

WWL 2018

Church History and Facts – TUNISIA

How many Christians?

Pop 2017	Christians	Chr%
11,495,000	23,800	0.2

Source: WCD, May 2017

How did Christians get there?

Tunisia has a very rich Christian history. Some of the early Church Fathers (e.g. Augustine and Tertullian) lived in this country and it was also one of the places where the Donatist controversy erupted in the 4th century concerning the appointment of leaders who had previously betrayed their Christian faith during persecution. As in other countries in North Africa, the arrival of Islam significantly affected Church development, but Christianity managed to survive in Tunisia until the 11th century despite the imposition of Islam. Christianity did not succeed in getting established again until the 19th century when many French and other expatriate Christians came to the country. The Roman Catholic witness grew considerably and an archbishop of Carthage was named in 1884. Various other Christian groups also began work: Anglicans in 1829, the North African Mission in 1881, the Seventh-day Advents in 1905, Methodists in 1908 (from America), and in 1911 Pentecostals from the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee).

What church networks¹ exist today?

Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Independent	Unaffiliated	Double-aff	Evangelical	Renewalist
230	19,600	1,000	2,400	530	-	680	2,200

Source: WCD, May 2017

¹ **Orthodox:** Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelicals:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalists:** Church members involved in the Pentecostal/Charismatic/Independent Charismatic renewal in the Holy Spirit.

Currently, there are Roman Catholics Protestant, Russian Orthodox, French Reformist, Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist and Greek Orthodox congregations in the country, according to the International Religious Freedom Report for 2014.² A small community of Christians with a Muslim background is also present in the country.

Religious context (selection)

Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Ethno-religionist	Jewish	Bahai	Atheist & others ³
23,800	11,436,000	-	86	-	1,900	2,300	30,800

Source: WCD, May 2017

Approximately 99.5% of the population are Muslim and virtually all are adherents of Sunni Islam, with most following the [Maliki tradition](#).⁴ There is also a very small Jewish minority in Tunisia.

Notes on the current situation

- The government's legal system is not robust enough to protect the freedom of Christians.
- The rise of Islamic militancy in the region is a threat to Christians.
- Tunisian nationals form one of the largest contingents of radical Islamic fighters in Syria and many of them are returning to Tunisia. This, coupled with the conflict and state collapse in Libya, is contributing to serious security challenges in Tunisia.

Word count: 565

² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

³ This category includes Atheists, Agnostics and New religionists.

⁴ One of the largest groups of Sunni Muslims. A major historical center of Maliki teaching, from the 9th to 11th centuries, was in the Mosque of Uqba of Tunisia. See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maliki>, last accessed 15 November 2017.