



Bible Access List

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

Nigeria

Bible Restrictions Rank: **38**

CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

BWL Shortage Rank: **2**

Bible needs estimate is more than ten million



An Overview of Bible access in Nigeria

Nigeria, home to over 229 million people, has the largest Christian populations in Africa, with approximately 106 million Christians, making up almost half of total population. Despite this vast number, millions of Christians still find their hands without a Bible due to considerable access restrictions, highlighting a need to make Scripture available to our brothers and sisters in Nigeria.

Bible access in significant parts Nigeria is a great challenge, characterized by violence, persecution, and systemic obstacles. The country is deeply divided along religious lines, with **12 out of 36 states enforcing Sharia law**. In these regions, owning a Bible can have severe consequences, including harassment, imprisonment, or even death. It is estimated that approx. 40% of Nigerians live in areas where Bible access is severely restricted.

Beyond legal restrictions, Bible distribution is hindered by government interference and socio-political barriers. Importing Bibles—particularly in Hausa, a crucial language for reaching Hausa and Fulani Muslim communities—is highly controlled. Reports indicate that government officials obstruct shipments at ports, confiscate materials, or impose bureaucratic hurdles. Additionally, unauthorized printing in restricted areas can be subject to criminal charges, preventing Bibles from reaching those who need them most.

Violent persecution in northern and central Nigeria continues with extremist groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Fulani militants systematically targeting Christian communities. Churches are burned, pastors and believers killed, thousands kidnapped, and entire villages displaced, leaving millions without homes or access to Scripture.

Beyond the threat of violence, widespread poverty, limited electricity, and low literacy rates make Bible access even more difficult, with many unable to afford or utilize printed or digital formats. These challenges force many Christians into secrecy, restricting their ability to gather, worship, or share their faith freely.

Before we go deeper, would you pause to pray for Nigeria?

How can I pray for Nigeria?

- **Protection & Access.** Pray for the safety of Christians, especially in Sharia-governed states, and for creative ways to deliver Bibles where access is restricted.
- **Global Support and Partnerships.** Ask for strong partnerships and wisdom for organizations working to overcome legal, logistical, and literacy barriers to distribute Bibles in multiple formats.
- **Peace & Freedom.** Pray for an end to the violence displacing millions and for Nigeria's leaders to uphold religious freedom, ensuring all Christians can access Scripture without fear.

After praying for Nigeria, continue reading on the next page to learn more.

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

-  Poor
-  Poor internet access
-  Poor infrastructure
-  50-70% of population access to electricity
-  50-70% literacy

Bible Shortages Among Believers

-  Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is >10 million
-  Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Christianity

Country population:
229,152,000

Christian population:

 106,608,000, 46.52% of total population

World Watch List: #7

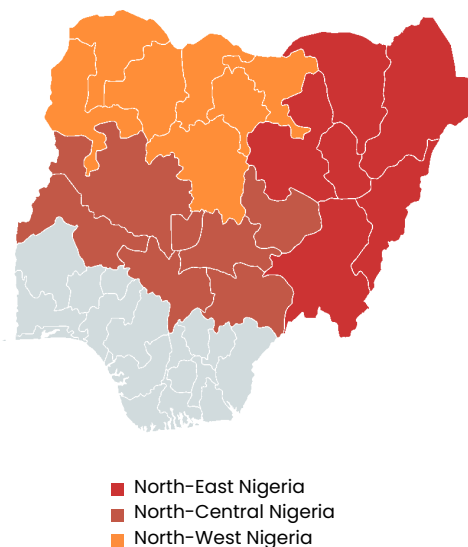
WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN NIGERIA?

A Nation Under Siege

In parts of Nigeria, it is a dangerous place to be a Christian. Violence against believers is at a high level, with Nigeria ranking as one of the highest in Christian killings globally. Islamic terrorist groups like Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Fulani militias wage terror across the country, targeting Christian communities with deadly attacks. Christians, particularly in the North, are frequently kidnapped, displaced, or killed, making access to Bibles nearly impossible in these areas.

The regions where Christians face the most danger include:

- **North-East Nigeria** – Boko Haram and ISWAP carry out relentless attacks, destroying churches, displacing Christian populations, and restricting access to Bibles.
- **North-Central Nigeria** – Fulani militants conduct violent raids, burning villages, killing men, and abducting women and children. The attacks are often aimed at Christian communities, forcing survivors to flee without their belongings—including their Bibles.
- **North-West Nigeria** – Armed 'bandit' groups, often aligned with Islamist movements, have expanded their operations, targeting Christian settlements with kidnappings and massacres.
- **Benue and Plateau States** – Once considered relatively safe, these regions have now become epicenters of brutal violence, with entire Christian communities wiped out or taken over by terrorist groups.



