



# Bible Access List

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

# Uzbekistan

Bible Restrictions Rank: **24**  
**SEVERE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

Bible Shortage Rank: **50**  
**Bible needs estimate between twenty five and fifty thousand**



## An Overview of Bible access in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, a nation of over 35 million people, Christians make up just over 1% of the population— that’s an estimated 400,000 plus believers scattered across a predominantly Muslim and deeply secular society. While the constitution claims to guarantee religious freedom, in practice, the reality for Christians, especially those outside the state-sanctioned Orthodox Church, is one of tight government control, surveillance, and severe restrictions on Bible access.

Though the Bible Society is the only organization legally permitted to import Bibles, actual permission is rarely, if ever, granted. Printing Bibles locally requires government approval, which is virtually impossible to obtain. These restrictions have effectively shut down both the import and production of Bibles in Uzbekistan, leading to an acute scarcity of Scripture, especially in non-Orthodox Christian communities.

Ownership and storage of Bibles are tightly regulated. Registered Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches may legally store and use Bibles within their buildings; but nearly a third of Christians belong to unregistered or independent fellowships, where even possessing more than one Bible can result in raids, fines, or imprisonment. For individuals, the law technically allows for one stamped Uzbek-printed Bible. But in practice, this is enforced harshly and inconsistently. For Muslim-background believers (MBBs), possessing or sharing a Bible can be dangerous and is often met with severe consequences from both state authorities and their own communities.

The restrictions go beyond ownership. Distribution is practically banned. All churches, Orthodox included, are blacklisted from receiving permission to distribute religious materials. Even house churches and informal gatherings are illegal unless held in registered buildings. Believers are closely monitored, and even a Christian poem found in a child’s notebook has resulted in fines. Bibles must be kept hidden, and Christian teaching is forced underground.

Bible distribution in Uzbek is only allowed using the Cyrillic script, but since the independence of Uzbekistan, the government has replaced Cyrillic by the Latin script. No permission has been given for distribution using Latin script, effectively excluding an ever-growing part of the population to access of a print Bible.

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

### How can I pray for Uzbekistan?

- **Provision for Open Access.** Pray fervently for the doors of access to swing open, allowing the Bible to reach every believer in Uzbekistan, unhindered by bureaucracy or fear.
- **Global Partnerships and Collaborations.** Ask the Lord to raise up strong global partnerships—creative, courageous networks willing to bring the Bible to those the world has forgotten.
- **Change in Laws and Restrictions.** Pray for a transformation in legal and societal attitudes toward religious materials, paving the way for greater freedom and deeper faith across Uzbekistan.

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

### Bible Access Restrictions

#### Considerable Access Restrictions

- Import restrictions
- Print restrictions
- Storage restrictions
- Ownership restrictions
- No distribution

### Other Limiting Factors

#### Some Other Factors

- Pockets of poverty
- Poor infrastructure

### Bible Shortages Among Believers

Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is between 25 and 50 thousand

**Main religion:** Islam

**Country population:** 35,674,000

#### Christian population:

406,000, 1.14% of total population

**World Watch List: #25**

# WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN UZBEKISTAN?

Despite constitutional promises of religious freedom, the reality in Uzbekistan paints a much different picture, particularly for Christians seeking access to Scripture. The core barrier is state control: all religious activities must be registered and monitored, and unregistered religious activity is considered illegal under national law. As a result, Bible access is effectively choked at every stage— from ownership, printing, distribution, and use.

Christian materials, including the Bible, can only be legally used by registered religious associations and only within their approved geographic locations. Even then, distribution remains highly restricted. The government requires an official stamp on every Bible, and possessing more than one copy per person or carrying a Bible outside of one's home is illegal. Violations can result in harsh penalties, including fines, arrest, and imprisonment.

Printing Bibles within the country is not allowed, as ownership of printing presses for religious materials is prohibited. Importing Bibles is theoretically possible, but permits are rarely granted, even to legally recognized organizations like the Bible Society. This means that in practice, both domestic production and legal importation of Bibles are nearly impossible.

Christians from unregistered groups, which comprise a significant portion of the believing community, are at even greater risk. Members of these groups face constant surveillance, police raids, detention, and hefty fines simply for meeting together, possessing a Bible, or engaging in religious conversation. Baptists, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals are often targeted, particularly those associated with house churches or independent fellowships.

The situation is even more perilous for Muslim-background believers (MBBs), who face intense pressure from family and community. Discovery of a Bible or any Christian literature often leads to beatings, expulsion, or forced isolation. In rural areas like the Fergana Valley, the pressure is especially severe, and MBBs are often forced into secrecy to avoid reprisal.

Beyond religious repression, systemic censorship also blocks access to Scripture in digital and printed formats. The internet in Uzbekistan is controlled by the state, with Christian websites and media platforms blocked or monitored. All Christian content must be approved by government authorities before it can be distributed. While accessing the Bible through the internet is possible, it's best to practice caution when doing so.

## Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan	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	Very weak	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 Uzbekistan, multiple persecution engines operate simultaneously to restrict Bible access, including **dictatorial paranoia**, **Islamic oppression**, and **clan oppression**. These engines are fueled by government officials, Muslim religious leaders, ethnic group leaders, and even normal citizens and extended family.

