

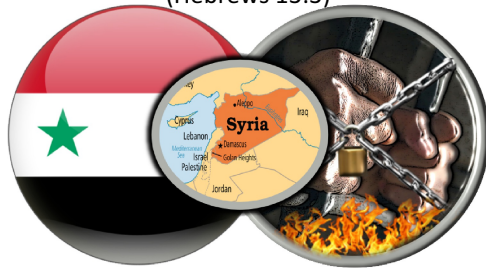


PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

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%**

Death Rate: 4.5/1000 per year: Just today: 216

What It Means To Follow Christ In Syria

Syria was once known for religious tolerance, relative to most nations in the Middle East. However, in recent years Syrian Christians have faced the same restrictions and opposition that are common in the region's more restricted Islamist nations. Christians commonly suffer the loss of jobs, homes, social standing and family relationships. Those born into Christian families are able to worship freely in church buildings as long as they keep their faith to themselves, but Christians who share the gospel face opposition from both extremists and the government. Churches struggle to meet the needs of the overwhelming number of displaced people. Still, some Christians have chosen to stay in the country to serve as a witness for Christ, despite the danger and harsh conditions.

Major Religions:

90 percent of Syrians are Sunni Muslims. Syrian Christians make up a significant minority, but many have taken refuge in neighboring countries because of the war.

Persecutor:

Islamist groups seek to drive Christians out of Syria, and the government works to control churches. While Muslim communities can be hostile to Christians, severe persecution usually comes from the government and Islamist groups, which have been unchecked in their oppression and abuse of Christians during the ongoing civil war.

Islamist Groups Entrenched in Syria

02/16/2022 Syria (International Christian Concern) - Fundamental Islamist groups are still highly active and present in Syria as observed by the number of jihadist religious schools in Idlib and the Pentagon report observing 2021 Quarter 3 activity of the Islamic State.

Idlib governorate is generally under the control of the "Salvation Government" led by the jihadist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), which was designated a terrorist organization in 2018 and an off-shoot of Al-Qaeda. Idlib's public schools, plagued by lack of funding and a poor economy, have paved the way for the increased religious school. Dar al-Wahi al-Sharif is a prominent religious school, associated with HTS and boasts 42 Quranic schools and six kindergartens. The Quranic schools offer tempting incentives to families, including no student fees, free transportation, and uniforms.

One researcher on radical Islamic groups explained, "HTS has followed a systematic plan through a series of steps to control the civil education sector in Idlib and turn it into an ideological religious education according to the ideas it espouses." The director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights also expressed concern about the indoctrination at young ages of fundamentalist theology and blind allegiance to HTS leaders. Idlib province hosts few Christians today as the opposition forces largely run the region and radical theology pushes religious minorities out. The continuation of education in this matter ensures that Christians are less likely to ever return home as a new generation of students is taught under fundamentalists.

The United States Pentagon quarterly report on Operation Inherent Resolve, the operations against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, was released just days after the killing of Islamic State leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, though it detailed activity from months prior. At the end of 2021, the report observed that the group had little major fracturing occurring and that Islamic State was prioritizing the freedom of detained members, foreshadowing the attack on Syria's al-Sinaa prison. Overall, the Islamic State "claimed fewer attacks in Iraq and Syria but remained entrenched in remote, rugged areas."

Islamic groups of various kinds threaten the safety and stability of the war-torn country, namely preventing Christians from returning home and continuing to pressure those who remain to seek a life outside.