



Bible Access List

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

Bahrain

Bible Restrictions Rank: **37**
CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **54**
Bible needs estimate between ten and twenty five thousand



An Overview of Bible access in Bahrain

Bahrain's Christian population makes up around 12% of the country's nearly 1.5 million residents, an estimated 184,000 believers. While over 80% of Christians have access to a Bible, this number doesn't tell the full story. Access is highly dependent on considerable factors such as legal status, religious affiliation, and connection to church networks. Deep structural restrictions limit Bible access for non-Christians, while even Christians face regulated channels for obtaining and storing Scripture.

While the law does not criminalize Bible ownership for expatriate Christians, the government maintains tight control over every aspect of access—from importing to distribution. The Bible Society of the Gulf (part of the United Bible Societies) is the only body officially permitted to import Bibles, and churches connected to international partners must follow strict guidelines. If there are delays in importation or issues with customs, access suffers across the entire Christian community. Printing Bibles within Bahrain is not permitted, and storing Bibles is limited to church property and officially recognized Bible centers.

Distribution is another major barrier. While Christians can purchase Bibles through their churches or affiliated bookstores, distribution beyond these boundaries, especially to Muslims, is not allowed. Personal Bible ownership is tolerated for Christian migrant workers, but Muslims are legally prohibited from possessing Scripture. Furthermore, the internet landscape in Bahrain is heavily monitored. While digital Bibles may be available online, uncertainty around surveillance creates hesitation and limits free engagement.

Before we continue, would you take a pause to pray for Bahrain?

How can I pray for Bahrain?

- **Pray for the Body of Christ.** Ask God to strengthen the Christian migrant community and provide wisdom for churches navigating strict access regulations.
- **Pray for Access Breakthroughs.** Pray for favor in logistics, importation, and distribution—especially for smoother coordination between churches and Bible organizations.
- **Pray for Open Doors.** Lift up Bahraini nationals and seekers. Pray for softened hearts and creative ways to share the Gospel legally and safely.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Considerable Access Restrictions

- Import restrictions for part of population
- No Printing
- Storage restrictions for part of population
- Ownership restrictions for part of population
- Distribution restrictions for part of population

Other Limiting Factors

No other factors identified

Bible Shortages Among Believers

Bible ownership is high (over 70%), **estimated** Bible need is between 10 and 25 thousand

Main religion: Islam

Country population: 1,499,000

Christian population:

184,000, 12.26% of total population

World Watch List: #67

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN BAHRAIN?

While Bible access in Bahrain is not entirely prohibited, it comes with caveats—being highly regulated and restricted at multiple levels. While Christians, especially expatriates, may own personal Bibles, the ability to import, store, and distribute Scripture is tightly controlled by the government, limiting broader access, especially for non-Christians and those without church affiliation.

Tight Government Control Over Bible Access

The Bible Society of the Gulf is the only officially recognized body permitted to import Bibles. Churches that maintain formal connections with international bodies may also be allowed to bring in limited quantities under strict guidelines, but these processes are highly regulated and subject to delays.

No local printing of Bibles is allowed, and all storage is confined to church buildings or Bible society facilities. This means that Bibles are only accessible through controlled channels and primarily designated for church congregants.

Legal Barriers for Non-Christians

Access to Bibles is virtually nonexistent for Muslim-background individuals. While expatriate Christians can own and use personal copies of the Bible, Muslims are not permitted to receive, possess, or be given Bibles. Any attempt to distribute Bibles to Muslims is not only illegal but could provoke significant social backlash or legal action.

As a result, outreach is severely restricted, and seekers from a Muslim background face significant barriers to engaging with Scripture.

Subject to Surveillance and Censorship

Distribution of Bibles, whether in print or digital form, is also constrained by surveillance and censorship. Government monitoring of the internet and social media platforms creates an atmosphere of caution.

Christians must exercise self-censorship, particularly with any content that could be perceived as evangelistic or critical of Islam. Public distribution or display of Christian materials is not permitted, and churches cannot openly promote services in Arabic.

Limited Storage and Infrastructure Constraints

Only designated religious institutions are allowed to store Bibles, and these are meant strictly for congregational use. This centralized model of access significantly hampers the availability of Bibles, particularly for individuals without church connections.

Despite a high rate of internet penetration in Bahrain, the fear of surveillance discourages many from accessing digital Bibles freely.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Bahrain

Bahrain	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 →										<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>
Persecution Drivers ↓	Medium	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Not at all	
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 Bahrain, three key forces of persecution operate in tandem to restrict Bible access. These are **Islamic Oppression**, **Clan Oppression**, and **Dictatorial Paranoia**. These forces are fueled by a variety of actors: from government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, extended family, and sometimes even everyday citizens.

The World Watch List of Open Doors 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 Bahrain?

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.



