



# Kyrgyzstan

Bible Restrictions Rank: **26**  
**SEVERE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

Bible Shortage Rank: **58**  
**Bible needs estimate between ten and twenty five thousand**



## An Overview of Bible access in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's Christian population makes up just under 4% of its approximately 6.8 million inhabitants, around 260,000 believers in total. Within this small and often overlooked minority, Bible access is severely restricted. Alarming, estimates show that approximately a third of Christians have access to a personal Bible, highlighting an urgent spiritual need amidst rising pressure.

While there are no outright constitutional bans on Bible ownership for Christians, the practical reality is far more complex. The Kyrgyz government maintains a rigid control over religious materials. For non-Christians, importing Bibles is strictly prohibited, with penalties that can include interrogation or worse. Even among Christians, only select registered churches, primarily Russian Orthodox, are permitted to import Bibles, and only for their members, under stringent oversight. For unregistered churches, which represent many Protestant and Evangelical communities, importing, storing, printing, or distributing Bibles is effectively impossible.

Although the law technically allows Bible printing, in practice, permits are rarely granted. The distribution of Bibles is similarly restricted. While registered churches in urban areas may distribute among members, believers in non-registered fellowships or rural communities face high risk. Raids on church gatherings are not uncommon, and confiscation of Bibles is regularly reported, particularly outside Bishkek and in the south.

Members of registered churches may possess Bibles, but even this right is constrained. For unregistered Christians, Bible ownership is dangerous and often kept secret. Muslim Background believers or MBBs, who form a growing but vulnerable segment of the church, face the harshest restrictions. Many are isolated by family, surveilled by authorities, or subjected to social and economic retaliation. For these believers, having a Bible can cost their safety or freedom.

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

### How can I pray for Kyrgyzstan?

- **Strength and Growth for the Church.** Pray for believers across Kyrgyzstan. May they be strengthened in unity and emboldened in witness, even under pressure.
- **Open Access to Bibles.** Ask God to break through the bureaucratic and spiritual strongholds preventing the spread of His Word. Pray for safe, creative pathways—whether through discreet digital distribution, audio formats, or print—to reach every believer.
- **Unity and Partnerships.** Pray for greater collaboration between global ministries and the local church. May these partnerships provide the resources, translations, and distribution strategies needed to ensure every Christian in Kyrgyzstan can own and engage with Scripture.

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

### Bible Access Restrictions

#### Considerable Access Restrictions

- Import restrictions
- Print restrictions
- Storage restrictions
- Ownership restrictions
- Distribution restrictions

### Other Limiting Factors

#### Considerable Other Factors

- Poor
- Extremely poor infrastructure

### Bible Shortages Among Believers

Bible ownership is very low, **estimated** Bible need is between 10 and 25 thousand

**Main religion:** Islam

**Country population:** 6,840,000

**Christian population:**

263,000, 3.84% of total population

**World Watch List:** #47

# WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN KYRGYZSTAN?

## Laws that Restrict Christian Expression

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While Kyrgyzstan's constitution nominally guarantees freedom of religion, in practice, this freedom is highly limited. All religious groups must be officially registered with the government to operate legally. The registration process is arduous. Churches must collect at least 200 signatures, and recently proposed legislation would raise this requirement to 500, a near-impossible number for most congregations.

Unregistered religious activity is prohibited, which blocks churches from distributing Bibles or meeting publicly. The state maintains a list of banned "religiously oriented" groups, and Christian communities report raids, closures, and arbitrary detentions, often under the guise of health or safety inspections.

## Community Pressure and Hostility Toward MBBs

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Beyond legal hurdles, Christians, especially those from a Muslim background, face serious social opposition. MBBs are often shunned, threatened, and, in some cases, beaten or expelled from their families. Local Islamic teachers preach against Christianity, and community leaders frequently incite hostility.

In rural areas, burial of MBBs is often refused by local communities, and children of Christian families may be harassed in school. Evangelism or public sharing of faith is risky and can result in arrest, especially in regions outside of major cities.

## Government Surveillance and Fear of Retaliation

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Churches are closely monitored, and religious materials, particularly Bibles, require government approval before they can be imported or distributed. Churches and seminaries were forcibly closed in the capital, Bishkek, and in the Osh region. Christians have been fined or detained for perceived "illegal missionary activity."

## Cultural Islam and Clan Expectations Intensify Isolation

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Kyrgyz society is culturally Islamic, and clan-based norms strongly influence daily life. MBBs often face collective punishment: they may be locked in their homes, denied inheritance, or forcibly married. The pressure to return to Islam is relentless and often sanctioned by both family and local officials.

In this environment, access to Bibles is not only logistically difficult, but dangerous.

# Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan	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
<b>Persecution Engines →</b>										<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>
<b>Persecution Drivers ↓</b>	Strong	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	Very weak	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	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 Kyrgyzstan, multiple forces of persecution operate simultaneously to restrict Bible access, including **dictatorial paranoia**, **Islamic oppression**, and **clan oppression**. These are fueled by government officials, Muslim religious leaders, clan elders, extended family members, and local community mobs.

