

In RESPONSE *to*
PERSECUTION

*Findings of the Under Caesar's Sword Project
on Global Christian Communities*





UNDER CAESAR'S SWORD:
CHRISTIAN RESPONSE *to* PERSECUTION



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Executive Summary

Christians around the world suffer persecution at the hands of both state and non-state actors. Among the state actors are Islamist, Communist, religious nationalist, and secular regimes, while non-state actors include violent religious extremists.

Christians' responses to this persecution fall into three broad categories: first, strategies of survival, through which they aim to preserve the life and basic activities of their communities; second, strategies of association, through which they build ties with others that strengthen their resilience in the face of persecution; and third, strategies of confrontation, through which they openly challenge the persecution levied against them or live out their faith such that they accept the possibility of martyrdom as a mode of witness. These responses are not mutually exclusive.

Executive Summary

Under Caesar’s Sword researchers have studied the character of these responses in twenty-five countries around the world in addition to “The West.” Eight findings arise from these studies:

1. Christian communities most commonly adopt survival strategies. While these strategies are defined as the least proactive form of resistance to persecution, they often involve creativity, determination, and courage. These strategies include going underground, flight, and accommodation to or support for repressive regimes.
2. Strategies of association are the second most common response. In these cases, Christian communities seek to secure their religious freedom by developing ties with other actors, including other Christian communities, non-Christian religions, and secular figures.
3. Strategies of confrontation are the least common response. They serve to bear witness to the faith, expose and end injustice, mobilize others to oppose injustice, and replace it with religious freedom.
4. Christian responses to persecution are almost always nonviolent and, with very few exceptions, do not involve acts of terrorism.
5. Theology—in particular, a Christian community’s theology of suffering, church, and culture—influences the response of that community.
6. Protestant evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are more likely to be persecuted than mainline Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, or other Christians associated with ancient churches. In response to persecution, evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are more likely to engage in strategies of survival or, on rare occasions, confrontation. They are less likely, however, to engage in strategies of association. Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, on the other hand, are more likely to respond through strategies of association.
7. The intensity of persecution only partly explains Christians’ responses.
8. While success is difficult to define, some strategies of response have produced tangible results worthy of emulation.

See pages 34–44 for an in-depth explanation of these findings.

Overall, the report finds that Christian responses to persecution embody a *creative pragmatism* dominated by short-term efforts to provide security, build strength through social ties, and sometimes strategically oppose the persecution levied against them. The fact that these efforts are pragmatic should not obscure that they often are conducted with deep faith as well as creativity, courage, nimbleness, theological conviction, and hope for a future day of freedom.

In this spirit, the report closes with policy recommendations for persecuted communities as well as non-governmental organizations, outside governments and multilateral institutions, outside churches and Christian communities, the media, academia, and businesses who seek to lend their support to these Christians.

Introduction

How do Christians respond to persecution? While a number of analysts have documented the global persecution of Christians, few have asked what Christians actually do when their human right to religious freedom is egregiously violated.

This report conveys the findings of *Under Caesar's Sword: Christian Response to Persecution*, the world's first systematic global investigation into the responses of Christian communities to persecution. The project seeks to achieve a better understanding of these responses in order to assist persecuted Christians and those who wish to act in solidarity with them.

Introduction

A team of seventeen leading scholars of global Christianity carried out the project through qualitative field research, including interviews with persecuted Christians, conducted between October 2014 and November 2015. The researchers focused on contemporary events and plumbed history only insofar as it provides context for the current situation. The report covers twenty-five countries, including most of those where the worst persecution is taking place. In many of these countries, several different Christian communities face persecution, and they often respond to it in different ways.

Why does this report focus on Christians? In short, Christians are the most widely targeted religious community, suffering terrible persecution globally.

In February 2015, members of the Islamic State marched twenty-one men, most of them Coptic Christians, onto a beach in Libya and beheaded them. Among those killed were two brothers, Bishop Kamel and Samuel Kamel. In an interview broadcast all over the Middle East, their remaining brother, Beshir, forgave the killers. Within hours of the broadcast, a clip posted on Facebook had received nearly 100,000 views.

These beheadings accounted for a mere twenty-one of the 7,100 Christians whom Open Doors estimates died for their faith in 2015. This represents more than a 300 percent rise from the 2013 figure of 2,123, and does not include incidents of intimidation or nonlethal violence. Reliable data about such nonlethal persecution are difficult to find, and estimates vary considerably, but even the most conservative estimates of the Christian proportion of global religious persecution do not fall below 60 percent. The International Society for Human Rights, a secular NGO based in Frankfurt, estimated in 2009 that Christians were the victims of 80 percent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world, while separate human rights observatories corroborate this finding. A report of the U.S. State Department shows that Christians face persecution

in over sixty countries. According to the nonpartisan Pew Research Center, for each year between 2007 and 2014, Christians have been targeted for harassment in more countries than any other religious group.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this persecution is the lack of press coverage it receives. Although a few scholars and journalists have documented the phenomenon of Christian persecution, the mainstream media and human rights organizations give it little attention. Georgetown University's Religious Freedom Project analyzed 323 major reports published by Human Rights Watch, one of the world's most influential human rights organizations, over a three-and-a-half-year period (from 2008 to mid-2011) and found that religious persecution of any kind was the focus of only eight (about 2.5 percent) of the published reports. Fewer than half of that small number of reports focused on Christian persecution.

Christians are far from the only religion whose members have suffered persecution and also have been on the delivering end of persecution, especially in episodes spanning the fourth through the seventeenth centuries. Violations of religious freedom are violations of the dignity that all humans share. Wherever, whenever, and against whomever they occur, these violations merit attention and alleviation. Fairness, however, also demands acknowledging the multiple contributions to freedom that Christians have made over the course of history and in the contemporary world, including where they are minorities.

Today, Christians are mostly on the receiving end of persecution. To study their responses as Christians, which is the focus of this report, makes it possible both to see general patterns of response shared widely by Christians and to make a nuanced comparison among the responses of Christian communities with different histories, theologies, challenges, and resources. This investigation of how Christians respond to persecution offers lessons to be learned for other faith communities and for those who are concerned about the persecution of any individual or group.

The Contexts of Persecution

The Contexts of Persecution

Persecution in the religious sense always involves a severe violation of the human right to religious freedom. Guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other major international legal conventions, the human right to religious freedom declares the moral and civic immunity of individuals and religious communities from coercion or violence on account of their religious beliefs and practice. It protects their structures of governance, their property, their schools, their charities, the public communication of their message, and their contributions to the political life of their respective societies, especially in matters touching upon justice and the common good.

Dr. Charles Tieszen defines religious persecution as “any unjust action of varying levels of hostility directed to religious believers through systematic oppression or through irregular harassment or discrimination resulting in various levels of harm as it is considered from the victim’s perspective, each action having religion as its primary motivator.” Modes of persecution include arbitrary detention, coercive and unjust interrogation, forced labor, imprisonment, beating, torture, disappearance, forced flight from homes, enslavement, rape, murder, unjust execution, attacks on and destruction of churches, and credible threats to carry out such actions. Often, law and policy authorize or encourage persecution, for instance through blasphemy laws, onerous religious registration regulations, and laws outlawing proselytism. This definition of persecution includes forms of severe discrimination in which religious minorities are denied jobs or positions in the economic sphere or in government, or are otherwise stigmatized within societies by private groups. Discrimination is a highly unjust form of unequal treatment that can impoverish entire communities. It often leads to violence.

As the following map shows, most of the world’s persecution of Christians takes place within a geographic band that begins around Libya, moves eastward to Egypt and the rest of the Middle East, expands north to Russia and south to Sri Lanka, and then proceeds eastward to China, Indonesia, and North Korea. Outside of this band are several other repressive regimes, like Cuba.

The Contexts of Persecution

In most of these countries, Christians are small minorities lacking demographic strength and political clout. There are exceptions, such as Russia; there, while the majority is Orthodox Christian, minority Christian churches and religious sects experience strong discrimination. Anomalous, too, is Cuba, where Catholic Christians constitute a majority that is nevertheless heavily constricted by the long-standing Communist government. Most of Kenya's population is Christian and is persecuted by al-Shabaab, an Islamist militant group.

Within the countries studied, who does the persecuting? Although Western commentary regularly blames Islam, the regimes that repress Christians vary widely. Islamist regimes like Saudi Arabia and Iran certainly constitute one type of persecuting state. Communist regimes like China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, and North Korea are a second type. India, Sri Lanka, and Russia exemplify a third type, in which various forms of religious nationalism promote a fusion of state, faith, and national identity to the detriment of Christian minorities. A fourth category comprises regimes that impose a harsh secular ideology, such as the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia.

Perhaps surprisingly, democracies sometimes host and even enable violence and harsh discrimination toward Christians. India, the world's largest democracy, though it has a well-earned reputation for religious peace and healthy pluralism, has elected a Hindu nationalist government with close ties to militant groups that foment violence against the country's minority Christians and Muslims. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim democracy, has a broad tradition of religious tolerance, yet its mechanisms of democratic representation and certain sectors of its bureaucracy enable Islamist activists to repress the Christian minority as well as Ahmadiyya and other Muslims.

It is not only "Caesar" (i.e., governments) that wields the sword against Christians. Non-state actors—populations at large and organized groups, including violent religious extremists and terrorist groups—are often responsible for repression, too. The Taliban in Afghanistan, Hindu extremist groups in India, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya are examples of organizations that are distinct from the state yet deny the state its characteristic monopoly on the use of violence.

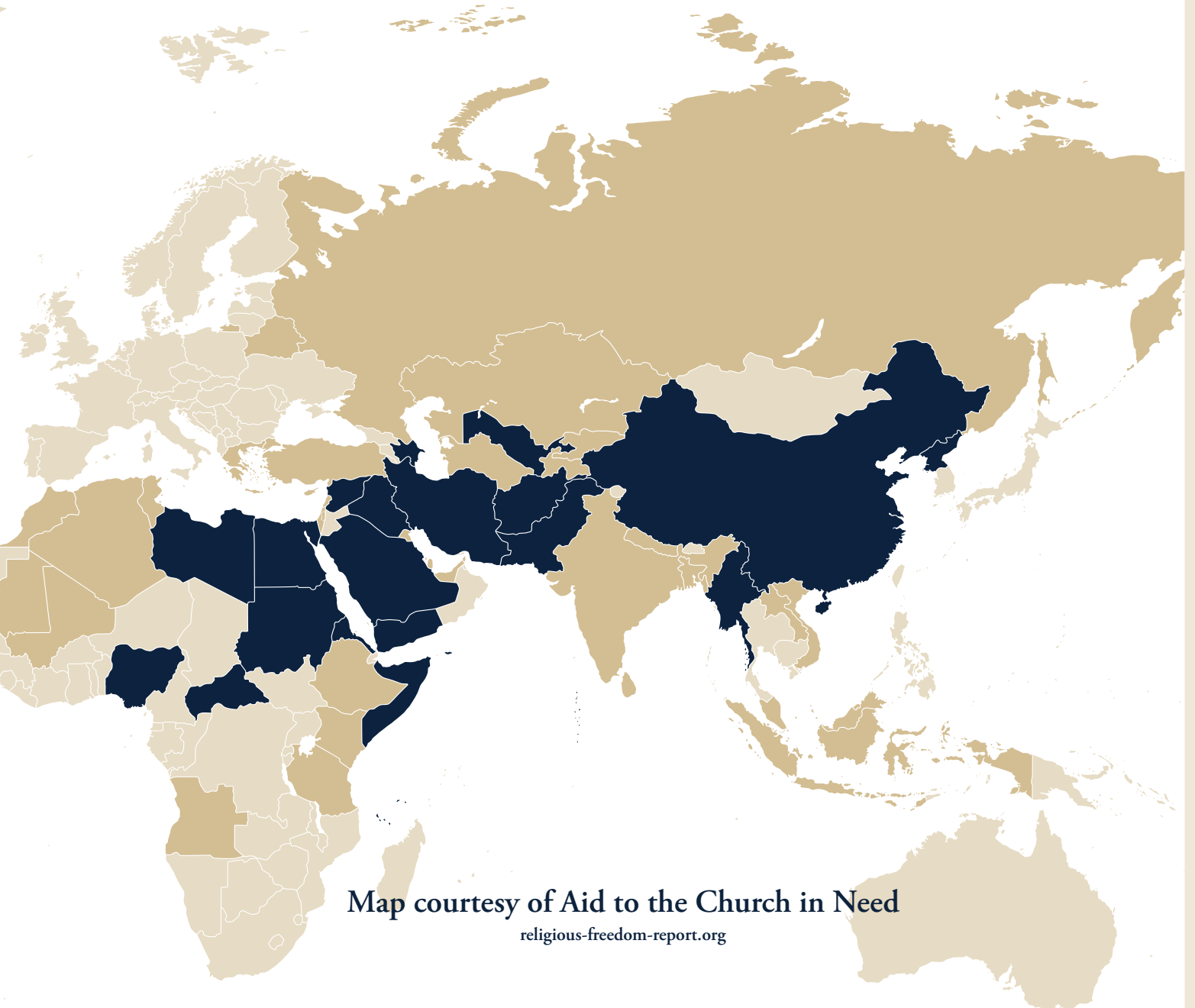
Frequently, Caesar and these "little Caesars" reinforce each other in inflicting persecution. Majority populations intolerant toward minorities buttress the authority of repressive regimes. Reciprocally, regimes that espouse intolerant ideologies provide legitimacy for, tacitly encourage, and sometimes overtly empower extralegal groups that carry out persecution. When a regime's ideology corresponds to popular culture and attitudes, government and society form a powerful united front against minorities. The Taliban, for instance, springing from the dominant culture of North Pakistan and Afghanistan, is strengthened by the laws of both countries, and is thus a formidable repressor of Afghanistan's tiny Christian minority. By contrast, when a regime's ideology is imposed by a dominant elite and does not resonate with the people, then government may carry out repression on its own. In some cases, violent extremist groups actually become Caesar when they form their own governing regime, as did the Islamic State when it came to control and govern vast territory in Iraq and Syria beginning in 2014.

