



## WWL 2016 Compilation 3 – All WWL documents (not including country persecution dynamics)



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

World Watch Research

January, 2016

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# WWL 2016: All WWL documents (not including country persecution dynamics)

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Revised: 2016-01-28 (inclusion of Policy Recommendations for Advocacy)

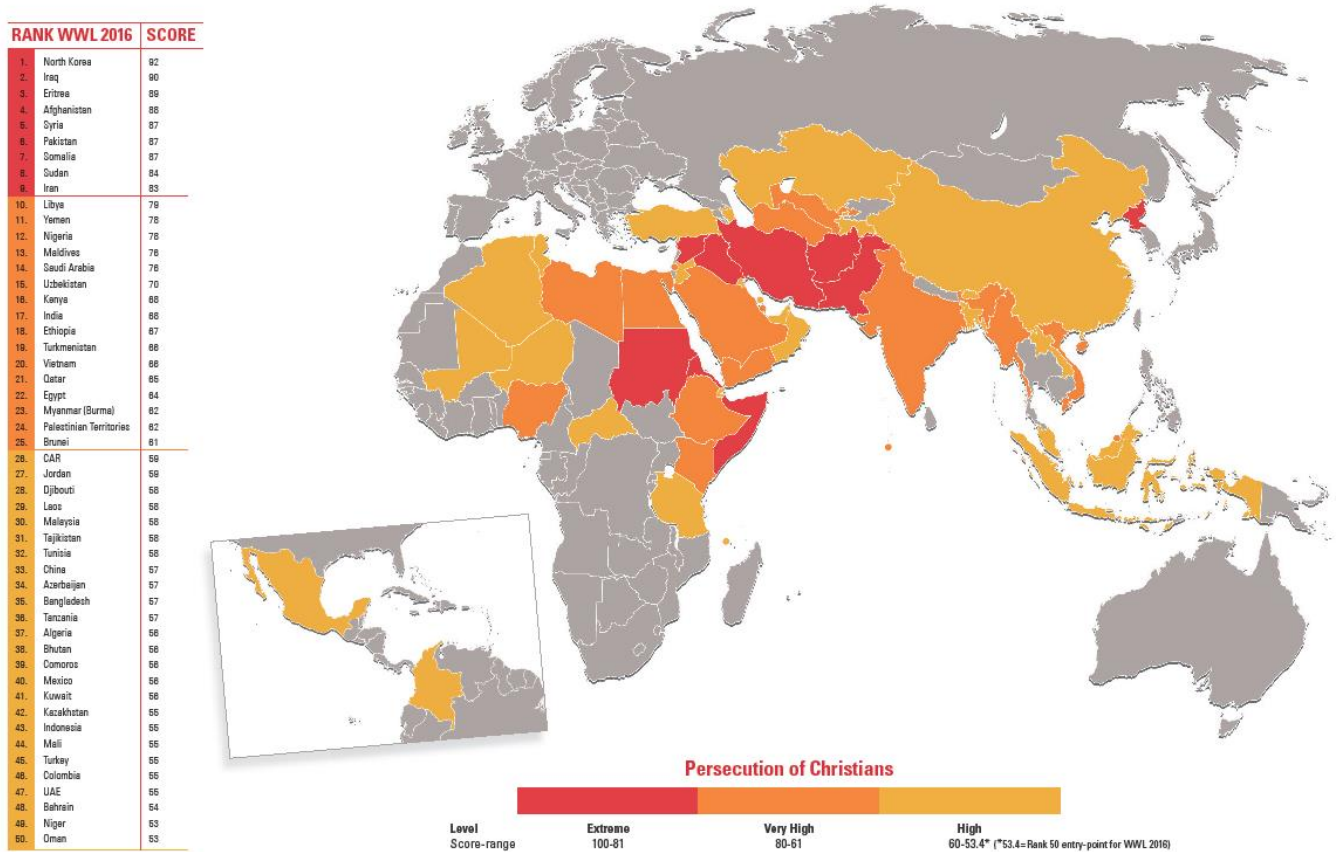
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# WWL 2016 – Ranks and scoring table for Top 50

World Watch List 2016 (1 November 2014 - 31 October 2015)										
RANK WWL 2016	Country	1. Private	2. Family	3. Community	4. National	5. Church	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORES WWL 2016	RANK WWL 2015	TOTAL SCORES WWL 2015
1	North Korea	16,667	15,476	16,472	16,557	16,667	9,815	92	1	92
2	Iraq	14,868	14,732	15,039	14,803	15,147	15,556	90	3	86
3	Eritrea	16,667	14,792	16,667	16,667	14,249	10,185	89	9	79
4	Afghanistan	16,477	16,295	15,300	13,432	15,885	10,741	88	5	81
5	Syria	14,394	14,063	14,453	13,597	14,930	15,556	87	4	83
6	Pakistan	14,583	13,988	14,063	14,748	12,674	16,667	87	8	79
7	Somalia	16,667	16,667	16,667	16,667	16,667	3,333	87	2	90
8	Sudan	14,205	13,691	13,867	13,651	14,844	13,519	84	6	80
9	Iran	14,110	14,509	14,584	14,803	16,102	9,260	83	7	80
10	Libya	14,489	13,393	13,086	13,542	14,627	9,630	79	13	76
11	Yemen	14,868	13,765	13,998	14,309	16,059	5,371	78	14	73
12	Nigeria	11,742	11,682	13,086	12,390	12,457	16,667	78	10	78
13	Maldives	15,152	14,955	13,867	15,241	15,885	1,111	76	11	78
14	Saudi Arabia	14,773	13,691	13,998	14,364	16,276	2,593	76	12	77
15	Uzbekistan	14,849	10,796	11,537	13,915	15,968	2,778	70	15	69
16	Kenya	12,614	13,817	12,695	10,707	11,332	7,222	68	19	63
17	India	11,331	10,611	11,050	11,105	10,181	13,334	68	21	62
18	Ethiopia	13,144	11,362	12,175	10,652	12,600	7,037	67	22	61
19	Turkmenistan	14,356	10,179	11,198	13,608	15,799	0,926	66	20	63
20	Vietnam	11,885	7,158	10,697	13,931	13,529	8,704	66	16	68
21	Qatar	13,542	12,946	11,849	12,555	13,585	0,185	65	18	64
22	Egypt	10,133	10,566	11,068	9,594	8,203	14,445	64	23	61
23	Myanmar	9,470	8,631	10,156	8,772	9,201	15,556	62	25	60
24	Palestinian Territories	11,932	12,500	11,524	10,965	12,804	1,852	62	26	58
25	Brunei	14,110	12,574	11,003	8,772	13,238	1,111	61	27	58
26	CAR	9,849	7,441	9,375	7,621	9,809	15,371	59	17	67
27	Jordan	12,784	12,500	11,068	9,375	11,415	1,852	59	30	56
28	Djibouti	12,671	12,723	10,742	9,995	11,450	0,741	58	24	60
29	Laos	11,515	5,603	11,667	11,968	13,759	3,519	58	28	58
30	Malaysia	12,500	12,426	9,766	10,691	10,243	2,037	58	37	55
31	Tajikistan	12,481	8,586	10,521	11,787	13,307	0,926	58	45	50
32	Tunisia	11,742	12,649	10,547	8,553	10,937	3,148	58	36	55
33	China	10,909	7,627	7,487	9,644	13,450	8,333	57	29	57
34	Azerbaijan	12,178	8,318	10,547	11,360	14,062	0,556	57	46	50
35	Bangladesh	11,638	9,055	10,996	9,397	7,752	7,963	57	43	51
36	Tanzania	10,133	9,449	10,677	9,211	10,417	6,667	57	33	56
37	Algeria	12,974	13,765	8,854	10,526	9,549	0,370	56	34	55
38	Bhutan	10,511	10,863	10,807	11,184	11,675	0,926	56	31	56
39	Comoros	11,364	11,086	10,287	9,759	13,411	0	56	32	56
40	Mexico	8,191	5,759	10,540	7,385	9,405	14,444	56	38	55
41	Kuwait	13,163	11,533	11,849	8,333	10,634	0	56	50	49
42	Kazakhstan	11,989	8,170	9,570	11,415	13,021	1,296	55	42	51
43	Indonesia	9,754	9,003	11,068	8,553	9,158	7,778	55	47	50
44	Mali	10,322	11,458	9,115	6,853	9,375	8,148	55	40	52
45	Turkey	11,553	8,333	9,375	10,362	10,026	5,185	55	41	52
46	Colombia	7,576	7,329	9,304	8,427	9,167	12,963	55	35	55
47	UAE	13,921	12,128	11,524	9,594	7,378	0	55	49	49
48	Bahrain	12,405	10,714	10,612	9,430	10,937	0	54	(new)	(new)
49	Niger	9,943	9,896	9,570	6,469	7,726	9,815	53	(new)	(new)
50	Oman	12,689	10,938	10,938	7,566	11,285	0	53	39	55

## WWL 2016 - Map recommendation and color categories



### WWL 2016 map recommendation: Description of color categories

- Extreme:** Points range 81-100 shows where there is literally no free exercise of Christian faith allowed in the society at large. Most churches are banned, or so controlled as to have no freedom of expression at all. The very fact of being a Christian draws persecution.
- Very High:** Points range 61-80 shows where the exercise of Christian faith is so difficult that most Christians fear to witness for their faith. In some cases persecution is restricted to particular areas of the country where campaigns waged against Christians may be very violent and long term.
- High:** Points range 53.4 to 60 shows where living as a Christian means that although there may be a tolerated church which enjoys some freedom, in practice prominent Christians are targeted, churches themselves subject to significant restrictions, and the culture remains largely hostile to Christian presence in such areas as education and employment. In some countries persecution is severe but restricted to particular geographical areas.

## WWL 2016 - Country religious statistics

Statistics WWL 2016 - Top 50 countries - WWU revised version: 16.12.2015		
Country	Total population (UN figure 2016)	Christians (numbers according to the WCD if not indicated)
Afghanistan	33,370,000	thousands*
Algeria	40,376,000	39,200*
Azerbaijan	9,868,000	316,000
Bahrain	1,397,000	179,000
Bangladesh	162,911,000	828,000
Bhutan	784,000	20,000*
Brunei	429,000	58,100
Burma/Myanmar	54,363,000	4,437,000
Central African Republic	4,998,000	3,578,000
China	1,390,266,000	97,200,000*
Colombia	48,654,000	46,004,000
Comoros	807,000	4,000
Djibouti	900,000	15,000
Egypt	93,384,000	9,057,000
Eritrea	5,352,000	2,595,700*
Ethiopia	101,853,000	63,760,000*
India	1,326,802,000	63,397,000
Indonesia	260,581,000	30,879,000
Iran	80,043,000	475,000*
Iraq	37,548,000	250,000*
Jordan	7,748,000	169,000
Kazakhstan	17,855,000	4,671,000
Kenya	47,251,000	38,745,800*
Kuwait	4,007,000	348,000
Laos	6,918,000	202,000
Libya	6,330,000	20,000*
Malaysia	30,752,000	3,000,000*
Maldives	370,000	hundreds*
Mali	18,135,000	527,000
Mexico	128,632,000	121,811,000
Niger	20,715,000	66,600
Nigeria	186,988,000	84,133,000
North Korea	25,281,000	300,000*
Oman	4,654,000	197,000
Pakistan	192,827,000	3,850,000
Palestinian Territories	4,797,000	42,300*
Qatar	2,291,000	210,000
Saudi-Arabia	32,158,000	1,379,000
Somalia	11,079,000	hundreds*
Sudan	41,176,000	2,016,000
Syria	18,564,000	772,000
Tajikistan	8,669,000	101,000
Tanzania	55,155,000	29,584,000
Tunisia	11,375,000	25,500*
Turkey	79,622,000	219,000
Turkmenistan	5,439,000	71,700
United Arab Emirates	9,267,000	1,150,000
Uzbekistan	30,300,000	357,000
Vietnam	94,444,000	7,997,000
Yemen	24,478,000	a few thousands*
* means numbers as agreed with OD field office but deviating from WCD.	Data Source: UN Stats, WUP 2011, medium variant, UN Economic and Social Affairs Unit, World Population Prospect, Revision July 2015, medium fertility; <a href="http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/">http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/</a>	Data source: Todd M. Johnson, ed., World Christian Database, research version (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed October 2015). Disclaimer: numbers are rounded off at hundreds.

Statistics WWL 2016 - Persecution Watch Countries						
Country	Total population (UN figure 2016)	Christians (numbers according to the WCD if not indicated)				
Belarus	9,482,000	7,290,000				
Cameroon	23,924,000	13,781,000				
Chad	14,497,000	4,939,000				
Cote d'Ivoire	23,254,000	7,920,000				
Cuba	11,393,000	6,908,000				
DR Congo	79,723,000	73,384,000				
Gambia	2,055,000	91,200				
Kyrgyzstan	6,034,000	429,000				
Mauritania	4,166,000	10,000				
Morocco	34,817,000	27,100*				
Nepal	28,851,000	1,077,000				
Russian Federation	143,440,000	117,845,000				
Senegal	15,589,000	805,000				
Sri Lanka	20,811,000	1,842,000				
Uganda	40,323,000	32,958,000				
* means numbers as agreed with OD field office but deviating from WCD.	Data Source: UN Stats, WUP 2011, medium variant, UN Economic and Social Affairs Unit, World Population Prospect, Revision July 2015, medium fertility; <a href="http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/">http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/</a>	Data source: Todd M. Johnson, ed., World Christian Database, research version (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed October 2015). Disclaimer: numbers are rounded off at hundreds.				

## WWL 2016 – Press release (short version)

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Revised 2015-12-23

### **PERSECUTION RISES WORLDWIDE IN A LAWLESS YEAR / WWU Revised version 23.12.2015**

The most oppressive regime in contemporary times, North Korea, tops this year's Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) for the 14th consecutive year. Eritrea and Pakistan rise to their highest levels, to #3 and #6 respectively and lawless Libya enters the Top 10 for the first time ever. Open Doors' researchers have recorded an average persecution increase of 2.6 points in this year's top 50 compared to last year.

In the reporting period (1 November 2014 – 31 October 2015) the Top Ten countries where Christians find it hardest to practice their faith are: North Korea (92 pts), Iraq (90 pts), Eritrea (89 pts), Afghanistan (88 pts), Syria (87 pts), Pakistan (87 pts), Somalia (87 pts), Sudan (84 pts), Iran (83 pts) and Libya (79 pts).

#### **Two major risers in the Top Ten**

Dubbed the "North Korea of Africa", Eritrea ranks among the very worst countries in terms of freedom of religion and other human rights records and so few will be surprised at the rise from #9 to #3 by a jump of 10 points. Engine for the increased pressure on Christians is president Afewerki's *Dictatorial paranoia*. Any Christian who dares to speak up in Eritrea and protest the treatment of Christians is jailed or arrested no matter what their status.

The world's second largest Muslim country, Pakistan has risen 8 points to #6 and is the only country getting the maximum score in the violence category together with Nigeria. The reporting period started with the killing of a Christian couple on 4 November 2014 and climaxed in a twin bomb attack on two churches in Lahore on 15 March 2015, leaving 25 dead. Less overt is the everyday abuse of Christian girls who are frequently abducted, raped, and forced to marry and convert.

#### **The newcomers**

The WWL 2016 contains two newcomers: Niger and Bahrain enter at #49 and #48 respectively. Boko Haram is spreading fear among Niger's Christians, and in Bahrain, Christians are beginning to feel the effects of the sultan introducing Sharia law. These two new entries have ousted Sri Lanka and Mauritania from the Top 50, which were outflanked this year by rises in persecution in other countries. Indeed, the entry score for the Top 50 has risen by almost 5 points. A very worrying signal.

#### **The smash and squeeze**

The Open Doors WWL's methodology is uniquely designed to track how the exercise of the Christian faith gets squeezed in five distinct areas ranging from private to national life, as well as covering violence such as killings and church burnings. Dr. Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, Director of Research at Open Doors International, explains why: "It is possible for persecution to be so intense in all areas of life that Christians fear to witness at all, and so you may find very low levels of violence as a result since incidents of persecution often result from acts of witness."

The countries that show where this squeeze was most intensive were: Somalia, North Korea, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Maldives, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Syria. The highest levels of violence directed against Christians (in countries listed in WWL 2016) were in Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Myanmar, Central African Republic, Egypt, Mexico, Sudan and India.

Open Doors records show that worldwide there were well over 7,000 Christians killed for faith-related reasons in the reporting period. That is a rise of almost 3,000 in comparison to conservative figures from the WWL 2015 period. This is excluding North Korea, and partly Syria and Iraq, where accurate records do not exist. Statistics also show that more than 2,400 churches were attacked or damaged, which is over double the number for last year.

In Nigeria news of violence has been dominated by the brutality of the radical Islamic militants, Boko Haram. But as Frans Veerman, the Director of the WWL Unit explains, even without Boko Haram, “that would still leave the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen regularly committing atrocities against indigenous Christian farmers in the Middle Belt states. Out of the more than 4,000 Christians who lost their lives in attacks in Nigeria in the reporting period, 2,500 are attributed to Boko Haram and not less than 1,500 to the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen. At least 30,000 Christians have been displaced through the violence in Taraba State alone.”

**The goal – supporting the people behind the figures**

The Open Doors World Watch List is published annually as a tool 1) for media to raise awareness 2) for politicians to make informed decisions and 3) for churches around the world to support and pray for their brothers and sisters on the frontline.

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WWU: DAT/FV/RBM/FINAL/2015-12-11

763 words / 3,818 characters without spaces / 4,589 with spaces



## WWL 2016 – Press release (long version)

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Revised 2015-12-23

### PERSECUTION RISES WORLDWIDE IN A LAWLESS YEAR / Revised version 2015-12-23

The most oppressive regime in contemporary times, North Korea, tops this year's Open Doors World Watch List for the 14th consecutive year. Eritrea and Pakistan rise to their highest levels, to #3 and #6 respectively, and lawless Libya also enters the top 10 for the first time ever. *Islamic extremism* constitutes the main persecuting force in thirty five of the top fifty countries, with *Religious nationalism* and *Dictatorial paranoia* also rising sharply. The degree of persecution of Christians was confirmed to be rising, with Open Doors' researchers recording an average persecution increase of 2.6 points in this year's Top 50 compared to last year.

The Open Doors World Watch List is published every January and lists the 50 countries worldwide where Christians experience the most persecution. Persecution is understood as any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians. Research methods and results have been independently audited by the International Institute for Religious Freedom ([IIRF](#)).

In the reporting period (1 November 2014 – 31 October 2015) the Top Ten countries where Christians find it hardest to practice their faith are: North Korea (92 pts), Iraq (90 pts), Eritrea (89 pts), Afghanistan (88 pts), Syria (87 pts), Pakistan (87 pts), Somalia (87 pts), Sudan (84 pts), Iran (83 pts) and Libya (79 pts).

