



Bible Access List

Where Bible access is most difficult, and Bible shortage is greatest

Democratic Republic of Congo

Bible Restrictions Rank: **52**

SOME ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **1**

Bible needs estimate is more than ten million



An Overview of Bible Access in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is home to an overwhelmingly Christian population—approximately 95% of its estimated 105 million people. Yet despite this, estimates show that only around one-third of believers have access to a Bible even if there are minimal restrictions in place. This means that millions and millions of Christians are in need of the word of God.

There are no formal legal restrictions on Bible ownership or distribution in the DRC. In fact, in much of the country, including the capital Kinshasa and central provinces, Christians enjoy freedom to gather and share Scripture. But this access is not universal.

In the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, where armed Islamist groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) operate, accessing, printing, owning or storing even a personal Bible can be dangerous. Christians in these regions are routinely targeted, with reports of homes and churches being burned, believers abducted or killed, and Bibles destroyed during violent raids. Some attacks are so brutal that churches are forced to close altogether. These high-risk zones, though representing a minority of the landmass, impact millions, particularly in rural and conflict-prone areas. Believers in these areas must often practice their faith in secret. Even storing a Bible at home invites risk of persecution.

Beyond security threats, systemic poverty creates another major barrier. More than half the population lives under extreme poverty. With basic needs like food, water, and safety taking priority, many families simply cannot afford a Bible. Electricity access is limited to just over a fifth of the population, and internet penetration remains low, rendering digital-only Bible solutions inaccessible for most Congolese Christians.

Before we continue, would you take a pause to pray for the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

How can I pray for Democratic Republic of Congo?

- **Protection.** Pray especially for Christians in the eastern provinces who face direct threats from ADF attacks. Ask God to safeguard them and provide pathways to receive and keep Bibles safely.
- **Provision.** Pray for global partnerships and logistical solutions to get Bibles into hard-to-reach regions, both in print and in audio formats.
- **Peace.** Ask God to bring lasting peace to the DRC and to break the cycle of violence that endangers believers and blocks the spread of His Word.

Bible Access Restrictions

Some Access Restrictions

-  Import restrictions for part of the country
-  Print restrictions for part of the country
-  Storage restrictions for part of the country
-  Ownership restrictions for part of the country
-  Distribution restrictions for part of the country

Other Limiting Factors

Severe Other Factors

-  Extremely poor
-  Poor internet access
-  Poor infrastructure
-  <50% of population access to electricity

Bible Shortages Among Believers

-  Bible ownership is very low, **estimated** Bible need is >10 million
-  Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Christianity

Country population:
105,625,000

Christian population:

 100,566,000, 95.21% of total population

World Watch List: #35

After praying for Democratic Republic of Congo, continue reading on the next page to learn more.

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO?

A Region Caught in Conflict

In the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), access to Bibles is severely compromised by ongoing armed conflict and widespread insecurity. Militant groups like the ADF, which has ties to the Islamic State, have targeted Christian communities with brutal attacks—including killings, abductions, and the destruction of churches. In North Kivu and Ituri provinces, these actions have forced tens of thousands of Christians to flee, leaving behind homes, churches, and access to Scripture.



The M23 rebel group, reportedly backed by external state actors, has also contributed to mass displacement and instability in the east. This ongoing violence creates an environment where owning, distributing, or even carrying a Bible can be a life-threatening risk. Churches in conflict zones are often closed or destroyed, and pastors have been directly targeted for their faith.

Daily Risks and Disrupted Faith Practices

Beyond armed conflict, corruption and crime continue to obstruct Bible access across the country. Organized crime networks smuggle resources through illegal trade routes, and those who speak out—often Christian leaders—face violent reprisals. In both rural and urban centers, systemic corruption allows officials to block or delay Bible shipments through bureaucratic hurdles or bribery, making the distribution of Scripture slow and unreliable.

