



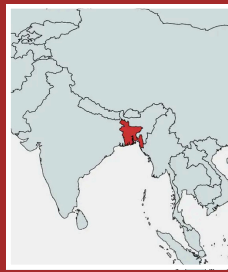
Bible Access List

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

Bangladesh

Bible Restrictions Rank: **47**
CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **34**
Bible needs estimate between one hundred and two hundred fifty thousand



An Overview of Bible access in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, with a population of approximately 175 million, is home to around 1.1 million Christians, making up less than 1% of the population. This small Christian community faces considerable challenges in accessing Bibles. It is estimated that just about half of the believers in Bangladesh have access to a Bible, highlighting a critical need to provide our brothers and sisters with Scripture they need to sustain and strengthen their faith.

The nation is a complex blend of economic progress and persistent hardships. While Bangladesh has seen improvements in infrastructure, with nearly universal electricity coverage and internet access reaching about half of the population, deep-seated poverty remains a major barrier to Bible access. Around 25% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty, meaning that even when Bibles are available, affordability remains a major obstacle as priority is given to basic needs. Additionally, literacy rates stand at approximately 75%, meaning a significant portion of the population cannot easily read printed Bibles. This highlights the need for audio Bibles and digital resources to reach those who cannot access written Scripture.

Accessing Bibles in Bangladesh is further complicated by legal and regulatory challenges. The Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act of 1973 requires government approval for the printing and publication of any book, including the Bible. Additionally, imported Bibles have been blocked at customs on occasion, creating further distribution barriers. While outright Bible bans do not exist, these restrictions, along with social pressures, create a climate of limited access for many believers.

For Muslim Background believers or MBBs, obtaining a Bible is even more dangerous. MBBs often face ostracization, harassment, and even threats of violence from family and community members. In some cases, simply owning a Bible can put a MBB's life at risk. Many are forced to practice their faith in secret, making discreet Bible distribution methods essential.

The Rohingya refugee crisis adds another layer of complexity. Bangladesh currently hosts nearly one million Rohingya refugees, primarily in Cox's Bazar. These refugees, mostly Muslim, represent both a significant challenge and a unique opportunity for the Gospel. Reports indicate that small groups of Rohingya Christians have emerged within the camps, yet Bible access remains nearly impossible. These new believers urgently need Bibles in Chittagonian and Rohingya dialects.

But first, would you take a moment to pause and pray for Bangladesh?

How can I pray for Bangladesh?

- **Access and Affordability.** Pray for increased access to Bibles and for solutions that make them affordable for believers. Ask God to open doors for **low-cost or free Bible distribution** in Bangladesh.
- **The Rohingya Refugees.** Pray for **the spread of the Gospel among the Rohingya people**, that they would be strengthened and protected, and that they would have access to Bibles in their language. Currently only the New Testament is available in their language, and only a portion of the New Testament is available in audio format.
- **Global Partnerships and Resources.** Ask the Lord to mobilize **strong partnerships** and resources worldwide to meet the Bible needs of the Church and seekers of truth. Pray for organizations working to translate, print, and distribute Bibles and for safe ways to get Scripture into the hands of believers.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Some Access Restrictions

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

Other Limiting Factors

Considerable Other Factors

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

Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bible ownership is low, **estimated Bible need is between 100 and 250 thousand**
- Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Islam

Country population: 174,701,000

Christian population:

1,118,000, 0.64% of total population

World Watch List: #24

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN BANGLADESH?

A Region Under Siege

One specific example can be found in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, home to many ethnic minorities—including a significant number of Christians—owning a Bible can be a dangerous risk. This region has long been plagued by land disputes, armed insurgencies, and ethnic conflicts, making it one of the most challenging places for Christians to access Scripture. The Bawm Christian community, in particular, has faced escalating violence, with at least 12 Bawm Christians killed between April and June 2024 in the wake of anti-insurgency operations by the government. The unrest has forced many Christians to flee, leaving behind their homes, churches, and Bibles.



