

## Christian Persecution in Iran Turns Its Tiny Church Into the World's Fastest Growing



The irony is stark: One of the worst countries in the world for Christians to be living in is also the country where the Church is growing the fastest.

That country is the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is listed as the eighth worst Christian-persecuting country in the world on the 2017 Open Doors USA World Watch list.

But now, Iran has gained the distinction of being the leading country in the world where the church is growing and influencing the region for Christ, according to the Christian persecution watchdog.

Last year the mission research organization Operation World listed Iran as having a 19.6 percent rise in its Christian population annually ? more than any other country in the world, according to Mission Network News.

Todd Nettleton with The Voice of the Martyrs, USA described the irony of it all on the group's persecution blog. He noted that the Ayatollah Khomeini, the radical Islamic leader who took power in Iran in 1979, turned out to be "the greatest evangelist we've had in Iran."

Nettleton cited statistics showing that as many as 70 percent of Iranians have rejected Islam. This is because they have seen that their government's promise to do "everything according to Islamic principles" has failed, since corruption and poverty still exist.

"That must mean Islam doesn't work.... That failure has really, in the eyes of the people of Iran, become the failure of Islam," he said.

Fox News noted that despite the Iranian regime's crackdown on Christianity, a large underground church movement is growing.

Hundreds of Iranians have reportedly been converting to Christianity, and many are being baptized in large ceremonies in underground churches held in private homes across the country.

Open Doors USA noted that when Khomeini turned Iran into an Islamic republic in 1979, all missionaries were kicked out, evangelism was outlawed, Bibles in Persian were banned, and pastors were killed.

"Many feared the small Iranian church would soon wither away and die. But the exact opposite has happened," the group said.

It cited two factors that contributed to this phenomenon: "First, violence in the name of Islam has caused widespread disillusionment with the regime and led many Iranians to question their beliefs. Second, many Iranian Christians have continued to boldly and

faithfully tell others about Christ, in the face of persecution."

This has led to something truly remarkable. According to Open Doors USA, "more Iranians have become Christians in the last 20 years than in the previous 13 centuries put together since Islam came to Iran."

This is backed up by statistics. "In 1979, there were an estimated 500 Christians from a Muslim background in Iran. Today, there are hundreds of thousands?some say more than one million. Whatever the exact number, many Iranians are turning to Jesus as Lord and Savior," the group's report said.

Source: Christian Post