

PASTOR LORENZO ROSALES FAJARDO

Cuba

While you might not think of Cuba as a place of persecution, the Cuban Communist government has become increasingly hostile toward people of faith, especially Christians, regulating all religious activity on the island and even co-opting certain faiths for political purposes. One small example of difficulties Christians face to practice their faith is that Bibles often need to be smuggled or hidden away in order to read or share as Christian communities are under constant, and intense, surveillance by controlling authorities.

Lorenzo Fajardo, a Cuban Christian Pastor, is one example of many hundreds of faith leaders affected in recent years. A husband and father, Pastor Fajardo was imprisoned due to his religious leadership role, now detained since 2021, and has been held incommunicado in a maximum-security prison since his arrest. His story is like many other Cuban pastors persecuted for their faith and work to help their neighbors on the island who suffer from lack of food or extreme poverty, among other mistreatments by government officials.

The Cuban government ultimately sentenced Pastor Fajardo to 7-8 years in prison on charges of “disrespect, incitement, and public disorder,” though in reality, it was because of his work as a pastor. His family has also been denied contact with him at times and there are recent reports he has been severely beaten, abused, and tortured by guards while in detention. Even his wife has been allegedly threatened with imprisonment herself if she continues to advocate for his release.

Pray with us today for the nation of Cuba, for Pastor Fajardo’s safe return home and for all those suffering in Cuba on account of their beliefs.



Religion: Christian - Protestant

Sentence: 7 years

Charges: “Unlawful disobedience” related to his role as a religious leader.

Read more about Cuba’s growing hostility and control of religion [here](#) and [here](#).

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on Cuba, which highlights other victims, [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



PASTOR RAYMOND KOH

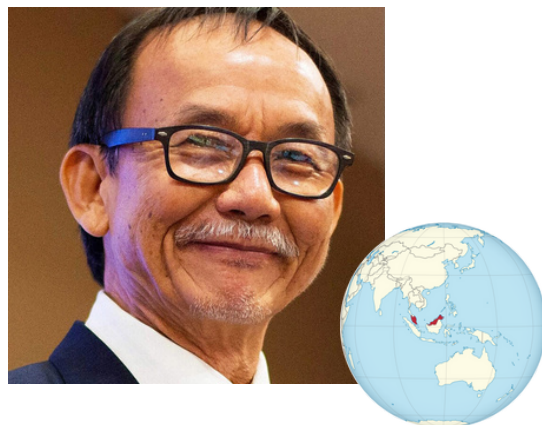
Malaysia

Pastor Raymond Koh is a Protestant pastor from Malaysia who was forcibly disappeared by government security forces in February 2017 for his religious and humanitarian work and for his evangelism. His whereabouts remain unknown today. Malaysia, a Southeast Asian country near Singapore with Malay, Chinese, and Indian cultural influences, has seen increasing religious persecution in recent years.

Reports indicate Pastor Koh was abducted by Islamic authorities because of the endeavors of his NGO, which focused on social and charitable work while also sharing the gospel of Christ with Muslims. In Malaysia, however, Christian converts from a Muslim-Malay background face high levels of persecution as converting to Christianity is seen as an act not only against one's ethnicity but their nation as well.

But persecution is also prevalent among non-Christians in Malaysia as the government compels Muslim citizens, for example, to obey government-approved interpretations of Sunni Islam. Citizens across the country are also forced to register their religion with the state, and all ethnic Malays are forced to register as Muslims (and assumed to be so) regardless of their beliefs. Blasphemy laws there similarly criminalize apostasy with fines, prison, or even forced placement in "rehabilitation" centers. Forced conversions are also common, too. Thus, Christians, Hindus, and certain non-traditional Muslims are all groups targeted and exposed to punishments and government harassment due to their distinct faiths and practices.

Pastor Koh is just one example of numerous forced disappearances of Christians over the past several years. Pray with us today for Pastor Koh's safe return home and for all those suffering in Malaysia for their faith, both believers and their non-Christian neighbors.



