



Bible Access List

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

Pakistan

Bible Restrictions Rank: **20**
SEVERE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **20**
Bible needs estimate between five hundred thousand and one million



An Overview of Bible access in Pakistan

Pakistan, a nation of approximately 245 million people, is home to an estimated 4.5 million Christians, making up less than 2% of the population. Despite their small numbers, the need for Bibles is significant, as access to Scripture remains severely restricted. Estimates suggest that around half of Christians in Pakistan have access to a Bible, highlighting a vast gap in meeting the spiritual needs of believers.

In Pakistan, Bibles can legally be imported, but only through the Pakistani Bible Society (PBS), which holds exclusive rights to bring Scripture into the country. This means that the entire Christian community is dependent on a single organization for access to Bibles. While importing is technically allowed, large shipments risk being confiscated, particularly in rural or extremist-controlled areas where pressure from Islamic groups is intense. Importing Bibles for or by Muslims is strictly forbidden, meaning that Muslim background believers (MBBs) face an even greater barrier—not only are they denied legal access, but merely owning a Bible can expose them to accusations of apostasy, threats, and even violence.

Bible printing within Pakistan is technically possible but highly restricted. Only approved Christian publishers can print Bibles, and even then, they must navigate complex bureaucratic requirements, limited resources, and social hostility. Large-scale production is difficult to sustain, making locally printed copies both scarce and costly. While established churches permitted to store and distribute Bibles, they must do so cautiously, as churches can become targets of violent attacks.

Beyond legal and security challenges, poverty and literacy barriers further limit Bible access. With barely 60% literacy nationwide, even lower among Christian communities, owning a printed Bible does not guarantee proper engagement with God's Word. Digital Bibles remain inaccessible for many, as only a third of the population has internet access.

Pakistan has over 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to terrorism, military operations, and sectarian violence. Christians are among them, forced to flee their homes, often leaving behind their possessions, including their Bibles. In these displacement camps, access to Bibles is nearly impossible, as Christian resources are scarce, and living openly as a believer can be dangerous.

Before we continue, would you take a pause and pray for Pakistan?

How can I pray for Pakistan?

- **For Divine Protection.** Pray for the safety of believers, especially those facing persecution for owning or reading a Bible.
- **For Bible Access and Distribution.** Ask God to open doors for creative, secure methods of distributing Bibles, despite legal, economic, and societal barriers.
- **For Global Partnerships.** Pray that organizations and individuals worldwide will respond to the urgent call to provide Bibles in print, digital, and audio formats, ensuring every believer in Pakistan has access to the life-transforming power of Scripture.

After praying for Pakistan, 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
- Poor internet access
- Poor infrastructure
- 50-70% literacy

Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bible ownership is low, **estimated** Bible need is between 500 thousand and 1 million
- Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Islam

Country population: 245,210,000

Christian population:

4,526,000, 1.85% of total population

World Watch List: #8

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN PAKISTAN?

A Nation Hostile Towards Christianity

In Pakistan, where Christians make up less than 2% of the population, simply owning a Bible can be dangerous. While there are no outright legal bans on Scripture, deep-seated religious discrimination, government-sanctioned persecution, and the looming threat of extremist violence make accessing God's Word extremely difficult.

False accusations of blasphemy often lead to mob attacks, forcing believers to flee their homes, leaving their Bibles behind. Churches face arson and destruction, while Christian leaders and evangelists risk imprisonment—or worse—if caught sharing Scripture. Even digital access is limited, with government surveillance and online censorship further restricting availability.

Some regions are especially hostile to Bible access. In Punjab Province, where most Pakistani Christians live, Christian homes and churches are frequent targets of mob violence. In Sindh, thousands of Christians trapped in bonded labor lack the freedom or resources to own a Bible. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, radical groups like the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and Lashkar-e-Taiba enforce their version of Islam, attacking Christian communities and burning down places of worship, making access to Scripture nearly impossible. For Muslim Background believers or MBBs, the situation is even more dire: discovery of their faith often means death.



Life Under the Blasphemy Laws

One of the greatest barriers to Bible access in Pakistan is the country's infamous blasphemy laws. These laws, originally enacted under British rule but severely strengthened in the 1980s, are frequently weaponized against Christians. Even owning or sharing a Bible can be twisted into an accusation of "blasphemy," which carries severe punishments, including the death penalty.

False accusations of blasphemy routinely result in mob violence, with radical groups inciting attacks on Christian communities. In August 2023, after two Christians were falsely accused of blasphemy, mobs burned or damaged at least 21 churches and forced hundreds of believers to flee their homes. Even when the government intervenes, justice is rarely served. The vast majority of those arrested for anti-Christian violence walk free, while Christians accused of blasphemy languish in prison.

Daily Risks and Bible Access

Simply possessing a Bible in Pakistan, especially in rural areas, can be life-threatening. Believers risk arrest, social ostracization, and even assassination if they are discovered to own or distribute Christian literature. The threat is particularly severe for MBBs who have converted to Christianity. These MBBs are considered apostates under Islamic law and are often targeted by their own families. Many are forced to practice their faith in secret, with no access to physical or digital Scripture.

