Hall of Shame

From the “Worst of the Worst” to the “New and Noteworthy”

Even if I face death, I will follow Jesus.” Kim Eun-Jin still remembers the day, more than 20 years ago, when her father uttered those fateful words.

A leader of an underground Christian church in the world’s most hostile anti-Christian regime, Eun-Jin’s father would soon after become one of the estimated 400,000 followers of Christ believed to have given their lives for their faith since the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK – North Korea) was founded in 1948.

Eun-Jin would, many years later, escape North Korea, leaving behind tens of thousands of her fellow Christians who remain in prison camps to this day, forced to work in horrific conditions because they chose to follow Christ instead of the State.

To remember the world’s forgotten martyrs as well as the living victims of persecution, International Christian Concern (ICC) releases this Hall of Shame report that details the world’s worst persecutors and countries that are regressing in religious freedom.

This year, however, we’ve changed the format from our usual structure. Rather than using a straight 1-10 ranking of the worst countries, we’ve broken our report into three categories. The “Worst of the Worst” (North Korea, Iraq and Syria, Nigeria) looks at the most egregious state persecutors.

Our second category, “Core Countries,” contains nations that are less egregious, but are perennial abusers of religious freedom (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, India, and Egypt).

Our third and most exceptional category is “New and Noteworthy.” The persecution in these countries is not anywhere near the same level of persecution as those in the rest of the list, but events in these countries indicate declining religious freedom and are cause for alarm.

According to the latest report by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 74 percent of the world’s population lives in countries with high or very high levels of government restriction and/or social hostility towards religion. The same report estimates that Christians were harassed in 108 countries around the globe.

While this is by no means a comprehensive list, our newly introduced 2016 Hall of Shame highlights 12 of these countries, shedding light not only on those who are the “worst of the worst,” but warning of nations where religious freedom is in decline.

For more than 20 years, ICC has existed to relieve the suffering of the persecuted Church and has spent countless hours conducting research regarding the nature of the persecutor and the countries that persecute.

ICC has developed networks on the ground made up of indigenous representatives with first-hand knowledge and experience, giving breadth and depth to the reporting that you will find in this Hall of Shame.
WORST OF THE WORST COUNTRIES

- Nigeria
  - Christians in central and northern Nigeria face brutal persecution from two armed Islamic militias. Boko Haram terrorizes northern and central Nigeria while Fulani militants wipe Christian farming villages off the map in central Nigeria. Christians are murdered, their churches burned, and their daughters are abducted, raped, and forced to convert to Islam. Over 30,000 Christians were killed in the last 15 years.

- China
  - China continues to crack down on Christianity and other religious minorities at levels previously unseen since Mao’s Cultural Revolution. More than 2,000 crosses and over 400 churches have been demolished with countless believers imprisoned for merely being followers of Christ.

- Saudi Arabia
  - Saudi Arabia sees itself as one great mosque, meaning there is no room within the nation for any other religion. Christians living in Saudi Arabia are forced to practice their faith in total secrecy for fear of arrest and imprisonment or worse. The main reason Saudi Arabia is on this list is their multi-decade effort to radicalize and militarize Muslim populations around the world. Most Islamic terror movements around the world were seeded with Saudi/Gulf State money.

- North Korea
  - For 14 straight years, North Korea has remained the worst country for Christians to live in, as an estimated 40,000-70,000 Christians remain in political prison camps, experiencing similar treatment to victims of the Holocaust.

- Pakistan
  - Christians are regularly charged with blasphemy against Islam. Often used as a tool for personal retaliation or to steal land, 269 cases have been reported since 2014 alone. Christians are treated as third-class citizens, as they are abducted, raped, forcibly converted to Islam, and regularly suffer the bombing of their churches.

- India
  - Christians experience harassment, violence, and the loss of their livelihood from radical Hindus throughout the country as nearly 50 villages in central India essentially banned Christianity through social boycotts.

- Mexico
  - Although hidden from much of the world, Protestant Christians in remote, rural areas, especially in the south, experience violence as well as loss of land and livelihood. Law enforcement and the courts regularly turn a blind eye which contributes to a culture of persecution that has left thousands homeless and without income.

