



## PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

### Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Syria

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Total Population: 17,500,658

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 6% – **Evangelical Witness: 0.0%**

Muslims: 90%

#### Recovering from Chaos, Still in Danger

The country's years-long civil war has left it in turmoil, and Christians have not been spared from that suffering. Christians are caught in the crossfire between government troops and rebel forces, especially at the frontlines.

Additionally, Christians are at risk if forces antagonistic to Christianity rule their home regions. Even in more secure parts of Syria, Christians who have converted from Islam face pressure and discrimination from their communities.

#### Targeted and Pressured

Due to their public visibility, the leaders of historical churches are particularly targeted for abduction. But Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are also in a vulnerable position as they are known for their more Western orientation, fragmentation, lack of strong leadership and lack of a foreign

spokesperson (like a Pope or a bishop) who can speak out on their behalf.

In areas controlled by radical Islamic groups, most historic churches have been either demolished or used as Islamic centers. Public expressions of Christian faith in these regions are prohibited and church buildings or monasteries cannot be repaired or restored irrespective of whether the damage was collateral or intentional.

Christians who converted from Islam are often put under pressure by their family, as conversion brings great dishonor to the family. This is particularly true in majority Sunni areas, where converts risk being expelled from their family homes or worse. Pressure from the family is somewhat less intense in Kurdish areas, as the Kurdish Sunnis are generally less radical.

#### Example

In November 2018, according to Syrians for Truth and Justice: A radical Islamist group "seized 400 houses and 50 shops, owned by Christians, in the province of Idlib." Reportedly, the violent group considers such property to be the spoils of war. As a result of loss of property and violations of their rights, most of the Christians in Idlib have moved to government-held areas or abroad.

#### Pray for Syria

- Many children are failing to receive an education as a result of the war and Christian children are particularly vulnerable, as many Christian schools have been closed or damaged. Pray for educational opportunities for these children.
- Centers of Hope, an Open Doors project in Syria, serve as an extension of the church and provide a wide variety of programs that include children and youth activities, food distribution, discipleship courses, trauma counseling, services delivering meals to the elderly and many more. Pray for strength for the many volunteers who serve in the 16 Centers of Hope all over Syria.
- Continue to pray for peace for Syria. The fighting there is complex, and ordinary people are suffering greatly. Pray for a true resolution.
- Pray for continued wisdom and discernment for church leaders as they guide their churches through uncertain times of war and conflict.