



WWL 2017: Compilation 3

All WWL documents (except country profiles)



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research Unit

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WWL 2017: Compilation Volume 3

All WWL documents

not including:

Country persecution dynamics – see Volumes 1 and 2

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WWL 2017 – Ranks and scoring table for Top 50

WORLD WATCH LIST 2017										
RANK WWL 2017	Country	1. Private	2. Family	3. Community	4. National	5. Church	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORES WWL 2017	TOTAL SCORES WWL 2016	TOTAL SCORES WWL 2015
1	North Korea	16.667	15.385	16.427	16.667	16.667	9.815	92	92	92
2	Somalia	16.667	15.385	15.385	16.667	16.667	10.185	91	87	90
3	Afghanistan	16.667	16.427	15.145	15.625	14.844	10.556	89	88	81
4	Pakistan	14.792	14.023	14.183	14.974	13.125	16.667	88	87	79
5	Sudan	13.854	14.423	14.583	15.625	15.469	13.334	87	84	80
6	Syria	14.375	14.263	14.664	14.584	14.896	13.704	86	87	83
7	Iraq	15.104	14.904	15.465	15.104	15.209	10.370	86	90	86
8	Iran	14.063	14.343	14.744	15.625	16.459	10.185	85	83	80
9	Yemen	16.667	15.305	14.503	16.341	16.615	5.926	85	78	73
10	Eritrea	15.208	14.503	15.705	16.016	15.312	5.000	82	89	79
11	Libya	14.792	13.221	14.102	15.430	15.208	5.371	78	79	76
12	Nigeria	11.250	11.458	13.461	12.826	12.448	16.112	78	78	78
13	Maldives	15.000	15.145	13.702	16.146	15.729	0.741	76	76	78
14	Saudi Arabia	14.896	13.622	14.183	15.300	16.459	1.667	76	76	77
15	India	11.250	11.218	12.019	13.737	11.250	13.519	73	68	62
16	Uzbekistan	15.209	10.818	12.100	12.826	15.677	4.259	71	70	69
17	Vietnam	12.188	7.692	11.859	14.323	13.594	11.111	71	66	68
18	Kenya	12.188	11.218	12.420	9.831	13.073	9.630	68	68	63
19	Turkmenistan	14.896	10.016	12.741	12.826	15.104	1.111	67	66	63
20	Qatar	13.438	12.901	11.779	13.542	14.427	0.370	66	65	64
21	Egypt	9.849	10.789	10.091	9.759	8.116	16.112	65	64	61
22	Ethiopia	10.417	10.417	10.417	12.044	11.719	9.260	64	67	61
23	Palestinian Territory	12.292	12.821	11.779	11.654	13.334	2.222	64	62	58
24	Laos	11.667	8.013	13.061	12.956	14.792	3.148	64	58	58
25	Brunei	14.896	14.183	10.016	9.896	13.490	1.111	64	61	58
26	Bangladesh	11.771	9.696	11.859	9.310	8.386	12.222	63	57	51
27	Jordan	13.229	12.741	11.459	10.938	12.917	1.481	63	59	56
28	Myanmar	9.167	9.856	12.821	10.352	11.198	9.074	62	62	60
29	Tunisia	12.083	13.381	10.577	10.807	11.666	2.963	61	58	55
30	Bhutan	11.250	11.138	12.500	11.393	12.552	2.037	61	56	56
31	Malaysia	10.729	13.862	11.298	12.826	9.740	2.037	60	58	55
32	Mali	10.729	11.138	11.298	9.766	12.083	4.259	59	55	52
33	Tanzania	10.104	10.336	10.737	10.156	10.364	7.408	59	57	56
34	CAR	9.375	9.615	9.615	9.375	10.208	9.815	58	59	67
35	Tajikistan	12.604	10.337	9.696	10.547	12.552	1.852	58	58	50
36	Algeria	12.917	13.061	7.933	11.589	10.417	1.667	58	56	55
37	Turkey	11.771	9.135	9.455	10.612	7.813	8.519	57	55	52
38	Kuwait	13.125	11.619	11.459	10.287	10.521	0	57	56	49
39	China	10.313	7.532	7.692	9.961	12.813	8.519	57	57	57
40	Djibouti	11.979	11.378	10.977	9.636	11.719	1.111	57	58	60
41	Mexico	7.188	6.330	11.218	8.073	9.323	14.444	57	56	55
42	Comoros	11.667	10.737	10.096	9.766	13.229	0.926	56	56	56
43	Kazakhstan	12.188	8.894	9.295	11.003	13.386	1.296	56	55	51
44	UAE	13.646	12.340	10.898	9.505	9.063	0	55	55	49
45	Sri Lanka	9.792	7.692	10.657	10.482	9.584	6.667	55	(not)	51
46	Indonesia	9.584	9.856	10.978	8.919	8.542	6.852	55	55	50
47	Mauritania	10.938	10.016	10.977	11.393	10.677	0.556	55	(not)	50
48	Bahrain	12.709	11.619	9.295	11.068	9.740	0	54	54	(not)
49	Oman	12.188	11.459	10.337	8.008	11.198	0.185	53	53	55
50	Colombia	7.292	7.612	11.939	8.464	7.656	10.185	53	55	55

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WWL 2017 - Country religious statistics

WWL 2017 Country religious statistics - Top 50 countries			
Country	Total population (UN figure: 2016-10-01 as compiled by WCD)	Christians (numbers according to WCD, 2016-10-01; if not indicated otherwise)	Source
Afghanistan	34,169,000	thousands	Other
Algeria	41,064,000	37,700	Other
Bahrain	1,419,000	186,000	WCD
Bangladesh	164,828,000	866,000	WCD
Bhutan	793,000	20,000	Other
Brunei	434,000	54,800	WCD
Central African Republic	5,099,000	3,772,000	WCD
China	1,388,233,000	97,200,000	Other
Colombia	49,068,000	46,657,000	WCD
Comoros	826,000	4,200	WCD
Djibouti	911,000	11,100	WCD
Egypt	95,215,000	9,521,500	Other
Eritrea	5,482,000	2,741,000	Other
Ethiopia	104,345,000	65,737,400	Other
India	1,342,513,000	63,970,000	WCD
Indonesia	263,510,000	31,925,000	WCD
Iran	80,946,000	800,000	Other
Iraq	38,654,000	230,000	Other
Jordan	7,877,000	169,000	WCD
Kazakhstan	18,064,000	4,627,000	WCD
Kenya	48,467,000	39,742,900	Other
Kuwait	4,100,000	349,000	WCD
Laos	7,038,000	225,000	WCD
Libya	6,409,000	20,000	Other
Malaysia	31,164,000	2,865,000	WCD
Maldives	376,000	a few thousands	Other
Mali	18,690,000	448,600	Other
Mauritania	4,266,000	5,000	Other
Mexico	130,223,000	124,869,000	WCD
Myanmar	54,836,000	4,369,000	WCD
Nigeria	191,836,000	95,918,000	Other
North Korea	25,405,000	300,000	Other
Oman	4,741,000	204,000	WCD
Pakistan	196,744,000	3,938,000	WCD
Palestinian Territories	4,928,000	70,800	WCD
Qatar	2,338,000	210,000	WCD
Saudi Arabia	32,743,000	1,406,000	WCD
Somalia	11,392,000	a few hundreds	Other
Sri Lanka	20,905,000	1,925,000	WCD
Sudan	42,166,000	1,996,000	WCD
Syria	18,907,000	794,000	WCD
Tajikistan	8,858,000	62,200	WCD
Tanzania	56,878,000	31,739,000	WCD
Tunisia	11,495,000	23,500	WCD
Turkey	80,418,000	187,000	WCD
Turkmenistan	5,503,000	69,900	WCD
UAE	9,398,000	1,220,000	WCD
Uzbekistan	30,691,000	350,000	WCD
Vietnam	95,415,000	8,368,000	WCD
Yemen	28,120,000	a few thousands	Other
	Data Source: UN Stats (as compiled by WCD), updated 1 October 2016	Data source: Todd M. Johnson, ed., World Christian Database, research version, updated 1 October 2016	Other = Open Doors estimate

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WWL 2017 – Press release (short version)

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HARDERWIJK, NETHERLANDS, 11 JANUARY 2017 – Anti-Christian pressure is rising most rapidly in South and Southeast Asia, according to the annual Open Doors World Watch List, released today.

The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party to power in India has unleashed a religiously motivated nationalist fervor, according to Open Doors researchers responsible for compiling the World Watch List. This index ranks the 50 countries where approximately 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution due to their identification with Christ.

Five of the six countries whose underlying scores rose most sharply during the past year are in South and Southeast Asia: India, Bangladesh, Laos, Bhutan and Vietnam.

“A stand-out trend is that religious nationalism is driving the Asian countries up the list,” said Dr. Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Director for Strategic Research at Open Doors International.

Since the Hindu nationalist BJP won national elections in India in 2014, the pace of anti-Christian violence has accelerated in the country’s north, where as many as 40 million Christians live. “Insecure governments of neighboring Hindu- and Buddhist-majority countries have found appeals to national religious identity to provide a boost to their own position of power”, Boyd-MacMillan said.

THE TOP 10

North Korea again ranks No. 1 on the list, for the 16th consecutive year. Open Doors rates Pyongyang’s dictatorial regime as unmatched in its hostility to religion.

Within the top 10, Somalia moved up 4 places to No. 2. The intensely tribal character of Somali society means any Muslim who converts to Christianity is immediately detected and that is enough to get you killed.

Overall, the top 10 has been stable. Nine of the top 10 on the 2017 list also were among the top 10 on the previous year’s list: North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Eritrea.

In Iraq and Syria there were fewer reported incidents as most Christians have fled from IS held areas but the pressure on Christians is still very high.

At No. 9, Yemen is the only newcomer to the top 10, displacing Libya. Yemeni Christians are caught in the middle of a civil war between the Saudi Arabia-backed loyalists and Iran-backed

Houthi rebels. “The Christians in this country are getting it from different ends including Islamic militants such as IS and al-Qaeda; it doesn’t matter who’s in charge,” Boyd-MacMillan said.

OTHER TRENDS AMONG THE TOP 50

The average score for all 50 countries on the 2017 World Watch List increased slightly compared to 2016. Nearly a quarter of that increase is attributable to increasingly authoritarian regimes in eight countries in the Middle-East and Northern Africa. Countries like Egypt, Jordan and Algeria -- these are countries that are really cracking down on extremists.

Extremism has a freer hand in sub-Saharan Africa, where Islamic militancy is going mainstream. Money is flowing to Islamic politicians and schools, among other elements of society.

ABOUT THE WORLD WATCH LIST

Open Doors, a ministry started by Brother Andrew in 1955, provides spiritual and material support to persecuted Christians in dozens of countries and has development affiliates in over 20 countries.

The Open Doors World Watch Research unit surveys five areas of Christian life: private; family, community, national, and within the church. Separately, it measures violence against Christians. Scores for each of the six categories are combined to create a total score, which determines each country’s ranking on the World Watch List.

The 2017 World Watch List accounts for the 12 months ending 31 October 2016.

Open Doors’ research methods and results have been independently audited by the [International Institute for Religious Freedom](#).

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The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party to power in India has unleashed a religiously motivated nationalist fervor, according to Open Doors researchers responsible for compiling the World Watch List. This index ranks the 50 countries where approximately 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution due to their identification with Christ.

Of the six countries whose underlying scores rose most sharply during the past year, five are in South and Southeast Asia: India, Bangladesh, Laos, Bhutan and Vietnam. Another country in the region, Sri Lanka, is a newcomer to the list for 2017. Another, Hindu-majority Nepal, did not make the list this year but trends indicate it could join the top 50 in 2018.

“A stand-out trend is that religious nationalism is driving the Asian countries up the list. It’s a long-term trend, it’s been gathering pace since the 1990s when nobody bothered to notice it. But this year, I think it’s really come into its own,” said Dr. Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Director for Strategic Research at Open Doors International. “It is most visible in India. India is at its highest position on the World Watch List ever. The Hindu extremists are really in power, and a mob can do what they like in India, and it’s a large church so there are a lot of incidents.” Since the Hindu nationalist BJP won national elections in 2014, the pace of anti-Christian violence has accelerated in the country’s north, where Open Doors estimates as many as 40 million Christians are caught up in the “squeeze” of discrimination and the “smash” of Hindu militants.

Although India is officially secular, the BJP and Modi held aloft a vision of economic revival and Hindu purity that filled a vacuum left when voters swept away the ineffective, corrupt government of the Indian National Congress Party. “Insecure governments of neighboring countries, themselves majority-Hindu and -Buddhist, have found that appeals to national religious identity are a potent formula to boost their own position of power, especially in rural regions”, Boyd-MacMillan added.

THE TOP 10

North Korea again ranks No. 1 on the list, for the 16th consecutive year. Though it is not the most violent country on the list, Open Doors rates Pyongyang’s dictatorial regime as unmatched in its hostility to religion. Believers are entirely underground and largely disconnected, risking a life of hard labor and death not only for themselves but for their families too, if discovered.

Only one country is new to the top 10 in 2017: Yemen, which ranks 9th after ranking 11th a year earlier. Yemen has been wracked by violence since predominantly Shia Houthi rebels attacked the capital in 2014, prompting the Wahhabist Saudi Arabian government to lead a multi-national bombing campaign, effectively turning Yemen into a proxy civil war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. “Caught in the middle”, Boyd-MacMillan said, “are indigenous Christians, mostly former Muslims who have converted.”

“Conversion to another religion is punishable by death. Christians have been actively targeted and killed by militant Sunni Muslims. The war has caused a shift and a sharp rise in persecution, the perpetrators are now mostly the Islamic extremists,” he said. “The Shia, under the Houthi tribe, are also very intolerant if the religious identity of local Christians is known. So the Christians, if their conversion is known, in this country are getting it from different ends, including IS and al-Qaeda; it doesn’t matter who’s in charge.”

Also within the top 10, Somalia moved up 4 places to No. 2, and now is just a single point behind North Korea. Though there may be only a few hundred Christian believers in the entire country of 10 million people, the intensely tribal character of Somali society means any Muslim who converts to Christianity is immediately detected and is enough to get you killed. Somalia is one of only two countries other than North Korea to have been ranked No. 1 on the World Watch List over the years.

Overall, the top 10 has been stable. Nine of the top 10 on the 2017 list also were among the top 10 on the previous year’s list. Somalia (2), Afghanistan (3), Pakistan (4), Sudan (5), and Iran (8) each rose in the rankings. Syria (6) and Iraq (7) each dropped. In Iraq and Syria there were fewer reported violent incidents as most Christians have fled from IS held areas, but pressure on Christians is still very high. Yemen’s arrival among the top 10 displaced only Libya, which now is No. 11.

OTHER TRENDS AMONG THE TOP 50

The average score for all 50 countries on the 2017 World Watch List increased slightly compared to 2016. Nearly a quarter of that increase is attributable to eight Middle-East and Northern Africa countries – Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

“You’ve got these polarized governments, either they’re getting more radical or they’re getting more dictatorial,” Boyd-MacMillan said. “Countries like Egypt, Jordan and Algeria - these are countries that are really cracking down on extremists.”

Extremism has a freer hand in sub-Saharan Africa, where Islamic militancy is going mainstream. Financial support from outside the region, is flowing to local Islamic politicians and schools, among other elements of society, even in Kenya, the largest Christian-majority country on the World Watch List top 20.

ABOUT THE WORLD WATCH LIST

Open Doors is a ministry that has served Christians persecuted for their belief in Christ for over 60 years. It was founded by Brother Andrew, a Dutch missionary who began his ministry by smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain. Today Open Doors provides spiritual and material support to persecuted Christians in dozens of countries and has development affiliates in over 20 countries.

The annual ranking of 50 countries on the World Watch List is the product of year-round research conducted by the World Watch Research unit of Open Doors.

Researchers survey key contacts in various countries, and those contacts in turn survey their own networks, on the state of religious freedom for Christians in five areas of life: private, family, community, national, and within the church. These five areas comprise the “squeeze” element of persecution – the daily pressure of official discrimination, hostile attitudes, and family rejection.

Separately, the team measures violence against Christians. This is the “smash” element of persecution, one that often commands headlines but which rarely is the most dominant reality of Christians who live in World Watch List countries.

For each country surveyed, scores for each of the six categories are combined to create a total score. The scores determine the country’s ranking on the World Watch List.

The 2017 World Watch List accounts for the 12 months ending 31 October 2016.

Open Doors’ research methods and results have been independently audited by the [International Institute for Religious Freedom](#).

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WWL 2017 – Article on Trends

“WAVES OF NATIONALISM PUT ASIAN COUNTRIES UP THE WWL”

Waves of ethnic nationalism swirled around the world in 2016. This took an anti-establishment form in the West, powered partly by fears over inequality, migration, globalization and slowing growth. However in an Asian context this nationalism took an anti-minorities form, and was fueled more dramatically by religious nationalism and government insecurity.

Pakistan rose to fourth position in the WWL 2017 with levels of violence that even exceeded northern Nigeria. India climbed to its highest ever rank in the WWL (#15) as Hindu nationalists battered the churches. With the exception of war-torn Yemen, the countries adding most points on the WWL 2017 came from Asia. Laos, Bangladesh, Vietnam and tiny Bhutan saw deterioration of the situation for Christians, and Buddhist nationalism boosted Sri Lanka back into the top fifty. Even in China – which did not change for points – xenophobia has driven new regulations warning the Christians to beware of “hostile foreign forces.” An expatriate Christian in Beijing told a November conference: “It used to be that the authorities would visit me once a year; but such is their new level of suspicion, it is now twice a week.”

Islamic oppression remains the dominant persecution engine for the top 50 however, and the Middle East and North Africa is the region providing the most countries. Islamic oppression is the motor for persecution in fourteen out of the top 20 countries, and thirty-five in the top fifty, with North Korea and Eritrea the only exceptions in the top 10 not to persecute Christians for reasons to do with Islamism.

Yemen enters the top ten, where all expatriate Christians have fled in the face of grisly murders of four Catholic Sisters of Charity, and the indigenous Christians burrow deep underground amid the chaos of the civil war. Sudan rises to #5 as President Omar al-Bashir seeks to make good on his 2011 boast when the Christian south seceded: “Now we can impose *sharia* here.” Turkey has worsened too (#37) as Recep Tayyip Erdogan used a failed coup in July 2016 to round up 120,000 of his opponents and push the country in a more Islamic direction, though Christians have yet to bear the brunt of this. There have even been incendiary threats to turn the great church of the Byzantine capital - Hagia Sophia - back into a mosque.

Even in those countries where the leaders crack down on Muslim extremists, such as in Egypt (#21), and Algeria (#36), Christians are under immense strain. For the fourth year in a row, the total number of points in the top 50 has risen, from 3299 in WWL 2016 to 3355 for WWL 2017, suggesting strongly that the persecution of Christians worldwide is a rising trend.

Yet the news is not all bad, as many persecuted Christians are swift to stress. An official in China’s Ministry of National Security was overheard to murmur in June 2016: “Nothing can stop the growth of the church.” The number of Christians facing high levels of persecution in the top fifty countries alone of the current list is estimated by Open Doors Field sources with the help of

Open Doors World Watch Research as “at least 215 million.” In top ten countries such as Syria (#6), Iraq (#7), the debilitating wars have brought some Christians together over denominational divides that have existed for centuries. Some Christians and Muslims are experiencing a new rapprochement that can only auger well for the rebuilding of these lands. As a Syrian Orthodox leader said, “Our churches even in war-ravaged areas are fuller than before; our schools better attended, as we been forced to practice our Christianity more on the streets and in the homes; and so we have embedded the faith in the society in a new way.” In another heartening incident, Muslim passengers refused to be separated from Christians during a bus attack in Kenya by al-Shabaab.