- Russia
  - In 2016, Russia took an about-face back towards the oppressive days of the Soviet Union. After passing new anti-extremism regulations, known as the “Yarovaya” laws, Christians across Russia can now be fined for speaking about their faith with non-believers, even in their own home or on the internet. These new laws are only the latest in a trend towards reducing religious freedom in Russia.

- Egypt
  - Christians face severe threats from Islamic radicals and are suffering through a government crackdown on human rights as well. Christians remain targets of kidnapping, church burnings, and generations of socioeconomic discrimination.

- Iraq & Syria
  - Home to a Christian genocide, war and Islamic extremism have led to an existential threat on the ancient Christian population. Christians have been specifically targeted by ISIS for total annihilation in these regions through killings and enslavement. Christian populations were around 1.5 million in 2002; today, some estimates put the population below 500,000.

CORE COUNTRIES

- Iran
- Turkey
- Turkey

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

- Iran
- Turkey
- Turkey

MAP LEGEND

Country Category | Main Source of Persecution
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WORST OF THE WORST COUNTRIES | 
FORMER MARXIST STATES | 
CORE COUNTRIES | 
RADICAL ISLAM | 
CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS FACTORS |
North Korea

North Korea's (DPRK) persecution of Christians has condemned hundreds of thousands of Christians to death over the decades. It is estimated that they currently have 30,000 to 70,000 Christians imprisoned for their faith. Christians not in captivity remain in hiding. It is estimated that they currently have 30,000 to 70,000 Christians

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Speaking of the conditions in DPRK, one former citizen said that the Christians are classified as 'hostile.'

In 1907, Pyongyang experienced one of history's greatest reviv- ers, but the government denies the existence of these prisons, satellite images and former prisoners' testimonies affirm the camps' continued use as well as the guards' inhumane treatment of prisoners.

Massive workload, starvation, extreme isolation, torture, and the casual murder of prisoners define North Korean gulags. One former child prisoner described how prisoners were forced to stone each other to death in a camp. Another prisoner reported seeing the execution of whole families in gas chambers.

"I witnessed a whole family being tested on suffocating the gas and crown. Since Christianity elevates God over the State, North Korea sees Christianity as a dangerous movement that challenges their power. There is evidence of more arrests, expanding prisons, and sentences of these prisons, satellite images and former prisoners' testimonies affirm the camps' continued use as well as the guards' inhumane treatment of prisoners.

The Kim family's communist government is the source of this per- secution. The Kims have defied themselves and will allow no other god in the land. Each successive Kim demands complete loyalty to himself. Putting anything or anyone else above the State is considered treason. Since Christianity elevates God over the State, North Korea sees Christianity as a dangerous movement that challenges their power and must be silenced. North Korea persecutes Christians using three primary tools: songbun system, civil and political police, and gulags.

Songbun is a three-tier (first – core; second – wavering; third – hos- tile) societal classification system that rewards and punishes citizens based on their ancestral and personal loyalty to the State. Dishonour in the lower categories eliminates the opportunity to achieve the highest songbun.

Those in the hostile class only make $3-$5 per month. Sadly, all Christians are classified as 'hostile.'

The State devotes massive resources to monitoring of its citizens. Speaking of the conditions in DPRK, one former citizen said that the State “was always watching what we were saying [and] doing.”

The final tool of the North Korean security apparatus is the gulags, or labor camps, loosely based on Stalin’s prison system. Gulags exact severe and effective punishments that hinder movements considered “anti-state,” like Christianity. While the government denies the existence of these prisons, satellite images and former prisoners’ testimonies affirm the camps’ continued use as well as the guards’ inhumane treatment of prisoners.

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In 1907, Pyongyang experienced one of history’s greatest revivals and was dubbed the ‘Jerusalem of the East’ as a result. With the continued influx of outside information, religious freedom may flourish again.

Iraq and Syria

On October 26, 2013, 18-year-old Ranim was murdered as ISIS invaded his hometown of Sadad, Syria. Ranim, a first-year university student and Syrian Orthodox Christian, was thrown down a well along with his grandparents, 16-year-old brother, and two other members of his family. At least 24 other Christians would be massacred by ISIS that week, and hundreds of Christian families would be used as human shields to protect ISIS fighters from counterattacks.

