

# Eritrea



## Jehovah's Witnesses

The Eritrean government has arrested and imprisoned Jehovah's Witnesses for their religious activities since October 1994 when the President revoked their citizenship for not participating in the 1993 national referendum. The state has been holding Witnesses for decades without charges or trial for refusing to serve in the military, which the government deems a criminal offense.



### Samuol Dawit

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Jehovah's Witness  
ARRESTED:  
March 23, 2023  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Religious belief and activity

## Protestants

Protestants are one of three Christian denominations the Eritrean government officially recognizes. Officials, however, have disappeared or detained several religious leaders and members from unregistered Protestant denominations for their religious activities. The government's arbitrary enforcement of laws makes any type of regular and public practice of faith difficult.



### Tesfazion Gebremichael

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Jehovah's Witness  
ARRESTED:  
July 20, 2011  
HEALTH CONCERNS: Elderly  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Sharing his religious beliefs with others



### Haile Naizghe

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Protestant  
ARRESTED:  
May 23, 2004  
RELIGIOUS LEADER: Yes  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Religious leadership role in a network of banned churches



### Yosief Fessehaye

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Jehovah's Witness  
ARRESTED:  
October 2006  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Religious belief and activity



### Kiflu Gebremeskel

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Protestant  
ARRESTED:  
May 23, 2004  
RELIGIOUS LEADER: Yes  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Religious leadership role in a network of banned churches



### Yonatan Yonas

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Jehovah's Witness  
ARRESTED:  
November 12, 2005  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Religious belief and activity



### Samuel Ghirmay

RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
Jehovah's Witness  
ARRESTED:  
March 2009  
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:  
Religious belief and activity

## FoRB Victims List Stats 61 out of 2,282

Religion or Belief	# of Victims
Jehovah's Witness	53
Protestant	4
Catholic	3
Orthodox	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

Type of Abuse	# of Victims
Detained	60
House Arrest	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

Reports of	# of Victims
Torture	3
Medical Neglect	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>

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## Frank R. Wolf FoRB Victims List Background

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016, requires USCIRF to:

*make publicly available, to the extent practicable...lists of persons it determines are imprisoned or detained, have disappeared, been placed under house arrest, been tortured, or subjected to forced renunciation of faith for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy by the government of a foreign country that the Commission recommends for designation as a country of particular concern [CPC]...or by a nonstate actor that the Commission recommends for designation as an entity of particular concern [EPC].*

USCIRF developed the Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Victims List—an online public database—to implement this provision for countries USCIRF recommends for Country of Particular Concern (CPC) or Special Watch List (SWL) status. The list also includes such victims located in the de facto territories of nonstate actors that USCIRF recommends for Entity of Particular Concern (EPC) status, according to the same criteria.

Due to limited resources, USCIRF is unable to identify and document all victims that meet the statutory requirement to be included on the FoRB Victims List and generally relies on receiving submissions from outside individuals and organizations. As such, the information contained in the database does not reflect country, regional, or global trends. Furthermore, percentages highlighted in this section should not be used for extrapolation purposes nor interpreted as a particular group experiencing greater violations than another or a particular country committing violations at a greater rate than others. To support this project, USCIRF invites those with credible information on victims to submit information using the Victims List Intake Form at [www.uscirtf.gov/form/uscirtf-victims-list-intake-form](http://www.uscirtf.gov/form/uscirtf-victims-list-intake-form).

## FoRB Victims List Stats Overall

Perpetrator	Victims Documented
Algeria	5
Azerbaijan	11
Burma	5
China	798
Cuba	11
Egypt	18
Eritrea	61
Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)	2
Houthis	3
India	55
Indonesia	9
Iran	351
Iraq	2
Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)	1
Kazakhstan	16
Malaysia	4
Nicaragua	68
Nigeria	9
North Korea	11
Pakistan	87
Russia	488
Saudi Arabia	50
Sri Lanka	1
Tajikistan	16
Turkmenistan	31
Uzbekistan	88
Vietnam	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,282</b>

Religion or Belief	Victims Documented
Adivasi	1
Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light	3
Baha'i	169
Bon	1
Buddhist – Hoa Hao	6
Buddhist – Theravada	3
Buddhist – Tibetan	93
Buddhist – Unspecified/Other	32
Christian – Catholic	79
Christian – Church of Almighty God	240
Christian – Jehovah's Witness	283
Christian – Orthodox	21
Christian – Protestant	150
Christian – Unspecified/Other	65
Duong Van Minh	4
ECKist (Eckankar)	1
Erfan-e Halgheh Practitioner	3
Falun Gong	217
Hindu	10
Humanist	1
Jewish	1
Muslim – Ahmadiyya	20
Muslim – Qur'anist	1
Muslim – Shi'a	40
Muslim – Sufi	64
Muslim – Sunni	412
Muslim – Unspecified/Other	233
Santeria	5
Scientologist	1
Shaman	1
Sikh	1
Yarsani	38
Unknown/Unspecified	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,282</b>

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## Not Released

Yanet Yonas  
 Rimon Yonas  
 Kiflay Tesfay  
 Kdisti Tesfamichael  
 Yoab Tekle  
 Tigist Tekle  
 Isak Tekle  
 Yonas Tekeste  
 Andemeske Jigur  
 Tewoldemedhin Habtezion  
 Bokurezion Dawit  
 Tesfazion Gebremichael  
 Ermias Asgedom  
 Daniel Teka  
 Yonathan Asgedom  
 Samuol Dawit  
 Bereket Habteyesus  
 Senait Birhane  
 Emnet Weldai  
 Mikaal Taddesse  
 Wintana Shiwaseged  
 Michael Gashazghi  
 Mehari Tewolde  
 Mardocai Estifanos  
 Thomas Tesfagabir  
 Faiza Seid  
 Milen Isaac  
 Isaias Afeworki  
 Samuel Ghirmay  
 Yosief Fessehaye  
 Yonatan Yonas  
 Henok Ghebru  
 Kiflu Gebremeskel  
 Meron Gebreselasie  
 Haile Naizghe  
 Kidane Weldou

## Released

Abraham  
 Mihretab Stefanos  
 Fikremariam Hagos Tsalim  
 Habtemariam Meraf Seyum  
 Liya Hidru  
 Tekle Gebrehiwet  
 Ghebru Berhane  
 Yosief Tesfamariam  
 Daniel Meharizghi  
 Tsegabirhan Berhe  
 Araia Ghebremariam  
 Hagos Woldemichael  
 Teklu Gebrehiwet  
 Yoel Tsegezab  
 Bereket Abraha Okba-gabr  
 Kibreab Fissehaye  
 Werede Kiros  
 Bemnet Fissehaye  
 Ambakom Tsegazeab  
 Mussie Fessehaye  
 Aron Abraha  
 Paulos Eyasu  
 Negede Teklemariam  
 Isaac Mogos

## Died in Custody

Abune Antonios