



Bible Access List

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

Libya

Bible Restrictions Rank: **7**
EXTREME ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **65**
Bible needs estimate is less than ten thousand



An Overview of Bible access in Libya

In the heart of North Africa, Libya is a nation of rich heritage, marred by more than a decade of instability, and for Christians, a place of profound isolation and danger. With a population of nearly 7 million, the Christian community is extremely small, estimated at just half a percent, or approximately 35,500 people. Among these, it's believed that only a fraction of believers have access to a Bible.

Accessing the Bible in Libya is not just difficult; it is virtually impossible and dangerously illegal. Both Libyan nationals and expatriates are forbidden from bringing or possessing personal copies of Scripture. The possession, importation, or distribution of Bibles, especially in Arabic, is considered a serious offense and can carry life-threatening consequences, including imprisonment or even execution.

Even foreign Christians, such as Sub-Saharan migrants and Egyptian Copts, are not spared from the consequences. There are documented incidents where we see migrant Christians face heightened persecution, including extortion, kidnapping, torture, and forced conversion by radical groups and corrupt officials. Churches that once served these groups are now either shuttered or non-functional, operating only under extreme caution, if at all.

There is no centralized government in Libya. The country is divided between eastern and western factions, with radical Islamic groups—some even institutionalized into local power structures—operating with impunity. Sharia law dominates both regions, and Muslim Background believers or MBBs face the gravest threats. Those found practicing Christianity may be tortured into recanting their faith. In one known case, a MBB was sentenced to death for apostasy.

Digital access does not offer much reprieve. Government surveillance and community monitoring exists, meaning that even viewing Scripture online can trigger arrest or worse. In a country where pressure to conform to Islam permeates every level of life—family, community, workplace, education—the risk of being found with Scripture, whether printed or digital, is overwhelming.

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

How can I pray for Libya?

- **For Protection.** Pray for the safety of Libyan Christians as they navigate the harsh realities of following Christ in secret. Ask for God's covering as they seek ways to access and meditate on Scripture discreetly.
- **For Governmental Change.** Lift up Libya's fragmented leadership. Pray for reform and a breaking of the spiritual and political strongholds that criminalize Christianity. Ask for hearts to be softened and laws to shift in favor of religious freedom.
- **For Strategic Bible Distribution.** Despite overwhelming obstacles, pray for God-inspired strategies that make it possible to bring the Bible to those who are seeking truth. Ask for creative, secure, and effective methods to arise—methods no government or militia can stop.
- **For the Growth of the Libyan Church.** Though small, the Church in Libya is not forgotten by God. Pray that those few believers would be strengthened in unity, bold in faith, and nourished by the Word—however they are able to receive it.

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

Bible Access Restrictions



Extreme Access Restrictions

- No Importing
- No Printing
- No Storage
- No Ownership
- No distribution

Other Limiting Factors



Considerable Other Factors

- Extremely poor infrastructure
- 50-70% of population access to electricity

Bible Shortages Among Believers



- Bible ownership is low, **estimated** Bible need is <10 thousand
- Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Islam

Country population: 6,964,000

Christian population:

35,500, 0.51% of total population

World Watch List: #4

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN LIBYA?

Lawlessness Enables Persecution

Libya's ongoing state of anarchy has created fertile ground for persecution. With no functioning central government, law enforcement is virtually absent. Militant Islamic groups, local militias, and organized criminal networks operate unchecked, often collaborating in targeting Christians. In such a climate, possessing a Bible or practicing the Christian faith openly is dangerous, especially for migrants and local MBBs.

MBBs Live in Constant Fear

For Libyans who leave Islam to follow Christ, the risks are extreme. Conversion is viewed as both religious apostasy and tribal betrayal. MBBs are often forced to keep their faith entirely secret. Family members and community leaders may impose intense pressure, which can include threats, forced divorce, social isolation, and, in some cases, physical violence. Owning or reading a Bible in this context can be life-threatening.

Migrants Face Double Discrimination

Sub-Saharan African Christians in Libya are among the most vulnerable. As migrants, they are often treated as expendable. As Christians, they are singled out for abuse. Many are intercepted en route to Europe and imprisoned in overcrowded detention centers where reports of rape, torture, and forced labor are widespread. Christian migrants are frequently identified by their faith and punished more harshly than others—sometimes by having their Bibles destroyed or being forced to renounce their beliefs.

Churches Are Restricted and Isolated

Public expressions of Christianity are tightly controlled. Only a few church buildings remain, mostly Catholic and Orthodox; and even these face constant risk of attack. The Coptic Orthodox churches in Tripoli, Benghazi, and Misrata are no longer functioning, while the only active Roman Catholic church in Tripoli serves a dwindling expatriate population. Libyans are forbidden from attending church services, and churches cannot accept or baptize MBBs. Displaying Christian symbols or conducting outreach is prohibited and can result in criminal charges.

The Digital Barrier

While the majority of Libyans have internet access, Christians must exercise extreme caution online. A recently enforced Anti-Cybercrime Law allows authorities to block websites, monitor online activity, and prosecute users. MBBs caught browsing Christian content risk exposure, arrest, or worse. Even foreign Christians face threats if they post or share religious material on social media.

A Climate of Impunity

With power fragmented and justice almost absent, perpetrators of violence against Christians act without fear of consequences. Whether it's family-driven violence, militia checkpoints, or abuse in detention centers, there is no meaningful legal recourse.