In August 2014, ISIS attempted to rees- tablish the Islamic caliphate based on Sharia law. They gained control of Syrian territory with roughly 10 million inhabitants. Among their more sinister acts was to begin enslav- ing Christian and Yazidi women. In 2015, ISIS published a pricing guideline for sex slaves, starting with 200,000 dinars for a woman aged 1-49/Yazidi/Christian” and end- ing with “$75,000 dinars for a woman aged 30-49/Yazidi/Christian.” ICC estimates that ISIS has taken at least 433 Syrian Christians hostage over the past several years, some- times demanding as much as $100,000 a

head for their return. On September 23, 2015, ISIS brutally executed three of these hostages to pressure the Syrian Church for payment. Today, Christianity in Iraq and Syria is on the verge of extinction as a result of atrocities by ISIS, other militant Islamic groups, and a widespread increase in radical Islamic thought.

In Iraq, the Christian population is believed to have dropped by 80 percent in just 13 years - from approximately one million in 2003 to no more than 275,000 Christians today. In Syria, Biritahi reported that the Christian population has shrunk from 1.5 million people in 2011 to approximately 500,000 people, a 66 percent reduction.

While substantial military efforts now appear to be driving ISIS out of Iraq, and per- haps eventually out of Syria, the vast majority of Christians who have fled their countries may never return. Many of those who remain fear trying to rebuild their lives anywhere with Muslim neighbors, knowing that much of the radicalization and persecution they face does not end with ISIS.

Nigeria

Although Nigeria’s population is almost equally divided between Christians and Muslims, the Christians in the North and Middle Belt regions face brutal daily persecution for their faith from the Islamic extremist groups Boko Haram and the Fulani militias.

Known for the 2014 kidnapping of almost 300 girls from Chibok, Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist group established to turn Nigeria into an Islamic caliphate. Their early attacks featured indiscriminate killing of all Nigerians who opposed an Islamic state, regardless of religious beliefs. In 2015, Boko Haram declared allegiance to ISIS, but a leadership crisis focused As would be expected, Christians are starting to arm themselves, but this is a grassroots movement without funding or coordination.

Unfortunately, there is little reason to assume that the situation will change anytime soon.

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Saudi Arabia

Across the Middle East, and even the world, there are few nations where religious freedom is as completely restricted as it is in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Only Sunni Islam may be practiced publicly and any Saudi citizen who converts to Christianity or another faith is immediately guilty of apostasy, punishable by death. Even non-Saudi Christians living in the Kingdom risk imprisonment and deportation if they attempt to meet privately to pray or read the Bible. For over a decade, the US State Department has designated Saudi Arabia as a “Country of Particular Concern” for its egregious persecution of Christians and other minorities.

Saudi Arabia is also responsible for sending 15 of the 19 hijackers of September 11, 2001 to the US, more suicide bombers to Iraq after 2003 than any other nation, and has supplied at least 2,500 fighters to ISIS, more than any other country except Tunisia. ISIS even adopted Saudi textbooks as official textbooks until they began publishing their own in 2015. These textbooks, which can be found in schools across the Muslim world, teach that the non-believer, whether Christian or Jew, is an unclean animal who can be killed on sight.

Saudi Arabia is the world’s leading exporter of oil, which is the backbone of the Kingdom’s economy. However, Saudi Arabia’s oil wealth is being increasingly offset by revenue losses from a declining economy and from a general trend towards greater acceptance of other faiths. The kingdom is facing a permanent economic downturn, which could eventually result in less funding for radical Islam and terrorism.

In India alone, between 2011 and 2013, Indian intelligence officials believe that approximately 25,000 Saudi clerics arrived in the country, bringing in over $250 million to build mosques and madrassas (boarding schools), and providing seed funding, guidance, and training to Sunni Muslim communities.

As of 2018, the Saudi government had designated at least 14,000 Sunni Muslim communities at the US State Department, visited with Saudi influence was “pernicious and universal,” an “insidious presence” in each place she visited.

Today, with new technological developments in oil extraction, Saudi Arabia may be facing a permanent economic downturn, which could eventually result in less funding for radical Islam around the world. For now, however, Saudi Arabia deserves its well-earned lead place in the core of ICC’s Hall of Shame report.