Religion: Christian - Protestant

Currently: Forcibly disappeared for his religious and humanitarian work; his family is praying for his safe return despite lack of attention or help from authorities.

Motives: Allegations against his ministry's evangelism to Muslims.

Read more about religious persecution in Malaysia [here](#) and [here](#).

Read updates on Pastor Koh's case [here](#).



FARIBA KAMALABADI

Iran

In Iran, while some Christian communities are “tolerated,” all are still treated as lower-class citizens regardless of safety concerns. A predominately Muslim country, Iran discriminates against Christians, not permitting believers to worship freely or even to read Scripture in Iran’s primary language, Farsi. Additionally, speaking to Christian converts from Islam could land you in prison in Iran. Indeed, converting from Islam to Christianity in Iran is illegal, and converts from Islam face the greatest risk of persecution among believers. For this reason, house churches are illegal. If arrested, many Christians are tortured or sentenced to arbitrarily long prison terms.

But just as Christians face severe persecution in Iran, Baha’is are another (if not the most) severely persecuted religious minority in Iran, often facing arbitrary arrests, raids, and harassment as they are considered an unrecognized religious group. The Baha’i faith, which focuses on social ethics and the oneness of humanity, has faced growing challenges as more than 320 Baha’is have been affected by persecution throughout Iran since 2022 alone, with reports indicating at least 90 Baha’is are still imprisoned today all because of their faith. Read more about the persecution of Baha’is in Iran, [here](#).

One example of a Baha’i follower suffering on account of her faith is Fariba Kamalabadi, an Iranian wife and mother of three arrested twice because of her beliefs and involvement with her faith community, particularly for her role as a religious leader. She remains incarcerated today and faces a second ten-year prison sentence.

Pray with us today for Fariba, her safety, health, and freedom.



Religion: Baha’i

Sentence: Currently serving her second 10-year prison sentence.

Motive for persecution: Her role as a religious leader and figure in a country that persecutes Baha’is.

Follow more of Fariba’s story [here](#) and read how one imprisoned Baha’i woman turned to poetry to survive her imprisonment [here](#).

Read more about persecution of Christians across Iran [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



MEERAN HAIDER

India

Though diverse and rich in history and culture, India - home to the world's largest Hindu population - faces widespread persecution as communal violence targeting minority faith groups increases. Christians and Muslims alike are persecuted by the government and extremist Hindu groups, as mob violence, church burnings, and even lynchings take place. With a slew of anti-conversion laws violently enforced, both Christians and their neighbors suffer under a polarizing government that espouses hate and even force conversions or marriages on non-Hindus, especially among young Christian and Muslim girls.

India's anti-conversion laws often target Christian pastors, church planters, and evangelists which is in addition to forced "reconversions" forcing Indians to "return" to Hinduism. Christian converts in India are commonly viewed as "traitors" to the Hindu homeland under current prime minister Narendra Modi. Reports of looting and destructions of Christian homes and churches is also increasing. But again, not only Christians suffer this way. Muslims are also targeted through misinformation campaigns, mob attacks and even labeled "infiltrators." Other ethnic minorities, particularly in the northeast state of Manipur, have endured violence and systemic attacks because of their ethnoreligious identities.

Meeran Haider is just one example of many Indian Muslims currently imprisoned their identity and belief. A former PhD student, Meeran was arrested in 2020 for peacefully protesting religious freedom violations in India, including openly opposing religiously discriminatory legislation from the government.

Alarming levels of harassment and persecution continue across the country, with both Christians and their neighbors - like Meeran - suffering for their faith. Pray with us today for his freedom and for all those in India unable to freely profess and practice what they believe.



Religion: Muslim

Sentence: Imprisoned since 2020.

Motive for arrest: Leading peaceful protests against religious persecution in India.

