

Christian Persecution Tops World List (Who Knew?)

Is Christianity the most persecuted religion in the world? Arguably so, numerous government and religious sources say. Yet among those most oblivious to the reality are, ironically, Christians in the West—where the notion of anti-Christian persecution is viewed as improbable, or worse, untrue.

“Ignorance” is the blinder worn by the West, says Michael Horowitz, an American Jewish activist who also writes on the worldwide persecution of Christian believers. The lack of awareness about the treatment of Christians globally “is fostered by preconceptions and conventional wisdoms that lead many in the West to dismiss anti-Christian persecution as improbable, untrue, impossible,” Horowitz told the *Toronto Star* newspaper.

Because Christianity is the faith of record for the world’s richest and most powerful countries—and has a historical record of brutality to go along with it—modern-day elites are more conditioned to think of Christian believers as the persecutors, not the victims, Horowitz notes.

“There’s still the mindset that Christianity is white, Western and European,” adds Paul Marshall of the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., who told the *Star* that the face of Christianity has changed drastically from what it once was.

“The average Christian, if one can use that term, is now a Nigerian woman,” Marshall, co-author of a 1997 book about Christian persecution, *Their Blood Cries Out*, told the newspaper.

Nearly all human-rights groups and Western government agencies that monitor the plight of Christians worldwide agree: Between 200 million and 230 million believers face daily threats of murder, beating, imprisonment and torture, and a further 350 million to 400 million encounter discrimination in areas such as jobs and housing. A conservative estimate of the number of Christians killed for their faith each year is around 150,000.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reported during a conference last month on Christian persecution that Christians were “harassed” by government factors in 102 countries and by social factors, such as mob rule, in 101 countries.

The report, presented at the conference hosted by the European Parliament, stated: “Altogether, Christians faced some form of harassment in two-thirds of all countries,” or 133 nations.

A Pew Forum spokesperson told the *Star* that Christians face harassment in more countries “than any other religious group.” In yet clearer terms, the conference was told that “at least” 75 percent of all religious persecution in the world is directed against Christians.

According to the newspaper, the term “harassment” encompasses vigilante and terrorist attacks against Christians in more than a dozen Muslim countries.

Open Doors International, the world’s largest outreach to persecuted Christians, lists the 10 most repressive countries for minority religions and Christians in particular: North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Maldives, Afghanistan, Yemen, Mauritania, Laos and Uzbekistan.

While the plight of Christians in communist and formerly communist countries, which was so prevalent during the 20th century, is “slowly easing,” Marshall told the *Star*, it is getting worse in India and across the Muslim and Arab world, where even owning a Bible is flirting with danger.

So why aren’t Western Christians, who still enjoy a predominantly free practice of religion, marching in the streets and demanding action?

“Because most of the persecution of Christians is not happening in our own backyard and the issue is not generally reported in the mainstream media,” Corey Odden, CEO of The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, told the *Star*.

“The lack of understanding comes from a lack of knowledge.”