Meanwhile, religious freedoms are undermined by weak state enforcement. Despite constitutional guarantees, churches are monitored, Christian civil society groups face operational restrictions, and violent perpetrators often go unpunished. The Ministry of Justice has not issued final registration permits for religious organizations since 2014, leaving many Christian groups in legal limbo and hindering their ability to operate openly.

Poverty and Infrastructure Barriers

With more than half the population living in poverty and inflation nearing 20%, most Congolese Christians simply cannot afford a Bible. Even when physical copies are available, the cost is prohibitive for the average household. Displacement has worsened the issue—over 7 million people are internally displaced as of 2024, many living in camps or informal settlements with no access to Scripture.

Digital solutions offer limited relief. While mobile phone usage is growing, internet penetration stands below 30%, meaning the vast majority cannot access online or app-based Bibles. In eastern conflict zones, even those with internet-capable devices often cannot use them safely due to power shortages.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Democratic Republic of Congo

Congo DR	Islamic Oppression	Religious Nationalism	Ethno-religious hostility	Clan oppression	Christian denominational oppression	Communist and post-Communist oppression	Secular intolerance	Dictatorial paranoia	Organized corruption and crime	Reference
Persecution Engines →										The more fully shaded the circle in orange, the stronger the level of persecution. The number of + signs indicates the frequency or intensity of the driving factors behind it. Very Strong Strong Medium None
Persecution Drivers ↓	Very strong	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Weak	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Very strong	
Government officials				+++				+++	+++	
Ethnic group leaders										
Non-Christian religious leaders										
Christian religious leaders					++					
Violent religious groups	+++++									
Normal citizens	++									
Extended family	++									
Political parties					++					
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups									++++	
Organized crime									+++++	
Multilateral org. & Embassies										

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Bible access is restricted by several overlapping forces of persecution, most notably: **Islamic oppression**, **organized corruption and crime**, **dictatorial paranoia**, and **clan oppression**. These forces are driven by violent religious groups, organized crime networks, government officials, and ethnic group leaders—each contributing to a climate where possessing or distributing Scripture can be dangerous and difficult.

The World Watch List sheds light on the broader context of persecution of Christians. But now we have to ask the question: How does this affect Bible access? Furthermore, where can we pinpoint the problem so we can address the need and demand for Bibles in Democratic Republic of the Congo?

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES

A persecution engine is simply this: the source of persecution in the country. A persecution driver (or actor) is the one “driving” the persecution. Taking a closer look at these engines and drivers, in proper context, will give us insight on how we can solve the problems of Bible access in the country.



Terror as a Tool Against Christians

Islamic oppression is most intense in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, where the ADF has systematically targeted Christian communities. This terrorist group has been responsible for some of the most brutal attacks in recent years.

Between January and June 2024, over **639 Christians** were killed, many by beheading or execution with machetes and firearms. In one attack on June 7, **60 Christians were beheaded** in Masala villages, and on June 12, another **42 Christians were massacred** in Mayikengo village. These attacks directly destroy Bibles, close churches, and displace believers, stripping them of their most valuable spiritual resource.

ADF militants have also abducted Christians en masse, with **at least 100 kidnappings** reported in the past year alone. In one tragic instance, **30 Christians were kidnapped** from a Pentecostal church in Beni on January 30, 2024. In these regions, open Bible reading or Scripture possession invites fatal consequences. Even Christian children have been forced to attend Islamic teachings against their will.



Exploiting Instability

With a Corruption Perception Index score of 20/100, the DRC ranks among the world's most corrupt nations. Government officials, crime syndicates, and rebel groups often collaborate to control trade, territory, and resources. For the Christian community, this creates an impossible environment for safe Bible distribution.

Rebel groups—including the M23, Mai-Mai, and CODECO—extort churches, seize Bibles during raids, and obstruct any organized Christian activities that don't serve their interests. Churches that resist corruption or speak out against injustice are punished through violence, arson, or bureaucratic blockage. Additionally, registration for churches has been stalled since 2014, leaving many Christian organizations in legal limbo.