Five major trends stand out that contour the 2017 Open Doors World Watch List:

1. Religious Nationalism in Asia is accelerating

Religious nationalism has been gathering pace since the mid 1990’s, but there is no doubt that it moved into a higher gear with the landslide election of Narendra Modi in May 2014. Hindu nationalists were out of power from 2004 to 2014, but they used that time well to expand massively into the countryside where the majority of India’s people live. Over 600,000 extremists were trained to run schools with the object of radicalizing families. It paid off. Now Christian organizations in Delhi are claiming an average of forty incidents per month where pastors are beaten, churches burned, converts harassed. Eight Christians have been killed for their faith this year alone. As the World Watch persecution analyst for India says: “It’s not only violence. There is a deterioration in freedom in all aspects of Indian society, and Hindu radicals have virtual impunity from the government.” The Indian church is massive, 64 million, with perhaps 39 million of them caught up in the vortex of direct persecution. Buddhist nationalism should not be forgotten either. In Bhutan the government does not regard Christians as Bhutanese at all. A new electronic identity card system ignores parts of the Christian minority, leading to a multitude of discriminations.

2. Asian Governments are more insecure, and play the nationalist card

Nationalism is always a card that an insecure government will play. Vietnam has a new government, Malaysia’s leader has been under pressure with corruption allegations and in China President Xi Jinping has been stoking Chinese nationalism even in the realm of religion, claiming that if you must belong to a religion, try a Chinese one like Confucianism – which is clever because it is not actually a religion but a series of moral obligations. Not a single country in East Asia lost points over the reporting period. In most of these countries, governments do say that to be, for example, Sri Lankan is to be Buddhist; to be a Malay is to be Muslim. Malaysia has “purification centers” for Christians and “deviating Muslims” to come back to Islam. Laos has a paranoid government desperate to stay in power, and the tribal believers bear the brunt, encountering a double persecution from state and tribe. Even in Vietnam there were three killings of Christians. Christians are always in vulnerable minorities in Asia with the exception of Christian majority Philippines, but even here converts to Christianity in Muslim majority Mindanao are persecuted. It is an easy and common ploy for tottering governments to gain cheap support by scapegoating Christians.

3. Islamic radicalization in sub-Saharan Africa is going mainstream

Of course sub-Saharan Africa has been hitting the headlines for years for the vicious antics of its Islamic militant insurgencies such as al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, the latter accused by the UN in November 2016 of causing Africa's most urgent emergency with 8 million in danger from starvation as a result of their fight. This still continues. At least a dozen Christians were killed in Somalia this year by al-Shabaab militants. But what is not so well known is that Islamic militancy is gaining ground in many more sectors of society. In the past, radicals would target only Muslims, but now – especially with generous Saudi funding – they are building new networks of extremist schools in Somalia, Kenya, Niger and Burkina Faso, and then targeting local government cadres, asking for concessions to build mosques and sponsoring those who are running for office. In most of these countries it is not only violence driving the persecution, but all WWL “squeeze categories” (measuring the pressure on Christians in the five realms of private, family, community, church and national life) are showing rising levels of persecution.

It is astonishing that Kenya, a Christian majority country, still remains firmly entrenched in the top 20. Even in Nairobi, Christian pastors have to hire private security firms to man the metal detectors at the church doors. Said the persecution analyst for the region: “Extremist violent movements seem to leave behind them a more radicalized people.” Hausa-Fulani herdsmen in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria have driven thousands of Christians off their lands. Somalia is #2 on the WWL because, as a local believer said: “Everything works against the Christian.” In Sudan, Christians are targeted by the government itself. Mali was actually the highest riser in the WWL 2017, up twelve places to #32, though Yemen added the most points. Islamic militants from Libya joined forces with Tuareg rebels to topple a hitherto democratic government in 2012, who were pushed back by an international military intervention, but the situation remains very precarious. On 17 December 2015, three people were killed when a gunman opened fire outside a Christian radio station in Timbuktu. All over the Sahel region the situation is worsening for Christians. According to an August 2016 World Watch Research report: “This is a critical time for the future of Christianity in the region. If the instability gets out of control and the militant groups have their way, Christians will be killed and exiled out of the entire region.”

4. The Middle East is polarized between more radical and more autocratic regimes

It is no surprise that with the military pull-back of the USA in the Middle East, two regional powers have moved into the vacuum and both are extremist regimes - Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudis are flexing their muscles in Yemen, as they seek to remove the Shia Houthi. The country has become a waste zone, with many Christians caught in the crossfire. Four sisters of the Missionaries of Charity were killed this year. Iran, now that its deal is done with the USA, has arrested record numbers of house-church Christians, and many are losing their livelihoods after having to pay huge fines. Always there is a dual effect of these trends however. Some Muslims see an ugly face of Islam and convert away from it, leading to a remarkable growth in the so-called MBB (Muslim Background Believer) movement; but others become more fundamentalist either out of conviction or merely to blend in. Sectarian divisions are increasing in many areas. Distinct from these more radical regimes are a group of more autocratic regimes, such as in Syria, Egypt and Algeria, that fight the extremists. Syria received the military backing of Russia this year. Syrian Christians in government run areas have in many cases as much freedom as before, and most Christians now have fled rebel held territory. But even in more peaceful Jordan

(#27), where the King seeks to control the extremists, the backlash from his attempts has resulted in higher levels of pressure on Christians.

5. Christians are being killed in more countries than before for their faith

The sad toll of Christians killed has continued in countries where it is sickeningly common, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular – a killing zone for the last decade. But in the WWL 2017 reporting period, the most all-pervasive violence recorded was in Pakistan. Islamic militants attacked Christians in a public park on Easter Sunday in Lahore, killing dozens. Bangladesh also experienced a year of attacks, which surprised a government which prided itself on its secular approach. Not only Muslim Background Believers (who are routinely targeted) but also other Christians found themselves the victims of violence. Three Christians were killed in Vietnam in the central highlands, where a huge church exists among the tribal minorities. One believer was also killed in tiny Laos. In Latin America, where large territories are controlled by mafia or guerrillas, standing up against corruption can be fatal. Twenty three Christian leaders were killed in Mexico, and four in Columbia. It is rare to have a reporting period where the killings of Christians have been more geographically dispersed. Ironically, fewer reports came in of Christians having been killed in Syria and Iraq, as most have already left the territory which Islamic State established as a caliphate in 2014.

“Good News” Strands?

While persecution can hardly constitute “good news,” many Christians in these countries are quick to state that their trials are often turned to good through the providence of God. Indeed, a central ministry of Open Doors is to be present to these suffering communities and find ways of making local believers more resilient so that their persecution becomes an opportunity to spread the Gospel “good news,” often in a way that would not be possible in more peaceful circumstances.

Below is a round-up of some of these “good news” elements.

1. The Chinese house church has a new opportunity to become more indigenous

Over 97 million people are Christians in China; 60 million plus worship outside state organized churches, but their leaders are conscious that they often look, sound and worship too much like their Western counterparts. “We are not Chinese enough,” said a pastor from Beijing. The years since 2012 has seen state control increase, though unevenly, in President Xi’s new China. One pastor in Shanghai sees this is a gift from God. He was forced to close his growing church two years ago by officials who became alarmed at its size. The congregation met in a park for a while in defiance of their orders to disband. But now he views the situation differently. “We have been blindly copying the Western church. But God has brought this persecution to stop us building mega churches and imitating others. Now that we have had to disperse back into smaller groups, I believe we have the chance to become a truly indigenous church.”

2. Christians are looking forward to going back to their historic homes in Northern Iraq

The days of an Islamic State-run caliphate in Northern Iraq and Syria are numbered. Since an August 2016 offensive, the Islamic militants have been pushed back by a coalition of Iraqi and foreign-backed forces. Some of the towns and villages such as Qaraqosh – which were once completely Christian – have been liberated. Iraq’s second largest city – Mosul – will soon be in the hands of Iraqi forces. Over 80,000 Christians fled their homes in 2014, and have been refugees in Iraqi Kurdistan since. “We can’t wait to go back,” said one, in Erbil, and then added: “But we will go back with a greater determination to keep freedom defended.” While Christians are keen to return to Christian majority areas, it seems that some who lived in cities like Mosul are not so keen: “I was betrayed by my Muslim neighbors. ... How can I go back to live side by side with them now?”

3. Muslim Background Believers in Indonesia have no fear in their new faith

There are fewer categories of Christian in the world who have it harder than the believer from a Muslim background (MBB). Many have to keep their faith secret. Most face on a daily basis the hostility of family, tribe and society. But it is not always the case. In the country with the world’s largest population of Muslims – Indonesia – a new kind of Muslim Background Believer is emerging: Independent, strong and fearless. Their numbers may be a clue, as they are numerous. But as a long-time observer of this country said: “These new MBB’s live a lifestyle that is not fearful, nor do they think they have to be like the Christians that told them about the Gospel – they will form a new strand of the church, that will be more biblical and vibrant, and they will bless the world.”

4. The “exodus” of Christians in the Middle East is significantly slowing ... for now

Most Christians in the Middle East may have crossed a border within the region, but for the moment they did not leave the region as a whole. However, a good number did and fleeing to a neighboring country is often the first step to leaving the region for the West. As a person in Jordan who worked in the refugee camps has said: “Look, if you were a Christian and you had resources, you’ve already gone.” Thus numbers exiting the region slowed, though many Christians still fear their existence in the region will come to an end. Open Doors estimates the number of Christians in the Middle East and Turkey at currently 16.5 million, including migrant and expatriate Christians in the Gulf States.

5. Some migrants are bringing new life to Western churches

The numbers of Christians among the migrant population entering Europe seems to be relatively small, but churches in countries like Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, who welcome the migrants, are also finding that they are not only givers but receivers. Christians in many towns have volunteered their time and skills to teach the local language, and connections have been made that extend all the way to the church. Some Muslim migrants have converted to Christianity, and although there are ethical concerns that many are doing so to improve asylum claims, some churches are enjoying the benefit of a new influx of young believers. Said a pastor in a Cambridge (UK) church recently: “We feel revived by the new Christians. They have different questions, and remarkable experiences, and we have grown as their new curiosity has taught us new insights about our faith.” Said another pastor from central Germany: “They are reminding us what real faith looks like.”

There is much however that is depressingly familiar.

North Korea tops the WWL once again, and this secretive state isolates and antagonizes even more with each passing year. Islamic oppression gathers strength as it seeks to create cultures that strangle the expression of the Christian faith. In the two largest churches in the top 50 – China and India – it is a darkening picture. The dilemmas of the persecuted Christian are also familiar. In countries such as North Korea or Somalia or even parts of Pakistan the dilemma is: Can I practice the Christian faith without telling anyone? In countries where religious nationalism is rising, the pastors often say: “How can we worship and evangelize without incurring the wrath of the mob? In countries where surveillance and control is all pervasive – such as Central Asian states – the dilemma is: Can we live out our faith in society when the eyes of the government are everywhere? In civil war states, such as Syria and Libya, the issue is often even starker: Can we get to a place where our house or church will not be bombed tomorrow? And for many it is still: How do we get out of the country, but not so far away we can never come back? Every day persecuted Christians the world over face these stark dilemmas. The persecuted need friends to stand with and strengthen them like never before.

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WWL 2017 – Numbers of Christians killed and churches attacked (1 November 2015 – 31 October 2016)

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Context

It is very difficult to gather reliable information on the total number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons worldwide. The same holds true for the total number of churches attacked. Notwithstanding the difficulties, the World Watch Unit (WWU) has been collecting data on these two topics. Although a complete listing is impossible, it is possible to lift a tip of the veil and see clearly something of the suffering Christians have experienced at the hands of their persecutors.

The data for this document has been gathered worldwide and organized into two groups: 1) countries inside the WWL 2017; and 2) countries outside the WWL 2017. This makes the comparison of the data with the WWL 2017 table of scores and ranking feasible. It also puts the data for Christian killed and churches attacked for faith-related reasons in a broader perspective: A high score for these categories of violence alone does not necessarily mean that the country suffers from high levels of persecution. An example are the newly added European countries.

Attacks on churches can vary from light to extreme. Light attacks come in the category of desecration or vandalism, whereas extreme attacks mean the complete destruction of the church. There are countries where there is no visible Church. Christians gather in secret, in 'house' or 'underground' churches, or they just stay on their own. The data on churches attacked

includes attacks on 'house' or 'underground' houses, even though it is very difficult to obtain such data.

In situations of civil war and other social disasters, there will always be many more Christians killed and churches attacked than can be included in this paper, since it is not always possible to distinguish precisely between random killings and killings where Christians are being targeted because of their faith. Only the latter qualifies as being 'persecution'.

It is very likely that there are many other incidents where Christians have been killed and churches have been attacked for faith-related reasons - thus qualifying as 'persecution' - but for a variety of reasons it was not possible to obtain details. These reasons may be security reasons, intelligence reasons, or otherwise. Such incidents could therefore not be included.

The data on violence against Christians in this paper is limited to records of Christians being killed or churches attacked for faith-related reasons. The WWL questionnaire contains questions on many more categories of violence for faith-related reasons which are then all taken into account for calculating the country score for violence. This explains why there is a difference between the ranking for violence in this paper and the ranking and scoring table (block 6) of the WWL 2017. In the first place the WWL questionnaire not only looks at churches but also at other Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) that have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated. Furthermore a variety of other incidents, apart from killings, is accounted for: Detention without trial; being sentenced to prison or labor camp; being sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment; abduction; rape or other forms of sexual harassment; forced marriages; other forms of physical or mental abuse (including torture and mistreatment); attacks on houses belonging to Christians; attacks on Christians' shops or businesses or other property by being damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated; Christians being forced to leave their homes or to go into hiding in-country, or to leave their country.

Global view

In the WWL 2017 reporting period 1,207 Christians were recorded as being killed for faith-related reasons, and 1,329 churches attacked. These attacks can vary between minor attacks (desecration, and acts of vandalism to complete destruction). This is much lower than in the WWL 2016 reporting period, especially the number of Christians killed (down from 7,106). The number of churches attacked was also lower (down from 2,425).

It is very difficult to get complete data, especially in situations of civil conflict. Examples are the civil war zones in Myanmar; the battle fields in Iraq and even more so in Syria; the Nuba Mountains in Sudan; the Middle Belt states of Nigeria with the attacks by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen and the northeastern states with attacks by Boko Haram; the hardship caused by Boko Haram in Chad and Cameroon; the situation in parts of Central African Republic where militant Muslims are still holding sway. Hardly known are the 'killing fields' of Eastern Congo, North Kivu Province. In all those areas the numbers recorded are always too low.

Apart from intelligence problems, the number of violent incidents is also lower because some very violent situations for Christians in the WWL 2016 reporting period calmed down somewhat

during the WWL 2017 reporting period. That is why Boko Haram related killings (and church attacks) in Nigeria and neighboring countries are hardly included in this count. Apart from the difficulties in gathering reliable data in such conflict situations, it is very likely that Boko Haram did cause less killings (and church attacks) since it has been under attack from different governments and forced into the defensive in recent months.

Christians killed for faith-related reasons

The number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons in the WWL 2017 reporting period is 1,207. It went down from 7,106 (WWL 2016 reporting period). The number of Christians killed in the WWL 2017 countries was 948, and for countries outside the WWL 2017 it was 225. That is a ratio of 78% to 19%. There were also 34 Christians killed in countries which could not be revealed (3%).¹

Inside and outside the WWL 2017	WWL 2017 reporting period - Christians killed	WWL 2016 reporting period - Christians killed
Inside WWL 2017	948	5,747
Outside WWL 2017	225	1,359
Countries unrevealed	34	0
TOTAL	1,207	7,106

North Korea: No conclusive data on this category is available.

Churches attacked for faith-related reasons

The number of churches attacked for faith-related reasons in the WWL 2017 reporting period is 1,329. It went down from 2,425 (WWL 2016 reporting period). The number of churches attacked in the WWL 2017 countries was 1,188 (89%), against 141 (11%) for the countries outside the WWL 2017.

Inside and outside the WWL 2017	WWL 2017 reporting period – Churches attacked	WWL 2016 reporting period – Churches attacked
Inside WWL 2017	1,188	2,242
Outside WWL 2017	141	183
Countries unrevealed	0	0
TOTAL	1,329	2,425

North Korea: No conclusive data on this category is available.

Countries inside WWL 2017

For the countries on the WWL 2017, 948 Christians were recorded as having been killed for faith-related reasons, and 1,188 churches attacked in the reporting period. This is much lower

¹ “Countries which could not be revealed” (in the tables shortened to: “Countries unrevealed”) means that the sources did not reveal the names of the countries where the violence happened; or that WWU decided not to mention the names of the countries for security reasons.

than for the WWL 2016 reporting period: the number of Christians killed went down from 5,747; the number of churches attacked went down from 2,242.²

Christians killed for faith-related reasons

In the countries covering ranks 1 to 50 of the WWL 2017, 948 killings of Christians were registered. Countries ranked on the WWL 2017 not mentioned in the table below registered 0 killings. Christians were killed in 25 out of the 50 countries. In the WWL 2016 reporting period there were 22 countries with one or more Christians killed for faith-related reasons.

RANK WWL 2017	Inside WWL 2017	WWL 2017 reporting period - Christians killed	WWL 2016 reporting period - Christians killed
12	Nigeria	695	4,028
4	Pakistan	76	39
18	Kenya	37	225
6	Syria	24	33
41	Mexico	23	10
34	CAR	13	1,269
2	Somalia	12	3
21	Egypt	12	12
3	Afghanistan	10	3
15	India	8	9
5	Sudan	5	6
28	Myanmar	5	13
9	Yemen	4	2
26	Bangladesh	4	1
50	Colombia	4	6
10	Eritrea	3	11
17	Vietnam	3	0
11	Libya	2	58
32	Mali	2	3
7	Iraq	1	10
16	Uzbekistan	1	0
22	Ethiopia	1	3
24	Laos	1	2
33	Tanzania	1	0
45	Sri Lanka	1	0
46	Indonesia	0	1
	TOTAL	948	5,747

North Korea: No conclusive data on this category is available.

The top 3 of this list are Nigeria (695), Pakistan (76), and Kenya (37).

² This paper compares the data for countries inside the WWL 2017 with their data for the WWL 2016 reporting period. It does not necessarily mean that all those countries also figured inside the WWL 2016 Top 50.

The number of killings in **Nigeria** went down, because Boko Haram related killings in Nigeria hardly figure in this list. Apart from the difficulties of gathering reliable data in such conflict situations, it is very likely there were less killings, because Boko Haram was in the defensive, itself under attack from various government forces. It is interesting to note that the still relatively high number of killings for Nigeria is now mainly caused by violence of Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen against Christians, elsewhere referred to as [‘ethnic cleansing’](#)³. Christians killed by “suspected Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen” were reported in 14 Nigerian states, some of them southern states. In two other northern states, killings by “suspected Islamic extremists” were reported.

The number for **Pakistan** is mainly made up of the victims of the bomb attack in Lahore, during Easter celebrations in a park. Local sources said 72 people were killed, among them scores of children as the bomb was detonated next to a playground.

