



# Mozambique

Bible Restrictions Rank: **31**  
**SEVERE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

Bible Shortage Rank: **8**  
**Bible needs estimate between three and five million**



## An Overview of Bible access in Mozambique

Mozambique's Christian population makes up more than half of its nearly 35 million people—an estimated 20 million believers in total. Yet barely one-third of these believers are believed to have access to a Bible due to severe restrictions. This spiritual shortfall points to a critical need for Scripture across the nation, especially as the church continues to grow amidst significant adversity and pressure.

While there are no blanket legal restrictions on Bible ownership in Mozambique, that fact can be misleading. A closer look reveals a deeply divided landscape. In the southern regions, access to Bibles may appear relatively open, particularly in the capital Maputo. However, in the northern provinces—home to over 18 million people and roughly 53% of Mozambique's Christians—conditions are drastically different. There, extremist violence, especially from the Islamic State-affiliated al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah (ASWJ), has made Bible importation and distribution dangerous, even deadly. Reports show that Bibles have been burned, confiscated, or hidden for profit, and those found possessing or distributing them may face harsh consequences.

Making matters worse, Mozambique is still reeling from a prolonged conflict that has displaced more than a million people. Ongoing insurgencies in the north have intensified in recent years, with Christian communities deliberately targeted in brutal attacks. Churches have been torched, pastors abducted, and believers killed simply for following Christ. The violence, fueled by a combination of Islamic extremism, organized crime, and corruption, makes daily Christian life, including access to the Bible, fraught with risk and fear.

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

### How can I pray for Mozambique?

- **Safety and Protection.** With the shadow of extremism looming over Christian communities, especially in areas affected by insurgent activities, pray for divine protection. May God's hand shield believers as they seek to access and share Scripture.
- **Provision and Global Support.** Let's ask for global partnerships to rise up and bring Bibles to Mozambique—not just in print, but also through audio and digital formats where safe. Pray for creative, sustainable strategies to reach even the most remote and restricted regions.
- **Peace and End to Violence.** Pray for an end to the spread of terror by groups like al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah. Ask God to bring lasting peace to the northern provinces so the Gospel can be freely shared without fear.






### Bible Access Restrictions

#### Some Access Restrictions



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

### Other Limiting Factors

#### Extreme Other Factors

-  Extremely Poor
-  Very poor internet access
-  Poor infrastructure
-  <50% of population access to electricity
-  50-70% literacy


### Bible Shortages Among Believers

-  Bible ownership is very low, **estimated** Bible need is between 3 and 5 million
-  Impacted by armed conflicts

**Main religion:** Christianity

**Country population:** 34,858,000

**Christian population:**

 19,973,000, 57.30% of total population

**World Watch List: #37**

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

# WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN MOZAMBIQUE?

## Violent Extremism in the North

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Christians in Mozambique face significant barriers to accessing Bibles due to a combination of violent extremism, systemic corruption, and legal and social constraints. The most immediate and severe threat comes from Islamic State-affiliated militants operating primarily in the northern Cabo Delgado province. Since 2017, these extremist groups have launched repeated attacks on Christian villages, burning churches, abducting believers, and forcibly displacing entire communities. In early 2024 alone, coordinated assaults in the Mocímboa da Praia district left at least ten Christians dead and over 200 homes destroyed, including churches. These acts are part of a broader campaign explicitly aimed at Christians.

## Criminal Networks and Corruption

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Beyond the violence, organized crime and corruption pose additional obstacles. Drug trafficking networks—some of which are linked to jihadist financing—have targeted Christian leaders and churches that work with youth or speak out against criminal activity. In these environments, Christian expression and outreach efforts are viewed as threats, placing believers in the crosshairs of both criminals and extremists.

## Bureaucratic Restrictions and State Surveillance

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Christians also face bureaucratic and legal roadblocks. The state imposes complex church registration requirements and closely monitors religious activity, particularly in areas perceived to be politically sensitive. Surveillance, along with pressure to conform to government narratives, limits the ability of churches and Christian organizations to function freely. These limitations are exacerbated in regions where Christians are a minority, especially for Muslim Background believers or MBBs, who often face ostracism or violent retaliation from their families and communities.

## Poverty and Infrastructure Gaps

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Furthermore, widespread poverty and poor infrastructure restrict access to Bibles in both print and digital formats. Nearly 80% of the population remains offline, and many regions lack electricity, making it difficult to access Scripture through conventional means.

Even in safer areas, believers may lack the financial means to purchase a Bible due to Mozambique's high poverty rate, which affects the majority of the population.

# Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Mozambique

Mozambique	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	Medium	Weak	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	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										

In Mozambique, multiple forces of persecution operate simultaneously to restrict Bible access, including **Islamic oppression, organized corruption and crime, dictatorial paranoia, and clan oppression.** These are fueled by violent jihadist groups, organized criminal networks, government authorities, and local clan leaders—creating a volatile and hostile environment for Christians, particularly in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

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 Mozambique?

## 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.



### Jihadist Campaigns to Eradicate Christianity

The most severe persecution engine in Mozambique is Islamic oppression, primarily driven by extremist violence in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Since 2017, the region has become a battleground, with Islamic State-affiliated militants (ASWJ) systematically targeting Christian communities.

