



Bible Access List

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

South Sudan

Bible Restrictions Rank: **57**
MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **22**
Bible needs estimate between five hundred thousand and one million



An Overview of Bible access in South Sudan

South Sudan's Christian population makes up approximately 61% of its 11 million people—amounting to nearly 7 million believers. Yet less than a third of these Christians have access to a Bible even if there are minimal legal restrictions, revealing a deep and widespread spiritual need despite the nation's strong Christian presence.

Unlike many restricted nations, South Sudan allows the free import, printing, storing, owning and distribution of Bibles. However, practical and regional challenges severely limit access. In Muslim-majority communities, particularly where extremist militias operate, Christians often impose self-censorship. Accessing Bibles, printing or distribution is dangerous. Open Bible study or worship can be risky, forcing many believers into quiet faith practices. While these areas make up a small percentage of the population, the fear is real, and the impact is significant.

Another major barrier is infrastructure. Only a fraction of South Sudan's population, not even 10%, has access to electricity, and internet connectivity is just a little above 10%. This drastically reduces access to digital or online Scripture. Poverty also plays a significant role. Many believers live in extreme poverty and cannot afford a Bible, even if it is available to them. This combination of factors: economic hardship, limited infrastructure, and regional caution, creates a gap that cannot be ignored.

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

How can I pray for South Sudan?

- **Provision of Bibles.** Ask God to open doors for Bibles to reach every believer in South Sudan, especially in rural and poverty-stricken areas.
- **Courage for Believers.** Pray for Christians in Muslim-majority communities who face social pressure and fear, may they stand firm and be strengthened.
- **Infrastructure & Access.** Pray for the development of resources—electricity, audio formats, and distribution channels—that will enable more people to receive God's Word in a way they can use and understand.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Minimal 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
- Extremely poor internet access
- Extremely poor infrastructure
- <50% of population access to electricity
- <50% literacy

Bible Shortages Among Believers

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

Main religion: Christianity

Country population: 11,277,000

Christian population:

6,862,000, 60.85% of total population

World Watch List: #76

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN?

In South Sudan, Bible access is not restricted by law. The government allows Bibles to be imported, printed, and distributed throughout the country. However, significant non-legal barriers continue to hinder the ability of many Christians to access Scripture.

Targeted by Armed Groups

The primary obstacles stem from ongoing violence, insecurity, and deeply rooted ethnic and societal divisions. Armed groups and paramilitary factions operate freely in many regions and frequently target Christian communities. These groups have been responsible for looting churches, abducting believers, and attacking congregations during worship services. Even some state forces have been implicated in these incidents.

Pressure in ATR-Dominated Regions

Christians also face difficulties in areas dominated by African Traditional Religions (ATR), where cultural and religious practices often conflict with Christian values. Converts to Christianity, particularly in rural regions, are pressured to return to traditional beliefs, and those who refuse may be ostracized or denied access to vital community resources such as water or grazing land.

In some localities, even owning Christian materials can provoke social backlash, creating an environment where believers must worship in secret.

Infrastructure Limitations

Infrastructure limitations add another layer of difficulty. With only around 9% of the population having access to electricity, digital Bibles are effectively out of reach for most South Sudanese. Print and audio remain essential formats, but widespread poverty leaves many unable to afford even a basic Bible.

The lack of stable distribution channels, especially in conflict-affected areas, further isolates believers from Scripture.

Culture of Corruption and Impunity

Finally, the broader environment of corruption and impunity exacerbates these problems. Organized crime networks, local power holders, and corrupt officials often operate unchecked, enabling persecution to continue without consequence.

In some regions, traditional and political leaders suppress Christian voices, particularly those involved in social justice or reform initiatives, viewing them as threats to the status quo.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in South Sudan

South Sudan	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	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	Weak	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Strong
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 South Sudan, multiple forces of persecution restrict Bible access—most notably **organized corruption and crime, clan oppression, and dictatorial paranoia**. These are driven by powerful actors ranging from government officials and ethnic group leaders to paramilitary forces and even extended family members.

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 South Sudan?

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.



Church Looting and Leader Detentions

South Sudan ranks among the most corrupt countries in the world, scoring just 8 out of 100 in Transparency International’s 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index. In practice, this corruption shields persecutors and criminal actors from accountability. Church buildings are looted, Christian leaders are detained or assaulted, and entire communities are forced to flee—all with no legal consequences.

In 2024, the South Sudan People’s Defense Forces (SSPDF) were reported to have looted and occupied churches, assaulted clergy, and detained religious leaders. These attacks occurred in multiple regions, including Torit (Eastern Equatoria State), Jonglei State, Yei River County (Central Equatoria State), and Gogrial East County (Warrap State). The violence was often accompanied by kidnappings and sexual assaults against women and girls.

