



**CORRUPTION
AND
CHRISTIAN
PERSECUTION**
BY LISA HARRAPPE
ICC FELLOW
SEPT 2024

Corruption and Christian Persecution

Worldwide, millions of people endure religious persecution, often characterized by systematic mistreatment by governments based on their religious beliefs. This maltreatment includes violations of human rights, encompassing political and economic restrictions, torture, rape, unjust imprisonment, and even death (Fox, 2021). Throughout human history, religious persecution has been a recurring theme, spanning various cultures, regions, and periods. Similarly, corruption has persistently plagued societies across history, with many countries grappling with government corruption today. This issue involves the misuse of public power for personal gain, undermining the foundations of good governance, hindering economic development, and exacerbating social inequalities (Bahoo et al., 2020). Both corruption and religious persecution present substantial challenges to global stability, justice, and the protection of human rights.

International Christian Concern (2023) has identified the worst countries for Christian persecution from 2021-2023. For example, Nigeria alone accounts for nearly 70% of all Christian killings (Ukeachusim, 2022). Transparency International (2023) has assigned each country a corruption score based on corrupt practices. This study aims to evaluate the correlation between corruption in these nations and its impact on documented cases of religious persecution. Examining the interconnection of these issues is essential, given that religious persecution affects millions of individuals globally.

Corruption is operationally defined as the misuse of entrusted power for private gain, encompassing acts such as bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism. Christian persecution refers to systematic mistreatment, harassment, or violence directed against individuals or groups because of their Christian faith. By shedding light on how corruption within governmental institutions

may contribute to discriminatory policies targeting Christian communities, the research aims to inform policy and advocacy efforts aimed at combating both corruption and religious persecution.

Impact

Many studies have been conducted in an attempt to show a correlation between corruption and religious persecution. When the majority religious group attains a high ranking, it often resorts to cronyism, increasing Christian discrimination and persecution. Raj (2019) critiqued the Hindutva ideology in India, which promotes Hindu nationalism and has been associated with religious persecution and corruption. The author examined how corruption intersects with religious persecution, particularly against religious minorities, under the influence of Hindutva ideology. Through a critical analysis, the article highlighted the ethical and social implications of corruption and persecution driven by such ideologies.

Corruption and persecution often negatively affect the economic growth of nations. Chaudhry & Shahbaz (2020) investigated the relationship between corruption, religious persecution, and economic development in Pakistan using time series analysis. The authors found empirical evidence suggesting that corruption and religious persecution have adverse effects on economic growth in Pakistan. The authors discussed the implications of these findings for policy interventions aimed at addressing corruption and promoting religious freedom to foster economic development.

The government and media often shape public perception, exacerbating discrimination and persecution. Haddad & Jurdi (2021) used a qualitative methodology to explore public perceptions of corruption and religious persecution. Through interviews and analysis, the study examined how corruption within institutions intersects with religious dynamics and contributes

to religious persecution. It shed light on the complex socio-political context and provided insights into the challenges faced by religious minorities.

Governments often are the facilitators of Christian persecution, instituting legislation and mobilizing security forces to violence. Kuman & Gupta (2022) examined the persecution crisis in Myanmar and its connection to corruption and religious persecution. They analyzed how corruption within Myanmar's government and military has facilitated religious persecution. The authors provided insights into the systemic factors driving persecution and discussed the implications for humanitarian responses and international interventions.

Persecution can have lasting impacts on victims. Pai & Dein (2019) explored the ethical and clinical implications for psychiatrists in India regarding corruption and religious persecution. They discussed how corruption within institutions can contribute to religious persecution and impact mental health outcomes in religious communities. The authors emphasized the importance of addressing corruption and religious persecution in psychiatric practice and advocated for ethical approaches to mental health care.

These articles provide insights into the intersection of corruption and religious persecution in various contexts. They highlight how corruption within governmental, legal, and societal institutions can exacerbate religious persecution, leading to discrimination, violence, and marginalization of religious minorities. The studies underscore the ethical, social, and economic implications of corruption and religious persecution, emphasizing the need for effective policy interventions to address these interconnected issues. They contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics underlying corruption and religious persecution and provide empirical evidence to inform evidence-based interventions and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting religious freedom and combating corruption.

Afghanistan

Corruption is pervasive across various sectors of Afghan society, including government, law enforcement, judiciary, and business. Typical forms of corruption observed in the country include bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, and patronage. Weak governance structures, lack of accountability, political instability, and external influences fuel this corruption, undermining efforts to establish effective institutions and impeding economic development. Additionally, corruption contributes to social inequality, fosters criminal networks, and undermines the rule of law in Afghanistan. Rahmani & Tytarenko (2018) found that Afghanistan suffers from exceptionally high levels of corruption, attributing this partly to the long-term national and regional conflict. The authors discovered that corruption remains high despite attempts to prevent or stop it. The study is important because it shows that Afghanistan has high levels of corruption despite efforts to curb it. Boyd (2020) found that the level of corruption in the Afghan National Police is high. The author notes that to curb police corruption, more evidence examining its correlation from top-down bureaucratic corruption to field officer corruption is needed. The study is critical because it shows that corruption in Afghanistan is not only at the bureaucratic level but is also found at all levels of government, including low-level police officers.