### Eritrea and Pakistan - Two major risers in the Top Ten

Dubbed the "North Korea of Africa", Eritrea ranks among the very worst countries in terms of freedom of religion, freedom of press, rule of law and other human rights records. Driving the persecution of Christians is first and foremost president Afewerki's *Dictatorial paranoia*. Any Christian who dares to speak up in Eritrea and protest the treatment of Christians is jailed or arrested no matter what their status. The former Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, Abune Antonius, has been under house arrest since 2007 for speaking out. According to a UNHCR report from November 2014, 22 per cent of all refugees reaching Italy by boat are Eritrean. "Eritrean Christians, even though they know that there is a very high probability of falling into the hands of traffickers and ruthless radical groups like the IS, are still desperate to escape from Eritrea", one researcher confirmed.

The world's second largest Muslim country, Pakistan has risen to #6 and is the only country getting the maximum score in the violence category in the World Watch List together with Nigeria. The level of pressure is high in all spheres of life and persecution does not come from the State as much as from radical Islamic groups. The reporting period started with the killing of a Christian couple, working in a brick kiln on 4 November 2014 by a furious mob and climaxed in a twin bomb attack on two churches in Lahore on 15 March 2015, leaving 25 dead and wounding dozens. This overt violence conceals the everyday abuse of Christian girls who are frequently abducted, raped, forced to marry and convert, and the country's 3.8 million Christians feel increasingly under threat in their daily lives.

### Newcomers in the Top 50 – Niger and Bahrain

The entry score for the Top 50 has risen by almost 5 points, which sends out a very worrying signal and shows that the World Watch List is really just a record of the tip of an iceberg. The WWL 2016 contains only two newcomers: Niger and Bahrain enter at #49 and #48 respectively. For Niger, the spread of Boko Haram into its territory has caused violence against and fear among Christians to rise sharply. In Bahrain, the sultan's gradual introduction of Sharia law has already begun to seriously restrict the public witness of Christian faith in the country.

These two new entries have ousted Sri Lanka and Mauritania from the Top 50, which were outflanked this year by rises in persecution in other countries. Despite leaving the official listing, the situation for these countries has not improved. In Sri Lanka churches are still being attacked by local Buddhist communities, despite fresh hopes of protection for religious minorities being placed in the recently elected new government. Mauritania is one of only four official "Islamic Republics" in the world, and the influence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mauritania is growing. The monitoring of all Christian activity has continued but happily violence has been very low in the reporting period.

### **The Smash and Squeeze**

The Open Doors World Watch List is unique not only as the instrument that measures the persecution of Christians annually, but its methodology is designed to track how the exercise of the Christian faith gets squeezed in five distinct areas – private life, family life, community life, national life and church life, as well as covering violence such as rapes, killings and church burnings. Dr. Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, Director of Research at Open Doors International, explains why: "It is possible for persecution to be so intense in all areas of life that Christians fear to witness at all, and so you may find very low levels of violence as a result since incidents of persecution often result from acts of witness."

The countries that show where this squeeze was most intensive were: Somalia, North Korea, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Maldives, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Syria. The highest levels of violence directed against Christians (in countries listed in WWL 2016) were in Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Myanmar, Central African Republic, Egypt, Mexico, Sudan and India.

Open Doors records show that worldwide there were well over 7,000 Christians killed for faith-related reasons in the reporting period. That is a rise of almost 3,000 in comparison to conservative figures from the WWL 2015 period. This is excluding North Korea, and partly Syria and Iraq, where accurate records do not exist. Statistics also show that more than 2,400 churches were attacked or damaged, which is over double the number for last year.

In Nigeria news of violence has been dominated by the brutality of the radical Islamic militants, Boko Haram. But as Frans Veerman, the Director of the WWL Unit explains, even without Boko Haram, "that would still leave the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen regularly committing atrocities against indigenous Christian farmers in the Middle Belt states. Out of the more than 4,000 Christians who lost their lives in attacks in Nigeria in the reporting period, 2,500 are attributed to Boko Haram and not less than 1,500 to the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen. At least 30,000 Christians have been displaced through the violence in Taraba State alone. These are the results of fact-finding on the ground but the researchers estimate that they uncovered only 50% of the atrocities committed. This is looking like *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation."

**Christians in conflict hotspots – Iraq, Yemen, Kenya**

The conflict zones of the world are very often regions where Christians are especially vulnerable. Whilst the world media fixes its attention to the battles and bombings, in the background the Islamic State (IS) is radicalizing populations even in countries where it has no apparent presence. The Kurdish region of north Iraq (which has risen 4 points to #2) is currently acting as a safe haven for thousands of Christian refugees from Mosul and the Nineveh Plain. But even there, the government is ordering land to be sold to Muslim families in several predominantly Christian areas and towns. This “demographic reversal process” in many majority Christian areas is forcing Christians to live precariously in a minority situation – or leave. In Yemen (#11), which missed entering the Top 10 by just one point, Saudi Arabia and Iran are fighting a proxy war. Virtually all Western expatriates have fled the civil war, leaving just a few thousand brave Muslim Background Believers in the country. The Church is holding on by the skin of its teeth.

Another region with an increasingly radicalized Muslim population are the northern and coastal areas of Kenya, which has risen 5 points to #16. Attacks from al-Shabaab adherents killed 28 Christians on a bus from Mandera on 22 November 2014. 36 Christian quarry workers were killed on 2 December 2014, again in Mandera; 148 Christian university students in Garissa were killed on 2 April 2015, and 14 Christian quarry workers were killed in Mandera on 7 July 2015. Most of these were “execution-style” killings and Christians were targeted specifically by separating them from Muslims. It is to be feared that the situation for Christians will continue to deteriorate, especially as pressure in all spheres of life is high.

**Central Asia – Rising persecution through surveillance of terror networks**

Christians living in Central Asian states have seen a sharp deterioration in their religious freedom, especially as these governments increase their surveillance and control on all groups in society, often cynically citing a need to crack down on Islamist inspired terror. Uzbekistan is a perennial occupant of the top 20 (at #15) with Turkmenistan joining it at #19, and Tajikistan (at #31 moving up from #45) and Azerbaijan (at #34 from #46) constituting some of this year’s significant risers.

**The goal – Supporting the people behind the figures**

The Open Doors World Watch List is published annually as a tool 1) for media to raise awareness 2) for politicians to make informed decisions and 3) for churches around the world to support and pray for their brothers and sisters on the frontline. World maps displaying the spread of persecution against Christians and further detailed information on the situation in specific countries are available from all Open Doors offices.

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WWU: DAT/FV/RBM/FINAL/2015-12-11 1,585 words / 8,204 characters without spaces / 9,803 with spaces

# WWL 2016 – IIRF Audit Statement



International Institute for Religious Freedom  
 Internationales Institut für Religionsfreiheit  
 Institut international pour la liberté religieuse  
 of the World Evangelical Alliance  
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 Sri Lanka

## Audit Statement on the outcomes of the Open Doors World Watch List 2016

The results of the Open Doors World Watch List 2016 are accurately presented by the WWU within the parameters of precision reached in the processing of information.

The numerical data is complemented by differentiated interpretative country profiles.

The auditors commend the implementation of new quality assurance measures by the WWU persecution analysts that were reported, both with regard to consistency in application of the questionnaire and methodology through group review of ambiguous questions and issues, as well as by selective mutual peer review of results on countries by pairs of persecution analysts.

On inspection of five sample countries the auditors found the implementation and the documentation of the scoring process from the raw material provided to the final country score commendable.

IIRF has submitted a list of recommendations for potential future improvements to Open Doors.

Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo,  
 this 18 December 2015

Prof. Dr. theol. Dr. phil. Thomas Schirmacher  
 (Director)

Prof. Dr. Christof Sauer  
 (Co-Director)

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- Max Klingberg (Germany): Human rights organizations
- Drs. Behnan Kocartagan (Turkey): Orthodox Churches
- İsmail Yinal Özbek (Turkey): Turkish Islam
- Dr. Paul Marshall (USA): Religious liberty research, Islam
- Patson Netha (Zimbabwe): Africa
- Prof. Glenn Penner† (Canada)
- Prof. Dr. Bernhard J. G. Bokema (Netherlands): Islam and Christianity
- Prof. Dr. Rainer Rothfuß (Germany): Geography
- Prof. Dr. Christine Schirmacher (Germany): Islamic Sharia
- Dr. Beronias Intan (Indonesia): Peacebuilding
- Prof. Dr. Donald L. Stultz (USA): Training
- Annetta Vysotskaja (Russia): Central and Eastern Europe

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## WWL 2016 – Article on Trends

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Revised 2015-12-23 and 2016-01-07

### 2015 – THE YEAR OF FEAR!

The year 2015 will surely go down as the *Year of Fear* due to religious persecution. Islamic State and its affiliates took their barbarity across borders like never before, into Libya, Kenya, and Egypt, culminating in random massacres in Paris on 13 November and in San Bernardino on 2 December 2015. There is a feeling globally that no one is safe from the reach of these newer jihadists, who can recruit, convert and train any one through the internet.

Governments are more worried than ever before about the effects of Islamic extremism, which once again is by far the most common engine on the 2016 Open Doors WWL with 35 out of the top 50 states having it as their primary engine. States as far away as Central Asia have tightened their controls on all religious expression as a result. Even in far flung Myanmar, where the Muslim Rohingya people constitute a minority, a whole raft of restrictive legislation was passed, ostensibly to keep extremism down but catching Christian believers in the drag net.

Fears were not allayed either with uncontrolled migration flows, as over one million migrants took the hazardous route to Europe from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees gave up on the possibility of ever returning to their war torn homeland. Their influx has caused fear to mushroom among European nations that the numbers may be too high to handle or their cultures be forever altered by the influx of mostly non-Christian peoples.

Much of this fear is paranoia of course, and in some cases governments have stoked it to justify crackdowns that have reduced religious liberty. The saddest news from the 2016 Open Doors World Watch List is that again, like the previous year, persecution of Christians worsened in all the continents. The entry level for points per country in for the 2015 list was 48.5; for the 2016 list it is 53.4 points.

### THE GLOBAL TRENDS

Four trends of fear stand out in this global deterioration:

1. **Islamic extremist self-styled caliphates have expanded their spheres of operation across international borders.** Islamic State has declared that it is waging war on the West, with sickening consequences in Paris, and is also preparing the town of Sirte in Libya as a possible new headquarters should Raqqa prove impossible to inhabit due to Western bombing raids. Other extremist insurgencies like Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria declared themselves part of Islamic State (IS). Boko Haram proceeded to expand its reign of terror to neighboring Niger and Chad. Al-Shabaab, though there was a faction of it that pledged allegiance to IS, still an al-Qaeda affiliate in the Horn of Africa, not only terrorized Somalia but also neighboring Kenya. Kenya in fact saw their worst act of terrorism in fifteen years when extremists held 700 students hostage on 2 April 2015 at Garissa University College and slaughtered 148 Christians, after carefully separating Muslims from Christians. All three of these self-described caliphates drive persecution in four of the top 10 countries on the WWL (Iraq,

Syria, Somalia and Libya), and significantly now in the fifth, Afghanistan, and many more extremist movements are seeking to establish caliphates reaching as far as the Democratic Republic of Congo. Said an Open Doors observer, “For a lot of extremists, Islamic State seems to have God on their side since they are so successful at taking and holding territory, and their propaganda is so seductive, so it is no surprise so many want to become part of their ‘brand’.”

2. **Governments became more fearful of Islamic extremism and responded by either (a) boosting nationalism as a counter force or (b) tightening regulations and increasing surveillance over all religious expression.** In the post-communist states of Central Asia – all of whom have seen a rise in points – governments have expanded intrusive surveillance into all aspects of church life. Myanmar passed no less than four discriminatory bills in 2015, including a religious conversion law that gives the state new powers to penalize Christians who convert from Buddhism. Even in China the situation continues to tighten as the government continues to view Christianity as dangerously “foreign” and rip crosses from churches.
3. **Muslims the world over are becoming more Islamic out of fear that extremists may take over their areas and that IS sleeper cells may wake. In other cases it might be out of opportunism or religious conviction.** All over the Middle East especially, Muslims are outwardly at least becoming more fundamentalist. Islamic State is radicalizing the population even in countries where it has no presence, but especially where it is nearby. This radicalization is occurring even in places like Iraqi Kurdistan, normally a beacon of freedom. However, there is a countertrend as many Muslims search for a new identity as they turn away in disgust from extremism. As an Egyptian journalist said earlier this year, “We woke up and looked into the mirror, and we saw the face of the Taliban instead of ourselves.” Many are entertaining Christianity as a faith option.
4. **Religious radicalization also extends into the Hindu world.** India climbed into the top 20 for the first time. It has been a year of deafening silence from its Hindu extremist leader, Narendra Modi, as attacks on churches and pastors climbed even higher than in 2014. The mob feels impunity as Hindu extremism is deliberately stoked. Rev. Richard Howell of the Evangelical Fellowship of India sums up, “Political Hinduism has arrived and majoritarian persecution has begun ... every week there are three to four incidents of mobs attacking Christians.”

## OTHER TRENDS

Yet the 2016 World Watch List contains other important trends that are worthy of note, though not as global as the three above.

### **African countries continue to move into the top fifty.**

Sixteen countries in the top 50 are from Africa, seven in the top 20. One of two newcomers to the list is Niger (#49), and indeed in the countries below the top 50 that will no doubt feature in future lists no less than nine of the fifteen counting down to #65 are African, mainly sub-Saharan countries. Islamic extremism in the world today has two hubs, one in the Middle East, the other in sub-Saharan Africa. In

numerical terms at least, though not in degree, the persecution of Christians in this region dwarfs what is happening in the Middle East.

**More states are lawless, with minorities suffering at the hands of violent groups.**

Libya is the land that the world forgot in 2015, but enters the top 10 for the first time ever. It is a lawless state divided into three separate regions, with Islamic state affiliates gaining more territory rapidly. The small Muslim Background Believer church has to dive deep to survive, and migrant Christians particularly from Sudan and Eritrea are also targeted. Dozens have been killed this year, often in grisly beheading scenes videoed and broadcast by Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL). In war torn Yemen the Saudi led forces make it even harder for the few Christians remaining. Syria will enter its fifth year of civil war, and Iraq continues to be three countries – the Kurdish part, the IS part, and the Shia part. In all three it's getting worse for Christians too.

**Never have so many Christians been on the move.**

It is well known that the Middle East has a comparable number of refugees as Christians – 12.5 million, though few know what the percentage of Christians is of the refugee total. It must be considerable though. Aleppo was one of Syria's most Christian cities, but by the spring of 2015 the numbers of Christians in the city had gone down from approximately 250,000 to roughly less than 40,000 in the four years of the war.

Less well known are the tens of thousands of Christians leaving the twelve sharia states of northern Nigeria, where 27 million Christians remain second class citizens, and now many thousands are fleeing the anti-Christian violence of Hausa-Fulani herdsmen in the Middle Belt region. This has created enormous numbers of internally displaced people in northern Nigeria, many of whom are Christians. Official estimates seem to be the tip of the iceberg. In Kenya many Christians are fleeing from the Muslim majority areas. Tens of thousands continue to brave desert and trafficking gangs to leave Eritrea, many ending up in Europe, where the UNHCR said in November 2014 that 22% of all refugees reaching Italian shores were from Eritrea alone. Even Pakistani Christians are fleeing to countries in South East Asia claiming asylum on grounds of persecution.

**Pariah states don't care.**

North Korea continues to top the Open Doors World Watch List, as it has for the past fourteen years. The country is only maintained in power by China's leaders, who fear an unmanageable refugee crisis on its border if the state collapses abruptly, but Sudan and Eritrea also belong in this category, and the lawless violence visited on Christians in these states as frightening but not well known. The largely Christian Nuba people are experiencing close to genocide in Sudan, and any Christian who dares to speak up in Eritrea and protest the treatment of Christians is jailed or arrested no matter what their status. The former Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, Abune Antonius, has been under house arrest since 2007 for speaking out.

**Extremism remains very well financed.**

Evidence exists that Saudi Arabia and Qatar have financed Islamic State, primarily as a means of curbing Iranian expansion, and it has long been known that the Pakistani intelligence bankrolls factions of the Taliban in Afghanistan to maintain a strategic interest in its neighbor. Islamic state too sells oil to the Turks, the Syrian Government and even Kurdish elements, though Western bombing may change this. But extremist movements are adept at raising funds from organized corruption and crime. Islamic State, despite their oil revenues, still kidnap Christians for money, and over 300 Christians are currently missing in Syria. In parts of Latin America drug gangs run entire regions, and even impose taxes on churches. In Somalia, al-Shabaab has lost territory in Somalia but respond by quickly hiring themselves out to tribes as enforcers in local disputes. Christians always suffer when these violent movements keep their coffers full. As one local Christian said gloomily, “full coffers also mean full coffins.”

**Local dynamics sometimes matters more.**

Typically trends can be international, national, or local, and it is the local layer that is often overlooked but can contain the more essential dynamics of persecution. In Central Asia for example, much of the persecution revolves around burial rites. Cemeteries are usually controlled by Imams, and they frequently refuse to bury Christians who have converted from Islam. Not only that, but they have been known to add pressure to family members, denying them a burial plot if they do not re-convert their family member. Or in rural Egypt justice is often dispensed by local tribal courts, who operate a parallel jurisdiction with government approval, yet Christians always lose in these forums.

**Some persecutors are getting cleverer.**

Central Asian states particularly are all very adept at surveillance and intimidation, but tactically they can also be remarkably sophisticated. For example, a well-known pastor inexplicably receives the gift of a house, or a luxury car. He does not know where it has come from. It's a gift from the state, and designed to sow suspicion and distrust among his congregation that he is compromised. Or a pastor may be arrested, but left alone in jail, well treated, for a few days. When released back to their congregation, the pastor is not believed when he says that he did not betray anyone. Disunity is successfully sown and the church is fatally weakened.

**Ethnic cleansing is back as an anti-Christian tactic.**

In the Middle East and Africa persecution is taking place in the context of ethnic cleansing/ genocide. In north, northeast and Middle Belt Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Sudan (Nuba Mountains), Somalia, northeast Kenya, persecution involves a pattern which is systematic backed by a policy of State or non-state actors. For example, in Middle Belt Nigeria, Christians have been forcefully removed from their homes and indigenous land by the Hausa-Fulani settlers. In Kenya Christians were singled out and killed (execution-style) on different occasions. In Sudan, Nuba Christians have been indiscriminately targeted and killed. In all these countries, persecution has been taking place with the intent to remove or even to exterminate Christians.



## **GOOD NEWS?**

Still, the global picture is not always bad news for Christians however. There is an Indian saying, “Children only throw stones at a ripe mango tree,” and persecuted Christians the world over will often say, “we are persecuted because we are doing something right, and this persecution shows we are ripe fruit for Christ.”

Here are some “good news’s trends in the past year.

### **In Sri Lanka a Buddhist nationalist was deposed.**

A dictatorial President, Mahina Rajapaksa, was unexpectedly defeated in January elections after appearing confident of victory. He had close ties to two radical Buddhist movements and since then both movements have been quiet. Churches are still attacked by local communities, but nationally approved violence seems to be on the decrease even if it continues to make little difference if Christians complain after an attack.

