Islamic Countries Dominate Open Doors 2011 World Watch List

North Korea ranks number one in the Open Doors World Watch List for the ninth straight year, but Islamic countries are quickly gaining ground as the most dangerous for Christians. Eight of the top 10 countries on the 2011 list have Islamic majorities—and persecution has increased in seven of them.

The top 10 in order are North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Maldives, Yemen, Iraq, Uzbekistan and Laos, which has a Communist government. Iraq is new to the top 10 list while Mauritania dropped out, going from No. 8 to No. 13, according to the annual list compiled by Open Doors International that tracks Christian life in 77 societies and ranks the top 50 most dangerous environments among them.

Video Contest Focuses on Sustaining Marriage

There's plenty of talk about the attack on marriages and family. Now, the Ruth Institute, a project of the National Organization for Marriage Education Fund, is encouraging creative young adults to become part of the solution with a video contest.

The Ruth Institute just launched its first annual Reel Love Challenge, a video contest for young adults aged 18 to 30. The contest is open to all young adults, married or single, male

or female, in college, out of college, or never been anywhere near a college. This contest offers a platform for a generation to offer ideas about what sustains love over a lifetime.

Biblica Rolls Out Chinese Contemporary Bible

China’s population has drawn foreign companies looking to cash in on retail opportunities. But it’s also drawing ministries seeking to save the lost and equip the saints.

Biblica, a 200-plus Bible translation and publishing ministry, is pushing deeper into communist nation with the Chinese Contemporary Bible (CCB). The new version will be released at the Chinese New Year in February.

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Offers Hope to Haiti

It’s been nearly a year since a devastating earthquake hit Haiti, killing more than 230,000 people. But Haiti’s rebuilding is far from over. In fact, more problems are arising, including a recent cholera outbreak that claimed the lives of an additional 2,000 people there.

While the nation saw an initial rush of help, some ministries have since moved on to the next disaster. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), however, is still on the ground in Haiti to offer help—and plans to offer even more support in 2011.

“This country is still struggling, even though there have been some great things that have happened this past year,” says Franklin Graham, president and CEO of BGEA and international relief agency Samaritan’s Purse. “We want to do everything we can to not only help the people of Haiti, but to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Afghan Christian Given One Week to Renounce Christ

In many ways, 2011 is starting off just like 2010 ended.

Indeed, Christian persecution promises to remain a running theme this year as Charisma magazine receives one of the first reports out of Afghanistan that a judge has given an covert from Islam to Christianity one week to renounce his faith in Christ. If he does not reject Jesus before men, he will be sentenced with 20 years of imprisonment at best—and death at worst.

International Christian Concern (ICC) is watching the case and expects Shoaib Assadullah to hear the verdict in his case today. Assadullah was arrested on October 21 in Mazar-e-Sharif for giving a Bible to a man who later reported him to local authorities. He remains in a prison in northern Afghanistan’s Mazar-e-Sharif.

Glo Digital Bible Offers Interactive Experience

In case you don't already have enough ways to read your Bible—online, on your smartphone, on your desktop, and, of course, in old-fashioned print—Immersion Digital is offering yet one more way to connect with the Word of God.

Immersion Digital is working to add an entirely new dimension to the growing Bible market. The Glo Bible presents the oracles of God with zoom technology and a touch interface. The software comes with an interactive database of historic and contemporary information, images, animations, video, maps, and 360-degree virtual tours.

"Moving forward, we need to exploit the full potential of interactive digital media," says Nelson Saba, CEO of Immersion Digital. "Glo is a digital publishing platform that offers an enhanced user experience of content through media. Slates combine mobility, rich media and intuitive multitouch interface creating an ideal platform for experiencing our enhanced media Bible."

Who Was Responsible for the Egypt Church Bombing?

LOS ANGELES, (CDN) – At least 21 people were killed and scores were wounded on Saturday (Jan. 1) when a bomb outside a church

in Alexandria, Egypt exploded as congregants were leaving a New Year's Eve Mass celebration.

The explosion ripped through the crowd shortly after midnight, killing instantly most of those who died, and leaving the entrance-way to the Church of the Two Saints, a Coptic Orthodox congregation, covered with blood and severed body parts.

The blast overturned at least one car, set several others on fire and shattered windows throughout the block on which the church is located.

Religious and Political Trends Set to Shape Future

What were the top religion and political trends in 2010? And how might they shape our future? That's the topic of a Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) study. The trends are important to note because they group expects them to continue into 2011 and beyond.

Robert P. Jones, CEO of PRRI, outlined the following 10 trends:

1. Nearly half (47 percent) of Americans who identify with the Tea Party movement also identify with the Christian right.
2. Pew found that 18 percent of Americans believe President Obama is a Muslim, and PRRI found that 51 percent say his religious beliefs are different from their own.
3. Fifty-seven percent of Americans are opposed to allowing NY Muslims to build an Islamic center and mosque two

blocks from ground zero, but 76 percent say they would support Muslims building a mosque in their local community if they followed the same regulations as other religious groups.

4. Americans are about five times more likely to give an “F” than an “A” to churches for their handling of homosexuality. Two-thirds see connections between messages coming from America’s churches and higher rates of suicide among gay and lesbian youth.
5. Forty-five percent of Americans say the values of Islam are at odds with American values and way of life, while a plurality (49 percent) disagree.
6. If another vote similar to Proposition 8 were held now, 51 percent of Californians say they would vote to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry.
7. At least seven-in-10 Americans say that protecting the dignity of every person, keeping families together, and the Golden Rule are important values that should guide immigration reform.
8. In his new book American Grace, Robert Putnam found that between one-third and one-half of all American marriages are in interfaith marriages, and roughly one-third of Americans have switched religions at some point in their lives.
9. Despite high levels of religiosity, Pew found on average that Americans only answered about half of 32 questions correctly on their Religious Knowledge Survey.
10. The 2010 congressional election revealed relatively stable voting patterns by religion compared to past elections. GOP candidates held an advantage among white Christians, while Democratic candidates held an advantage among minority Christians and the unaffiliated.

Festival For Life Focuses on Unborn Children

Some call it Civil Rights Day. Others call it Dr. Martin Luther King Day. Whatever you choose to call it, the Christian civil rights leader's birthday is being remembered during the Festival For Life on Jan. 17 at the Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Miss.

A group of black pastors is organizing the event to draw attention to what they see as the next wave of the civil rights movement King helped pioneer: dignity and equal protection for unborn children.

Anti-Christian Events Plague 2010

As Lee Grady noted in his "Year in Review" article, Christian persecution increased around the world in 2010. Now, a new list has emerged chronicling the top 10 anti-Christian acts in America last year.

DefendChristians.org, a ministry of the Christian Anti-Defamation Commission, just offered up its list based on an online poll of Christians. According to Dr. Gary Cass, Chairman and CEO of DefendChristians.org, the results demonstrate a double standard is being applied against Christians and their faith, values, and liberty.

"If these same types of actions were taken against other groups one would call it bigoted," Cass says. "We are exposing

the shameful behavior of bashing Christ and biblical values for what it is, ‘Christophobia,’ the irrational fear and hatred of Christ and His Word.”