The killings in **Kenya** were all in Muslim-dominated regions. Among those killed were 2 bus-passengers when al-Shabaab militia boarded a bus and separated Christians for execution. Five policemen (considered 'Christians') and 3 Christian men were attacked in their homes and killed in Lamu area. Six persons presumed to be 'Christians' by al-Shabaab were killed in their Mandera homes. About 12 non-local Christians were murdered when al-Shabaab militia attacked the guest house where they were seeking accommodation.

Churches attacked for faith-related reasons

In the countries covering ranks 1 to 50 of the WWL 2017, 1,188 attacks on churches were recorded. Countries ranked on the WWL 2017 not mentioned in the table below registered 0 attacks on churches. Churches were attacked in 27 out of the 50 countries. In the WWL 2016 reporting period there were 29 countries with one or more churches attacked for faith-related reasons.

RANK WWL 2017	Inside WWL 2017	WWL 2017 reporting period - Churches attacked	WWL 2016 reporting period - Churches attacked
4	Pakistan	600	17
39	China	300	1,500
17	Vietnam	38	2
45	Sri Lanka	35	81
12	Nigeria	33	198
22	Ethiopia	23	10
15	India	21	23
46	Indonesia	15	20
26	Bangladesh	14	16
41	Mexico	13	13
8	Iran	11	2
5	Sudan	10	53

³ See: <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Ethnic-cleansing-in-the-Middle-Belt-Region-of-Nigeria-2015.pdf>. World Watch Research reports can be accessed on the Open Doors Analytical website with the password: freedom.

21	Egypt	10	69
33	Tanzania	10	13
37	Turkey	10	8
50	Colombia	9	14
7	Iraq	8	18
6	Syria	7	24
28	Myanmar	4	11
9	Yemen	3	3
11	Libya	3	2
16	Uzbekistan	2	1
18	Kenya	2	0
23	Palestinian Territories	2	1
30	Bhutan	2	0
36	Algeria	2	2
34	CAR	1	131
14	Saudi Arabia	0	1
29	Tunisia	0	1
31	Malaysia	0	1
32	Mali	0	7
	TOTAL	1,188	2,242

North Korea: No conclusive data on this category is available.

The top 3 of this list are Pakistan (600), China (300), and Vietnam (38).

Pastors in **Pakistan** reported more than 600 attacks, from broken windows to burned-down buildings. In **China** the cross demolition campaign was fading out, it stopped in 2016. So, there were much less churches affected than in the years before. In **Vietnam**, apart from three individual attacks, OD field researchers reported: "In the highland areas there has been a crack-down on registered churches. According to the various reports about 35-40 church buildings have been attacked by various actors like government agents, villagers and local thugs." The number chosen (38) is on the lower side. Additionally, land of more than 60 pastors has been taken away.

Countries outside WWL 2017

For the countries outside the WWL 2017, 225 Christians were recorded as having been killed for faith-related reasons in the reporting period, and 141 churches attacked. This is much lower than for the WWL 2016 reporting period: The number of Christians killed went down from 1,359; the number of churches attacked went down from 183.⁴

⁴ This paper compares the data for countries outside the WWL 2017 with their data for the WWL 2016 reporting period. It does not necessarily mean that all those countries were also outside the WWL 2016 Top 50.

Christians killed for faith-related reasons

In the countries outside the WWL 2017, 225 Christians were reported killed. Christians were killed in 9 countries. In the WWL 2016 reporting period there were 8 countries with one or more Christians killed for faith-related reasons.

(NO RANK)	Outside WWL 2107	WWL 2017 reporting period - Christians killed	WWL 2016 reporting period - Christians killed
	DRC	156	467
	Chad	20	750
	Uganda	16	4
	Cameroon	13	114
	Philippines	11	6
	Lebanon	5	0
	France	2	0
	Guinea	1	0
	Guatemala	1	0
	Niger	0	10
	Ivory Coast	0	1
	Gambia	0	7
	TOTAL	225	1,359

The top 3 of this list are DRC (156), Chad (20), and Uganda (16).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) all but one of the killings happened in North Kivu Province (155). In May 2016 World Watch Monitor reported on the [violence in DRC⁵](#) committed by ADF-NALU (more recently often called MDI), particularly in Beni and Lubero (North Kivu Province): “[Local civil society organizations] say the violence has so far claimed 1,116 lives between October 2014 and May 2016. That’s an average of 60 killed per month, or two a day, points out their letter (which WWM has seen). It says some 1,470 other people were abducted, while 34,297 families have been forcibly displaced or are dispersed. There are also numerous cases of sexual violence against women and children.” [Human Rights Watch⁶](#) (October 2016) also reported on the same conflict: “Human Rights Watch research and credible reports from Congolese activists and the UN indicate that armed fighters have killed at least 680 civilians in at least 120 attacks in Beni territory since October 2014. Victims and witnesses described brutal attacks in which assailants methodically hacked people to death with axes and machetes or shot them dead. The actual number of victims could be much higher.”

According to [World Watch Monitor \(August 2016\)⁷](#), basing itself on a report published on 21 March 2016 by the Congo Research Group, an independent group linked with New York University, “ADF rebels have forged strong ties with local groups and militias over the course of

⁵ See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/05/4465470/>, last accessed 19 December 2016.

⁶ See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/07/dr-congo-protect-civilians-beni-attack>, last accessed 19 December 2016.

⁷ See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/07/4547030/>, last accessed 20 December 2016.

20 years of insurrection around Beni”, leading to a strong suspicion that “members of the national army and local militias have also been involved in attacks on civilians.”

Although many sources talk about “civilians”, the religious dimension of the attacks by the militant Islamic group is betrayed by the observation of a local source, that people who started wearing Islamic dress were not attacked.

In Koumra (**Chad**), at least 4 died during an attack by Muslim cattle breeders on Christian farmers at the end of 2015. Many Christians lost their lives due to the Boko Haram conflict in the Lake Chad region.

In **Uganda**, most of the killings took place in Eastern Uganda. Among the Christians killed was a church elder, strangled to death by unknown persons after many warnings by local Muslims to stop his evangelistic activities in the area. A church warden was stabbed to death by an imam. Five MBBs died after being poisoned by Muslim family members. Two Christians (one of them a MBB) were deliberately electrocuted as they accessed their church compound for overnight prayers. A Christian lady was hacked to death for converting and becoming a preacher of the Gospel. A pastor was killed while travelling to a pastors' graduation ceremony in Kampala. His killers dumped the body near the local police station. Police arrested and briefly detained the person suspected of driving the car in which his body was transported but released him without charge. No further progress has been reported in the case. This is typical for the situation in Eastern Uganda: Most cases were reported to the police, they promised to investigate, made a few arrests but released most of the suspects. Also, most of these cases were not reported in the national media, and the few that got media coverage were instead reported as 'normal' crimes by local language newspapers.

Churches attacked for faith-related reasons

In the countries outside the WWL 2017, 141 attacks on churches were registered. Churches were attacked in 25 out of the 50 countries. In the WWL 2016 reporting period there were 11 countries with one or more churches attacked for faith-related reasons. However, 12 countries (shaded gray) did not have a thorough enough investigation last year to be able to compare the data for the WWL 2016 and WWL 2017 reporting periods. The data for those 12 countries for the WWL 2017 reporting period are from the Vienna-based [Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe](http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/).⁸

(NO RANK)	Outside WWL 2107	WWL 2017 reporting period - Churches attacked	WWL 2016 reporting period - Churches attacked
	France	45	
	DRC	20	13
	Chili	18	0
	Spain	11	
	Italy	11	
	Cuba	4	3

⁸ See: <http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/>.

	Belgium		3	
	Germany		3	
	Kosovo		3	
	Philippines		2	0
	Nepal		2	5
	Uganda		2	3
	Israel		2	0
	Ukraine		2	
	Slovenia		2	
	Sweden		2	
	Kyrgyzstan		1	0
	Chad		1	10
	Guinea		1	0
	Senegal		1	0
	Morocco		1	0
	Austria		1	
	Greece		1	
	United Kingdom		1	
	Mongolia		1	0
	Belarus		0	5
	Niger		0	115
	Russia		0	3
	Cameroon		0	10
	Côte d'Ivoire		0	10
	Gambia		0	6
	TOTAL		141	183

The top 3 of this list are France (45), DRC (20), and Chili (18).

The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe registered many incidents against churches in **France**. Apart from 45 church buildings, small chapels, crosses and statues as well as nativity scenes were desecrated, vandalized or otherwise attacked. Those were not counted in this list. Churches where it seems the destruction was related to simple theft were not counted; the same applies for a case in which the perpetrator seemed to have serious psychological problems. In that sense the count is on the lower/cautious side.

Due to the violence committed by ADF-NALU in **DRC** many churches were partly or completely abandoned. The CECA-20, only one of the churches in the region, reported that in its Oicha Section, which is part of North Kivu Province, 20 local churches were attacked and closed.

Chili saw 18 cases of arson attacks on churches, partially or totally destroying them, all happening in rural areas. Many of the attacks were claimed by the Weichan Auka Mapu, a group which propagates ethnic fundamentalism, seeks to re-take ancestral lands by force and to force out all who do not identify with Mapuche cosmology. Attacks are related to the Luchsinger-MacKay case in which a married couple were attacked and burned in their house and farm in Vilcun on the morning of 4 January 2013, as a result 11 Mapuche members were arrested and

charged, including a *machi* (shaman). Especially the fact that the *machi* was still detained, caused attacks in the WWL 2017 reporting period. Attacks on churches can also be seen as reprisals for the eviction of the Mapuche from the Major Seminary San Fidel, a Catholic premises on 2 March 2016. The Huequenche Ni Aukinko community had progressively re-taken land since 2012, claiming ancestral rights.

Churches nearly or completely abandoned

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 taking their families to church again. It will have a ripple effect on other Christian 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 DRC, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, , Colombia, and Mexico, 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](#)⁹, 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.

DATA ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL GROUPS OF MEMBER STATES

The summary of the same data is now presented according to the United Nations Groups of Member States.

Christians killed for faith-related reasons

The African Group has registered by far most Christians killed (989; 82%), followed by the Asia-Pacific Group (154; 13%). The number of countries in the African Group (54) is comparable to the number of countries in the Asia-Pacific Group (55). The Latin American and Caribbean Group has 33 countries, the Eastern European Group 23, and the Western European and Others Group 29.

United Nations Regional Groups of Member States	WWL 2017 reporting period - Christians killed	WWL 2016 reporting period - Christians killed
African Group	989	6,971
Asia-Pacific Group	154	119
Latin American and Caribbean Group	28	16

⁹ See footnote 1 above.

Eastern European Group	0	0
Western European and Others Group	2	
Countries unrevealed	34	0
TOTAL	1,207	7,106

North Korea: No conclusive data on this category is available.

Churches attacked for faith-related reasons

The Asia-Pacific Group has by far most churches attacked (1,068; 80%), followed by the African Group (120; 9%).

United Nations Regional Groups of Member States	WWL 2017 reporting period – Churches attacked	WWL 2016 reporting period – Churches attacked
African Group	120	653
Asia-Pacific Group	1,068	1,726
Latin American and Caribbean Group	44	30
Eastern European Group	4	8
Western European and Others Group	93	(no data set available except Turkey:) 8
Countries unrevealed	0	0
TOTAL	1,329	2,425

North Korea: No conclusive data on this category is available.

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WWL 2017 – Persecution Watch Countries (outside Top 50)

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It always needs to be emphasized that countries which are not part of the WWL Top 50 are not necessarily free from persecution. 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.

The Persecution Watch Countries are listed below with a short explanation. Not all countries listed have been completely scored yet. The bottom line for inclusion in the list of Persecution

Watch Countries is no longer a score of 41 points or higher - it can be lower. The bottom line is when initial research by WWU shows there is a need to step up the persecution analysis of the situation in a given country.

This list of Persecution Watch Countries is not complete. Others could have been added. But for the moment these are the countries WWU would like to suggest for special attention.

1. Overview of the Persecution Watch Countries

Country	1. Private	2. Family	3. Community	4. National	5. Church	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORES FOR WWL 2017 EXERCISE
Uganda	10,104	8,654	9,615	5,990	8,646	10,000	53
Nepal	10,938	9,535	9,375	10,026	9,479	3,148	53
Azerbaijan	11,979	7,612	9,135	10,352	12,292	0,926	52
Kyrgyzstan	10,417	8,894	9,215	6,771	10,990	1,852	48
Niger	10,313	10,817	10,016	6,836	7,344	2,037	47
Cuba	8,438	3,846	10,417	9,375	11,406	3,519	47
Russian Federation	10,313	7,212	9,055	8,203	10,052	1,111	46
Cameroon							
Chad							
DRC (Eastern)							
Gambia							
Guinea							
Israel							
Ivory Coast							
Morocco							
Philippines (Southern)							
Senegal							
Venezuela							

Order of countries from Cameroon downwards is alphabetical.

2. Africa

Cameroon

Islamic oppression is the main persecution engine in Cameroon. Despite the fact that the Christian population is 59.8%¹⁰ 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) is being challenged due to the growing prominence of Salafist teaching and the activity of jihadist groups across the Sahel and the Sahara, and in particular through the activities of

¹⁰ Data source: Todd M. Johnson, ed., World Christian Database, research version, updated 1 October 2016.

Boko Haram within the country. Over the past several years, Boko Haram has used the country as an operational base and as a refuge for regrouping, and has also conducted 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 - including 13 Christians who were reported killed during the WWL 2017 reporting period. Despite the fact that the incidence of suicide attacks by Boko Haram has decreased during the WWL 2017 reporting period, as long as the Boko Haram threat is not tackled, the threat against Christians and churches will remain very high in northern Cameroon.

Chad

The main persecution engine in Chad is still *Islamic oppression*. Though the country has a large Christian population (35.2% of the total population), the influence and dominance of Islam is manifest and growing. Militant Islamic 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. There is a reduction in the activities of Boko Haram, which have been focused mainly in the Lake Chad region. However, extremist Salafi teaching is being spread throughout the country through the creation of a network of training centers. The growing influence of such teachings and movements is leading to the overall radicalization of the Muslim population in the country. In the long run, this poses a serious challenge to the freedom and security of Christians in Chad. There is a good working relationship between the government (President Idriss Déby) and the Christians. Nevertheless, Christians are being marginalized and discriminated against in society, and radical Islam is growing.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In DRC, with a Christian population of 95.2%, the ADF-NALU (Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for Liberation of Uganda) is active in the east of the country and specifically in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces. In these two provinces, several villages and churches were attacked and almost abandoned.

The ADF-NALU was created in the mid-1990s by two armed groups.¹¹ It was set up to destabilize the government of the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986. Although the rebellion has moved to the DRC, it is a Ugandan movement, born in Uganda for a Ugandan cause. They are known to have the support of the Somali militant group al-Shabaab. The ADF-NALU movement was reorganized in the Rwenzori Mountains to plan criminal actions.

Supported by Sudan, the ADF were originally composed mainly of militants coming from the Tabliq movement, a Muslim missionary movement. As the years passed, ADF adherents became radicalized and today it is mainly composed of jihadists.

Since its creation, the ADF-NALU attacked Kampala repeatedly but unfortunately for them, they always failed because every time Kampala hit back hard. So they were unable to get established. Repulsed by the Ugandan army, they found refuge in neighboring DRC where they merged and formed a hybrid rebellion that was born and implanted in the DRC, after failing to settle in

¹¹ In more recent times ADF-NALU is also called "Muslim Defense International" (MDI).

Uganda. The ADF-NALU rebels found fertile ground in the eastern part of the Congo for their survival.

When they first arrived, the rebels were very well received in the DRC. They even received financial support from Kinshasa. There was a peaceful coexistence between them and the people in the region. They cultivated fields, did business together and signed agreements with local populations. So it turns out that according to some surveys, this Ugandan rebellion is partly made up of Congolese people.

Over time, the ADF-NALU turned against the population and the Congolese government. They committed atrocities and became a public danger to all the Congolese people. Thus, a series of offensives were conducted against them by the Congolese army, beginning in 2005. Those attacks were aimed at forcing the Ugandan rebels to leave Congolese territory permanently. However, due to their guerrilla tactics and their position deep in the forest, the rebels have been able to resist, despite being under serious pressure.

Since October 2014, DRC has suffered repeated attacks by ADF-NALU on the population and the Congolese army. Crimes committed include the following:

- a) Kidnappings
- b) Massacres, killings of civilians and attacks on military positions.
- c) Looting
- d) Rape of women
- e) Recruitment of children into the army
- f) Displacement of families, communities and churches
- g) Abductions.

Although many sources talk about “civilians” - and most civilians in the region under attack are Christians - the religious dimension of the attacks by the militant Islamic group is betrayed by the fact that people who started wearing Islamic dress were not attacked (according to observations by local sources).

[World Watch Monitor](#) has written several articles on the situation in DRC.

Gambia

Gambia (4.5% Christians), 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 oppression* as a persecution engine is present in the country. Non-violent measures are taken to Islamize the country, particularly the educational system, public institutions, media and areas concerning marriage and family. Muslims who convert to Christianity (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) face considerable problems in the communities. Every citizen is considered a member of the Islamic *umma* from birth and is thus expected to practice the religion of his people. Christian families are rarely free to conduct their family life in a Christian way. The pressure caused by the communal lifestyle means that - particularly in remote areas - MBBs and other Christians are very restricted in expressing their Christian faith and fear persecution. Islamist-inspired mobs are also present in the country. During the reporting period, President Yahya Jammeh declared

“The Gambia” an Islamic Republic¹² and has made the country the second African Islamic republic after Mauritania.

Guinea

The church in Guinea (3.5% Christians) is mainly made up of Christians with a Muslim background (MBBs). *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine while *Ethnic antagonism* and *Denominational protectionism* are also present to a lesser extent. The *private, family and community spheres* are the *spheres of life* where the persecution of Christians is most prevalent. Although to a lesser degree as compared with the other spheres, Christians also face considerable persecution in the *church and national spheres*. Under President Alpha Condé, the state is showing a degree of acceptance to Christians. The Authority of Religious Affairs has started to show some level of sensitivity regarding the rights of Christians. For example, the Authority has agreed to arrange for government sponsorship of Christians traveling to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage.

Radical Islamic groups are not particularly active in Guinea and the government tries to reduce the risk they pose to Christians and the society at large. No large-scale violence against Christians was recorded in the WWL 2017 reporting period. In the foreseeable future, the major concern for Christians in Guinea is the growing influence of radical versions of Islam that promote persecution in the entire West African region. Under the influence of radical teachings, many families and communities are becoming less tolerant of Christians and this makes life very difficult, especially for MBBs. The radicalization of society will sooner or later be reflected in how the government thinks and acts as well as in the increasingly hostile environment in which the local church will be forced to operate.

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast (35% Christians) has witnessed some of the worst violent incidents in Africa in the WWL 2017 reporting period. The most widely reported incident occurred in the resort town of Grand-Bassam¹³ where Islamic militants linked with al-Qaeda (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) killed twenty- two people, including a five year old boy. Comparable attacks took place in Mali (November 2015) and Burkina Faso (January 2016). The Washington Post (14 March 2016) reports: “The trio of attacks in West Africa has triggered fears that radical Islamist terror groups are extending their reach to previously untouched corners of the continent. All three incidents resembled an attack on a Tunisian beach in North Africa in June that killed 38 people and was claimed by the Islamic State.”¹⁴ This creates an atmosphere of terror, especially for Christians. Furthermore, there is an increasing pressure on Christians in the country due to the growing presence of Islam in government, administration, business, media and education. Open Doors field workers have noted an increasing pressure from radical groups and there is a discernible growth in the influence of Islamic Salafist ideology through the provision of charitable social services in the country. For the Ivoirian church, this changing atmosphere and the increasing activity of Islamic militancy pose a great challenge.