Church leaders and Christian workers are also frequent targets. Pastors have been arrested, threatened, and even killed for their faith. Church buildings, which sometimes house Scripture stockpiles, are monitored, attacked, and destroyed. In March 2024, arsonists set fire to a church in Rawalpindi, burning its interior. In such an environment, keeping Bibles secure is an ongoing challenge.

Poverty and Systemic Discrimination

Beyond violent persecution, economic hardship further restricts Bible access. The majority of Pakistani Christians belong to the lowest socio-economic class, with many trapped in bonded labor. These believers, often working in brick kilns or sanitation jobs, struggle to afford basic necessities, let alone a Bible.

Christian workers also face job discrimination, being relegated to the lowest-paying and most dangerous jobs. In some regions, even Christian healthcare workers are denied access to government medical aid programs. Without financial stability, the ability to purchase a Bible remains out of reach for many.

The Digital Divide

For those who cannot obtain a printed Bible, digital and audio formats could be a solution, but access to these resources is also severely limited. Only a third of Pakistan's population has internet access, with an even lower percentage in rural areas. Christian women, in particular, face a lower chance of accessing the internet compared to men. Even when believers do have access, Pakistan's government closely monitors online activity. Although relatively safe, Christians must still practice caution with accessing Bibles online.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Pakistan

Pakistan	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 → Persecution Drivers ↓										<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>
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										

Pakistan ranks among the most dangerous countries for Christians. The primary forces behind persecution include **Islamic oppression, dictatorial paranoia, clan oppression, and organized corruption and crime**. These are driven by government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, normal citizens, extended family, political parties, and revolutionary or paramilitary groups. All these collectively operate in an intertwined system, making Bible access a significant challenge for Pakistan's Christian minority.

The World Watch List 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 Pakistan?

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES



The Stranglehold on Christian Life

In Pakistan, the weight of Islamic oppression bears down on Christians at every level of society, making access to Bibles both dangerous and difficult. The country's blasphemy laws, introduced in 1986, have become a powerful tool for suppressing religious minorities. These laws, which carry death sentences and life imprisonment, are frequently weaponized against Christians, often based on false accusations. Once a Christian is accused, whether truthfully or falsely, mob violence erupts, and the legal system rarely provides fair trials.

As earlier mentioned, the Jaranwala attack back in August 2023 stands as a chilling example. Following a false blasphemy accusation against two Christians, a violent mob tore through the Christian community, burning at least 21 churches and hundreds of homes, leaving families displaced and terrified. Though authorities pledged accountability, most perpetrators remain free, reinforcing a pattern of impunity.

Beyond these high-profile attacks, Christians are targeted in their everyday lives. Many believers fear openly carrying or reading a Bible, as owning Christian materials can provoke accusations of blasphemy, leading to potential arrest, imprisonment, or violent retribution. Radical Islamic groups like **Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)** and the **Pakistani Taliban (TTP)** stir up hatred, enforcing religious purity through terror, while extremist leaders embolden local mobs to take justice into their own hands.

For many Christians, simply existing in Pakistan is fraught with risk. Sanitation workers, students, and professionals have been executed, imprisoned, or forced into hiding because of their faith. In a recent case, a Christian mother of four was sentenced to death for forwarding content in a WhatsApp group that was deemed blasphemous, illustrating how even digital interactions can become grounds for persecution. This hostile environment means that Bible distribution is nearly impossible in public spaces, and even private ownership is dangerous. Churches are monitored, and Christian bookstores are scarce, leaving believers with limited options for accessing Scripture.



A Government That Enables Persecution

While Pakistan's Constitution technically guarantees religious freedom, these rights are overshadowed by laws that prioritize "the glory of Islam", making it extremely difficult for Christians to practice their faith freely. The government, military, and judiciary do little to protect religious minorities, instead choosing to appease Islamic extremist groups to maintain political control.

Christians are systematically excluded from government positions, meaning they have no voice in policy-making and no representation in leadership. Without political influence, advocacy for Bible access is met with silence or suppression. Meanwhile, job advertisements openly declare sanitation jobs as "reserved for Christians", reinforcing their status as second-class citizens.

Surveillance on churches, Christian leaders, and faith-based organizations has become routine. Many churches have been forced to close due to pressure from local authorities, severely limiting the availability of Bibles. Those that remain open are watched closely, and their activities are heavily regulated.

When attacks against Christians occur, the police rarely intervene. Even in major incidents like the Jaranwala attacks, where mobs burned churches and homes, most of the assailants have not been prosecuted. This lack of accountability emboldens future acts of violence, leaving Christians without protection or recourse.

The judicial system does little to address Christian persecution, as blasphemy cases are almost always ruled against the accused, and appeals can take decades. This atmosphere of state-sanctioned discrimination makes Bible access very difficult, with believers constantly facing the risk of legal repercussions or violent backlash for simply owning Scripture.



