



Bible Access List

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

Palestinian Territories

Bible Restrictions Rank: **55**
SOME ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **67**
Bible needs estimate is less than ten thousand



An Overview of Bible Access in the Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza)

In The Palestinian Territories (West bank and Gaza), Christians comprise less than 1% of the overall population, with a number estimated over 40,000 believers. While Bible access appears almost universal in this small community of believers, some restrictions remain to be overcome due to the ongoing conflict and growing insecurity in the region.

Bible access in The Palestinian Territories is heavily influenced by the distinct situations in Gaza and the West Bank, regions impacted by ongoing conflict and intensified by the escalating war between Israel and Hamas. Importation of Bibles faces numerous obstacles; Gaza has particularly stringent restrictions imposed by Hamas, effectively blocking Bible imports altogether.

In the West Bank, printing religious texts, including Bibles, faces fewer legal hurdles, yet Christians often practice significant self-censorship to maintain peaceful relations with Muslim communities. Conversely, Gaza severely limits printing opportunities, confining Bible production to small-scale operations solely for local use. Possessing a Bible in Gaza can invite serious consequences, especially for Christians from Muslim backgrounds, given intense familial and societal pressures.

Purchasing Bibles in the West Bank is largely limited to Christian bookstores located primarily in cities with substantial Christian populations, like Ramallah and Bethlehem. The situation in Gaza is significantly worse; the closure of its only Christian bookstore since 2007 severely limited access, leaving churches as virtually the sole distribution points. Public distribution of Christian materials carries the risk of significant backlash and potential intervention by authorities, particularly in Gaza, exacerbating the critical shortage of Bibles.

Economic hardships further compound these challenges. Even before the war, approximately over 60% of Gaza's population depended on external aid, with unemployment rates among the highest globally. The conflict has exacerbated poverty, severely hindering Bible accessibility due to the inability of many to afford Scripture. Technological barriers also persist; despite relatively high internet penetration in The Palestinian Territories, ongoing conflicts, power outages, and infrastructure damage significantly limit digital Bible distribution.

Before we continue, would you take a pause to pray for The Palestinian Territories?

How can I pray for The Palestinian Territories?

- **Provision for Bible Shortage:** Pray for the urgent Bible needs in The Palestinian Territories. Ask the Lord to provide these critical spiritual resources for the Christian community.
- **Global Partnerships:** Pray for the development of strong global partnerships and innovative solutions to overcome Bible distribution barriers in The Palestinian Territories.
- **Peace and End of War:** Intercede for peace in The Palestinian Territories. Pray for resolution to conflicts and for conditions that allow the Christian community to practice their faith freely, ensuring the unhindered distribution of Bibles.

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



Bible Access Restrictions

Minimal Access Restrictions



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

Other Limiting Factors

Some Other Factors

-  Pockets of poverty
-  Poor infrastructure


Bible Shortages Among Believers

-  Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated Bible need is <10 thousand**
-  Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Islam

Country population: 5,495,000

Christian population:

 42,600, 0.78% of total population

World Watch List: #62

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES?

War and Destruction in Gaza

The ongoing war since October 2023 has devastated life in Gaza. More than 90% of the population has been displaced, and critical infrastructure—homes, churches, roads—has been damaged or destroyed. Churches sheltering Christians have been bombed, and even inside their compounds, believers have been killed. In this chaos, the ability to access or distribute Bibles is virtually nonexistent.

Movement Restrictions and Isolation in the West Bank

In the West Bank, Israeli control over 60% of the land has led to widespread movement restrictions. Checkpoints and permit requirements limit the ability of Christians to travel or transport religious materials. After October 2023, increased settler violence and Israeli military operations have further isolated Christian communities.

Political Fragmentation and Institutional Paralysis

Since the split between Hamas and Fatah in 2007, the Palestinian Authority has lacked unified governance. The legislative council has not convened in years, and governance is split between rival factions. This political vacuum prevents consistent support for Christian institutions and complicates efforts to distribute Bibles or support Muslim Background believers or MBBs.

MBBs at Risk: Legal and Social Pressures

Conversion from Islam to Christianity is not legally recognized. MBBs face intense pressure from family, society, and religious authorities, especially in Gaza, where practicing Christianity openly can be life-threatening.

Even in the West Bank, MBBs must keep their faith secret to avoid expulsion or violence, limiting their access to Christian resources, including Bibles.

Economic Collapse and Emigration

The war has collapsed the economy in both Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, nearly every resident now lives in poverty. In the West Bank, over 100,000 jobs were lost after Israel revoked work permits. Christian families, many of whom rely on tourism for income, have been especially affected. Since 2023, several hundred Christian families have emigrated, weakening the communal structures that support Bible access and discipleship. Even before the October attacks of Hamas on Jewish citizens, due to severe economic mismanagement of both Hamas in Gaza and Fatah, the ruling faction on the West Bank, Palestinian Christians were eager to leave their homelands.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in The Palestinian Territories

Palestinian Territories	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	Medium	Medium	Medium	Weak	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	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

In The Palestinian Territories, multiple forces of persecution operate simultaneously to restrict Bible access, including **Islamic oppression, religious nationalism, ethno-religious hostility, clan oppression, and dictatorial paranoia**. These are fueled by government officials, religious leaders, ethnic group heads, and even extended family members and normal citizens—each contributing uniquely to the suppression of Christian expression and Bible access.

