



Bible Access List

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

Türkiye

Bible Restrictions Rank: **59**
MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **48**
Bible needs estimate between twenty five and fifty thousand



An Overview of Bible access in Türkiye

Türkiye's Christian population represents a tiny minority, less than half a percent of its 86 million citizens, amounting to a little over 250,000 believers. By rough estimates, just about 80% of Christians in Türkiye currently have access to a Bible.

Legally, there are no formal bans on owning or printing Bibles. In fact, Bibles are being printed within the country, and there are retail outlets within churches where Scripture can be sold. However, Bible access is restricted by complex social, political, and religious dynamics. For traditional Christians from historical churches (such as Armenian or Greek Orthodox), owning a Bible is permitted. But for Muslim Background Believers or MBBs, simply reading the Bible privately can provoke serious consequences, including threats from family, social ostracism, and even surveillance.

Distributing Bibles publicly, especially outside of church spaces, is risky and can be interpreted as proselytism, something viewed with deep suspicion by both government and society. While storing Bibles in small numbers is possible, having a large quantity would likely trigger government scrutiny, and self-censorship is common among Christians to avoid drawing attention.

Economically, Türkiye faces high inflation and widespread economic inequality. Although it ranks as an upper-middle-income country, nearly 15% of the population lives in poverty, making it difficult for many believers to afford a Bible. Refugee Christians, particularly Iranian or Afghan MBBs, often live in vulnerable, undocumented conditions, with limited legal rights or mobility, and face threats from within their own ethnic communities.

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

How can I pray for Türkiye?

- **Spiritual Boldness & Protection.** Pray for Turkish Christians, especially MBBs, who must hide their faith or risk severe consequences. Ask God to strengthen and protect them.
- **Refugee Believers.** Pray for Christian refugees from Iran, Syria, and Afghanistan, who face both legal vulnerability and social hostility. Ask for stability, provision, and access to God's Word.
- **Freedom to Access Bibles.** Ask God to open the doors for safe and strategic distribution of Bibles in all necessary formats—print, audio, and digital—across every region of Türkiye.

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

Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is between 25 and 50 thousand
- Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Islam

Country population: 86,260,000

Christian population:

257,000, 0.30% of total population

World Watch List: #45

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

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN TÜRKIYE?

Legal and Bureaucratic Barriers

Although owning a Bible is not illegal in Türkiye, systemic and bureaucratic restrictions create significant challenges for Christians seeking to access or share Scripture. Most Protestant churches lack formal recognition as places of worship. As a result, they do not receive the benefits granted to officially designated religious institutions, such as exemption from utility bills and property taxes.

Attempts to register churches often face arbitrary zoning restrictions and inconsistent treatment depending on the local mayor's disposition. Even when churches legally rent or own property, they may receive warnings for operating without formal worship status.

Pressure from Society and Government

Christians, especially MBBs, face intense pressure from their families and communities. While conversion is legal, it is widely frowned upon, often resulting in ostracism, threats of divorce, loss of inheritance, or even physical abuse. Many MBBs hide their faith, Bibles, and other Christian materials to avoid backlash.

Nationalism and religious identity are deeply intertwined in Turkish society, and being a "true Turk" is commonly equated with being a Sunni Muslim. This cultural norm contributes to the stigmatization of Christians and impedes the public expression of Christian faith, including the possession or sharing of Bibles. Christians are frequently portrayed negatively in local media, which further increases social hostility.

Targeting of Foreign Christians

In recent years, the Turkish government has issued bans on foreign Christians, many of whom had lived in Türkiye for years and played vital roles in church leadership or community support. Some were married to Turkish citizens. These entry bans disrupt local church life and appear to be part of a broader effort to isolate and weaken the Protestant community in particular.

Digital Surveillance and Fear of Discovery

Although internet access in Türkiye is high, government surveillance and censorship are widespread. Christian digital content is monitored, and believers risk exposure if they access or share Christian materials online.

While accessing Bibles through the internet is considered safe, it must be done discreetly and not necessarily for public sharing. Many prefer anonymity or avoid online Bible resources altogether. Some churches report infiltration or surveillance by state agents, creating a climate of fear and caution even in digital spaces.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Türkiye

Türkiye	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	Strong	Strong	Medium	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	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

In Türkiye, a blend of strong persecution forces exists, including **Islamic oppression**, **religious nationalism**, **dictatorial paranoia**, **ethno-religious hostility**, and **clan oppression**—work in tandem to severely restrict Bible access. These engines are driven by government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, political parties, ethnic group leaders, and even one’s own family, creating a complex web of hostility and legal obstruction that affects every sphere of Christian life.

The World Watch List of 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 Türkiye?

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.



Islamic Oppression Blended with Religious Nationalism: “To Be Turkish Is To Be Muslim”

In Türkiye, religious and national identity are often inseparable. This fusion of Islam and nationalism breeds intense societal pressure against Christians, particularly MBBs. They often face threats of divorce, loss of inheritance rights, and familial rejection. They are frequently forced to hide their faith, along with their Bibles, or to lead double lives to avoid exposure.

Even Christians from historical traditions, such as the Armenian, Syriac, and Greek Orthodox churches, are viewed with suspicion and seen as remnants of foreign influence. Churches easily identifiable by their architecture are often targeted, and Christian symbols can provoke hostility or vandalism. For example, in December 2023, assailants tore down the entrance sign of a church near Istanbul. In early 2024, two Islamic State gunmen attacked the Santa Maria Church in Istanbul during a Sunday service, killing one congregant.

