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## **Millions of Christians could face deportation from the US, report says**

By [Chris Eyte](#)

[Christian Daily](#) (01.04.2025) - A new report by several Christian organizations warns that up to 10 million Christians could face deportation under proposed Trump administration policies—raising concerns for families and churches across the U.S.—though the authors say their goal is not to take a political stance but to highlight the potential impact on the American church.

[One Part of the Body: The Potential Impact of Deportations on American Christian Families](#) is a multi-agency report produced by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, the National Association of Evangelicals, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services, and World Relief.

The report highlights that the Bible teaches that there is one body of Christ, which is “not made up of one part but of many,” (1 Corinthians 12:13-14) and “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (verse 26).

The authors note that immigrants that are “integral parts” of American churches, whether they have permanent legal status or not, are vulnerable to deportation. This puts millions of Christians at risk under former President Donald Trump’s pledge to “carry out the largest deportation in history.”

“Among these categories of individuals who are at risk of deportation — should any administration seek to deport as many individuals as legally within their authority without any change to U.S. law — are many Christians, given that Christianity is, by far, the religion of the large majority of those in these categories,” write the report’s authors.

“We estimate that, as of the end of 2024, there were more than 10 million Christian immigrants present in the United States who are vulnerable to deportation, including those with no legal status, as well as those with a temporary status or protections that could be withdrawn.”

Many of these people live with U.S. citizens in households as lawful permanent residents or with others not at risk of deportation.

“The impact on American Christian households goes well beyond those directly at risk of deportation,” adds the report. “We find that nearly 7 million U.S. citizen Christians live within the same households of those at risk of deportation.”

“Most of these U.S. citizens are spouses or minor children of the immigrant at risk of deportation. While the immigrant may be at risk of deportation, a U.S. citizen spouse or child cannot be deported under U.S. law.”

The report clarifies that it does not advocate for a specific political position or argue that all deportations are wrong.

“Rather, our purpose with this report is to invite American Christians — within our congregations and within the halls of governmental power — to recognize that, if even a fraction of those vulnerable to deportation are actually deported, the ramifications are profound — for those individuals, of course, but also for their U.S. citizen family members and, because when one part of the body suffers, every part suffers with it, for all Christians.”

The report also expresses concern for non-Christian immigrants at risk of deportation, emphasizing that all people are made in the image of God and have “inherent dignity” (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 9:6, James 3:9).

“Jesus’ command to love one’s neighbor was clarified by a story of a person who loved someone of a different religious tradition who was in need (Luke 10:25–37),” the report continues. “Our call extends to those outside of the Body of Christ — but it certainly also includes those within, and many American Christians, we suspect, have not realized that among immigrants at risk of deportation, the vast majority — four out of five — are fellow Christians.”

The report outlines the legal and personal circumstances faced by many immigrants, including those who have lived in the U.S. for years under temporary permissions. It presents scenarios in which deportation creates complex dilemmas for mixed-status families.

One such scenario would be that a member of a family is given a deportation order, which would mean the family as a whole would face a dilemma. A U.S. citizen husband would have to choose between leaving with his deported wife, and thus leaving his job and means to support the family. In his wife’s country, the American husband could then face the same threat of religious persecution, which led his wife to originally flee her country, and give up his religious freedom rights and protection afforded by the U.S. Constitution.

Decisions become even more difficult when American citizen children are involved, the report says.

“Some families repatriate as a family, avoiding separation, but others make the difficult decision to have a parent not facing deportation stay behind with U.S. citizen children, or to find a relative or even a foster family to care for their children so that they can benefit from the relative safety, educational opportunities and economic well-being available in the United States but not in their parent’s country of origin,” the report says.

“Some parents would rather their son or daughter stay with loved ones — relatives or members of their church community — in the United States, where they can worship Jesus freely, rather than have them travel to a context where Christians face persecution,” the report adds.

The potential for such family separations, if the Trump administration follows through on mass deportation plans, presents a “sobering public policy concern,” the report states.

An additional concern is that if a church pastor is deported from the U.S., it can lead to the folding of churches due to lack of leadership. Similarly, if a large number of church members are deported, churches may close.

“In these cases, even church members who are citizens or legal permanent residents will be deeply impacted. In other cases, fear of deportation may deter some church members from attending services at all, again affecting the entire congregation.”

Overall, the report found that 8 percent of all Christians in the U.S. are at risk of deportation or live in households with someone who is.

“That’s one out of every 12 Christians in the U.S. — including one out of 18 evangelical Christians and nearly one out of five Catholics — that are vulnerable to deportation or could lose at least one family member if the United States government were to deport all of those vulnerable to deportation without any change in law,” the report adds.

“That’s because the vast majority of individuals at risk of deportation are Christians: 80 percent of all of those at risk of deportation are Christians. Sixty-one percent of those at risk of deportation are Catholic, 13 percent are evangelical and 7 percent are adherents to other Christian traditions.”