A vivid example of the interplay between state and society comes from Egypt, from June 30, 2012, to July 3, 2013. During that period, the Muslim Brotherhood was in power under President Mohammed Morsi. Although the Brotherhood did not call overtly for the persecution of Egypt's Coptic Christian minority, which accounts for 5 to 10 percent of the population, it sought to establish a far more conservative form of Sharia law that deepened the Copts' vulnerability. Previously, under President Hosni Mubarak, who ruled from 1981 until the Arab Uprisings overthrew him in early 2011, Copts had lived a second-class status but received some government protection. Feeling empowered by Morsi, a group of Egyptian Islamic scholars signed a common letter in August 2012 in which they called for the killing of Christians, citing Quran 9:29: "Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day." Hours after Islamists distributed the letter, Muslims began killing Christians in Asyut in Upper Egypt.

Not only is persecution perpetrated by a variety of regimes and actors, it is also manifested in varying degrees of severity. Two organizations dedicated to the cause of persecuted Christians, Aid to the Church in Need and Open Doors, have developed indices for this severity, which are reported in the table on pages 16–17.

Countries with High and Medium Religious Persecution

■ High persecution ■ Medium persecution



Map courtesy of Aid to the Church in Need
religious-freedom-report.org

Varieties of Christian Responses to Persecution

One of the most important fruits of the *Under Caesar's Sword* research is a categorization of Christian responses to persecution. These responses fall into three types, ranging from reactive to proactive: *survival*, *association*, and *confrontation*. A word of caution is in order here: “Reactive” and “proactive” imply no moral judgment of how Christians respond to excruciatingly difficult circumstances. Sometimes a strategy of survival is nothing short of heroic, such as continuing to worship and gather in community in a war zone. These categories of response to persecution, which are not mutually exclusive, are offered for understanding what Christians do—and what they might do—when they are under fire.



Varieties of Christian Responses to Persecution

Survival

Responses of survival are strategies whereby Christians aim to preserve the life and the most characteristic activities of their communities, including worship, education, community life, and sometimes evangelization. One response is simply to carry out these characteristic Christian activities against the wish of persecutors and in secret. This response is dangerous and precarious under regimes like those in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and China. In some cases, Christian communities adopt strategies of cultural adaptation, such as speaking in a language acceptable to the regime, showing patriotism outside the walls of the church, or even hiding their faith through deception or feigning conversion to a

non-Christian religion. Small Christian communities in Iran, for instance, speak a different language outside their churches, and Protestant churches in Russia regularly put their patriotism on display. In other cases, Christian communities forge tactical alliances with a dominant religious community, accommodate the authority of the state by scaling back their activities, or develop a cooperation of common purpose with regimes and groups that engage in persecution. Finally, one of the starkest and simplest survival strategies is to flee, either elsewhere within the same country or outside their state's borders, as Christians often do in settings of war and rampant violence, such as contemporary Iraq, Syria, Libya, and northern Nigeria.

Association

Strategies of association are a step more proactive. They aim beyond simple survival and include building relationships, bridges, and partnerships. Such practices manifest the community's faith and build resilience in the face of persecution. Strategies include engaging in interreligious dialogue, cooperating with other Christian communities, and forging coalitions and partnerships inside countries. Catholic and Protestant Christian communities in northern Nigeria, for instance, have formed ecumenical partnerships as well as close ties with mainstream Islamic leaders in the face of the rampant violence carried out by Boko Haram. Christian communities also forge ties with actors outside their country, including members of their

own church, advocacy groups, or foreign governments. Another associational response is to provide social services, not only as a way to live out the faith but also as a way to gain credibility and build bridges with hostile actors. When Protestant churches in Russia carry out a ministry to alcoholics, for instance, they gain the favor of local governments. In obedience to the commandments of Scripture, Christians in some settings of persecution have practiced forgiveness as a way of inviting their enemies to peace. Pakistan's Paul Bhatti, for instance, forgave the militants who killed his brother Shahbaz for the latter's work on behalf of religious minorities while he served as Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs.

Confrontation

Finally, strategies of confrontation are those in which Christians openly challenge the persecuting government or non-state actors. This can involve the acceptance of imprisonment or martyrdom as a mode of witness. Shahbaz Bhatti was nearly certain that he would face assassination for his work on behalf of minorities, and indeed, he accepted death as a Christian witness. In rare cases,

Christians take up arms against a government or rival social groups. More commonly, Christians document human rights abuses in order to elicit assistance from a court system or a human rights advocacy organization, domestic or foreign. Sometimes they engage in nonviolent protest against a hostile government, societal groups, or both.

Varieties of Christian Responses to Persecution

Countries	Aid to the Church in Need Rating (2014)	Open Doors World Watch List Severity Score (2015)	Continuing characteristic Christian activities	Fleeing	Cultural adaptation	Deception/ feigning conversion	Allying with a dominant religious group	Accommodation of authorities	Making common cause with authorities	Strategies of Survival Totals
Iraq	High	90	•	•		•	•			4
Afghanistan	High	88	•		•	•				3
Syria	High	87	•	•	•		•	•	•	6
Pakistan	High	87	•			•				2
Sudan	High	84	•	•		•				3
Iran	High	83	•	•	•	•		•		5
Libya	High	79	•	•		•				3
Nigeria	High	78	•	•			•			3
Saudi Arabia	High	76	•	•		•				4
Uzbekistan	High	70	•	•		•	•	•	•	6
Egypt	High	64	•	•	•		•			4
Gaza	High	62	•	•	•	•	•			6
China	High	57	•		•		•	•		4
Kenya	Medium	68	•	•		•	•			4
India	Medium	68	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	7
Turkmenistan	Medium	66	•				•	•		3
Vietnam	Medium	66	•	•		•	•			4
Tajikistan	Medium	58	•				•	•		3
Laos	Medium	58	•	•		•	•	•		5
Kazakhstan	Medium	55	•				•	•		3
Indonesia	Medium	55	•		•	•				3
Turkey	Medium	55	•	•	•		•			4
Sri Lanka	Medium	n/a	•		•	•				4
Kyrgyzstan	Medium	n/a	•				•	•		3
Russia	Medium	n/a	•		•		•	•		4
The West	n/a	n/a	•		•					2
Totals	n/a	n/a	26	15	12	13	10	17	9	102

Survival

	Countries	Interreligious cooperation	Ecumenical cooperation	Partnering with non-religious allies (domestic)	Allying with international actors	Appealing for policy change	Providing social services	Forgiveness	Strategies of Association Totals	Accepting martyrdom or imprisonment	Armed resistance	Documenting human rights abuses	Non-violent protest/open criticism of the government	Legal/judicial measures	Strategies of Confrontation Totals
IQ	•	•	•	•	•	•		6	•		•				2
AF		•				•		2	•						1
SY	•	•	•	•	•	•		6	•	•	•	•			4
PK	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	7	•			•	•		3
SD				•	•			2	•			•	•		3
IR	•			•				2							0
LY				•				1							0
NG	•	•	•	•	•		•	6	•	•					2
SA								0							0
UZ				•		•		2							0
EG					•			1			•	•			2
GZ						•		1							0
CN						•		1	•		•	•	•		4
KE	•	•	•		•		•	5		•					1
IN	•	•	•	•	•	•		6		•	•	•	•		4
TM								0							0
VN	•	•	•	•	•			5	•		•	•	•		4
TJ				•		•		2							0
LA	•	•	•	•	•			5	•		•	•	•		4
KZ	•	•		•		•		4							0
ID	•	•	•	•	•			5	•	•		•			3
TR	•	•		•	•	•	•	6	•		•		•		3
LK	•	•	•	•		•		5			•	•	•		3
KG	•	•				•		3							0
RU		•	•			•		3					•		1
We	•	•	•	•	•	•		6				•	•		2
TTL	15	16	12	17	13	15	4	92	11	5	9	11	10		46

Association
Confrontation

Responses to Persecution by Region

Understanding Christian responses to persecution requires a close look at the texture that they take on in each region where they take place.

The twenty-five countries that the researchers studied include most, though not all, of the countries where the most severe persecution takes place. North Korea, arguably the country where Christians are persecuted most severely, is inaccessible to research. Countries like Eritrea, Somalia, and Yemen, while they are also sites of severe persecution, fell outside of the project's logistical capabilities. The suffering in these countries, of course, is no less worthy of remembrance.

Middle East and North Africa

SYRIA AND IRAQ

In Iraq and Syria, Christians have been persecuted on a large scale in the context of ongoing civil war. In March 2016, the US State Department declared that Christians, as well as Yazidis and Shiites, were victims of genocide at the hands of the Islamic State.

In 1987, when Iraq took its most recent census, Christians made up about 8 percent of the population. About 70 percent of these Christians, in turn, are Catholic Chaldeans, with the rest divided among historic communities like the Armenian Orthodox and Assyrian Churches. Christians have been present on the Nineveh Plain for more than sixteen centuries, with some communities dating back to the second century AD. These communities have a long history of being attacked, including in the genocides against Armenians and Assyrians in the early twentieth century, in the quest of Saddam Hussein to assimilate Christians to an Arabic Iraqi nation between 1974 and 1989, and at the hands of Islamist militants in the wake of the Iraq War of 2003. The most recent violence has involved attacks on churches, sometimes during services. These forms of attack were continued and expanded by the Islamic State (IS), which had taken control of large swaths of western Iraq by summer 2014.

Where IS has controlled Christians, it has presented them with the choice of converting to Islam, execution, exile, or paying a poll tax known as *jizya* (much harsher than its historic antecedent, and functioning de facto as naked extortion designed to drive Christians from the region). IS has carried out mass killings, including crucifixions.

Historically, Christians in Syria have had a better existence, enjoying relative protection and middle- and upper-class status, though they have also experienced persecution during certain periods. In the 1920s, they made up some 30 percent of the country's population. In the wake of uprisings against the government of President Bashar Assad in early 2011, a civil war erupted that left Christians vulnerable. They have been harshly attacked by Islamist factions among the rebels, including both IS, which established its capital in Raqqa in 2014, and the Al-Nusra Front, which was originally an offshoot of al-Qaida. These factions have treated Syrian Christians much like they have treated Iraqi Christians.

Among Christians in Iraq, flight has been a major response. An estimated population of nearly 1.5 million Christians just prior to the U.S. invasion in 2003 dwindled to about 700,000 in 2006, and further to less than 400,000 in 2016, though these figures are uncertain and disputed. Almost no Christian has remained in IS-held territory. Most have gone to Kurdish and Shiite territory, from where they hope to return home, while others have fled to camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Still others have gone overseas. Those who have remained in the country have had to scale back their activities greatly, though they continue to worship and pray. Some have formed militias to reclaim their land, wealth, and communities—the Nineveh Plains Force, for instance—and in some cases, Christians fight IS alongside Kurds. Some engage in political advocacy at the United Nations and among Western governments for a safe haven or autonomous region on the Nineveh Plains; others document human rights abuses; others perform social services, like assisting other refugees. Cooperation among Christian communities is robust.

Christians in Syria, too, have fled *en masse* from conflict zones, some of them migrating to Damascus and western Syria, others to camps in neighboring countries, and some to Europe. Others have chosen to remain in Syria. Populations of Christians in cities like Aleppo and Homs, both scenes of intense fighting, have been decimated, and Damascus now may have the greatest concentration of Christians among Syrian cities. Since 2011, an estimated two-thirds of Christians have left Aleppo, their population plummeting from an estimated 110,000 in 2010 to 30,000 today. Nationwide, even before the war, Christians had declined to some 5 to 6 percent of the population due to emigration and lower birth rates, but they are now estimated to make up only about 3 percent of Syria's population. As in Iraq, some Christians have formed militias to protect their cities, while others perform social services, document human rights abuses, and forge cooperation among communities. One Jesuit priest, Paolo dall'Oglio, had run an interreligious monastery for thirty years and sought to carry out interreligious dialogue during the conflict, but he was exiled by the Government of Syria after he met with members of the opposition. After nearly a year outside the country, he returned to Syria but was kidnapped by IS and possibly executed, though his death is unconfirmed.



TURKEY

During the past century, Christianity in Turkey (and before Turkey was founded, the Ottoman Empire) has experienced a sharp decline. A once vibrant Christian population now finds itself on the border of extinction. When the Ottoman Empire entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers in late 1914, its Christian population (in the region that later became Turkey) numbered 4.5 million. By 1923, the year that the Republic of Turkey was founded, that number had declined to 250,000 in a population of 12.5 million. Today, Turkey's five Christian communities number 1,700–2,000 Greek Orthodox Christians; 60,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians; 15,000–30,000 Armenian Christians; about 3,500 Roman Catholics; and some 4,000 Protestants. The surrounding population is 98 percent Muslim.