Christians, especially pastors and church leaders, are often harassed or threatened, verbally and online, resulting in a climate where distributing or even owning Bibles becomes a risky endeavor.



A State Silencing Christianity

While Türkiye's constitution claims to protect religious freedom, the reality on the ground is shaped by authoritarian control. Under President Erdogan's administration, the government has increasingly positioned Sunni Islam as the religious norm. Christian groups, particularly Protestant churches and foreign-affiliated ministries, are subjected to surveillance, bureaucratic harassment, and outright expulsion.

This is especially evident in the widespread use of immigration restriction codes. Over 115 foreign Christians, including some married to Turkish citizens, have been denied entry or residency, severely disrupting church leadership and cutting off avenues for Bible importation and discipleship. In 2024, several Protestant churches reported losing access to key leaders due to these restrictions, many of whom had helped coordinate Bible teaching or Scripture distribution efforts.

Church buildings also face steep challenges under zoning laws and renovation restrictions. Despite one high-profile exception, the construction of a Syriac Orthodox church in Istanbul, new churches are virtually impossible to build. Existing ones struggle to secure legal status that would allow tax exemptions or utility relief. This directly affects the ability of churches to store, distribute, or openly read the Bible without fear of legal backlash.



Christian Heritage Under Threat in the Southeast

Ethnic Christian communities in southeastern Türkiye—primarily Syriac, Armenian, and Assyrian—have long been caught between state pressure and Kurdish insurgency. These historical Christian populations face land confiscation, bureaucratic obstacles, and in some cases, physical violence intended to drive them from their ancestral lands.

In one case from 2023, a 92-year-old Assyrian Christian was murdered in his village of Enhil, likely as part of a continued attempt to expel Christians from the region. This underscores the level of hostility Christians face when simply exercising basic hospitality or remaining in their historic territories, let alone trying to distribute or preserve Bibles.

This environment not only forces Christians to abandon their homes, but also leaves churches (often the sole hubs for Bible distribution) isolated and vulnerable. Many of these churches are legally unrecognized and thus excluded from protections or support for religious operations.



Invisible But Tangible Pressure Within Families and Refugees

In rural and conservative regions, particularly in the east, family and tribal structures exert powerful social control. MBBs are seen as traitors, not just to their faith but to their family and ethnic identity. Women, in particular, may be placed under house arrest, denied access to Christian materials, or even threatened with forced marriage to restore “family honor.”

MBBs refugees—from countries like Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria—face double persecution: pressure from their own families and ethnic communities, as well as from Turkish society. Many are undocumented or hold precarious refugee status, making them ineligible for employment or housing. When their faith becomes known, they are often forced into hiding and cut off from local churches, removing even the possibility of receiving a Bible through community channels.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN TÜRKIYE

Given the immense social and political pressures Christians face in Türkiye, Bible access becomes more urgent. It is estimated that **up to 50,000 additional Bibles** are needed to meet current demand. This will significantly support the growth and hopefully inject courage for our brothers and sisters in Türkiye.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Though small in number, the church in Türkiye has been growing over the past five years. This growth underscores an urgent need to equip new believers with the Word of God, especially as societal and governmental pressures intensify.

Amid surveillance, discrimination, and restrictions on worship, the church continues to stand firm, often at a huge cost; therefore, we must provide aid and solve Bible access as the need continues to rise.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

Given the unique challenges in Türkiye, the need isn't just for printed Bibles. In fact, **audio Bibles** become a priority, particularly for MBBs who cannot openly keep physical copies of Scripture. **Bibles in video format** are also increasingly vital for discipleship, especially in urban areas.

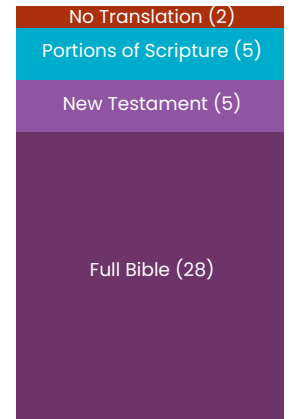
In contrast, rural and traditional communities, particularly those facing ethno-religious hostility, still benefit significantly from printed Bibles as long as accessed discreetly. Providing access across multiple formats is crucial to reaching the full spectrum of Türkiye's diverse Christian community.

The Translation Gap

Language diversity presents another layer of complexity. While Christians in Türkiye speak at least 40 different languages, of these languages:

- Only **28** have full Bible translations
- **5** languages have only the New Testament translated
- **5** have partial Scripture translations
- **2 languages have no Bible translation at all**

This translation gap leaves entire communities without access to God’s Word in their heart language, hindering both discipleship and evangelism. As the church grows, so does the need to prioritize ongoing translation and distribution efforts across these unreached language groups.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Türkiye

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Türkiye is an urgent mission for the global church to solve. In a nation where Christians are often treated as outsiders and where national identity is tightly bound to Islam, possessing and proclaiming the Word of God is a courageous act of faith.

Believers risk rejection, isolation, and even death for following Christ, and they do so with remarkable faith. We, the international Christian community, have an opportunity to stand with them. By supplying Bibles in every needed format and supporting vital translation work, we answer more than a logistical challenge; we answer a cry for hope, truth, and the life-changing power of God’s Word.

Let us answer the call today!



10.1%

Annual Church Growth



Bibles needed for both

Believers & Seekers



25-50k

Bible needs estimate



Audio Bible

Preferred Format



Video Bible

Format 2nd Priority