



Near East and North Africa

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Egypt

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Algeria
Kuwait

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Iraq
Sudan

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Libya

Saudi Arabia

Category 3



Egypt

The population of Egypt is 69,812,000, of which there are 701 Adventist members. Egypt has experienced a serious problem with religiously motivated violence in recent years. In addition, leaders of the Coptic Church have occasionally made comments against other Christian communities that are incendiary in the context of the tensions in the Middle-East.

Category 4



Algeria

The population of Algeria is 31,196,000, of which 99% are Muslim and 0.1% are Christian. There are only a few Adventists in Algeria which imposes many restrictions on religion. Nevertheless, people are allowed to disseminate their religion in private or public, and they can observe religious days of rest, with many restrictions. A church can get legal status within the country, and pastors can perform baptisms, weddings and funerals according to their convictions. However, they may not have access to minister to those in prisons, hospitals, the army forces, or on television and radio stations.

In the past, the Adventist Church operated a clinic, a college, and engaged in many activities including radio programs and evangelistic meetings in Algeria. After Algeria received independence from France the Adventist Church was able to keep its building for a few years. However, the property was eventually confiscated by the government.



Iran

The population of Iran is 92,942,000. There are only 35 Adventist members in Iran. Religion is tightly regulated in Iran. There are restrictions on people's right to change faith and on disseminating literature in

public places. There are also restrictions on churches registering for legal status and on pastors performing religious rites such as baptisms and funerals. There is some religious freedom outside these restrictions.

In a June 11, 2002 *Agence France Press* article, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Khurazi was quoted as calling the Baha'i faith a cult. The Baha'i members have been persecuted in Iran since the Iranian Revolution. Since that time, the Iranian government has used European "anti-cult" legislation as an excuse for persecuting religious minorities. Kurazi's statement was given during a meeting with the Belgian Foreign Minister, Louis Michel. Both ministers were preparing for the official visit of Iranian President Mohammed Khatami to Belgium. (*IRPP, June 17, 2002*)



Iraq

The population of Iraq is 23,586,000, of which 97% are Muslims. There are 219 Adventist members in Iraq.



Kuwait

The population of Kuwait is 2.2 million. There are a few thousand Christians, including some Adventists, in Kuwait.



Lebanon

The population of Lebanon is 3.5 million, which includes a few hundred Adventists.



Republic of Sudan

The population of Sudan is 31,779,000, which includes 10,371 Adventists. Sudan is suffering through an extremely bitter civil war between the largely Islamic north pitted against the largely Christian and Animist south. It is estimated that over 2 million people have died in the conflict and 4 million have been displaced. Efforts to impose Shari'a law on non-Muslims is one, of many, points of contention between the warring

parties. Both sides have been accused of the most egregious human rights abuses, including deliberately disrupting food aid to civilians in enemy controlled areas of the country that are in famine.

Category 5

Libya

The population of Libya is 5,115,450, of which about 50,000 are Christians and 98% are Muslim. Adventists once had a significant presence in Libya, that included a hospital. However, since the revolution in Libya, the Adventist presence has been virtually wiped out. In 1997 the Vatican established diplomatic relations with Libya. Information about the status of religious minorities in Libya is limited.

Saudi Arabia

To understand the circumstances of religious freedom in Saudi Arabia, it is important to understand a few facts:

1. Seven million foreigners live in Saudi Arabia: 1.5 million Indians, 500,000 Bangladeshis, 800,000 Egyptians, 800,000 Pakistanis, 600,000 Filipinos, 130,000 Sri Lankans, and 36,000 Americans.
2. More than 500,000 Catholics and Protestants, one hundred thousand Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews live in Saudi Arabia.
3. Special religious police, the Mutawwa'in, control the religious practices of the populace.
4. A conversion of a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy, a crime punishable by death in Saudi Arabia, if the accused does not recant.

5. The government prohibits public non-Muslim religious activities. Non-Muslim worshippers risk arrest, lashing, and deportation for engaging in overt religious activities.
6. The government does not permit non-Muslim clergy to enter the country for the purpose of conducting religious services.
7. Proselytizing by non-Muslims is illegal.
8. Women are subject to discrimination under Shari'a, as interpreted in the country.
9. Children of Saudi fathers are considered Muslim, regardless of the country or the religious tradition in which they may have been raised. (*Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, 2001, p. 478-482*).

Thirteen Christian foreign nationals spent Christmas 2001 and New Years 2002 in Saudi prison after being charged with propagating Christianity. They were arrested between July and September 2001 in Jeddah and held in Sarafiah prison. (*IRPP, January 2, 2002*).