China

China frequently uses intimidation, arrest, destruction of church property, and church closures to persecute Christians. China has exercised increased persecution towards Christians in 2016. For instance, in November, 30 Chinese police officers surrounded a house church before ending the service. In 2016, the Chinese government destroyed or tore down approximately 1,200 crosses from churches in President Xi Jinping’s ongoing crackdown on the Church.

The government is the primary persecutor of Christians in China as it seeks to consolodate power over the people. China attempts to curtail Christians into their government-sanctioned and controlled denominations; the Three Self Patriotic Movement Church for Protestants and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association for Catholics which is loyal to the State rather than the Vatican.

Despite the government’s efforts to control and stifle the Church, Christianity continues to explode. Estimates show that China will have the largest Christian population of any nation by 2030. It is thought that President Xi Jinping perceives this as an existential threat to the government by and it is assumed that his multi-year program of church destruction and cross removal will continue.

Egypt

December 11, 2016, marked a heartbreaking moment for Egyptian Christians as a bomb ripped through a Cairo church during a Sunday service, killing 27 and injuring at least 47 others. ISIS claimed responsibility after the blast.

Authorities were quick to act and arrested four connected with the suicide bomber. However, this is not always the case for Christian victims when attacks are perpetrated by Muslims. Tragically, Egyptian women are regularly abducted, raped, and forcefully married and converted. Often, police either ignore or will even assist the perpetrators in these cases.

Egypt’s 10 million Christians have endured persecution for 1,400 years since Islam arrived. They are treated as second-class citizens and forced to list their religion on their national ID cards which facilitates discrimination. While Christians can change this religious ID to “Muslim,” the reverse is illegal. The government often acts as an ally and tool of the Muslim populace, enforcing persecution. For instance, they place restrictions on the building or renovation of churches, while these regulations are not imposed on the building of mosques.

Although Egypt is seen as a moderate Islamic country, the truth is that it is a very fundamentalist country which continues to oppress its Christian citizens and intentionally keeps them as a permanent underclass. Unfortunately, we don’t see this changing in the near future.

Pakistan

Christians account for 1.6 percent of Pakistan’s population, but endure intense persecution from both the Muslim-majority culture and government that severely restrict their religious expression and practice.

Pakistan’s population, but endure intense persecution. Christians are relegated to the lowest caste and considered untouchable. Menial and low-paying jobs such as street sweepers, housemaids, etc., are reserved for Christians.
The escalation of attacks on Christians in India coincides with the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the ascension of their candidate, Narendra Modi, to Prime Minister. Founded on a Hindu nationalist platform, the BJP often employs religiously divisive political strategies that incite Hindu radicals against the country’s religious minorities. Unfortunately, Modi and the BJP deny that persecution is taking place and allow the persecutors to go unpunished, implicitly approving of the anti-Christian violence.

In the first nine months of 2016, ICC recorded 272 attacks on Christians and their places of worship, indicating a dramatic escalation in intolerance and violence against Christians, ICC has dedicated many resources to documenting 272 total incidents of attacks, arrests, and violence against thousands of Christians throughout India.

During the first three quarters of 2016, ICC documented 272 total incidents of attacks, arrests, and violence against thousands of Christians throughout India.

Over the past two years, attacks on Christians have increased sharply in India. Due to this dramatic escalation in both intolerance and violence against Christians, ICC has dedicated many resources to India. Based on our breadth of cases and first-hand experience, India provides an ideal case study.

**Noteworthy Religious Minority Events in India**

1. **Dadri Mob Lynching**
   - **Location:** Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, India
   - **Date:** September 2015
   - **Description:** On September 28, 2015, Mohammad Akhlaq Saifi, a 52-year-old Muslim, and his 22-year-old son, Danish, were attacked and savagely beaten by a mob of Hindus who accused the Muslim of slaughtering a cow, an animal considered sacred by Hindus, and consuming beef. As a result, Mohammad died after being beaten to death with bricks and Danish was left with permanent brain injuries. The attack sparked international outrage against the rise of extreme Hindu nationalism and led to several protests by Muslims and other minority groups across India.