Read an update on persecution in India [here](#).

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on India [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



ILHAM TOHTI

China

Officially an atheist state, Christians face increasing persecution in China. The Chinese Communist Party views churches that claim Christ is King as suspicious and monitor them closely, even making it illegal for children under 18 to attend church. Indeed, it is difficult for Christians to share their faith publicly or freely attend worship services as church raids increase and closures occur without warning. Protestant house churches are particularly vulnerable as digital surveillance grows there. Even Christian chat groups are routinely shut down. But across China, it is not just Christians who are vulnerable to persecution. Chinese authorities use extreme and repressive measures in order to eradicate certain ethnoreligious identities, notably Tibetan Buddhists and Uyghur Muslims. These distinct faiths, with their heritage and cultures, have led to strict censorship campaigns by the government, threats, arbitrary imprisonment, and even being sent to “reeducation centers.” In fact, Uyghurs in China are the most heavily jailed people group in the world according to recent statistics despite making up only one percent of the total population of China.

Ilham Tohti is one example. A scholar and Uyghur Muslim, Ilham is currently imprisoned for his ethnoreligious identity, sentenced to life in prison. In the years leading up to his arrest, he had worked to foster understanding between Uyghur and Han people (China’s majority ethnic group). However, since 2017, Ilham has been detained incommunicado.

Ilham is the father of Jewher Tohti, a human rights activist based in the U.S. and one of the Global Gathering’s featured panelists on Friday Oct. 25th, which is also Ilham’s birthday. Jewher has fought for her father’s freedom over the last decade (even meeting with President Trump in 2019) and dedicates her work today to continuing her father’s legacy of bridging the gap between the Uyghur people and the Han Chinese.

Pray with us for Ilham, and his family, today.



Ethnoreligious identity: Uyghur Muslim

Sentence: Life imprisonment - already has served 10 years.

Motive for arrest: “Seperatism”, i.e., advocating for the rights of Uyghurs and his research on Uyghur-Han relations.

Read more about China’s overt religious persecution [here](#).

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on China [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



TO HOANG CHUONG

Vietnam

Though Vietnam made significant progress in the area of religious freedom from 2000-2019, its authoritarian governance and state control over social activities show worrying signs of regression. For Christians (both Roman Catholic and Protestants), persecution remains prevalent as crackdowns on house churches continue to intensify and accusations are constantly made against Christian ministries for “sabotaging national unity” –especially those with leaders who unapologetically proselytize. For example, in spring of this year, a Protestant missionary was sentenced to 13 years in prison for work in his Christian ministry, and just last year, an Evangelical pastor was threatened to renounce his faith in Christ before eventually being killed.

As terrible as it can be for Vietnamese Christians, it is not just our brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer for their faith there. Many ethnoreligious minority groups across the country also suffer, with acts of surveillance, arbitrary detainments, and even campaigns to eradicate certain groups taking place.

Buddhists are one persecuted group suffering alongside Christians, and in particular, Khmer Krom Buddhists. To Hoang Chuong is from this ethnic faith community and is currently imprisoned for his religious freedom advocacy there. To Hoang was arrested last year for advocating for the rights of his community – and others – to practice their faith independent from state interference or harassment. Reports indicate he has been tortured while imprisoned as his community continues to face serious restrictions on their fundamental freedoms, including religious expression.

Pray with us for To Hoang Chuong and his community today.



Ethnoreligious identity: Khmer Krom Buddhist

Sentence: 4 years imprisonment (with reports of torture)

Motive for arrest: Advocacy for the rights of ethnoreligious communities in Vietnam.

Read more about Vietnam’s recent crackdowns [here](#) & the effects on local churches [here](#).

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on Vietnam [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



TESFAZION GEBREMICHAEL

Eritrea

Though widely unknown, Eritrea is one of the world's worst religious freedom violators and has even been called "The North Korea of Africa." In Eritrea, people are often detained purely for their religious beliefs as its authoritarian government does not recognize most faiths, often imposing severe restrictions on its citizens and their freedom of belief or expression.

