



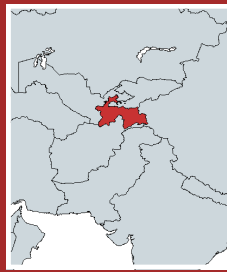
# Bible Access List

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

# Tajikistan

Bible Restrictions Rank: **15**  
**EXTREME ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

Bible Shortage Rank: **66**  
**Bible needs estimate is less than ten thousand**



## An Overview of Bible access in Tajikistan

Tajikistan, a mountainous nation in Central Asia, is home to a small but resilient Christian community. With a population of over 10 million, Christians make up less than 1%, estimated around 62,000 believers. The majority of these are Russian or Ukrainian Orthodox, with a smaller number of Protestants and Muslim background believers or MBBs. Only over 60% of them are estimated to have access to Scripture, and even this estimate leans heavily on the relative freedom enjoyed by Orthodox Christians. For others, particularly MBBs and Protestants, Bible access is extremely limited and fraught with risk.

While on paper it may seem possible to import or distribute Bibles through legal channels, in practice, this access has been all but shut down. Permits for importing Bibles technically exist, but none have been granted for the past three years. Attempts to import multiple copies have led to confiscations, arrests, and long prison sentences. Even small-scale printing efforts have resulted in believers being sentenced to five or six years in prison.

The government tightly controls all religious activity under the guise of national unity and secularism. Any church that wishes to legally store or distribute Bibles must be registered with the Committee on Religion and gain special approval, permissions that are almost never granted. Since 2022, no new churches have been legally registered. As a result, unregistered house churches cannot lawfully store Bibles, and raids frequently result in confiscation and fines. The risk of arrest looms over every unauthorized prayer gathering or Bible study.

These government restrictions are compounded by social pressure. Tajikistan is overwhelmingly Muslim in culture and identity, and conversion to Christianity is viewed not just as a religious decision but as betrayal of family, ethnicity, and nation. MBBs face harassment, beatings, social isolation, and in some cases, forced marriages or expulsion from their homes. Christian women, especially, face gender-based persecution—often locked inside their homes to prevent them from attending church or receiving discipleship.

Though the literacy rate is nearly universal, and mobile phone usage is widespread, less than 40% of the population has internet access. The use of Bible apps and digital Scripture is therefore limited, especially outside urban areas. While some believers access Scripture through SD cards or foreign websites, these options remain risky and dependent on a digital infrastructure that many simply cannot access.

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

### How can I pray for Tajikistan?

- **More Opportunities for Bible Acces.** Pray that doors would open for Bibles to enter the country legally, and that believers—especially MBBs—would find creative and safe ways to engage with Scripture despite the risk.
- **Global Partnerships.** Ask the Lord to raise up new partnerships with Christian organizations who can resource the church in Tajikistan. These partnerships are crucial for translation efforts, distribution strategies, and encouragement for the underground church.
- **Spiritual Awakening.** Pray that the hearts of government officials, local leaders, and extended families would soften toward Christianity. Ask for a move of the Holy Spirit that awakens a widespread desire for truth, peace, and the Word of God.

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

### Bible Access Restrictions

#### Severe Access Restrictions

- No Importing
- No Printing
- No Storage
- Ownership restrictions
- No distribution

### Other Limiting Factors

#### Considerable Other Factors

- Very poor
- Poor internet access
- Poor infrastructure

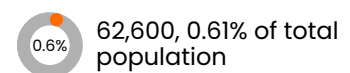
### Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is <10 thousand

**Main religion:** Islam

**Country population:** 10,332,000

**Christian population:**



**World Watch List:** #39

# WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN TAJIKISTAN?

## A State That Seeks to Control Everything

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In Tajikistan, Bible access is not just a matter of availability; it's a matter of strict state control. The government imposes heavy restrictions on all religious activities outside of state-run institutions. Any religious community that is not officially registered is deemed illegal, making it nearly impossible for many churches to legally operate, hold services, or distribute religious materials.

Even registered churches face significant scrutiny. The government must approve any import or production of Christian literature, especially Bibles, and rarely grants permission. Printing presses, bookstores, and religious websites are tightly monitored, and Christian materials (especially those in Tajik) are viewed with suspicion and often confiscated during police raids.

## Targeted Surveillance and Harassment

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Non-Orthodox Christian communities—especially Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Muslim background believers—are often the focus of this control. State officials routinely monitor church gatherings, interrogate leaders, and pressure them to become informants. Even small house churches are raided and harassed.

Muslim background believers face the brunt of persecution: they are often beaten, placed under house arrest by their families, and in some cases, forced to flee the country altogether.

## Religious Literature and Youth Access Blocked

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Tajikistan enforces some of the most restrictive laws on religious education and youth involvement. Children under 18 are legally barred from attending religious activities, and the state prohibits any church-based youth work. This law impacts about half of the Christian population, which is under the age of 18.

Churches that defy this rule are raided, fined, and sometimes shut down. These restrictions prevent young believers from even encountering the Bible at formative ages.

## Cultural and Family Opposition

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In rural and traditional areas, Christians from Muslim backgrounds endure severe pressure from their own families and communities. Conversion is viewed as betrayal, not just of faith, but of national and ethnic identity. Families may beat, isolate, or expel those who leave Islam, making Bible study or ownership a serious personal risk.

# Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Tajikistan


Tajikistan	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
<b>Persecution Engines →</b>									
<b>Persecution Drivers ↓</b>	Strong	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Very strong	Not at all
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

Tajikistan, multiple forces of persecution operate simultaneously to restrict Bible access, including **dictatorial paranoia**, **Islamic oppression**, and **clan oppression**. These are fueled by government officials, Muslim religious leaders, local ethnic leaders, and even one's own extended family.

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 Tajikistan?

## 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.



### State Control and Surveillance

In Tajikistan, the government maintains rigid control over religious life through its Committee on Religion, Regulation of Traditions, Celebrations, and Ceremonies (CRA). Religious freedom is officially protected by the constitution, but in practice, the regime uses legislation to suppress unregistered religious activity and restrict access to Scripture. The Law on Religion (amended in 2018) has become a central tool for surveillance, raids, and the criminalization of church gatherings.

Churches, particularly Protestant and non-Orthodox groups, face frequent raids by police, often resulting in the confiscation of Bibles. Even registered churches struggle to import materials, as all religious texts must undergo state approval. In 2024, one house church was attacked twice, once at Christmas and once at Easter, highlighting how vulnerable Christian gatherings are, even in private homes.

Authorities regularly summon church leaders for interrogation, pressuring them to act as informants. Religious activity for youth under 18 is outright banned, with violations resulting in fines or detention. Since roughly 50% of Christians in Tajikistan are under 18, this ban significantly impedes the transmission of biblical knowledge to the next generation.



### Islamic Oppression Blended with Clan Oppression: Pressure from Religious Majority

For indigenous Tajik Christians, especially those from a Muslim background, Islamic oppression combined with clan oppression creates relentless pressure. Muslim background believers or MBBs are often viewed as traitors to family, culture, and faith. Many are beaten, ostracized, or held under house arrest by their own families. In 2024, at least 20 MBBs were physically abused by their families or local communities simply for following Christ.



Community members and local imams play a strong role in enforcing conformity. Known MBBs are publicly shamed, verbally abused, and sometimes reported to authorities. Families may forbid MBBs from accessing Christian resources, including Bibles, and in some cases, female MBBs are forcibly married to Muslims to "restore honor" to the family. Children of MBBs may be taken from them or forced into Islamic religious education against parental wishes.

In rural areas, clan leaders and local religious figures often act as gatekeepers. They not only discourage Christian practice but actively oppose Bible distribution, especially when it involves Tajik-language Scripture, fearing evangelism. These tightly knit social structures make it nearly impossible for MBBs to access Scripture without secrecy or fear of exposure.

## THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN TAJIKISTAN

For an already tiny Christian community, low Bible access becomes more urgent. For those who do not have a Bible this lack of access is a critical spiritual gap. It is estimated that even **less than 10,000 additional Bibles** would already meet the spiritual needs of believers across the country significantly. However, getting them into the right hands remains a significant challenge.

### A Shrinking Church, A Growing Urgency

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Unlike countries with rapidly growing Christian populations, the church in Tajikistan is shrinking in recent years. Emigration, government repression, and intense social pressure on MBBs contribute to this decline. This highlights the urgency for Bibles all the more.

With increased pressure and persecution, Tajik believers turn to Scripture as their lifeline. In times of isolation and fear, the Word of God becomes not only a source of truth but a refuge.

# Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

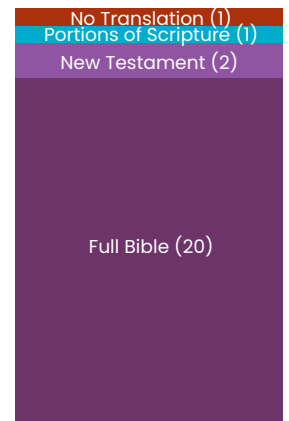
In Tajikistan, **printed Bibles remain the top priority**. With a literacy rate near universal, print copies are both practical and preferred. However, in areas where security concerns or state raids make physical copies risky, **audio Bibles** offer a discreet and powerful alternative. **Internet-based Bible** access is also viable as internet access continues to develop in the country, especially in urban centers. But this must be done with caution.

## The Translation Gap

Christians in Tajikistan speak at least 24 different languages. Of these languages:

- **20** of those languages have a full Bible translation
- **2** additional languages have only the New Testament
- **1** has just a portion of Scripture translated
- **1 language remains with no translation at all**

This means that thousands of believers, and entire people groups, still cannot read or hear the full Bible in their heart language. Without translation efforts and expanded distribution, these believers will continue to wait for the hope and guidance found only in Scripture.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Tajikistan

## THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Tajikistan is far more than logistical; it is a deep spiritual crisis that must be resolved. Each copy of Scripture is a beacon of hope in a place where following Jesus can cost someone their community, their safety, or even their freedom. As the church endures under persecution, the cry for God’s Word echoes louder than ever.

Now is the time for the global Church to respond. We must ensure that every believer in Tajikistan has access to a Bible. By investing in translation, distribution, and creative delivery methods, we can meet this need and stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters. When one part of the body suffers, we all suffer. But when we rise to meet the need, the whole church is strengthened.

Let’s bring the Word to those still waiting. Let’s make sure no believer in Tajikistan is left without the life-changing 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](http://Bibleaccesslist.org).