



Reports

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Violent Incidents Database Report on Top Ten Non-Christian Victims (2022–2024)

Muslims in Myanmar Experience Highest
Levels of Violence for their Faith
in the World

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Muslims in Myanmar Experience Highest Levels of Violence for their Faith in the World

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Introduction

War torn Myanmar tops a new ranking of countries that records religiously motivated acts of violence against adherents of non-Christian religions, with a count of 344,984 mostly Muslim victims from the ethnic Rohingya people in the two years between November 2022 and November 2024. Muslim victims dominate the list, with Sudan, Nigeria, China and India comprising the top five.

The grim statistics are drawn from the Global Christian Relief funded *Violent Incidents Database* (VID), compiled by the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), which records verified acts of physical violence against all people of faith and their property (including places of worship) in every country.

Dr Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, Director of Strategy and Research for Global Christian Relief, says “Although Christians count by far as the primary victims of violence for their faith globally, even if they were included in the *all faiths total* Myanmar would still be the number one country, with Azerbaijan at number two due to its forced displacement of 120,045 Armenian Christians.”

After Christians, Muslims experienced the most physical violence for their faith in past two years. Another war-torn country—Sudan—places second on the list, with 10,202 Muslim victims. In third place is Nigeria. Its northern states recorded 6,934 violent incidents, including 2,700 Muslims killed by extremist Islamist groups. China placed fourth, with a total of 6,893 incidents, which included 1,530 Muslims and 1,112 Buddhists. Violence against the Uyghur Muslims is much higher, but due especially to the Chinese government’s total control over information, it is difficult to find reports of sufficient specificity to include in the database. Also, the huge majority of arrests of Uyghur Muslims took place before the reporting period in question. The world’s most populous country, India, places fifth on the list with a total of 4,338 victims, 3,600 of them being Muslims.

Myanmar tops the list because of the violence directed against Muslim minorities perpetrated by the current military junta. Forced displacement is the primary violence category here with Rohingya Muslims ordered out of the western state of Rakhine, mainly by the Arakan Army. The downtown of the city of Buthidaung was systematically set on fire. The country also ranks the highest for attacks on property, with 7,541 recorded incidents.

Since the database records incidents of violence against specific religious groups, Israel topped the list for Jewish victims in the 2022–2024 period, with 1,722 incidents of violence recorded. This includes the over 1200 deaths in the October 7th, 2023 attacks by Hamas, which triggered an unprecedented surge in antisemitic incidents worldwide, including physical attacks, vandalism, arson, online threats and more. The VID counts physical violence against people and property, so various forms of hate speech and slander are not recorded, but antisemitic incidents involving physical violence against synagogues, Jewish institutions, homes and individuals are included. India saw the highest number of Jewish buildings attacked, with 200 recorded incidents. The United States places second on the Jewish victims list, with 97 incidents recorded, including

attacks on 43 buildings. Germany (23), France (21) and Palestinian Territories (21) round off the top five.

Asian countries contain the most recorded incidents of violence against Hindus. India is at number one, with 595 incidents, with Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal comprising the top five. Bangladesh is the country that saw the largest number of attacks on Hindu buildings, with 283 violent incidents recorded. Buddhist victims of violence were most prominent in Myanmar, with 2,754 attacks on people recorded and 814 buildings attacked.

The Violent Incidents Database is the first instrument of its kind, and is unique not only for its in depth focus on violence, but its commitment to gather data on all religions, and to provide free and full access for all to its sources. Says Dr Dennis P. Petri, the head of the IIRF, “Please see this VID as an invitation to provide us more information. Many religious communities often lack the NGO’s that collect and publish data, and without reported events, upon which the VID relies, it is frequently impossible to collect enough actionable information.”

Non-Christian Victims 2022–2024

		Total non-Christian	Muslim	Jew	Hindu	Buddhist	Other/unknown
1	Myanmar	359613	356773	0	3	2754	83
2	Sudan	10202	10202	0	0	0	0
3	Nigeria	6934	6621	0	0	0	313
4	China	6893	1530	0	0	1112	4251
5	India	4338	3690	1	595	9	43
6	Colombia	3403	0	0	0	0	3403
7	Palestinian Territories	2765	2257	21	0	0	487
8	Israel	1740	0	1722	0	0	18
9	Iran	1659	1527	0	0	0	132
10	Democratic Republic of the Congo	1272	0	0	0	0	1272

Non-Christian Buildings 2022–2024

		Total non-Christian	Muslim	Jew	Hindu	Buddhist	Other/unknown
1	Myanmar	8371	7541	0	1	814	15
2	India	2528	2215	200	93	0	20

3	Central African Republic	552	552	0	0	0	0
4	Palestinian Territories	423	378	20	0	0	25
5	Bangladesh	299	0	0	283	3	13
6	Ethiopia	265	265	0	0	0	0
7	Iran	168	0	0	0	0	168
8	Pakistan	137	117	0	19	0	1
9	China	68	0	0	0	31	37
10	United States	64	0	37	0	3	24

Methodological Considerations

One of the strengths of the VID is its classification and tracking of violence against all religions. The tables above list the top ten countries where the VID has recorded acts of religiously motivated violence against persons and the top ten countries where the VID has recorded property violence and destroyed houses.