### **Kurdish Iraq still remains a beacon of freedom.**

Most of the 120,000 Christians who fled the Nineveh Plain when Islamic State swarmed over it in the summer of 2014 landed in Iraqi Kurdistan. On the whole they are safe, though there are concerns the culture is getting more Islamic. Still they experience a haven of peace, where they are not preyed upon, and can receive foreign aid to wait for their return to their homeland in some comfort.

### **Prayer can push even narco-traffickers back.**

Two countries from Latin America are in the top 50, Mexico (#40) and Colombia (#46), and this reflects the growth of narco-trafficking gangs who see the churches as an obstacle to their trade, or often target them for extortion. In Monterrey, Mexico, pastors all got together than prayed against the drug lords. The city is now safer with these groups significantly removed. Of course, they have moved to different localities, but the people of the city see the power of concerted prayer again.

### **A security guard gives his life to save a church.**

Pakistan has never been higher on the WWL (#6), and this year joined Nigeria as attaining the maximum points in our violence against Christians and Christian property measurement. But often a single story can reverse a decline, and in one city a volunteer security guard saw suicide bombers approach a church. He tackled them, losing his life in the process. The following week the church was bursting at the seams. Such heroic acts of sacrifice can give courage to a whole faith community, and beyond it!

### **Syrian refugees continue to find Christ.**

Many Muslims are finding Christ in the refugee camps of Jordan and especially Lebanon, and linking in with their communities in order to plant churches upon their return. In Syria itself there remains an unprecedented level of openness and co-operation between Christians and Muslims on the ground. Said one Syrian pastor from Aleppo, “We will distribute aid to any one, and Muslims respect that and come to us, which is a big shift because they used to be taught that Christians would try to kill or poison them.”

**Historic Ecumenical Conference for the Persecuted was held.**

For the first time in the modern history of Christianity, high level leaders and representatives of the various Church traditions gathered together to listen to, learn from, and stand with, persecuted Churches and Christians in the world today. The global gathering of 145 people took place 2 – 4 November 2015 in Tirana, Albania, and included high level representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches. Pope Francis sent a message hoping that the “shedding of blood” would create a new unity among the world’s churches. Leaders of the world’s great Christian traditions pledged to, “listen more, pray more, speak up more, and do more” for the world’s persecuted believers.

**It has been a year when what happens in Syria or even Somalia affects Christians in the West. As has been well said, “There is no such place as abroad anymore.” What happens in these places – in a globalized world – will happen everywhere also, in time! Christians, and the people of Paris, found that out the hard way.**

**Still, Christians have a positive message from the front line of suffering. As Bishop Anastasias of Albania put it at a gathering of leaders of persecuted Christians; “The church is always a suffering church, or it is not a church.”**

**The Open Doors World Watch List remains more than a List. It is a reminder of what it costs to be a Christian...everywhere!**

WWU: RBM/FINAL/2015-12-11/Revised FV 2015-12-23 / Last revision FV 2016-01-07

## WWL 2016 – Article on Violence

Revised 2016-01-07

### WWL 2016 - Violent incidents: Christians killed and churches attacked

Persecution of Christians is more than just physical violence. It's a complex multifaceted phenomenon that involves many aspects such as various forms of cultural marginalization, government discrimination, hindrances on conversion, hindrances on participation in public affairs and restrictions on church life. These and other aspects of persecution are comprehensively covered by the World Watch List methodology which distinguishes between *squeeze* (pressure) and *smash* (violence). This article highlights some of the WWL 2016 findings related to violence, which, although not the only aspect of persecution, is perhaps its sharpest edge.

It is always a challenge to document violent incidents targeting Christians, especially in countries where access to information is restricted, or media reporting is insufficient. Based on research by the WWL team, assisted by Open Doors' networks in the field and/or external experts, the following table has been drawn up.

All incidents listed here occurred during the WWL 2016 reporting period: 1 November 2014 - 31 October 2015.

Country	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	How many churches have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?
Nigeria	4028	198
CAR	1269	131
Chad	750	10
DRC	467	13
Kenya	225	0
Cameroon	114	10
Libya	58	2
Pakistan	39	17
Syria	33	24
Myanmar	13	11
Egypt	12	69
Eritrea	11	0
Niger	10	115
Iraq	10	18
Mexico	10	13
India	9	23
Gambia	7	6

Sudan	6	53
Colombia	6	14
Philippines	6	0
Uganda	4	3
Ethiopia	3	10
Mali	3	7
Afghanistan	3	0
Somalia	3	0
Yemen	2	3
Laos	2	0
Bangladesh	1	16
Indonesia	1	20
Côte d'Ivoire	1	10
China	0	1500
Sri Lanka	0	81
Tanzania	0	13
Turkey	0	8
Belarus	0	5
Nepal	0	5
Cuba	0	3
Russia	0	3
Algeria	0	2
Iran	0	2
Vietnam	0	2
Malaysia	0	1
Palestinian Territories	0	1
Saudi Arabia	0	1
Tunisia	0	1
Uzbekistan	0	1
North Korea <sup>1</sup>	No data	No data
<b>Total</b>	<b>7106</b>	<b>2425</b>

In total, we received reports of 7,106 Christians who were killed and 2,425 churches attacked and/or destroyed. A few countries stand out where Christians have suffered physical violence on a very high scale. Christians in countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa, where militant Islamic groups such as Boko Haram, Séléka, ADF-NALU (now called Muslim Defense International or MDI) and al-Shabaab are active, experienced high numbers killed: Nigeria, CAR, Chad, DRC, Kenya and Cameroon.

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<sup>1</sup> No conclusive data on these categories is available.

In the case of **Nigeria**, the total of 4,028 Christians and 198 churches attacked and/or destroyed, is likely to be much higher than these numbers, as many atrocities are underreported and religious affiliation is often not mentioned. What we know, is this:

- Based on [research](#) commissioned by World Watch Research, of the 1,484 people who were killed in Taraba State between December 2013 and July 2015, an estimated 70% was in the period November 2014 and July 2015, giving a total of 1,039 Christians killed; and 120 churches attacked. The researchers estimate that the information gathered on violence in Taraba State could be 50% of the total violence committed.
- Based on preliminary data research commissioned by World Watch Research (in preparation), 489 Christians were killed during the reporting period in Nasarawa State and 78 churches destroyed. The final research data could well reveal higher numbers in Nasarawa State. While other Middle Belt states where initial investigations indicated comparable violence, have not yet been investigated in-depth (for instance Benue State, Kaduna State, Plateau State).
- According to a report by [Amnesty International](#), between 2014 and 2015, Boko Haram has killed more than 5,500 people around Maiduguri in Borno State (this was confirmed by [Church in Need](#)). Most of these people are suspected to be Christians in northern Nigeria. The Catholic diocese of Maiduguri, the worst hit area, indicated that more than 5,000 people have been killed in the diocese alone. Because Amnesty International implies that a large number of those killed are Christians and that Christians were deliberately targeted by the Boko Haram violence, we decided to count 50% of this number, as a conservative estimate.

In China no killings of Christians were reported in the reporting period. However, the number of churches attacked was enormous. More than 60% of the total number of churches attacked happened in China. Here local authorities continued a campaign against religious structures, especially churches. Some were completely destroyed and an estimated 1,500 crosses on church buildings or church compounds have been broken down. Regarding **Central African Republic**, the numbers of killings (1,269) and churches attacked (131) are taken from the period of January-April 2015 alone, so the actual numbers for the whole reporting period are likely to be much higher. This is also true for **Syria** and **Iraq**, where the incidents that were reported should not be considered as a complete record of violent acts affecting Christians during the reporting period. In both Syria and Iraq, Christian communities are affected by the continuing crisis in much of the country. Reports of the desecration of church buildings continued during this period, especially in areas controlled by Islamic State.

In **Libya**, during this reporting period, three major violent incidents of persecution occurred, which are all part of a structural pattern of kidnapping and/or murdering of Christian migrants: in February 2015 21 mainly Egyptian Coptic Christian migrant workers were murdered by jihadists affiliated to the Islamic State; in April, a similar incident occurred in which 79 Christian Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees were also kidnapped and more than thirty of them cruelly killed; in June 2015, 86 Christian Eritrean migrants (some reports mention 88), fleeing political repression in their home country, were kidnapped by militants from Islamic State in Libya.

It is important to understand that, even more than in case of killings, attacks on churches are not just one-time events. A church attacked may very well disrupt the Christian community around that church

for a long time. Christians will fear to take their families to church again. It will have a ripple effect on other communities too. A destroyed church that is never rebuilt will also be a continuous witness of the vulnerability of the Christian community and the impunity of the perpetrators.

Killings of Christians and attacks on churches tell only one part of the story. In countries such as Nigeria, CAR, DRC, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Mexico and Colombia, the internal (or external) displacements caused by this violence are the most visible side of the story. It is important to highlight that in many of these countries the internal displacements are often part of a process that can be seen as [ethnic cleansing](#), which is defined as “the expulsion of an [‘undesirable’ population](#) from a given territory due to religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or a combination of these.” The practice of *ethnic cleansing* sometimes touches upon *genocide*. Killings are only one element of these dynamics. Rape, kidnappings, destruction of houses and shops, destruction of fields, and other forms of violence contribute to terrorizing the “undesirable” population.

**The reporting period shows an increase in the numbers of Christians killed for faith-related reasons and churches attacked in comparison to last year. The WWL 2015 (1 November 2013 – 31 October 2014) reported 4,344 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,062 churches attacked. The WWL 2016 (1 November 2014 – 31 October 2015) sees 7,106 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 2,425 churches attacked. These statistics underline the narrative of this WWL 2016 that the persecution of Christians has increased in the reporting period in many countries.**

WWU / 2016-01-07

## WWL 2016 – Persecution Watch Countries (outside Top 50)

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### WWL 2016 – The Persecution Watch Countries

The *Persecution Watch Countries* are part of a group of countries beyond the World Watch List Top 50, in which serious degrees of hostility against Christians and churches are prevalent. Indeed, countries that are not part of the WWL Top 50 are not necessarily free from persecution. The fifteen Persecution Watch Countries listed below all received scores of 41 points or more, and are characterized as countries with a “high” level of persecution.

The Persecution Watch Countries are listed below with a short explanation. The WWL team has comprehensively scored all of them.

#### North Africa

- The WWL score for **Mauritania (50 points; WWL 2015: 50 points)** remained the same, but due to the increase in points of other countries, it loses its top 50 ranking. The persecution engine affecting Christians in Mauritania is *Islamic extremism*, which is exacerbated by the country’s apostasy laws which are directed against the activities of non-Muslims and its cultural norms that strongly dissuade people from associating with non-Muslims. Mauritania is one of only four official “Islamic Republics” in the world, and its constitution recognizes Islam as the sole religion of the country’s estimated 4 million inhabitants and designates Sharia (Islamic law) as the only officially recognized source of legislation. Moreover, the influence of Islamist groups in Mauritania is growing. The group is gaining support among local Mauritians and is also attempting to monitor Christian activity in the country. Because of harsh government restrictions, it is difficult for Christian missions and Christians in general to operate in the country. Pressure on Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) from family, tribe members and leaders of local mosques, is very high. During the reporting period, Open Doors received one report of a believer who was “roughed up” by family members, and pressured by his imam to renounce his faith. There is some freedom for expatriate churches, but even for expatriates residing in the country, the situation is complicated. It remains completely impossible for all Mauritanian Christians to register their churches, so they must meet in secret. No violent incidents against Christians were recorded in Mauritania during the reporting period. This is not a sign of the absence of persecution. Pressure upon Christians is still present. The prospect of increasingly powerful Islamist insurgencies in Mauritania is the greatest threat to Christians in the country.
- In **Morocco (48 points; WWL 2015: 47 points)** *Islamic extremism* is the persecution engine, emphasized by the fact that the nation is led by an Islamic party. The revolutionary wave that went through North Africa and the Middle East known as the Arab Spring also reached Morocco. In the case of Morocco, the protests did not bring the monarchy to an end, but King Mohammed VI adopted a number of reforms in order to restore social peace and satisfy the demands of the Islamists. Victims of persecution are mainly Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background

Believers, MBBs), though restrictions also apply to the small historical Catholic and expatriate communities in the country. Foreign workers still must seek legitimate grounds for living in the country. In this reporting period, few violent incidents against Christians were recorded. Compared to previous years, the situation of Christians in Morocco has not changed much apart from one important change: the arrival of the Islamist party in government. This has had a negative effect on the position of the Church. Islamist forces are becoming more visible in the country causing many Christians to be pessimistic about the future. During the reporting period, one MBB, returning from Europe where he converted to Christianity, told his friends about Christ and was imprisoned two years ago. In spring 2015 he was sentenced to 15 years in prison because of proselytizing Moroccans. Another MBB in the north of the country has been stripped of his passport for three years. He will only get his passport back if he accepts collaborating with the police. Also, a local businessman and known MBB, was falsely accused and stripped off huge sums of money without receiving a fair trial and had to leave the country temporarily.

## Sub-Saharan Africa

- In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (53.2 points; WWL 2015: no score)**, the persecution engine is *Islamic extremism*. World Watch Monitor (WWM) published an article on 12 October 2015 on the [difficult situation of Christians in DRC](#). Rebels of ADF-NALU, now calling themselves Muslim Defense International (MDI), seem to be following a policy of *ethnic cleansing*, if not *genocide* in eastern DRC. Since the publication of this article, violence has continued. People have been killed and others abducted (including a mother and her two small children); trucks, shops and houses have been destroyed and fields abandoned; hundreds of people have fled. On 2 August 2015, Independent Catholic News reported on 1500 children, some as young as nine years old, who have been taken to [remote jihadist camps](#) “where they are being brutalized and indoctrinated by Islamist militia.” The scene resembles northeastern Nigeria under Boko Haram, although on a smaller scale. Eastern DRC has a long history of violence. Many different groups have terrorized the population over a long period of time. In the midst of all the suffering, the Church has always found ways to gather its people, comfort them and give them hope for the future. Now the Church itself is being attacked, by very radical Muslims, who do not value non-Muslim lives at all, and who want to establish their caliphate in the area. The pattern is typical for *ethnic cleansing*: non-Muslims (nearly all of them Christians) are forced by intimidation through different forms of crude violence to flee, leaving their homes and fields behind. Neither the Congolese government nor the international community seem to be taking any notice of this.
- **Chad** increases ten points scoring **51 points (WWL 2015: 41 points)**. The persecution engine is *Islamic extremism*. The score of the country is an expression of the rising religious tensions that up until recently have been latent. Though the country has a large Christian population (around 40 per cent of the total population), the default in society is towards Islam. Islamist movements are also present in Chadian society. They want to see all citizens under the banner of Islam and to make the country an Islamic republic. All other religions especially the Christian faith are seen by them as an obstacle to be removed by all possible means. Islamic teaching is ingrained in the hearts and minds of the Muslim population. Anyone who renounces their faith to embrace the Christian faith (Muslim Background



Believers) will be punished severely. Moreover, attacks by Boko Haram outside Nigeria, including in Chad, are increasingly frequent. Chad is facing unprecedented religious violence, which the security forces can hardly cope with. Primary targets of Boko Haram have always been Christians and those Muslims, whom they consider too moderate.

- **Cameroon scores 45 points (WWL 2015: 44 points).** *Islamic extremism* is the persecution engine in this country. Despite the fact that the country is roughly 70% Christian and the government should be seen as pro-Christian, Cameroon's historically moderate form of Islam (about 20% of the population are adherents, or 5 million people) has eroded with the development of jihadist groups across the Sahel and the Sahara, and in particular through the activities of Boko Haram within its borders. Boko Haram over the past several years has used the country as a base of operations and refuge in order to regroup, while also conducting several kidnapping operations and terrorist attacks in Cameroon's north. Many Cameroonian Christians live in the north and are directly threatened by this, as evidenced by the numerous Christians that have been the victims of terror incidents over the past several years in northern Cameroon (a total of 114 Christians were reported to have been killed during the WWL 2016 reporting period). Boko Haram has staged innumerable attacks during the reporting period along the border region and in Cameroon as well. Over 80 Christians have been attacked and killed by Boko Haram in a [July 2015 attack](#). Hundreds more were killed in other attacks during the year.
- With a score of **45 points (WWL 2015: 41 points)**, **Uganda** did not make it to the Top 50 of the World Watch List 2016, yet showed an increase in points by four because persecution of Christians has kept increasing in the country. *Islamic extremism* is the persecution engine in the country. This engine can be divided into two: (i) *the rise in radical Islamic activities in the country* and (ii) *the harmful activities of the Allied Democratic Forces*. Concerning the former and according to an Open Doors researcher, the *Tabliqs* (a sect of puritanical Muslims whose members portray themselves as Muslim evangelists) "have continued to advance the cause of Islam in areas like Mbale, Kasese, Arua/Yumbe. The Muslims have also positioned themselves strategically in all levels of politics and governance. In addition, they have invested financially heavily in businesses, and the Bureaus for Foreign Exchange are operated by Muslims. *Islamic extremism* in the country is partly explained by pressure put especially on Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) by family, extended family and community, especially in Muslim dominated areas. Many have been disowned and expelled from home for giving testimonies. A case is reported in Kasese of a young girl who was ostracized for attending Christian fellowships and sharing what she learnt with other family members. There were also violent incidents that targeted churches. For example, a total of 3 churches were destroyed. A church was attacked after false allegations that it was leading astray the Muslim youth. St James Church of Uganda has been vandalized many times. Glory House church in Mbale area was forced to close by the Muslim community supported by the Muslim mayor. From its base in East Democratic Republic of Congo (East DRC), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an armed force established by *Tabliqs*, has been creating fear among Christians. The group has recruited many youth from Uganda. The most difficult aspect of this is that the presence of the group is creating an environment of intolerance. Ugandan Muslims were not intolerant in the past. But, those who sympathize with ADF are preaching the idea of having an Islamic state in Uganda and in a part of DRC, and this is taking away the culture of tolerance.

