



# Reports

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*International Institute for Religious Freedom*

## October 2025 Thematic Report: Top Five Countries for Killings, Abductions, Arrests, and Sentences of Christians

July 2024 – July 2025

**2026 / 10**

International Institute  
for Religious Freedom



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**Internationales Institut für Religionsfreiheit  
Institut International pour la Liberté Religieuse  
Instituto Internacional para la Libertad Religiosa**

The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) was founded in 2007 with the mission to promote religious freedom for all faiths from an academic perspective. The IIRF aspires to be an authoritative voice on religious freedom. We provide reliable and unbiased data on religious freedom—beyond anecdotal evidence—to strengthen academic research on the topic and to inform public policy at all levels. Our research results are disseminated through the *International Journal for Religious Freedom* and other publications. A particular emphasis of the IIRF is to encourage the study of religious freedom in university institutions through its inclusion in educational curricula and by supporting postgraduate students with research projects.

The IIRF has a global presence with academic and advocacy partners on all continents. We perform original research and in collaboration with our partners. The IIRF is also a “meeting place” for all scholars that take an interest in religious freedom.

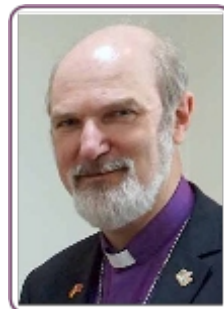
We understand Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) as a fundamental and interdependent human right as described in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In line with CCPR General Comment No. 22, we view FoRB as a broad and multi-dimensional concept that needs to be protected for all faiths in all spheres of society.



**Dr. Dennis P. Petri**  
(V.i.S.d.P.)  
*International Director*



**Dr. Kyle Wisdom**  
*Deputy Director*



**Prof. Dr. mult.  
Thomas Paul  
Schirmacher**  
*President of the  
Academic/Editorial  
Board*



**Prof. Dr. Janet Epp  
Buckingham**  
*Executive Editor of the  
International Journal  
for Religious Freedom  
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## Killings

Nigeria	363
Democratic Republic of the Congo	234
Syria	49
Ethiopia	38
Haiti	38

## Abductions

Nigeria <sup>1</sup>	156
Mexico	110
Democratic Republic of the Congo	74
Myanmar	30
Vietnam	11

## Arrests

China	96
Kenya	95
Iran	91
Tanzania	86
India	66

## Sentences

Russia	62
China	15
Cuba	9
Iran	8
Ukraine	5

During the period from July 2024 to July 2025, violence and repression against Christians remained widespread, with Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of

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<sup>1</sup> Given the importance of Nigeria for understanding themes, we have started our own data collection on the country instead of just waiting for our partners. Additional information from ORFA will be integrated into the database when available. These numbers are lower than anticipated because of the additional work we are doing on the country. We expect these to increase as we continue to add through the year.

the Congo once again standing out as the deadliest countries. Nigeria alone accounted for more than a third of all reported killings and the highest number of abductions, but real numbers may be much higher. These patterns point to a continuation of targeting Christian communities by Fulani Herdsmen and armed groups including jihadist insurgencies and criminal militias. The Democratic Republic of the Congo also experienced severe violence against Christian civilians, reflecting ongoing instability in its eastern provinces.

In Asia and Eastern Europe, state repression was the dominant pattern. China, Iran, and Russia topped the lists for arrests and sentencing, confirming a growing trend of legal harassment and criminalization of religious activity. Cuba and Ukraine also reported multiple prison sentences for Christian leaders or activists. Meanwhile, Mexico and Myanmar combined high levels of abductions with systemic intimidation of church personnel.

Overall, the data show a dual pattern of persecution: extreme physical violence in parts of Africa and Latin America, and judicial or administrative repression in authoritarian contexts across Asia and Eastern Europe.

## Imprint

### Addresses

International Institute for Religious Freedom  
P. O. Box 780068  
Orlando, Florida 32878  
United States of America

Friedrichstr. 38  
2nd Floor  
53111 Bonn  
Germany

International Director: Dr. Dennis P. Petri (V.i.S.d.P.)  
Research Director: Prof. Dr. Christof Sauer  
Executive Editor of the IJRF: Prof. Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham  
President: Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher

Website: <https://iirf.global>  
Contact: [info@iirf.global](mailto:info@iirf.global)

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for Religious Freedom

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Bonn | Brussels | Cape Town  
Colombo | Brasília | Delhi  
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iirf.global • info@iirf.global