

Syria's Christians Cry Out for Prayer

In the wake of a year of protests and violence, the situation in Syria has brought great suffering to the entire population. **Syrian Christians** say their greatest need right now is **prayer**, according to Open Doors.

Syria has more than 20 million inhabitants with 1.9 million of them Christians. Syria is ranked number 36 on the Open Doors 2012 World Watch List of the top 50 **persecutors of Christians**.

The danger has prompted many churches across the country to meet only in daytime, many only on Sundays. On Fridays, the weekly Islamic day of assembly, many Christian schools now close.

Because of rampant killing, theft and kidnapping of children, some parents have stopped sending their children to school. Syria also suffers a lack of fuel and electricity, an economy in shambles and few jobs.

"Christians' plights vary by place," says Dr. Carl Moeller, president and CEO of Open Doors USA. "Damascus Christians seem to have the fewest difficulties; in contrast, many Homs believers have fled what has become a war zone."

Some Christians want to stay; others desperately seek to emigrate, Moeller says. Many say they simply cannot flee.

"Many believers tell us that Syria is where they belong and will remain, even if that means dying there," he said.

More than 80 percent of Christians have fled Homs, the city where fighting is the worst. Looters have invaded the homes of those who have fled. At least one evangelical church has been attacked. Those who remain have limited means of safe

transportation. Few attend church services.

"Homs is a ghost town, and the situation of people there is not stable," another source said. "Everyone there fears for safety. People in the city don't have resources or supplies. The situation makes a decent human being cry."

In some areas, the situation is relatively **safe for Christians**.

"We come together to worship, and people have **strong faith**," one Syrian pastor said. "Currently, Christians are not under direct attack. But we don't know if things change how they will treat us."

Christians fear that if President Assad is overthrown, their plight will dramatically worsen. But Christians find strength in their faith, Moeller says.