The Web of Exploitation

Beyond legal oppression and extremist violence, systemic corruption and criminal networks further restrict Bible access by trapping Pakistan's Christians in economic servitude and social exclusion.

One of the most severe forms of oppression comes in the form of bonded labor, where thousands of Christian families are forced to work in brick kilns under exploitative contracts. With no financial freedom, purchasing a Bible is simply out of reach for many believers. The Christian community is one of the poorest in Pakistan, and economic restrictions keep them struggling for survival, making them unable to purchase Bibles.

Criminal land grabs have also become a method of persecution. Churches and Christian-owned properties are frequently seized, with authorities turning a blind eye or outright collaborating with corrupt officials. In many cases, entire Christian villages have been forced off their land, leaving believers without places of worship or safe spaces for Bible study.

Women and girls face an additional threat. Human trafficking and forced marriages disproportionately target Christian women, ensuring that entire generations of Christian families are cut off from Scripture. Once trafficked or forcibly married to Muslim men, these women are pressured or forced to renounce Christianity, eliminating their access to faith resources.

This deep economic oppression and unchecked corruption create barriers that add another complex barrier hindering Bible access. Without financial independence, safe gathering spaces, or legal protection, Pakistan's Christian population remains at the mercy of those who exploit their vulnerability.



No Escape from Persecution

For MBBs, persecution often starts in the home. Families, driven by cultural honor and religious duty, view conversion as a betrayal of both faith and family, and the consequences are often severe.

Forced conversions remain a widespread crisis. Research estimates that at least 1,000 Christian and Hindu girls are abducted and forcibly converted to Islam each year, with Christian girls making up 70% of these cases. Many of these girls are underage, and courts often refuse to intervene, accepting the testimony of abductors who claim the conversions were voluntary.

For male MBBs, the risks are equally dire. Many face violent beatings or death at the hands of their own relatives. If they manage to escape, they often have to live in secrecy, constantly moving to avoid being discovered.

Communities play an active role in enforcing religious conformity. In neighborhoods where Christians are a minority, locals will report them to authorities or extremist groups, ensuring that any attempt to gather, pray, or access Scripture is met with hostility.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN PAKISTAN

Against the backdrop of extreme persecution, systemic discrimination, and socio-economic barriers, Bible access in Pakistan remains critically low. While Pakistan is home to approximately 4.5 million Christians, the majority live in conditions of daily hardship and spiritual isolation.

Research estimates that approx. **half a million believers** require a Bible, while additional Bibles are needed to address the needs for **seekers** who are searching for the truth of Scripture. Given high number of illiterate Christians the need for Audio Bibles is an important part of this need.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Despite persecution, the church in Pakistan continues to grow during the last five years. However, this growth is amplified by the already urgent need for Bibles. With restricted access to religious materials, new believers and those exploring the faith are left spiritually vulnerable, unable to deepen their knowledge of God's Word. Many Pakistani Christians, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds, struggle to obtain a Bible due to high costs, government-imposed barriers, and fears of persecution.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

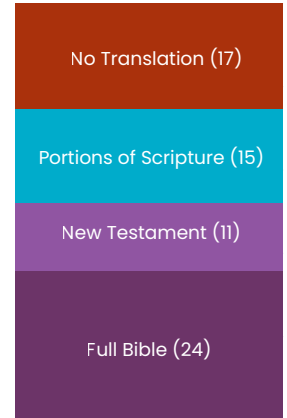
Given the realities of Pakistan's infrastructure and societal challenges, the primary need is for **printed Bibles**, followed by **audio formats** for those who cannot read. Many believers work in labor-intensive jobs or live in areas where literacy rates are low, making audio Bibles a crucial tool for Bible engagement.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Linguistic diversity presents a major obstacle to Bible accessibility in Pakistan. Research estimates that Christians speak at least 67 languages. But among these languages:

- **Only 24** have a full Bible translation
- **11** languages have only the New Testament
- **15** have only partial translations
- **17** languages remain without any Scripture at all

This gap leaves entire communities without access to the Word of God in their heart language, significantly hindering evangelism and discipleship efforts.

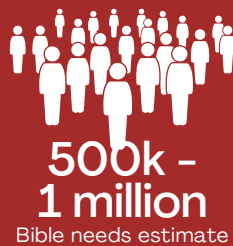


Spoken Languages with Believers in Pakistan

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Pakistan is more than just a matter of logistics, it is a matter of spiritual survival. Many believers remain without Scripture, vulnerable to persecution, misinformation, and discouragement. Addressing this need requires overcoming deeply entrenched barriers through **strategic partnerships, innovative distribution methods, and dedicated translation efforts.**

By providing Bibles in **print, audio, and translated formats**, we can equip Pakistan’s Christian community with the Word of God, empowering them to stand firm in their faith despite the challenges they face. Now is the time to act, ensuring that every believer and seeker in Pakistan has access to the life-changing power of the Word of God.



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.