Christian civil society organizations advocating for accountability are harassed or silenced. Church properties have been bombed, looted, or burned—over 100 churches and Christian facilities were attacked in the past year alone.



State Power Against the Church

Although President Tshisekedi promised reforms, the DRC government has continued to suppress Christian influence, especially when Christians challenge corruption or electoral irregularities. Churches that publicly advocate for political transparency or speak against injustice often face harassment and threats from the state.

Government security forces have been implicated in mass killings and attacks on civilians, including incidents in Goma and Kinshasa. Surveillance, censorship of sermons, and arbitrary detentions of outspoken Christian leaders contribute to a climate of fear that hinders the open proclamation of the Gospel.



Ethnic Divides and Spiritual Exclusion

In parts of Kasai, Kisangani, and North Kivu, ethnic and clan dynamics severely restrict Christian converts, especially those leaving traditional African religions or Islam. Converts may face forced divorce, loss of inheritance, or forced participation in traditional rites. In these regions, Christianity is viewed as a betrayal of heritage, and believers are often ostracized or targeted by clan leaders.

This pressure not only restricts access to Scripture but also isolates new believers from discipleship and church fellowship. In many cases, Christians in these areas must practice their faith in secret, with little or no access to Bibles.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Against the backdrop of persecution, displacement, and socio-economic instability, Bible access in the DRC remains critically low. With over 100 million Christians in the country and just a third equipped with the Word of God, an estimated more than **10 million Bibles** can bridge the gap and spark hope in a region filled with violence and conflict.

A Steady Church, A Growing Demand

The urgency is amplified by the growth of the Church in the DRC. In the last five years, as the general population expands, the Christian population has expanded as well adding millions of new believers across urban centers and conflict-affected rural regions alike. This growth reveals a widening gap in access to Bibles, especially for new Christians who are in need of discipleship resources, pastoral guidance, and scriptural grounding amid instability and persecution.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

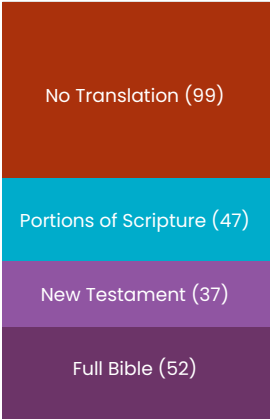
Due to widespread poverty, conflict, and infrastructure challenges, **printed Bibles** remain the most vital format, especially in regions without stable electricity or internet access. **Audio Bibles** are also essential, particularly for those who are illiterate or displaced, providing access to Scripture in camps and remote areas. Due to low internet penetration nationwide, digital formats cannot yet replace the need for physical and audio versions.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

The DRC’s immense linguistic diversity also poses a significant barrier to Scripture access. While believers speak at least 235 languages, of these languages:

- Only **52** have a full Bible translation.
- **37** languages have only the New Testament translated.
- **47** have partial Scripture portions translated.
- **99 languages still have no translation at all**

This means entire communities numbering in the tens of millions remain without access to God’s Word in a language they can understand, let alone engage with on a personal or communal level.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Democratic Republic of Congo

THE CLARION CALL

The crisis in the DRC is not just one of physical suffering, but of spiritual urgency. In a nation where churches are burned, Christians are beheaded, and pastors are hunted—the Bible becomes more than a religious text. It is a source of hope, resilience, and eternal truth that stands in the face of terror.

Now is the time for the global Church to respond. Through prayer, partnership, and radical generosity, we can equip believers in the DRC with the life-giving power of God's Word.

Let us rise to meet this moment—by investing in Bible printing, accelerating translation efforts, and delivering Scripture in the formats and languages needed most. Every Bible placed in a believer's hands is a victory over darkness and a seed sown for eternal transformation.



3.6%
Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



>10 million
Bible needs estimate



**Printed
Bible**
Preferred Format



**Audio
Bible**
Format 2nd Priority