¹² See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35359593>, last accessed 22 December 2016.

¹³ See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/03/14/horror-at-the-beach-22-dead-in-terrorist-attack-on-ivory-coast-resorts/?utm_term=.895ccf264ac5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Morocco

In Morocco (0.1% Christians), *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine, and the Islamist party, PJD, remains in power after winning the October 2016 elections. Reverberations from the Arab Spring revolutionary wave were also felt in Morocco, but here the protests did not bring the monarchy to an end. Instead, 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 (MBBs), though restrictions also apply to the small historical Catholic and expatriate communities in the country. Foreign workers must still provide justification for living in the country and for Christian mission workers it is difficult to get residence permits.

In the WWL 2017 reporting period, few violent incidents against Christians were recorded. Compared to previous years, the situation for Christians has not altered much, apart from one important change: The Islamist majority in government. This has had a negative effect on the position of the Church. Islamist influence is becoming more visible in the country causing many Christians to be pessimistic about the future. Despite being regularly monitored and dismantled by government forces, Islamic State (IS) cells represent an on-going threat for Christians in Morocco.

Niger

In the last two decades, Islamic associations - including Wahhabi groups - have become more active and prominent in Niger (0.3% Christians). In the past few years, Boko Haram's presence in Niger has become more visible. The country is home to three WWL categories of Christianity: Historical Christian communities; communities of converts to Christianity (here: from a Muslim background, MBBs); and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities. Sometimes the pressure on Christians only affects MBBs, sometimes all three types of Christianity are affected.

Persecution in Niger is mainly shaped by *Islamic oppression*. Although the pressure on Christians is significant, it is still moderate in comparison to the rest of the region. However, small incidents can spark very high levels of violence as was evidenced by the protests over the Charlie Hebdo cartoons in January 2015. In the WWL 2017 reporting period no such large-scale violent incidents have taken place and the level of violent persecution against Christians has decreased compared to the WWL 2016 reporting period. The pressure on Christians is still highest in the *private, family and community spheres*. Since the events of January 2015, the government and NGOs are making great efforts to promote peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic groups and religions in Niger. While these efforts and the decline in the level of violence against Christians justify some optimism, the influence of radical Islamic groups is increasing within society and this indicates that Christians face a difficult future in Niger.

Senegal

Although Senegal (5.2% Christians) is known for its culture of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different religions, the persecution engine *Islamic oppression* is present in the country. The BBC reported on 18 November 2015 that Senegal is making plans to ban women from wearing the full-face Islamic veil¹⁵ in public in response to the increasing threat of jihadism in that country. On 7 November 2015, seven people including four imams were arrested by the

¹⁵ See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35359593>, last accessed 22 December 2016.

Senegalese authorities for their suspected ties with radical Islamic groups¹⁶. 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, 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 growing 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 the WWL 2017 reporting period, but more violence has happened in the past.

Uganda

Uganda (84.4% Christians) did not make it to the Top 50 of the World Watch List 2017, yet showed an increase of eight points because the persecution of Christians is increasing in the country. The increase in score is a continuation from the WWL 2016 reporting period when the country's score had increased by four points.

Islamic oppression is the persecution engine in the country. This engine can be divided into two: (i) the rise in *Islamic oppression* in the eastern part of the country and (ii) the morale boost to radical Muslims in the country by the activities of ADF-NALU (Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda).¹⁷ 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".

Islamic oppression in the country is partly explained by the pressure on Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) in particular, being exerted by family and local community, especially in Muslim dominated areas. Bullying and harassment - targeting MBBs in particular - have been very common in eastern parts of the country. MBBs in particular found it difficult to live a normal life. For example, owning Christian materials or discussing their faith with family members or community members was often matched by expulsion, serious physical attacks and even death.

In the WWL 2017 reporting period, violence against Christians rose sharply. Sixteen Christians were killed, mostly in eastern Uganda. Some were killed for being active Christians (non-MBBs), and others for leaving Islam and becoming Christians. There were also violent incidents that targeted churches. The Nalugongo Church of Uganda, Nalugongo District, was attacked twice in the WWL 2017 reporting period. From its base in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), ADF-NALU is another cause for concern among Christians. The group has recruited many youth from Uganda. For the moment, as the group is operating from inside DRC, Christians in Uganda are not affected by the presence of this group in the jungle of DRC. However, the group's main aim is to establish a sharia state in Uganda and so it is naturally trying to set up networks and support groups in the country. In the WWL 2017 reporting period, the desecration of Christian graves in Kinawanswa Village was also reported. Rape and forced marriage were also reported.

¹⁶ See: <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2015/11/senegal-four-imams-arrested-for-jihad-terror-activities>, last accessed 22 December 2016.

¹⁷ In more recent times ADF-NALU is also called Muslim Defense International (MDI).

This cycle of violence is going on unabated partly because the victims are often afraid to report incidents to the police.

The reports in the past two years are showing that there is an increase in the persecution of Christians in Uganda. If government and society do not take decisive measures, it is very likely to see the level of persecution growing in the coming years.

3. Asia

Kyrgyzstan

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Kyrgyzstan (5.0% Christians) are *Dictatorial paranoia* and to a lesser extent *Islamic oppression*. This country is the odd one out in Central Asia as it has a democratically elected head of state and parliament. Yet, in 2009 Kyrgyzstan introduced one of the most restrictive Religion laws in the region, imposing a 200-member minimum necessary for church registration. There are very few congregations in the country having enough members for this. No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed.

In December 2012, a new censorship law was introduced which also affects Christian literature. In March 2015 Kyrgyzstan's parliament passed the so-called "foreign agents" law, which marks all organizations that receive financial support from abroad as foreign agents.

In Kyrgyzstan, local authorities and councils usually have more power than in other Central Asian countries. This has a negative effect on MBBs as these local bodies tend to have strong relationships with the local community who are all Muslims. And it is in the local councils that decisions about burials of converts are taken. This has already resulted in quite a few cases of families that have had to travel all over the country to find a place to bury MBBs.

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.

International Crisis Group¹⁸ summarizes Kyrgyzstan's challenges as follows: "Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia's only even nominal parliamentary democracy, faces growing internal and external security challenges. Deep ethnic tensions, increased radicalization in the region, uncertainty in Afghanistan and the possibility of a chaotic political succession in Uzbekistan are all likely to have serious repercussions for its stability. The risks are exacerbated by leadership failure to address major economic and political problems, including corruption and excessive Kyrgyz nationalism. Poverty is high, social services are in decline, and the economy depends on remittances from labor migrants." Christians are likely to suffer from these upheavals and be caught in the crossfire. Converts will probably experience increasing hostility and violence.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, *Kyrgyzstan: An Uncertain Trajectory*, 30 September 2015, available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan-uncertain-trajectory>, last accessed 9 November 2016.

Nepal

The persecution engine affecting Christians in Nepal (4.0% Christians) is *Religious nationalism*, with Hinduism as the dominating religion. In the past there was also *Communist and post-Communist oppression*, however, since 2008 the Communists integrated into the state structure and no longer oppressed Christians. Elections for a new parliament and government were held in November 2013, but these elections left the country in a stalemate which lasted into 2016. In discussions about a new constitution, the restriction of religious beliefs played a prominent role. The country's new constitution, adopted in September 2015, declares that Nepal is a secular state. In addition, the new constitution bans changing religion and all kind of proselytism. More changes to the constitution are still under discussion.

Despite many hardships over the past decades, the Church in Nepal has one of the [fastest growing Christian populations in the world](#)¹⁹, according to figures on World Christian Database. WCD's data for October 2016 is 1,172,000 Christians (4% of the population). This has given rise to increasing oppression.

Nepal is a small and poor country that borders China and India. Both countries have a huge economic and political impact on Nepal. China objects to the presence of the Dalai Lama, fearing influence on Tibet's Buddhists. Since May 2014 India has been ruled by the radical Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party under Narendra Modi. This has led to an outburst of Hindu radical violence all over India. India is now pressuring Nepal to follow in its footsteps – it even imposed an economic boycott in August 2015 which forced the Nepali government after 5-6 months to give in. Since then, Hindu radical elements in Nepal have stepped up their activities. Christians have come under pressure.

In July 2016 seven Christians who had Bibles with them were arrested and their Bibles were used as evidence by the police to later accuse them of attempting to forcefully convert children to Christianity. Later a pastor was also arrested in the same case. So it seems that the constitutional provision is being directly used by the authorities to target Christians. In December 2016 all eight Christians were acquitted of the evangelism accusation and released.

Philippines (Southern)

The persecution engine affecting Christians in the Philippines (90.6% Christians) is *Islamic oppression* and most of the persecution comes from Muslim religious leaders and affects Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) from three tribes: the Tausug, Yakan and Sama. There were also reports of incidents affecting Maguindanao and Iranun Christians.

The Philippines face a long-standing violent insurgency and independence movement on the Southern Island of Mindanao, which has a strong Muslim minority. Since the accords on autonomy have not been inclusive, leaving out various militant groups, the way ahead will be complicated, even under the new government elected in May 2016. In the WWL 2017 reporting period, the insurgent group BIFF (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters) killed 9 Christian farmers in Mindanao on 24 December 2015. However, the killing of a pastor and his son in

¹⁹ See:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/why.does.nepal.have.one.of.the.fastest.growing.churches.in.the.world/78690.htm>, last accessed 22 December 2016.

November 2015 by the Maoist group “New People’s Army” shows that not all persecution stems from *Islamic oppression*. Weapons used for killing four people in a terror attack in Jakarta on 14 January 2016 were reportedly brought into Indonesia from the southern Philippines which also show worrying connections of Islamic militants across borders in South East Asia. Islamic State (IS) announced plans to create a province of their caliphate in the Southern Philippines, and BIFF and some other groups already pledged allegiance to IS. Christians in the southern part of the country will most likely face more violence.

MBBs are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Several reports showed that they have to keep the Christian faith carefully hidden from their families and that meeting with other Christians is very difficult, dangerous and at times impossible. Some MBBs were forced into denying their faith.

4. Latin America

Cuba

Cuba (61.6% Christians) is one of the few remaining Communist regimes in the world. In 2006, Fidel Castro, the country’s leader (who died in 2016) was replaced by his brother Raúl as leader of the government, but the regime stayed essentially the same, and any groups hoping for change were disappointed. 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, including the historical visit of US President Obama in March 2016, bear the potential for bringing about a certain degree of political change. However, their scope and impact are not yet visible. 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 Christians are monitored and all church services are infiltrated by informers. 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.

In comparison to the WWL 2016 reporting period, the level of persecution in Cuba increased slightly. This is explained by an increase in points in the *community* and *national spheres*, as well as a slightly higher violence score.

Venezuela

In Venezuela (92.4% Christians), the persecution of Christians is subtle. The main persecution engine is *Communist and post-Communist oppression*. There is a political trend towards a socialist society, with the president crushing opposition. The church has been affected by the complex political situation. Tensions between President Chavez, and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, and the leadership of the Catholic Church have been growing. For years, the Chavez administration has attempted to shut down private education of all kinds in favor of state schools. His goal, observers say, is to use the state school system for the political indoctrination of the youth. The government gives economic incentives to students who attend state schools while denying equal recognition to students of private schools. Hence, church-based schools, both Catholic and Evangelical, find themselves working against policies and programs designed to eventually drive them out of business.

The general security situation is rapidly deteriorating due to an alarming increase in violent crime, which puts Christians at greater risk of violent death than before. In some cases, Christians with political views critical of the Chavez administration have been threatened with physical harm. Some say they know of friends or neighbors who were arrested or who have "disappeared" (sometimes kidnapped by Colombian guerrilla groups operating within Venezuelan territory with the tacit approval of the Chavez regime) because they opposed Chavez policies. Political ideology often produces persecution of Christians, even though the persecution is not purely religious. It is only a matter of time until these two factors combine to cause a major rise in the persecution of Christians in Venezuela.

5. Europe

Azerbaijan

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Azerbaijan (3.2% Christians) are *Dictatorial paranoia* and to a lesser extent *Islamic oppression*. The regime of Azerbaijan is very intelligent in its persecution of Christians. Some pastors were detained and held for about a week and then released. Everyone assumes that these pastors talked while in detention and so no one will trust them anymore. Most churches are infiltrated and informers are everywhere. As a result, Christians do not know whom to trust anymore. This is also reflected in the reporting of persecution: No one dares to talk for fear of being arrested – the main reason for the lower score of this country this year. There are also repeated obligatory re-registrations for churches - every 6-7 years all churches must apply for new registration. It can hardly be called coincidence that each time fewer churches manage to get the new registration. During the latest cycle, all churches and religious groups were required to renew their registration by 1 January 2010, but since that date no new churches have been able to register. It would seem that Azerbaijan has found a fool-proof method of getting rid of churches.

The state monitors all religious activity, and especially targets unregistered groups. While registered churches can meet inside their buildings, special permission is needed for organizing events outside these buildings. Youth-work is very much restricted and all Christian materials must be cleared by the Committee for Religious Affairs in advance. In practice this means that all importing, printing, and distribution is blocked. Training facilities for Christians do not exist. All media are state-controlled and are therefore not accessible for Christian input. Christians can do some social work – e.g. in prisons (where there is usually a chapel). It is a punishable offence

to bring religious literature into the country. By law, foreigners are not allowed to preach in the country.

Israel

In Israel (2.5% Christians) Christians enjoy a higher level of religious freedom than in most other countries in the Middle East. However, Israel is foremost a Jewish state, meaning that Jewish citizens receive a preferential treatment over other ethnic and religious groups. Most violations of religious freedom are caused by individuals or small groups of religious extremists. The two persecution engines which are mostly active are *Islamic oppression* and *religious nationalism*. In both cases, converts to Christianity are especially affected. Less active persecution engines are *Denominational protectionism* and *Secular intolerance*.

Christians from a Muslim background (MBBs) experience a high level of pressure in the *private* and *family spheres of life*. Opposition from the family is less severe than in other Middle Eastern states due to legislation protecting religious freedom. This affects the way people interact. An exception however is the law which prohibits adults from evangelizing youth younger than 18 years old. Christians have been refused entrance to Israel or were forced to leave the country because of their assumed involvement in missionary or political activities.

Examples of drivers of 'other religious militancy' are Ultra-Orthodox Jewish (UOJ) organizations (e.g. Yad Le Achim) or individuals who consider Messianic (Jesus believing) Jews traitors and no longer Jews. In some majority UOJ areas, demonstrations are held regularly in front of buildings where Messianic Jews gather for worship. Other forms of harassment are spreading libel, spitting at clergy, painting of anti-Christian slogans on churches and monasteries. Though top Israeli political leaders have condemned these assaults and Israeli police established a special unit to crackdown on the culprits, this has led to little success in catching culprits so far. Nevertheless the number of attacks decreased in 2016. Opposition experienced by Messianic Jews from their (extended) family or community varies in seriousness, ranging from tolerating the convert (if he or she does not share his/her faith) to ignoring and social exclusion. Several Messianic Jews who want to make Aliya – immigration of Jews to Israel - have been refused residency permits, based on their faith in Jesus the Messiah. Many court cases have been fought (and won) to nullify these illegal measures. In some cases their citizenship was revoked after immigration. After the Ministry of Education considerably cut financial support, Christian church-owned schools report experiencing pressure to change their status to become state schools, so risking losing their independency as Christian schools.

There is some measure of *Denominational protectionism*, i.e. the resistance from historical Christian communities towards members who attend non-traditional Protestant Christian communities. Theological differences and accusations of 'sheep stealing' often play a role here. Religious leaders of other churches and extended family are likely put some pressure – varying in measure- on the 'convert' to return to the traditional church in question. Many denominations, mostly non-traditional Protestant churches, are not officially recognized by the government as "religious communities", giving them less basic rights in matters like marriage, burial and other religious issues.

Secular Intolerance is only in an initial stage in Israel. An example is the closure of a wedding-hall owned by Christians in 2014 as they refused to host same-sex marriages because of their

faith. According to the Israeli law, this is prohibited. Currently a court case is running concerning a Messianic Jewish couple that wanted to celebrate their wedding in a public party center, but were refused because the owner told them he'd lose his 'kosher' certificate.

Generally, there is a relatively low level of specifically faith-related violence against Christians in Israel. Nevertheless, there have been acts of vandalism against Christian property since 2012 and these have continued in 2016. These attacks are called 'Price Tags' and concern a mixture of politically and religiously-motivated vandalism. They are mostly carried out by Ultra-Orthodox Jews in protest against Arab terrorist attacks or the destruction of Jewish settlers' homes in the West Bank as part of Israeli government policies. Some of them were arrested. These acts of vandalism are condemned by the majority of the Jewish community.

Russian Federation

In the Russian Federation (82.3% Christians) the prevalent persecution engines are *Dictatorial paranoia* and to a lesser extent *Islamic oppression*. Officially, Russia is a secular state, but the government is openly courting the Russian Orthodox Church at the disadvantage of other denominations (which are often regarded as foreign). In the Muslim regions, the situation is quite different: Here the authorities are explicitly courting Sunni Islam. In July 2015 changes came to Russia's Religion law which now requires all religions without legal status to register with the authorities and notify them of their activities, including the names and addresses of all members and meetings. Also, registered groups are limited in their activities within the first ten years of their existence, e.g. teaching and invitations to foreign preachers are very restricted. Unregistered groups experience discrimination all over Russia. In the North Caucasus Christians cannot hold a public office. On Russian TV channels and printed media there is a permanent campaign against sects and Evangelicals who are criticized along with Satanists and Scientologists. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians and Historical Christian communities are monitored by the state but can operate without undue disturbance. However, communities of converts to Christianity (MBBs) are targets for violence and severe pressure from family and community, particularly in the Caucasus area. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are persecuted from three sources: The Russian Orthodox Church regards them as heretics and sheep-stealers; the state often considers them a cover for Western spies; in Muslim areas, they are often targeted on suspicion of evangelizing.

Since 2011, a number of legal restrictions have been imposed. As there is a trend towards greater state control, it is likely that more such legislation will be passed in the coming years. As ties to Western countries are becoming more and more strained, the Russian Federation may become increasingly isolated. This will affect especially those Christians who belong to denominations that are regarded as Western. The activities of militant Islamic groups are likely to continue with outbursts of violence and attacks. For MBBs in the Muslim areas (the Caucasus and the region around the city of Kazan) difficulties can also be expected to continue.