Christians in Afghanistan endure severe persecution due to the dominance of Islamic culture and the presence of extremist groups. Muslims who convert to Christianity face harsh treatment, including the threat of death, as some interpretations of Islamic law deem apostasy to be punishable by death. Converts risk ostracism from their families and communities, as well as threats, harassment, and violence from radical Islamic groups. Public worship rarely occurs, as

any display of Christianity attracts attention from authorities or militant factions. Many Afghan Christians practice their faith in secret, gathering in small meetings to evade detection. Social marginalization, discrimination, and the constant threat of violence mark Christian persecution in Afghanistan, rendering the country one of the most dangerous for Christians globally. Emadi (2021) examined the evolution of Christianity in Afghanistan and its diaspora community, focusing on the transition from the concealment of faith to active propagation. The author found that Afghan Christians have historically practiced their faith discreetly due to societal and legal pressures, often facing persecution and discrimination. Muslim converts are careful not to disclose their faith to anyone unless they have complete trust in that person because of the dangers associated with being a Christian. The community must remain quiet and exercise caution in practicing their faith. This has caused many Christians to leave, both voluntarily and forcedly, for the safety of Pakistan and India, trying to seek asylum in countries in the West. Emadi (2021) noted that while in exile, Muslim converts to Christianity turned to active propagation to share their faith with their countrymen back home. This study is important because it shows that Christians in Afghanistan have historically faced immense persecution, including violence, suppression, and displacement for their faith.

Algeria

In Algeria, corruption manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism. Corrupt practices are often intertwined with the government and business sectors, undermining public trust and impeding socioeconomic development. Multinational corporations derive vast revenues from oil rent that has allowed bureaucratic collusion with private sector investors. Corruption is so widespread in Algeria that citizens call it the “national sport.” Algerian law institutionalizes favoritism, so while low-level officials are

charged, higher-up and more well-known parties to illicit activities are untouchable (Limam, 2012). Limam's findings are important because they show that the law itself is corrupt in Algeria, leaving official actors with the largest and most diverse corruption to collude at will without fear of reprisal. This study is significant because it shows that to become effective at curbing corruption, Algeria must become a rule-of-law nation and prosecute crime regardless of social standings.

Algeria has a predominantly Muslim population, and Christians, particularly converts from Islam, face various forms of persecution. While the Algerian constitution guarantees freedom of religion, in practice, Christians encounter discrimination, harassment, and restrictions on their religious activities. The government imposes regulations on non-Muslim religious groups, requiring them to register with the state and limiting their ability to worship freely. Like Afghanistan, Muslim converts to Christianity risk social ostracism, threats, and violence from family members, communities, and extremist groups. Overall, legal and societal barriers, intimidation, and marginalization characterize the persecution of Christians in Algeria. Tamburini (2021) found that regimes used state-of-emergency constitutional provisions for their survival in times of instability and social unrest. This led to cases of the suppression of human rights for many years and the suspension of the democratic process. The study is critical because it shows that the corrupt Algerian regime used the force of the law to remain in power and, thereby, was able to commit atrocities legally.

Azerbaijan

Corruption is prevalent in both the public and private sectors, involving bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism. The country's economy, particularly its oil and gas industry, is susceptible to corrupt practices, with reports of widespread cronyism among

government officials and business elites. Sadigov (2017) found that “tolerance of corruption” is high among the population in Azerbaijan, with everyday citizens using bribes to bend the laws in their favor. The author contends that a successful fight against corruption cannot be confined to the eradication of only bureaucratic bribe demand; it needs to address the corrupt practices of the population as well. This study is significant because it demonstrates that corruption is rampant throughout the government and citizenry of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is a predominantly Muslim country where Christians face challenges in practicing their faith. The government imposes strict regulations on religious activities, requiring religious groups to register with the state and limiting their ability to proselytize or engage in public gatherings. Christians in Azerbaijan often encounter discrimination, harassment, and social pressure from both the government and society at large. Like many countries, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but Christians face restrictions, violence, and intimidation. Seppälä, S. (2021) found that during the last century, the Armenian Church and nation have lost most of their sacred spaces. In recent decades, the Azerbaijan government destroyed hundreds of sacred monuments, leading to the destruction of the Armenian cultural heritage. This study is critical because it shows that Christians in Azerbaijan, who were indigenous to the area before the creation of the nation, are losing their religious and cultural identity due to persecution. Oge (2014) found that genuine reform can only be achieved through the combined efforts of external and domestic actors. Political accountability and genuine anti-corruption measures are necessary and must come from abroad to be effective. The study is significant because it highlights the need for international cooperation in ridding Azerbaijan of corruption.