The major reason for this decline is persecution, taking the form of violent repression and heavy-handed discrimination. During World War I, 1.5 million Armenian Christians were killed in genocidal violence. During the first twelve years of the Republic of Turkey (1923–1935), a regime based on an aggressive secular nationalist ideology, Christians were subject to continual repressive violence. Subsequent decades were punctuated by further episodes of violence, including a massive pogrom against the Greek Orthodox Church in Smyrna and Istanbul in 1955 that the state incited and the local population carried out, and further incidents in 1963 and 1974, both related to Turkey's conflict with Greece over Cyprus. The past decade has seen violence against Christian minorities, including the 2006 murder of a Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Andrea Santoro, at the hands of a Muslim assassin; the 2007 murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink at the hands of a Turkish nationalist; and other killings.

Strong policies of discrimination and nonviolent repression are aimed directly at diminishing Christian communities and continue through this day. The government carries them out both to further its secularist ideology and to satisfy the demands of Islamists in its population. First, Christians as well as Jews have faced comprehensive economic disenfranchisement, including laws that discriminate in employment, a property rights regime that has confiscated and expropriated their property, and a taxation regime that inflicts a heavy financial toll. Second, the government has interfered strongly in the governance of Christian communities as well as in their freedom to worship, to educate, and to build facilities. The 1971 closure of the Greek Orthodox Theological School of Halki exemplifies this impulse. Third, the government has

promoted the Islamization of Christian churches and properties. Fourth, the government has failed to act against or punish groups that carry out violence against Christians. Fifth, the regime, from the time of its founding, has implemented a system of assigning codes to members of Christian, Jewish, and Alawite minorities in order to control them. Many Christians carried hopes that the Justice and Development Party under President (formerly Prime Minister) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would advance religious freedom for Christians after this party came to power in 2002, but they have been largely disappointed.

In response to persecution, Christians have carried out strategies of all three types: survival, association, and confrontation. Turkey's semi-open system enables this multifaceted response, though Christians are still constrained by their tiny size, a hostile regime, and a hostile surrounding population.

They persist in worship, but in the face of laws and policies that make it difficult. Over the course of the past century, they have fled the country in great numbers, particularly after pogroms but also continually through this day. They seek to gain acceptance by publicly voicing favor for policies of the regime such as its bid to join the European Union, privately hoping that greater religious freedom will result. They have had to scale back their cultural activities and limit their activities mostly to worship.

Churches in Turkey have also sought to strengthen their position through strategies of association. Several of them, most actively the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, have pursued ecumenical and interreligious ties, both within the country and internationally. They seek to ally with outside advocates, including human rights groups. They make consistent appeals to the government for greater freedom, but with little result. To a small degree, they engage in providing social services. Some promote forgiveness and reconciliation, for instance the journalist Hrant Dink who was murdered in 2007.

Strategies of confrontation can also be found, though they are fewer. Dink is an example of a Christian who pursued justice knowing that his life was in danger—an acceptance of martyrdom. None of the communities engages in protest, whether nonviolent or armed. They commonly document human rights abuses and engage in legal strategies. Generally, they have seen little progress in religious freedom though they continue to press for it.

EGYPT, LIBYA, AND GAZA

In these three settings, Christians face violence at the hands of Muslim militants. Especially in Egypt and Libya, this violence has increased as a result of the “Arab Uprisings” of 2011.

Various sources estimate that Christians make up between 5 and 10 percent of Egypt’s population. These Christians, 90 percent of whom are Coptic Orthodox, have experienced violence at the hands of Muslim militant groups and discrimination at the hands of the government and the surrounding population for many decades. For instance, the government has sharply restricted the building and repair of churches. After the Arab Uprisings of early 2011, assaults on Christians increased, including killings, the destruction of churches, kidnappings, and anti-Christian rhetoric in the media. The Morsi regime enabled this violence further, both in its rhetoric and in its security policies, and failed to protect Christians. After Morsi’s fall in July 2013, his militant supporters unleashed attacks on Christians, including one episode in which they assaulted sixty-four Christian places of worship within twelve hours. Since General Sisi took power in June 2014, he has made far greater efforts to protect Christians, though violence against them has continued. He has, for instance, provided armed guards for Coptic Christians to worship, safe from Muslim Brotherhood attacks.

In Libya, Christians make up between 3 percent and 5 percent of the population and are mostly migrant workers from outside the country. While Christians generally enjoyed freedom from heavy discrimination and a decent level of liberty to worship and practice under the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, Christians’ security disappeared when this dictator fell and Libya was beset with lawlessness. Militias and tribal groups were empowered, including Muslim groups like Ansar al Shariah, al-Nusra, the Islamic State, and the Muslim Brotherhood. At their hands, Christians suffered assaults on churches, violence against clergy, abductions, and numerous other forms of violence. It was on a beach in Libya that the twenty-one Christians were beheaded.

The Christian community in Gaza dates back to the fourth century, but according to a March 2014 estimate, the community today has only about 1,300 people. That number has been decreasing due to both a low birth rate and emigration. In Gaza, an uprising in 2011 was quelled, giving rise to the influence of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Christians in Gaza are squeezed on one side by an Israeli economic blockade and on the other by Islamist vigilante groups and the Islamist government of Hamas, under which they suffer discrimination.

Christians in all three of these countries have adopted survival strategies in the face of repression. Under the Morsi regime in Egypt, tens of thousands of Copts (disproportionately wealthier ones) fled the country.

Since Morsi’s fall, President Sisi has offered protection for Copts and has received Coptic Pope Tawadros’s support in return. Copts have avoided taking up arms to defend themselves or seeking outside alliances, instead emphasizing their patriotism in order to protect their churches and their communities from attack.

As anarchy took hold in Libya, many Copts and other Christians at first tried to avoid abductions while remaining in the country, often living like fugitives. Eventually, a mass exodus ensued, with more than 200,000 Christians leaving Libya between 2011 and 2015, it is estimated.

The Christian community in Gaza, which Israel has cut off from the outside world, has sought dialogue with Muslim leaders and has stressed its support for the Palestinian cause. Christians look to schools as a base for resisting pressure to adopt Islam.

Although survival strategies dominate the region, confrontational responses can also be seen, especially in Egypt, whose Christian population is the largest in the Middle East. After 2011, Copts undertook marches and vigils to protest their maltreatment and joined in the protests that overthrew Morsi in 2013. In Egypt as in Gaza, Christian women have resisted pressure to wear the veil.



IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA

These “Islamic superpowers,” bitterly divided over Iran’s Shia and Saudi Arabia’s Sunni identities, are each theocratic states that severely repress their minority Christian communities. To offer one example, in December 2012, Iranian government forces invaded a Christian home and seized four Christians, who were sentenced to eighty lashes for the crimes of drinking communion wine and possessing a satellite antenna.

Christians in Iran number between 240,000 and 370,000 in a population of about 77 million; their ranks are growing and include members both of churches whose roots in Persia date back to the earliest days of Christianity, as well as churches that have arrived far more recently, especially evangelical and Pentecostal ones. In Saudi Arabia, the vast majority of Christians are expatriate laborers from South and East Asia; they number between 1.25 million and 3.5 million in a population of about 29 million.

The governments of both countries treat Christians as second-class citizens, allowing them to worship only behind closed doors and barring them from virtually all public expressions of their faith, most of all anything resembling proselytism. Christians live in constant danger of harassment, arrest, and harsh imprisonment. In Saudi Arabia, Christians are not allowed to build churches. In 2014 alone, Iran arrested about 500 Christians. Evangelicals, whom the regime charges with being illegally registered and with proselytism, are especially subject to

repression. The government has formally banned the use of Farsi in Christian gatherings, while permitting Assyrian or Armenian language worship services. In both countries, Christians face heavy discrimination in employment and other spheres. In both, they are harassed and attacked by paramilitary organizations that are only loosely controlled by the government.

In these conditions, Christian responses are overwhelmingly ones of survival, mostly aimed at avoiding the attention of the authorities.

They avoid criticizing the government, complaining about restrictions, expressing ill will toward their opponents, or saying anything indicating a connection with Western powers or interests, for both governments regularly depict Christianity as being a foreign, Western faith. They avoid worshipping in the languages of the dominant Muslim population—Farsi in Iran, Arabic in Saudi Arabia. Some Christians have emigrated from the country, often with the approval of the government, and relocated elsewhere. Their numbers are not known, but in 2012 Germany granted asylum to 4,384 Iranians, many of whom were Christians.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The project studied the experience of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa by examining three countries: Nigeria, Kenya, and Sudan. Christians are persecuted by extremist Islamist militant groups in northern Nigeria, where Muslims are a strong majority and where *sharia* is the law in twelve of Nigeria's thirty-six states, and in Kenya, which is 82 percent Christian and 11 percent Muslim. In Sudan, by contrast, it is primarily the government that persecutes Christians. Islamist groups Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabaab in Kenya target Christians (as well as Muslims deemed heterodox) because of their religious beliefs. Boko Haram, it is estimated, has destroyed over 200 churches, internally displaced 1.5 million people, created 200,000 refugees, inflicted 13,000 deaths, and kidnapped and made sex slaves of Christian women. It is estimated that in 2013 more Christians were killed in Nigeria as a result of religious persecution than in the rest of the world combined. Al-Shabaab has committed crimes of the same sort, though on a lesser scale.

In Sudan, particularly since the secession of South Sudan in 2011, the government has preached a religious nationalism, insisting that to be Sudanese is to be Muslim. In keeping with this ideology, the regime has persecuted Christians, at times through deadly violence, but mostly by making it difficult for Christians to worship openly, including by actually demolishing churches and by sanctioning discrimination and harassment.

Christian responses in northern Nigeria (where the violence is concentrated in that country) have mostly followed a survival approach, with most Christians fleeing areas of violence and so becoming Internally Displaced People (IDP) or refugees.

Associational responses from Christian leaders have also been common—and, in some cases, effective.

Leaders in Nigeria and Kenya have strengthened ties among churches and have worked to build bridges with Muslim community leaders, even proclaiming forgiveness publicly in order to counter the jihadist discourse.

These efforts have produced some results. For example, in several cases in both Nigeria and Sudan, Muslims have hidden Christians from other Muslim attackers.

In all three countries, Christian leaders have appealed to governments to respond to violence by militants or to allow greater freedom. Christians in Nigeria and Kenya debate the government's use of military force against militants; Christian leaders in Nigeria are widely disappointed by the government's lack of protection. In Sudan, Christian leaders have appealed to international actors and have achieved some success in securing the release of prisoners. Some activists, though, have appealed to the government of Sudan for greater religious freedom only to be punished for it.

A small number of Christians in these countries have adopted openly confrontational approaches. A group of Christians in Nigeria has taken up arms in self-defense. Christian leaders have sought to shame the governments of both Nigeria and Kenya through international media and advocacy campaigns. Christian leaders in Sudan have openly criticized the government and have suffered imprisonment as a result.

South Asia

INDIA AND SRI LANKA

In both India and Sri Lanka, small Christian minorities face persecution from surrounding religious majorities whose most ardent spokespeople claim that the country is their homeland and that Christians are a foreign presence.

India's Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), gained command of the central government in 2014, while Sri Lanka's Buddhist nationalist president, Mahinda Rajapaksha, was defeated in January 2015. Christians in both countries face legal repression at the hands of the government and violence at the hands of non-state actors.

In India, where Christians are officially estimated to account for 2.3 percent of the population, the Supreme Court has upheld anti-conversion laws that restrain Christians in some six states. Christians also suffer several hundred incidents per year of intimidation, vandalism, and physical violence at the hands of Hindu nationalist groups. The best known examples are the riots in Kandhamal, Odisha, in 2007 and 2008, in which at least fifty Christians were killed, many more suffered assaults, and an estimated 30,000 were forced into refugee camps.

The government of Sri Lanka, meanwhile, accuses Christians, who form 8 percent of the population, of promoting conversions. The government uses registration regulations to deny Christian communities the right to build churches, exposes them to vandalism and other violence, and harasses their members. Christian communities also experience destruction of their church property, desecration of religious objects, and attacks on their members. An estimated 103 such incidents took place in 2013 and another 111 in 2014.

Christian communities in both countries have enacted a wide range of all three types of responses—survival, association, and confrontation—which are made possible in part by the democratic character of both countries' regimes. Where violence has been greatest in India, especially in Odisha, Christians have migrated, mostly within India. Indian Christians have also made extensive efforts to build alliances among churches and with Hindu and Muslim religious leaders, stressing common values and collaboration to provide social services. Christians have tended to reduce the openness and assertiveness of evangelization, and they have fought for their rights through the political system by staging demonstrations and strikes, supporting opposition parties that challenge the BJP, making common cause with Muslims, who are also a minority, and supporting secular government. Amid the Kandhamal riots, Christians engaged in limited violent retaliation (though not nearly on the scale of the violence they received), destroying some 120 Hindu homes.