WWL 2017 – Smash table and scores (VIOLENCE)

WORLD WATCH LIST 2017 - SMASH ONLY

RANK WWL 2017	RANK SMASH WWL 2017	Country	6. Violence
4	1	Pakistan	16.667
12	2	Nigeria	16.112
21	3	Egypt	16.112
41	4	Mexico	14.444
6	5	Syria	13.704
15	6	India	13.519
5	7	Sudan	13.334
26	8	Bangladesh	12.222
17	9	Vietnam	11.111
3	10	Afghanistan	10.556
7	11	Iraq	10.370
2	12	Somalia	10.185
8	13	Iran	10.185
50	14	Colombia	10.185
1	15	North Korea	9.815
34	16	CAR	9.815
18	17	Kenya	9.630
22	18	Ethiopia	9.260
28	19	Myanmar	9.074
37	20	Turkey	8.519
39	21	China	8.519
33	22	Tanzania	7.408
46	23	Indonesia	6.852
45	24	Sri Lanka	6.667
9	25	Yemen	5.926
11	26	Libya	5.371
10	27	Eritrea	5.000
16	28	Uzbekistan	4.259
32	29	Mali	4.259
24	30	Laos	3.148
29	31	Tunisia	2.963
23	32	Palestinian Territories	2.222
30	33	Bhutan	2.037
31	34	Malaysia	2.037
35	35	Tajikistan	1.852
14	36	Saudi Arabia	1.667
36	37	Algeria	1.667
27	38	Jordan	1.481
43	39	Kazakhstan	1.296

19	40	Turkmenistan		1.111
25	41	Brunei		1.111
40	42	Djibouti		1.111
42	43	Comoros		0.926
13	44	Maldives		0.741
47	45	Mauritania		0.556
20	46	Qatar		0.370
49	47	Oman		0.185
38	48	Kuwait		0
44	49	UAE		0
48	50	Bahrain		0

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WWL 2017 – Squeeze table and scores (PRESSURE)

WORLD WATCH LIST 2017 - SQUEEZE ONLY									
RANK WWL 2017	RANK SQUEEZE WWL 2017	Country	1. Private	2. Family	3. Community	4. National	5. Church	TOTAL SQUEEZE	
1	1	North Korea	16.667	15.385	16.427	16.667	16.667	81.813	
2	2	Somalia	16.667	15.385	15.385	16.667	16.667	80.771	
9	3	Yemen	16.667	15.305	14.503	16.341	16.615	79.431	
3	4	Afghanistan	16.667	16.427	15.145	15.625	14.844	78.708	
10	5	Eritrea	15.208	14.503	15.705	16.016	15.312	76.744	
7	6	Iraq	15.104	14.904	15.465	15.104	15.209	75.786	
13	7	Maldives	15.000	15.145	13.702	16.146	15.729	75.722	
8	8	Iran	14.063	14.343	14.744	15.625	16.459	75.234	
14	9	Saudi Arabia	14.896	13.622	14.183	15.300	16.459	74.460	
5	10	Sudan	13.854	14.423	14.583	15.625	15.469	73.954	
6	11	Syria	14.375	14.263	14.664	14.584	14.896	72.782	
11	12	Libya	14.792	13.221	14.102	15.430	15.208	72.753	
4	13	Pakistan	14.792	14.023	14.183	14.974	13.125	71.097	
16	14	Uzbekistan	15.209	10.818	12.100	12.826	15.677	66.630	
20	15	Qatar	13.438	12.901	11.779	13.542	14.427	66.087	
19	16	Turkmenistan	14.896	10.016	12.741	12.826	15.104	65.583	
25	17	Brunei	14.896	14.183	10.016	9.896	13.490	62.481	
23	18	Palestinian Territories	12.292	12.821	11.779	11.654	13.334	61.880	
12	19	Nigeria	11.250	11.458	13.461	12.826	12.448	61.443	
27	20	Jordan	13.229	12.741	11.459	10.938	12.917	61.284	
24	21	Laos	11.667	8.013	13.061	12.956	14.792	60.489	
17	22	Vietnam	12.188	7.692	11.859	14.323	13.594	59.656	
15	23	India	11.250	11.218	12.019	13.737	11.250	59.474	
30	24	Bhutan	11.250	11.138	12.500	11.393	12.552	58.833	
18	25	Kenya	12.188	11.218	12.420	9.831	13.073	58.730	
29	26	Tunisia	12.083	13.381	10.577	10.807	11.666	58.514	
31	27	Malaysia	10.729	13.862	11.298	12.826	9.740	58.455	
38	28	Kuwait	13.125	11.619	11.459	10.287	10.521	57.011	
36	29	Algeria	12.917	13.061	7.933	11.589	10.417	55.917	
35	30	Tajikistan	12.604	10.337	9.696	10.547	12.552	55.736	
40	31	Djibouti	11.979	11.378	10.977	9.636	11.719	55.689	
42	32	Comoros	11.667	10.737	10.096	9.766	13.229	55.495	
44	33	UAE	13.646	12.340	10.898	9.505	9.063	55.452	
22	34	Ethiopia	10.417	10.417	10.417	12.044	11.719	55.014	
32	35	Mali	10.729	11.138	11.298	9.766	12.083	55.014	
43	36	Kazakhstan	12.188	8.894	9.295	11.003	13.386	54.766	
48	37	Bahrain	12.709	11.619	9.295	11.068	9.740	54.431	
47	38	Mauritania	10.938	10.016	10.977	11.393	10.677	54.001	
28	39	Myanmar	9.167	9.856	12.821	10.352	11.198	53.394	
49	40	Oman	12.188	11.459	10.337	8.008	11.198	53.190	
33	41	Tanzania	10.104	10.336	10.737	10.156	10.364	51.697	
26	42	Bangladesh	11.771	9.696	11.859	9.310	8.386	51.022	
37	43	Turkey	11.771	9.135	9.455	10.612	7.813	48.786	
21	44	Egypt	9.849	10.789	10.091	9.759	8.116	48.604	
39	45	China	10.313	7.532	7.692	9.961	12.813	48.311	
45	46	Sri Lanka	9.792	7.692	10.657	10.482	9.584	48.207	
34	47	CAR	9.375	9.615	9.615	9.375	10.208	48.188	
46	48	Indonesia	9.584	9.856	10.978	8.919	8.542	47.879	
50	49	Colombia	7.292	7.612	11.939	8.464	7.656	42.963	
41	50	Mexico	7.188	6.330	11.218	8.073	9.323	42.132	

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WWL 2017 – Country persecution patterns

WWL 2017 Persecution patterns

A discussion of each country persecution pattern can be found in Section 5 of the long version of the Persecution Dynamics for the respective country.

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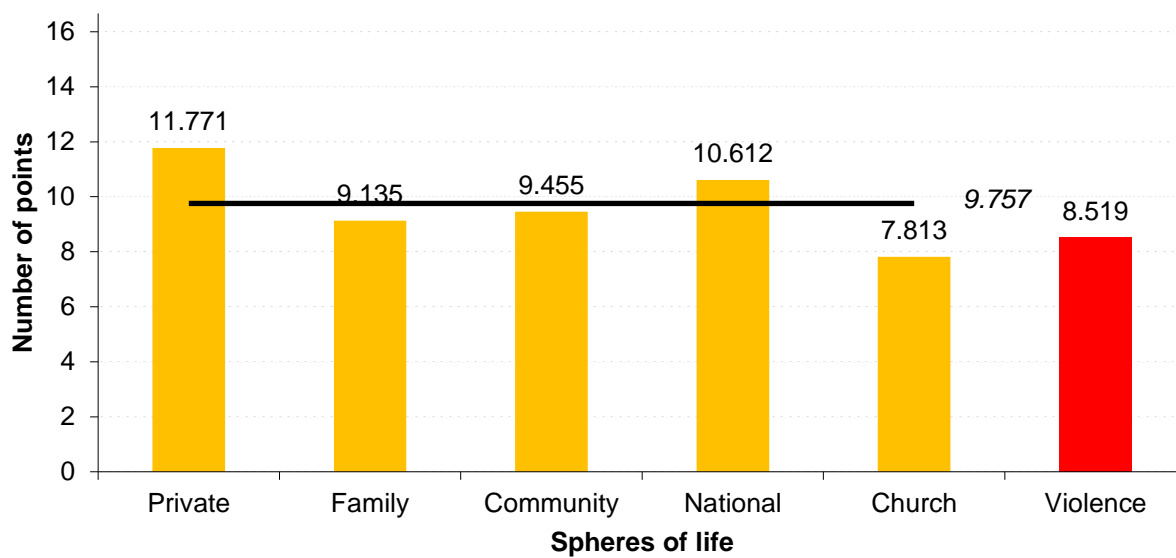
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Turkmenistan	45
Tajikistan	45
Kazakhstan	46
India	46
Colombia	47
Mexico	47
Bangladesh	48
North Korea	48
Afghanistan	49
Laos	49
Brunei	50
China	50
Malaysia	51
Maldives	51
Sri Lanka	52
Vietnam	52
Pakistan	53
Indonesia	53
Myanmar	54
Bhutan	54
Syria	55

Iraq	55
Iran	56
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WWL 2017 Persecution patterns

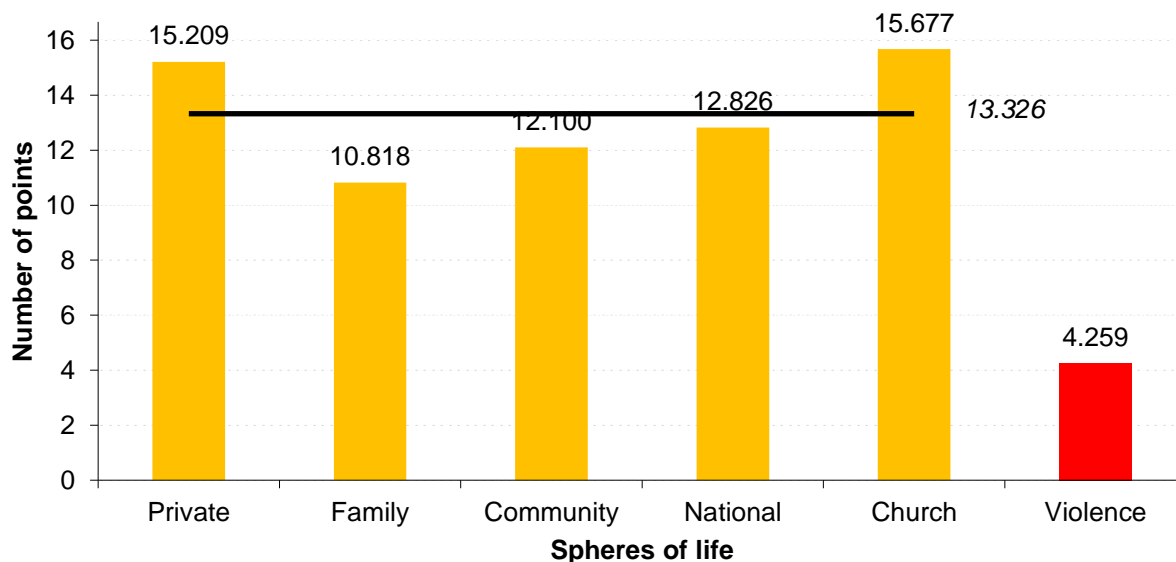
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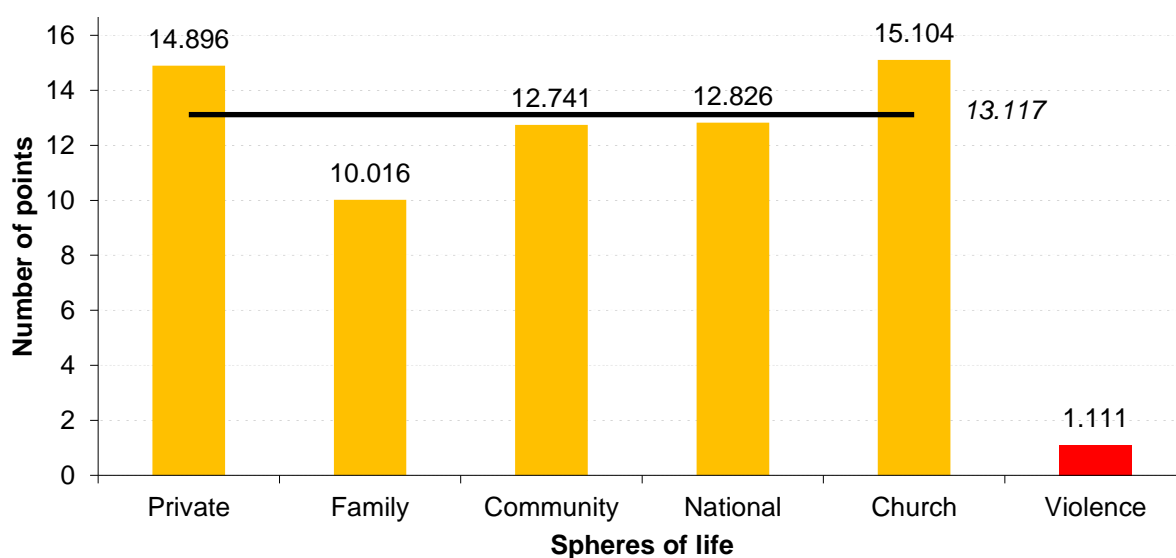
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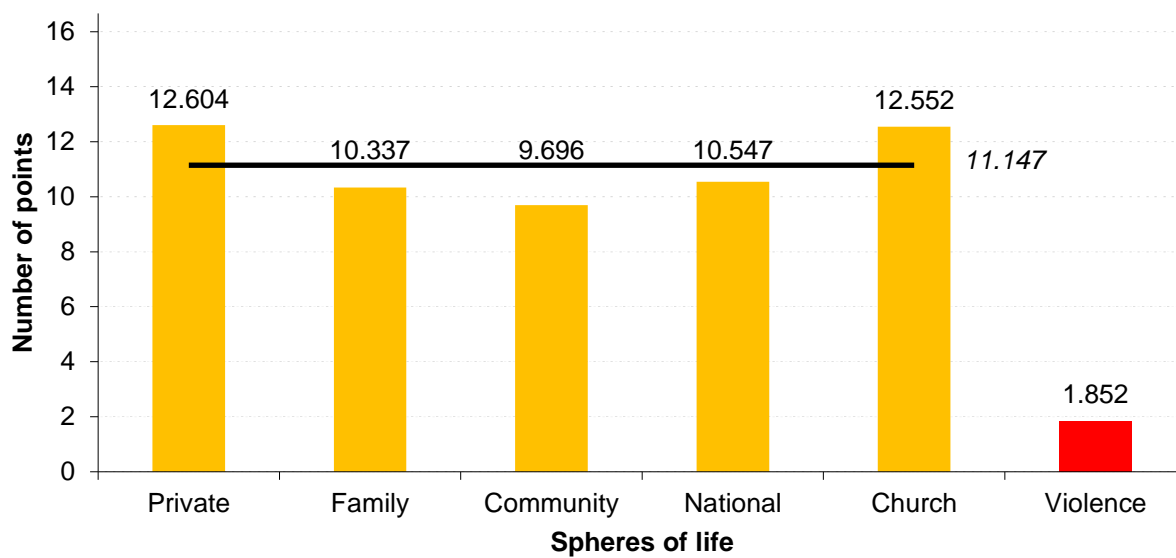
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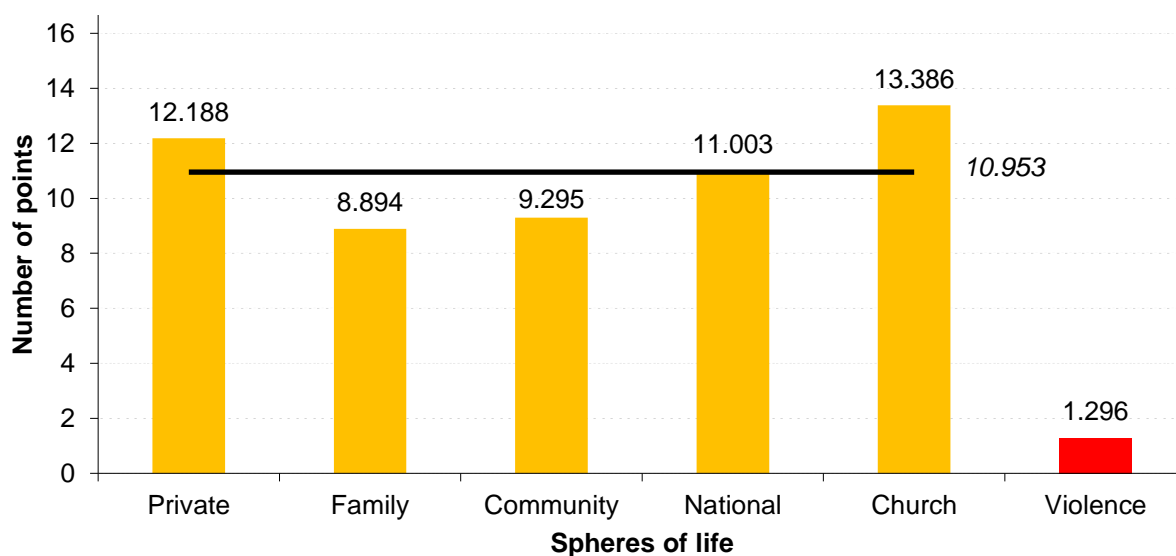
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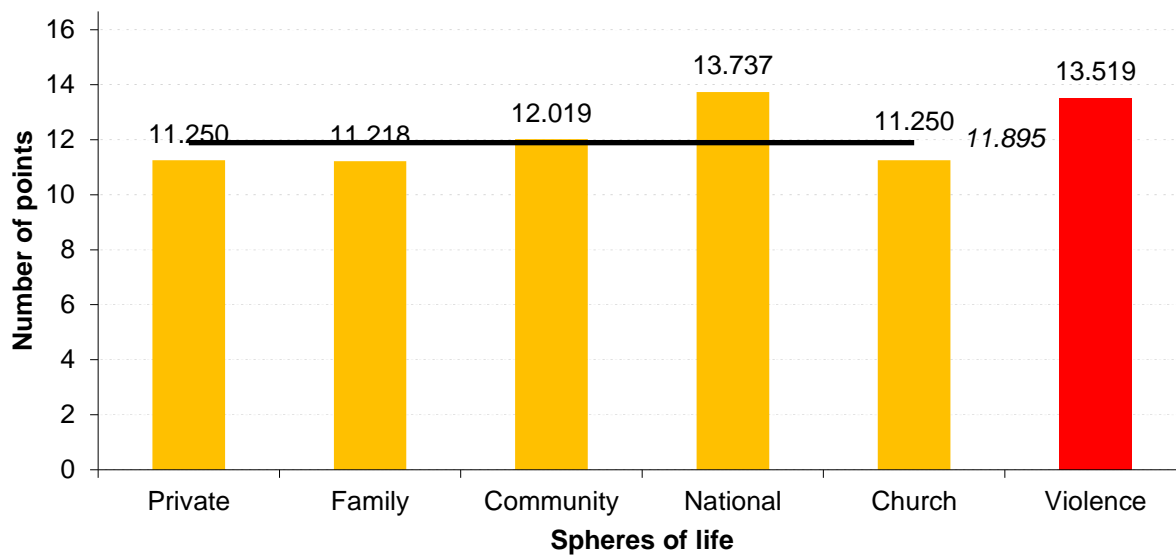
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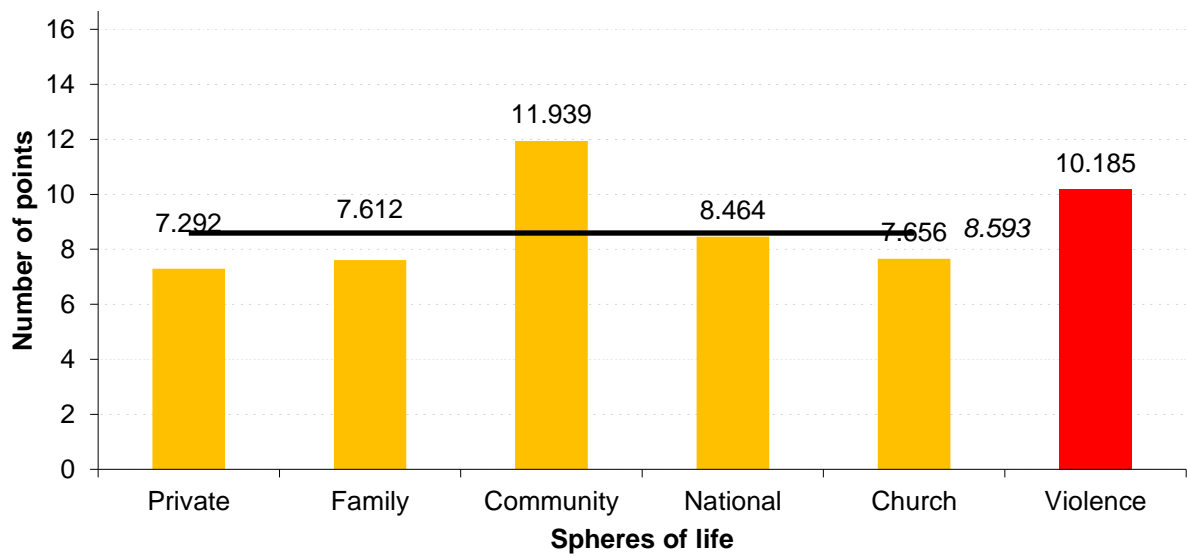
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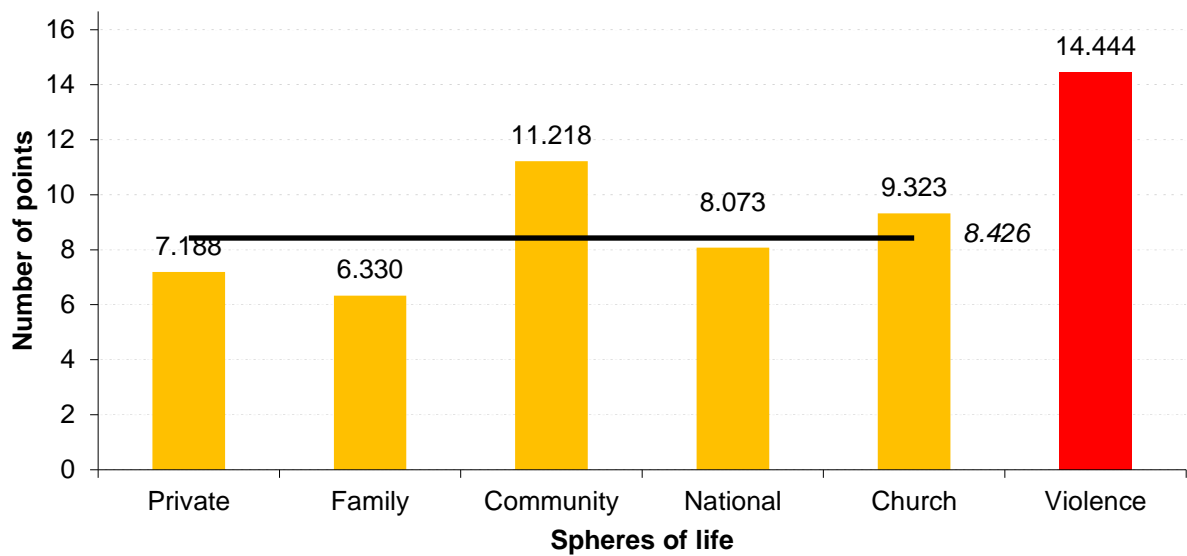
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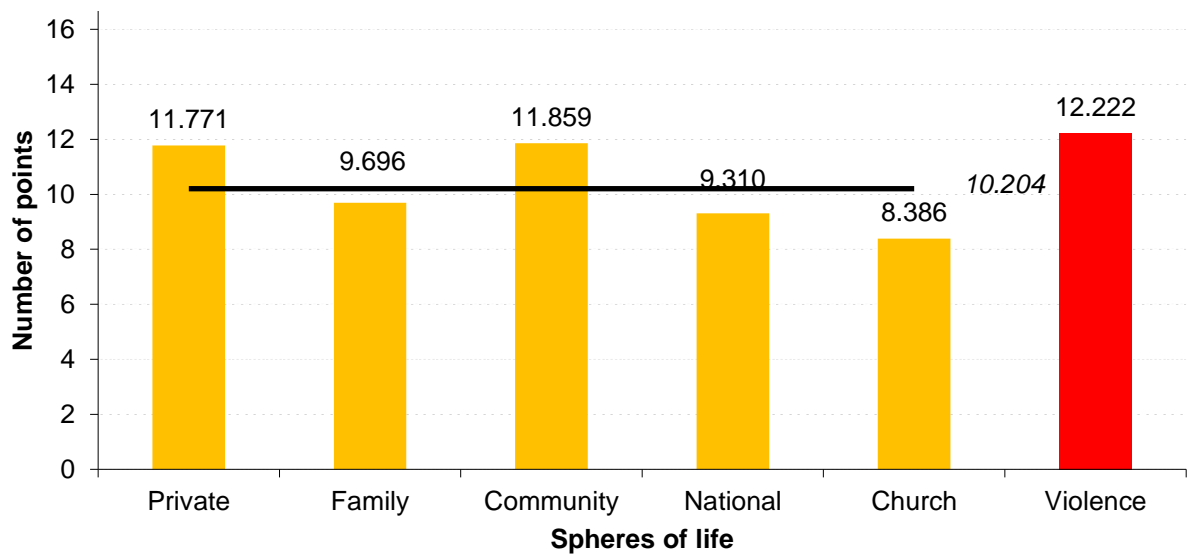
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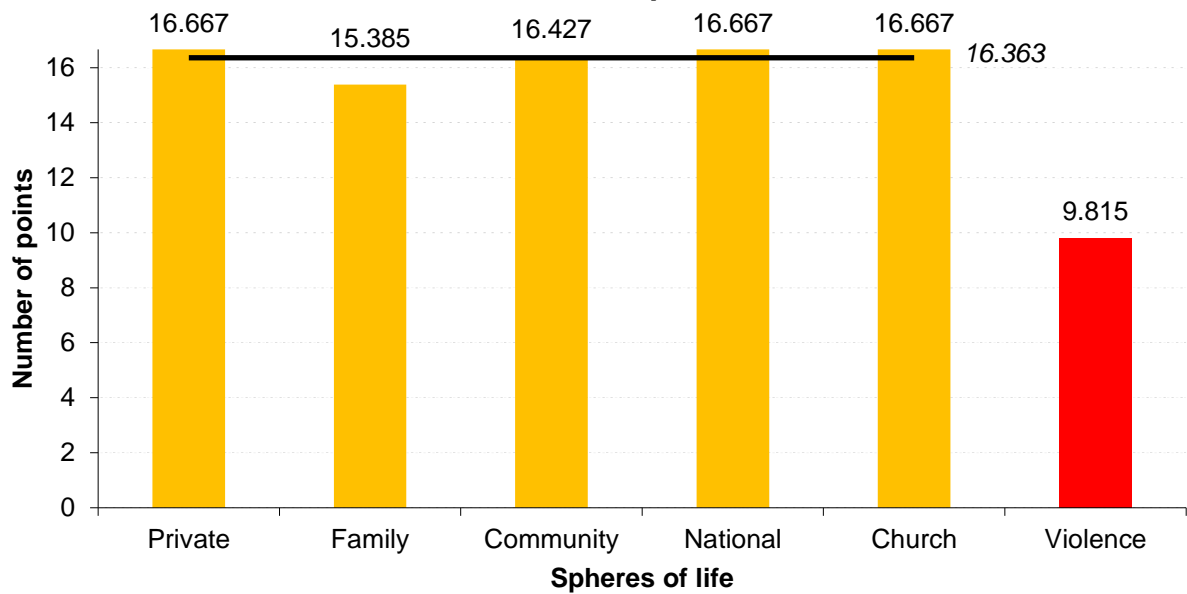
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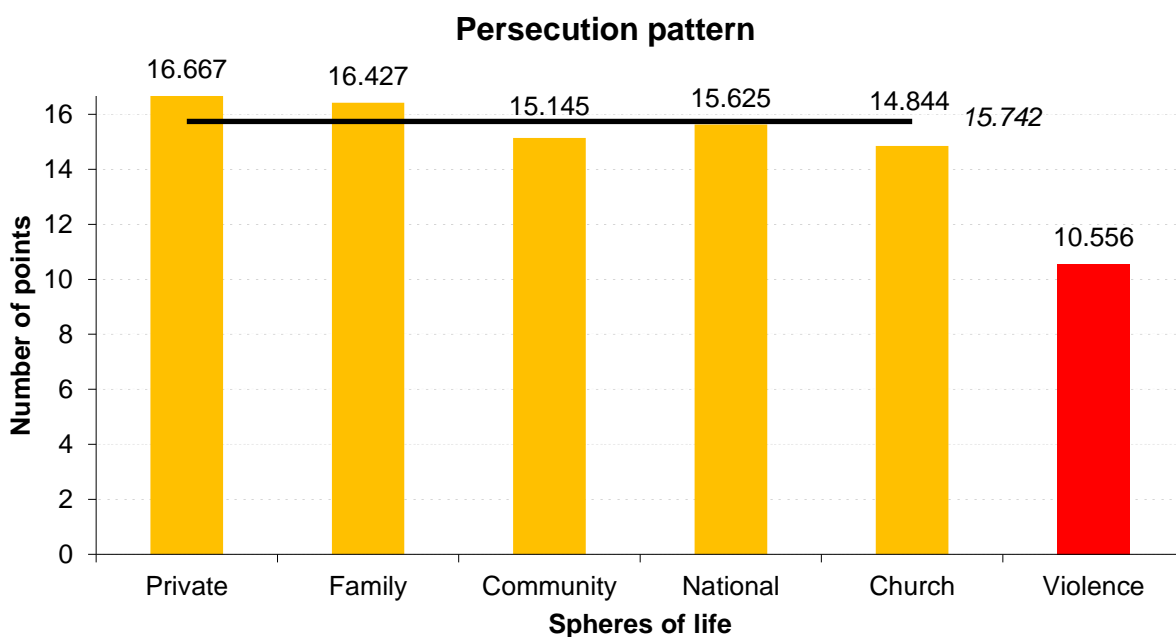