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 The Palestinian Territories?

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.



Faith Under Surveillance

In Gaza, where Hamas and Islamic Jihad are active, Islamic oppression is especially severe. MBBs suffer the most. The Christian community in Gaza, already tiny, has been decimated by the war that began in October 2023. More than 30 Christians were killed, and all three church compounds, including a Baptist church, were damaged. These church grounds had served as shelters for displaced Christians.

MBBs in Gaza live their faith in utmost secrecy. Even possessing a Bible or being seen with Christian materials is dangerous, as it can lead to violent backlash from family or community members. Baptisms of MBBs are conducted in secret; if discovered, the individual risks being attacked by relatives or local mobs.



When Faith Breaks Family Honor

Clan oppression is particularly severe for those who leave Islam for Christianity. In Palestinian society, identity is inseparable from family and religion. Conversion is seen not only as apostasy but also as betrayal of the tribe. As a result, family heads and community leaders feel obligated to "restore honor"—often pressuring the MBB to renounce their new faith or leave the community entirely. MBBs are frequently cut off from inheritance, forced into hiding, or subjected to house arrest. Women, in particular, face confinement and even threats of so-called honor killings if their faith becomes known.

This pressure can extend to children as well. When a Christian father converts to Islam and divorces his Christian wife, the children automatically become Muslim and custody is granted to the father, in accordance with Sharia law. Similarly, children of convert parents cannot legally be registered as Christians, and are instead placed in Islamic religious classes, even in Gaza.



Religious Nationalism & Ethno-religious Hostility

While the persecution of Christians in The Palestinian Territories is often internal, Israel's control over the West Bank introduces a different layer of restriction—one rooted in Jewish religious nationalism and ethno-religious hostility. Israeli security forces and settlers control Area C (60% of the West Bank), where Christian movement is heavily restricted. Internal checkpoints and travel permits make it extremely difficult for believers to attend church services, access religious education, or visit holy sites such as Jerusalem.



This control, intensified since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023, isolates Christian communities and hampers economic development. Many Palestinian Christians, feeling suffocated by restrictions and rising settler violence, have chosen to emigrate. The growing sense of displacement is mirrored by settler attacks, often protected by the Israeli army, which have escalated since the war's outbreak.



No Room for Dissent

Within the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, authoritarian control has created another dimension of pressure. Criticizing the authorities, particularly their Islamic policies, can result in loss of privileges, arrest, or worse. Church leaders must walk a fine line, careful not to provoke political backlash from either Palestinian or Israeli officials. In Gaza, the space for religious freedom is even more limited. MBBs cannot openly practice or gather, and churches avoid integrating them to maintain peace with surrounding Islamic communities.

While some Christian communities are included symbolically in governance, the lack of elections and deep-rooted nepotism mean that power is consolidated in ways that exclude real Christian influence—especially for those outside the historical churches.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

With a population of just over 40,000 believers in The Palestinian Territories, an estimated number of less than **10,000** Bibles can already become a game-changer and spark hope. While the number may appear small in comparison to other nations, the stakes are profound. Each Bible represents not just a book, but a lifeline to hope for believers living amid war, displacement, and daily pressure from society and family.

A Shrinking Church In Desperate Need of God’s Word

Making matters more pressing, the church in The Palestinian Territories is not growing—it is shrinking. The Christian population has declined due to war, mismanagement, and mass emigration. With entire families leaving cities like Bethlehem and Ramallah, the Christian presence in the land is at risk of fading entirely. Each Bible sown today is a seed to nurture endurance, courage, and continuity for a community holding on by faith.

Bible Formats for Unique Needs

To meet this need effectively, Bible formats must align with on-the-ground realities. **Audio Bibles** are the highest priority due to the fear and secrecy surrounding Bible ownership, especially for MBBs who must hide their faith. **Video resources** follow closely, offering visual and auditory ways to engage with the Gospel in settings where printed materials are too risky.

While internet access in the West Bank is relatively widespread, digital resources are harder to access in Gaza, where connectivity is limited and infrastructure decimated. Multiple formats ensure Scripture can reach both the open and the hidden Church.

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in The Palestinian Territories is not just strategic; it is sacred. It represents a cry for hope from a region considered to be part of the birthplace of our faith, where Christian communities are pressed on every side. Amid conflict, persecution, and isolation, the hunger for God’s Word has not diminished; it has only intensified. This is a pivotal moment for the global Church. Will we respond?

Now is the time to act with both urgency and compassion. To bring Scripture not only to churches and leaders, but to underground believers, traumatized families, and seekers longing for truth. Whether through audio, video formats as priority—or even in print and digital platforms done discreetly and strategically—every Bible given is a declaration: you are not forgotten, and the Word of God endures.

Let us rise, not in fear but in faith, to ensure that every believer in The Palestinian Territories—no matter their background, denomination, or region—has access to the life-transforming power of the Word. Let us send a message to the watching world: the Church in The Palestinian Territories will not be silenced, and God’s Word will not be stopped.



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



<10k
Bible needs estimate



**Audio
Bible**
Preferred Format



**Video
Bible**
Format 2nd Priority