



Bible Access List

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

Myanmar

Bible Restrictions Rank: **46**
CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **32**
Bible needs estimate between two hundred fifty and five hundred thousand



An Overview of Bible Access in Myanmar

In Myanmar, a nation of nearly 55 million, Christians make up almost 9% of the population, or roughly 4.7 million believers. Yet despite their numbers, access to the Bible remains severely limited due to considerable restrictions. Only a little over half of Christians have access to a Bible. This leaves millions without daily access to Scripture, highlighting a deeply unmet spiritual need across the country.

Bible access in Myanmar is entangled in a web of restrictions. Legally importing Bibles is very difficult and requires the necessary permits which in reality are very difficult to obtain and with many delays. Those who attempt it often face burdensome taxation or are forced to resort to bribery. Although some printing of Bibles occurs in certain areas, widespread and unrestricted printing is not feasible. Churches, especially in rural or conflict-affected areas, are frequently raided by military forces, and when this happens, Bibles are often confiscated or burned. In Buddhist-majority areas, Christians face added scrutiny, and converts are particularly at risk—often forced to read their Bibles in secret due to community surveillance and the fear of being reported.

Online access to Bibles remains technically possible, but it is hindered by digital and economic divides. Although literacy is relatively high, barely half of the population has internet connectivity. The escalating civil war has also displaced nearly 3 million people, including large numbers of Christians, many of whom now live in IDP camps with restricted movement and little or no access to Scripture. In this climate, digital tools are insufficient substitutes for printed materials, which remain a lifeline for spiritual growth and corporate gatherings.

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

How can I pray for Myanmar?

- **Global Partnerships and Provision.** May God raise up both international collaborations and local efforts aimed at distributing Bibles in Myanmar. Pray for an abundance of resources and innovative strategies to overcome logistical barriers, enabling the seamless flow of Scriptures.
- **Protection and End of Conflicts.** As Myanmar grapples with internal strife and the challenges it poses to practicing faith, let's pray for God's divine protection for Christians living in conflict-ridden areas. Pray that the hostilities between the Myanmar Army and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) will finally cease, and that peace will prevail, allowing for the safe practice of faith and the unhindered access of Bibles.
- **More Opportunities to Access and Share Scripture.** Let's pray for the Body of Christ in Myanmar to access Scripture despite the difficulties. May they find ways to get their hands on Bibles despite the conflicts and barriers they face.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Some Access Restrictions

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

Other Limiting Factors

Considerable Other Factors

- Very poor
- Poor internet access
- Extremely poor infrastructure

Bible Shortages Among Believers

Bible ownership is low, **estimated** Bible need is between 250 and 500 thousand

Main religion: Buddhism

Country population: 54,965,000

Christian population:

4,760,000, 8.66% of total population

World Watch List: #13

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN MYANMAR?

Despite Myanmar's rich Christian heritage and sizable-but-minority population of believers, formidable barriers persist to hinder Bible access, especially in areas affected by conflict and systemic religious discrimination.

Armed Conflict and Displacement

Since the military coup in 2021, Myanmar has plunged deeper into civil war, with heavy fighting concentrated in predominantly Christian regions such as Chin, Kachin, Kayah, and Karen states. Churches, often central to community life, have been bombed, looted, or completely destroyed, with dozens of incidents documented in the past year alone. These attacks have forced tens of thousands of Christians, especially in the region of Kachin, to flee into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps or remote areas. In these camps, access to Scripture is scarce and often non-existent.



State Censorship of Christian Materials

The government imposes strict control over religious publications. All Christian materials must pass through the Ministry of Religious Affairs for approval, and owning a printing press is heavily restricted. Publishing Bibles in minority languages is nearly impossible, and importing Scripture faces bureaucratic hurdles. These restrictions severely limit Bible availability, especially for Christians in rural and ethnic minority regions.

Social Ostracism and Community Discrimination

In Buddhist-majority areas, Christians, especially converts, face severe social exclusion and hostility. Many are denied access to communal water sources, pressured to participate in Buddhist rituals, and excluded from community meetings and aid programs. Christian business owners experience boycotts, and children from Christian families often suffer harassment in schools.

Surveillance and Crackdowns on Gatherings

Christian gatherings, Bible studies, and worship services are heavily monitored by state authorities and local informant networks. Churches are required to report weekly activities to the government, and gatherings without official permission are at risk of being raided or violently dispersed. This surveillance creates an atmosphere of fear and forces many believers to worship and study Scripture in secret.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Myanmar

Myanmar	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
Persecution Engines →									
Persecution Drivers ↓	Weak	Very strong	Strong	Very weak	Weak	Weak	Not at all	Very strong	Medium
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									

Reference

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.

Myanmar presents one of the most volatile and hostile environments for Christians today. The country's persecution dynamics are driven by an intense blend of **dictatorial paranoia** and **religious nationalism**, compounded by **ethno-religious hostility** and **organized corruption and crime**—each playing a role in restricting Bible access.