- Although **Senegal (42 points; WWL 2015: 37 points)** is known for its culture of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different religions. However, *Islamic extremism* as a persecution engine is present in the country. Although it is outside the reporting period, the BBC reported on 18 November 2015 that Senegal is making plans to [ban women from wearing the full-face Islamic veil](#) in public in response to the increasing threat of jihadism in that country. On 7 November 2015, seven people including four imams had been arrested by the Senegalese authorities for their [suspected ties with radical Islamic groups](#). The fact that the government of Senegal is trying to combat jihadism with a ban on full-face veils is an interesting initiative that might help prevent suicide bombers using veils as cover when attacking churches and other targets (as happened recently in [Cameroon](#) and [Chad](#)), but such measures do not deal with the roots of jihadism in the country. There continue to be reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Many of these abuses target evangelical churches, which are rapidly increasing in membership. For the most part, persecution occurs in the form of mobs targeting evangelicals who are seen as encroaching on the identity of this almost entirely Islamic nation. A small number of violent incidents was recorded during this reporting period, but more violence has happened in the past. For example on 26 June 2011, rioting youth attacked a Dakar evangelical church, while this church was holding a worship service and injured 40 people. On the following day, violent Muslim youth attacked six other evangelical churches and completely burned down one of them.
- **Côte d'Ivoire scores 41 points (WWL 2015: no score)** mainly because of an [extremely violent incident](#) that occurred in the north of the country, in the village of Kissankaha. This incident can be considered as a part of the persecution engine *Islamic extremism* which is blended with *Tribal antagonism*. In April 2015, angry mobs wearing masks coming from five neighboring villages went to Kissankaha and burned a church, the pastor's house, and the houses and properties of Christians in this village. The mobs were African Traditionalists who oppose the presence of Christianity in the country. At the time of the attack there were between 150 and 250 Christians in this village including children, who had to flee into the woods. The traditional authorities as well as the administrative and political authorities kept silent about these acts of persecution, and even accused Christians of [provoking the violence](#). Open Doors researchers in the field also reported about a Christian who was burned alive during the reporting period after publicly expressing his faith.
- **Gambia (41 points; WWL 2015: no score)**, a Muslim majority country, is popularly known as a religiously tolerant country. Not only is the constitution secular, the present government has so far defended its position on religious tolerance with unwavering commitment. Yet, *Islamic extremism* as a persecution engine is present in the country. Non-violent measures are taken to Islamize the country, particularly the educational system/institutions, public institutions, media and marriage/family. Muslims who convert to Christianity (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) face considerable problems in the communities. Every citizen is considered a member of the *umma* from birth and thus expected to practice the religion of his people. Christian families are rarely free to conduct their family life in a Christian way. The implications of the communal lifestyle for MBBs and other Christians, particularly those in remote areas, is such that their freedom of interaction with expressions of their Christian convictions is often over-shadowed by the fear of persecution from

various quarters within their local communities. Islamist-inspired mobs are also present in the country. During the reporting period, there were some isolated instances where Christians were unable to gather for their usual Sunday service due to threats from some individuals who targeted them requesting they quit worshiping on the threat of being stoned according to Islamic (folk) laws. The person who made this threat had previously been accused of killing seven Christians. Muslim mobs attacked Christian students because of their clothing, complaining that they were wearing clothes deemed offensive to Islam. Christian women were also attacked. During the reporting period, the unfinished building where a new church met was burnt down in Kerr Sereign following threats trying to force the congregation to move out of the area.

## Central Asia

- In the **Russian Federation (48 points; WWL 2015: 45 points)**, the prevalent persecution engines are *Islamic extremism* and to a lesser extent *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Denominational protectionism*. Under president Putin, a former KGB officer, more and more restrictions are being introduced in the legislation. The authoritarian government continues to restrict freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and other human rights. Forum 18 News Service reported that communities which exercise freedom of religion or belief in public without Russian state permission may find their members facing five-figure Rouble fines if they do not inform the local authorities in advance. It is possible that changes to the Religion Law may have a positive effect on cases currently before the courts, such as that of a Sochi protestant leader fined for holding prayers and a Bible study in a rented café. The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) was behind that case, sending officials to attend the meeting. However, a new Criminal Code Article 212.1 may have a chilling effect on exercising freedom of religion or belief in public. The Sochi Bible study group has ceased to meet fearing prosecution under this article, their lawyer told [Forum 18](#). However, Aleksandr Verkhovsky of the SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis thinks the authorities may seek to avoid prosecuting religious or belief communities under this article. In the various republics on the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountain range (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia), radical Muslims are fighting the Russian army to establish a Muslim caliphate. Many ethnic Russians have left the area due to the violence. Churches have seen the number of their members drop. Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) have to keep their faith secret for fear of being executed.
- The persecution engines affecting Christians in **Kyrgyzstan (47 points; WWL 2015: 44 points)** are *Dictatorial paranoia* and to a lesser extent *Islamic extremism*. A new Religion Law is under discussion. The latest draft version would mean a deterioration of freedom of religion. One of the biggest problems would be that the hurdle to get official registration is increased from 200 to 500 members. This would allow a few Russian Orthodox churches to continue, while all others will lose their registration. No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed. Since 2009, when a new Religion Law was introduced, many restrictions have been imposed on religious activities. Pressure from Islamic groups is particularly aimed at Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs). Kyrgyzstan is refusing despite medical evidence to investigate named police who tortured seven Jehovah's Witnesses during a raid on a

meeting for worship, Forum 18 News Service has learned. The victims have complained to the General Prosecutor's Office. Under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Kyrgyzstan is obliged to arrest anyone suspected on good grounds of having committed torture and try them under criminal law. A 2012 UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) visit found that "torture and ill-treatment is prevalent", due to among other factors "the impunity and general lack of accountability of officials". Reported by [Forum 18](#).

- In **Belarus (45 points; WWL 2015: no score)**, the persecution engines affecting Christians are *Dictatorial paranoia* and to a lesser extent *Denominational protectionism*. Belarus used to be called the last dictatorship of Europe, but it is now suffering from competition from Russia and Turkey. Belarus intends to follow an independent course and has given Russia a clear sign to stop its interference. Europe is rewarding Belarus with renewed trade agreements. The largest denomination in Belarus is the Belarusian Orthodox Church, which is a clear favorite of the regime. All other Christians are clearly treated with much less respect. From time to time there are raids, interrogations, detentions and fines. All types of Christianity exist in Belarus and are experiencing various levels of persecution. On 31 May 2015 police in Belarus raided the Reformed Orthodox Transfiguration Church's meeting for Sunday worship, held in rented premises in Gomel. On 11 June 2015 officials banned the Church from renting premises, therefore banning it from meeting, church members told [Forum 18 News Service](#). Police asked them: "Why do you attend this church and not a normal one?" Officials warned congregation leader Pastor Sergei Nikolaenko - who is already facing trial on Administrative Code charges - that he would be investigated on possible Criminal Code charges. "You can watch a football match or discuss [the poet Aleksandr] Pushkin without permission, but for a religious meeting you need permission", Dmitry Chumakov, the official in charge of religious affairs at Gomel Regional Executive Committee told Forum 18. Two weeks earlier there was a similar armed police raid on the Soligorsk congregation of Council of Churches Baptists. "11 more armed police arrived and broke up the service, as if they were coming after bandits", Forum 18 was told. Two congregation members were fined in early June for meeting for worship without state permission.

## South and East Asia

- In **Nepal (53.3 points; WWL 2015: 45 points)** the persecution engine is *Religious nationalism*. Nepal made international headlines when it was struck by two major earthquakes in April and May 2015, leaving an estimated 9,200 people killed and causing a damage of around ten billion USD, which is roughly fifty percent of the country's annual GDP. What has been less reported, though, is the fact that the government promised to fund the reconstruction of temples destroyed, but not of church buildings which were destroyed as well. Although the country's new constitution, adopted in September 2015, declares that Nepal, which was the world's only Hindu kingdom until 2007, is now a secular state, the definition of secularism (as translated into English) reads: "Secularism means freedom of *Santan* culture and Religion including their protection". (*Santan* literally means, "from ancient times" and is generally understood as "Hindu religion" in Nepal. In addition, the new constitution bans changing religion and all kinds of proselytism.) The tense situation is also reflected by the fact that in the reporting period attacks against churches – which had ceased for several years

– occurred with the attempted bombing of four church buildings on September 14, 2015 in the Jhapa district. Two bombs exploded, causing great damage, but without demanding casualties, one failed and one was defused.

- Over the last years, **Sri Lanka (52.5 points; WWL 2015: 51 points)** has been affected by two persecution engines, *Religious nationalism and Dictatorial paranoia*. The latter ceased when national elections were held in January 2015 and won by opposition candidate Sirisena, who defeated the president responsible for bringing the 26 year civil war to a bloody end in 2009. The main question is now how radical Buddhist groups like *Bodu Bala Sena (BBS)* and *Sinhala Ravaya* will react. Their actions against religious minorities went unchecked and claims were made that the former government was supporting them. They have remained suspiciously silent after the election but attacks against religious minorities have continued unabatedly - 63 attacks against churches alone were reported. Despite the increase in score, the country did not make it to the World Watch List 2016 as countries with deteriorating situations for Christians overtook it in scores and ranks. It will remain under observation.

## Latin America

- **Cuba (42 points; WWL 2015: 40 points)** is one of the few remaining communist regimes in the world. Some years ago, the country's aging leader, Fidel Castro, was replaced by his brother Raúl in the government, but the regime stayed essentially the same and desired changes did not take place. Cuba continues to isolate itself from the rest of the world and function under totalitarian control. The persecution engine is *Communist and post-communist oppression*. In recent years, a set of internal and external factors – whose scope and impact are not yet visible – bear the potential of bringing about a certain degree of political change. The persecution of Christians, more severe decades ago, is slowly changing. While Christian persecution in the past included beatings, imprisonment and sometimes murder, now it is generally more subtle. It continues in the form of harassment, strict surveillance and discrimination, including occasional imprisonment of leaders. All believers are monitored and all church services are infiltrated by spies. Christians are threatened and suffer discrimination in school and at work. The totalitarian regime allows no competitors of any kind. Pastors and Christians are sometimes pressured to stop evangelizing and to limit their activities to their own church premises. Permission to print Christian literature locally is hard to obtain. Bibles, Bible study materials and Sunday school materials are in extremely short supply. Everything is restricted. Existing seminaries and church buildings may be used, but new churches and seminaries cannot be built. Legal procedures are possible, but are excessively slow. Foreigners who enter the country can bring Bibles with them, but only a maximum of three Bibles. Mail can be sent but there is a maximum of two kilograms that can be sent, and all mail is checked and censored. The Gospel may be preached, and even foreigners may request a 'religious visa', but it is not possible to mention the human rights situation and politics. It is possible for Cubans to leave the country, but administrative processes are intentionally slow.

WWU: DP/FV 2015-12-16  
(WWL 2016 Full Package Article)

## WWL 2016 – Sidebar 1: Why is it getting worse everywhere?

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For the second time in a row, the Open Doors World Watch List 2016 revealed an increase in the persecution of Christians on every continent. While the causes for this are many and complex, here is a quick guide to five geographic reasons why this global trend is escalating.

### **Violent jihadists have extended their ruthless caliphates in the Middle East**

We've all heard of Islamic State. Now they control a region as large as Britain in Syria and Iraq. In the summer of 2014 they dominated the headlines with a virtually unopposed march into the Nineveh plain, displacing 100,000 Christians in a single month. A total of 1300 of them took the ancient city of Mosul, whose contingent of 60,000 troops and police fled in three days, led by their commander.

What would you take if you had two hours to leave your house, a house you may have lived in all your life, and your ancestors too?

Islamic State are medieval in their barbarism, and sophisticated in their ability to appeal to disaffected teenagers the world over. Christians are exiting these areas in their hundreds of thousands. "We are just not wanted here," say most of them, "and we must give our children some chance of a future." The exodus of Christians from their ancient heartlands is accelerating. Iraq is at it's the highest ever point in the WWL, at #2, and Syria at #5.

One must not forget however that Islamic extremists ruling territory with an intolerant fist is not new, and countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia are highly ranked also, at #9 and #14 respectively. It is only that their rule is so absolute they succeed without appalling levels of violence.

### **Islamic extremism has another hub – sub Saharan Africa**

The headlines always get monopolized by the Middle East, but more Christians are killed for their faith in Northern Nigeria every year than in any other country. In the World Watch List 2016, the conservative figure of Christian deaths is 4028, out of a worldwide total of 7100. This is partly due to an even more vicious Islamic extremism movement – Boko Haram. In fact the top six countries where most Christians were killed for their faith in the WWL 2016 reporting period were all sub-Saharan African countries: Nigeria, CAR, Chad, DRC, Kenya and Cameroon. African countries are here to stay in the WWL. Islamic extremism has another hub in the world, ironically in the part of the world where the church is growing the fastest – sub-Saharan Africa. This area has the world largest population increase, the world's most rapid urbanization, and the world's longest youth bulge. The combination is deadly, and even a Christian majority state such as Kenya (#16) is seeing a huge increase in pressure. This is the longest term trend in Christian persecution, and it must be noted that the extremism has a subtle form as well as a violent face.

### **China's leaders are more fearful of Christian growth**

The urbane Chinese President Xi Jinping is not so much anti-church as pro-control. He's right to be worried about Christian growth. In a 2015 book, "A Star in the East: The Rise of Christianity," Sociologists Rodney Stark and Xiuhua Wang show if that the Chinese Church grows at the same annual rate it has since 1980, which is 7%, in 2030 that means just less than 300 million people will be Christians in China; and nearly 600 million in 2040.

This fear and control is a reversal of increasing freedom in recent years. If you want to have a church, don't rock the boat. Don't protest about the exploitation of workers. Don't criticize the state for its poor record on human rights. Don't teach people from the Bible that they must obey God first, and then men. Don't organize nationally. And don't have foreign links.

In other words, churches had better lock up their prophets in Xi's new China. The Chinese government is issuing an ultimatum: Play it safe, and we won't clamp down. Be radical, and we'll crash your walls down. The country is at #33 in the WWL 2016.

### **Hindu extremists are back in power in India**

In May 2014 the world's largest democracy elected the most radical Hindu nationalist India has ever seen, Narendra Modi. Though he is careful to let his underlings say it, he really does not believe Christians have a place on the northern Gangetic plain. Mr Modi says, "I'm a born Hindu and Hindu nationalist," so Christians and Muslims by definition are anti-national. The mobs are released. and if a church is burned down, or a pastor beaten up – which is now happening on average three times a week – the police now never arrive, the courts now never act. Why should they? The government has given an amnesty for attackers of Christians. India has entered the top twenty of the WWL 2016 for the first time in its history, at #19.

### **Narco-traffickers are extending their reach in Latin America**

Even in the most Christianized continent persecution is on the rise. These are countries where governments barely control the territory, and sometimes not at all. Once powerful guerrilla movements such as the FARC in Colombia have morphed into drug trafficking, and mafia style crime syndicates bestride the continent with guns to kill anyone who stands in their way or money to lure anyone out of the way. Often the only group that will stand up against these violent racketeers are the pastors. Being in charge of wealthy churches makes you a target for extortion. In one city in Mexico they came to the pastor and said, "We've counted 550 people in your church. That means you owe us \$10,000 dollars each month...pay up and live." And those who dare to preach good ethics, stand against corruption, and – worst of all – actually encourage people to leave the drug gangs – can expect a violent visit, and often a violent end. Mexico has reached its highest point in the WWL mainly due to its levels of anti-Christian violence, to #40 and Colombia is at #46. And trends like these never stay in one area in a globalized world. West African countries are now the targets of the Latin American narco-traffickers and are actively making Guinea-Bissau their hub in the region. Expect more persecution even there.

It's getting worse for your brothers and sisters everywhere. Get tuned in. Get involved. Learn how you can make a difference.

These trends may be global but they are not irreversible.

Dr. Ronald Boyd-MacMillan

WWL 2016 Full package sidebar 2: WWL 2016 Overview / 2015-12-15 / RBM

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## WWL 2016 – Sidebar 2: Overheard in 2015

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Persecution is not all about statistics and trends. It is human. A human cry wrung from the heart. Here are some quotations overheard in the course of a year travelling around among persecuted Christians. They give a flavor of the whole world of serving the persecuted – from those who are served, and from those who serve.

**“This pastor has 20 children; three of his own, and the rest from other pastors who have disappeared.”**

The statement of a pastor from Laos, showing the picture of a fellow pastor. Laos may be overlooked as a country, but it has a vibrant if small church. But persecution is intense, and pastors disappear regularly. Pastor Mai, from the Hmong church, was told by his neighbors that they did not want a Christian in their village. But he continued to hold meetings in his home. Once when he was in the jungle, he returned to find his house burned. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, he disappeared, and his body was found in the forest three days later. He left a wife and four children. Other pastor’s look after the children of the “disappeared,” but it is a difficult undertaking in a dirt poor country that few care about.

**“We in the persecuted church do not want something from you; we want you.”**

A Middle East Christian speaking to a group of concerned Christians in the USA. An Arab Christian, his intention was to dispel an attitude some Western Christians have that they must “rescue and fix” their suffering brothers and sisters. But he stressed that persecuted Christians first and foremost covet the encouraging presence of their Western counterparts. This is a focus of our work in Open Doors. We commit ourselves primarily to go and be with the persecuted, and out of that relationship of presence we serve. As the same Arab Christian said, “Then you will find we all belong to the persecuted church...take action because you belong.”

**“The church of China is going to end up in the crosshairs of Xi’s new ‘normal’”**

This was the projection of one of the world’s most respected China watchers in March. President Xi Jinping may not necessarily be anti-Christian, but he is very definitely pro-control, and churches can expect to have their freedoms rolled back because of four new emphases of Xi’s new normal society. First, there is a new emphasis on social stability, and so if a church becomes a national network with too much power in the eyes of the Communist party, it becomes a rival. Second, there is a new emphasis on “rule by law,” but so much Christian activity occurs in a grey area that is not protected by law. These so called grey areas will shrink. Three, there is a new anti-NGO emphasis, where Non-Governmental Organizations are seen as rivals or threats to the Chinese Communist Party, and this greatly affects the charitable and social work of Christians. Finally, there is a new anti-Westernism, and Christianity – unlike Buddhism and Confucianism – is seen as a foreign religion. President Xi’s new normal will not be comfortable for China’s vast Christian community.

**“This morning my village was attacked for the third time within a year.”**

This was the despairing cry of a church leader from Syria. They confessed that their choice was stark; “either we take up arms and fight, knowing we may die, or we flee, knowing we may never return.” It is heart-breaking that so many hundreds of thousands of Christians have had to flee, impaled on the horns of this dreadful dilemma. “Our only prayer right now is that those who have the power to create peace in our country, will find the will to do so,” said this Christian sadly, and began to pack up their belongings. But the resilience of Syria’s Christians is also astonishing. It takes a lot to make them leave, and even then most refuse to go too far from their home, preferring to stay in rather grim refugee camps than abandoning the region altogether. A Syrian church leader told an international conference of concerned believers, “Don’t make it easy for us to leave, because we want to show we are part of the silent majority in the Middle East who wants peace.”

**“We cannot ring the bells of our churches in Iran, think of us when you hear church bells.”**

The anguished cry of a leader of the Anglican Church in Iran. The government will not allow services to take place to the ringing of the church bells, which have been mute for years. This reflects a trend to silence the established churches in outreach in Farsi. The Iranian government tolerates only non-Persian speaking Christian churches, for example the Armenian Orthodox, but only on the strict understanding that they must not welcome Muslims. And once a nuclear agreement was reached with the USA, arrests of house church Christians began to rise suspiciously. When you hear church bells, spare a prayer for the Christians of Iran.