2. **Village Resolutions & Social Boycotts in Bastar**
   - **Location:** Bastar District, Chhattisgarh State, India
   - **Date:** June 2014 - Present
   - **Description:** In June 2014, more than 50 villages in the Bastar District of India’s Chhattisgarh State banned the practice of non-Hindu religions, effectively outlawing Christianity. This resolution remains in place, forcing many Christians to choose between converting to Hinduism and leaving their village.

3. **Anti-Christian Riots in Kandhamal**
   - **Location:** Kandhamal District, Odisha State, India
   - **Date:** September 2015
   - **Description:** On September 28, 2015, Mohammad Akhlaq Saifi, a 52-year-old Muslim, and his 22-year-old son, Danish, were attacked and savagely beaten by a mob of Hindus who accused the Muslim of slaughtering a cow, an animal considered sacred by Hindus, and consuming beef. As a result, Mohammad died after being beaten to death with bricks and Danish was left with permanent brain injuries. The attack sparked international outrage against the rise of extreme Hindu nationalism and led to several protests by Muslims and other minority groups across India.

4. **Village Resolutions & Social Boycotts in Tamil Nadu**
   - **Location:** Nagapattinam and surrounding villages, Tamil Nadu, India
   - **Date:** July 2015 - Present
   - **Description:** In July 2015, a social boycott was initiated against Christians in an estimated 64 villages near the town of Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu. This boycott restricts an estimated 6,000 Christian families from collecting water from village wells, talking to their Hindu neighbors, engaging in commerce, using communal fishing boats, or even burying their dead.

5. **Anti-Muslim Riots in Gujarat**
   - **Location:** Gujarat State, India
   - **Date:** February 2002
   - **Description:** Following the Godhra train burning, in which 58 Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya were killed, anti-Muslim riots broke out across India’s Gujarat State. Hindu radicals killed an estimated 780 Muslims. Prime Minister Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat State during the riots, was accused of initiating and condoning the violence that took place.

6. **Series of Church Attacks in Delhi**
   - **Location:** New Delhi, Delhi, India
   - **Date:** December 2014
   - **Description:** Starting in December 2014, five churches were attacked and desecrated in India’s capital of New Delhi. Among these churches was St. Sebastian’s Church, which was burned on December 1, 2014. The series of church attacks in Delhi sparked protests by Indian Christians calling for Prime Minister Modi to do more to protect their community and places of worship.
While there is no comparison between the life of a Christian in the US and his cousin in Mexico, the persecution against Christians who disagree with the “traditionalist” religion. Because of these provisions, government apathy, or even collusion, perpetrators operate freely without fear of consequences.

The international community has failed to hold the Mexican government accountable. However, back channel discussions between the US and Mexican governments on this issue have yielded some fruit. The Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, David Saperstein, visited Mexico to speak with activists and members of religious minorities. In September, 13 members of Congress joined ICC in writing a letter to the Mexican attorney general, calling for the prosecution of individuals guilty of religious freedom violations.

In 2016, Russia regressed in its protection of human rights by passing what are called the “Yarovaya” laws. The laws, which on the surface are designed to counter violent extremism from Islam, in fact place incredible restrictions on Christians and other religious minorities who are not part of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Yarovaya laws are just the most recent crackdown in a trend of stifling religious expression. In addition to the 2016 Yarovaya laws, a 2013 blasphemy law criminalized disrespecting or insulting religious beliefs, while a 2012 anti-extremism law made illegal any materials stating that one religion is truer than another. A 2014 “public order” law requires prior official permission to conduct prayer or worship meetings, even in privately owned spaces.

Pastor Donald Osweaarde was the first American citizen to be charged under the Yarovaya laws, which included a ban on missionary activities in settings that are not explicitly religious. Under these laws, anyone who shares their faith outside of a church could face stiff penalties. Osweaarde was arrested for holding worship in a private home and allegedly posting information about worship times on bulletin boards in nearby housing blocks. He is one of several Christian missionaries who have been fined for everything from conducting baptisms to preaching over the last few years.

In June 11, 2016, Omar Mateen, a US-based radical Muslim, attacked a gay nightclub in Orlando, killing 49 and injuring 53 more. In a call to 911, he clearly laid out his motivation. The attack was driven by his allegiance to ISIS and desire for retribution for attacks on ISIS. Incredibly, after the attack, numerous high profile media outlets blamed the attacks on what they perceive as the anti-LGBTQ atmosphere that Christians have created.

