



## Focus on Religious Freedom

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*"Hostility is always at the beginning of the persecution of Christians."  
Pope Francis*

### Persecution of Christians Increases in Nigeria and India

#### **Nigeria, Africa:**

A Catholic priest was burned alive and his assistant pastor was shot in the parish residence in north central Nigeria in January, 2023. "It's a continuation of a situation that's been going on for years," said Stephen Rasche from a center for peace and justice. "Many of the victims go unreported - all sorts of different types of Christians who are living in rural areas." <sup>(1)</sup>

"This is a sad moment. For a priest to be killed in such a manner means that we are all not safe. These terrorists have lost it and drastic action is needed to end this ongoing carnage," said the state governor of Sani Bello. <sup>(2)</sup>

The *World Index of Christian Persecution* cites Nigeria as the first in the world for violence against Christians. It is estimated that 89% of Christians killed throughout the world are located in Nigeria with more than 7,600 Nigerian Christians murdered from January 2021 to June 2022. Nigeria is 53.5% Muslim, 10.6% Catholic, and 35.3% other Christian according to the CIA World Facebook.

**India, Asia:** The Christian churches in India are exhausted by the surge of anti-conversion laws and accusations of illegal proselytization. Mobs are driving out Christians from their villages and many face property destruction and personal violence. Recently, 22,000 Christians from many denominations and around the country gathered at the nation's capital to demand better.

"This protest is basically to call the attention of the government to the increasing violence against Christians and our institutions," said the Orthodox Syrian Church in Delhi. <sup>(3)</sup>

"This coming together of all denominations ... is a unity to strengthen the kingdom of God," said the National Council of Churches in India. "It is a cry of our people ... who are suffering in rural areas. They have a right to believe in their God, but that is being curtailed." <sup>(4)</sup>

"Wherever persecution is reported, we approach the authorities to intervene and help Christians who are being targeted, but instead the authorities start to act against the Christians rather than help them ... the situation in the state is worsening with every passing day ...," said attorney Patsy David. <sup>(5)</sup>

*"The age of martyrs is not yet over ... the Church as more martyrs now  
than in the first centuries."  
Pope Francis*

(aleteia.org, 1/15/23(1); cna.com, 1/15/23(2); abcnews.com, 1/15/23; africanews.com, 1/15/23; christianitytoday.com, 2/27/23(3)(4)(5); religionnews.com, 3/9/23; persecution.org, 3/9/23)