In many countries in the VID, Christians are the main target of violence. In Myanmar, however, the primary victims are the Rohingya Muslims, a non-Christian group. This is also true for Sudan, where many victims of the violence are Muslims. In countries like India, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Iran, China, and the Palestinian Territories, various non-Christian groups suffer violence alongside Christians.

When accounting for violence against non-Christians, it is important to note that these religious communities often lack the NGOs that collect and publish data. Without reported events, upon which the VID methodology relies, it is impossible to collect event-based data. For this reason, some notable areas are underreported. This is clearly the case for violence against Uyghur Muslims in China, against Hindus in Pakistan and against Buddhists in Myanmar, as described below.

Description of the Top Ten Non-Christian Victims 2022–2024

1. Myanmar

Myanmar, at the top of the list, mainly sees violence against Muslim minorities perpetrated by the current military junta. The largest incident involves Rohingya Muslims, who were ordered to leave the western state of Rakhine by the Arakan

Army, a majority Buddhist wing of the United League of Arakan. They systematically set fire to downtown Buthidaung. As the fighting escalated, over 100,000 Muslims fled for their lives. While this is the largest event, many similar incidents have occurred on a smaller scale. Most killings occur in three states, suggesting further opportunities for subnational analysis. As a Buddhist majority country, close to 75 % of the population, it is also clear that they will also be victims of the junta. Buddhist victims rank a distant second (2754) to Muslims (356,773). Myanmar also ranks highest for building attacks, which is likely best explained by the ongoing war.

2. Sudan

Much of the violence in Sudan comes from the ongoing conflict between the country's *de facto* president after the 2021 coup and a different general who leads the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF has its own complicated history, but has been heavily involved in attacking villages, burning and looting homes, and killing many. Former elements like the Janjaweed militias have been accused of crimes against humanity in Darfur. Conflicts like these always have multiple factors at work, including taking advantage of chaos to deal with enemies. The largest record of violence in the VID for Sudan involves an incident where the RSF attacked and killed at least 10,000 people that were both Muslim and Christian.

3. Nigeria

Nigeria records some of the largest numbers of killings and abductions. While Christians suffer disproportionately, moderate and peaceful Muslims also face significant violence, particularly from radical Muslim groups. Over 2,700 Muslims were killed during the reporting period. Subnational analysis reveals different patterns in various states. For example, in Borno, where 93 % of Muslim killings by violent religious groups occur, the perpetrators likely come from the adjacent Lake Chad Basin, a known epicenter of radicalism. When all perpetrator categories are included, killings are spread across the Muslim-majority North, with the highest numbers in states like Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Katsina.

4. China

Many would expect to see high numbers of violence against Uyghur Muslims. However, this is a significant underreported area in the VID. The lack of event-based reports stems from the fact that most publicly available information on Uyghurs in China comes in the form of annual reports, which lack the necessary details for VID inclusion. The Chinese government's tight control over the media and efforts to suppress unfavorable information exacerbate this underreporting. The approach of the Chinese government is reflected in a difference sub-category where China is a clear outlier. The VID counts 6630 arrests and sentences, which only considers non-Christians. China has double the amount of the next closest country, Myanmar, which has a contested and chaotic governance at

the national level. Many of the arrests and sentences are against the Falon Gong community and the widespread experience of many religious traditions is evidence of the government's tactics of imprisoning religious adherents no matter their tradition.

5. India

While much attention has been given to violence and discrimination against Christians in India, Muslims also suffer violence that is often underreported. Many killings of Indian Muslims are the result of mob violence. For example, crowds might be incited against Muslims because they eat beef. Narratives about so-called “love jihad” —where Hindu men are said to convert to Islam in order to marry Muslim women—also contribute to this violence. This violence often extends to the destruction of mosques and homes. For example, in Assam's Morigaon district, demonstrators destroyed hundreds of Muslim homes, claiming they encroached on railway land, while Hindu-owned buildings were left untouched. Other factors included in India, are widespread discrimination against Muslims which create pressure on that community. India is an outlier in property destruction. In many countries, mosques, synagogues, or meeting places have a high percentage of total property destruction. Violence against Muslim properties is clearly focused on individual homes.

6. Colombia

A concerning trend is the targeting of indigenous communities in Colombia, often linked to disputes over resource extraction projects in their territories. These acts of violence are frequently intended to intimidate or displace these groups, undermining their opposition to such developments. For example, on January 26, 2022, in the Palomino corregimiento of La Guajira, unidentified individuals attacked the Kogui indigenous community. They set fire to several houses and a religious center, injuring several children in the process. Indigenous representatives expressed fears that this attack was retaliation for their resistance to extraction projects encroaching on their lands.

