

Failed and autocratic states

Failed states have governments so weak that they can't perform the normal actions of a state. A think-tank called The Fund For Peace names the 10 most fragile states in 2018 as South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Chad, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe. Some of these countries are fought over by rival militias, others have a ruling elite that is looting the state. Sometimes the Church is the only national institution that still works.

Autocratic states are marked by single-party rule, repression of critics, and elections that the ruling party always wins. Autocratic states can deliver law and order and provide for people's needs. But because autocracies fear alternate centres of power, they typically repress civil society and suppress unorthodox ideas, which often squeezes the Christian Church.

Despite many gains for peace and freedom in various countries, autocracy is on average increasing in the world. The think-tank Freedom House (freedomhouse.org) in 2018 listed 71 states where political rights and



civil liberties had declined; 35 countries had improved. It was the 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.

🙏 Pray that governments everywhere will enable Christians to live 'peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Tim 2:2 NIV).

🙏 Pray that God will raise up leadership across the world that enables people to live in safety, free from oppression and able to prosper.

🙏 Pray that Christians will be salt and light in failed and autocratic states.

THE NATIONS

🇯🇵 JAPAN

This East Asian nation of 127 million people enjoys low crime and great wealth but faces difficult changes due to ageing and population decline. By 2060 there could be 40 million fewer Japanese and 40% of Japanese will be over 65.

For forty years after the shattering experience of WWII, Japan was a land of a famously hard-working people and an all-conquering economy. This was followed by long years of stagnation and now by a generation that is re-evaluating the value of work and leisure.

Buddhism and Shintoism are soaked into the culture and rituals are widely practiced, but only a small number of people identify themselves as Shinto or Buddhist, preferring to be known as non-religious or atheist. Old temples fall into disuse as the population shrinks; faddish new religious trends start. Everything is mixed, Santa Claus and gospel-music choirs and Shinto shrines. The Christian Church (0.5% of the population) was founded by Catholic missionaries 500 years ago, has known 17th century persecution and post-WWII Protestant growth but struggles to make an impact and struggles internally with formalism and cultural relevance.

- 🙏 Praise God for Japanese Christians and pastors who persevere despite all the discouragements!
- 🙏 Pray for pastors and missionaries who are starting churches in Japan.



🇮🇹 ITALY

Fifty-nine million people share this rich Mediterranean land of dazzling cultural treasures, short-lived governments and economic stagnation. Most Italians are Catholic by culture, though not by church attendance. Italy's richer north is more secular; its poorer and more rural south more likely to mix Catholicism with folk religion. A love of the Bible is rare. Evangelicalism is historically small and divided, but has been boosted in recent years by moves toward unity, and by new congregations among Italy's many migrant communities.

- 🙏 Pray for renewal to transform Italy's religious landscape and fill it with life and truth!