**“It is a sad reflection that those who persecute Christians seem to understand better than Christians that we are one.”**

The statement of a Roman Catholic Cardinal to a November conference in Albania where leaders of the persecuted churches gathered with leaders of the world’s great Christian traditions. Many persecutors, he said, do not seem to make the same distinctions between denominations that Christians do. Whether Pentecostal, Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, non-denominational, they are all targets of the persecutor. “The issue of persecution exceeds confessional barriers,” said the Cardinal, “it is time to repent of our divisions, and unite.” Unity between Christians can be the greatest and most powerful response to persecution. Wrote Pope Francis in greeting to the conference, “May the martyrs of today, belonging to many Christian traditions, help us to understand that all the baptized are members of the same Body of Christ, his Church (cf.1 Cor 12:12-30).”

**“What’s so wrong with the darkness? We have to stay in the darkness with others so that we all see the light together!”**

A Jordanian Christian’s reply, when asked, “Where is the light in the Middle East today?” Only persecuted Christians as a rule learn to see darkness as a gift, in which insights may be glimpsed and unexpected resolutions found. For him, it was important that through this dark time Christians and Muslims and other faith communities experience the same trials, and as they do they will come together with a new unity and understanding. This new togetherness in adversity may well be the cornerstone of a new and better Middle East.

## WWL 2016 – Sidebar 3: Christian refugees – a growing problem!

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As stated in the Trends report, probably never have so many Christians been on the move as a result of war and persecution. Here is a short round up of some of the main hotspots for refugees.

### Syria

Syria is the “[largest displacement crisis globally](#)” according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). More than half the pre-war Syrian population of 22 million have left their homes; 7.6 million are internally displaced within the country, and [4 million are refugees](#) outside it. It is impossible to know how many of the 1.8 million Christians that were in Syria at the start of the Civil War are among this group, but estimates are that between 600,000 and 900,000 remain in the country. Looking at one example, the city of Aleppo contained one of the largest amounts of Christians – about 250,000 – in any of Syria’s cities at the beginning of the civil war, but this year this number had dwindled to less than 40,000. Most of them are simply fleeing because the civil war has made it impossible to stay.

Most of Syria’s refugees have ended up in Turkey (over 2 million), Lebanon (1.4 million) and Jordan (623,000). Often refugees are kept in camps away from the cities in the desert, and sometimes in poor conditions. This year with the German Chancellor, Angel Merkel’s promise of a welcome for Syria’s refugees, [immigration into Europe](#) surged with over a million refugees registering in Germany alone, most of them thought to be Syrian. But the vast majority of these refugees are Muslim and Christians may be underrepresented since many of them fear to go into the camps in the first place, as in the words of a Christian father from Syria, “we are still a vulnerable minority in a very dangerous place.”

### Eritrea and other African countries

According to the [United Nations Human Rights Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights](#) in Eritrea, 5,000 people leave this country every month. Eritrea is the biggest source of asylum seekers in Europe relative to its population, at 2.13% (Syria by contrast is 1.25%). Again, the percentage of Christians in this number is hard to estimate, but to visit camps in, for example, Calais, it is clear that the Christian proportion is high. Moreover, more than two hundred thousand Eritreans have taken refuge in Ethiopia and Sudan: 131,660 in Ethiopia and 117,320 in Sudan, according to the UNHCR. Ethiopians also leave their country in significant numbers, as do those from Sudan. It is a hazardous journey they make as they cross desert and war torn regions. North African countries are no safe haven for Christians, as we saw with the terrible massacres of Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians in Libya this year.

### Asia

Originally this was the area with the world’s most high-profile refugees with the so called Boat people fleeing Vietnam in the late seventies and eighties. But there are two quiet tragedies today in this region concerning Christians. First of all, although the UN figure is 4,000 the real number is thought to be about 10,000 Pakistani Christians who have fled to Thailand, most of them in our reporting period. They are

badly treated and are refused refugee status by the government, so they are not allowed to work and are subject to police intimidation and forced to rely on handouts and sporadic work. Unfortunately even Thai churches are wearying of the burden of supporting them. And in Myanmar the military government continues its war against Christian minority groups such as the Kachin and the Chin. There are thought to be 100,000 Christian refugees sitting uneasily in China across the border, and even more are internally displaced. These camps are cruel places, with young girls particularly exploited and married off. Abuse is rampant and drugs remain a major problem too.

### **Internal displacement**

Christians become refugees in such large numbers often because they are the victims of [ethnic cleansing](#), which is defined “the expulsion of an ‘undesirable’ population from a given territory due to religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or a combination of these.” But it is important to remember that this discrimination is made up of more than killings. In the Middle Belt of Nigeria for example, Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen target Christian farms, burning their fields and shops and houses, forcing them off the land. In [Taraba State](#), there are at least 30,000 IDPs. Researchers from the Nigeria Conflict Security Analysis Network (NCSAN) say that “while the conflict lasted, there were no designated camps by the Taraba State government for the displaced Christians.” One of the reasons mentioned by victims was that “the [state] government’s refusal to provide camps was a tactic to conceal from the attention of the world the huge population that had been displaced in the state”, reported NCSAN. In addition, the violence caused by Boko Haram has also led to massive displacements of people. Many of them are Christians. In total, the [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#) estimates the total number of IDPs in Nigeria at 1,538,982 (figure as of April 2015).

In Latin America war has displaced millions also. Colombia comes second only to Syria in the numbers of internally displaced – over six million. In Mexico there are just over 281,000 displaced. The displacement of a significant part of this number is due to antagonism from indigenous tribes in Mexico, resentful of the Christians converting and rejecting the sometimes brutal traditions of these tribal groups.

### **Concluding remarks**

Christians are facing treacherous situations in their bid to flee persecution and war in some parts of the world. Life is always hard in refugee camps whether within or outside the country. Said one father in a camp in Lebanon, “You flee to survive and keep your children safe, but often that is just as hard in the camps, since it can be tough to find enough to eat and also to stop undesirables preying particularly on our young daughters.”

Said another in Iraq, one of the 120,000 Christians who fled the march of Islamic State over the Nineveh plain, “Yes we have to cope with the trauma of leaving, and sometimes with the dreadful things we have seen, but the hardest thing I find is to keep hope alive that we will ever return – if you feel despair about the future then it is very hard to find the motivation to survive.”

This is why the **presence** imperative of Open Doors is so important. Our primary duty is to be physically present with persecuted Christians, praying with them and assuring them that the world wide Body of Christ has not forgotten them. Then we also bring help, whether it be resources for food and blankets,

assistance in staying secure, and committing to advocate for them in the right circles for an end to their uncertainty and exile. In this way, said another Iraqi refugee mother, “you help to keep our hope alive.”

Dr. Ronald Boyd-MacMillan / WWU-FV2 2015-12-24

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - WWL background information

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## FAQ: Does *ethnic cleansing* apply to the WWL Top 50?

The concept of *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation might well apply to (part of) what is happening in a number of the WWL Top 50 countries. Sub-Saharan Africa is an example.

In a growing number of Sub-Saharan African countries *ethnic cleansing*, one of the most recent concepts under international criminal law, would seem to apply for the dynamics created by (political) Islam opposing the presence of Christians in what Muslims consider their territory within countries. *Ethnic cleansing* is when a competitor or those who differ in race, ethnicity or **religion** are forced to leave a given area by different unlawful means. These can be murder, destruction of property, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, confinement of civilian population in ghetto areas, forcible removal, displacement and deportation of civilian population, extra-judicial executions, rape and deliberate military or other organized attacks, or threats of attacks on civilians or even *genocide*. The situations in northeast Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan can be said to be typical examples, which in some cases are verging on *genocide*.

The WWL team is finalizing studies on *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation in [Nigeria \(Middle Belt Region\)](#), Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Sudan. It should be noted that even in contexts not defined as conflict, *ethnic cleansing can be in process*. Saudi Arabia is an example of this, notwithstanding the massive presence of Christian migrants in the country.

Further research will reveal if *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation could be considered as a universal characteristic of the WWL top 50 or if it only applies to specific countries.

### **FAQ: Does *genocide* apply to the WWL Top 50?**

The concept of *genocide* based on religious affiliation might apply to (part of) what is happening in a number of WWL Top 50 countries. WWL analyst Yonas Dembele has made a strong argument for [genocide being carried out against Christians in Syria and Iraq](#). What is happening in northeastern Nigeria under the Islamic militant activities of Boko Haram could also be characterized as *genocide*. What the government of Sudan is doing against the Nuba-Christians could be called *genocide*. It should be remembered that there is an overlap between *genocide* and *ethnic cleansing* at times.

### **FAQ: What is the educational level of the WWL team & the profession /status of those filling in the questionnaires?**

The WWL team consists of one communicator and five researchers (also referred to as persecution analysts) besides the director, all of them having university degrees. Three of the team (including the director) have or are completing PhDs. Two well-educated part-timers gather data from the internet on violent incidents against Christians and/or churches in English and Arabic language fields.

The persecution analysts collaborate closely with researchers and other experts operating at regional, national and subnational level. Some of these are Open Doors staff, others are external experts.

The external experts have different professional backgrounds: e.g. legal scholars with extensive experience in the field of human rights, constitutional law and governance; public policy researchers; international development experts; lecturers in different disciplines (some being university professors); international security experts; Christian ministry workers (missionaries with many years of experience in the country); directors of Christian NGOs in the countries concerned; national and international human rights organizations dealing with freedom of religion or belief.

### **FAQ: What are the dimensions of religious freedom?**

Freedom of religion cannot stand alone and hence it is multidimensional. The modern legal conception of the multidimensionality of religious freedom can be derived directly from Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was later incorporated under Article 18 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) be it slightly modified:

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”*

It is important to bear in mind that the presentation of freedom of religion in Article 18 is much broader than how it is commonly understood. To remind the world about the rich tenor of the article, the UN Human Rights Committee published a [general comment on Article 18](#), adopted by the Committee on 20 July 1993. The Swedish Mission Council (2010) produced a booklet entitled “*What freedom of religion involves and when it can be limited*”, which enumerates seven specific dimensions of religious freedom:

1. Freedom to have, choose, change or leave a religion or belief;
2. Freedom to manifest a religion or belief;
3. Freedom from coercion;
4. Freedom from discrimination;
5. Right of parents to give their children religious and moral education in accordance with their own beliefs;
6. Right to conscientious objection;
7. Freedom to practice one’s religious belief in the workplace.

The second point in this list includes a set of dimensions, which are in fact different types of religious behavior. This set of dimensions can encompass other fundamental human rights principles protected under international law. As there are:

- To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain premises for these purposes.
- To establish religious, humanitarian and charitable institutions.
- To make, acquire and use articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief, including to follow a particular diet.
- To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications.
- To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for the purposes and to establish theological seminaries or schools.
- To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions.
- To train, appoint or elect leaders, priests and teachers.
- To celebrate religious festivals and observe days of rest.
- To communicate with individuals and communities on faith issues at national and international level.
- To display religious symbols including the wearing of religious clothing.

All points in this list refer to different forms of hostilities to which Christians can become vulnerable, whether directly in the form of violence (*smash*), or indirectly through restrictions of specific rights and freedoms (*squeeze*). Hostilities can be experienced in different *spheres of life: private sphere (forum internum)*, and *family, community, national and church spheres (forum externum)*.

## FAQ: How does persecution originate and develop?

The evolution of persecution was well described by the *Religious Economies Model* of Finke and Grim. In this model one can see that social groups and government are continuously reinforcing each other against religious minorities.<sup>2</sup> It normally starts with a specific social group in a country representing a specific religion or ideology trying to manipulate the government. From this beginning persecution begins to take root and develop.

The WWL team adapted the *Religious Economies Model*. Schematically, these would be the six stages of gradual development of most of the persecution engines:

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<sup>2</sup> The Price of Freedom Denied, 2010, page 68ff



1. A small, highly ‘charged’ social group representing a specific religion or ideology starts to spread their ideas at the expense of (an)other group(s). Often a social or political vacuum presents an excellent breeding ground for such ideas.
2. Fanatical movements grow out of this ‘starter group’ or assemble around them, and exert pressure on society and government through media strategies and/or physical mob attacks on elements of the other group(s). (These are not usually violent terrorist attacks without involvement of the general public, since these might otherwise alienate the general public from the ‘sacred cause’.)
3. The violence disturbs society but governments and the security apparatus (police, military) leave the fanatical movements unpunished while blaming the other group(s) for being the cause of the social unrest by their mere existence. By doing this the government creates a climate of impunity for human rights abuses by those movements and their allies from the general public.
4. This reinforces the actions of the fanatical movements, and draws in more and more regular citizens. This leads to more pressure on the government to collaborate with their agenda, and also to more pressure and/or violence against the other group(s). Sometimes citizens will join out of fear instead of conviction.
5. In the end society and government (including the security apparatus and the judicial system) squeeze the members of the other group(s), to the point of (nearly) suffocating them. This extends to all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church spheres) and all spheres of society (family, church, school, marketplace, media, arts & entertainment, health system and government).
6. Culture as a whole is taken over by the agenda of the highly ‘charged’ social group representing a specific religion or ideology (point 1), and the worldview that is intrinsically linked to this agenda becomes a main cultural source.

In the second point it said violent attacks, often instigated by fanatical movements, are done through mob mobilization. That is the case when persecution gradually develops in society, co-opting the government. In cases in which the aim is to overthrow governments – as Islamic State is doing – violent attacks are more in the context of a religious (or ideological) revolutionary movement. (Consequently steps 2 to 6 will then be different.)

The length of time that persecution engines take to develop from stages 1 to 6 can differ greatly depending on the specific context in the country, and on the type of persecution engine. It can also be a continuous or a discontinuous process. And it can be a clearly visible or more invisible process.

## **FAQ: Why does the WWL only focus on Christians?**

The fact that the WWL focuses only on Christians is explained by the mandate of Open Doors which is to support suffering Christians worldwide. The WWL is essentially a tool for both Open Door’s leadership and constituency to obtain insight into the nature, scope and spatial location of the persecution of Christians. Open Doors is also uniquely equipped to specifically research the persecution of Christians: the advanced networks in the countries where Open Doors works allow research to go down to the “village level.” Moreover, because we are Christians ourselves, we are best able to understand what it means to be subjected to hostilities, sometimes simply through subtle but continuous systems of pressure.

The focus on Christians does not make us blind to the position of other religious minorities. The death of a non-Christian is certainly not less deplorable than that of a Christian. We are aware that in many cases

not only Christians suffer but also other minority groups. When relevant, we do mention this in our country profiles.

## FAQ: Does the WWL look at Christians of all denominations?

Yes, the WWL looks at all Christian denominations. The WWL methodology uses the following definition of **Christian**:

*A Christian is “anyone who self-identifies as a Christian and/or someone belonging to a Christian community as defined by the church’s historic creeds”.*

Based on this definition the WWL methodology distinguishes four types of Christianity:

### 1. *Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians*

This category applies to a situation in which foreign Christian residents (expatriates or migrant workers) are allowed to rent or own church buildings to a certain degree or at least to conduct church services, but they are not allowed to have contact with nationals regarding Christianity. Moreover, nationals are not allowed to assist in their services. So, the expatriate or migrant church community is often a very isolated body in the country.

Saudi Arabia is a typical example. In countries like Saudi Arabia, expatriates or migrant workers can often be divided in two major subcategories: highly educated and skilled laborers working in oil and related industries and poorly educated non-skilled workers, such as house workers. In such contexts, expatriate or migrant Christian communities, though tolerated, face serious restrictions.

### 2. *Historical Christian communities and/or government controlled churches*

This category applies to the typical historical churches, such as Catholic, Orthodox and traditional Protestant churches, which have often been part of a country’s history for hundreds of years. In many cases, they have been holding an official church registration for years. Their situation and degree of freedom differ from country to country. In some countries their presence is nearly eradicated, in others they have a great degree of freedom to operate. In many other countries they have been functioning in a state of second-class citizenship (*dhimmitude*) for years. In persecution contexts they are often less persecuted than the third and fourth types of Christianity.

A parallel phenomenon in this category is formed by the so-called government controlled churches, such as the Three Self Church in China. They have an official registration but because they are government controlled, their status is different to that of the historical churches mentioned above.

### 3. *Communities of converts to Christianity from a ‘persecutor background’*

This category considers people who once belonged to a dominating religion or ideology, traditional religion, organized crime or other strong identifier and who changed identity in order to become Christian. Christian Background Believers can be part of this category, meaning that someone changed from one type of Christianity – often the majority type – to another.

Converts may be absorbed by one of the other types of churches but often gather in ‘house’ or ‘underground’ churches. When the latter is the case, converts are afraid to be openly recognized as Christians.

*4. Non-traditional protestant Christian communities (such as evangelical and pentecostal congregations) and/or other Christian communities not included in the above three groups*

This category deals with the great variety of new protestant expressions and includes the independent churches in many countries. Some of them may be disputed by other Christians in terms of having a serious lack of theological orthodoxy but as long as they self-identify as Christians (see definition of Christian) they are included in this category.

This category also includes other people who self-identify as Christians but are not included in the other three types of Christianity. Notable examples are the Jehovah Witnesses. While they initially did not refer to themselves as Christians, they now do and therefore are included in this category.

In general, the Christian communities included in this category are often active in reaching out to their communities. This makes them prone to serious hostilities in countries where the context for Christianity is suppressive. Because of this, these Christians are also sometimes forced to gather in ‘house’ or ‘underground’ churches.

## **FAQ: How does WWL’s concept of persecution compare to others?**

In its classical understanding persecution is often carried out by the state or sponsored by the state. In reality that is usually not the case. Nowadays, the role of non-state actors has become massive in many ways – e.g. very radical groups like Islamic State, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab. But also a variety of other social actors could be mentioned: actors from civil society, such as ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, church leaders, fanatical movements, ordinary citizens forming mobs, the extended family, political parties, revolutionaries, paramilitary groups, organised crime cartels or networks, or multilateral organizations.

There is no universally accepted definition of persecution. Courts, lawmakers and scholars have approached the concept from different angles. The preamble, the articles or the *Travaux Préparatoires* of the 1951 Refugee Convention do not define persecution. However, some have tried to put the bar high for a situation to be called persecution. The [United States Court of Appeals, Third Circuit \(1961\)](#) noted that the mere “repugnance of ... a governmental policy to our own concepts of religious freedom cannot ... justify our labelling such actions as ‘persecution’. [Persecution] should be taken to mean confinement, torture or death inflicted on account of race, religion, or political viewpoint.” [The Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court](#) also suggested that the bar has to be very high. It states: “The perpetrator severely deprived, contrary to international law, one or more persons of fundamental rights.” The WWL methodology, however, defines persecution as “any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.”

The reason for national jurisdiction setting the bar very high is clear: If the standard was not set high, it might lead to a situation where the international community has to face the serious challenge of affording protection to very many people claiming ‘persecuted’ status. This fear of the international community has the flipside of underestimating the various dimensions of persecution, especially the

continuous pressure Christians (and other minorities) might face in their different *spheres of life*. The WWL methodology intends to track, document, analyze and report about these challenges that Christians face in their daily lives.

### FAQ: How do the duties of the State relate to persecution?

Of all entities the State has a huge responsibility to make sure that human rights (freedom of religion or belief in this case) are not violated.

