



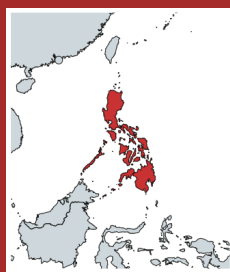
Bible Access List

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

Philippines

Bible Restrictions Rank: **77**
MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible shortage has been confirmed



An Overview of Bible Access in Philippines

The Philippines is home to nearly 120 million people, with around 90% identifying as Christians. This makes the Philippines the most Christian-majority country in Asia and the third-largest Catholic population in the world. Yet despite the country's deep-rooted Christian heritage and religious freedom protections, research indicates that only around half of believers have Bible access. This means millions of Filipino Christians go without regular contact with God's Word.

Legally, there are no restrictions in the Philippines. In fact, the constitution upholds freedom of religion, and the broader cultural environment is deeply shaped by Christian faith, with over 80% of Filipinos favoring biblical influence on national laws. However, practical and regional challenges hinder widespread access to Scripture.

One major area of concern is the southern island of Mindanao, particularly the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), which includes over 4 million people. This also includes the Sulu province, which operates under similar constraints despite being outside BARMM. In these areas, Bible printing and storage are avoided due to cultural sensitivities and fear of backlash from the Muslim community, though Bibles are accessible through nearby provinces. When it comes to personal ownership, Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) often face strong opposition from family and community, adding another layer of restriction. In addition to BARMM and Sulu, three provinces in Zamboanga require special permits to distribute Bibles. Altogether, almost 8% of the population lives in regions where Bible access is moderately restricted due to social, legal, or religious tensions. This still constitutes millions of people without access to the Word of God.

These challenges are compounded by ongoing conflict in Mindanao. Although peace efforts are underway, violence from extremist groups like Abu Sayyaf, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and remnants of other insurgent movements continues to threaten safety and stability. Christians in these areas have been subjected to bombings, church attacks, forced displacement, and harassment, all of which obstruct their ability to gather and access Scripture.

Economically, nearly 28% of Filipinos live in poverty, particularly in rural and conflict-prone areas. For many, purchasing a Bible is not financially feasible. However, digital distribution holds promise, especially with the Philippines having one of the highest social media usage rates globally. This presents unique opportunities to expand Bible access through platforms already widely used, especially by the youth.

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

How can I pray for Philippines?

- **Provision for Bible Shortage.** Pray for the substantial needs in Bible distribution, particularly in impoverished areas and regions facing resistance. Ask for the Lord's intervention in filling this vast need.
- **Global Partnerships and Innovation.** Let's seek God's guidance in fostering global partnerships and innovative solutions that can effectively address and overcome the logistical challenges of Bible distribution in the Philippines, especially addressing the issues faced in the southern island of Mindanao.
- **Economic Breakthrough and Blessing.** Pray for economic growth and prosperity that could enhance the living standards of all Filipinos, making spiritual resources like Bibles more accessible to the broader population.

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

Bible Access Restrictions



Minimal Access Restrictions



Print restrictions for part of population



Storage restrictions for part of population



Ownership restrictions for part of population



Distribution restrictions for part of population

Other Limiting Factors



Some Other Factors



Pockets of poverty

Bible Shortages Among Believers



Bibles are needed for believers and seekers



Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Christianity

Country population: 119,106,000

Christian population:



107,061,000, 89.89% of total population

World Watch List: #78

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN PHILIPPINES?

Despite being the only Christian-majority nation in Southeast Asia, Bible access in the Philippines faces distinct regional and socio-political barriers—especially in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). In this region, Christians live as a minority under a unique Tri-Justice system that blends Sharia law, civil law, and tribal law. While Christianity is openly practiced in most parts of the country, believers in BARMM encounter systemic obstacles that impact their access to Scripture. For example, the distribution of Bibles is restricted in some areas such as Sulu and Zamboanga, where specific permits are now required for open distribution—even though neither region is officially part of BARMM.

Christians in Muslim-majority communities also report surveillance, harassment, and social ostracism. Muslim Background believers or MBBs often practice their faith in secret due to fear of retaliation from family, religious leaders, or local authorities. Some families are pressured to register children as Muslim based solely on their names, and in public schools within BARMM, Christian children are often compelled to participate in Islamic religious education. In certain cases, MBBs must travel long distances to be baptized discreetly due to local restrictions.



Additionally, believers involved in land rights or environmental advocacy face threats and violence. A practice known as “red-tagging”, where church leaders and Christian civil society advocates are falsely accused of being communist-terrorists, has led to harassment, arrest, and even exile. This climate of suspicion hampers open Christian ministry, especially among marginalized and Indigenous communities.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Philippines

Philippines	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 ↓	Strong	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Very weak	Very weak	Not at all	Not at all	Very weak
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.