Though all religious groups face persecution in some form, Jehovah's Witnesses – alongside Christians – face particularly harsh restrictions and attacks in Eritrea. For Christians, thousands are fleeing the country in hopes of finding freedom to practice their faith without persecution. For Jehovah's Witnesses, at least 36 individuals are currently in prison unlawfully, including Tesfazion Gebremichael who has been incarcerated for nearly 14 years.

Tesfazion, now 80-years-old, is currently imprisoned in Eritrea for sharing his religious beliefs with others, specially, sharing passages from his religious text.

With Tesfazion's age, the state of Eritrean "prisons" is cause for concern as torture, solitary confinement, and other abysmal conditions are common – some "prisons" have even been shown to be actual shipping containers.

Pray with us for Tesfazion and others in Eritrea suffering greatly for their faith, and pray a change in government would come soon.



Religion: Jehovah's Witness

Sentence: Unclear but he has already served 14 years.

Motive for arrest: Discussing religious texts with others.

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on Eritrea [here](#).

Read more about Eritrea's harsh policies on religion [here](#) and its persecution of Christians [here](#) and [here](#).

And see how global prayers efforts have helped shift the tide [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



YAHAYA SHARIF-AMINU

Nigeria

Nigeria is considered one if not the most dangerous countries in the world for Christians today who suffer greatly for their faith in Christ. Nigeria has even become known as “the world’s center of Christian martyrs,” as extremists groups kill at least 4,000 Christians every year (which, according to [Global Christian Relief](#), is often more than the rest of the world combined). Violence across the country is extreme, with radical Islamic extremists seeking to eradicate Christianity from Nigeria’s northern states and this hate spreading south by way of terrorist group, Boko Haram.

“The violence,” writes Global Christian Relief, “has resulted in refugees now numbering over four million, mostly Christian farmers. The government of Nigeria has proved unwilling to condemn the levels of violence which some call genocidal, or inept in its attempts to engage and neutralize extremist movements.”

And even with such extreme numbers affecting Christians today in Nigeria, people of other religious practices suffer alongside persecuted Christians there, even including those who do not hold faith in any type of higher power.

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu is one example. A Nigerian Sufi Muslim and musician who often expresses his faith through music, Yahaya has been imprisoned since March 2020 after WhatsApp audio recordings of him went viral. His accusers claim he blasphemed the Prophet Muhammed because “he praised an imam” from *his* community of faith, the Sufi Tijaniyyah Order.

Only 22 at the time of his arrest, Yahaya’s family home was burned down by protestors over allegations he “insulted the religious creed.” Shortly after his arrest, the court found him guilty and sentenced him to death. Because of the good work of domestic and international Christian religious freedom advocates, his death sentence was overturned on appeal and his attorneys filed a new appeal in 2022 with the Nigerian Supreme Court. Yahaya remains detained.



Religion: Sufi Muslim

Sentence: Originally sentenced to death (now overturned on appeal), Yahaya was found guilty of blasphemy and is currently imprisoned waiting on a retrial.

Motive for arrest: Blasphemy and religious expression through music.

Read more about Nigeria’s extreme persecution [here](#), and why it has been called the most dangerous country in the world for Christians today [here](#) and [here](#).

For more on Yahaya’s case and blasphemy in Nigeria, [watch](#) here.

