

IT'S TIME FOR JUSTICE

Religious Persecution

The Bible bears witness to God's desire that the powers and people of the world act with care and justice. As Jeremiah tells us, "This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place." (Jeremiah 22: 3, NIV)

Religious persecution is present on every continent: the oppression of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar; the killing of Coptic Christian in Egypt; the limitations China places on Buddhists, Muslim Uyghurs, Christians and Falun Gong followers; and the attacks on mosques and synagogues in North America and New Zealand are some examples of violence committed against groups on the basis of religion.



In 2016, the Pew Research Centre found that 83 countries (42% of the 198 surveyed) were identified as having high or very high restrictions and/or hostilities regarding religion—an increase from 80 countries in 2015 and 58 countries in 2007. Countries where religious freedom is high tend to have fewer instances of armed conflict, better health outcomes, higher income, prolonged democracy and better educational opportunities for women. Ensuring the religious freedom of one person requires protecting the religious freedom of all people.

The Church Responds

Presbyteries are encouraged to pray at each meeting in 2019–2020 for persecuted Christians and other persecuted religious groups around the world.

The International Affairs Committee published *Praying for 31 Countries Around the World Where Religious Persecution is High* to guide individuals and prayer groups in praying for an end to religious persecution.

Presbyterians are also encouraged to write to their Members of Parliament indicating their commitment to the protection of religious freedom in Canada and around the world

Prayer

Creator, we pray for your children around the world to have the peace of God which passes understanding, the hope of the Holy Spirit's presence and to experience the love of Christ which is beyond measure. Help all Christians and people of good conscience understand that the religious freedom of one person supports the freedoms of all people. Amen.