Now, we can go deeper to ask the question: how do these forces affect Bible access? Furthermore, where can we pinpoint the problem so we can address the need and demand for Bibles in Myanmar?

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.



At the heart of this crisis is a military regime determined to maintain control at all costs. Since the 2021 coup, the army has systematically targeted Christian communities in Chin, Kachin, Kayah, and Shan states—bombing churches, destroying homes, and arresting pastors and aid workers. In April 2024 alone, five churches and an entire Christian village of 400 homes in Chin state were razed. These attacks have forced tens of thousands of Christians into displacement camps or remote jungles, where access to Bibles is virtually nonexistent, severing communities from vital spiritual nourishment.

The regime also suppresses religious expression through bureaucratic control. All Christian gatherings must be reported in advance to local authorities, even in areas outside military control. Churches are heavily monitored, and new Bible translations or printed materials, especially in ethnic minority languages, are subject to extreme censorship. Christian leaders risk imprisonment or worse if caught distributing Scripture without explicit permission, making Bible access a dangerous act of resistance.



Beyond state-driven oppression, radical Buddhist groups such as Ma Ba Tha fuel religious nationalism. Though officially banned, Ma Ba Tha continues to exert heavy influence in villages and local governments, often pushing for "Buddhist-only" policies. Converts from Buddhism to Christianity are particularly vulnerable—frequently expelled from their homes, denied access to essential resources like water, and forced to live in secrecy. Families, neighbors, and mobs pressure converts to renounce their faith, creating an environment where owning or sharing a Bible is seen as an open act of betrayal.



This persecution is intensified by deep-seated ethno-religious hostility, where conversion to Christianity is viewed not merely as a religious choice but as an act of ethnic betrayal. In regions where Christians are minorities both religiously and ethnically, local leaders and networks actively block aid, restrict public services, and deny communal resources. For example, in Kyaukpalin village, Christian families were deliberately excluded from a government electricity project.



Meanwhile, organized corruption and criminal enterprises form another major barrier. Many Bible-hungry communities are located in resource-rich regions like Kachin and Shan, saturated with jade, timber, and illicit drug trade. These commodities fuel violent competition between the military, insurgent groups, and criminal networks. Christians who oppose or obstruct these economic interests, or who simply inhabit contested territories, face harassment, eviction, and coercion.

In some cases, the military itself has distributed drugs among youth in Christian villages, destabilizing communities and making ministry work—and by extension, Bible access—extraordinarily difficult and dangerous. As violence escalates over control of these territories, the hope of providing Bibles to these believers grows dimmer unless external intervention can break through these hardened barriers.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN MYANMAR

Despite a long Christian heritage and the faithful presence of believers in ethnic minority regions, access to the Bible remains critically limited in Myanmar. To meet the immediate need of the church, an estimate of **at least two hundred fifty thousand printed Bibles** are urgently required.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

The urgency is compounded by the fact that Myanmar's church is expanding slowly in the last five years, despite fierce persecution and widespread displacement. As more people turn to Christ, particularly among the Karen, Chin, and Kachin ethnic groups, the demand for God's Word grows. Yet, for many new believers, there are simply not enough Bibles to go around. Churches are often forced to share limited copies among dozens of members, and in IDP camps, access to any Scripture at all is rare.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

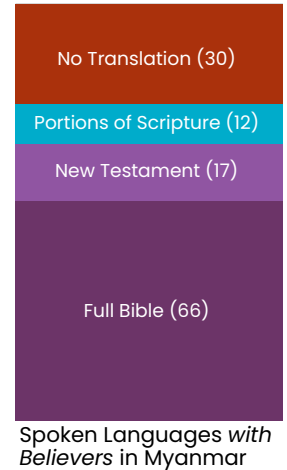
In terms of format, **printed Bibles** are the greatest need, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas where internet access is unreliable or non-existent. **Audio Bibles** and **digital formats** are helpful complements in some areas since accessing the internet is generally safe.

The Translation Gap

Christians speak at least 125 languages in Myanmar. Of these languages:

- Only **66** have a full Bible translation
- **17** languages have only the New Testament
- **12** have partial Scripture
- **30** languages have zero Scripture translation

This linguistic gap reflects a broader spiritual disparity: many ethnic Christians, particularly in border regions, have never had access to a Bible in their heart language. In a country where one's ethnic identity is deeply entwined with faith and community, the absence of Scripture in these languages leaves believers disconnected from God's promises in the language that speaks most deeply to their soul.



THE CLARION CALL

This is a clarion call to the global Church: Myanmar's Christians are suffering not only from war, displacement, and systemic injustice, but also from a silent famine of God's Word. In a time of intensifying spiritual and physical conflict, access to the Bible is considered a lifeline for millions of people.

The church around the world must rise in urgent solidarity, helping place the living Word of God into the hands of those crying out for hope, guidance, and truth in Myanmar.

The time to act is now.

