



# 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

(VOM May 2021) Syrian Christians' lives have been severely disrupted by the civil war that began in 2011. Caught in the crossfire in this brutal conflict between Muslim factions, Christians have been abused and attacked from all sides. More than 750,000 Christians have been driven from the country. The churches and Christians that have been able to remain in Syria have served as a beacon of hope and a source of peace for both Christians and Muslims throughout the war. Many Muslims have come to Christ as Christians have reached out with acts of compassion and practical assistance. And reports that neighboring countries may send Syrian refugees back to Syria gives believers hope that those who came to faith in nearby countries will return and strengthen local churches.

### 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.

### 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.

### 14 Christians Reportedly Kidnapped in Syria

08/27/2020 Syria (International Christian Concern) – According to a pastor, 14 Kurdish youth from the Syrian city of Afrin were kidnapped by Turkish-backed Syrian militants. Each of these youths were a Christian convert. Other reports claim a different number of those kidnapped.

Regardless, the news is jolting but not necessarily unexpected. Turkey's invasion of Afrin in 2018 was nothing less than a genocide. It was an ethnic cleansing of the local Kurdish community. Additionally, a number of local Kurds had also converted to Christianity and were worshiping freely in Afrin. The invasion was pursued with strong Islamic overtones. Thus the church found themselves targeted for being both Kurdish and Christian.

The news of Turkish-backed militants kidnapping Christian converts in Afrin follows news that they had arrested a Christian convert on charges of blasphemy at the end of July. In this particular case, members of Failaq al-Sham had ordered the convert to turn over his school so it could be repurposed as an Islamic educational institution. When he refused, he was arrested on blasphemy charges.

Turkey has heavily invested itself in the Syrian conflict by providing funds and other resources to militant groups. These groups are all widely recognized as terrorists, many of whom have connections to ISIS or al-Qaeda. Turkey is a NATO-member and candidate for EU membership. But as its actions in Syria suggest, religious freedom is not a priority for Turkey.