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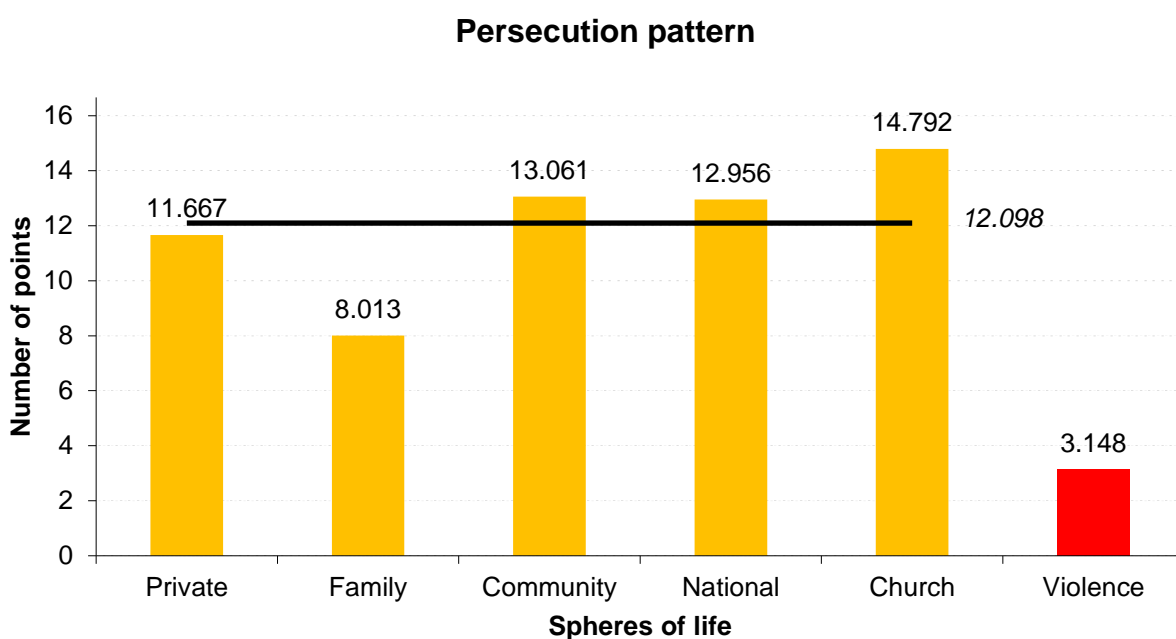
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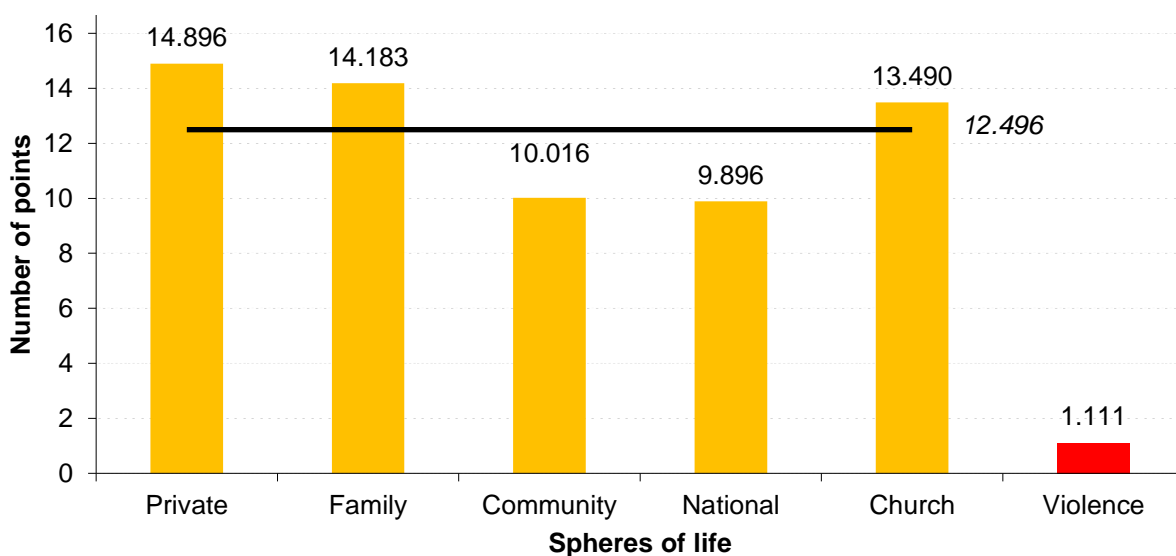