Sri Lankan Christians illustrate some of the more creative survival strategies, such as representing churches as community centers in order to evade permit regulations and accommodating mainstream Buddhist culture by, for instance, celebrating Buddhist holidays. Christian churches—not just Catholics, who represent 80 percent of the country's Christian population, but also evangelicals and Pentecostals—have built bridges both among themselves and with other faiths, often collaborating to provide social services, for example. Christian churches have conducted civic education campaigns among their followers and contributed to peacebuilding efforts in Sri Lanka after its civil war ended in 2009. Christian churches and organizations like the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka have also engaged in international advocacy on behalf of religious liberty in Sri Lanka.

PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

Christians in Pakistan, about 2 percent of the population, suffer heavily from discrimination, the pressure of religious conversion, and abuses connected with the country's draconian blasphemy law. Persecution comes from both regime and society. Founded in 1947, Pakistan was declared an Islamic republic in its first constitution in 1956 and saw the sharp growth of heavily Islamist laws beginning in the 1970s—a legal framework that encourages the maltreatment of Christians as well as of Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims.

In part, the maltreatment of Christians takes place through discrimination. The majority of Pakistani Christians are Protestant, hailing from Punjab, and low-caste, consigned to menial jobs in the sanitation industry and as domestic staff. A smaller community of Catholics are middle-class. Low-caste Christians suffer heavy discrimination, in which caste identity and religious membership reinforce each other; women are treated especially poorly.

Christians are also subject to forced conversions. An estimated 1,800 cases per year are reported of Christian girls who are kidnapped and forced to “convert” and “marry” their Muslim captors. Christians, like Muslims, are regularly prosecuted under Pakistan's blasphemy law, which was revised in 1991 to carry the death penalty. The case of Asia Bibi, a young Christian woman who was sentenced to death in 2010 for allegedly insulting the Prophet Muhammad, was internationally protested. While her death sentence has not yet been approved by the superior court, she remains in prison. Two government officials were assassinated for speaking out on her behalf and against the blasphemy law: Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab, and Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's first Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs.

The Christian community in Pakistan has responded actively to persecution through a wide array of strategies, enabled by a political system that features open contestation despite its many repressive laws. Among their other responses, Pakistani Christians stand out for their use of the media—to bring attention to injustices that Christians face, to strengthen their influence with political parties, to gain sympathy with Muslims, to counteract their muted

role in school textbooks and official historical narratives, and to bring international attention to their plight (a combination of associational and confrontational strategies).

Pakistani Christians have also sought to build bridges with Muslims, including through interreligious dialogue, promoting harmony in the slums, and carrying out conflict resolution (strategies of association).

The Christian Study Center in Rawalpindi, for example, assists churches in navigating their place in a Muslim state, seeks to build the nation of Pakistan based on interreligious harmony, and provides a place for uncensored debate and discussion.

On the confrontational end, Christians in Pakistan have engaged in political protest and advocacy. One strategy has been to create political organizations that lobby the government to alter its policies or to address discrimination more actively. Another is to engage more directly in protest—rallies and marches—against injustices like kidnappings and false accusations under the blasphemy law. Especially creative has been “architectural protest,” such as the building of a cross 140 feet tall in Karachi.

Whereas the constitution of Pakistan guarantees religious freedom while restricting it in practice, the constitution of Afghanistan does not allow it, and the government imposes a harsh form of *sharia*. Christians are largely driven behind closed doors, facing great danger in expressing their faith in any kind of public way. Though there has been no census since before 2001, it is estimated that there are 500 to 8,000 Christians in the country—a tiny community, all of whom are converts. Conversion carries the sentence of death.

The major responses to persecution in Afghanistan are concealing identity and migration, both survivalist strategies. Some have continued evangelization at an individual or local level, at the risk of their lives. Among those who have emigrated, many have fled to India; there is a growing number of Afghan churches in New Delhi.



INDONESIA

Muslims constitute 87.2 percent of Indonesia's population, while Christians make up almost 9.9 percent (7 percent Protestant and 2.9 percent Catholic). Christians face violence at the hands of Muslim militant groups, who are emboldened by laws and certain sectors of government, despite the fact that Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim democracy and has a robust tradition of interreligious harmony. Upon achieving independence in 1945, Indonesia passed a constitution that established a national philosophy of *Pancasila*, which permitted five religions, including Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism, and which was amended in 2000 to allow for six religions. Under this structure, Christians have prospered, tripling their share of the national population and becoming disproportionately represented in the middle class as well as in business, the arts, and other sectors. The two largest Islamic political and social movements, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, are strong upholders of *Pancasila*, democracy, and a society-wide level of tolerance and religious freedom. After democracy protests in 1998 led to the fall of Suharto, Indonesia's dictator of three decades, the first elected president was Abdurrahman Wahid, a blind cleric who espoused a strong policy of religious freedom and tolerance.

Still, Christians have faced violence and other denials of religious freedom, as have Muslims deemed "deviationist," especially Shia and Ahmadiis. The groundwork for this repression was laid in a 1965 blasphemy law, a 1969 regulation controlling the building of houses of worship, and the establishment of the semi-governmental Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) in 1975, which issues *fatwas*, many of an Islamist bent, regarding marriage, education, and other matters.

Persecution increased most dramatically in the years following Suharto. Radical Islamist movements have grown in number and aggressiveness, destroying hundreds of churches, promoting discrimination, and killing Christians in the midst of communal violence, especially between 1999 and 2003. For example, one night in September 2008, an Indonesian pastor was sitting in his home in Aceh when a group of Islamists crashed through his door. They dragged the pastor out of his house and

demanded that he convert to Islam. When he refused, they cut off his finger. He still refused, so they chopped off his hand. When he refused again, they cut off his arms, and when he refused again they sawed off his legs, ending by chopping off his head. The pastor's wife met the same fate. This societal violence has been encouraged by certain sectors of the state, especially through the president's own encouragement of the MUI's *fatwas*, the informal connivance of governmental officials with violence, the inconsistent enforcement of laws, the passage of a law in 2003 requiring religious schools to teach faiths other than their own and contrary to their will, and scores of bylaws instituting *sharia* at the local level.

The dominant Christian responses to these developments have been ones of association, building alliances with the majority of Muslims who are dedicated to preserving *Pancasila*.

For instance, after a series of attacks on churches in East Java around 2000, Christian leaders sought help among members of the NU, which placed Muslim security guards around churches, a collaboration that continues through 2016. At times, especially during the violence of 1999–2003, Christians have formed militias to defend themselves, a response that was more common among local Protestant churches but less common among Protestant and Catholic national leaders who were more apt to pursue peace-building through interreligious ties. In other cases, Christian leaders have engaged in political opposition, as when they spoke out against the 2003 education legislation at the time it was first proposed. In this case, Christians sought common ground with Hindus, Buddhists, and progressive Muslims in NU and Muhammadiyah. Christians sometimes engage in demonstrations—for instance, over the refusal to grant permits to construct churches. These largely associational responses are characteristic of a Christian minority that experiences repression in a democratic setting.

Communist East Asia

CHINA

The People's Republic of China is experiencing both a sharp growth in Christianity and a spike in the persecution of Christians. Since the Communist Revolution in 1949, the government of China has sought the demise of Christianity and, indeed, of all religions. In the 1950s, it required all Protestant churches to be governed by the official Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and all Catholic churches by the official Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA), which was barred from having ties to the Vatican. Since that time, some Chinese Christians have belonged to the "official" churches approved by these bodies, while others have belonged to underground "house" churches, and still others have skirted the line or oscillated between these statuses. During the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1979), the Communist regime undertook a plan to eradicate Christianity, but Christian churches held firm, with Catholics remaining at three million and Protestants growing from one million to three million during this period. Since 1979, the government has tolerated Christianity but has also restricted it and inflicted setbacks and spikes of persecution. Estimates of numbers of Christians in China vary considerably, but one 2010 estimate held that some 5.5 million Catholics and 23 million Protestants populated China's official churches, while underground churches accounted for some 11 million Catholics and between 46 and 69 million Protestants.

The persecution of Christians in China takes place in three broad forms, mostly at the hands of the government. The first form is ideological eradication, which takes place through mandatory indoctrination in atheism in all schools, from the elementary level through university education, and in extracurricular youth organizations. The party also transmits atheist propaganda through the mass media and prohibits religions from utilizing public media.

A second form of persecution is political repression. Religious leaders are prohibited from joining the Communist Party and thus from holding government positions. Throughout Communist rule, the government has conducted campaigns to suppress missionaries and religious leaders, subjecting them to imprisonment, labor camps, torture, and sometimes execution. Since 1997, overt persecution has become less frequent, though the

government adopts indirect strategies, like falsely charging religious leaders with economic crimes and sex crimes. In 2015, 260 religious leaders were estimated to be in jail. In Zhejiang province, the government has destroyed more than 1,500 crosses and nearly 400 churches since 2013.

The third form of repression is economic punishment. Christians who refuse to obey government strictures may be fined, dismissed from their jobs, stripped of their property, or demoted. As a result, these believers face social isolation, defamation, or stigmatization.

Responses to persecution take several forms, too. Some Christian leaders have become active cooperators with Communist rule, either clandestinely or openly; some of these renounce their faith while others retain their faith and look upon Communism as a progressive program of justice. Several leaders of the TSPM, for instance, have been active cooperators with Communism. This response is less common, however, among younger generations of Christians.

A second strategy, which remains common today, involves the reluctant accommodation of Communist authority, in some cases after imprisonment or torture, in order to keep alive Christian ministry and evangelization. Many Christian leaders have joined the TSPM and CPA as an expression of this strategy.

Other Christians, unwilling to compromise, follow a third strategy, one of resistance, conducting underground worship, ministry, and evangelization, fully anticipating severe consequences at the hands of the state.

A moderately confrontational response is that of Christian lawyers who take up civil and human rights cases in the courts. A small number of Christians have openly criticized the government for its repression of religion.



VIETNAM AND LAOS

Vietnam and Laos have been Communist states since the mid-1970s. While their governments have moved away from Marxist-Leninist doctrine in the realm of economics, they continue to regard religion in general, and Christianity in particular, as a threat to the social order. Christians are 10 percent of Vietnam's population of 93 million, with Catholics vastly outnumbering Protestants. Christians are less than 3 percent of Laos's population of 7 million and are divided roughly equally between Protestants and Catholics.

Over the course of its rule, the government of Vietnam has campaigned to eradicate Christianity through forced recantations, imprisonment, torture, and labor camps, targeting both Catholics and Protestants, but most heavily evangelical Protestants among the Montagnard ethnic minority in the Central Highlands. Since a 2004 ordinance on religion, the government has shifted from a policy of "eradication" to one of "containment," but it continues to inflict heavy repression and harsh discrimination, including denying permits to churches and the identification cards required for a wide range of services to individuals.

Laos saw less persecution after the Communist takeover because Christian leaders fled the country, but when the Lao Evangelical Church rose again in the 1990s, the government arrested leaders, closed churches, and required Christians to sign an oath renouncing their faith or face prosecution. Since 2000, the situation has improved, but Christians still face detentions, fines, and the closing of churches.

The predominant response to the persecution of Christians in Vietnam and Laos is one of survival and endurance, accepting persecution as a central dimension of the Christian life and persisting in worship and evangelization. While the Catholic Church developed through its bishops a pattern of engaging the government, evangelical churches remained underground and separated.

Hmong evangelicals fled in response to a crackdown on house churches in the 1990s, as did evangelicals in the wake of the suppression of Montagnard uprisings in the early 2000s.

Some Christians in both countries recanted their faith under duress, though some of these later reconverted.

Shortly after the Communist takeover, some Christians in both countries fled.

Finally, Christians have undertaken various forms of advocacy and resistance. They appeal quietly to the country's constitution and laws, engage in negotiations with authorities, stage large demonstrations, publicly shame officials who have committed gross injustices, and gain support from churches and other organizations overseas. For example, in the 1980s, activists obtained access to government documents revealing plans to suppress Christianity in Vietnam. The activists then formed alliances with supporters abroad, eliciting a stream of petitions against the government from both inside and outside the country. Generally, though, advocacy and protest have borne limited results.

Russia and Central Asia

RUSSIA

Under Vladimir Putin, the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state is the closest it has been since the Tsarist period. Suffering as a result are non-Orthodox Christians, who make up less than 5 percent of the Russian population and comprise a wide range of Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Whereas persecution is not as overt as it is in China or Saudi Arabia, national, regional, and local governments in Russia nevertheless strongly curtail religious freedom. The main objective is to curb the growing numbers and vitality of evangelicals and the support from the West that some enjoy.

One unsettling form of repression is the political uncertainty that comes in the form of selective and uneven protection of Christian communities. A 1997 law made church registration difficult and clamped down on missionary activity, and a 2012 law restricted the receipt of foreign funds. Such legislation is used to prohibit and prosecute religious activities. For instance, in April 2015, a Baptist pastor in Crimea was jailed for street evangelization and released after three days. He was one among many across the country who have been harassed. Other forms of repression consist of state harassment and public vilification of certain churches. A final set of challenges

is the state's inordinate provision of financial and legal support to the Russian Orthodox Church, a pillar of national identity, which amounts to a form of discrimination against small non-Orthodox churches who lack this funding source.

Most responses of minority Christian churches to these challenges fall in the category of association. For instance, they have formed umbrella organizations to raise their voices jointly on legal and political issues, especially issues involving their religious freedom. They have also engaged heavily in social services ranging from homeless shelters to outreach to alcoholics, drug addicts, and at-risk youth, which improves their reputation in society and helps them to forge links with the larger community and local governments. Finally, these churches offer their political support for particular causes—mostly socially conservative ones, such as those concerning the family—that demonstrate their patriotism and their loyalty to President Putin's government. They are keen to demonstrate that they are not tentacles of the West, a charge commonly laid on them by nationalistic Russians. In some cases, churches take up a more survivalist response of “going underground” and meeting in secret.



CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

Christians in the five Central Asian republics—Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan—lived under severe repression during the Soviet period. They have continued to suffer curtailments of their freedom since these countries gained their independence upon the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Muslims make up more than 90 percent of these countries' populations (except for Kazakhstan, where they are about 70 percent). Meanwhile, ethnic Russians, most of whom identify as Orthodox Christians, are less than 25 percent of the population in Kazakhstan, less than 7.7 percent in Kyrgyzstan, and less than 5 percent in each of the other republics. Other Christians, including Catholics and members of numerous Protestant churches, make up between 1 and 5 percent of these populations. A major phenomenon across the region since the early 1990s has been missionary outreach by evangelicals, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons through hundreds of missionary organizations, many of which have funding sources in the West. The states' religious persecution has fallen most heavily on them, increasing in the last ten to fifteen years and achieving considerable, but not total, success in suppressing their evangelization efforts.

All of the region's regimes are secular in outlook, asserting strong control over all religions. All have become worried about the rise of Islamist groups in recent years and are fearful of Western influence. The persecution they inflict takes the form of bureaucratic strangulation reminiscent of the Soviet era.

Governments use registration requirements, laws against missionaries, and laws against the religious education of youth to suppress those churches they regard as threats, while exercising comparative leniency towards and forging

strategic alliances with the Russian Orthodox Church and mainstream Muslim leaders. Heavy discrimination also takes place against Christians at the hands of local populations in the form of exclusion from jobs, harassment, and subjection to violence.

By and large, Christians in the region have responded to persecution through strategies of survival. Responses of political engagement through association and confrontation are scattershot and isolated in comparison. Since the 1980s, many Catholics, traditional Protestants (e.g., Lutherans), and Russian Orthodox have emigrated from the region, though for reasons that are ethnic and economic as much as they are religious. Some churches have persisted in worship and missionary work underground. In most of these countries, there are churches that provide a measure of social services but are kept under close watch, while some outside religious organizations have entered the region under the rubric of promoting economic development. Local churches are reluctant to turn for help outside their country's borders, but a few have established contact with human rights groups, international media, United States embassies, and overseas legal counsel. A limited amount of dialogue takes place between churches and governments, among churches, and between churches and other faiths, but only in the comparatively less repressive nations of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

The exception to this repressive pattern is the experience of the Russian Orthodox Church. It enjoys a collaborative relationship with the governments of this region, one that helps this church to recover confiscated property dating back to the Russian colonial era, to conduct its work freely, and to obstruct competing churches. This relationship in turn enables governments to appease Russia, stem the emigration of ethnic Russians, and gain help in suppressing proselytizing Protestants, whom they view as agents of the West.

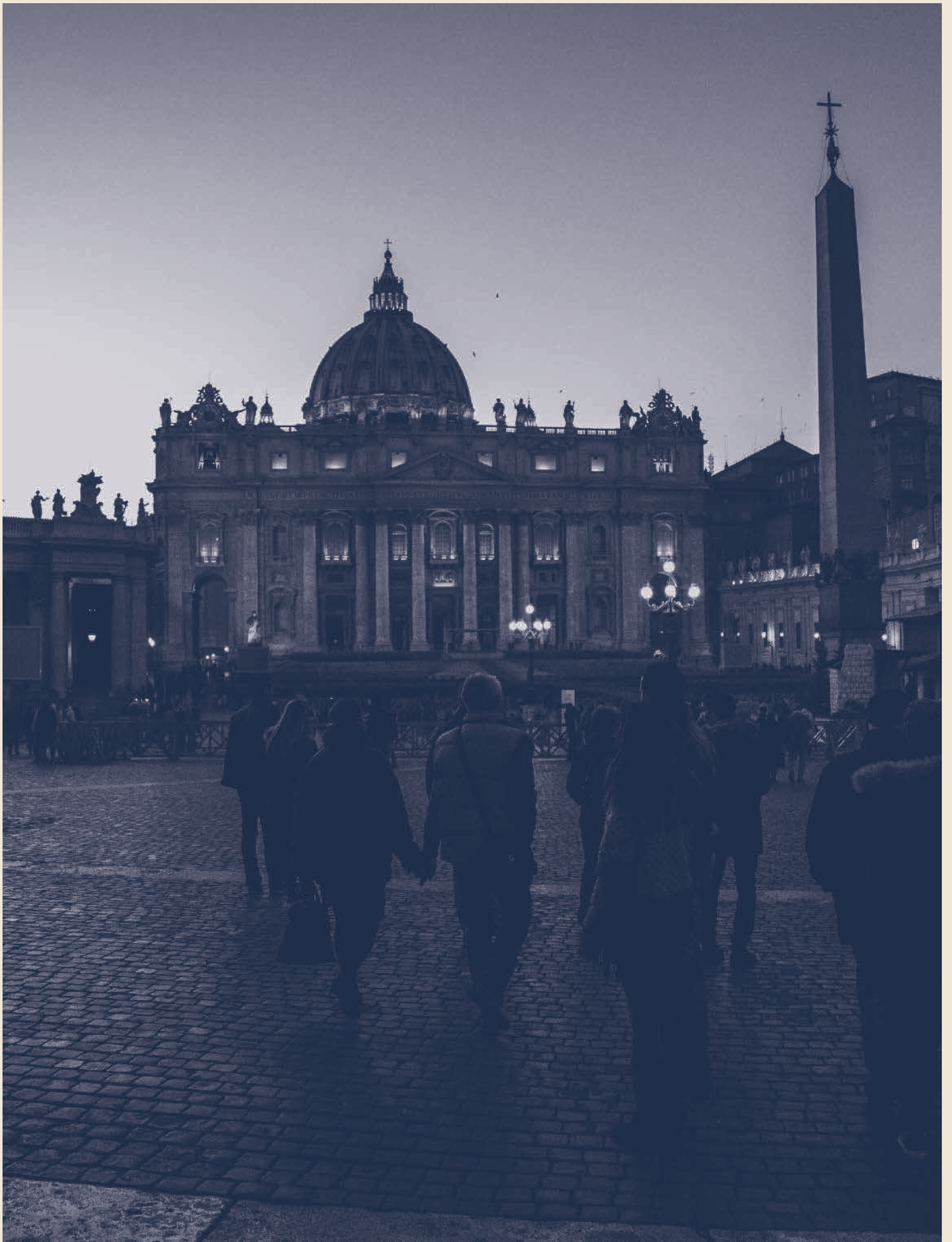
A Note on “The West”

Recently in the West, trends have developed toward the curtailment of Christians’ religious freedom, attended by intensive debates over these trends. The West is a vague category—as much a cultural as a geographic one. In this report, the designation refers to the world’s robust constitutional liberal democracies, most of them located among majority Christian populations in Western and Central Europe, the United States, Canada, most of Latin America, and Australasia. Most of these democracies rank in the highest tier of global religious freedom indices. In almost none of them do violations of religious freedom take the form of the human rights abuses that we have defined as persecution. Exceptions to these regions’ pattern of freedom are Cuba, whose Communist regime continues to restrict severely the authority and activities of Christian churches; Colombia, where hundreds of Christians have been killed in an armed conflict that has lasted for decades; and Mexico, whose laws contain persistent elements of a previous secularist state control over religion, where drug lords have killed Christians who have stood up to them, and where traditionalist Catholics have maltreated converts away from Catholicism in some parts of the country.

While Christians in the West generally do not experience severe repression, they have suffered increasingly serious curtailments of their religious freedom, particularly with

respect to their convictions about sexuality, marriage, and the sanctity of life. The Pew Research Center reports that between 2007 and 2013, governmental restrictions on religion increased in 37 out of 43 European countries, as well as in Canada and the United States, while social hostilities increased in 38 out of 43 countries.

Pope Francis has called these restrictions “polite persecution,” implying that they are similar in kind, if not in degree, to overt persecution. Such restrictions are motivated by a secular ideology and involve imposition of serious material costs on Christian believers due to their commitment to traditional Christian teachings. The costs have been borne by merchants, universities, schools, hospitals, charities, students, public officials, employees, and citizens who have been variously fired, fined, threatened with a denial of accreditation, evicted from campuses, and otherwise barred from living out their convictions. In response, Christians have engaged in those strategies of association and confrontation that are feasible in open democracies: litigation and other legal action; political advocacy and lobbying for favorable legislation and administrative law; cooperation and compromise, usually in the form of advocacy for conscience exemptions from laws; education and intellectual engagement; and efforts to shape culture.

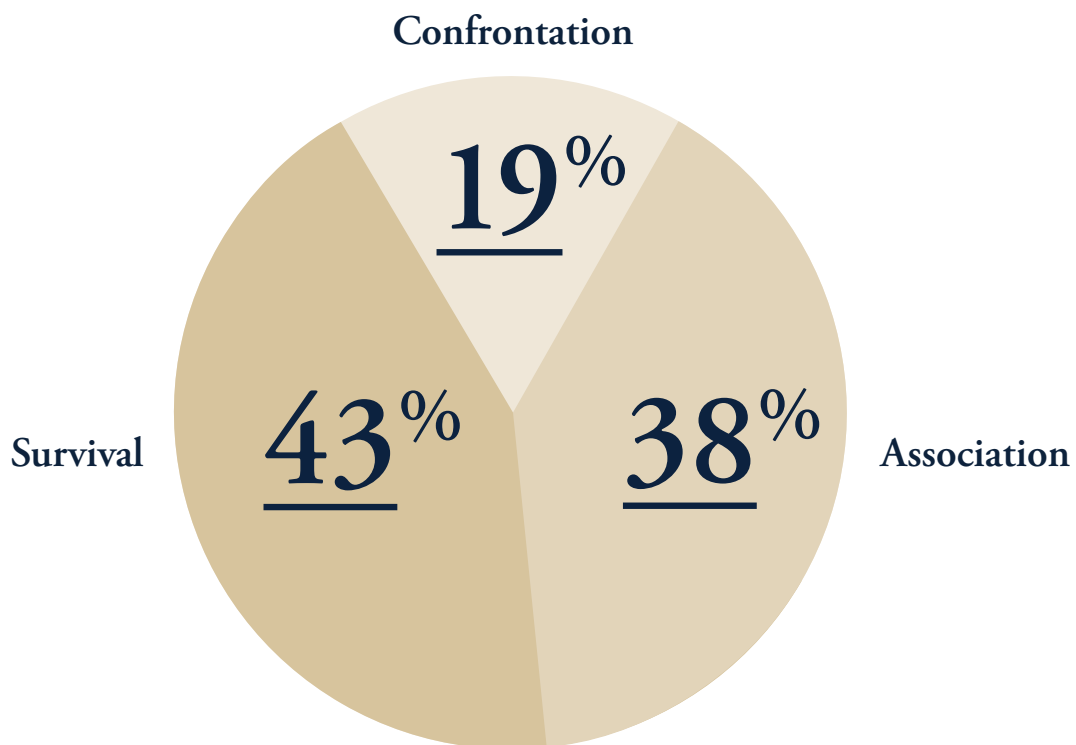


Major Findings

Major Findings

What major findings about Christian responses to persecution emerge from the study? An answer begins with the following figure, which arrays the percentage of responses found in each of the three categories: survival, association, and confrontation.

Distribution of Strategies of Response



Major Findings

FINDING ONE STRATEGIES OF SURVIVAL

Christian communities most commonly adopt survival strategies. While these strategies are defined as the least proactive form of resistance to persecution, they often involve creativity, determination, and courage. These strategies include going underground, flight, and accommodation to or support for repressive regimes.

Christians most commonly adopt survival responses in the face of persecution. They constitute 43 percent of total responses. This is hardly surprising. In the face of persecution, many Christian communities seek to ensure their survival first and foremost. Apart from this, they may believe they can do little else.

To say that survival strategies are the least proactive is to say that they involve the least degree of forceful and direct action in opposition to the persecuting party. If survival strategies are not proactive in this sense, however, it is not to be concluded that they are supine. Even if they do not challenge persecutors, they often involve creativity, courage, cunning, and deliberation.

Survival strategies merit special notice when Christians choose them reflectively amid armed conflict or severe repression. In both Iraq and Syria, some Christians decided to stay rather than flee from surrounding combat in order to preserve the presence of their communities in their homelands. Dating back to the earliest centuries of Christianity, these communities embody priceless historical memory as well as their contemporary life of faith. In Iraq, the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church, Louis Raphael Sako I, even ordered priests who had fled overseas to return to Iraq in order to be present with the Christian community there.

In several countries in our study, Christian churches have gone underground in order to survive. For instance, after the governments of Central Asia cracked down on the relatively open atmosphere of the 1990s, when Christian churches engaged in overt evangelization, many churches continued to worship, teach the Bible, and spread literature underground. From China comes the remarkable story of Protestant churches that conducted evangelization during the Cultural Revolution, when the government sought to close down all Christian churches. This bravery brought about the growth of the Christian church during this period and set the stage for the much sharper growth that took place later. Our research reveals that in Iran, China, Vietnam, and elsewhere, jailed pastors have sometimes responded by communicating their faith to their captors.