China

The country's rapid economic growth and extensive bureaucracy have created fertile ground for corrupt practices, including bribery, embezzlement, kickbacks, and nepotism. The government has made attempts to curb corruption through anti-corruption campaigns and institutional reforms. However, it is still a significant challenge in China, with negative consequences for both domestic stability and international relations. Aidt et al. (2020) noted that it is individuals who are corrupt, not regions or countries, and therefore found it essential to study corruption at the individual level. The authors found that the number of bribes received systematically increased as officials moved up the bureaucratic ladder. Positions that have the authority to decide on spending initiatives receive larger bribes. Entry-level and retirement-approaching officials take higher bribes than middle-aged officials. Higher education is associated with taking higher bribes. Gender made no difference in the amount of bribe taken. This study is critical because it shows that bribery is a deep-rooted issue that affects all levels of government in China. Consequently, Kim et al. (2018) found that Chinese firms suffered an aggregate loss of USD 30 billion in firm value due to corruption. This study is important because it shows that the Chinese economy is suffering because of the high level of rampant corruption.

The government tightly controls religious activities and organizations, imposing restrictions on religious gatherings, publications, and expressions of faith. Christians face harassment, surveillance, detainment, torture, and death. Christians in China have reported church demolitions, kidnappings, arbitrary detention, and long-term incarceration without a conviction. The government's crackdown on Christians reflects its broader efforts to assert control over civil society. Despite facing persecution and restrictions, many Christians in China continue to practice their faith and advocate for religious freedom. Ma & Li (2017) compiled qualitative interviews on state surveillance, repression, and restrictions on religious expression.

The authors discussed the challenges and opportunities of Chinese Christians as they try to live out their faith within the constraints of the authoritarian state. This book is essential because it highlights the severe tactics of the Chinese government to eradicate Christianity through persecution.

Egypt

Corruption is a major issue in Egypt. It affects all aspects of businesses and government. Bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement are commonplace. Public outcry over government corruption led to mass protests by Egyptian citizens in 2011. Since then, the government and non-governmental organizations have worked to establish legislation and anti-corruption agencies. They spearheaded transparency initiatives. However, corruption remains widespread in Egypt, directly affecting accountability and good governance. Fayed (2017) found that anti-corruption measures have failed in all sectors of government and society. This study is critical because it shows that Egypt is a highly corrupt nation, and current legislation and policies are inadequate to combat it.

Egypt has a sizable Christian minority, primarily Coptic Christians, who have faced discrimination, violence, and legal restrictions. Interestingly, Coptic Christians were indigenous to the Egyptian land before it was a nation-state. Their history dates back to the first century. While Egypt's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Christians are not able to practice their faith freely and openly. Reports of sectarian violence, attacks on churches, and discrimination in employment and public services highlight the challenges faced by Christians in Egypt. Blasphemy laws and social pressure from the Muslim majority further marginalize Christian communities and restrict their religious expression. Despite these challenges, many Christians in Egypt continue to practice their faith resiliently and advocate for their rights within

the country's diverse religious landscape. Barrie et al. (2022) found that unarmed attacks against property (“burnings”) are the product of political mobilization, unarmed attacks against individuals (“beatings”) are related to socioeconomic tensions, and armed attacks (“bombings”) follow the strategic logic of terrorist violence. This study is essential for two reasons. First, it shows the extreme threat that Christians are under in Egypt. Second, it is able to provide insight into the possible causation of specific crimes against Christians.

Eritrea

An authoritarian regime governs this country, and reports criticize it for its lack of transparency, arbitrary governance, and widespread human rights abuses. Corruption in Eritrea includes nepotism, embezzlement, and bribery. Government officials and members of the ruling party are known to siphon state resources for personal gain. Corruption flourishes with impunity due to the lack of accountability and independent oversight. The U.S. Department of State (2020) reported a high incidence of bribery, patronage, cronyism, and petty corruption within the executive branch. Access to social benefits is limited to family members of officials. Authorities do not prosecute acts against the population if they benefit the government. This report is vital because it shows that officials of the Eritrean authoritarian regime commit acts of corruption with impunity.

As for Christian persecution, Eritrea is known for its strict control over religious activities, mainly targeting Christians who practice their faith outside of officially recognized denominations. The government tightly regulates religious institutions and requires religious groups to register with the state. Unregistered churches and their members face harassment, arrest, detention, and torture by state authorities. Eritrea's National Service Program, which requires citizens to undergo military training, has been criticized for its harsh conditions and

indefinite duration, leading many Christians to flee the country to escape persecution. The Eritrean government's repression of religious freedom has led to a climate of fear and intimidation for Christians in the country. According to the United States Commission on Religious Freedom (2021), the Eritrean government is responsible for the disappearance, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, inhumane detention treatment (i.e., being detained in metal shipping containers), and unfair trial of Christians. There are no judicial oversight bodies and no political recourse for the human rights abuses that Christians suffer in Eritrea. This report is significant because it shows the atrocious acts committed against Eritrean Christians who have no recourse against the authoritarian regime.