The report’s authors say such findings “should be sobering” for all Christians, if the government — or a future administration — seeks to “deport as many individuals as possible under existing law.”

“Our prayer is that the president and his administration as well as the Congress will take these stark realities into consideration as they pursue immigration policies,” the report concludes.

“Just as importantly, we pray that the whole of the American church, including the 11 out of 12 Christian households not at risk of losing a family member to deportation, will recognize that this suffering that is likely to affect many parts of the body of Christ actually impacts them as well.”

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## **Christian migrants among deportees from the U.S. to Islamist countries**

By [Edward Ross](#)

[Open Doors](#) (21.02.2025) - Christian converts from Islam are among migrants from countries hostile to Christianity who have been deported from the United States – initially to Panama, where they are isolated before possible deportation to their home countries, according to The New York Times.

The Feb. 18 article reported that at least 10 Christians from Iran were among more than 100 people put on a military plane last week for Panama, including migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Uzbekistan – respectively ranked eighth, 10th, 15th and 25th on

Open Doors' World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian.

Iran, where leaving Islam is punishable by death under *sharia* (Islamic law), is ranked ninth on the list.

Locked in the towering Decapolis Hotel Panama in Panama City with about 340 other migrants flown from the United States on three military planes, a 27-year-old Christian woman from Iran scrawled "Help us" in lipstick on a window, [The Times](#) reported. Its reporter made contact with her and learned that she and her Christian countrymen, including three children, had been desperate to obtain help from the outside world.

Authorities had seized their passports and deprived most of them of their mobile phones before they were locked inside the hotel guarded by armed personnel and prohibited from seeking legal help. The Iranian woman told [The Times](#) that one of the other deportees had tried to commit suicide in the hotel; another broke his leg trying to escape.

None of the migrants at the hotel have criminal records, Carlos Ruiz-Hernández, Panama's deputy foreign minister, told [The Times](#).

The Iranian woman reportedly said she knew when she left Iran in December that soon-to-be President Trump would deport migrants, but that as an educated person with no criminal record and documented conversion to Christianity, she expected to be able to stay. Seeking a better life in the United States, she had first flown to Mexico and paid a smuggler \$3,000 to help her climb over a U.S. border wall, then was quickly apprehended, she told [The Times](#).

Like other deportees fearful of retaliatory measures if returned to their home countries, she told [The Times](#), "Only a miracle can save us."

Another Christian convert from Iran told the reporter that her 8-year-old son was terrified upon seeing the shackles that U.S. authorities put on his parents while on the military plane. Her husband reportedly said that when his wife and son cried on the flight, he told them, "Jesus has said, 'If you don't take your eyes off me, I won't take mine off you.'" So I was constantly signaling that to my wife, saying, keep your eyes on Him."

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a press statement that none of the illegal migrants "asserted fear of returning to their home country at any point during the processing or custody," according to [The Times](#).

Ruiz-Hernández said Panama was holding the deportees temporarily at the hotel in response to a Trump administration request for Panama to hurriedly take them. Threatening to take over the Panama Canal, the U.S. administration has put the Central American country under intense pressure, [The Times](#) noted.

After U.S. officials began deporting hundreds of migrants from Asian, Middle Eastern and African countries to Panama on Feb. 12, Panama now bears the onus of what to do with them.

"Because the deported migrants are no longer on U.S. soil, Washington is not legally obligated to make sure they are treated humanely or have the chance to seek asylum," [The Times](#) reported.

The newspaper reported that attorneys in Panama said people cannot be legally detained in the country for more than 24 hours without a court order. The deportees were expected to be sent soon to a makeshift camp called San Vicente in the Darién Gap jungle, according to The Times, citing Panama President José Raúl Mulino.

Calling Panama “a leader and strategic partner in migration management,” Ruiz-Hernández reportedly said his government and the United States had an agreement and were “respecting human rights.”

The U.N.’s International Organization of Migration is one of two U.N. agencies tasked with overseeing the deportees while in Panama, but a spokesman for the agency said they were not involved in their “detention or restriction of movement” and was “facilitating returns where safe to do so,” according to The Times.

A senior U.N. official told the newspaper that the United Nations was “providing Panama with humanitarian and technical support, but the Panamanians were tightly managing the deportees and the process they were following was not entirely clear.”

Costa Rica has also announced that it would receive deportees from the United States as part of what Muzaffar Chishti, a senior fellow at Migration Policy Institute, told The Times was a “totally new era” of Washington pressuring other countries to take part in its “deportation machinery.”

“Panama’s president has said that the plan is to send people back to their home countries,” The Times reported. “But if the United States could not easily send deportees back to certain countries, it is unclear how Panama will do so.”