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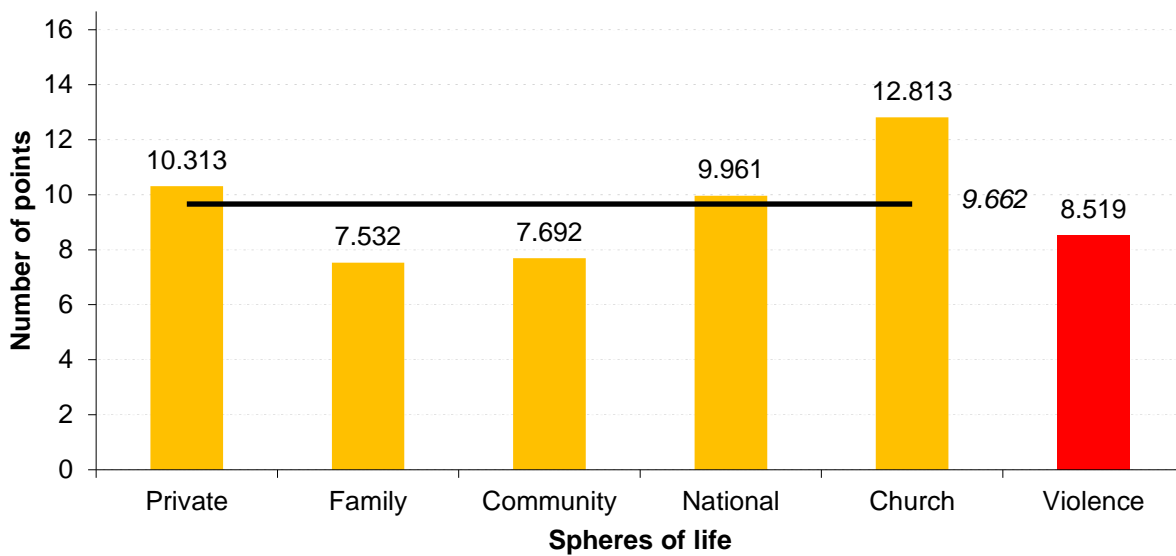
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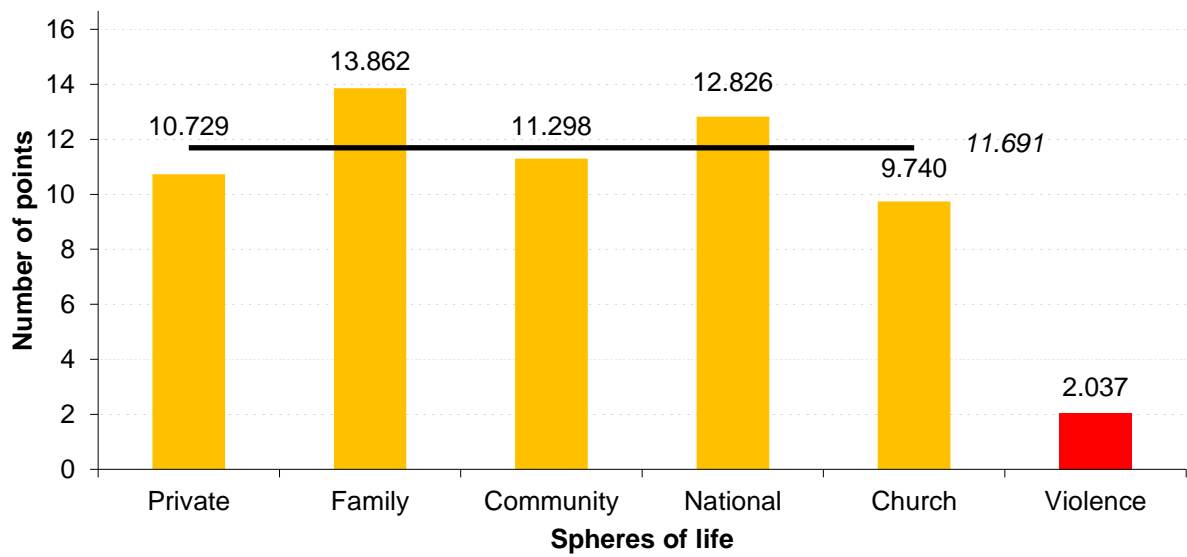
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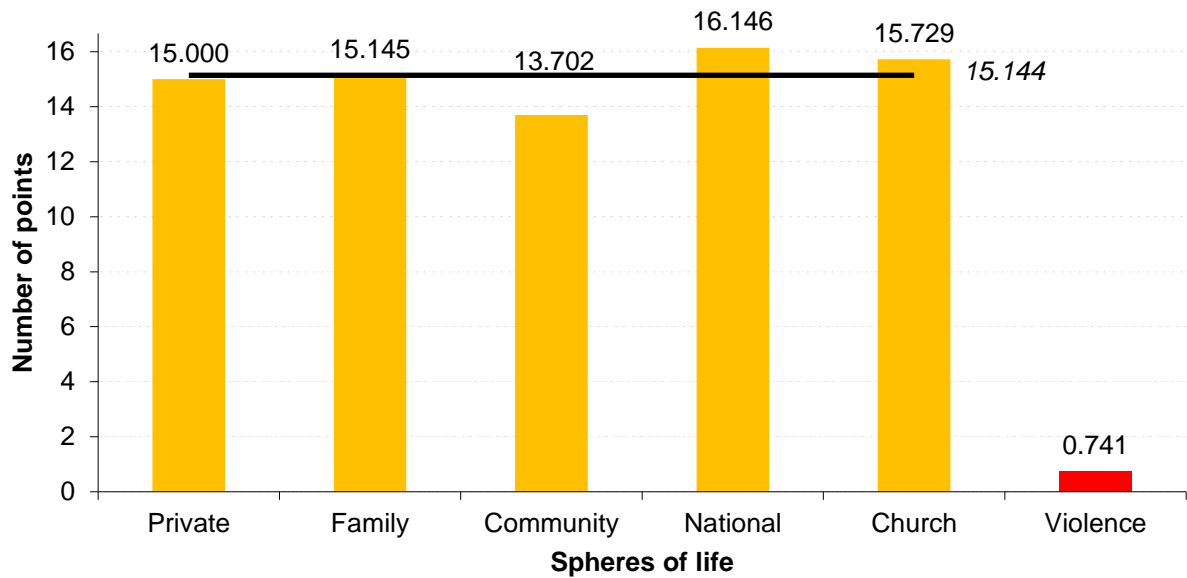
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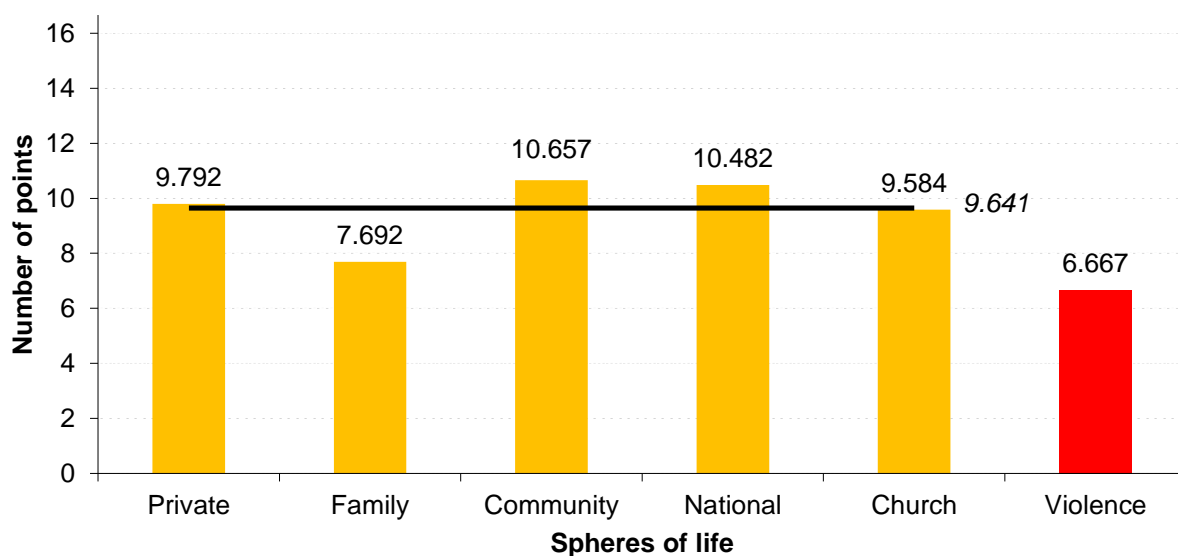
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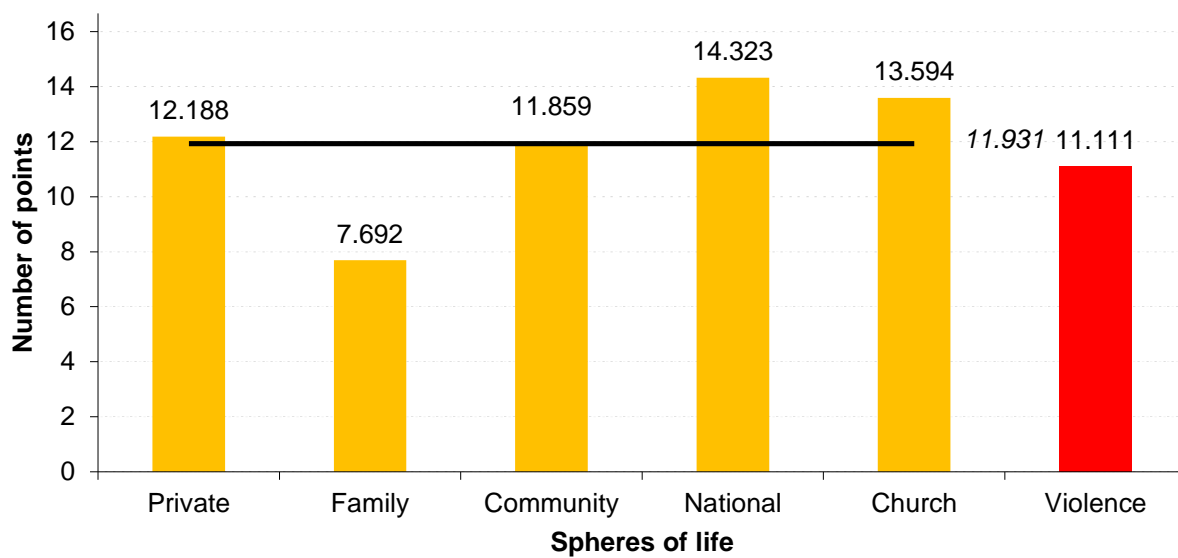
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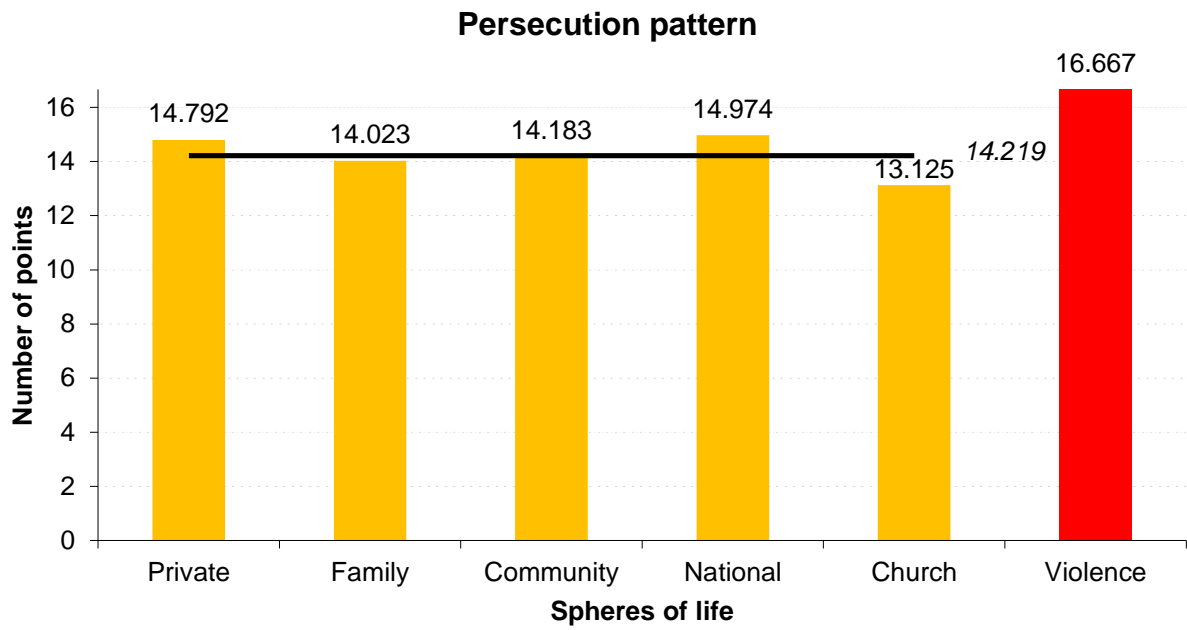


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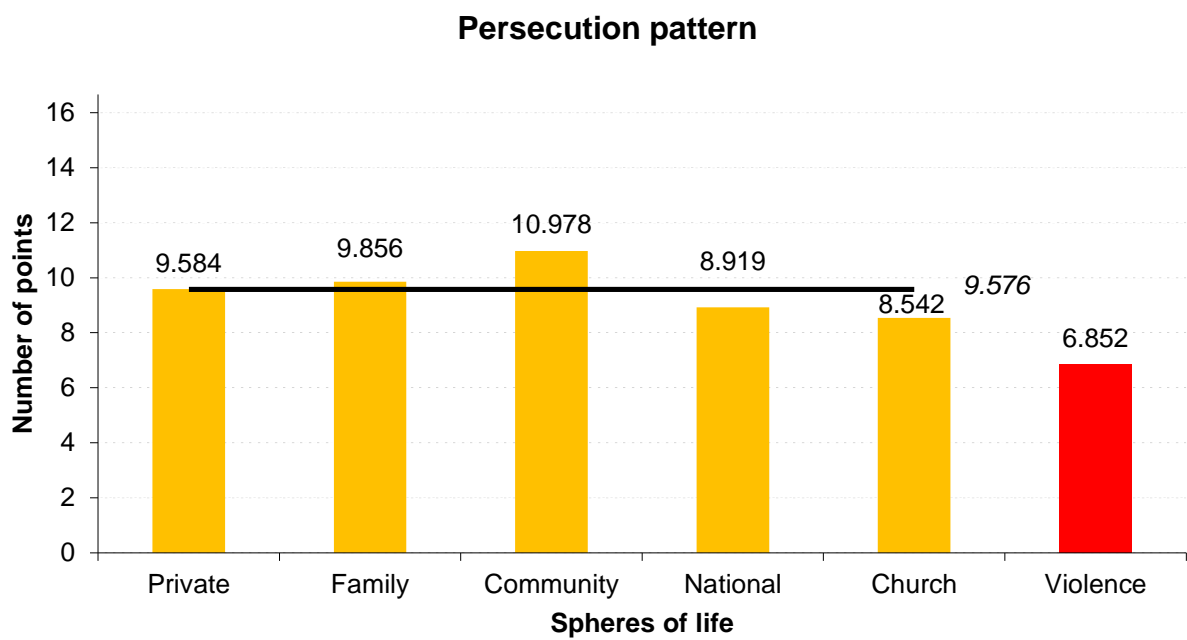
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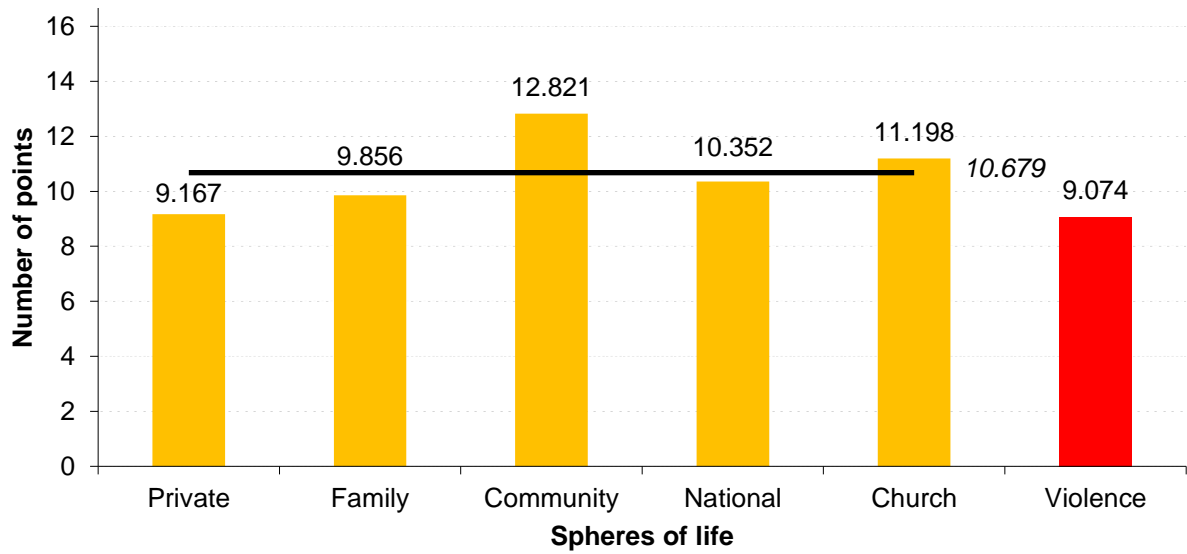


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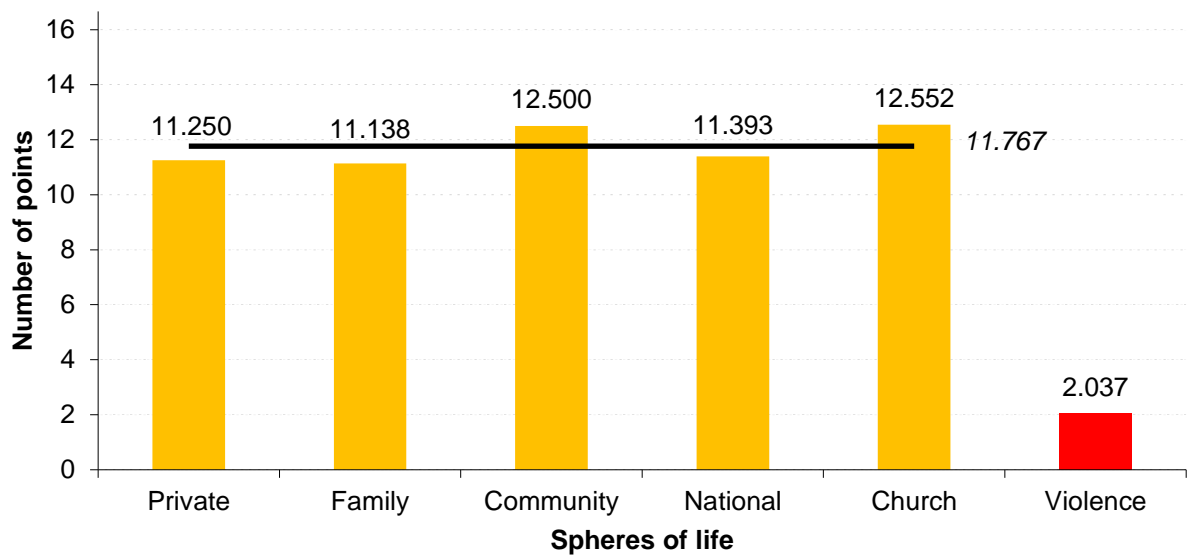
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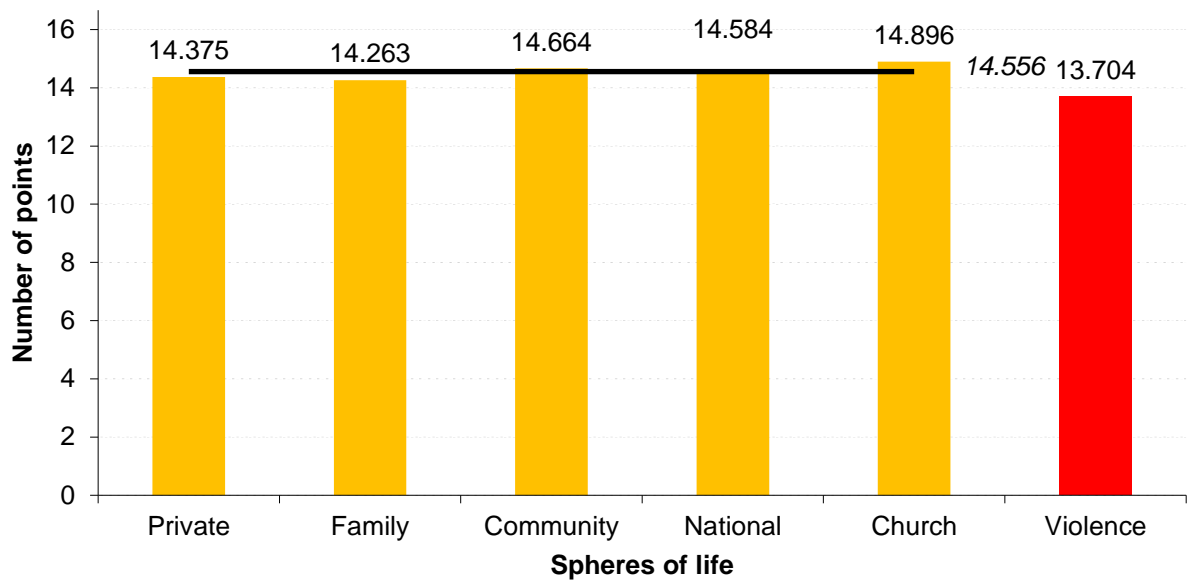
Bhutan