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



RAMZAN BIBI

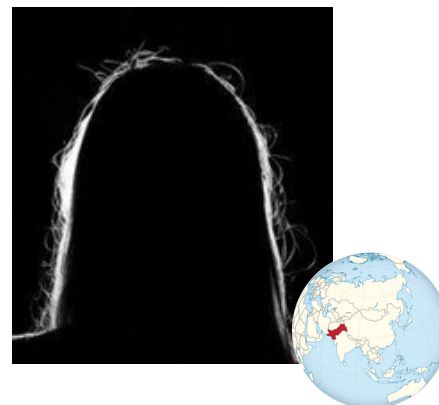
Pakistan

Christians across Pakistan are from diverse faith backgrounds and denominations, but all face persecution because of their faith in Christ. Witnessing to Muslims, gathering to worship, or sharing scripture are often dangerous activities that can lead to violence, imprisonment, or worse. With 98% of the country Muslim, Christian families and Christian converts from Islam face extreme persecution at the hands of the government and Islamic extremists. In particular, the country's harsh blasphemy laws (which are some of the worst blasphemy laws in the world) target non-Muslims. Blasphemy laws punish people for expressions or acts deemed defamatory of religions, religious symbols, figures, or even feelings. In Pakistan, that means speech or action deemed blasphemous against the traditional majority Sunni Islam.

Like Christians, Ahmadi Muslims face persecution which is often more extreme than that of Christians. Ahmadis are one of Pakistan's most persecuted religious minority groups as they are officially declared "non-Muslims" by the government, targeted mainly because they differ from the traditional Sunni Muslim majority traditions. Often, Ahmadis are treated as apostates, like Christians. Ramzan Bibi's story is the result of this view and just one of many.

Ramzan Bibi is a 59-year-old wife and mother of six and Ahmadi Muslim who, in 2020, was attacked for simply trying to make a charitable donation to one of her village's Ahmadi mosques. Shortly after making the donation, her money was returned, her non-Ahmadi family members became outraged, and she was accused of committing blasphemy by local village leaders. Reports indicate that despite there being no "evidence" against her, some local traditional Islamic leaders recruited a non-Ahmadi witness to testify against her. Her bail was rejected and she remains in prison today.

Punishments for blasphemy in Pakistan can lead to life imprisonment or even carry the death penalty. Over the last few decades in Pakistan, thousands of Ahmadis like Ramzan Bibi have faced criminal proceedings associated with their faith, with hundreds charged with blasphemy and many of their mosques desecrated. Mob violence is also common against various communities of faith.



Religion: Ahmadi Muslim

Charges: Blasphemy. Currently imprisoned, the section of the Pakistan Penal Code under which she was charged carries the death penalty.

Motive for arrest: Charitable donation to an Ahmadi mosque.

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on Pakistan [here](#).

Read more about the persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan [here](#) and [here](#) who suffer alongside [Christians](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.



GULMIRA IMIN

China

Recent reports indicate that Chinese Christian persecution is at the worst it has been in 40 years. One example of such persecution is that Christian children – in the millions – have been forced to sign forms renouncing their faith in Christ publicly. Additionally, communist leaders in the country continue to desecrate Churches, often removing their crosses.

But as we have seen, many other religious groups suffer alongside Christians in China, especially Uyghurs, who are persecuted not only for their faith but also their ethnicity. Gulmira Imin is one example.

Gulmira is currently serving a nearly 20-year prison sentence in Urumqi, China because of her ethnoreligious identity as a Uyghur Muslim and her advocacy for religious freedom in the country. Uyghurs are continuously seen as threats to the Chinese Communist Party and thus harshly persecuted. With this, Uyghurs face forced separation of families and forced sterilization of Uyghur women, with the government goal being to eradicate all Uyghur heritage.

Pray with us for Gulmira today as well as for the millions of Uyghur men, women, and children who are persecuted for who they are and what they believe. And as we pray for their community, we also remember our Christian brothers and sisters struggling to freely worship or express their faith in China, knowing God's heart is for all of His creation and that as His children, we are called to care for those who are hurting.



Ethnoreligious identity: Uyghur Muslim

Sentence: 20 years imprisonment with reports of torture.

Motive for arrest: Protesting religious freedom violations in China and more specifically, for her ethnoreligious identity.

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on China [here](#).

Read more about China's harsh policies on religion [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.