The persecution extends beyond ethnic Christian communities. Rohingya Christian refugees in the camps of Cox's Bazar face threats from radical Islamic groups operating within the camps, where MBBs live in constant fear of harassment, abduction, and forced conversion. With movement restrictions and limited resources, they are unable to access Bibles or practice their faith freely.

Daily Risks and Bible Access

For many Christians in Bangladesh, owning, reading, or distributing Bibles carries significant risks. In rural areas, MBBs face severe backlash from their communities. Many are ostracized, beaten, or pressured to return to Islam. In extreme cases, MBBs are falsely accused of crimes, harassed by local authorities, or driven out of their villages.

Even historical Christian communities, such as the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations, have faced increasing threats. Churches in Dhaka and northern Bangladesh were targeted amid political unrest in 2024, leading to their closure and disruption of Bible distribution efforts. Additionally, Christian literature is closely monitored, and in some cases, police and local vigilante groups have raided homes and confiscated Bibles from suspected MBBs.

Poverty and Practical Barriers

Beyond persecution, economic hardship and systemic discrimination further limit Bible access in Bangladesh. With nearly 25% of the population living below the poverty line, many families cannot afford a printed Bible. In rural communities, Christians are often denied access to education, jobs, and financial assistance, leaving them economically vulnerable. MBBs, in particular, struggle to find employment, making it nearly impossible to purchase a Bible.

Digital Barriers and Literacy Challenges

While Bangladesh has internet connection for almost half of the country, access to digital Bibles remains limited. In rural areas, however, only around 30% of households have internet access, and smartphone ownership among women is significantly lower than among men. Additionally, government surveillance under the Cyber Security Act has heightened fears of online persecution. Christians engaging in digital evangelism or Bible-sharing on social media face harassment, threats, and potential legal action under blasphemy laws.

Literacy is another major barrier. While 75% of Bangladeshis are literate, functional literacy remains low, particularly in remote regions where many Christians reside. Audio Bibles could bridge this gap, but the availability of such resources in local languages is scarce.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Bangladesh

| Bangladesh | 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 → Persecution Drivers ↓ | | | | | | | | | | <p>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.</p> |
| 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 | | | | | | | | | | |

As you can see in the chart, persecution against Christians in Bangladesh is fueled by multiple forces, with **Dictatorial Paranoia** and **Islamic Oppression** being the strongest, followed by **Ethno-Religious Hostility** and **Organized Corruption and Crime**. These forces collectively are driven by **government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, political parties**, and even from **normal citizens** and **extended family**. This multi-faceted web of pressure creates an environment where Bible access is severely restricted, particularly for converts from Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Research from 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 Bangladesh.

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. For a country like Bangladesh, it seems like there are multi-faceted pressures involved that create an environment where Bible access is severely restricted, particularly for converts from Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.



Government-Sanctioned Discrimination

Bangladesh’s previous government, led by Sheikh Hasina, systematically silenced opposition voices and marginalized religious minorities, including Christians. While Hasina’s removal in August 2024 created temporary uncertainty, radical Islamic factions and nationalist groups have since filled the power vacuum, leading to greater persecution.

In May 2024, Sheikh Hasina made inflammatory claims that Christians were conspiring to establish an independent Christian state by seizing land from Bangladesh and Myanmar, fueling societal hostility against the Christian minority. These accusations reinforced the perception that Christians are outsiders, making it even harder for believers to access Bibles without fear of reprisal.

Local government officials have also played a role in obstructing Bible access by restricting church activities, surveilling Christian gatherings, and enforcing bureaucratic hurdles for Christian organizations seeking registration. With the increasing influence of radical Islamic groups in politics, these restrictions have only intensified.



A Climate of Fear and Intimidation

Radical Islamic groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Hefazat-e-Islam, and Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) actively target Christians, particularly those involved in evangelism. MBBs are at the highest risk—they are ostracized, threatened, and, in some cases, physically attacked for owning a Bible.

Ordinary citizens are often mobilized against Christians, with community leaders spreading propaganda that frames Bible distribution as a foreign conspiracy. In some regions, mobs have raided Christian homes, confiscating or destroying Bibles.

