

Open Doors Warning: America's Fading Status as Safe Haven for Persecuted Christians

Without the presence of God, the world is destined to become a much darker place. The Bible declares that Jesus is a bright light in our lives (John 8:12).

The Creator of all things has been kicked out by His sons and daughters from areas of society such as education, government and even their daily lives.

When the light of God is not present, it is as if there is only darkness. In the book of John, it says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it," (John 1:4-5).

In the absence of Jesus, the darkness will spread and Christians are seeing the result of this abandonment of the light in the United States of America.

While on the surface the world seems to be returning to normalcy after the pandemic, a joint report by international religious freedom advocacy groups delivers a stark warning to the Christian community. The report, presented by Open Doors US and World Relief, reveals the plight of persecuted Christians seeking refuge in the United States remains troublingly difficult. This is a matter of great concern, given that one in every seven Christians worldwide faces high levels of persecution and discrimination.

The "Closed Doors" report, presented on Capitol Hill, paints a disheartening picture. It highlights that America, once seen as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution, may no longer offer that sanctuary as it once did. The data speak volumes: Christian refugees admitted into the United States from

countries listed on Open Doors' annual World Watch List are currently at their lowest levels in a decade.

The report's findings reveal that even as life in the United States returns to post-pandemic normal, the pace of refugee admissions has lagged behind. By the end of fiscal year 2022, the number of Christian refugees resettled from the 50 countries where Christians face severe persecution plummeted by about 70% compared to fiscal year 2016. In 2022, only 9,538 Christian refugees from the most persecuted countries found refuge in the U.S. This is less than one-third of the 32,248 Christian refugees admitted in 2016.

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It's not just about the numbers; it's about the lives affected. The report points out that Christian refugees from specific countries, where persecution is especially severe, face an even more challenging journey to find safety. Iran and Iraq, among others, witnessed alarming drops in the number of Christian refugees admitted between 2016 and 2022.

The situation is dire for many who seek asylum, particularly at the border. The report highlights policies and proposals that could further restrict access to asylum for persecuted Christians. These measures include rules implemented by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, creating what some describe as an 'asylum lottery.'

World Relief President and CEO Myal Greene emphasizes the importance of supporting a pathway for asylum, especially for those escaping persecution for religious reasons. He calls on the Biden administration to raise the refugee resettlement ceiling, seeking to restore the Lautenberg Amendment, which historically provided a pathway for religious minorities and those from former Soviet republics to find refuge in the

United States.

Amid these challenges, there is hope in bipartisan efforts like the Dignity Act, which aims to enhance border security and expand the capacity to process asylum claims. Such measures, if enacted, could provide a lifeline for persecuted Christians and others seeking safety in the United States.

In these times, when hostility toward Christians and restrictions on their ability to find refuge seem to be on the rise, it's essential to remember the Bible's teachings. Scripture warns us that in the end times, the world will grow darker spiritually, and hostility toward Christians will increase. These challenges remind us to hold fast to our faith and continue advocating for justice and compassion for those in need. {eoa}

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