

Iran Sees Explosive Church Growth, Sparks of Revival

Open Doors staff members recently reported that church growth is “explosive” in Iran; they even speak of a **revival**.

Iran is the fifth country in the world on Open Doors’ World Watch List for the persecution of believers. The president and the supreme leader of the country openly speak against the growth of house churches, and persecution against Christian converts is highly prevalent.

Interestingly, though, these two government leaders are nearly alone in their disdain for Christianity as a “Western religion,” says one Open Doors staff member. “In the past, Christianity wasn’t popular; it was seen as a Western religion. Now only the government sees it as a Western product, or better: a Western political system,” says the staff member.

Iranians have seen the corruption of the **Islamic Revolution** in their own country and are looking for something more. This yearning combined with a bold Christian presence is causing church growth like never before.

“Iranians are very outgoing and want to speak about their faith,” a staff member states. “That is why discipleship training (with elements of outreach and communications) for Iranian believers is successful. If you tell them that a Christian should share, the Iranian Christian shares.”

Offering discipleship training is one of the ways Open Doors works to strengthen the **Iranian church**. It is estimated that about half of the new Christians are open about their new faith while others are keeping their conversion a secret.

As a result of this willingness to take risks, there are

hundreds of thousands of believers in Iran. About 40 years ago, approximately 200 Christians from a Muslim background were living in Iran. Today some estimate that there are as many as 370,000 Christian converts. Besides these new believers, Iran also has a traditional Armenian and Assyrian church with about 80,000 members.

These Christians face daily harassment for their faith. The government's abhorrence of house churches has caused **house churches** to cut membership down from around 15 members to more like five or six.

Open Doors staff say that in the last several months, the Iranian government has prohibited several churches from offering services in Farsi on Fridays, the official day off in the country. The Iranian government also forbids the selling of **Bibles** or New Testaments.

And persecution comes from society, too. "Based on the information that we get from people, we believe that persecution by family members is growing; but this kind of persecution is less visible than, for example, arrest by police." But, the staff member adds, "Even though persecution is growing, people becoming Christians continues to grow."

The growth can only be explained by the power of the Lord. Pray that He would continue to work through the church, and to give dreams and visions to seeking Iranians. Pray for boldness and safety for believers as they proclaim the name of the one and only God.