Such reactions to heavy persecution were often cultivated by an expectation of persecution and a determination to rejoice in suffering, themes well developed in Christian theology. The apostle Paul, who endured heavy persecution himself, warned churches that “everyone who wants

to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). One house church pastor in Vietnam, Dinh Thien Tu, even designed a course for Christian leaders called “What If Tomorrow?” which prepared believers for being picked up and taken to prison, as Tu had been. The course even involved having a small bag of essential items packed and ready to go.

When Christians accommodate repressive regimes, they may risk compromising the clarity of their identity and witness, yet they often approach accommodation with creative strategies. In Iran and Saudi Arabia, Christians make efforts to express loyalty to the governing regime and outrage at Western neo-colonialism. In China, Christians who choose to belong to above-ground churches are skilled at pretending politeness and sympathy toward governing authorities. In Iran, Christians often disguise their faith in public, aiming to appear little different from the surrounding Muslim culture. Such measures do not necessarily compromise their faith. The second-century *Letter to Diognetus* stresses that Christians share in the ways of their surrounding culture, even while their citizenship is in heaven. Today’s Christians pay respect to the governing authorities so that they might worship safely and authentically behind closed doors.

To be sure, strategies of survival are often far more reactive. To repeat a point from above, this is a descriptive, not a moral, judgment regarding choices made in excruciating circumstances. Though churches in Central Asia continued evangelization in the 2000s, they did scale back their efforts. Tens of thousands chose to flee from and within Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Nigeria, the State of Odisha in India, and elsewhere. Other Christians reluctantly have directed their loyalty to dictators like Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and Hosni Mubarak (and now Abdel Fattah al-Sisi) in Egypt because of the protection, however imperfect and inconsistent, these rulers have provided.

In some cases, Christians openly align themselves with a persecuting regime and its purposes. In the first few decades of the People’s Republic of China, some Christian leaders adopted great enthusiasm for the Communist experiment (in some cases out of a Social Gospel theology) and professed their loyalty to the regime. Few such leaders still exist. Likewise, the Russian Orthodox Church in Central Asia cooperates closely with secular governments in repressing small missionary churches.

FINDING TWO STRATEGIES OF ASSOCIATION

Strategies of association are the second most common response. In these cases, Christian communities seek to secure their religious freedom by developing ties with other actors, including other Christian communities, non-Christian religions, and secular figures.

Christian communities suffering persecution frequently reach beyond survival strategies and seek to secure their religious freedom by constructing networks, relationships, institutions, and new sets of practices. Strategies of association can be found at all levels of persecution, but they are most robust in “semi-open” settings, that is, environments where persecution is strong but where significant opportunities for action and expression exist, such as Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Kenya, and Indonesia. These strategies amount to 38 percent of total responses.

Isolation is among the most formidable obstacles facing persecuted churches. Persecuting regimes and militant groups aim to keep Christian communities disconnected, hidden, and obscure. It is no coincidence that North Korea, the country in which Christians are persecuted most severely, is the country in which the plight of Christians is least known.

Through strategies of association, Christians communities counteract isolation by building connections to other Christian churches, other religions, political parties, activist NGOs, and allies outside the country, including the United Nations, human rights organizations, other governments, and members of their own churches. In Russia, small non-Russian Orthodox Christian churches overcame discrimination and denials of their freedom by forming an umbrella association. In Indonesia, the most important strategy through which Christian churches have counteracted Islamist violence and intolerance has been

the strengthening of ties to segments of the Muslim population—including large Muslim organizations—that are committed to the country’s tolerant tradition of *Pancasila*. Sometimes, the ties that Christians forge generate poignant counter-messages to persecution, as when Egyptian Muslims formed protective circles around Coptic churches during worship, and Copts did the same for Muslims in early 2011, a time of heightened religious violence.

Another common strategy of association is to provide social services. Because of their mission and message, Christian communities are unusually well-equipped to address social ills through hospitals, rehabilitation programs to treat addictions, orphanages, homeless shelters, and the like. In providing these services, Christians build relations in the community and perform a function that governments value, thus fortifying their freedom.

Not to be overlooked as a strategy of association is forgiveness, which involves overcoming resentment and foregoing revenge as well as inviting the perpetrator to conversion—another form of building ties. Anticipating martyrdom, Christian de Chergé, leader of the “Tibhirine Monks” of Algeria who were martyred in 1996 during the uprising, wrote a letter to his would-be killers, forgiving them and inviting them to a future of living together in freedom. Forgiveness is among the most distinctively Christian responses to persecution, understood by its practitioners as obedient imitation of Christ.



Major Findings

FINDING THREE STRATEGIES OF CONFRONTATION

Strategies of confrontation are the least common response. They serve to bear witness to the faith, expose and end injustice, mobilize others to oppose injustice, and replace it with religious freedom.

Strategies of confrontation are the least common, making up 19 percent of all responses. They are exercised in hopes of exposing injustice, mobilizing others to oppose the injustice, and, most of all, stopping the injustice and replacing it with religious freedom.

These strategies can be found at all levels of persecution, though there is some variation according to context. In relatively open political systems, confrontation is more likely to take the form of public demonstrations, documenting human rights abuses, or seeking redress through the courts. In six cases—Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Kenya, Indonesia, and India—confrontation has taken the form of armed resistance, aimed not at the ruling regime itself but rather at militant groups against whom the regime had failed to protect Christian communities.

Strategies of confrontation are also the most dangerous and likely to incur the repression of the state. This is most true of martyrdom and imprisonment, which can form a strategy (and not simply be a fate) when Christians openly profess their faith or assert their freedom in full acceptance

and expectation of these consequences. They do so in order to bear witness. The word martyr derives from the Greek word for “witness,” and such martyrs embody the fullest expression of Christian freedom, testifying with their lives to the ultimate triumph of the God in whom they hope. Like forgiveness, martyrdom is constructive insofar as it points others to a just world. When Chinese Catholic and Protestant leaders accepted decades of imprisonment in punishment for their refusal to join the Communist government’s official church structures, and when Pakistan’s Shahbaz Bhatti stood for persecuted minorities, knowing that a form of martyrdom was their likely fate, they bore witness not only to their God but also to the dignity of all, Christians and non-Christians alike.

Still, these dramatic, high-profile instances of martyrdom are rare. To be sure, it is not rare for many Christians to be killed for their faith every year; however, it is uncommon to see the sort of martyr who gains a high profile within a country or internationally, or whose martyrdom results in serious pressure against a persecuting government.



FINDING FOUR NONVIOLENCE

Christian responses to persecution are almost always nonviolent and, with very few exceptions, do not involve acts of terrorism.

The research for this report reveals the rarity of Christian communities taking up arms against their persecutors. Given that Christian communities are often tiny minorities, they might seem to be prime candidates for deploying an all-too-common weapon of the weak: terrorism. In fact, while Christians take up violence, they usually do so in self-defense as a response to open violence by or among armed groups. Often, too, they live side by side and engage in argument with other Christians who abjure violence.

In northeastern Nigeria, for instance, where the vast majority of Boko Haram attacks have taken place, Christians debate the morality and strategic wisdom of using coercive force, with only a minority choosing to take up arms and most opting for interreligious engagement. Similar debates and responses took place among Indonesian Christians during the violence in Maluku between 1999 and 2003.

In Iraq and Syria, in the context of a large-scale civil war, some Christians formed militias to defend themselves, reclaim land and wealth, take revenge against IS, and establish an autonomous safe zone for Christians and other religious minorities. This tactic has most often been employed alongside or to supplement government protection against violent non-state actors, not in active

opposition against a standing government. In some cases, though they are rare, Christians have massacred civilians, including Muslims in Indonesia during the clashes in Maluku of 1999–2003, in retaliation against Hindus in the Kandhamal riots, and, in a case that falls outside this report, the Central African Republic.

What explains this low level of violent retaliation against persecution? One plausible answer is the predominance of the just-war doctrine among Christians today, especially Catholics and traditional Protestants—a doctrine that allows armed force exclusively in self-defense against an attack on the community and that forbids all direct, intentional killing of civilians. Christians who dissent from the just-war doctrine are mainly pacifists, who reject killing altogether. While Christians are capable of violence, even against innocents at times, their doctrine governing the use of armed force forbids violence in most contexts of persecution. Another plausible answer is that Christian tradition and spirituality contain teachings that help Christians imagine and enact alternative forms of response, restoring right relationship instead of continuing the violence.

Major Findings

FINDING FIVE INFLUENCE OF THEOLOGY

Theology—in particular, a Christian community’s theology of suffering, church, and culture—influences the response of that community.

Many factors help explain Christians’ responses to persecution: the level and kind of persecution, the size of the Christian community in proportion to the surrounding population, the cohesiveness and centralization of the community, the history of the community in the region, and the kind of leadership present in the community.

Another important factor is the community’s theological commitments with regard to evangelization, interfaith dialogue, the use of force, the purpose of the state, the meaning of culture, and the role of persecution in the Christian life. Some Christian communities see persecution as God’s will, a trial to be endured in fulfillment of Scripture, perhaps as a precursor to the end time when Christ will defeat evil directly and deliver his persecuted followers.

Others may interpret persecution not as God’s will but as an evil to be opposed and defeated by all justifiable means, even if it is also to be expected.

As mentioned in Finding 4, Christian communities also draw on doctrine to determine justifiable means of resistance, some favoring nonviolence, some allowing force. Christians also differ over the value of interreligious dialogue and over the meaning and worth of the standard linguistic, cultural, and social norms in their countries.

In many locales, Christian communities with different political theologies will, accordingly, react differently to persecution. In Nigeria, Christians facing Boko Haram differ over interreligious dialogue and the use of force. Although views do not divide perfectly, Catholics and mainline Protestants tend to favor interreligious dialogue and building ties with Muslims, while evangelicals are skeptical of such engagement and more likely to prioritize evangelization. Evangelicals are divided between those who are willing to take up arms and those who view witness and non-retaliation as the responses to which the Bible calls Christians. In Vietnam and Laos, evangelicals have espoused a doctrine of non-involvement in politics since the division of Vietnam in 1954, while Catholics are divided between those who speak out against injustices and those who refrain.



FINDING SIX

PATTERNS AMONG CHURCHES

Protestant evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are more likely to be persecuted than mainline Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, or other Christians associated with ancient churches. In response to persecution, evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are more likely to engage in strategies of survival or, on rare occasions, confrontation. They are less likely, however, to engage in strategies of association. Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, on the other hand, are more likely to respond through strategies of association.

A broad global pattern shows that evangelical and Pentecostal Protestants tend to stand in a more antagonistic relationship to regimes and societal groups who deny religious freedom than do Christians of other churches. Three reasons explain this pattern. First, in many countries, evangelicals and Pentecostals are comparatively recent arrivals and thus have not established patterns of relating to surrounding populations and governments to the same degree as churches with decades or centuries of history in a given region.

Second, evangelicals and Pentecostals are often perceived to be supported by co-religionists and allies in the West.

Third, evangelicals and Pentecostals tend to understand evangelization and conversion as verbal, urgent, and sometimes dramatic processes and, consequently, expect and are prepared to endure persecution.

For all of these reasons, governments and surrounding populations are more likely to deem them a threat.

This is a pattern, not a perfect correlation. Christians of other churches also evangelize, sometimes to a costly degree, while evangelicals and Pentecostals sometimes seek cooperative relationships with governments. A wide variety of churches advocate for justice and provide social services. The pattern fits well, though, in Russia and the Central Asian Republics, where evangelical and Pentecostal churches have conducted strong missionary activities since the end of the Cold War. It also fits well in Iran, where evangelical and Pentecostals consistently suffer the most severe forms of repression. In China, Protestants have grown fastest through evangelization over the course of the Cultural Revolution and subsequent decades. A version of this pattern is also found in Nigeria, Kenya, India, and Sri Lanka.

Major Findings

FINDING SEVEN NOT JUST PASSIVE VICTIMS

The intensity of persecution only partly explains Christians' responses.

There is no doubt that the level and type of persecution that Christian communities face do shape, enable, and constrain their responses. In the most severely repressive settings, like Iran and Saudi Arabia, there is little possibility for robust responses outside of strategies of survival. In societies riven by war, such as Iraq and Syria, survival strategies also dominate, though a few Christians have taken up arms in resistance. By contrast, in societies where more open contestation and expression may take place, yet where the heavy denial of religious freedom occurs, Christian communities have more opportunity to engage in strategies of association and certain kinds of confrontation.

Still, this interpretation has its limits, as is most apparent in circumstances where Christian communities facing the same threats act divergently. We have already seen how, in Nigeria, Christian communities facing the violence of Boko Haram differed with respect to their willingness to engage in interreligious dialogue and to take up arms. We have seen, too, the stark difference in the Central Asian Republics between the Russian Orthodox Church, which has developed close ties with governing regimes, and other

churches, which have gone underground. Over the course of Communist China's history, Christian communities have adopted approaches of enthusiastic cooperation with Communism; reluctant pragmatic accommodation of the regime in the context of official associations; and direct resistance by refusing to join official associations and showing willingness to accept imprisonment, torture, and other forms of harassment. In Indonesia, during the violence in Maluku, the Catholic Church pursued interfaith peace initiatives, while the Protestant community was divided between pursuing such initiatives and organizing self-defense units. As mentioned above, Christians in Vietnam are divided between evangelical Protestants, who shun politics, and Catholics, who are more likely to undertake political engagement.