India

Corruption is a prevalent issue in India. It impacts all aspects of society, including politics, bureaucracy, law enforcement, and business. The government has established legislation and anti-corruption agencies, such as the Central Vigilance Commission and the Central Bureau of Investigation. Despite these efforts, corruption remains widespread due to factors such as bureaucracy, weak law enforcement, and a lack of accountability.

Christian persecution in India has been a growing concern in recent years. Hindu nationalist groups, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliates, often promote a Hindu supremacist ideology (Hindutva) that views Christianity as a foreign and undesirable influence. The ruling Hindu Nationalist Party has publicly denounced Christians as “being a threat” and not “being Indian.” Because of this Hindutva ideology, several states in India have enacted anti-conversion laws, which restrict religious conversion and are often used to target Christian missionaries and their activities. This ideology has led to incidents of violence, harassment, and discrimination against Christians, including attacks on churches, pastors, and

congregants, as well as forced conversion to Hinduism. Saiya & Manchanda (2019) used a quantitative approach to investigate whether anti-conversion laws correlate with instances of violent persecution. Their findings suggest a significant association between the existence of anti-conversion laws and heightened levels of violent persecution directed toward the Christian community in India. The study is significant because it shows that leadership hostile to Christianity can create legislation that creates hatred toward Christians, which manifests as violent persecution. Cavallin & Kuhlin (2014) found that media portrayals of Christians in national Hindu newspapers can influence attitudes and ideas that may play a significant role in the intensity of conflicts and extinguish the possibility of peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Christians. This study is important because it shows the role of the government and press in creating negative stereotypes and narratives of Christians, which perpetuates violence against them.

Indonesia

Like other countries, corruption is rampant in Indonesia and affects all sectors, including government, law enforcement, judiciary, and business. Legal reforms and the establishment of anti-corruption agencies, such as the Corruption Eradication Commission, were meant to curb corruption. Yet, it persists due to weak law enforcement, lack of transparency, and long-standing cronyism and nepotism. Mietzner (2020) found that the country has been experiencing a democratic decline in the last decade. This produced intensifying religious conservatism, religious and political polarization, corruption, and increasing efforts among anti-democratic actors. The author called this a toxic mix that is constraining Indonesia's ability to move forward. This study is significant because it shows that corruption plays a major role in Indonesia's societal discord.

Christian persecution in Indonesia primarily affects minority Christian communities, particularly in regions with a Muslim majority. While Christianity is a recognized religion in Indonesia, Christians often face discrimination, social marginalization, and acts of violence perpetrated by extremist groups. Attacks on churches, intimidation, and restrictions on religious practices have been reported, particularly in areas like Aceh, West Java, and Papua provinces. Authorities have used blasphemy laws and regulations governing religious freedom to target Christians and restrict their ability to practice their faith as they see fit. Christians in Indonesia encounter persecution and live under constant threat from radicals and extremist groups. Damayanti & Yunato (2022) found that the establishment of an Islamic state, the rise of radicalism, and the legalization of worship restrictions manifest in religious persecution. The study is significant because it showed that the establishment of Islamic states and the accompanying political dynamics increase the persecution of Christians in Indonesia.

Iran

The lack of transparency, accountability, and independent oversight contributes to the prevalence of corrupt practices. Some common forms of corruption observed in Iran include bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, and patronage. Weak governance structures, lack of transparency, political patronage, and the influence of powerful interest groups, organized crime, and terrorist networks often facilitate corruption. The government established anti-corruption agencies and passed legislation aimed at increasing transparency and accountability. However, corruption remains a significant challenge, undermining economic development, eroding public trust in institutions, and exacerbating social inequality. International sanctions and isolation have created opportunities for bad actors to attempt to capture existing wealth or resources through manipulation of the political or economic system. Illegal activities, including drug trafficking,

smuggling, and cybercrime, further exacerbate corruption in the country. Salihu & Jafari (2020) attempted to analyze anti-corruption strategies used to fight economic and financial crimes in both the public and private sectors in Iran. They relied on third-party sources such as newspapers and official legislation because there was no adequate measure available to gauge their effectiveness. This study is significant because it shows that, even though the Iranian government is attempting to curb corruption, there is no adequate evaluation process or accountability of effectiveness. Without accountability, corruption can continue with impunity.

Christians in Iran experience significant persecution due to the government's strict interpretation and enforcement of Islamic law. Shia Islam imposes strict limitations on religious freedom. Christians face discrimination, harassment, and persecution, including arrest, imprisonment, and even execution, on charges such as apostasy, evangelism, and blasphemy. Law enforcement monitors churches and often raids worship services. Being a Muslim convert to Christianity is dangerous. They face intense pressure to recant their faith, and if they do not, authorities may imprison, torture, or kill them. Christians are at great personal risk in continuing to practice their faith. Nazir-Ali & Bazmjou (2022) found that despite facing severe persecution, including imprisonment and both judicial and extrajudicial killings, record numbers of people in Iran have been embracing the Christian faith. These new believers often gather in homes due to the closure of churches and the crackdown by the regime. While the Iranian people generally exhibit tolerance toward differences, the government has taken harsh measures against these emerging Christian communities, which include arresting leaders, imprisoning believers, and confiscating assets. This study is significant because it shows that the government in Iran is responsible for the persecution of Christians.