In January 2024, militants launched a coordinated series of attacks under a campaign titled “**Kill Them Wherever You Find Them**”, explicitly aimed at Christians. The violence began on January 3 in Ntotoe village, where three Christians were killed, and over 60 homes and one church were burned down. Additional attacks in Chimbanga and another village left six more Christians dead and over 110 homes destroyed.

These acts weren't isolated. Throughout 2024, Christian homes and businesses were deliberately burned, and entire communities displaced. Terrorists often separate villagers by religious identity before executing attacks. In September 2023, 11 Christians were executed in Naquitengue after jihadists separated them from Muslims.

Bible access in these zones is virtually impossible. Believers have fled with nothing, and those who remain face the daily risk of abduction, forced conversion, or death simply for possessing Scripture.



### **Drug-Fueled Intimidation Against the Church**

Mozambique's porous northern ports have long been exploited by drug trafficking networks and armed criminal groups. These cartels often work in tandem with jihadist militants to fund insurgency efforts. Churches that speak out against drug use or provide youth outreach programs face direct threats and acts of violence.

Throughout 2023 and into 2024, Christian workers in Cabo Delgado and surrounding areas who challenged the influence of organized crime, especially through anti-drug youth programs, were targeted for harassment and physical attacks. Christian businesses were boycotted or burned, and pastors involved in moral teachings about corruption and drug abuse faced threats to their lives.

These conditions make it highly dangerous for Christians to distribute Bibles or even gather for study and worship. Where church influence is seen as a threat to criminal profits, Scripture becomes a casualty of control.



### **: State Control Through Regulation and Surveillance**

While Mozambique's constitution affirms religious freedom, in practice, government control over civil society remains tight. The state imposes burdensome registration processes for churches and closely monitors religious organizations.

Christian leaders have reported being coerced into aligning with government policies, with penalties for dissent. In recent years, including during the 2023–2024 election period, churches critical of government corruption or injustice faced increased surveillance and intimidation.

Some pastors have been denied exit visas or placed in re-education camps for up to three years, simply for voicing opposition or standing up against persecution. These heavy-handed tactics suppress open distribution of Bibles and restrict Christian organizations from importing or distributing Scripture materials without government scrutiny.



## Cultural Resistance to Christian Growth in Rural Communities

In remote, tribal regions of Mozambique, particularly where traditional African religious systems dominate, Christianity is often viewed as a threat to cultural cohesion. Clan leaders, who frequently double as spiritual leaders, resist the spread of Christianity and retaliate against MBBs.

In 2024, multiple reports detailed how evangelistic efforts by local Christians in rural areas were met with intense social pressure, forced isolation, and threats from ethnic or tribal elders. MBBs in these areas risk being ostracized, denied access to land or community support, and barred from participating in local rituals or communal life.

This resistance undermines church planting efforts and makes Bible distribution a socially dangerous act. Churches that try to establish themselves in such regions face formal and informal blockades, severely limiting Scripture access among the unreached.

# THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN MOZAMBIQUE

Bible access in Mozambique remains critically low despite the large Christian population. Many believers, especially in northern provinces affected by insurgent violence and displacement, lack the most basic access to Scripture. For a nation of nearly 20 million Christians, the need translates into an estimate of up to **5 million Bibles**. This can make a huge difference to bridge the gap and spark hope to Christians in Mozambique.

## A Growing Church, Increasing Demand

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This need is further amplified by the rapid growth of the church. Over the past five years, the Christian population has expanded, with hundreds of thousands of new believers joining the body of Christ. These growing congregations require more than community. They need the Bible to anchor their faith, foster discipleship, and build resilience amid persecution and poverty.

## Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

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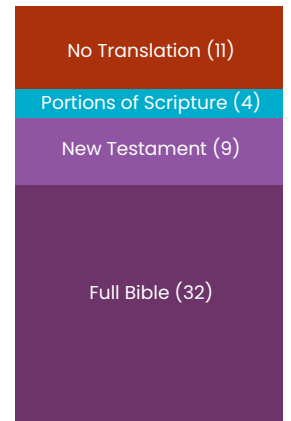
In terms of Bible delivery formats, **printed Bibles** are the highest priority due to widespread digital limitations. Majority of the population remains offline, and nearly one-third lacks consistent access to electricity, rendering digital Bibles inaccessible to most. **Audio Bibles** offer a critical alternative, especially in areas with low literacy or displacement.

# The Translation Gap

Language diversity also presents a significant challenge. Of the 56 languages spoken by Christians in Mozambique:

- Only **32** have full Bible translations
- **9** have only the New Testament
- **4** have only portions of Scripture
- **11 languages still have no Bible translation at all**

This means millions are unable to read God’s Word in their heart language—a barrier that urgently demands attention from Bible translators and missions teams.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Mozambique

## THE CLARION CALL

The cry for Bibles in Mozambique is more than a statistic. It is the cry of believers facing violence, displacement, and spiritual isolation. It is the prayer of pastors rebuilding churches from ashes. It is the longing of new believers hungry for truth.

As the church continues to grow in one of Africa’s most fragile regions, now is the time to respond. We must rally the global Church to act—through Scripture translation, diverse format distribution, and sustained partnership.

Together, we can ensure that every believer in Mozambique has access to the life-giving Word of God.



**2.9%**  
Annual Church  
Growth



Bibles needed for both  
**Believers  
& Seekers**



**3-5 Million**  
Bible needs estimate



**Printed  
Bible**  
Preferred Format



**Audio  
Bible**  
Format 2nd Priority