Daily Risks and Bible Access

Owning a Bible in northern Nigeria isn't just difficult—it can be deadly. In areas controlled by Boko Haram and ISWAP, simply possessing a Bible can lead to execution. These extremist groups systematically burn churches, raid homes, and confiscate Christian materials, leaving believers with no choice but to hide their faith. Many flee to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps for safety, but there, access to Bibles—whether printed, digital, or audio—is nearly impossible due to extreme poverty and a lack of resources.

The violence has displaced nearly 3.3 million Nigerians, with Christian families among the hardest hit. Many were forced to escape with nothing, leaving their Bibles and belongings behind as their homes were burned or taken over. For most, returning is not an option—villages have been occupied or destroyed, and attempting to reclaim what was lost could mean walking into another attack.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable. Christian schoolgirls are frequent targets for abduction by Boko Haram and Fulani militants, who force them into marriages where they are pressured to renounce their faith. In the 12 northern states governed by Sharia law, owning a Bible is already considered very dangerous. Christian materials are banned, confiscated, or heavily censored, making it even harder for believers to access God's Word.

Poverty and Practical Barriers

In areas where violence is less severe, systemic poverty makes Bible access a challenge. With over **40% of the population living below the poverty line**, many Christians simply cannot prioritize purchasing a Bible when basic survival—food, shelter, and medical care—demands every available resource. Even for those who deeply desire Scripture, it remains out of reach when daily necessities take precedence.

Infrastructure challenges further compound the issue. While digital and audio Bibles could provide an alternative, **barely half of the population have internet access**, and many rural communities experience frequent power outages or lack electricity altogether. Without reliable connectivity or electricity, digital formats become inaccessible, leaving millions without practical ways to engage with God's Word.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Nigeria

Nigeria	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	Very strong	Very strong	Medium	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Very strong	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	++++									

Nigeria ranks among the most dangerous countries for Christians, with a deadly blend of persecution sources including **Islamic oppression, religious nationalism, ethno-religious hostility, dictatorial paranoia, and organized corruption and crime**. These are often enforced by government officials, ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, normal citizens, political parties, and even organized crime. As you can see, the persecution is not just ideological but violently enforced, with thousands of Christians killed, abducted, or displaced each year.

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 Nigeria?

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.



Establishing A Muslim State

Islamic extremism in Nigeria is not new. Since the early 19th century, the Fulani-led Sokoto Caliphate sought to spread Islam by force. This ideology persists today, with Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Fulani militants leading a campaign of terror against Christians.

- **Boko Haram and ISWAP:** These groups have carried out mass killings, church bombings, and targeted kidnappings, including the infamous Chibok schoolgirls abduction. In recent years, the violence has intensified with **a reported alliance between Boko Haram and ISWAP**, signaling a more coordinated effort to establish an Islamic state.
- **Fulani Militants:** These well-armed militias have expanded their attacks beyond the north, pushing southward into Christian-majority areas. Over the last few years thousands of believers have been killed, and hundreds of villages have been occupied by Fulani militants, effectively erasing Christian communities.

Their ultimate goal is the eradication of Christian presence, forcing believers to either convert, flee, or face death. The destruction of church buildings, confiscation of Bibles, and targeting of pastors are all part of this calculated strategy.



Second-Class Citizenship for Christians

In northern Nigeria, particularly in the **12 Sharia-ruled states**, Christians are legally and socially marginalized. This can include:

- **Land and Property Seizures:** Christian villages are frequently attacked and occupied, forcing residents into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps where they have **no access to Bibles or places of worship**. Reports indicate that at least **3.3 million people** have been displaced due to religious persecution.
- **Legal Discrimination:** The Nigerian Constitution theoretically guarantees religious freedom, but Sharia law in the north **overrides national law**, relegating Christians to second-class status. In some regions, Christians are denied access to education, healthcare, and even basic utilities like water.

Without systemic reform, Christians in northern Nigeria remain **trapped in a cycle of persecution, poverty, and displacement**, leaving them with no access to Scripture or the ability to practice their faith freely.



A Shifting Landscape of Persecution and Reform

The push to Islamize Nigeria extends beyond militant groups, deeply embedded within political structures that prioritize Islamic dominance while fostering a culture of authoritarian neglect. Under former President Buhari, key government positions—especially in security and law enforcement—were disproportionately filled with Muslims, enabling religious persecution to thrive unchecked. However, under the new administration, there have been some shifts, including decline in killings and a more engaged military response to violence. While Nigeria remains one of the most dangerous places for Christians, these improvements signal a potential shift in addressing religious persecution, even as significant challenges persist.

In northern states, blasphemy laws serve as a tool of oppression, frequently weaponized to accuse Christians of religious offenses that result in imprisonment, mob violence, or even execution. The brutal murder of a Christian student in Sokoto back in 2022 is a stark reminder of how these laws are manipulated to silence Christians and intimidate those who openly express their faith.