Islamic militants have also infiltrated refugee camps, where a small number of Rohingya Christians are subjected to abductions and forced conversions. With little access to digital resources and the constant threat of violence, obtaining a Bible in these settings is nearly impossible.



Persecution of Christian Ethnic Minorities

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, home to many ethnic minorities, is a hotspot for persecution. The predominantly Christian Bawn tribe has been disproportionately affected by government crackdowns and communal violence. Between April and June 2024, at least 12 Bawn Christians were killed, with many others fleeing for safety.

Ethnic group leaders, particularly among Buddhists and Hindus, also resist conversions to Christianity, pressuring new believers to renounce their faith. Christian converts from tribal backgrounds are often denied community resources, barred from educational opportunities, and driven from their ancestral lands.



Land Grabbing and Economic Suppression

Corrupt local officials and land-grabbing mafias exploit Christian minorities, particularly in rural areas. Many Christian families have lost their homes due to fraudulent legal claims, leaving them displaced and without access to their Bibles.

Christian businesses are frequently boycotted, and believers struggle to secure employment, making it financially difficult for them to acquire a Bible. In some instances, Christian shop owners have been forced to close their businesses entirely due to community-led harassment campaigns.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN BANGLADESH

Against the backdrop of persecution, poverty, and linguistic barriers, Bible access in Bangladesh remains critically limited. Among the estimated 1.1 million Christians the demand for Bibles is urgent. Current estimates suggest that between **100,000 and 250,000 copies** are needed to ensure that believers have access to Scripture.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

With all the challenges, the Church in Bangladesh remains stable. Some new believers, particularly from indigenous and tribal communities, have come to faith and require Bibles in their own languages. The need is especially pronounced among groups like the Bawn, Santal, Marma, and Tripura, where language barriers prevent many from accessing Scripture. Additionally, many traditional Christians do not own a Bible, further underscoring the need for widespread distribution.

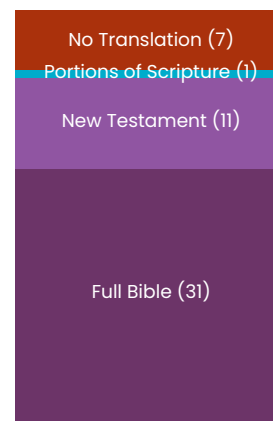
Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

Given the economic and technological landscape of Bangladesh, the primary need is for printed Bibles. However, the demand for audio Bibles is also significant, estimated around 250,000, specifically for new believers who face persecution and cannot openly own a physical Bible. Digital Bibles, while valuable, remain a lower priority due to limited internet access.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Bangladesh's linguistic diversity presents a significant challenge to Bible access. While Bengali is the dominant language, many tribal Christians speak other languages, making Bible translations essential for their spiritual growth. Among the 50 languages spoken in the country, only **31** have a complete Bible translation, while **11** have only the New Testament, and **1** has limited portions of Scripture. Alarmingly, **7 languages have no Bible translations at all.**

Efforts to translate the Bible into these remaining languages are critical for reaching the millions of believers and seekers who are still waiting for Scripture they can fully understand. There is an urgent need for translations in languages like Marma, Tripura, and Santal, where large Christian populations remain without access to God's Word in their heart language. Without these translations, entire communities are left spiritually isolated, highlighting the pressing need for ongoing translation projects to bridge this gap.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Bangladesh

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Bangladesh is urgent. More than a logistical challenge, it represents a spiritual hunger and a cry for hope. In a nation where believers face discrimination, economic hardship, and growing pressure from radical Islamic groups, access to Scripture is a lifeline. To bridge this gap, a strategic effort is required—prioritizing **printed and audio Bibles**, expanding **translation projects**, and ensuring that every believer, from the cities to the most remote tribal villages, has the opportunity to engage with God's Word. By meeting this need, we can empower the Church in Bangladesh to stand firm in faith, grow in discipleship, and bring the gospel to those who have yet to hear.

