

Four Examples of Violence and Persecution Against Christians Around the World

India – Anti-Conversion Laws and Escalating Pressure on Christian Communities

Anti-conversion laws, now in force in 12 Indian states, are officially framed as safeguards against forced or fraudulent conversions. However, critics argue that vague terms such as “force,” “fraud,” and “allurement” have facilitated their use against Christians, particularly those involved in humanitarian or educational activities.

In **February 2025**, Catholic nun Sr. Sheela Savari Muthu and three colleagues were detained in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, after hosting a health and hygiene awareness camp for children of domestic workers. Although the event had prior permission and no evidence of coercion was presented, accusations from a Hindu nationalist group led to their arrest. Authorities later demolished the building housing Sr. Muthu’s office before a court decision could be rendered.

A similar pattern was reported in Uttar Pradesh, where Pastor Jose Pappachan and his wife received five-year prison sentences after being accused of attempting to convert Dalit and tribal communities through social and educational outreach activities.

Alongside legal action, vigilante violence has also been documented. In **June 2025**, Pastor Gokhariya Solanky and several Dalit Christians in Madhya Pradesh were publicly humiliated and assaulted by a mob, underscoring growing concerns about impunity for attacks on religious minorities.

The country is one of 24 classified under the category of persecution in Aid to the Church in Need’s *Religious Freedom in the World Report 2025*.

Eritrea — Authoritarian Rule and Systematic Repression of Religious Freedom

Eritrea remains one of the world's most restrictive environments for religious freedom, where an authoritarian regime tightly controls religious life and effectively criminalized any unauthorized religious practice. Although the constitution formally guarantees freedom of religion, the government recognizes only four groups — Sunni Islam, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church — leaving other Christian denominations and unregistered communities vulnerable to arbitrary arrest, torture, and prolonged detention.

Aid to the Church in Need's *Religious Freedom Report 2025* places Eritrea among the 24 countries in the category of persecution. Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims—including minors and religious leaders—are reportedly held without due process in overcrowded, inhumane facilities, often for years. The long imprisonment of Jehovah's Witness Negede Teklemariam, who spent 26 years behind bars for his faith, underscores the severity of this repression. Religious gatherings are banned, and Eritrea remains designated by the U.S. government as a Country of Particular Concern.

Government pressure also extends to recognized churches. In 2019, authorities forcibly closed 21 Catholic hospitals and medical facilities, reflecting broader efforts to limit independent religious influence and silence criticism of state policies.

Recent verified information remains limited due to restrictions on journalists, international organizations, and independent monitoring.

Mexico – Criminal Violence and Insecurity Affecting Religious Communities

In Mexico, violations affecting religious communities are rarely state-driven; instead, they are closely linked to organized crime. The *Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM)* documents persistent violence against priests, religious personnel, and Catholic institutions, including killings, kidnappings, threats, and extortion. Its *Annual Report 2025* estimates that 26-28 attacks on Catholic churches occur each week. One example: in **August 2025**, a man armed with a machete entered the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Veracruz, injuring two church workers and setting fire to religious images and the main altar.

With conditions worsening since 2023, ACN's *Religious Freedom in the World Report 2025* notes that Mexico remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a religious leader. Five of the 13 murders of religious leaders recorded in Latin America between 2023 and 2024 occurred in Mexico. The CCM highlights more recent cases (**2025**) including the killings of Fathers Bertoldo Pantaleón Estrada and Ernesto Baltazar Hernández Vilchis, as well as non-fatal attacks, such as the shooting of Father Héctor Alejandro Pérez in Tabasco and the stabbing of Father Roldán Antonio Sánchez Gamboa.

Even Bishop José de Jesús González Hernández survived an armed attack early in his ministry after gunmen mistook him for a rival drug lord. (*Religious Freedom in the World Report 2025, Case Study: Between Bullets and Blessings*).

Communities connected to parish life have also been affected. Two attacks in Guanajuato in **March and May 2025** left fifteen young people dead during religious activities, while shootings near parish grounds in Mexico City underscore the broader climate of insecurity (*CCM, 2025*). In cartel-controlled regions, this violence severely restricts the Church's ability to carry out social and humanitarian work.

Furthermore, debates over secularism continue, from the Supreme Court's 2022 review of nativity scenes in Yucatán to more recent local disputes over religious symbols in public spaces.

Mozambique – Jihadist Insurgency and the Devastation of Christian Communities

Mozambique continues to face an escalating wave of jihadist violence in the north, where Islamic State–affiliated militants have intensified attacks on Christian communities. Despite the presence of international military forces, insurgents have expanded into new districts, exploiting weak state control and the instability that followed the 2024 elections. Their assaults have included killings, kidnappings, forced displacement, and the destruction of churches and villages, often accompanied by threats of forced conversion or death.

Although the insurgency in northern Mozambique began in 2017, the brutality has deepened markedly **since 2025**. In **August** of that year, coordinated attacks displaced nearly 50,000 people across districts such as Chiúre, Palma, and Quissanga in Cabo Delgado Province. In **November**, the violence spread farther south into Nampula Province, where militants struck the district of Memba, killing at least four Christians—including one who was beheaded—and burning hundreds of homes and several chapels. According to the bishop of Nacala, entire communities fled in terror, contributing to a displacement crisis affecting more than 128,000 people.

The violence continued into **2026**. On **April 30**, in addition to destroying homes and other infrastructure and forcing captured civilians to watch and listen to hate-filled speeches, jihadist fighters destroyed the historic parish of St. Louis de Montfort in Meza. Founded in 1946, the church—an important landmark in a majority-Muslim region—was reduced to rubble, along with the parish offices and missionaries’ residence. Thankfully, the missionaries were not present during the attack, but the community was left traumatized.

Yet amid this devastation, Christian and Muslim leaders have remained steadfast in promoting peace and interreligious dialogue through initiatives such as the *Interfaith Declaration of Pemba*, resisting the manipulation and instrumentalization of religion to justify violence, and working to preserve social cohesion in one of Mozambique’s most fragile regions.