Generally speaking the State has the following duties:

- ✓ To respect – not breach or interfere with the enjoyment of the right
- ✓ To protect – stop and prevent violations
- ✓ To fulfill – adopt appropriate measures towards the full realization of rights; and the obligation to facilitate, provide and promote human rights.

The State has an active duty in terms of protecting the rights of Christians from different drivers (actors) of persecution. In the case where drivers of persecution are related to the persecution engines *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Secular intolerance* it is apparent that the State itself interferes with the right (duty to **respect** and **protect**). In the case where radical groups or militias violate rights of Christians, it means the government fails to **protect**, or even collaborates with these groups. It is clear that in these cases the State also fails to **fulfill** the right to freedom of religion or belief.

### FAQ: Is Christianity the most persecuted religion on the globe?

The statement that Christianity is the most persecuted religion on the globe may be true or false depending on how you look at it. Pew Forum suggests that persecution of Christians and Muslims is nearly the same. However, if we take away intrareligious persecution, Christians are much more persecuted than Muslims, by people from other religions or ideologies.

Many say that it is natural to consider that Christianity is the most persecuted religion on the globe, because it is also the largest religion in the world. However, when you look at the numbers of Christians compared to the total population of the countries in which they are persecuted, these are often (though not always) countries with small Christian populations.

**The WWL team recommends avoiding the use of this statement.** The designation of Christianity as ‘the most persecuted religion on the globe’ is being queried by human rights organizations. It is not particularly helpful if religions are played out against each other, say representatives of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well the UN-Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. On the other hand, it is not particularly helpful either if the persecution of a religion is widely ignored, just because it happens to be the majority religion in the West, as often happens in international media and press.

### FAQ: Is WWL confusing ethnic rivalry and civil war with persecution

Conflicts such as those in Central Africa, Nigeria, Iraq and Syria are presented on the WWL – at least partly – as situations involving the persecution of Christians. The question is if WWL is thereby confusing ethnic rivalry and civil war with persecution. How much of it is really religious persecution?

Nigeria is a typical example where ‘persecution’ and ‘civil unrest’, ‘Islamization’ and ‘environmental degradation and migration’ are confused. The country has, in recent years, earned the reputation of being a country with an alarming record of religiously-related violence. Numerous incidents of such violence have resulted in the wanton loss of lives and property, and inflicted pain and suffering on individual people and communities, as well as undermined the fabric of the society. No one seems to be in doubt about the far-reaching and appalling implications of this for religious freedom. However, the phenomenon has also triggered a debate among analysts and commentators about the question of whether the Nigerian situation is actually persecution, or just civil unrest. Is there an agenda of Islamization or is it about ‘environmental degradation and migration’. A paper, produced for the WWL team by a Nigerian researcher (he prefers to remain anonymous for security reasons), argues that the Nigerian case is a classic example of what could be referred to as [persecution eclipse](#). This is a situation whereby persecution and civil conflict overlap to the extent that the former is in a real or imaginative sense overshadowed or rendered almost invisible by the latter. Other papers illustrate the point for the [Nigerian Middle Belt region](#). The researchers call the one-sided emphasis on environmental degradation and migration “single story that gradually becomes the only story”. According to the researchers, “though environmental degradation might have played a part, the conflict appears to be inspired by Islamic religious propaganda to dominate Christian territories and bring them under the *darul Islam* (house of Islam).”

Nigeria is only one example, there are other examples. In many cases analysts or commentators look at the situation of civilians in civil conflicts. They do not look at the role of religious identity on the side of the victim and religious motivation on the side of the perpetrator among the complex mix of factors and motives for hostilities against civilians. Religion very often plays an important or even decisive role, without which the situation cannot be fully or correctly understood. This applies even when religion is not the only factor.

### **FAQ: How many Christians are persecuted worldwide?**

It is important to recognize that the various counts of the number of persecuted Christians worldwide depend on the definition of persecution that is adopted. Depending on what one decides to include as persecution (whether you include all social and governmental hostilities or only grave persecution with arrests, use of violence or resulting in death), the number of persecuted Christians might be too high or too low. A first exploration by the WWL team revealed that, based on their broad definition of persecution, the 100 million figure is actually much too low. The WWL team is now working on an alternative estimation of numbers of persecuted Christians which is to be finalized in 2016.

### **FAQ: How many Christians were killed for faith-related reasons?**

There is an ongoing debate about the number of martyrs or Christians killed for faith-related reasons. While some talk about 90,000 or 100,000 Christian martyrs per year, or ‘one Christian killed every 5 minutes’, the WWL team normally comes with much lower numbers. Like in the WWL 2016 article (revised 07 January 2016) on violence against Christians, where it says, that the WWL 2016 (1 November 2014 – 31 October 2015) sees 7,106 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 2,425 churches attacked. For sure the numbers given by the WWL team are likely much lower than reality, but this is

related to the approach of the WWL team to count what is concretely reported about. More information on the [debate about the number of Christian martyrs](#) can be found in a publication of World Watch Monitor (Nov. 13, 2013).

### **FAQ: Why is the list limited to the top 50 countries?**

For practical purposes, the WWL is limited to 50 countries, but the WWL team comprehensively scores around 65 to 70 countries. If a country does not make it to the top 50, this does not mean there is no persecution in the country. Besides the WWL 2016 top 50, the WWL team publishes a list of Persecution Watch Countries. Countries on that list – in order of points scored – are Nepal, DRC, Sri Lanka, Chad, Mauritania, Russia, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, Cameroon, Uganda, Belarus, Cuba, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire and Gambia (all score between 41 and 53.3 points). This score range (41 to 53.3 points) is chosen because it is still part of the category “high” level of persecution that extends into the WWL 2016 top 50 from 53.4 to 60 points.

Finally, there are other countries in the group below 41 points where there is persecution. The WWL team keeps an eye on them too, using different tools.

### **FAQ: How can the WWL team know they cover all countries where there is serious persecution when they only cover around 65 to 70 countries with (complete) WWL questionnaires?**

It would be very laborious to investigate all countries of the world using the extensive WWL questionnaire. In order to know which countries to include in in-depth investigations, the WWL methodology has developed a three step approach for monitoring hostilities against Christians in all countries of the world. The first step of this approach is the Rapid Appraisal Tool (RAPT) combining information from different sources and internet search. When RAPT surpasses a specified threshold, it is followed by the mini-questionnaire, World Watch Surveyor Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT). If the results from one of these follow-up tools confirm the need for in-depth investigation, the WWL questionnaire will be used for that country. For more information please consult the [WWL methodology](#).

### **FAQ: Why are some countries not included (for instance Israel)?**

The WWL sometimes leads to questions. People hear that something serious happened to Christians or churches in a specific country, or that a specific part of Christianity is under (serious) restrictions in a country, and wonder why it is not on the list. Israel is a well-known example. Being a country under heavy scrutiny from different sides, the WWL team regularly receives questions about Israel not being on the WWL top 50. The answer is that Israel has been regularly scored according to the WWL methodology, for several years now, but until now never received enough points to enter the WWL top 50. During this WWL 2016 exercise Israel got 35 points. The threshold for entering the WWL 2016 is 53.4 points. The threshold for being included in the list of WWL 2016 Persecution Watch Countries is 41 points, as the score range from 41 to 53.3 points is still part of the category “high” level of persecution that extends into the WWL 2016 top 50 from 53.4 to 60 points.

## **FAQ: What is the role of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF)?**

The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF; [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu)), which is the academic partner of the WWL team, has audited the WWL methodology, and the implementation of the WWL methodology for WWL 2014, WWL 2015 and WWL 2016. The main focus of the World Watch List 2016 audit was on consistency in the processing of the WWL questionnaires by the various persecution analysts of the WWL team. The WWL questionnaire is the basic tool of the WWL methodology. The audit statement expresses IIRF's conclusions. Through the academic method of 'peer review', these audits ensure that the academic quality (objectivity and transparency) of the WWL is guaranteed, enhancing its credibility.

WWU/FV/2016-01-12

## WWL 2016 – WWL 1993 Overview of scores

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It is important to realize that there have been changes in the methodology. These have of course influenced the comparability of the scores over the different years. We have tried to neutralize this in different ways but the inaccuracies it caused were bigger than the benefits gained. So we propose you simply use the data as they are, but put a disclaimer in this sense: “Changes in the methodology over the years covering WWL 1993 to WWL 2016 have negatively influenced the comparability of the country scores. Still we think comparison of the country scores yields important information.”

WWU/FV December 2015



# WWL 2016 – Persecution engines per country

Overview of persecution engines in the WWL 2016 countries:								
Meaning of colors:								
<b>Main</b>								
<b>Secondary</b>								
Meaning of comments in cells:								
<b>No comments</b>	: This persecution engine is analyzed separately.							
<b>Blended with...</b>	: This persecution engine is not analyzed separately but considered included in the other persecution engine.							
<b>Descriptive only</b>	: This persecution engine is not analyzed separately but only briefly described in the persecution profile. In several though not all cases, a separate analysis might be needed next year.							
	Islamic extremism	Religious nationalism	Tribal antagonism	Denominational protectionism	Communist & post-communist oppression	Secular intolerance	Dictatorial paranoia	Organized corruption and crime
Afghanistan			blended with IE					descriptive only
Algeria							blended with IE	descriptive only
Azerbaijan								
Bahrain							blended with IE	
Bangladesh			blended with RN					
Bhutan			blended with RN					
Brunei							blended with IE	
CAR								descriptive only
China								
Colombia				descriptive only				
Comoros							blended with IE	
Djibouti			blended with IE					
Egypt							blended with IE	blended with IE
Eritrea								
Ethiopia						descriptive only		
India								
Indonesia		descriptive only						descriptive only
Iran							blended with IE	descriptive only
Iraq			blended with IE	descriptive only				descriptive only
Jordan			blended with IE					
Kazakhstan								
Kenya								
Kuwait							blended with IE	
Laos		blended with C&P-CO						
Libya								blended with IE
Malaysia							blended with IE	
Maldives							blended with IE	
Mali								
Mexico								
Myanmar	descriptive only						descriptive only	
Niger								
Nigeria			descriptive only					descriptive only
North Korea							blended with C&P-CO	
Oman							blended with IE	
Pakistan								descriptive only
Palestinian Territ.			blended with IE					
Qatar			blended with IE					
Saudi Arabia			blended with IE					
Somalia								descriptive only
Sudan							blended with IE	
Syria			blended with IE				descriptive only	descriptive only
Tajikistan								
Tanzania								
Tunisia								descriptive only
Turkey								
Turkmenistan								
UAE							blended with IE	
Uzbekistan								
Vietnam								
Yemen			blended with IE					descriptive only

# WWL 2016 – Persecution engines: Explanation

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## WHAT ARE THE EIGHT MAIN PERSECUTION ENGINES AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

### 1. What is a persecution engine?

A persecution engine reveals a **primary reason** why Christians are persecuted in a particular area or setting. As such, they represent the various sources of persecution that Christians experience and they usually occur in combination. This enables us to understand better the full dimensions of persecution and assists our strengthening response to it. An engine may not necessarily be anti-Christian in itself, such as *Dictatorial paranoia*, or *Organized corruption and crime*, but it explains why - in certain circumstances - the Christian community becomes the target of persecution.

### 2. Why is it important to name and know about them?

Because the strengthening work of Open Doors needs to be properly targeted. In order to strengthen a particular Christian community, we need to know more precisely why and how Christians are being persecuted, so that the assistance and even intervention we render is clearly keyed to the type of persecution being experienced.

This is a unique advantage of the persecution engines, and it prevents us from doing more harm than good. For example, if you assume that a community is getting persecuted by Islamists when in fact the main attack is from tribes, or we think the main persecution is coming from Communism when in fact it is coming from corruption, then we (a) have failed in our first duty to understand what a persecuted

community is going through and (b) will be less able to stand with them if we are unsure what enemy we are standing together against.

It is also vital to realise that persecution engines *rarely occur singly*. They cluster and overlap. *Islamic extremism* is often accompanied by *Tribal antagonism* for example, and *Organized corruption and crime* can overlay on all other engines. This shows that persecution is profound and universal, and we believe, spiritual: “You will be hated by all because of my name” (Luke 21:17). Above all, it shows the causes of persecution are complex, not simple, and this rescues us from simplistic interventions. Whatever else the Open Doors World Watch List is, the engines show that persecution is complex, profound and here to stay.

### 3. Currently, what are the main persecution engines?

Up till now we have said that there are eight primary sources of persecution in the world today for Christians. We are still holding to the eight, but we have changed the wording in some.

#### Islamic extremism

Tries to bring the country or the world under the 'House of Islam' through violent or non-violent actions.

This is the organized attempt to make the world Islamic. Extremists in Islam must ensure that sharia law is applicable over the state or territory for Islam to be properly observed, though not all Muslims aspire to this. Religious minorities may be tolerated, but strictly as second class citizens. Islamic extremists range from *extremist states* that require sharia law, such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, to *extremist movements* that seek to impose Islam but through relatively peaceful means, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, to *extremist groups* that espouse violence to achieve their aims, such as Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria and IS in Syria and Iraq, to *extremist households or individuals* that are the most effective in enforcing Islam’s apostasy laws. In many cases, all four layers may be involved, but there is no doubt that in 2015 it is the actions of the violent jihadists that have attracted the most attention. Still, it must not be forgotten that Islamic extremism is often more effective in stopping Christian witness through the squeeze of a strongly Islamic culture than the actions of violent jihadists, since state, tribe, family and neighborhood all combine to stifle the exercise of the Christian faith. Islamic extremism constitutes by far the most common engine in global terms to Christians.

#### Religious nationalism

Tries to conquer the nation for one’s religion. Mainly Hinduism and Buddhism, but also Orthodox Judaism or other religions.

This refers to an ideology that seeks to make a territory or a state exclusively the province of a particular religion. It sees its religion as utterly supreme over other religions and traditions, and sets a very clear national boundary on its militancy. In this respect it is to be distinguished from Islamic extremism in that IE is always trans-national, for example the IS militants are not local Syrians who want to make Syria Islamic, but the whole world, which is why they moved into Iraq. But Islamic extremists often play the nationalist card, such as in Somalia. To be a good Somali, they say, is to be a good Muslim. So there is overlap. But the engine refers more specifically for example to the Hindu nationalists in India, who use

the ideology of *Hindutva* to justify their vision of a Hindu India, or the nationalist Buddhists in Sri Lanka, who maintain all Sinhala people must be Buddhist or they are betrayers of their heritage and country. It results in Christians being accused of being unpatriotic and walking away from their primary and ancient identity.

### **Tribal antagonism**

Tries to force the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in tribal context. Often comes in the form of traditional religion or something similar.

This refers to the reality that when someone becomes a Christian they are often persecuted because they are seen to have turned their back on the traditions of their tribe. Sometimes the tribe may have its own religion, like animistic tribes in parts of Africa, or sometimes the tribe may simply be a social or blood obligation that can act as strongly as the religious ties. So there are two senses in which this applies. First a Christian may refuse to continue in the rituals of the tribe, especially the more animistic rituals which can involve immorality, blood sacrifices and idol worship. Or second, where the Christian proclaims that their deepest identity is “In Christ” which causes serious friction because the tribe demands that they see themselves and act purely as a Pashtun, or a Fulani, or a Lao. This is more marked in certain states where there is little sense of national identity. For example very few people in Afghanistan see themselves as “Afghans,” but Pashtuns, or Tajiks. The tribe may or may not be religiously constituted (though it usually is), but it does have a distinct identity, and it is often harnessed by religious nationalists or Islamic extremists, making this engine relatively hidden and difficult to spot. One scholar wisely remarked of the Middle East, “Islam only goes back 1500 years here, but tribalism goes back 5000.” But where tribalism ends and Islamic extremism begins can be difficult to discern in practice. We make the distinction because in many states Christian are persecuted out of tribal reasons. The most persecuted Christians of the Far East for example are tribal Christians, who often experience a double persecution, e.g. from the state and from their tribe, like the Chakma in Bangladesh or the Hmong in Vietnam.

### **Denominational protectionism (formerly Ecclesiastical Arrogance)**

Tries to maintain one’s Christian denomination as the only legitimate or dominant expression of Christianity in the country. In most cases this Christian denomination is the majority Christian denomination.

This is where a church tries to impose its version of Christianity on everyone, especially other Christians, and refuses to accept the validity of other traditions. This was a particular problem mainly in the Roman Catholic churches of Latin America, although they have improved in this respect. Orthodox churches have an unfortunate habit of becoming co-existent with the state, and see non-Orthodox Christians as unpatriotic. Thus in for example Russia, the Orthodox church has often sought to marginalize and disempower those belonging to vibrant Christian communities, such as Baptists and Pentecostals. Today in Ethiopia Pentecostal Christians can sometimes expect their severest persecution to come from radical movements within the Orthodox church.

### Communist and post-communist oppression (formerly Communist Oppression)

Tries to maintain communism as a prescriptive ideology and/or controls the church through a system of registration and oversight that has come from communism.

Communism is an ideology that seeks to bring about a classless paradise through the triumph of the proletariat and is utterly atheistic in its method. But it is also a system of control, where the state seeks to ensure a church is registered in order to control it. While the ideological drive of communism is fatally wounded today, the communist *system* of state control over the Church remains especially in those post-communist states such as Russia and the so called “Stans” of Central Asia. Now there are five countries left that are still formally communist: China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam, though it is hard to say how much of the ideology remains and how much is just the system of control staying in place. But there are parts of the world where ideological communists persecute Christians, such as the Maoists in Nepal and the Naxalites in India, and indeed even in states like Venezuela communist rhetoric is far from dead.

### Dictatorial paranoia

Does everything to maintain power, not specifically focused on realizing a vision.

Dictatorial paranoia is where a political leader and his clique seek to dominate every aspect of society. The dictator is seized by fear that someone, somewhere, is plotting to overthrow them. No one is allowed to organize outside state control. This desire to control can come from a variety of motives. It can originate from an ideology like Communism, but more commonly it emerges from an overbearing leader, who seeks to survive through control. The world is full of leaders who take more and more power to themselves. Africa particularly is plagued by leaders like this, so too Latin America. Christians are a threat to any totalitarian regime if they refuse to be dominated, and especially if they organize outside government control – the ultimate act of disloyalty. It is out of fear that Christians get persecuted because they cannot be controlled. Often Christians are tolerated if they allow themselves to be controlled through registration and laws. We have narrowed the engine down, as totalitarian paranoia proved too broad.

### Secular intolerance

Tries to eradicate religion from the public domain, if possible even out of the hearts of people, and imposes an atheistic form of secularism as a new governing ideology.

Secularism can be understood two ways. First, positively, where it insists that the state stays neutral (or secular) in its refusal to prejudice one religion or denomination over another. Indeed, in this sense, state secularism is a legacy of the Reformation where the Anabaptists for example regarded themselves as aggressive secularists. This is why we are changing the descriptor. But it also has a negative use too, where atheists exploit secularism to insist that *all religion* be expunged from public life, also in crucial discussions about social issues such as sexuality, marriage, human dignity. This is what we mean by secular intolerance. These atheists call for the abandonment of the state’s historical neutrality, and sponsor a humanistic secularism that regards religious expression and opinion as injurious to the public good. They do not tolerate another interpretation of how to run public life, and take stealth steps to

ensure this takes place their way, often without seeking permission or approval. Often this is peddled by atheists who claim that all religious expression and opinion is by definition pathological. Richard Dawkins has said that the difference between scientists and religious people is that the former build planes whereas the latter crash them into buildings. It is in the Western world where this engine is strongest, but it is for export too. This is a subtle engine because not all these secularists are always aware that they are being intolerant.