Organized crime and paramilitary networks have been instrumental in these violations, operating hand-in-hand in regions with no effective rule of law. Churches have become targets in these violent campaigns, and Bibles and Christian materials are among the items often destroyed or confiscated in these attacks.



Converts Punished, Bibles Restricted

In many areas, cultural loyalty to ethnic and clan traditions trumps religious freedom. Ethnic divisions, especially between the Dinka and Nuer, are deeply entrenched and often reinforced by local leaders. For Christians, especially new converts, this creates immense pressure to conform to traditional religious practices.

In the ATR-dominated region of Abyei, Christians face restrictions on owning Christian materials. In 2024, local communities associated with the Missirya nomads made private ownership of Christian resources particularly dangerous.

In the Tonj State, also in recent years, 150 members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church were detained following complaints about the denomination’s growing influence. These kinds of incidents demonstrate the pressure to conform and the punishment that can follow nonconformity.

Converts in these areas are often denied access to communal resources, including wells and grazing land, unless they participate in traditional rituals. In some cases, families forcibly separate converts from their spouses or children as a form of social punishment.



Preaching Monitored, Voices Silenced

Although Christians are not the explicit target of state policy, the authoritarian regime of President Salva Kiir fosters an atmosphere of fear and suppression. Government officials routinely crack down on voices perceived as critical of the state, including pastors and Christian leaders who speak out on social issues.

In one prominent example, a pastor who preached about civil war leaders being deposed was detained for over 30 months, after his message was interpreted as a political threat. This occurred during the ongoing period of authoritarian control under Kiir’s regime.

Christian preaching and teaching continue to be monitored. The Freedom in the World 2024 report scored South Sudan just 1 out of 100, underscoring the extreme limitations on civil liberties and freedom of expression—even within churches.

Even though elections were originally scheduled for December 2024, they were postponed to December 2026, reflecting continued authoritarian control and the suppression of dissent, including that of outspoken Christian leaders.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN SOUTH SUDAN

In South Sudan, fewer than 3 in 10 Christians currently have access to a Bible. This represents a staggering gap for a nation where nearly 7 million people identify as followers of Christ. An estimated number of **up to 1 million Bibles** can bridge this gap and meet the spiritual hunger of believers across the country. In a country marked by unrest and suffering, the Word of God remains a critical source of hope, comfort, and direction.

A Shrinking Church, Urgent Needs for Bibles

The urgency to provide Bibles in South Sudan is amplified by the shrinking of the Church in recent years, reflecting the broader shrinking population of the country. This population reduction is primarily a result of ongoing war with Sudan, severe food insecurity, and the humanitarian crises that have devastated communities and displaced millions. These challenges have weakened the Church's presence and underscore the urgent need for Bibles to support and sustain faith in these difficult times. With Christianity deeply rooted in the majority of the population, the focus is to sustain and equip the church. Without widespread access to the Bible, faith risks stagnation, discipleship can weaken, and future generations may lack the biblical foundation necessary to thrive.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

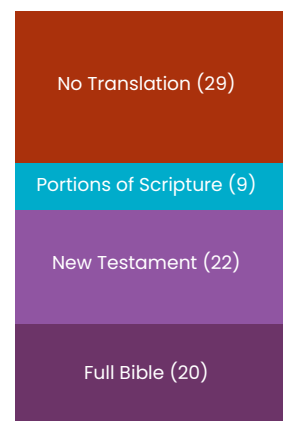
Bible formats must meet the realities on the ground. With limited infrastructure and literacy challenges—especially in rural areas—**audio Bibles are the top priority**, offering access to those who cannot read or lack electricity for digital devices. **Printed Bibles** remain important, particularly for pastors, church leaders, and believers in cities and towns. While internet-based resources are technically “safe” to use, they remain out of reach for over 90% of the population due to extreme poverty and a lack of connectivity.

The Translation Gap

Linguistic diversity adds another layer of urgency. South Sudanese Christians speak over 80 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **20** of these have the full Bible translated
- **22** have just the New Testament translated
- **9** only portions of Scripture
- **29 languages are without any translation of the Bible at all**

This means entire communities are cut off from the Word of God. Without Scripture in their heart language, many believers and seekers cannot engage with the Gospel in a meaningful way. Translation efforts must be accelerated to ensure that no language group remains unreached or underserved.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Oman

THE CLARION CALL

The call to act is clear. South Sudan is a nation that has bled, wept, and waited. It has emerged from civil war still battered by ethnic tension and economic collapse. And yet, its church remains—a wounded yet worshipping community in desperate need of God's Word. The need for Bibles is not a distant issue. It's an urgent, global opportunity.

Let the global Church rise up to meet this moment. Through Bible distribution, translation, and the provision of audio and print resources, we can deliver more than just a book—we can deliver life, truth, and the enduring promise of hope.



-3.7%
Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



**500k -
1 million**
Bible needs estimate



**Audio
Bible**
Preferred Format



**Video
Bible**
Format 2nd Priority