Myanmar

The civil war in Myanmar has been ongoing for several decades, with various conflicts and insurgencies erupting across different regions and ethnic groups. Armed conflicts and political instability often exacerbate corruption by creating a lack of transparency, accountability, and effective oversight mechanisms. This creates opportunities for corruption to thrive. Various armed groups and the militarization of certain regions further perpetuate corrupt practices, such as extortion, bribery, and embezzlement. Charney (2013) explored how corruption in Myanmar is deeply embedded within the colonial state's administrative and legal structures. The author contends that corruption intersects with issues of law, order, and governance. This study is significant because it shows corruption in Myanmar as a historical phenomenon influenced by broader socio-political contexts rather than just a moral failing of individual actors. Because of this, corruption in Myanmar will be difficult to eradicate.

Christians in Myanmar face discrimination and persecution. The predominantly Buddhist government and military subject Christians to systemic persecution, including violence, displacement, and denial of citizenship rights. Both government and civilian actors harass, restrict worship and gatherings, and perpetrate violence against churches and Christian communities. According to the U.S. Department of State (2022), though religious freedom is expressed through Burmese law, the military routinely persecuted Christians through raids on churches and residences, violence, unlawful detainment, and destruction of church buildings. This report is significant because it shows that the Burmese government sanctions the persecution.

Nigeria

Corruption is rampant in Nigeria and often includes bribery, embezzlement, electoral fraud, and kickbacks. The country's population, institutions, and economic development suffer

greatly as a result. The lack of transparency and accountability exacerbates the issue, allowing corruption to thrive. They contribute to social inequality, hinder the delivery of public services, and foster criminal networks, such as the terrorist group Boko Haram. Despite numerous governmental attempts to combat corruption, its prevalence remains high, posing significant challenges to the country's development and stability. Olugboyega et al. (2023) used a multi-linear regression to test the absence of logical reasoning in the implementation of anti-corruption measures in Nigeria. They found that anti-corruption measures were inadequate to curb corrupt practices. This study is significant because it highlights the inadequacy of current policies to address corruption and suggests a potential strategy for anti-corruption campaigns.

Christian persecution in Nigeria primarily stems from religious extremism, particularly in regions where Islamist militant groups like Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen operate. These groups target Christians often through violent attacks, abductions, kidnapping for ransom, forced marriages, forced conversions, and destruction of property. Discriminatory laws and policies in areas where Islamic Sharia law is enforced contribute to the marginalization and persecution of Christians. While the Nigerian government has taken some measures to address religious violence and extremism, challenges persist in ensuring the safety and protection of Christians. Johnson & Zurlo (2014) found that Nigeria produces the highest number of Christian martyrs in the world. They discovered that martyrdom cannot only be attributed to state-sanctioned persecution but is also exacerbated because of civil war, genocide, and other conflicts. This study is significant because it shows that societal instability coupled with government-sanctioned violence exacerbates the persecution of Christians.

Interestingly, Casciano (2022) found that the Nigerian church is not immune from internal corruption. The author found that several Pentecostal Nigerian pastors use fraudulent

schemes and corrupt practices to gain both monetary and moral support from Nigerian Christians. These pastors then live high-profile, individualistic, hyper-consumer lifestyles. The study is significant because it shows that corruption is rampant in all aspects of Nigerian society, including the Christian community.

North Korea

The authoritarian regime, led by the Kim dynasty, exerts tight control over all aspects of society, including the economy, media, and judicial system. Corruption often takes the form of bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and cronyism, with elites and members of the ruling party benefiting disproportionately from access to resources and privileges. This comes at an economic cost to the average citizen who lives in poverty. The country suffers from national-scale food insecurity and must receive foreign aid to meet its food needs. Due to the secretive nature of the regime and limited access to independent information, the full extent of corruption in North Korea is difficult to ascertain. Dukalskis & Joo (2020) found that despite the increase in market-oriented practices, the flow of information, and a rise in corruption, there hasn't been a concerted effort against or a collective challenge to the existing regime. They found that changing social dynamics show signs of societal shifts and challenges. This study is significant as it provides hope that attitudes in North Korea are changing and may lead to a unified opposition to the corrupt regime.