### **Organized corruption and crime (formerly Organized Corruption)**

Tries to create a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for self-enrichment.
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Societies contain elites like mafias that run extensive economic rackets, and Christians can get targeted insofar as their ethics threaten these rackets. An obvious example would be those regions in Latin American that are run by guerrilla armies who get their funds through drug trafficking. Pastors or priests that stand out against this trade get threatened and killed with sickening frequency. Unfortunately this engine is perhaps the most global of them all, as each society – especially where the state is weak or complicit – contains very deliberate and organized schemes to direct riches to a pampered and often violent elite. In Africa for a pastor to speak out prophetically against a corrupt leader like Robert Mugabe who is fleecing the country for his own aggrandizement can result in instant death or flight. The world is getting more corrupt, and not all forms of organized corruption are officially disapproved of. Saint Augustine famously remarked that the only difference between a government and gang of bandits was that a government was a gang of bandits that had given themselves immunity. This has caused some geopolitical specialists to talk of “mafia states,” where legitimately elected leaders rule the country like giant godfathers, and refuse to encourage the rule of law and the separation of powers. It is not always easy to clearly notice organized corruption. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime reports “that while the activities of organized criminal groups have grown significantly across the globe in the last decade, the nature of their organizational structures is much more complex and dynamic than was perhaps the case in the past”. The report continues, “One of the clearest examples of the fragmentation of organized crime is the break-up of the cartels involved in the trafficking of illicit narcotics from Colombia. They have been replaced by a large number of smaller and more loosely organized trafficking groups.”

## WWL 2016 – Policy Recommendations

Revised version: 2016-01-28

**Note:**

Making recommendations is always tricky. On the one hand, there is the idea that recommenders should stick to principles regardless of how the recommendations might be perceived. On the other hand, there is a pragmatic approach: recommendations should be limited to feasible and practical issues that could be achieved. In the following list of recommendations, we have opted to take from both whenever necessary.

Country	WWL rank	WWL score	Policy recommendations
North Korea	1	92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is known that large numbers of Christians are held in labor camps. The international community should strongly denounce the existence of the labor camps and put pressure on the government of North Korea to close these camps and to restore justice to the victims.</li> <li>- Sanctions and international isolation have not benefited North Korean people in general, including Christians. Thus, it is important to try to engage the North Korean regime.</li> <li>- The international community must work with countries allied to North Korea for a release of Christian foreigners who are imprisoned.</li> </ul>
Iraq	2	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The EU Parliament and the UN should condemn the atrocities committed against Christians and Yazidis.</li> <li>- While we call for a protection of the lives, livelihood and freedom of Christians who are suffering disproportionately in the Middle East, we recognize that Christians are reaching out to their societies to provide a much needed hope in an otherwise hopeless landscape. Therefore, we highlight that a Christian presence is vital to ensure a sustainable peace and stability to the region, as research indicates a strong correlation between pluralism and greater social stability, political moderation and economic development.</li> <li>- The government of Iraq should protect religious minorities in the country.</li> <li>- Ideologically counter extremism; and suspend the provision of foreign weapons to all extremist groups.</li> <li>- Encourage and incentivize national and regional powers to create the environment for diversity of ethnicity and religion within their communities, as a central component of a long-term strategy to bring stability and prosperity to Iraq.</li> <li>- Increase international development support to host</li> </ul>

			<p>communities in Lebanon, Jordan, the KRG and Turkey, aimed at enhancing the socio-economic capacity of their societies and equipping them to accommodate the current influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allow flexible funding opportunities to allow a variety of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), such as churches and mosques, to attempt to maintain and regain normality by initiating a variety of locally-appropriate psycho-social care, reconciliation and community-building projects amongst the internally displaced. Further, we urge that such flexible funding mechanisms are available to CBOs for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, such as housing repair and establishing income-generating projects.</li> <li>- Ensure that the restoration of villages and properties – or the provision of compensation – to those forced to flee is a key part of the international response to the crisis in Iraq.</li> </ul>
<b>Eritrea</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>89</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The UN Security Council should consider referring the Eritrea situation to the International Criminal Court.</li> <li>- The UNHRC should take the report by the commission of inquiry into human rights abuses in Eritrea seriously and should take considerable measures to encourage Eritrea to implement its recommendations.</li> <li>- The international community should encourage the Eritrean government to cooperate with the investigation of the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom.</li> <li>- The government of Eritrea should release all Christians arrested/detained because of their faith.</li> <li>- The Eritrean government should release the deposed Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch from house arrest.</li> <li>- Christian leaders around the world should use all available forums to urge the Eritrean Orthodox Church to stop persecuting Protestants.</li> </ul>
<b>Afghanistan</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>88</b>	- <b>(No policy recommendations available)</b>
<b>Syria</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>87</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The EU Parliament and the UN should condemn the atrocities committed against Christians and Yazidis.</li> <li>- While we call for a protection of the lives, livelihood and freedom of Christians who are suffering disproportionately in the Middle East, we recognize that Christians are reaching out to their societies to provide a much needed hope in an otherwise hopeless landscape. Therefore, we highlight that a Christian presence is vital to ensure a sustainable peace and stability to the region, as research indicates a strong correlation between pluralism and greater social stability, political moderation and economic development.</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ideologically counter extremism; curb the continued influx of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq; and suspend the provision of foreign weapons to all extremist groups.</li> <li>- Christians and others who are escaping the war in Syria and Iraq are facing enormous challenges even during their escape. To ease these problems, the international community should support the pockets of relative stability within and outside Syria that acts as de facto sanctuaries.</li> <li>- Maximize all diplomatic efforts, including the Vienna talks and the work of Staffan de Mistura, to bring an end to this conflict.</li> <li>- Suspend the funding and provision of arms to all parties to the conflict.</li> <li>- Ensure all components of the Syrian societies are represented and considered in the future of Syria.</li> <li>- Encourage and incentivize national and regional powers to create the environment for diversity of ethnicity and religion within their communities, as a central component of a long-term strategy to bring stability and prosperity to Syria.</li> <li>- Anecdotal evidence suggests that Christians are rarely going to the Refugee camps for different reasons. Therefore, we call the international community to ensure that humanitarian aid and development reach outside the camps through cooperating with front line organizations to help people living in hard-to-reach areas.</li> <li>- Allow Flexible funding opportunities to allow a variety of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), such as churches and mosques, to attempt to maintain and regain normality by initiating a variety of locally-appropriate psycho-social care, reconciliation and community-building projects amongst the internally displaced. Further, we urge that such flexible funding mechanisms are available to CBOs for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, such as housing repair and establishing income-generating projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>87</b>	- <b>(No policy recommendations available)</b>
<b>Somalia</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>87</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The links between al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, and the inspiration it gets from Islamic State are a cause for concern. The international community and regional organizations must monitor the developing links between jihadist organizations throughout the continent, and deal with Islamic extremism at the regional level.</li> <li>- The government of Somalia should respect the rights of Christians to exist peacefully.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Somali government should allow the reopening of the Mogadishu Catholic Cathedral.</li> <li>- The government of Somalia should investigate violence against Christians and bring its perpetrators to justice.</li> </ul>
<b>Sudan</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>84</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Commission for the Rights of Non-Muslims that was established following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was abolished in 2011 after the breaking away of South Sudan. The international community should urge the government of Sudan to reestablish the Commission.</li> <li>- The government of Sudan should immediately halt the indiscriminate direct (and by proxy) attacks against Christians.</li> <li>- The international community should urge the cessation of 'genocide by attrition' (or sustain long-term attacks) in the Nuba Mountains, and urge the government of Sudan to establish a commission of inquiry into the indiscriminate attacks on people in the Nuba mountains and bring the perpetrators to justice.</li> <li>- The government of Sudan should return the churches taken away from Christians.</li> <li>- The government of Sudan should stop demolishing Christian churches and buildings.</li> <li>- The government of Sudan should repeal the apostasy law.</li> <li>- The Sudanese government should exercise due diligence when it comes to investigating, and bringing perpetrators of violence against Christians to justice.</li> <li>- The government of Sudan should pay compensation for unlawful detention of the two pastors who were acquitted by the court.</li> </ul>
<b>Iran</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>83</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community, taking advantage of the improved diplomatic relations with the West, must urge the government of Iran to recognize all minority religions, including the ethnic Persian believers. In general, the human rights situation must be addressed in the negotiations between Iran and Western countries, with a particular emphasis on religious freedom.</li> <li>- Closing churches ( 8 in the last year have been shut down or forced to cancel Farsi-language services), appropriating church property, arresting church leaders and threatening churchgoers are violations of freedom of religion and belief proscribed in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the ICCPR), to which Iran is a signatory. Article 13 of Iran's Constitution says Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians are recognized religious minorities free to</li> </ul>

			<p>perform religious rites and ceremonies. Article 23 of Iran's Constitution says: "investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief." Therefore, we urge the international community to hold the Iranian government accountable to uphold these international and constitutional commitments to protect the freedom of Christians in its territories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The 108 Christians who were arrested and or imprisoned for their faith in November 2015 must be immediately released. Any unfair legal treatments and violence against Christians in prisons must be stopped immediately.</li> </ul>
<b>Libya</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>79</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We call upon the international community to make sure the Libyan authorities fight impunity and ensure a minimum rule of law in the country, which would at least deal with part of the violations committed against minorities (including Christians).</li> <li>- Strengthening state institutions is essential to rebuild the country. There must be guarantees that the strengthening of the state capacity is accompanied by guarantees of the protection of the rights of minorities, including Christians.</li> <li>- Contrary to principles of the ICCPR, legislations in Libya restrict Christians in the church sphere. Bibles in Arabic are forbidden; indigenous churches cannot exist (migrant churches can survive, in great fear and in small numbers) nor be registered, etc. Therefore, the international community and the Libyan government must address this issue in order to ensure full religious freedom.</li> <li>- Countries are under obligation to protect individuals in their territory/jurisdiction. In Libya, African migrant workers face a double vulnerability because of their origin (racism) and because of their religion. Consequently, we call upon the international actors working to rebuild Libya and the Libyan government to address the very fundamental problems immigrants face in their daily life.</li> </ul>
<b>Yemen</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>78</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yemen's warring parties have finally agreed to hold peace talks in Switzerland in December 2015, which were unsuccessful. The international community must put the issue of religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities on the agenda of future peace negotiations and should systematically raise this issue in bilateral discussions.</li> <li>- The international community must work together with both the de facto government and the exiled government of Yemen to restore the rule of law and</li> </ul>

			<p>stability in the country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The growing influence of various Islamist groups (mainly Al Qaeda but also Islamic State and Shia radical groups), in Yemen is a source of concern. The international community must closely monitor the situation in the country and hold regional powers such as Saudi-Arabia, Iran and Turkey accountable for the role they play in the country and urge them to work to prevent the empowerment of groups with a radical agenda who are seeking to take advantage of the war situation of Yemen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nigeria</b></p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>78</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community should urge the government of Nigeria to conduct an in-depth investigation into the Northern and the Middle Belt atrocities against civilians in general and against Christians in particular, and bring the perpetrators of violence against Christians to justice.</li> <li>- The international community should urge the UN Human Rights Council to mandate a Commission of Inquiry to the North and the Middle Belt. If proof can be given of ethnic cleansing as defined under the international criminal law, appropriate action should be taken, including bringing the perpetrators to justice.</li> <li>- The international community should urge the government of Nigeria and the international community to step up their efforts to support those who are affected by the violence in the Northern and the Middle Belt Nigeria.</li> <li>- Enterprises who do business with Nigeria should urge the Nigerian government to thoroughly investigate the violence against Christians in the Middle Belt region and bring the perpetrators to justice on time.</li> <li>- International role players should take note of the fact that the narrative in mainstream media is almost exclusively focused on Boko Haram. However, the situation in Nigeria is much more complex than this. Much violence against Christians is also perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen. Apart from the violence, Christians also experience severe marginalization under Northern politicians in Sharia states but also in states not governed by sharia.</li> <li>- The Nigerian government has an obligation to protect freedom of religion as enshrined in the UDHR and other pertinent international laws that Nigeria is party to. However, laws of the Sharia states certainly contradict the UDHR. Therefore, the international community should urge the Nigerian government to rectify this matter and at the very least to ensure that</li> </ul>

its citizens' religious freedoms are not encroached upon.

- The narrative in mainstream media characterizes the conflict in Nigeria as a conflict devoid of a religious dimension. Although the conflict has undeniable political, economic, social and ethnic components, it also has a strong religious dimension. The combination of religious, political, economic, social and ethnic factors is what makes Christians vulnerable. Policy makers and international role players should acknowledge the religious dimension of the conflict in Nigeria.
  - While the main focus of the international community and mainstream media is on the ongoing conflict where Boko Haram is the main actor, the humanitarian crisis as the result of the conflict seems to be relegated as an issue of less importance. Therefore, it is imperative that the international community and the concerned parties attend to the issue of IDP's within Nigeria and refugees other in neighboring countries who fled the conflict.
  - The conflict in Nigeria affects many groups of society; however, women are the ones affected most. Yet, there have not been enough attempts to address the problem. Consequently, the international community and the government of Nigeria should attend to the issue of Violence against Women.
  - As Boko Haram is on EU's terrorism list, this should have consequences for the EU's foreign policy. It should effectively open the way for closer scrutiny on individuals, and it can lead to financial and travel restrictions.
  - Duty to protect. It is a well-established norm that "States must put in place effective measures in order to prevent or sanction violations of freedom of religion or belief when they occur, and ensure accountability." In Nigeria, Christians are being killed for faith related reasons or by targeted violence, and the government is not taking enough actions to protect them. Therefore, the Nigerian government should be urged by the international community and countries to fulfill its obligations.
  - Christians are undeniably one of the most vulnerable groups in North and Middle Belt Nigeria (this is supported by considerable research from the WWR). However, the government of Nigeria is notorious for underreporting casualties during violence and to not acknowledge the onslaught on Christians out of fear for ideological/religious bias. The government should
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			<p>report honestly about the conflict, and provide true casualty figures, mention when Christians are being killed, and expose the perpetrators of the violence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Boko Haram insurgency holds a regional threat. In addition to what the African Union and neighboring countries doing, the international community should pay greater attention to the regional spread of Boko Haram to neighboring countries and take pro-active steps to contain the threat.</li> <li>- In some states of the northern part of the country, Islamic studies and Muslim education are considered compulsory; therefore, affecting the rights of children as enshrined under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (IESCR) as well as the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC). Consequently, the international community as well as the Nigerian government should address the problem.</li> </ul>
<b>Maldives</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>76</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Maldives should uphold citizens' right to change their religion.</li> <li>- Article 9 (d) of the Constitution which states that a non-Muslim may not become a citizen of the Maldives would mean converts would lose their citizenship, thus, the government must amend this provision.</li> <li>- Countries that do business, especially pertaining to tourism, with the government of Maldives should discuss the issue of religious freedom with the country's leaders.</li> </ul>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>76</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The country's legislation and constitution severely restricts Christian gatherings and the distribution of religious literature, in contrary to the principles of OCCPR. Therefore, we urge more pressure on the Saudi government to grant religious freedom to its citizens.</li> <li>- The country should be requested to give enough protection to domestic workers some of whom are Christians from South East Asia and Africa.</li> <li>- Western countries should engage the Saudi government about religious minorities and their protection in the kingdom.</li> <li>- Companies working with the Saudi government should take all available opportunities to discuss the status of Christians in the kingdom.</li> </ul>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>70</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community must urge the government of Uzbekistan to respect freedom of association, in particular of religious groups. Also, the prohibitive registration requirements for religious associations must be abolished, and monitoring of religious activities that do not threaten national security must cease. Specifically, Administrative Code</li> </ul>

			<p>Article 240 ("Violation of the Religion Law", dating from 1998) and the 2003 decree that restricts the activities of faith-based NGOs should be repealed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Damage to churches caused by police raids must be repaired.</li> <li>- All Christians who are serving jail sentences for faith related reasons should be released immediately and the injustice committed against them must be redressed.</li> <li>- The humiliation of children and youth due to the Christian faith of their parents must be stopped in schools, universities and other public institutions. All cases of humiliation must be investigated and justice restored.</li> </ul>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>68</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community should help Kenya in its attempt to fight terrorism that has been taking the lives of Christians.</li> <li>- The Kenyan government should investigate the atrocities committed against Christians with due diligence.</li> <li>- The Kenyan government should step up fighting corruption which has contributed to the violence perpetrated by al-Shabaab in the country.</li> <li>- Kenyans should seriously hold interfaith religious discussion in order to avoid further animosities between different faiths.</li> </ul>
<b>India</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>68</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The attempt to enact anti-Conversion law at a national level (started by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government) should be abandoned as it is against freedom of religion</li> <li>- Anti-conversion laws that exist and are in force in the states of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat should be repealed.</li> <li>- Countries that do business with India should show their concern about the rights of religious minorities in India.</li> <li>- The government of India should investigate and prosecute those who are responsible for the killings, raping and kidnapping of Christians.</li> <li>- Also, the government should investigate the damage caused to churches and Christians properties.</li> </ul>
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>67</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian leaders around the world should use all available forums to urge the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to stop persecuting Protestants.</li> <li>- The government of Ethiopia should respect citizen's right to form association.</li> <li>- The government of Ethiopia should not use double standard when it regulates religious communities, thus, it should abolish or amend the law that requires</li> </ul>

			<p>registration for Protestants, but exempts Orthodox and Muslims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government should investigate violence perpetrated against Christians and bring those who are responsible to justice.</li> </ul>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>66</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community must urge the government of Turkmenistan to grant full religious freedom to all religious minorities present in the country. Although religious freedom is formally protected by the constitution, it is not respected in practice as violations of religious freedom are frequent.</li> <li>- The 2003 religion law that forbids worship in private homes and bans religious activities being carried out by unregistered organizations should be repealed.</li> <li>- It is critical that press freedom is fully accepted in the country.</li> <li>- All reported cases of imprisonment, detention, threats, verbal insults, beatings, confiscation and sexual assault of Christians and other religious minorities must be properly investigated and punished.</li> </ul>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>66</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government announced it will publish a revised version of its Religion Law (No. 92) in 2015 and has invited selected Christians to participate in the drafting process. The international community must send observers to guarantee that Christians and other religious minorities are granted full participation in this consultation. The international community must demand that provision for church registration to be considered for recognition including registration of activities and number of members must be abolished. Religious affiliation must no longer be included in public registries.</li> <li>- The case of the Mennonite Church in Binh Dhuong province that was bulldozed together with several small house churches and dwellings of Christians in Kon Tum province in November 2014 must be properly investigated and all material damage must be repaired.</li> <li>- The international community must investigate the case of the 200 Montagnard Christians who have fled their homes in central Vietnam due to the high pressure of persecution executed by authorities and crossed the border to Cambodia, demand justice and closely monitor the position of the ethnic minorities known as the Montagnards.</li> </ul>
<b>Qatar</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community must urge the government of Qatar to abolish the death penalty for</li> </ul>