Very Strong

Strong

Medium

None

One primary force of persecution heavily affects Bible access almost exclusively in the southern region of Mindanao. This mainly involves **Islamic oppression**, which can sometimes be compounded by **clan oppression** depending on certain contexts. This can be driven by government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, normal citizens, and sometimes political parties.

Now we have a broader context of Christian persecution in the Philippines. 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 the country?

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.



Although the Philippines is a predominantly Christian nation, the southern region—particularly the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)—presents a stark contrast. Here, a strong force of Islamic oppression marginalizes Christian communities. The region’s implementation of a Tri-Justice System, which includes Sharia law alongside civil and customary laws, has led to growing Islamization and restrictions on Christian expression. Christians in BARMM face limitations on Bible distribution, are pressured to comply with Islamic customs in schools and workplaces, and report discrimination in employment and education.

Militant Islamic groups such as Abu Sayyaf and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) further fuel this oppression. These groups operate in BARMM and surrounding areas, often targeting Christian communities with violence, including church bombings, grenade attacks, and forced displacement. MBBs face especially severe consequences—ranging from death threats to physical abuse and social ostracism—even from their own families.



In indigenous and tribal communities across the Philippines, particularly in rural and Muslim-majority areas, clan-based persecution also poses a threat to MBBs. Families often view conversion as a betrayal of cultural identity. MBBs are pressured to abandon their faith, sometimes forcibly removed from ancestral lands, and face threats from tribal leaders and extended relatives. In some cases, entire Christian families are expelled from their communities. Revolutionary or paramilitary groups, especially those aligned with local customs or business interests, have been known to raid or intimidate Christian communities, especially when conversions disrupt established clan alliances or local power structures.

Unique Engines: Environmental Activism and Red-Tagging

Outside the BARMM, persecution sometimes arises not from religion itself but from Christians’ involvement in social justice and environmental advocacy. Faith-based organizations that speak out against mining, land grabbing, or government corruption have faced intimidation, surveillance, and harassment. The practice of “red-tagging”—falsely accusing Christian leaders and churches of communist ties—has been used as a means to silence dissent. Several Christian leaders have been arrested, had their organizations’ assets frozen, or were forced to flee their communities for safety. Although there have been some improvements under the current administration, this form of persecution remains volatile.

THE NEED FOR BIBLES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Despite being the only Christian-majority nation in Southeast Asia, Bible access in the Philippines remains low especially in the southern region of Mindanao. Research estimates that fewer than half of Filipino Christians own a personal copy of the Bible, leaving millions without direct access to Scripture. To meet the spiritual needs of its vast and growing Christian population, **a significant number of Bibles are needed**. Bibles are generally available across the country, with some exceptions in the BARMM region.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Over the past five years, the church in the Philippines has expanded. The need for Bibles remains high, especially in poorer rural provinces and conflict-affected regions such as Mindanao and the BARMM region. Without sufficient access to Scripture, new believers face challenges in discipleship, spiritual growth, and evangelism.

Bible Formats for Unique Needs

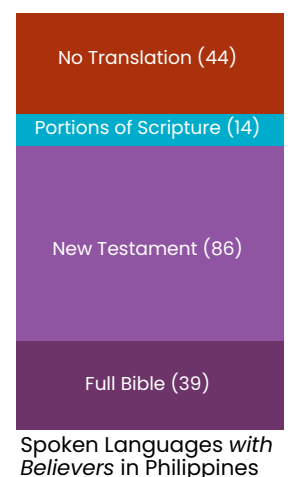
The need spans not only the number of Bibles but the format in which they are delivered. **Print remains the top priority**, especially for rural areas where electricity is inconsistent and digital access is unreliable. However, **Bibles that can be accessed through the internet** are becoming increasingly necessary in urban centers where digital penetration is higher.

The Translation Gap

Christians in the Philippines speak at least 183 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **39 languages** have a full Bible translation
- **86** have only the New Testament
- **14** have partial Scripture portions
- **44 languages have no Scripture at all**

This means that thousands of communities still cannot engage with God's Word in their heart language. Many of these unreached groups live in conflict-prone or marginalized regions, where Christians also face societal discrimination, pressure from Muslim or tribal communities, and, in some cases, outright persecution for their faith.



THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in the Philippines is urgent. This is not just about numbers—it’s about answering a cry for hope amid spiritual hunger, poverty, and persecution. As Islamic extremism grows and poverty deepens, especially in regions where Bible access is already scarce, the opportunity to bring lasting transformation through God’s Word is more critical than ever.

Now is the time for the global Church to act with generosity, with prayer, and with a commitment to place the Bible in every believer’s hands, in a language and format they can truly understand.

With our help, the Philippines can truly become the Christian nation God has called them to be.



1.5%

Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



**Printed
Bible**
Preferred Format



**Internet
Bible**
Format 2nd Priority