Christian persecution in North Korea is severe and systematic, as the regime views Christianity as a threat to its ideology of Juche and its ruling family. They consider it a tool of Western imperialism. The government strictly prohibits religious practices and actively suppresses Christianity. Christians face severe persecution, including arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution, simply for practicing their faith or possessing religious materials. The

regime operates prison camps where they subject Christians to harsh conditions, torture, and forced labor. Despite international condemnation and pressure, the North Korean government continues to violate the rights of Christians with impunity. Lee (2021) explored various legal, policy, and advocacy measures aimed at combating religious persecution and promoting freedom of religion or belief. The author found that combating religious persecution is twofold. First, international cooperation and multilateral initiatives in addressing religious persecution are necessary. Second, robust legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms must be established to hold perpetrators accountable. This study is significant because it provides a clear direction for the international community to assist in combating the authoritarian regime of North Korea.

Pakistan

Corruption in Pakistan often manifests as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, and electoral fraud. It hampers efforts to provide public services, ensure justice, and promote transparency and accountability. Corruption makes it difficult to build effective institutions and increase economic development. It erodes public trust in government and law enforcement. It contributes to social inequality, bolsters criminal networks, and undermines the rule of law. Though the government has created legislation and agencies, such as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), to curb corruption, it is still a pervasive issue. Ali et al. (2017) examined the organization, operations, and legal underpinnings of the NAB. They found the need for increased anti-corruption initiatives and governance practices. This study is significant because it provides direction to the nation's corruption agency, which, if implemented, may assist in lowering corruption. Ullah et al. (2022) analyzed qualitative data from interviews. The study looked at issues such as inflation, government scale, transparency in international dealings, and the intersection of religious values with corruption. The authors found that public perception is

essential in understanding corruption dynamics. This study is significant for future policy formulation and governance to curb corruption and bring about societal stability.

Christian persecution in Pakistan is a significant issue, as Christians face discrimination, violence, and social marginalization. Authorities often misuse blasphemy laws to target Christians, resulting in arrests, imprisonment, and mob violence. Pakistani society subjects Christians to discrimination, with limited access to education, employment, and political representation, often relegating them to low educational attainment, low-paying jobs, and social exclusion. This marginalization creates generational poverty in the Christian community. Violent attacks on churches and communities are commonplace. Despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, Christians in Pakistan continue to experience persecution and discrimination. Ahmed & Zahoor (2020) analyzed patterns in the portrayal of Christians and examined the discourses surrounding their rights, freedoms, and experiences. The authors found that the media perpetuates stereotypes and negative representations of Christians, framing them as outsiders or threats to national security, leading to discrimination, violence, and marginalization. This study is significant because it shows that the media plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes and policies toward Christians in Pakistan. It highlights the need for state-sponsored media to perpetuate inclusivity.

Turkey

Corruption in Turkey has been a long-standing issue that is rampant across all sectors of society, including politics, business, and law enforcement. Embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, and political corruption are a significant concern. Bribery and kickbacks involving high-ranking officials and government contracts have been reported. The lack of transparency in government processes and weak accountability mechanisms have further exacerbated the problem, allowing

corrupt actors to commit crimes with impunity. Turkey's strategic location as a transit hub between Europe and Asia has made it susceptible to corruption due to organized crime activities, particularly drug and human trafficking. The government has instituted legal reforms and anti-corruption initiatives, but challenges remain in effectively combating this pervasive issue and restoring public trust in institutions. Kimya (2019) found that the government has been successful in terms of diminishing petty corruption but failed to regulate the legal framework of political parties and electoral campaign finance, which opened the door for cronyism. This study is significant because it underscores the importance of a comprehensive strategy to curb corruption at all levels of government.

Turkey's Christian minority comprises a small percentage of the population, and they encounter societal discrimination, limited religious freedom, and violence or harassment. Restrictions on religious activities and property rights also impact Christian communities. Andakian (2020) found that Turkey wishes to become part of the EU, and in order to obtain membership, the government must institute policies that respect the rights of the Christian minority. This study is significant because it shows that international pressure to address human rights violations is essential and a positive catalyst for change in Turkey.

Results

The 2023 Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) underscores the global prevalence of corruption. This index ranks 180 countries and territories based on their perceived levels of public sector corruption, using a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 represents highly corrupt and 100 signifies very clean. Over the three-year period, North Korea consistently ranked among the lowest, with a score of 17. Eritrea also maintained consistently low scores, hovering around 22. Additionally, countries like Nigeria (24), Afghanistan (24), and Azerbaijan (23)

consistently demonstrated low scores. Conversely, higher scores, such as those seen in China (45), India (40), and Turkey (38), suggest relatively lower levels of corruption. China consistently earned one of the highest scores (45) throughout the three years, while India maintained a relatively high score (40) in both 2021 and 2023. Iran and Pakistan also exhibited relatively high scores (25-28) over the years. Notably, Algeria, Egypt, and Indonesia witnessed fluctuations in their scores (ranging from 30 to 34) across the years, indicating varying levels of corruption perception. In 2022, Afghanistan recorded a relatively low score of 24.