Beyond legal and political pressures, the government's failure to act has emboldened extremists and deepened Christian vulnerability. In Muslim-majority areas, Christian girls are abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, and married off with the silent approval of local authorities, furthering the systematic erasure of Christian communities. Even in regions with a strong military presence, attacks on Christians continue unabated, with security forces often accused of withholding protection or, in some cases, aiding the attackers. Meanwhile, media censorship ensures that reports of Christian persecution are frequently suppressed, controlling the narrative and minimizing public outcry.

This climate of impunity has allowed violence to spread, making Bible distribution and open Christian worship nearly impossible in many regions. Churches operate under constant threat, and believers must often hide their faith for fear of retribution. But despite the ongoing crisis, the Nigerian government's response has shown some improvement, with increased military intervention and a decline in killings. However, serious challenges remain, as religious persecution continues to persist in many areas. Though progress has been made, the protection of religious minorities remains inconsistent, and systematic issues continue to leave many Christians vulnerable to violence and discrimination.



A Profit-Driven Persecution Model

In Nigeria, persecution is not just about ideology; it has become a thriving industry where corruption and crime turn suffering into profit. For criminal networks and corrupt officials, Christian persecution is a business opportunity, with human lives as the currency. Kidnapping for ransom has become an epidemic, where pastors, church leaders, ordinary believers, and even entire congregations are snatched from their homes and churches, held captive while their families and communities scramble to pay impossible sums. Tens of thousands of dollars exchange hands, not just to brutal terrorists but to corrupt security forces who allow the cycle to continue. Every abduction tightens the grip of fear, forcing churches into silence and making even the possession of a Bible a dangerous risk.

But the extortion doesn't stop there. In some regions, extremists force Christians to pay so-called "protection fees"—an unspoken tax just for the right to exist. Those who refuse to comply face violent retribution, their homes burned, their livelihoods destroyed. Even acts of charity are suffocated under layers of corruption, as Christian-led humanitarian efforts are deliberately stalled, buried under endless fees and bureaucratic red tape. Bible shipments are delayed, confiscated, or made too costly to distribute. In the most hostile areas, access to Scripture is nearly impossible, churches operate in fear, while digital Bibles remain out of reach due to low internet penetration. The system is designed to break them, keeping the hope found in God's Word out of reach.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN NIGERIA

Against a backdrop of violence, displacement, and economic hardship, Bible access in Nigeria remains critically low. With an estimated 106 million Christians in the country, the demand for Bibles far outweighs the current availability. Further research suggests that over ten million Bibles are required to meet the needs of both believers and seekers (*those who are looking to explore the Christian faith*).

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Despite the intense persecution faced by Nigerian Christians, the church continues to grow. Protestant and Evangelical churches, in particular, report significant expansion in regions where persecution is the strongest. However, this growth amplifies the Bible shortage, leaving new believers without access to foundational Scripture. The expansion of Christianity in Nigeria is outpacing the availability of Bibles, making distribution a pressing priority.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

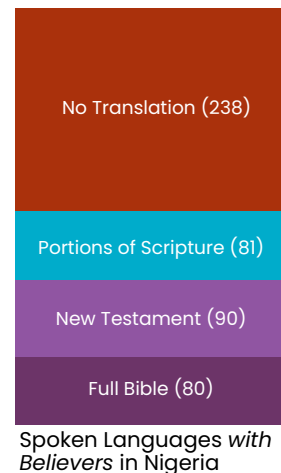
Given Nigeria's infrastructural challenges, **print Bibles remain the top priority for distribution.** While digital formats are valuable in urban areas with internet access, they are not sufficient for rural regions where electricity is unreliable. Some regions still struggle with power shortages, making printed Bibles the preference, rechargeable solar powered audio Bibles are also a great solution. For the large population of internally displaced Christians living in makeshift camps, audio Bibles provide an alternative, as literacy rates remain a barrier in some of these areas.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Nigeria is one of Africa’s most linguistically diverse nations, research estimates that the diverse Christian population speak close to 500 languages. However, Bible translation efforts have not kept pace with this diversity. Currently:

- Only **80 languages** have a complete Bible translation
- **90 languages** have only the New Testament
- **81 languages** have only portions of Scripture available
- **238 languages** still have no Bible translation at all

This translation gap leaves entire communities without access to God’s Word in their native tongues. Without accelerated translation efforts, millions of believers will remain without Scripture in a language they fully understand.



THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Nigeria is not just a logistical issue—it is a spiritual crisis. The staggering numbers of believers without access to Scripture reflect an urgent call for intervention. Providing Bibles in all necessary formats, prioritizing print and audio distribution, while accelerating translation efforts are essential to ensuring that every Christian in Nigeria has access to the life-changing power of God’s Word.

Meeting this demand requires innovative strategies and global partnerships. By addressing the barriers of poverty, persecution, and linguistic diversity, we can equip Nigeria’s growing church with the Scripture it so desperately needs.