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 Uzbekistan?

## 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.



The Uzbek government exercises sweeping control over all religious activity. It is illegal to engage in unregistered religious gatherings, preach in Uzbek, or distribute Christian materials without state approval, which are almost never granted. Even the Bible Society, the only legally authorized entity to import Bibles, faces insurmountable obstacles. Printing presses cannot be owned by churches, and every religious item must be government-approved and stamped. Surveillance is widespread: homes are raided, personal Bibles confiscated, and Christians are fined or arrested for possessing “unauthorized” materials, even poems or songs with Christian content found on mobile devices have triggered punishment.

Security forces consider unregistered churches as dangerous sects, often accusing their members of being foreign agents seeking to undermine the state. In this climate of fear, owning a Bible, let alone distributing one, is a deeply risky act, especially outside of Orthodox or government-registered communities.



### Islamic Oppression Blended with Clan Oppression

For Muslim-background believers (MBBs), who make up a notable share of Christians in Uzbekistan, persecution is both systemic and intensely personal. MBBs often face physical abuse, house arrest by family members, and expulsion from their communities. In rural areas like the Fergana Valley, local imams preach against MBBs and pressure communities to shun them. Families go to great lengths to prevent baptisms, Christian education of children, or even Christian funerals. In many cases, simply being found with a Bible is considered hard evidence of conversion and can provoke violence or eviction.



Religious literature is forbidden in private homes without official approval. Even possessing more than one Bible is grounds for suspicion. Communities and Mahalla (neighborhood) leaders are authorized to monitor residents and report “suspicious” religious activity, further fueling societal control and the criminalization of Christian faith practices.

These persecution engines are not isolated. They feed off each other—government suspicion, social hostility, and religious intolerance combine to create a climate where Bible access is not only rare but dangerous. MBBs hide their faith. Churches meet in secret. And the precious few Bibles that do circulate often do so at great personal risk.

# THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN UZBEKISTAN

Despite the small size of the Christian population in Uzbekistan, the need for Bibles is striking. Research estimates that fewer than 40% of Christians in the country currently have access to a Bible. For the church to flourish in such a restrictive environment, it is estimated that at least 25,000 to 50,000 Bibles are needed to meet the demand for both new believers and growing Christian communities.

## A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Encouragingly, despite immense pressure, the church in Uzbekistan is slowly expanding over the past five years. This growth, mostly among non-traditional and unregistered churches, underscores a critical and urgent need to supply the spiritual backbone of this movement: access to God's Word. Without Scripture, discipleship and evangelism become nearly impossible, especially in communities where open preaching or teaching is illegal and punishable.

## Bible Formats for Unique Needs

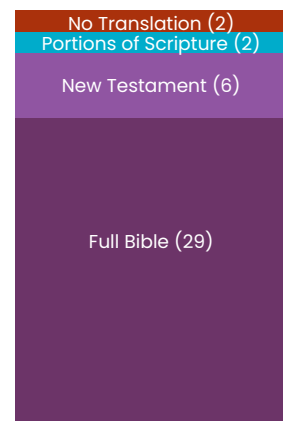
In terms of Bible formats, **printed Bibles remain the highest priority**. The state-controlled internet, censorship laws, and the illegality of using media to spread Christianity all limit access to digital formats. While **video-based Scripture** content is useful, especially in regions with growing smartphone penetration, distribution remains risky. Government censorship is fierce, and religious media must pass through strict, often impossible-to-navigate, approval systems. Furthermore, many believers meet in secret or do not have consistent internet access, making print and discreet physical distribution essential.

## The Translation Gap

Language accessibility presents another layer of challenge. Christians in Uzbekistan speak at least 39 different languages. Of these languages:

- **29** languages have a full Bible translation
- **6** have only the New Testament
- **2** have only portions translated
- **2 languages still have no Scripture translation at all**

This leaves entire communities without access to God's Word in their heart language. Translation work is slow due to political and social barriers but remains a vital component of ensuring access to all.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Uzbekistan

# THE CLARION CALL

The Church in Uzbekistan is growing in resilience and numbers, but it cannot grow in maturity without Scripture. It is not only about getting Bibles into hands; it's about preserving faith in a context where owning a Bible can lead to fines, harassment, or even imprisonment. For many believers, especially MBB, the Bible is not just a book; it is a lifeline to hope, identity, and truth.

Meeting this need requires more than strategy; it requires courage, partnership, and urgent global prayer. The global Church must respond. We must fuel translation efforts, strengthen secure supply networks, and prioritize creative distribution strategies that can thrive in secrecy. Every page matters. Every verse is a weapon against fear. Every Bible placed in the hands of a believer in Uzbekistan is an act of defiance against darkness and a declaration that God's Word cannot be chained.



**3.5%**

Annual Church  
Growth



Bibles needed for both  
**Believers  
& Seekers**



**25-50k**

Bible needs estimate



**Printed  
Bible**

Preferred Format



**Video  
Bible**

Format 2nd Priority