			<p>conversions away from Islam.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Furthermore, the international community must require from the government of Qatar that full religious freedom is granted to all religious minorities. Specifically, the extensive church registration requirements for Qatari nationals must be eliminated.</li> <li>- Any violence committed against Christians must be properly investigated and punished.</li> </ul>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>64</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We call on the international community to urge Egypt to review all legislation restricting Freedom of Religion or belief to be compatible with the obligations and principles of ICCPR and other relevant treaties to which Egypt is a signatory.</li> <li>- Under article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, states must treat all individuals equally without discrimination on the basis of their religion or belief. But, in Egypt, Christians are treated with blatant discrimination in many spheres of life. Therefore, the government of Egypt should be urged to take necessary measures to promote equal social justice for all, which stands firmly against any form of cultural or religious discrimination.</li> <li>- We welcome the Egyptian president’s apology and his promise to finish rebuilding the churches burned by the Muslim Brotherhood in 2016, and we encourage that this step will be duplicated for the other difficulties facing Egyptian Christians.</li> </ul>
<b>Myanmar</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>62</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During the campaign and elections the Burmese army continued its attacks against ethnic minorities in Kachin and Shan State even though a ceasefire agreement was signed on 15 October 2015. Christians are strongly affected by such attacks and the level of violence is high. The international community must urge the government of Myanmar to put an end to this violence.</li> <li>- Ma Ba Tha, an organization of Buddhist radical monks increased its campaigns against religious minorities and successfully helped introduce four laws for the “Protection of Race and Religion” in August 2015, building extensive hurdles for conversions and complicating religiously mixed marriages. As these laws restrict religious freedom and more broadly violate the UDHR, they must be repealed.</li> <li>- The case of rape and murder of two Kachin Christian teachers, the attempted rape of one Christian girl, the abduction and killing of two teenage boys in Shan state, and the case of rape of another girl in Chin state should be investigated and be given justice. Chin and Shan states are two of the four states in Myanmar that</li> </ul>

			have sizable population of Christians.
<b>Palestinian Territories</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>62</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The influence of extremist Islamist organizations in the country is growing. The international community must urge the political leaders of the Palestinian Territories to address the threats posed by these organizations and protect the Christian population in their territories.</li> </ul>
<b>Brunei</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>61</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decree that bans the importation of Bibles and the public celebration of Christmas should be lifted.</li> <li>- The government’s policy of “Islam evangelism” is forcing people to convert to Islam for material benefits; that is indirectly forcing people to change their faith. Thus, this should be stopped.</li> <li>- The government’s introduction of first phase of punishment based on Sharia penal law undermines non-Muslim’s freedom in many ways. The government should be requested to repeal the first phase that was introduced in 2014. In addition the government should be requested not to continue with the next phases of the introduction of penal code based on sharia law.</li> </ul>
<b>CAR</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>59</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protecting civilians in UN refugee camps is primarily the duty of states. When a given state is unable and/or unwilling to do so, the onus is on the international community to safeguard the refugees. In CAR, Christians do not feel safe in (UN) refugee camps. Therefore, the international community and the government of CAR must address the issue immediately.</li> <li>- The stalled peace process in the Central African Republic should be reinvigorated by the international community (United Nations) and the newly elected Central African government (December 2015). This stalled peace process (5 December 2013) led to large frustration among the local population that is suffering from insecurity and the negative effects at the humanitarian level (displacement, poverty, malnutrition lack of sanitation). Militia (anti-Balaka and ex-Seleka) also became frustrated in seeing the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration failing and baring no favorable perspective for them.</li> <li>- Security should be effectively kept in the whole country and notably in the PK5 quarter of the capital of Bangui and at the Batafango – Mobaye frontier, factually dividing the country in two, were anti-Balaka and ex-Seleka militia clash. Special concern should be given to the integration of returning Muslims to western CAR and the safeguarding of Christians in northeastern CAR that are still (since January 2013)</li> </ul>

			<p>marginalized, discriminated and violently targeted by ex-Seleka militia and associated groups of Fulani herdsmen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Justice should be done to the effect that perpetrators of crimes against humanity are effectively brought to court.</li> <li>- Reconciliation among (religious) communities, rebuilding of society and trauma counseling among victims of the violence should be vigorously sought and practiced. At the same level the political process and the economy have to be boosted in order to provide good governance, prosperous business and household development.</li> </ul>
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>59</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The influence of extremist Islamist organizations in the country is growing. The international community should support the government of Jordan in its efforts to address the threats posed by these organizations and protect the Christian population in its territory.</li> </ul>
<b>Djibouti</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>58</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Djibouti should protect Christians from harassments perpetrated by the extremists.</li> <li>- The western government especially the USA and France should engage the government of Djibouti regarding freedom of Christians.</li> <li>- Anti-Christian sentiment has spread within a society without any control from the government. Therefore, the international community and countries should urge the government of Djibouti to tackle the problem.</li> </ul>
<b>Laos</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>58</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Laos' Decree 92 mimics that of Vietnam and requires government permission to print and import religious materials which amount to censorship. It also demands the government's prior consent for any religious activity to be legal. This should be repealed.</li> <li>- The government should recognize other Christian groups outside LEC, the Catholic Church, and the Seventh Day Adventists.</li> <li>- The September 2014 NGO law affects freedom of Christian to form association is against the principle of freedom of religion, expression and association. Therefore, it should be repealed.</li> <li>- The government should investigate the death of Pastor Singkeaw Wongkongpheng who was stabbed to death in Luang Prabang province on 8 September 2015; and bring the perpetrators to justice.</li> <li>- The government should protect religious minorities in the country, especially converts and tribal believers.</li> </ul>
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>58</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attempts to introduce Sharia penal law (<i>hudud</i>) in the federal state of Kelantan severely violates rights of Christians; therefore, it is recommended that such a move be aborted.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-conversion laws should be repealed.</li> <li>- Laws that ban the use of “Allah” (God) by Christians should be repealed.</li> <li>- Prohibition of propagation of non-Muslim religion should be repealed.</li> <li>- Requiring government permission for printing and importing Christian materials amounts to censorship, thus this should change.</li> <li>- Re-education camps for MBBs are degrading, humiliating and inhumane, and should therefore be stopped.</li> <li>- The government’s policy of “Islam evangelism” is forcing or tricking people to convert to Islam for material benefits; that is indirectly forcing people to change their faith. Thus, this should be stopped.</li> </ul>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>58</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Tajikistan puts heavy pressure on all “deviating” groups, including Christians. By tightening already existing laws and by enforcing them strictly, the government is putting additional pressure on the Christian minority. The new youth law in particular has left Christians (and other affected religious minorities) in legal limbo as it is not obvious what is allowed and what is denied by law. Any legislation restricting the freedom of religious minorities must be abolished.</li> <li>- Since March 2015 there has been a crackdown on all non-government organizations. Activities related to church ministry, including youth work and the publication of religious materials have been curtailed and censored by the government. State agents and community members can act aggressively towards Christians with impunity. Christians suffer from biased treatment against them in court. The international community must urge the government of Tajikistan to eliminate these discriminatory measures.</li> </ul>
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>58</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Urge the international community to demand guarantees for the respect of religious freedom in the framework of the new Constitution which leaves room for alternative interpretations especially in Article 6 which declares freedom of religion is also too complex. We, therefore, call on the international community to work with the Tunisian government for this article to be clarified as much as possible in correlation with article 18 of the Global Declaration of Human Rights.</li> <li>- It is a well-established norm that “States must put in place effective measures in order to prevent or sanction violations of freedom of religion or belief when they occur, and ensure accountability.” In Tunisia, links between organized crime and Islamic</li> </ul>

			<p>extremism are becoming visible. The government is not taking enough actions to protect its population. Therefore, the Tunisian government should be urged by the international community and countries to fulfill its duty to protect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Tunisia should commit to its constitutional obligation to implement sufficient measures to protect minorities against increasing extremist violence.</li> </ul>
<b>China</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>57</b>	- <b>(No policy recommendations available)</b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>57</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Azerbaijan should respect rights of association and assembly of Christians by removing all unnecessary steps and requirements that have made church registration difficult.</li> <li>- The government of Azerbaijan should stop personal threats to Christian leaders being made by different state institutions such as the religious committee, police and secret police.</li> </ul>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>57</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The religious freedom provision of the constitution of Bangladesh must be upheld. The constitutionally definition of Islam as state religion must be eliminated. The international community must urge the government of Bangladesh to not give to any demands to introduce Sharia law or any form of legislation that restricts freedom of religion.</li> <li>- The government has the duty to protect its citizens, including Christians, against any threat to harm their physical integrity. The government must properly investigate and punish those responsible for any harm done against the physical integrity of representatives of religious minorities.</li> <li>- The government must develop policies to stop the influence of radical messages coming from radical groups such as Islamic State and others in the country. In addition, the government must closely monitor the activities of radical Islamic groups who are inspired by Islamic State and similar organizations.</li> </ul>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>57</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The newly elected president should take his popularity to tackle the challenges that Christians face especially in Zanzibar and the Coast. The international community should also help the newly elected president to do so.</li> <li>- The government of Tanzania should drop a provision in the draft constitution regarding the establishment of Sharia courts in the country as this would create unprecedented challenges for the country by pitting Christians against Muslims.</li> <li>- The government of Tanzania should investigate the crimes committed against Christians and bring those</li> </ul>

			<p>who are responsible to justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian communities around the world should come together to help the Christian community in Tanzania facing terrible persecution.</li> </ul>
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>56</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ordinance 06-03 must be repealed. All restrictive legislation to the Freedom of worship for Christians must be eliminated.</li> <li>- Be careful with radical elements within society. The fall of Gaddafi gave massive weapons and seasoned fighters to non-state actors in Algeria. Indeed, Islamic extremism is becoming potent in the country. The Islamists in Algeria are clearly siding with Islamic State. This is creating a situation in which Christians are a particularly vulnerable group, and their rights under increasing pressure.</li> <li>- “Freedom of religion or belief is intrinsically linked to freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association and assembly as well as to other human rights and fundamental freedoms all of which contribute towards the building of pluralistic, tolerant, and democratic societies. Expression of a religious or non-religious belief, or of an opinion concerning a religion or belief, is also protected by the right to freedom of opinion and expression enshrined in Article 19 of the ICCPR.” In Algeria freedom of expression is severely restricted. Therefore the international community and countries should urge the Algerian government to allow free press and free expression.</li> <li>- The government of Algeria should commit to its constitutional obligation to implement sufficient measures to protect minorities against increasing extremist violence.</li> </ul>
<b>Bhutan</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>56</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government demands only one representative of Christians for Christianity to be recognized by the government. This remains unmet as there are various Christian denominations present in Bhutan. The government should recognize the various Christian denominations and respect their right to hold Christian meetings.</li> <li>- The government should allow Christian groups to build their own house of worship.</li> <li>- Section 463 (A) and (B) of the penal code of Bhutan is very broad and its application severely restricts freedom of religion and expression. The government of Bhutan should repeal the law.</li> </ul>
<b>Comoros</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>56</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Comoros should repeal the anti-conversion law.</li> <li>- The government of Comoros should repeal a law that prohibits proselytizing for any religion except Islam</li> </ul>

			<p>because it is against the principle of equality and freedom of expression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Comoros should be urged to tackle the anti-Christian sentiment that is developing in the country.</li> </ul>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>56</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The international community should make the reduction of risks for Christians in Mexico caused by organized crime an integral part of its policies. Efforts in the fields of state reform, corruption prevention, strengthening of the rule of law and human rights education are essential to Mexican society as a whole, but specific attention to the vulnerability of actively practicing Christians in the framework of organized crime is required.</li> <li>- The Parliaments of the world should pay special attention to the position of vulnerable groups in Mexico, particularly that of actively practicing Christians, in their oversight of their government’s foreign policy. They should also recognize the full breadth of religious freedom violations, including the vulnerability of Christians in a context of organized crime (particularly Christians engaged in social work with youths, drug addicts, etc.).</li> <li>- The international community should work together with the government of Mexico to create a system in which churches and Christian leaders who are victims of extortion feel safe to denounce threats against them.</li> <li>- Mexico is one the signatories of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. However, the corruption level within the country is significant. Mexico also is the country in the world with the highest number of abductions. The international community should assist the government of Mexico in tackling corruption at all levels, and the infiltration of organized crime in public institutions by means of corruption must be addressed.</li> </ul>
<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>56</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kuwait should be urged to ensure the necessary protection for international domestic workers some of whom are Christians.</li> <li>- When engaging with the Kuwaiti government, Western countries must urge the implementation of more freedom for Christians and other minorities residing in the country.</li> <li>- As Islam is the state religion, the freedom to choose a different religion is severely restricted and converts are still considered Muslims on their ID cards. Therefore, we call upon the international community to urge the Kuwaiti government to ensure the full</li> </ul>

			<p>rights of converts to fully embrace the religion they choose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Kuwait should encourage the establishment of interfaith discussions that can work towards reducing religious animosities.</li> </ul>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>55</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Kazakhstan should remove obstacles for and stop confiscation of religious literature which does not have extremist content.</li> <li>- The administrative laws in the country have made church registration cumbersome. The government should considerably simplify church registration requirements.</li> <li>- The government of Kazakhstan should stop arbitrary arrests of Christians.</li> </ul>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>55</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Islamic by-laws rule regions and territories and the province of Aceh is ruled by Sharia law. These legal dispositions contradict the core principles of the UDHR, in particular in relation to freedom of religion. The international community must urge the Indonesian government and its Legislative to abolish any legal disposition that restricts freedom of religion in any way.</li> <li>- The government must do all that is in its power to prevent and punish the violence of radical Islamic groups against houses of worship of religious minorities, including Christians. In addition, the government should dissolve civil society groups that spread violence in the name of Islam.</li> <li>- Any practical or administrative obstacles regarding the registration of church buildings must be removed.</li> </ul>
<b>Mali</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Mali and the international community through MINUSMA and SERVAL operations should create conditions at the level of security and rebuilding of communities whereby exercising freedom of religion by Christians in the north is possible. This in view of returning Christians facing obstacles from the local Muslim population when they retake their possessions and death threats from Islamist groups that appear again.</li> <li>- The government of Mali should create awareness among government officials and the general population about marginalization, discrimination and at times targeted violence against the Christian population, that they as citizens of the state are entitled to freedom of religion, all kinds of civil rights and deserve protection. A special focus in this respect on the Northern areas is required, but also on the Southern areas as the Islamic imprint on society was strengthened through an alignment of government</li> </ul>



			and Islamic civil groups during the instability due to the Islamist takeover in the North.
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Turkey, hate crimes against Christian targets are relatively frequent. The government of Turkey must do all that is in its power to prevent and punish the violence of radical Islamic groups against houses of worship of religious minorities, including Christians.</li> <li>- Press freedom, and more broadly, freedom of expression, must be fully respected in Turkey. No government censorship can be allowed.</li> <li>- Anti-Christian interpretations of secularism persist. For example, no chaplains are permitted in the Turkish Army, the right to distribute religious materials is not always respected, and Christian evangelistic activities are sometimes criminalized. Neither the so-called Lausanne minorities nor the other minorities are protected by the Turkish state. All religious minorities should be allowed to register and to function freely, without restriction, and be allowed to establish universities or seminaries to train their leaders.</li> <li>- The international community must urge the government of Turkey to eliminate any biases against Christians in the Judiciary system. Illegal detentions and intimidations (human rights violations) of religious minorities should be applied.</li> <li>- Maintenance of historic religious buildings requires government approval, so religious properties can fall into government hands if specific conditions are not met, such as belonging to a recognized religious community and complying with a number of administrative requirements including zoning issues.</li> <li>- The international community must also urged the Turkish government to ensure the return of all confiscated properties belong to Christians that were disputed under the zoning law. The case of the Mar Gabriel monastery belonging to the Syrian Orthodox community is a clear example of this.</li> </ul>
<b>Colombia</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>55</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The position of Christians is not part of the agenda of the ongoing peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC. The international community should urge the Colombian government to include a focus on guarantees for Christians and on reducing their vulnerability to threats from organized crime as part of the peace talks.</li> <li>- The autonomy of indigenous territories, guaranteed in the Colombian Constitution, gives indigenous rulers free room to implement authoritarian governments where basic human rights, including those of Christians, are not respected. The international</li> </ul>

			community must denounce this situation and put pressure on the Colombian government to reform this constitutional provision. Even though respect for indigenous traditions and culture is very important in a democratic society, it must not be used as an excuse to tolerate and endorse bad governance and gross human rights violations such as torture or exclusion from basic social services.
<b>UAE</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>55</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of UAE should be requested to give the necessary protection to domestic workers who are from South East Asia and Africa and many of them are Christians.</li> <li>- The government of UAE should actively stop all kinds of discriminations that Christians face in the country, thereby ensuring equal civil and legal rights for residents from all religions and ethnicities.</li> <li>- Western countries should urge the UAE government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in the country.</li> <li>- The government should remove restrictions it imposes on Christian fellowship and construction of worship places.</li> <li>- The government of the UAE should remove any restrictions on the right of one's right to change his/her religion.</li> </ul>
<b>Bahrain</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>54</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Bahrain should be requested to give the necessary protection to domestic workers many of whom are Christians</li> <li>- Western countries should urge the Bahrain government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in the country.</li> <li>- The government should remove restrictions it imposes on Christian fellowship and construction of worship places.</li> <li>- The government of Bahrain should actively stop all kinds of discriminations that Christians face in the country, thereby ensuring equal civil and legal rights for residents from all religions and ethnicities.</li> </ul>
<b>Niger</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>53</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The presence of radical Islamist groups in Niger is a source of concern, and so is the increasing violence they are responsible for. The international community should urge the government of Niger to investigate crimes committed against Christians and bring their perpetrators to justice.</li> <li>- The government of Niger should also uphold full religious freedom and respect the secular nature of the State to the effect that Christians can freely worship and exercise their civil rights at the political, economic, social-cultural and religious levels.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government should aid the Christian communities to rebuild their churches, houses, shops and other Christian buildings lost in the attacks that followed Charlie Hebdo attack in the country in January 2015. The government should compensate churches, business men and families for the material losses incurred.</li> </ul>
<b>Oman</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>53</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government of Oman should be requested to give the necessary protection to domestic workers, some of whom are Christians.</li> <li>- The government of Oman should actively stop all kinds of discriminations that Christians face in the country, thereby ensuring equal civil and legal rights for residents from all religions and ethnicities.</li> <li>- Western countries should engage the government of Oman government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in the country.</li> <li>- The government should repeal a family law that denies a father who left Islam custodian rights, as it is incompatible with international standards on freedom of religion.</li> </ul>

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