The World Watch List by 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 Kyrgyzstan?

## 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.



### Tightened Grip on Churches

Religious activity in Kyrgyzstan is strictly monitored and regulated. All religious groups must register to operate legally. Requiring 200 citizen signatures (with discussions to increase this to 500) has become a threshold unattainable for most congregations who desire to be registered.

In December 2023, several registered churches and a seminary in Bishkek were shut down on dubious technical grounds, such as fire or sanitary code violations. Others were closed in the Osh region. These closures show how the state uses bureaucratic mechanisms to silence and dismantle Christian activity.

To make matters worse, President Japarov signed a controversial law in 2024, allowing authorities to classify organizations as “foreign representatives.” This mirrors Russia’s restrictive “foreign agents” law, enabling further state control over churches, especially those receiving international support.



### Blended Islamic and Clan Oppression: MBBs At High Risk

While the government is secular, Kyrgyz society remains culturally Islamic, especially in rural areas, making life especially difficult for Christians from Muslim backgrounds. MBBs often face severe rejection from their families and local communities. Some are locked up for extended periods, beaten, or expelled from their homes. One example in August 2024 shows two Christian women forcibly evicted by their families due to their faith.



Local Islamic leaders actively preach against Christian MBBs, leading to their expulsion from villages and community isolation. Even in death, MBBs are denied burial in village cemeteries, with families forced to search for alternative burial grounds.

Clan elders, local imams, and community members often pressure believers to renounce their faith and may report any Christian activity to authorities. In one case, one Protestant believer was sentenced to six months in prison for “inciting religious enmity” after sharing his faith online.

## THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN KYRGYZSTAN

Against the backdrop of persecution, poverty, and shrinking religious freedoms, Bible access in Kyrgyzstan remains alarmingly low. With an estimated Christian population of 263,000, this means that between **up to 25,000** additional Bibles are urgently needed to bring hope and spark growth.

For many believers, especially new MBBs or isolated house church members, Scripture is a lifeline they cannot afford or safely obtain.

### A Declining Church, An Urgent Window

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The need for Bibles is made even more urgent by the church’s recent decline. Over the past five years, Kyrgyzstan’s Christian population has declined, a troubling sign in a region where spiritual hunger continues, but many believers are leaving due to persecution, emigration, or lack of support.

With churches closing and public Christian witness under increasing pressure, the window to strengthen and preserve the church through Scripture is rapidly narrowing. Now is the time to invest in believers who remain by ensuring they are anchored in God’s Word.

# Bible Formats for Unique Needs

For many believers in Kyrgyzstan, **audio Bibles are the most accessible** and preferred format, especially for those in rural areas or from a Muslim background where reading Christian material may arouse suspicion. **Print Bibles still play a foundational role** in discipleship, but challenges such as government registration laws and literacy barriers make it crucial to offer multiple formats.

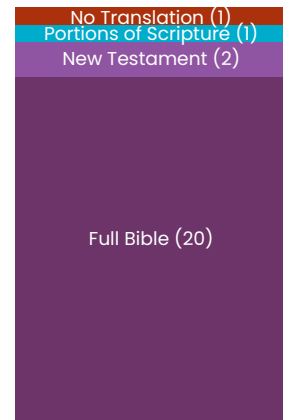
For many, hearing the Bible in their heart language is not just a preference. It's the only viable way to engage with Scripture in secret or on the move.

## The Translation Gap

Christians in Kyrgyzstan speak at least 24 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **20** currently have a full Bible translation.
- **2** languages have only the New Testament.
- **1** has only a portion of Scripture translated.
- **1 language remains with no translation at all**

These gaps leave entire communities without access to the full counsel of God's Word. In a nation marked by ethnic diversity and rising authoritarianism, accelerating Bible translation is essential for reaching every believer in their mother tongue.

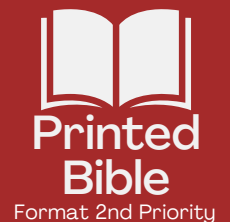


Spoken Languages with Believers in Kyrgyzstan

# THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Kyrgyzstan is not just about numbers—it's about preserving faith under pressure and giving believers the strength to stand. Every Bible represents a voice of truth in a climate of fear, a light in a region growing dimmer with repression.

For the global Church, this is a defining opportunity to respond—not with passivity, but with purpose. By supporting the distribution of Bibles in print and audio, investing in translation efforts, and partnering with local churches, we can ensure that the believers of Kyrgyzstan are not forgotten, and that the light of God's Word can shine even in the darkest places.



The Bible Access List (BAL) and the Country Profile utilizes data from various primary and secondary sources. Key resources include the survey data, World Christian Database, Open Doors' World Watch List files, World Bank development indicators, and Bible translation data from multiple organizations. For a complete list of data sources and links, please refer to the BAL Methodology available at [Bibleaccesslist.org](http://Bibleaccesslist.org).