In short, Christians in the US are facing constant attacks in the media, where they are portrayed as bigoted, racist, sexist, and close-minded. The characterization in the media may be translating into direct attacks as well. The First Liberty Institute, the largest legal organization in the US dedicated exclusively to protecting religious freedom, documents such actions and reports that attacks on religion doubled between 2012 and 2015.

More importantly, Christians and all religious people are being marginalized through the law. From the case of a Christian football coach suspended for praying at this 50-yard line, to Christian business owners forced to pay a $135,000 fine for declining to bake a cake for a same-sex wedding, the number of cases directed against Christians has exploded. In 2011, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship lost their official recognition as a student organization in all of their respective chapters across 23 California public colleges. This occurred because the Christian organization required their respective leaders to uphold a doctrinal statement of Biblical principles, which allegedly conflicted with California State universities’ policies. After four years of embattled negotiations, InterVarsity regained their official recognition in June 2015.

In 2014, Eric Walsh was terminated one week after being hired by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). The basis of termination was alleged undisclosed income from price employment in California. However, the Georgia DPH knew that Walsh was a Christian preacher outside of work and went to great lengths to review and investigate the content of his sermons posted on YouTube. Georgia officials have even requested copies of Walsh’s sermons, despite prior statements that the termination had nothing to do with his religious views or affiliations.

Walsh is currently suing the Georgia DPH for wrongful termination and religious discrimination. The rise of these cases stems partly from a broad cultural shift towards secularism. The Pew Foundation found that those identifying as non-religious in the US rose by seven percent, to 23 percent of the total US adult population within just seven years (2007 to 2014). Anti-Christian entities have been able to leverage the growing secularization of society and culture to their advantage, utilizing the courts as a preferred venue to gradually marginalize and silence Christians. Using the cudgel of “equality,” secular forces in and out of the courts have worked to create a body of law built from one had precedent after another. Claims of intolerance and inequality are used to fundamentally distort the clear intent of the First Amendment.

The Founders carefully and deliberately placed religious freedom as the first liberty because it encompasses several fundamental rights including thought, speech, expression, and assembly. The First Amendment explicitly grants freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. The essential aim is to protect the right of citizens to practice religion in the public square.

Decades of accumulated poor judicial decisions and precedents have twisted the First Amendment so that the courts, in defiance of the Founders, are pushing religion out of the public square, and into the small space of private expression. In essence, the courts are deciding that you only have full religious freedom and expression in the church and your home. In the public domain, your religious views and thoughts must be restrained and controlled.

This trend is extremely worrying in the country that has long held the ideal of religious liberty. While there is no comparison between the life of a Christian in the US with persecuted believers overseas, ICC sees these worrying trends as an alarming indication of a decline in religious liberty in the United States.

In Mexico, discrimination against Christians in rural villages and small rural communities, which are not a part of government intervention. Although Mexico’s population is very religious, only five percent are evangelicals. This minority faces widespread persecution.

ICC has documented more than 150 cases of persecution against Protestant Christians in rural communities. In rural communities, minority Christians are often told that they must participate in and pay for local village festivities that they consider to be either pagan or even satanic.

This typically sets up a point of conflict between evangelicals and town leaders that ultimately results in heavy fines, imprisonment, and eviction from their communities, or in the most extreme cases, rape or murder. In January 2016, 38 evangelical Christians in the state of Chiapas were exiled from their village and their homes were destroyed.

Lucio Perez Núñez, a Mexican evangelical Christian, was imprisoned several times after publicly proclaiming his faith. Village authorities demanded that he deny his beliefs, which they claimed were contrary to their “custom” of communal faith. Núñez was told that he must leave the community or face a longer imprisonment. When he tried to return to his village to visit his family in March, he and his family were brutally attacked and he was quickly and his cousin were imprisoned. They have since been released.

Although Mexico’s constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the persecution of minority Christian communities has continued without prosecution of perpetrators. Additionally, provisions in the constitution which guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples are often used to justify persecution against Christians who disagree with the “traditionalist” religion. Because of these provisions, government apathy, or even collusion, perpetrators operate freely without fear of consequences.

