

Modern Day Persecution

Myanmar is predominantly a Buddhist country and is listed on Open Doors USA's World Watch List as one of "the top 50 countries where it's most difficult to follow Jesus." The Buddhist religion is based on doing good works and is the fourth largest religion in the world today.

Myanmar recently experienced a military coup (February 2021) that replaced a quasi-democratic government with complete military rule. Many years ago, Myanmar used to be called Burma and the national language is Burmese. Persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in Myanmar is also due to "Religious Nationalism." This means that in order to be a good citizen of Myanmar, you need to be a Buddhist. If you are not Buddhist, you may be denied social services, fined, or (especially during the COVID pandemic) you may be denied food or medical aid by the village or local leaders.

Christians are not the only religious group to face persecution in Myanmar. In 2017, Myanmar's military began operations against a religious Muslim minority group called the Rohingya. Their villages in Myanmar were burned down and many people were killed. Because of persecution by the military and Buddhist religious groups, the Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, a country that is on the border of Myanmar. Over 1 million Rohingya are living in refugee camps in Bangladesh in very poor living conditions. The Rohingya are considered an unreached people group. This creates a unique opportunity for Christians to pray for the Rohingya and show them love by providing food aid, clean water, and bringing them the Word of God.



Last year:

- » **Over 340 million Christians** lived in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination
- » **4,761 Christians** were killed for their faith
- » **4,488 churches** and other Christian buildings were attacked
- » **4,277 believers** were detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned

Everyday:

- » **13 Christians** worldwide are killed because of their faith.
- » **12 Christian Churches** or Christian buildings are attacked.
- » **12 Christians** are unjustly arrested
- » **5 Christians** are abducted.

OPTIONAL RESEARCH TOPICS

What does the U.S. Office of International Religious Freedom say about our countries' view on religious freedoms? How do they describe the current situation in Myanmar/Burma? Find their latest report at www.state.gov/international-religious-freedom-reports/.

Research Mission Network News' latest articles about recent events in Myanmar/Burma. How are Christians making a difference? Visit www.mnnonline.org.

Read through the latest World Watch List from Open Doors USA (www.opendoorsusa.org). Pick one country to research and find out why it's included on the list.

Note: See lesson plan, these may include sensitive topics.

*Source: Open Doors USA