Discussion

North Korea consistently received one of the lowest scores (17) across all three years, indicating a high perception of corruption within the country. Eritrea also maintained consistently low scores (around 22), suggesting significant perceived corruption. Other countries with consistently low scores include Nigeria (24), Afghanistan (24), and Azerbaijan (23), indicating ongoing challenges with corruption. Conversely, higher scores are seen in China (45), India (40), and Turkey (38), suggesting relatively lower levels of perceived corruption in comparison to other countries. China consistently earns one of the highest scores (45) throughout the three years, indicating a persistent perception of corruption within the country. This score may also be attributed to the limited availability of un-doctored information and news reports since Chinese authorities control the media. India maintains a relatively high score (40) in both 2021 and 2023, suggesting consistent challenges with corruption perception. Iran and Pakistan also exhibit relatively high scores (25-28) over the years, indicating ongoing concerns regarding corruption. Overall, these scores provide insight into the perceived levels of public sector corruption in various countries and territories, which can inform efforts to address corruption and improve governance practices.

Conclusion

Lowering corruption requires a multifaceted approach involving governmental, institutional, and societal efforts. This includes strengthening legal frameworks to prevent and punish corrupt practices, enhancing transparency and accountability in government operations, empowering anti-corruption agencies, fostering ethical leadership, engaging civil society, promoting international cooperation, addressing underlying socioeconomic factors, and fostering a culture of integrity. By implementing these strategies collaboratively, societies can work toward reducing corruption, promoting transparency, and fostering trust in public institutions.

In conclusion, this data shows that there is a correlation between government corruption and Christian persecution. Lowering corruption rates can play a pivotal role in reducing Christian persecution rates by fostering a more just and accountable society. When corruption is minimized, the rule of law is strengthened, ensuring governments properly investigate cases of persecution against Christians and hold perpetrators accountable. Additionally, with improved governance comes greater protection for religious minorities' rights, including freedom of religion and expression. Transparent and accountable institutions build trust among citizens, including Christians, in the legal system's ability to address instances of persecution. Moreover, addressing corruption contributes to socioeconomic stability, reducing societal tensions and conflicts that may lead to religious persecution. Overall, by combating corruption, societies can create a more conducive environment for protecting the rights of Christians and reducing incidents of persecution.

References

Ahmed, Z. S., & Zahoor, M. (2020). Impacts of the “War on Terror” on the (De-)Humanization of Christians in Pakistan: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Reporting. *Islam and*

Christian-Muslim Relations, 31(1), 85–103.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1713569>

Aidt, T. S., Hillman, A. L., & Qijun, L. (2020). Who takes bribes and how much? Evidence from the China Corruption Conviction Databank. *World Development*, 133, 104985.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.104985>

Ali, A., Khan, M. J., & Khalid, S. U. (2017). Theory and practice of understanding corruption in pakistan: Case study of national accountability bureau, KPK. (POLITICAL ECONOMY AND GROWTH). *Pakistan Development Review*, 56(4), 361.

Andakian, I. E. (2020). EU enlargement, conditionality, and the protection of Christian minorities in Turkey. *Kyiv-Mohyla Law & Politics Journal*, (6), 45-72.

<https://doi.org/10.18523/kmlpj220759.2020-6.45-72>

Bahoo, S., Alon, I., & Paltrinieri, A. (2020). Corruption in international business: A review and research agenda. *International Business Review*, 29(4), 101660.

Barrie, C., Clarke, K., & Ketchley, N. (2022). Burnings, Beatings, and Bombings: Disaggregating Anti-Christian Violence in Egypt, 2013–2018. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592722002730>

Boyd, G. (2020). Danny Singh (2020). Investigating Corruption in the Afghanistan Police Force: Instability and Insecurity in Post-Conflict Societies. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paaa066>

Casciano, D. (2022). Popular tales of Pastors, Luxury, Frauds and Corruption. *Journal of Extreme Anthropology*, 5(2), 52–71. <https://doi.org/10.5617/jea.9008>

- Cavallin, C., & Kuhlin, J. (2014). Violence against Christians in India: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Two Indian English Newspapers. *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, 27(1).
<https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1579>
- Charney, M. W. (2013). *Jonathan Saha. law, disorder and the colonial state: Corruption in Burma c. 1900*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/118.5.1504>
- Chaudhry, H., & Shahbaz, M. (2020). Corruption, religious persecution, and economic growth in Pakistan: Evidence from a time series analysis. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 65, 71-82.
10.1016/j.eap.2020.09.010
- Damayanti, A., & Yunanto, S. (2022). From Evangelization to Worship Restrictions: The Changing Characteristics of Threat Perception between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 33(4), 329–353.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2022.2158608>
- Dukalskis, A., & Joo, H.-M. (2020). Everyday Authoritarianism in North Korea. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 73(2), 364–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1840517>
- Emadi, H. (2021). From Concealment of their Faith to Active Propagation of their Faith: Afghanistan's Christians and its Diaspora Community. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 29(3), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10065>
- Fayed, A. A. (2017). The current status of corruption in Egypt. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 10(4), 510–521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2017.1399641>
- Fox, J. (2021). What is religious freedom and who has it? *Social Compass*, 68(3), 321-341.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00377686211012368>