In short, Christian communities are not simply pawns of persecutors but are driven by their characteristics, their commitments, and their theology.



While success is difficult to define, some strategies of response have produced tangible results worthy of emulation.

What strategies of response to persecution have been successful? The question is a difficult one to answer. What is success? Is it ending violations of religious freedom? By this criterion, very few strategies would count as successful. Rare, for instance, was the formidable influence of Pope John Paul II in bringing about the downfall of Communism in Poland during the 1980s. Perhaps success means that a particular episode or dimension of repression was stopped or mitigated. Or perhaps it means simply that a given strategy was carried to completion: a community managed to flee; interreligious dialogue was forged; human rights abuses were documented. Even this criterion can be complicated, though.

What about martyrdom? Is that a success? While the worldly answer is “no,” in Christian theology it merits a crown, and in places like China and Iran, it has inspired conversions and contributed to the growth of Christian churches.

The clearest examples of success are instances where a strategy of response is linked clearly to an improvement in policy or a reduction in violence. Consider these:

- Indonesian Christian leaders point to the 2014 election of Indonesia’s President Joko Widodo, a leader who strongly favors Indonesia’s multi-religious and pluralist tradition, as evidence of the success of their strategy of collaborating with Indonesia’s major Islamic movements around Indonesia’s tolerant vision

of *Pancasila*. Widodo, a Muslim, chose a Christian running mate, much to the chagrin of Islamist voices, yet achieved victory.

- Laotian pastor Reverend Khamphone Pounthapanya spent years in a prison/re-education camp where he befriended his jailers. Upon release from captivity, he became the General Secretary of the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC), a position from which he has negotiated and advocated on behalf of the LEC—sometimes achieving improved protection. This success was achieved notwithstanding evangelicals’ general reluctance to engage in political advocacy in this region.
- In Pakistan, Christians utilized newspapers to win a government mandate to refer to Christians as “Masihi,” connoting Jesus as the Messiah, rather than “Isai,” connoting disbelief in the resurrection of Christ, as well as an official recognition of Easter as a holiday. Both victories gave Pakistani Christians great encouragement.
- In the wake of a 1997 law in Russia that made registration processes for minority religions difficult, small, non-Russian Orthodox churches have formally affiliated with a national umbrella organization of churches and have often found success in registering as a result.
- In India, a branch of the All India Catholic Union in Mangalore joined hands with Muslims and secular-minded Hindus to defeat the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party in local elections in 2009, in the wake of riots carried out by Hindu extremists against Christians in the state of Karnataka.

Major Findings

General Finding

Is there a general lesson or finding that emerges from this study of Christian persecution? What should we know as we act in solidarity with persecuted Christians? To hazard one lesson, it is that Christians most often pursue the cause of their freedom through a range of pragmatic strategies that secure their life, strengthen their position by building ties with others, and sometimes critically engage governments.

By contrast, strategies of open confrontation, armed rebellion, or prophetic denunciation, though they are far more dramatic and historically memorable, are relatively rare. This is not to deny the heroism of these strategies or the success that they sometimes achieve, but only to say that they are seldom employed.

A prominent leitmotif of this report is that we should not overlook the courage, creativity, nimbleness, and theological conviction which undergird these pragmatic, often productive strategies. The benefits of these strategies may seem short-term and modest, but from the standpoint of those persecuted, the strategies reflect a kind of divine logic, one rooted not only in hope for reward and

fulfillment in the life to come but also in the conviction that should these communities remain true to their faith, there will come a day when the persecuting regime or militant group may pass away and the church spring up and branch out with vigor, as it has done so often in history before.

Current wielders and architects of Christian responses may never see this hope realized, yet sometimes they do witness moments when “hope and history rhyme,” in the phrase of poet Seamus Heaney. Something strongly analogous to this hope characterized the church of the early centuries of Christianity that lived under the Roman Empire. It found ways to persist amid persecution and suffered increasing waves of martyrdom during the third and early fourth centuries until finally the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, ended the persecution of Christians, and opened the door to Christendom.

Those who wish to act in solidarity with persecuted Christians can imitate their creative and faithful pragmatism.



Recommendations for Action

The following recommendations for action arise from the foregoing analysis. They are directed to an array of sectors, including persecuted communities, non-indigenous or multinational NGOs, external governments and multilateral institutions, outside churches and Christian communities, academics, and businesses.

Recommendations for Action

Persecuted Communities

- 1** Persecuted Christians, particularly leaders, should be encouraged to come together as equals with those facing persecution in analogous situations to develop best practices. For example, activists from several South Asian countries have united to argue and work against anti-conversion and blasphemy laws in countries in their region.
- 2** Domestic advocacy is most effective when done quietly and respectfully by Christian leaders who have nurtured relationships with local and national officials, as in Laos and Vietnam.
- 3** Christians should consider keeping local festivals, dress codes, customs, and cultural symbols where these do not conflict with their faith. Local styles of worship can also be retained so long as they are supportive of, and do not undermine, Christian beliefs and teachings.
- 4** Persecuted churches should, where possible, be a vibrant part of their society, rather than isolated islands that refuse contact with other faiths, involvement in local societal issues, or social outreach. Churches can demonstrate to the authorities by their presence and actions that they promote harmony and the common good. In doing so, they can counter false stereotypes of being “fifth columns” or agents of the West.
- 5** Persecuted churches should avoid giving unnecessary offense and bringing on “avoidable” persecution by adopting (where possible) culturally sensitive measures to avoid community tensions. For example, churches can monitor sound levels during worship, avoid staging events on other religions’ festival days, rely as much as possible on indigenous leadership, and avoid disrespectful public comments about other religions.
- 6** Persecuted churches should engage in interfaith solutions to address poverty and marginalization in areas where lack of development helps jihadi recruiters (for example, northeastern Nigeria and northeastern Kenya).
- 7** Persecuted churches ought to celebrate their holidays with other faith communities and seek to carry out common projects to promote peace and social development where consistent with their faith (as in India and Pakistan).
- 8** Where appropriate, persecuted churches should consider establishing local, on-the-ground, early-warning systems to escape imminent attacks (as in Nigeria), as well as cooperating in international early-warning systems.
- 9** Preserving the history and records of destroyed churches, seminaries, and other sacred places can prevent “memoricide.” (Such a tactic has been successful in Turkey.)
- 10** There is a need to balance short-term survival or “coping” strategies (for example, setting up decentralized churches having little contact with each other) with longer-term strategies (for example, solidarity among churches to resist persecution and to enable standing together under attack).
- 11** Christian denominations of differing types should work cooperatively and closely, both to support one another and, where appropriate and helpful, to present a united front to non-Christians.

Non-Indigenous or Multinational NGOs

- 1** Continue to advocate both for individuals and for persecuted church communities, documenting violations and rigorously verifying information.
- 2** Campaign in a spirit of solidarity, mobilizing prayer for those who are suffering, showing solidarity through visits, and writing to prisoners. Provide resources for persecuted communities, including Bibles, training for pastors and other leaders, and humanitarian relief and development assistance.
- 3** Advocacy should always be driven by the needs of the persecuted churches NGOs serve. Draft guidelines on how to “do no harm,” covering, for example, not publicizing situations that could endanger persecuted churches, unless those in harm’s way specifically request publicity and protest. Listen to persecuted churches, who know the challenges firsthand, even if their communications are not expressed in ways that NGOs find easy to assimilate or understand.
- 4** Situate advocacy for persecuted churches in the culture in which those churches live and operate, especially in public documents. For example, terms such as “freedom” will be understood very differently outside of a liberal democratic setting. Avoid using language that delegitimizes the ancient presence of Christians in the Middle East and plays into the narrative that they are a Western “fifth column.” Where caste dynamics are relevant, it is important that NGO staff understand them so as to avoid misunderstanding the underlying motivation of persecution and discrimination.
- 5** Develop local partnerships between indigenous organizations such as NGOs and persecuted churches to provide information, show solidarity with the churches, and ensure one has a mandate to act on their behalf.
- 6** Establish networks that include your organization, persecuted churches, and a broad range of global actors that serve to communicate the experiences of particular persecuted churches to the rest of the world, including other persecuted churches.
- 7** Where appropriate, encourage churches to be engaged in the civic life of the community, meeting the needs of the community and serving the common good.
- 8** Mobilize diaspora communities from countries where persecution occurs (e.g., UK citizens of Pakistani origin or American citizens of Chinese origin) to speak up for Christians in their country of origin.
- 9** When challenging persecutor governments, select an appropriate strategy ranging from “name and shame” to quiet, behind-the-scenes constructive engagement such as encouraging small steps of reform and stressing that religious freedom is in the best interest of governments.
- 10** Advocate for other religious minorities as well as for Christians—for instance, for Muslims in Sri Lanka, India, and Burma, and for Baha’is and non-Shia Muslims in Iran. This appeals to secular policymakers and makes it more difficult for persecutors to pick off minorities one by one. Christian NGOs (and Christians in general) have a biblical and theological mandate to promote religious freedom for all.
- 11** As much as possible, speak to governments and international organizations with one voice across denominations and religious communities. Ecumenical and concerted efforts to engage them are much more effective.

Recommendations for Action

- 12** Create broad-based faith and non-faith coalitions on specific issues where appropriate. Ally with human rights groups to advocate for human rights across the board in countries with a range of such violations, since an overall improvement in human rights will always benefit religious freedom. Help secular human rights NGOs to understand that a society that does not protect religious freedom is unlikely to protect other human rights.
- 13** Be prepared to use non-human rights language as well, appealing to self-interest, peace, and stability, especially when engaging with China, India, Russia, Muslim-majority nations, and other states that are suspicious of or hostile to international human rights norms.
- 14** Emphasize the broad, positive social effect of increasing religious freedom, stressing those effects with greatest salience in particular countries, such as economic growth (China), long-term democratic stability (Egypt), or decreased religious extremism and violence (Iraq).
- 15** Especially in conflict areas and failing states, promote peace-building and reconciliation initiatives to rebuild the stability needed to protect and promote religious freedom.
- 16** Help Western policymakers raise their levels of religious literacy as they try to understand a world where religion is almost always a vitally important factor. Furthermore, help Western policymakers understand the pragmatic benefits of religious freedom, that is, how religious freedom correlates closely with and contributes to key foreign policy and security concerns.
- 17** Do not limit lobbying to governments and international organizations. For example, consider lobbying international companies on religious freedom issues in countries where they operate, and encourage them to work with NGOs that promote human rights and corporate social responsibility.
- 18** In regions with religious or ethnic minorities, encourage the development of historical narratives that include the contribution of those minorities to national stories. Ensure the dissemination of these stories both in the home country, as a reminder to the authorities of the value of these religious communities, and in the West, so policymakers there can reinforce this narrative to the persecuting governments. These narratives also help to preserve memories of Christian communities that are in danger of being lost.

External Governments and Multilateral Institutions

- 1** Do not succumb to the temptation to consider advocacy for human rights and religious freedom detrimental to the pursuit of “good relations”—something that governments like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, China, Vietnam, and Laos would like Western democracies to believe. Instead, insist that human rights and “good relations” are interdependent. For instance, use human rights and religious freedom as a means to bargain for political and economic gains.
- 2** Stress the distinct importance of “religious freedom” and do not allow it to be swallowed up or watered down by broader terms like “religious engagement” in the planning, articulating, and carrying out of policy. While engagement with religious leaders and communities is valuable, what is at stake most centrally for persecuted Christians—and the societies in which they live—is religious freedom.

- 3** Consistently raise religious freedom in discussions with violator countries to ensure they understand that outside governments see both human rights and religious freedom as basic to a harmonious international order and correlated with stability and prosperity.
- 4** Be prepared to use both human rights language and appeals to self-interest (promoting peace and stability) when engaging with other states that are suspicious of or hostile to international human rights norms.
- 5** With key economic powers such as China, always include human rights and religious freedom on the agenda for discussion and avoid the temptation to sacrifice them for the sake of furthering political or economic interests.
- 6** Use approaches that are well suited to particular circumstances and to the interests of the target society. These “smart” interventions, ideally supported with a clear local mandate, are often the most effective.
- 7** Make sure the impact on local persecuted churches is addressed in foreign policy or security decisions.
- 8** Continue to put pressure on governments for better protection of religious freedom in countries such as Russia, where such pressure is widely felt among top officials.
- 9** Governments and international organizations should make religious freedom a central theme in human rights evaluations of regions.
- 10** Seize upon opportunities to build coalitions among religious minorities of different faiths who are the subjects of persecution and heavy discrimination, such as Ahmadis and other non-conformist Muslims in Indonesia, Muslims in China and India, or Jews in Europe.
- 11** Determine if there are locally available social and ethical resources that can enhance local initiatives and also make international human rights norms more culturally relevant and thus effective—for instance, building bridges in Indonesia to the many Muslims who adhere to its tradition of plurality and multi-confessional citizenship.
- 12** Provide training to ensure that officials handling relevant geographical areas and functional issues are “religiously literate” and specifically aware of how religious freedom is closely correlated with the achievement of key policy aims relating to stability, security, and prosperity.
- 13** Lobbying by international coalitions and networks (for example, of legislators or religious freedom officials) often can have a much greater impact than lobbying by individual countries, especially if Global South countries are included.
- 14** Governments can improve their credibility by “attending to their own backyard,” that is, improving religious freedom at home and acknowledging their own efforts to build religious freedom for minorities.
- 15** Governments should create conditions that will allow Christians to stay in their homelands and provide help for Christians wanting to return to their homelands, but also accord them an appropriate proportion of slots for asylum if their desire is to emigrate.
- 16** Governments should recognize that violations of religious freedom are a root cause of migrant crises, as is the case in Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Nigeria, and elsewhere, and integrate religious freedom into their advocacy on behalf of migrants.
- 17** Governments should devote greater resources to helping their own citizens among migrant workers who face harassment on account of their faith, for instance, Filipinos in countries like Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.
- 18** Governments should only participate in inter-faith and similar initiatives, such as those promoted by Gulf princes and foundations, if the issue of persecution will be addressed as well.