In many parts of Libya, simply being known as a Christian, let alone owning a Bible, is enough to make someone a target.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Libya

Libya	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 ↓	Very strong	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	
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 Libya, multiple forces of persecution overlap to create an environment of fear and suppression for Christians seeking access to the Bible. These include **Islamic oppression, clan oppression, and organized corruption and crime**. These are fueled by extended government officials, radical religious leaders, political factions, violent groups, armed militias, criminal networks, down to family members and normal citizens. Each can operate with near-total impunity in a lawless state.

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 Libya?

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.



The Core Barrier to Bible Access

Islamic oppression is the most powerful force restricting Christian activity and Scripture access in Libya. Deeply embedded Islamic culture, amplified by radical Salafi and Wahhabi teachings, leads to intense pressure on MBBs, especially from their own families.

Local imams and radical Islamic leaders openly incite hostility toward Christians, particularly those from Sub-Saharan Africa. In December 2021, authorities launched a nationwide crackdown on Christmas celebrations, calling them an “imported holiday” contrary to Islamic morals. These actions send a clear message: Christian presence is not tolerated.

In March 2023, at least six Libyan Christians were arrested in Tripoli for converting from Islam and allegedly evangelizing online. They were tortured in detention, with authorities attempting to force them to renounce their faith. In another chilling instance, a Libyan MBB was sentenced to death for apostasy in September 2022; and to this day, he remains in prison with his case pending before the Supreme Court. Radical militias like the Madkhali Salafists, operating on both sides of Libya’s east-west divide, have embedded themselves in local governance and security forces. In places like Sirte and parts of Tripoli, known for extremist presence, being found with a Bible or Christian literature is enough to provoke arrest, beatings, or worse.



The Hidden Hand of Familial Control

In Libya’s conservative and tribal society, religion is not just a belief system; it’s a marker of identity and family honor. Converting from Islam to Christianity is considered an act of betrayal against one’s family and tribe. MBBs are disowned, imprisoned in their homes, or in some cases, subjected to forced marriages. In 2023, there were examples of known female MBBs who were married off to strict Muslim men or kept in isolation within their homes.

The threat isn’t theoretical. Another example was during a crackdown back in March 2023, where family members of arrested Libyan Christians were also interrogated, suggesting pressure extended beyond the individual to the entire household. Fear of being discovered forces many MBBs to hide even from their own children, never sharing their faith for fear it might be accidentally exposed.



Scripture Targeted in a Lawless Market

In a country fragmented by civil war and governed by armed factions, criminal syndicates thrive, and Christians suffer. These networks are deeply entangled with local militias and even some official authorities, blurring the line between political power and predatory crime.

The targeting of Christians is not incidental. Human traffickers reportedly treat Christian migrants more harshly than Muslim ones. This was confirmed in a February 2020 report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, noting that Muslim smugglers often show preferential treatment to Muslim migrants while Christians are more frequently subjected to forced labor and sexual violence.

In Libya's overcrowded detention centers, especially near Tripoli, Christian migrants are singled out for abuse. A report from July 2021 by Amnesty International documented that migrants identified as Christian were routinely beaten, raped, and in some cases, had their Bibles confiscated and destroyed. One Eritrean Christian recounted how guards threw away his Bible and cross necklace before whipping him with electric cables.

In 2023 alone, at least 13 Christian worship spaces, mostly makeshift chapels used by Sub-Saharan African groups, were attacked or destroyed by unknown groups, presumed to be linked to radical militias or local gangs.

Christian migrants, especially from countries like Eritrea, Nigeria, and Ghana, are targeted for kidnapping and extortion. In 2024, several Sub-Saharan Christian migrants were abducted and held for ransom. Some had their families back home contacted with video footage of them being tortured.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN LIBYA

The need in Libya is far more than urgent; it's an emergency. A number **less than 10,000 Bibles** can already bridge the gap and strengthen Christ-followers. But in a country where even possessing a Bible can mean imprisonment, torture, or worse, these figures reflect far more than scarcity; they represent spiritual isolation and risk. Hence, the problem must be solved with courage and strategy

A Church Slowly Growing That Needs More of God's Word

Despite the hostile environment, the Church in Libya is still growing, no matter how small. This quiet growth, driven largely by underground MBBs and resilient migrant believers, signals a clear opportunity: the seed of faith is spreading, and it must be nourished. Without access to Scripture, these believers remain spiritually malnourished and dangerously vulnerable in their discipleship journey.

Bible Formats for Unique Needs

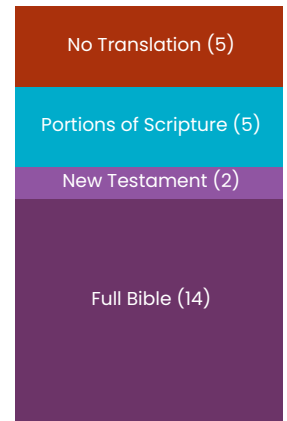
In terms of format, **audio Bibles are the most critical**, followed by **video formats** that can discreetly reach believers through mobile devices. Print remains risky for many, though still necessary for a few safe pockets.

The Translation Gap

In Libya, even in the realm of translation, access is limited. Christians speak at least 26 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **14** have the full Bible translated.
- **2** have the New Testament only.
- **5** have just a portion of Scripture.
- **That leaves 5 more languages that still have no Scripture at all**

This leaves entire groups and communities without access to the Word of God.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Libya

THE CLARION CALL

Now is the time for the global Church to respond. The need for Bibles in Libya is not simply a call to solve Bible access. It's a cry for help from believers trapped in the shadows of silence and suffering.

Let us rise with urgency, with courage, and with faith to equip every believer in Libya with the Bible, especially in a format and language they can understand.

The Body of Christ must act now. Every soul in Libya deserves to encounter the power of the Gospel and the light of Scripture.