- Haddad, Y. Y., & Jurdi, R. (2021). Corruption and religious persecution in Lebanon: A qualitative study of public perceptions. *Journal of International Development*, 33(2), 248-262.
10.1002/jid.3539
- International Christian Concern. (2023). *Persecutor of the Year Awards*. International Christian Concern. <https://www.persecution.org/projects/poy/>
- Johnson, T. M., & Zurlo, G. A. (2014). Christian Martyrdom as a Pervasive Phenomenon. *Journal of Church and State*, 56(2), 225-246. 10.1093/jcs/csv019
- Kim, D. S., Li, Y., & Tarzia, D. (2018). Value of corruption in China: Evidence from anti-corruption investigation. *Economics Letters*, 164, 112–116.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2018.01.021>
- Kimya, F. (2019). Political economy of corruption in turkey: Declining petty corruption, rise of cronyism? *Turkish Studies*, 20(3), 351-376.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2018.1531352>
- Kumar, R., & Gupta, S. (2022). Corruption and religious persecution: Insights from the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 35(1), 99-114.
10.1093/jrs/feab054
- Lee, S. (2021). Dying for rights: Putting north korea's human rights abuses on the record by sandra fahy (review). *Korean Studies*, 45(1), 221-224.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ks.2021.0013>
- Limam, M. H. (2012). Detailed analysis of the phenomenon of political corruption in algeria: Causes, repercussions and reform. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 5(2), 252-278.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2012.671999>

- Ma, L., & Li, J. (2017). *Surviving the State, Remaking the Church: A Sociological Portrait of Christians in Mainland China*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Mietzner, M. (2020). Populist Anti-Scientism, Religious Polarisation, and Institutionalised Corruption: How Indonesia's Democratic Decline Shaped Its COVID-19 Response. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(2), 186810342093556.
- Nazir-Ali, M., & Bazmjou, A. S. (2022). Conversion, Persecution, and the Reforming Voices of Muslims in Post–Revolution Iran. *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, 5(2), 224–240. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25424246-05020006>
- Öge, K. (2014). The Limits of Transparency Promotion in Azerbaijan: External Remedies to “Reverse the Curse.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66(9), 1482–1500.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2014.956448>
- Olugboyega, O., Binga, B., Oseghale, G. E., & Aigbavboa, C. (2023). Effect of anti-corruption systems' logic on corruption manifestations in project planning and execution in nigeria. *Construction Economics and Building*, 23(3/4), 186-207.
<https://doi.org/10.5130/AJCEB.v23i3/4.8885>
- Pai, A., & Dein, S. (2019). Corruption and religious persecution in India: Ethical and clinical implications for psychiatrists. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 46, 24-27.
- Rai, P. (2019). Corruption and persecution in India: A critique of the Hindutva ideology. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 54(3), 264-279.
- Rahmani, Z., & Tytarenko, V. (2018). Corruption in Afghanistan: an Experience for Ukraine. *Ukrainian Policymaker*, 2(2), 27–32. <https://doi.org/10.29202/up/2/4>

- Sadigov, T. (2017). Localization, Formalism, and Passivity: Symbols Shaping Bribe Offers in Azerbaijan. *Journal of Civil Society*, 13(4), 406–425.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2017.1387716>
- Saiya, N., & Manchanda, S. (2019). Anti-conversion laws and violent Christian persecution in the states of India: a quantitative analysis. *Ethnicities*, 20(3), 587–607.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796819885396>
- Salihu, H. A., & Jafari, A. (2020). Corruption and anti-corruption strategies in Iran. *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, 23(1), 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jmlc-01-2019-0001>
- Seppälä, S. (2021). The Struggle for Memory: The Khachkar Field of Julfa and Other Armenian Sacred Spaces in Azerbaijan. *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu*, 13(2), 185–213.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2021-0021>
- Tamburini, F. (2021). The state of emergency and exception in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia: The ‘License to kill’ the rule of law? *Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden)*, 56(6), 1286-1303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620962530>
- Transparency International. (2023). *2023 Corruption Perceptions Index*. Transparency.org.
<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>
- Ullah, M. A., Urquhart, C., Arthanari, T., & Ahmed, E. (2022). Dimensions of corruption in pakistan: A systems thinking approach and qualitative analysis. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 39(2), 324-338. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2775>
- Ukeachusim, C. P. (2022). Exegetical study of John 16:25–33 and the Church in persecution in Nigeria. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 78(4).
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7366>

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. (2021). *Religious Freedom Conditions in Eritrea* | USCIRF. Wwww.uscirtf.gov. <https://www.uscirtf.gov/countries/eritrea>

U.S. Department of State. (2020). *Eritrea*. United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/eritrea/>

U.S. Department of State. (2022). *Burma*. United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burma/>