Outside Churches and Christian Communities

- 1** Churches need to understand their global responsibility for Christians under persecution and achieve unity across Christian communities in supporting persecuted minorities. Particular stress should be placed on building bridges connecting traditional Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches with evangelical and Pentecostal groups.
- 2** With respect to ancient Middle East churches, Christian leaders in the West should communicate to followers a theology of ecumenism that highlights the contribution of these churches to the global church and to their respective societies.
- 3** Global Christian churches should invite to interfaith fora and academic conferences both representatives of the Orthodox Church and minority denominations from countries like Russia in order to encourage voices within the Orthodox Church who support religious freedom and protection for minority denominations.
- 4** With respect to Central Asia, global Christian churches should facilitate interreligious dialogue for Protestants and Catholics with Orthodox and Muslim leaders to improve relations and break down societal discrimination against Protestants and Catholics.
- 5** Outside churches should build trust between their respective local affiliates on the ground in order to address concerns about “sheep stealing” and to facilitate solidarity with those being persecuted.
- 6** Churches should support NGOs that offer Bible study, prayer, outreach, and discipleship, including through broadcast, in order to strengthen and encourage isolated believers in closed countries such as Saudi Arabia.
- 7** Churches should support parachurch organizations such as Aid to the Church in Need, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Christian Solidarity International, Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs, and Release International that serve persecuted churches in various ways.
- 8** Supporters of persecuted Christians should raise awareness of persecution among congregations in more religiously free areas of the world, teaching these congregations about solidarity with persecuted churches and what they can learn from persecuted churches. They should encourage Christians to visit persecuted churches where possible; form links with churches on the front line; and encourage churches to help persecuted Christians in practical ways, for instance, by resettling Afghan Christians in India through financial and logistical support with assistance from church contacts in India. This should always be done in cooperation with churches or other organizations who are knowledgeable of the persecuted churches.
- 9** Churches in more religiously free regions of the world should incorporate the study of persecution into relevant seminary courses.
- 10** Churches should ensure that voices of persecuted churches are heard at church conferences nationally and internationally.
- 11** In many countries, churches can and ought to facilitate dialogue between governments and religious leaders to break down government fears of religion.
- 12** Outside churches could facilitate opportunities for churches and other religious organizations to engage with local officials to pursue charitable or social work in communities.

13 Churches who assist persecuted Christians from the outside can enhance their moral authority and credibility by acknowledging past mistakes over treatment of minorities or dissenters and calling attention to the opportunity to take an increasingly vigorous stance in support of religious freedom—for instance, the Catholic Church’s journey over many centuries toward *Dignitatis Humanae*, its 1965 declaration on religious liberty.

14 Churches should encourage interreligious efforts to promote economic development and mutually respectful relations in countries where extremist groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabaab in Kenya, recruit in impoverished or marginalized areas. Peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives should be similarly encouraged.

15 Churches should be mindful of the responsibility and dangers that come with evangelism in the Global South and, where missionaries have committed abuses, condemn these abuses in order to maintain the reputation of the indigenous churches.

16 Churches should only participate in inter-faith and similar initiatives, such as those promoted by Gulf princes and foundations, where there is a commitment to fully address the interests of persecuted churches.

17 Churches should make inter-faith alliances proactively and not just when a crisis occurs, stressing the principle of religious freedom for all and for the common good. They should also seek to draw in people beyond churches to include activists in community development, the media, and other sectors.

Media/ Journalists

1 Media outlets should work hard to provide balanced reporting of contentious issues, such as Muslim-Christian violence in Nigeria, making a concerted effort to screen out bias and to understand the views and backgrounds of the religious communities and local reporters in the area.

2 Journalists from the West should understand that religion is a vital part of people’s lives in most of the world and a key to conflict resolution, economic growth, democracy promotion, and peace-building.

3 Western journalists should strive to educate themselves as much about religious factors as about political and economic ones. NGOs such as Lapid Media, which promotes religious literacy in journalism, can be helpful in this regard.

Recommendations for Action

Academics

- 1** Academics should conduct even-handed, objective research that documents precisely the state of religious freedom in a given country or area. Persecuted communities are helped best by clear, objective exposure of governmental and societal mistreatment of religious believers.
- 2** Academics should influence government policy institutes and think tanks to promote religious freedom globally.
- 3** Christian theologians should continue to articulate a theology of persecution and adapt it to present-day circumstances.
- 4** Academic theology should draw connections between the persecution of Christians and relevant topics in exegesis, dogmatics, ethics, church history, practical theology, and missiology.
- 5** Theologians and scholars of religion should incorporate issues raised by persecution in their research and teaching on ethics: justification for and proper application of self-defense, the theological warrant for nonviolent responses, and the right to change one's religion.
- 6** Scholars ought to continue writing new and accurate histories of persecution, honest about the Christian church's own history of inflicting persecution but also about black legends, distortions, and exaggerated histories. They ought to expose the danger of the extinction of ancient Christian traditions in parts of the Middle East.
- 7** Social scientists ought to pursue research into particular contexts of persecution as well as comparative research into the causes and conditions for persecution. Well-documented social science research into persecution increases the trust of media and politicians and is taken seriously by the secular world. Reports including the use of rankings are especially effective.
- 8** The academic fields of jurisprudence, political science, international relations, and peace studies ought to include religious freedom issues in their research.



Businesses

- 1** Businesses ought to familiarize key staff with international standards on religious freedom and non-discrimination, such as those found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, and the International Labor Organization.
- 2** When framing company policies regarding the promotion of human rights, companies ought to recognize the importance of religious freedom as part of an overall commitment to promoting human rights.
- 3** Companies ought to become familiar with the correlations between religious freedom and economic and business prosperity, as highlighted by the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.
- 4** Company leaders should educate themselves and their employees about the religious freedom situation in any country in which they operate or plan to operate, regularly review it, and consider what they can do to improve the situation.
- 5** Companies should publicly condemn any religious freedom violations, especially when they affect staff. Leaders ought to respect the religious freedom of employees and those with whom they do business. They should train managers and staff on how to apply human rights and religious freedom policies and practices. They should allow religious observance in the workplace.
- 6** Companies should require contractors and partners to observe international human rights and religious freedom standards.
- 7** Companies ought to maintain a dialogue with relevant local and national authorities and with international human rights and religious freedom NGOs.
- 8** Companies ought to review regularly whether company policies and operations comply with best practices and principles such as those enshrined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN Global Compact.



About *Under
Caesar's Sword*

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Under *Caesar's Sword: Christian Response to Persecution* is a collaborative global research project that investigates how Christians respond when their religious freedom is severely violated. The project began in September 2014 with the support of a grant of \$1.1 million from The Templeton Religion Trust. It is a partnership of the University of Notre Dame's Center for Ethics and Culture, the Religious Freedom Institute, and Georgetown University's Religious Freedom Research Project.

The project involves a team of leading scholars of global Christianity who conducted first-hand research on Christian responses to persecution in some twenty-five countries. Through multiple channels, the project seeks to disseminate the findings of this research in order to raise awareness of Christian responses to persecution and to promote solidarity with those who are persecuted. On December 10–12, 2015, in Rome, the project hosted *Under Caesar's Sword: An International Conference on Christian Response to Persecution*, at which the scholars presented their findings. On November 1, 2016, the project released a documentary film, also titled *Under Caesar's Sword*. The project also has produced an interactive website on Christian responses to persecution. The present public report was released in spring 2017 and launched at a public symposium in Washington, D.C., on April 20, 2017. The project will also produce curricula for schools, churches, and other educational forums, including an online course, as well as a volume of essays by the team of scholars. All of these initiatives, including an online version of this report, can be explored or accessed at the project's website, ucs.nd.edu.

The scholars whose findings were used in compiling this report, with the countries that they studied, include:

Chad Bauman, Associate Professor of Religion,
Butler University (India and Sri Lanka)

Kathleen Collins, Associate Professor of Political Science,
University of Minnesota (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan,
Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan)

Maryann Cusimano Love, Associate Professor of
International Relations, Catholic University of America
(transnational networks)

Jekatyerina Dunajeva, Lecturer, Eotvos Lorand University,
Budapest, Hungary (Russia)

Paul Freston, Professor of Religion and Culture,
Wilfrid Laurier University (Latin America)

Robert Hefner, Professor of Anthropology,
Boston University (Indonesia)

Kent R. Hill, Executive Director, Religious Freedom
Institute (Iraq and Syria)

Karrie Koesel, Associate Professor of Political Science,
University of Notre Dame (Russia)

Joshua Landis, Associate Professor of International
Studies, University of Oklahoma (Iraq and Syria)

Paul Marshall, Senior Fellow, Center for Religious
Freedom, Hudson Institute (Western Europe and
North America)

James Ponniah, Assistant Professor, Department of
Christian Studies, University of Madras (India and
Sri Lanka)

Elizabeth Prodromou, Visiting Associate Professor of
Conflict Resolution at the Fletcher School of Law and
Diplomacy at Tufts University (Turkey)

Reginald Reimer, World Evangelical Alliance
(Vietnam and Laos)

Sara Singha, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Georgetown
University (Pakistan and Afghanistan)

Mariz Tadros, Fellow, Institute for Development Studies,
University of Sussex (Egypt, Libya, and Gaza)

Christian Van Gorder, Associate Professor of Religion,
Baylor University (Iran and Saudi Arabia)

Fenggang Yang, Professor of Sociology, Purdue University
(China)

About the Report

The project's scholars carried out their research through primary, qualitative research, including interviews with members of persecuted Christian communities. Citations of figures and other information meriting attribution found in this report can be located in a separate document posted alongside the online version of this report at the project's website, ucs.nd.edu.

The table that appears on pages 16–17 shows Christian responses to persecution in various countries. The calculation of the total number of each kind of response merits mention as well. The table shows which responses to persecution were undertaken by Christian communities in various countries. What it does not communicate is which Christian community adopted which response in cases of countries where separate Christian communities adopted different responses. In Central Asian countries, for instance, the Russian Orthodox Church responded quite differently to the government than did evangelical Protestant churches. A methodological difficulty is determining exactly what a Christian community is. A given church in a particular country, a local congregation or parish, a global transnational church, an underground

“house church,” a parachurch organization, or an organization like the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China could all constitute a coherent Christian community. Even within, say, a national church (e.g., the Anglican Church in Nigeria), different local communities may act in different ways. Given all of these difficulties, the producers of the report judged that the best approach—though not without its limitations—is to adopt the country as the unit of analysis.

It is also the case that the percentages derived for each category of response—43 percent for survival, 38 percent for association, and 19 percent for confrontation—do not control for the varying number of different kinds of responses in each category, namely 7, 7, and 5. The percentages may therefore seem to be inequivalent measurements. Weighting the total number of responses in each category according to the number of different kinds of responses in each category, the percentages come out to 41 percent for survival, 35 percent for association, and 24 percent for confrontation. Substantively, the result differs little.

This report was compiled under the leadership of the primary partners in the *Under Caesar's Sword* project:

Daniel Philpott, Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame

Thomas F. Farr, President, The Religious Freedom Institute; Director, Religious Freedom Research Project, The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs; and Associate Professor of the Practice of Religion and International Affairs, Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

Timothy Samuel Shah, Senior Advisor and Director, South and Southeast Asia Action Team, Religious Freedom Institute; and Associate Director, Religious Freedom Research Project, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University

Aid to the Church in Need closely collaborated in editing, producing, and distributing this report, in addition to giving permission for the reproduction of its map of global persecution. Daniel Philpott was the principal drafter of the report. David Taylor and Sean Oliver-Dee contributed to drafting the report, especially the policy recommendations. Providing close editing were Thomas Farr; Timothy Samuel Shah; Kent R. Hill, Executive Director, Religious Freedom Institute; Jeremy Barker, Operations Manager, Religious Freedom Institute; Joop Koopman, Director of Communication, Aid to the Church in Need; Kristi Haas, Program Manager, *Under Caesar's Sword*; Margaret Cabaniss, Scholarly Research and Publications Program Manager, Center for Ethics and Culture, University of Notre Dame; and Britta Eastburg Friesen. Kristi Haas oversaw the production of the entire report. Critical also for producing the report was the sponsorship of the *Under Caesar's Sword* project by the Center for Ethics and Culture at the University of Notre Dame, under the directorship of O. Carter Snead. Chris Stewart, Vice President, Grant Programs, at Templeton Religion Trust, has supported the project with constancy and commitment. The country rankings provided by Open Doors listed in the table on pages 16–17 can be found at <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>.





UNDER CAESAR'S SWORD:
CHRISTIAN RESPONSE *to* PERSECUTION



in collaboration with

