



Algeria

The Church grew to be very strong in North Africa in the first six centuries after Christ, producing such famous figures as Augustine, Cyprian and Tertullian. Sadly after the Arab-Muslim invasions the Church was eliminated and disappeared for over a thousand years.



Algerian believers worshipping together.

However, there has been a great work of the Holy Spirit over the last 25 years, and once again many thousands of Christians are to be found among Algeria's 31 million population, though they are still a tiny minority in a country that is over 99% Muslim. There are no official records of the number of Christians, but it is thought there are now at least 50,000 to 60,000.

Christians enjoyed six years of relative religious freedom following the end of the civil war in 2000, but in 2006 new restrictions were introduced by the government after pressure from radical Islamists. Christian activity is once again severely hindered, as it was prior to 2000. Evangelism to Muslims is prohibited, and is punishable by a fine or imprisonment. Evangelists face the prospect of a lengthy term of imprisonment for distributing Christian material.

It can prove very difficult for a church to obtain official recognition from the authorities, who sometimes stall applications for long periods. Churches that are not registered may encounter opposition from neighbours and local authorities, and Christians are also threatened and harassed by Islamists.

Despite the granting of a licence to the country's largest Protestant group, the Algerian Protestant Church Association (EPA), for its affiliated churches to meet and worship freely, not all the churches who want to register have yet been able to, and some still experience harassment. In July 2012, a mob of villagers in El Majene village entered a house where church services were being held and demanded that the EPA-affiliated worshippers return home because they were meeting "illegally".

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