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**Major Stories of 2016**

**Mexico:** 30 Protestants in Chiapas were expelled from their homes by community members and forced to watch as their property was destroyed. This incident is one of a series of hostilities targeted at Protestants in rural Mexico. Government officials chose to ignore the pleas for help from Protestant villagers.

**China:** A church leader and his wife were buried alive while trying to prevent the destruction of their church because a developer wanted control of the property. The leader escaped, but his wife suffocated to death under the rubble. One member of the demolition crew said, “Bury them alive…I will be responsible.”

**India:** Evangelical Fellowship of India issued a report showing that incidents of violent attacks on Christians increased dramatically during the first half of 2016. There were 134 reported incidents versus 167 incidents of violence in 2014 and 2015 combined. Most volatile regions remain in northern India; however, Tamil Nadu in the south contributes to the violence.

**Russia:** The first American citizen, Pastor Donald Ossewaarde, was charged under Russia’s new “anti-terror” laws for conducting missionary activity. The new law was implemented in July and targets those who evangelize in public, threatening freedom of religion. Pastor Ossewaarde joins three others who have been charged under the “anti-terror” law.

**Iraq/Syria:** As a coalition of forces advanced on Mosul, ISIS forced 200 families from a neighboring town into the city, possibly intending to use them as human shields in the forthcoming battle. It was feared that ISIS may kill another 350 families who were moved into the city from Njafia.

**North Korea:** Amnesty International reports that prison camps in North Korea continue to grow. The reports have documented severe human rights violations for up to 120,000 people being held in political prison camps. Christians comprise a large percentage of prisoners, with an estimated 30 to 70 thousand being held prisoner.

**Pakistan:** During Easter, a suicide bombing in Lahore killed at least 70 people and wounded more than 300, becoming the second deadliest attack on Christians in Pakistan’s history, following the 2013 bombing of All Saints Church. Christians have suffered much due to the Pakistani government’s unwillingness to protect them.

**United States:** The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) terminated Dr. Eric Walsh, a leading public health expert who also serves as a lay minister, due to the content of his sermons. The DPH sent workers to investigate his sermons on issues of health, homosexuality, and other topics, and subsequently retaliated.

**Saudi Arabia:** A Tunisian religious affairs minister was ousted from his governmental position after linking Saudi Arabia’s religious ideology with extremism. The government claimed that the minister’s remarks were an attack on the country’s diplomatic values. Historically, Saudi Arabia has played a behind-the-scenes role in radicalizing the global Sunni Muslim body.

**Nigeria:** Boko Haram carried out several attacks where they beheaded a village chief and his son, killed eight Christian villagers returning from church, and ambushed a convoy under military escort. Boko Haram has vowed to persecute and kill Christians because of their faith.

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Our History

Since 1995, International Christian Concern (ICC) has served as a resource for members of Congress and their staff on all issues related to religious freedom and persecution overseas. ICC was established in Washington D.C. as a non-partisan, non-profit, and non-denominational organization committed to helping all Christians suffering from persecution arising as a result of their faith.

The children of Samuel Kangethe, a villager in Malamande, Kenya, who was among many shot and left to die when al-Shabaab attacked their village. Thankfully Samuel survived the attack.

ICC’s Three A’s

ADVOCACY
Advocacy is at the core of our mission. We regularly work with members of Congress, the State Department, and the White House. We receive timely reports of persecution from our field network stationed throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Following these updates, we offer policy recommendations to the executive and legislative branches of government.

AWARENESS
A massive gap exists between the frequency and severity of worldwide persecution of Christians and the international media’s level of attention to this issue. Our organization stands in this gap by offering a number of educational resources. These include daily news posts, periodic press releases, and monthly newsletters, which can be found or requested through our website, www.persecution.org.

ASSISTANCE
Practical assistance to persecuted Christians is a crucial aspect of our work. Our financial and material gifts to suffering Christians include education, job training, microfinance, medical care, and construction projects.

International Christian Concern briefing the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on religious persecution in Mexico.
A village in the Kenyan bush visited by ICC during an investigative trip.