Islamic oppression in Bahrain is deeply embedded in the legal and social fabric. The Constitution technically permits religious freedom, but under the condition that activities align with Islamic customs. Since Islam is the state religion and Sharia is a principal source of legislation, this effectively curtails religious expression outside tightly controlled boundaries.

This oppression is most intense for Muslim Background believers or MBBs. In 2024, there were reports of Bahraini MBBs being physically and mentally abused by family members. These multiple instances usually involve family members, local Islamic clerics, and sometimes even government officials who pressure MBBs to recant their faith. To cite one example, some MBBs were detained briefly by the government—not as part of formal charges, but as a tactic to quell public unrest and coerce them back to Islam.

These pressures translate directly into Bible access issues. MBBs cannot safely own or store Bibles at home, particularly in Shia families, where strict adherence to Islam is expected. Privately possessing a Bible as a MBB—especially if discovered by family—is likely to lead to punishment or social isolation. In addition, poor and low-skilled Christian workers—particularly domestic workers from Asia and Africa—also face abuse. In 2024, at least 10 Christian housemaids were physically or mentally abused, and their faith was noted as a contributing factor to their vulnerability. In such cases, it's best to keep Bibles hidden to avoid being targeted.



Tribal and familial identity is deeply intertwined with religion in society. Conversion is perceived as a betrayal of one's lineage and family honor. Here, extended families and tribal leaders act to pressure or punish MBBs. In 2024, testimonies cited that Christian women face beatings, threats of honor killing, forced marriage, and financial control by male family members.

In such a context, Bible access becomes not just a legal issue but a deeply relational and emotional battleground. Families may confiscate Bibles, isolate MBBs from Christian fellowship, or monitor their communication to ensure they are not engaging with Scripture. For MBBs living in tightly knit communities or family homes, accessing a Bible, whether physical or digital, can come at the cost of safety and belonging.



Bahrain's authoritarian regime enforces broad restrictions on religious freedom, civil society, and digital expression. The government is especially wary of any activity that could appear to challenge public order or Islamic values. Article 23 of the Constitution forbids any action that contradicts "fundamental beliefs of Islamic doctrine," which can be interpreted to include Christian evangelism or public Scripture distribution.

As of 2024, the Bible Society of the Gulf remains the only entity officially allowed to import Bibles. If delays occur, Scripture access across the country suffers. Churches must exercise self-censorship and are discouraged from integrating local MBBs or distributing Bibles beyond their congregations. MBBs may be detained by authorities under vague charges, adding state pressure to the already intense family and social persecution.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN BAHRAIN

Considering the issues of Bible access in Bahrain, it is estimated that between **10,000 – 25,000 Bibles** are needed to meet the needs of the Christian community. However, the challenge lies not in quantity alone, but in the restrictive systems that control how Bibles are imported, stored, and distributed.

Supplying the Word of God to a Declining Church

Compounding this need is the troubling trend of church decline. The Christian population in Bahrain has been shrinking in the last five years primarily because about 99% of Christians in the country are foreign guest workers. Their share of the population has been decreasing hence this is the main reason for the reduction. However, this decline only increases the urgent need for Bibles. A Bible is not only a personal resource but a lifeline in a region where conversions are met with intense social and familial pressure, and public evangelism is restricted.

Bible Formats for Unique Needs

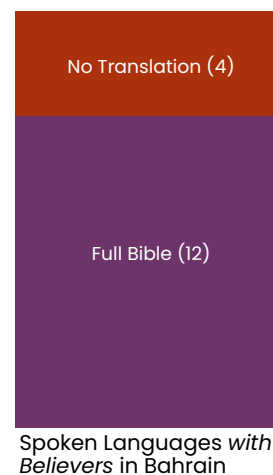
Access to Scripture in Bahrain must be tailored to real-life limitations. **Printed Bibles** remain the highest priority and **audio Bibles** offer a vital supplement for low-literacy users or those who cannot read fluently in the available print languages. However, internet-based access is risky, government monitoring and ambiguity around digital platforms create uncertainty, causing many believers to hesitate before engaging with online Scripture resources.

The Translation Gap

Language also presents a barrier. Christians in Bahrain speak at least 16 different languages, Of these languages:

- only **12** have a full Bible translation.
- None of the remaining languages have a New Testament or even just a portion of Scripture translated

This leaves entire groups without access to God's Word in their heart language. Translation projects must continue to bridge this gap—with only 4 languages remaining.



THE CLARION CALL

Bahrain is often seen as tolerant compared to its neighbors, but this masks the intricate layers of restriction that block Bible access. Christians, especially MBBs and domestic workers, face a web of legal, cultural, and technological constraints that isolate them from Scripture. Behind the statistics is a deep spiritual hunger: not just for information, but for transformation.

This is not just a call for more Bibles, it's a call for strategic but compassionate action. The global Church must rally to overcome legal bottlenecks, support translation initiatives, and fund creative pathways for safe and effective distribution. If we act now, we can equip believers in Bahrain with the truth and hope of God's Word.