7. Palestinian Territories

Following the large-scale terrorist attack perpetrated against Israel on October 7, 2023, by Hamas and other groups, the Israeli Air Force launched a series of bombardments that led to the destruction of religious sites. These sites were targeted on suspicion of being used as bases, hideouts, or rocket launch sites, while others were damaged during attacks on nearby targets. A record dated December 8, 2023, indicates that Israeli attacks resulted in the total destruction of 66 mosques and partial damage to 146 others, accounting for approximately 20 % of all mosques in Gaza. According to VID records, at least 10 Christian churches were also destroyed in Gaza.

8. Israel

A notable incident occurred on October 7, 2023, when the Islamic terrorist organization Hamas attacked Israeli targets, killing 1,200 Jews and abducting 253 Israelis and foreigners.

9. Iran

Recent trends in Iran demonstrate both violent attacks on religious minorities and repressive measures against Sunni Muslim communities. On 26 October 2022, Islamic State militants targeted worshippers at the Shahcheragh Shrine in Shiraz, killing 15 and injuring 19. This highlights the continued threat of extremist violence against Shi'a Muslim sites in the country. Additionally, on 11 December 2023, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) detained over 253 Sunni students, including Afghan and Baloch individuals, at religious institutions in Zahedan (Sistan and Baluchestan). The IRGC alleged connections to terrorist groups, leading to the deportation of some Afghan detainees. This reflects a trend of state suppression under the pretext of counterterrorism, disproportionately affecting Sunni communities and foreign nationals in Iran.

10. Democratic Republic of the Congo

Recent trends in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo indicate a persistent pattern of mass violence targeting civilians, particularly by rebel groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and CODECO militias. These attacks often involve killings, abductions, arson, and destruction of property, contributing to ongoing instability in the region.

Examples include:

- From 31 July to 14 August 2023, ADF rebels and allies killed at least 55 people in various villages across Ituri and North Kivu provinces, including 19 fatalities in Batangi-Mbau (Beni territory) and others in Mbingi, Makangwa, and Masenze.
- On 15 February 2022, CODECO militiamen attacked Abelkoze village (Ituri), killing 18 civilians, including five women, injuring four, kidnapping several, and burning houses.
- On 22 January 2023, ADF fighters claimed responsibility for killing 23 people in Makugwe (Beni area, North Kivu), where homes and shops were also set ablaze, and three individuals went missing.
- On 9 March 2023, ADF forces killed at least 36 civilians in Mukondi village (North Kivu), using guns and machetes, while burning huts and leaving several injured and others unaccounted for.

Violence Against Specific Religious Groups

Hindus

Top Five Hindu Victims 2022–2024

1	India	595
2	Bangladesh	62
3	Pakistan	23
4	Sri Lanka	19
5	Nepal	5

Top Five Hindu Buildings 2022–2024

1	Bangladesh	283
2	India	93
3	Pakistan	19
4	Trinidad and Tobago	15
5	Nepal	10

The largest numbers of Hindus killed are in India and Pakistan. However, there is little recorded violence against Hindus in the VID, likely because they are a majority in India and enjoy support from Hindutva-leaning authorities.

Muslims

Top Five Muslim Victims 2022–2024

1	Myanmar	356773
2	Sudan	10202
3	Nigeria	6621
4	India	3690
5	Palestinian Territories	2257

Top Five Muslim Buildings 2022–2024

1	Myanmar	7541
2	India	2215
3	Central African Republic	552
4	Palestinian Territories	378
5	Ethiopia	265

India records the largest number of attacks on Muslim homes. The largest number of Muslims arrested and sentenced by the government was in China. The largest number of Muslim religious buildings closed was in Kyrgyzstan, where police shut down 39 mosques and 21 madrassas lacking official registration.

Jews*Top Five Jewish Victims 2022–2024*

1	Israel	1722
2	United States	97
3	Germany	23
4	France	21
4	Palestinian Territories	21

Top Five Jewish Buildings 2022–2024

1	India	200
2	United States	43
3	Turkey	36
4	Canada	24
5	Germany	20

The October 7th 2023 attack by Hamas against Israel triggered an unprecedented surge in antisemitic incidents worldwide, including physical attacks, vandalism, arson, online threats, and more. While various forms of hate speech or slander are not recorded in the VID, antisemitic incidents involving physical violence against synagogues, Jewish institutions, homes, and individuals are included. From 2022–2024, the top five countries for antisemitic violence were: Israel (1,722 violent incidents), the United States (97), Germany (23), France (21), and the Palestinian Territories (21).

Bhuddists

Top Five Buddhist Victims 2022–2024

1	Myanmar	2754
2	China	1112
3	Vietnam	43
4	India	9
5	Thailand	5

Top Five Buddhist Buildings 2022–2024

1	Myanmar	814
2	China	31
3	Thailand	9
4	Vietnam	7
5	Indonesia	6

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