



***"May the God of all compassion,
who has called us into a living hope,
stir your hearts and move you to
shine as a light in this dark hour."***

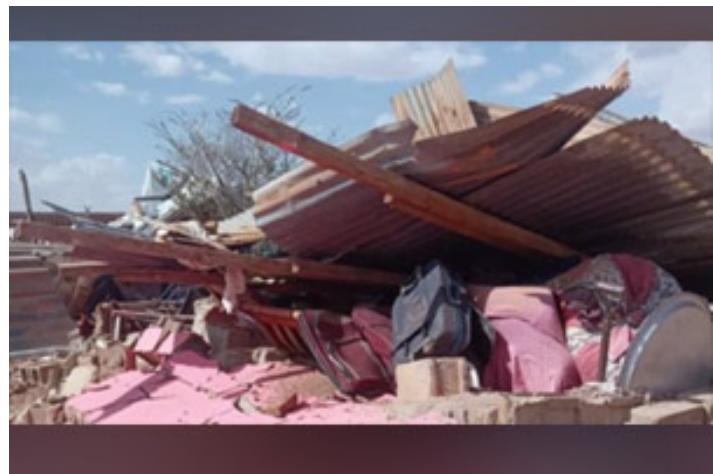
~ An Afghan believer in Tajikistan

SUDAN: Church Building Destroyed While Authorities Watch

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Mission Network News, Open Doors UK, International Christian Concern

On July 8th, approximately 30 individuals equipped with heavy machinery demolished a Pentecostal church in the El Haj Yousif area of Khartoum as police officers and military personnel looked on without intervening. By the time the demolition was finished, the worship hall – which had been constructed in the early 1990s – was reduced to rubble, along with the church's administrative offices, guest house, and other adjoining buildings.

While police and military forces did not directly take part in the demolition, they allowed the destruction to proceed, prevented church members from interfering, and prohibited the recording of the event. In addition, the congregation was unable to save any items from within the buildings. Officials later informed church leaders that the demolition was part of an effort to remove "unregulated" buildings from the city.



A demolished Pentecostal church building in Khartoum.

Photo: CSW

Rafat Samir, a local church leader who serves as chairman of the Evangelical Community Council for Sudan, has warned that the future of Christianity is uncertain under the current rule of the country's armed forces. He believes that churches located outside the main cities are at risk of continued direct attacks, while those within the city centres may be further targeted through the military's allegedly "lawful" measures.

Since the onset of civil unrest, Christians within the country have experienced opposition from multiple fronts, and over 100 church buildings have reportedly been damaged or destroyed. The Sudanese authorities have made it clear that reconstruction won't be permitted without official authorization, and that such permits will not be issued to churches. For additional reports addressing the challenges facing Christians in Sudan, visit our [country profile](#).

- ***Following the recent loss of their place of worship, pray that the members of this demolished church in Khartoum will be granted wisdom, guidance and unity as they determine their next steps.***
- ***Pray for God's divine ministry to take place within the hearts and minds of the Sudanese authorities, so that they would realize the importance of upholding justice so the country's Christians can peacefully worship Him – the Creator of our vast universe and beyond....***
- ***Lift up all believers throughout Sudan, praying for the Lord's protection over their lives and church sanctuaries amid the political unrest and increased hostility from Islamic militants on all sides of the armed conflict.***

SYRIA: Pastor and Family Killed in Targeted Attack

Sources: Premier Christian News, Christian Post, Barnabas Aid, Christian Daily International, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Israel 365 News

A pastor and several members of his family were killed in Syria on July 16th during what church officials have described as a "targeted massacre." While initial reports confirmed at least 12 fatalities, other sources indicate that more than 20 people were possibly killed, including Pastor Khaled Mazher, his parents, as well as his sisters and their children.

The incident occurred just one day after governmental forces raided the city of Sweida, an area plagued by sectarian violence between government-backed Bedouin groups and Druze militias. As a matter of fact, Pastor Khaled himself had converted from the syncretic Druze religion several years prior. Some reports speculate that the attackers may have assumed that he was still a member of the Druze sect.



Photo: Unsplash / Sara Calado

The broader context, however, indicates a deliberate targeting of Christians in these recent incidents. Just days before the attack, leaflets calling for violence against "cross worshippers" were found at the doors of various churches in the area. Additionally, less than a month earlier, a church in Damascus was targeted by a suicide bomber, resulting in the deaths of at least 20 people (see [this report](#)).

Pastor Khaled led the Good Shepherd Evangelical Church, one of the few Christian congregations within the country's predominantly Druze region. Despite the increased danger and violence, the pastor remained committed to his ministry work, courageously sharing the Gospel message in this region. To learn more about how the violence in Syria is affecting the lives of our Christian brothers and sisters residing there, see our [country profile](#).

- ***Pray for the grieving members of the Good Shepherd Evangelical Church and all those who are mourning the tragic loss of Pastor Khaled, his family, and the many other innocent victims of this devastating attack.***
- ***Intercede on behalf of the country's church leaders as they determine how to move forward with their ministries amid the heightened hostility and uncertainty.***
- ***Pray for an end to the violence in the city of Sweida and other areas of Syria, asking that those who are inciting such acts of terror would experience the Holy Spirit's conviction and transformation.***

AFGHANISTAN: Christian Refugees in Tajikistan Face Deportation

Sources: VOM USA, Open Doors UK, SAT-7

Since the Taliban gained control of Afghanistan in 2021, thousands of Afghans who refused to follow the regime's strict form of Islam have been forced to flee the country. Among them are an estimated 13,000 refugees who sought asylum in neighbouring Tajikistan. However, in a deeply troubling development, Tajik authorities have begun forcibly deporting refugees back to Afghanistan, where they could face severe persecution and possibly death.

In mid-July, more than 150 individuals were rounded up from public areas and deported. The group included men, women, children, as well as the elderly. In many cases, families have been torn apart. Among those deported were Christians; other believers managed to flee to safer regions within Tajikistan. The reason for the sudden change in policy remains unknown, though some suggest that the decision may be



Afghan refugee children.
Photo: Hashoo Foundation USA ([cc](#))

linked to Tajikistan's alignment with Russia, which recently had formally recognized the Taliban administration in Afghanistan.

Under Taliban rule, Afghans must adhere to strict Islamic beliefs and practices. Those who deviate are subjected to arrest, torture, and even possible execution. No information is currently available about the fate of the Christians who have already been deported; and, for those remaining in Tajikistan, the future is very uncertain.

VOMC's ministry partner, SAT-7, recently received a message from one of the affected Christians, who described the situation as "uncertain and filled with fear and hope mingled together." The believer went on to explain: "Many conflicting reports surround us – some bring fleeting comfort, while others strike terror in our hearts. Some of us face the threat of forced return – not to safety but, for many, to the very mouth of death." Christian refugees in Tajikistan are calling for urgent prayer. To access previously published reports regarding the dire situation in Afghanistan, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***Please lift up these imperiled Afghan believers in your prayers, asking the Lord to mightily intervene by softening the hearts of the Tajik authorities so further deportations will not take place.***
- ***In the meanwhile, may our Heavenly Father divinely protect those who have already been forced to return to Afghanistan, shielding them from any risk of danger amid the volatile situation.***
- ***May Tajikistan's political leaders value justice and compassion, honouring their commitment to protect vulnerable refugees in need of safety and humanitarian aid.***
- ***Continue to pray for peace and stability to take place in Afghanistan, asking that the oppressive grip of the Taliban will be broken and that religious freedom would be restored.***

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