

Christmas Blessing 2021

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VOMC's *Christmas Blessing* project is specifically designed to allow Canadian Christians to express love and encouragement to their persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. As gifts are typically given to loved ones during the Christmas season, this distribution project gives us a unique opportunity to remind persecuted Christians of the ultimate gift given by our Heavenly Father – His one and only Son, Jesus Christ – while, at the same time, extending His compassionate provision for their practical needs.

Every year, VOMC focusses on a specific region where persecution is prevalent, working closely



with in-country ministry partners to provide packages containing practical items, such as Christian resources (including Bibles), toys for the children, clothing, food, household necessities, hygienic supplies, etc. This year, VOMC is partnering with local churches in Tunisia and Morocco to provide gift packages to Christians in need.

Uniqueness of North African Nations

Tunisia, located in the far north of the African continent, features the second closest point to Europe after the Strait of Gibraltar. Christianity took root in Tunisia at a very early date and is still spreading across the nation today. The region was even home to several important early church forefathers, including Cyprian, Tertullian and St. Augustine. Present-day members of the Tunisian church are located throughout the country, consisting of indigenous Arabs and Berbers, as well as those of European descent.

Morocco is known for its breathtaking geographical diversity and openness to Europe through the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla. This North African country has produced many influential figures of the early church, including Marcellus of Tangier. Christianity in Morocco, which can be traced back to the second century AD, is comprised of Arabs, Berbers and foreigners, most of whom are from sub-Saharan Africa.



These photos reflect a few of VOMC's many "Christmas Blessing" distributions over previous years. For Christmas 2021, we are partnering with local churches in Tunisia and Morocco to provide gift packages to Christians in need.

Challenges Facing North African Believers

Although Tunisia operates under a civil legal system, traditional Islamic law has a deep spiritual hold on the nation. As a result, the church in Tunisia is experiencing widespread persecution at the hands of militant Muslims. Converts to Christianity can even be at risk of the death penalty, as Islamic law permits the killing of those who leave the Muslim faith. Furthermore, many of the pressures Tunisian Christians encounter stem from local societal traditions and familial relationships. Muslim parents who do not accept their children's conversion to Christianity commonly expel them from the home, ban them from communicating with the rest of the family, and even deprive them of their inheritance.

In both countries, Christians are not recognized by their governments as official minorities. Some followers of Jesus are also deprived of the right to have a Christian marriage ceremony and, therefore,

are forced into marital contracts that only comply with Islamic law. Additionally, believers in both of these Muslim-majority nations are not allowed to evangelize, build churches, give their children non-Islamic names, sell or distribute Bibles, nor declare their Christian faith in any form of the local media (whether it be TV, radio or newspaper). Most church members meet discretely without permission from the state by gathering in each other's homes. Those who do openly practise their faith are frequently charged with sedition and imprisoned for not complying with the traditions of their Muslim communities.

As we approach the upcoming Christmas season, may the peace and joy of the Lord Jesus reign in the hearts of our persevering Christian family in Tunisia and Morocco, encouraging them to remain faithful to Him despite the challenges they encounter. 🌍

To contribute to this year's "Christmas Blessing" project, please contact us at:

**www.vomcanada.com/ChristmasBlessing
1-888-298-6423**