Persecution pattern



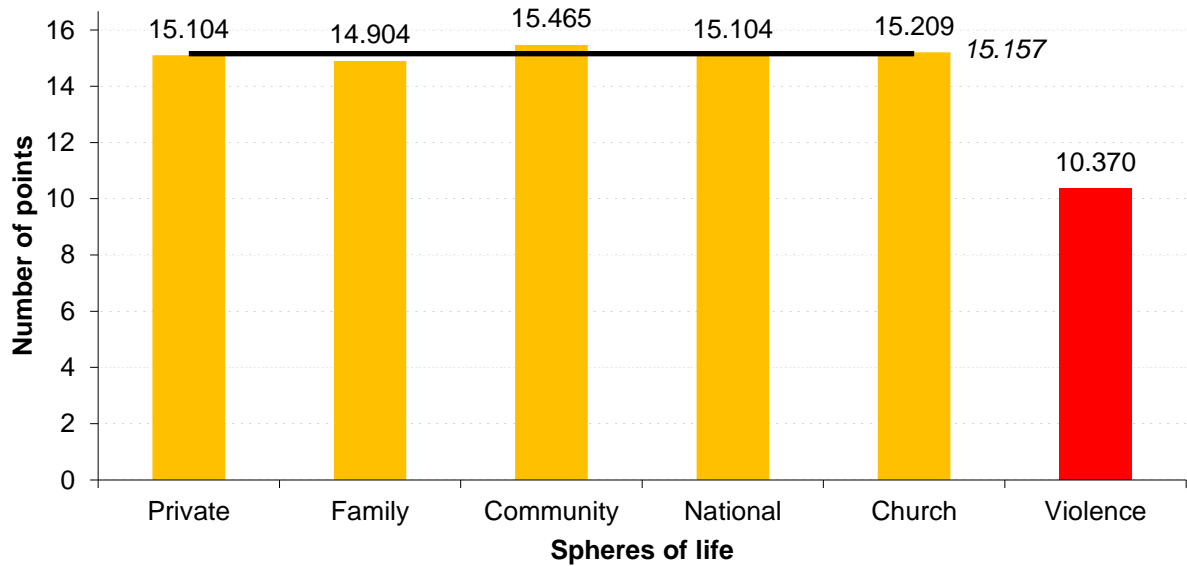
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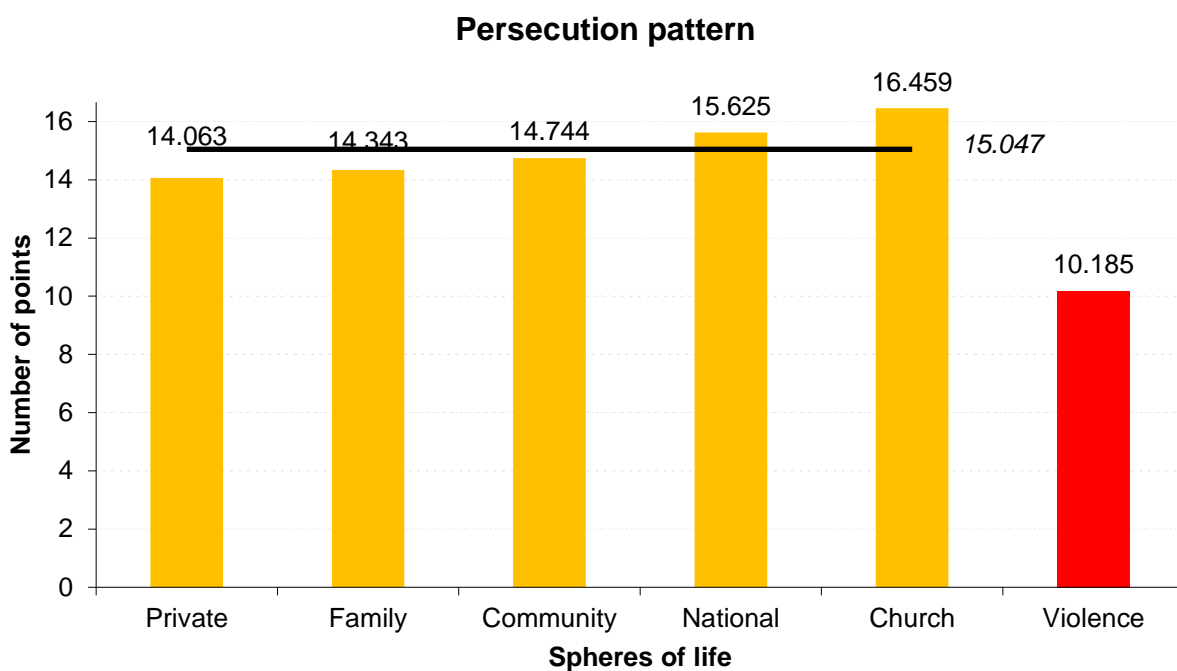


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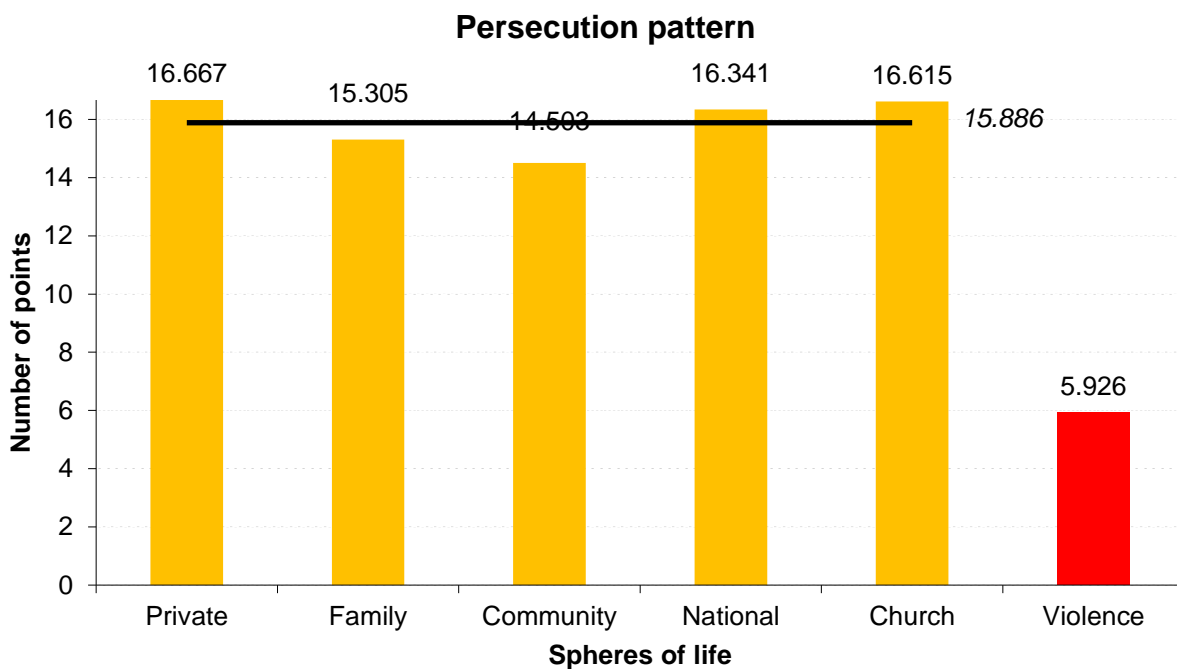
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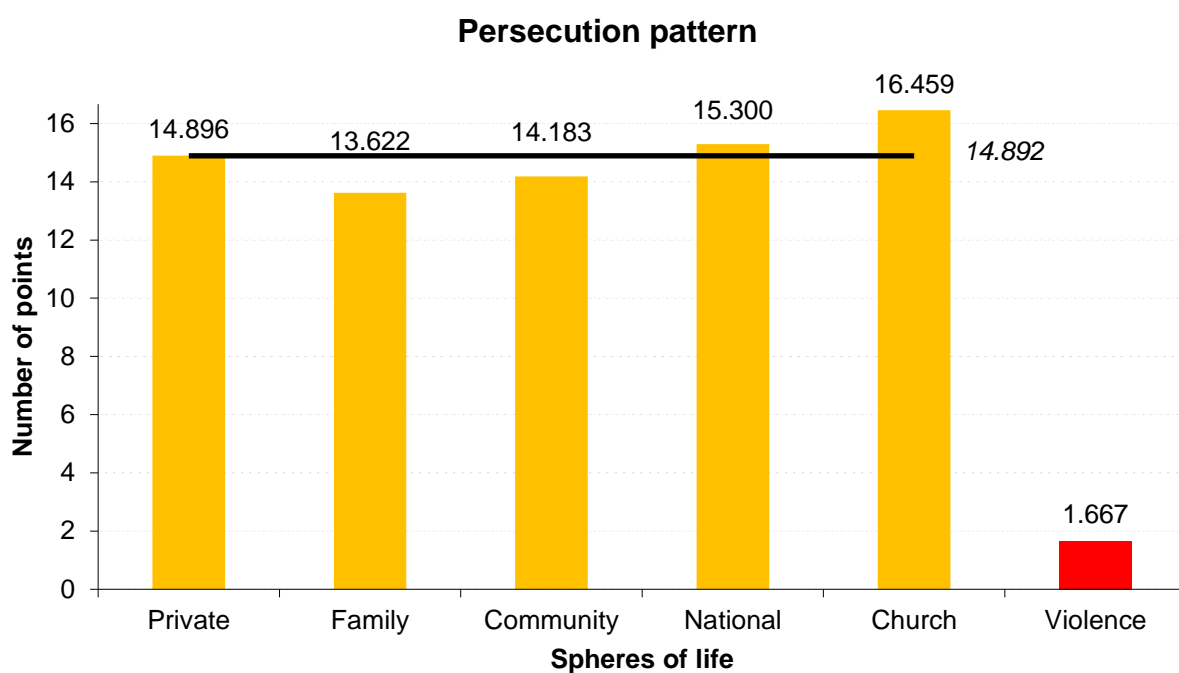
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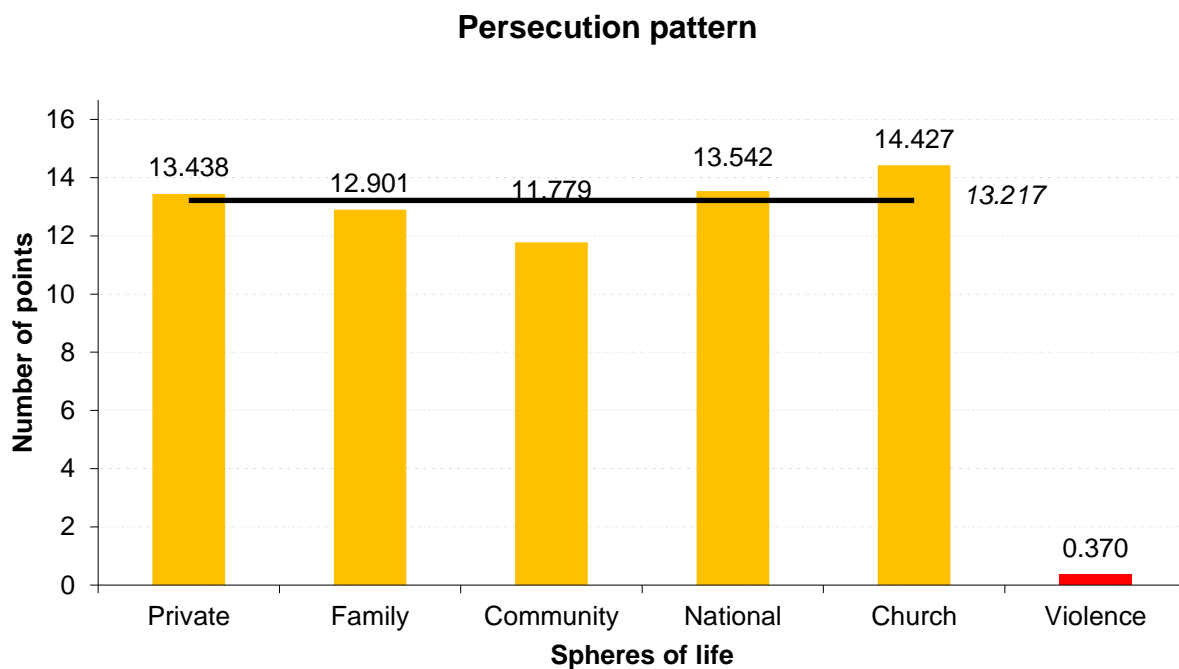
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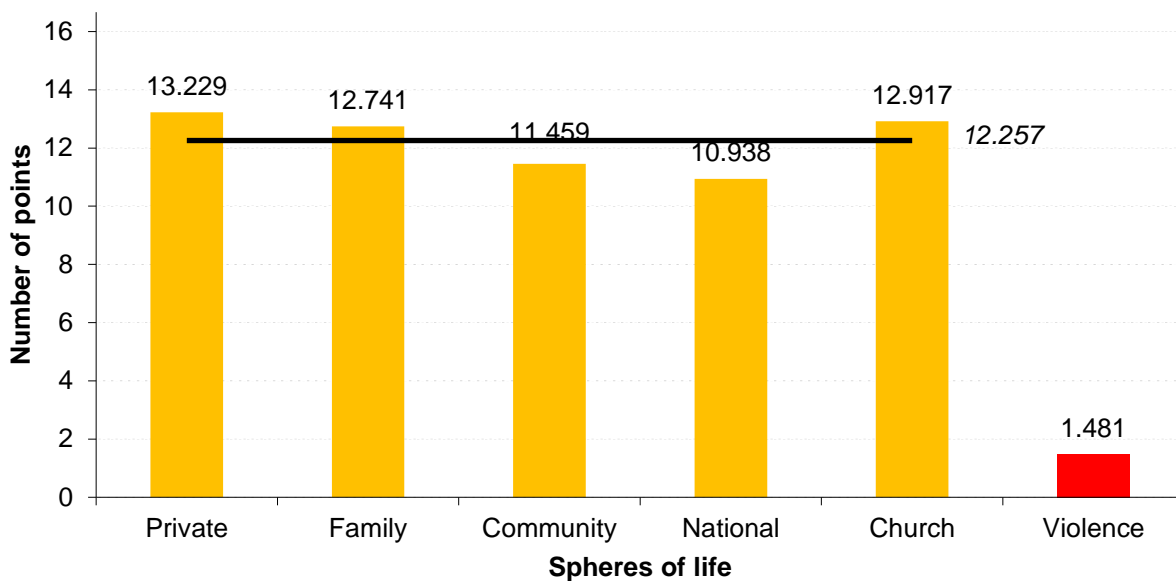


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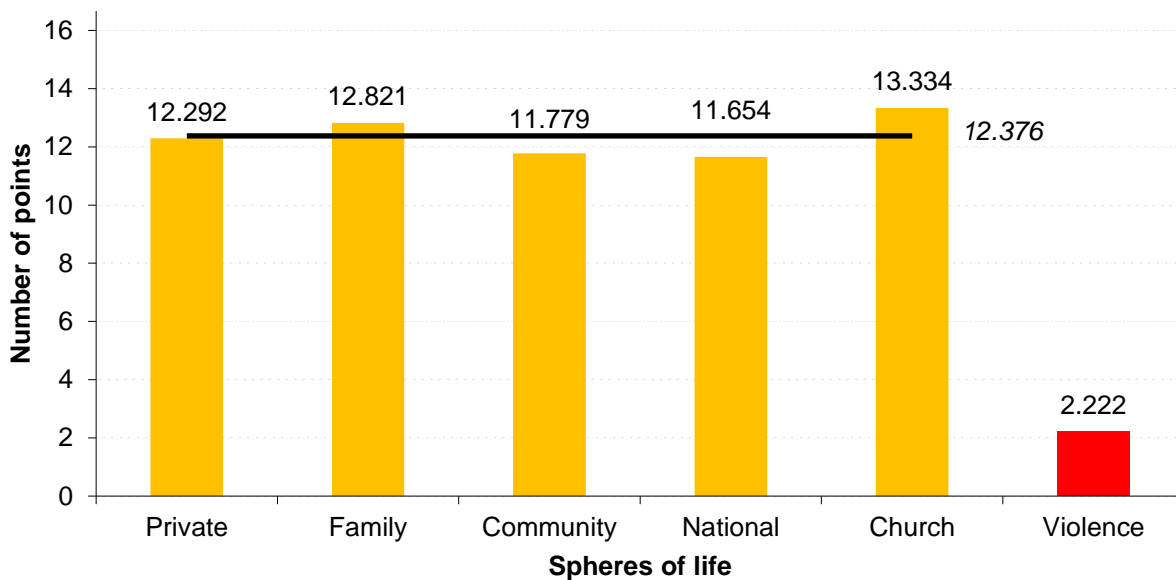
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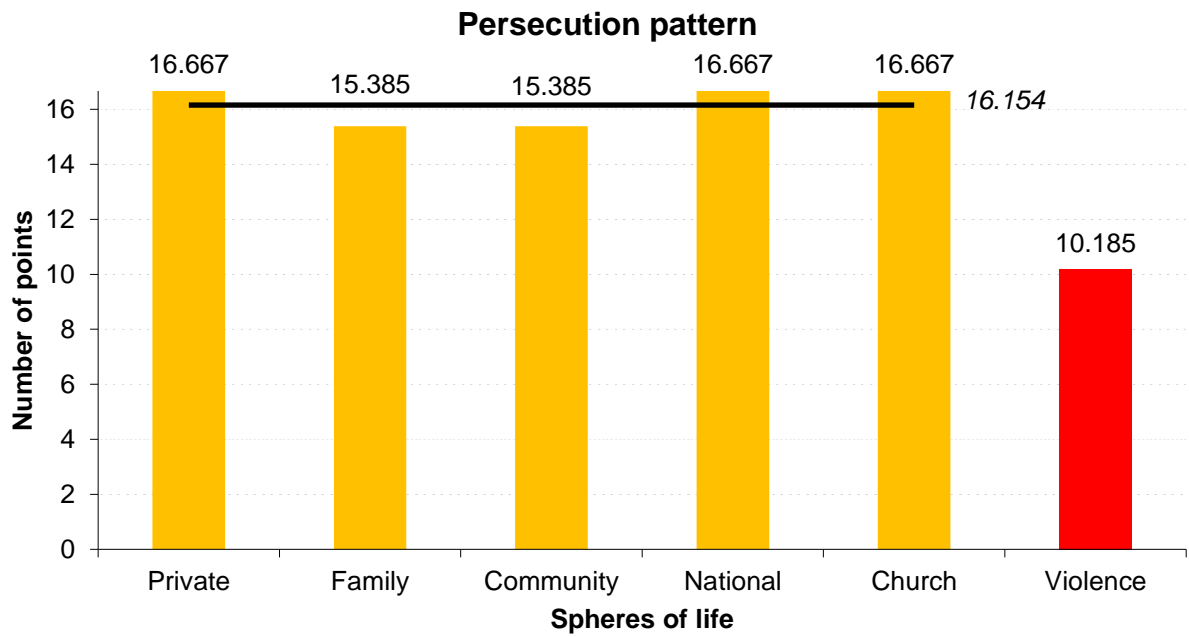


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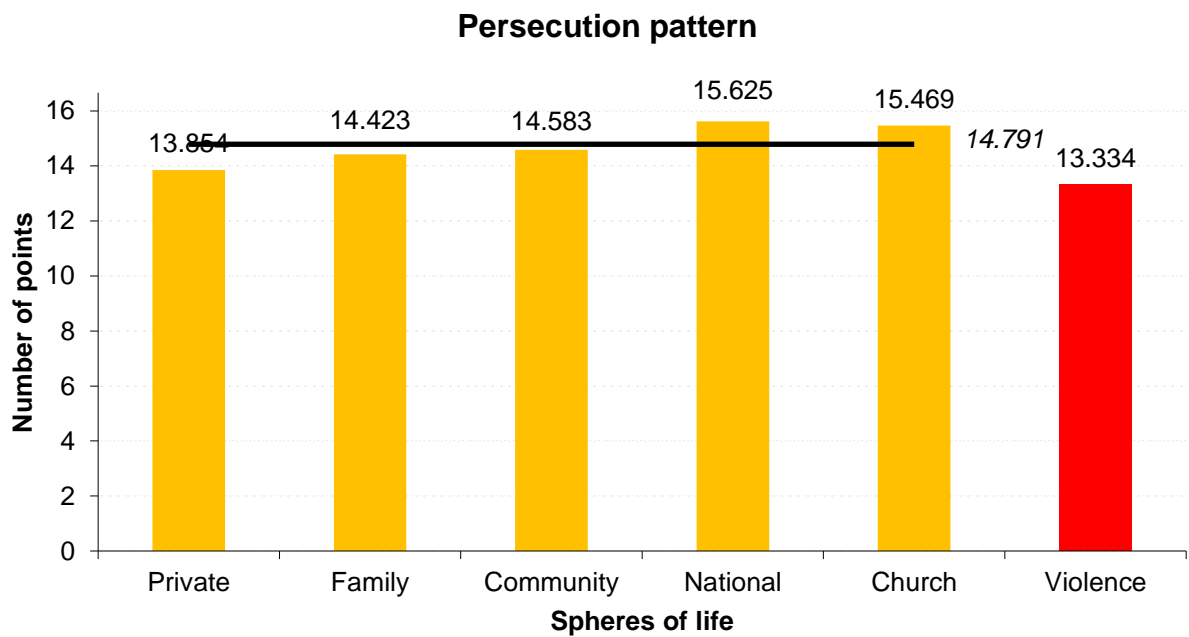
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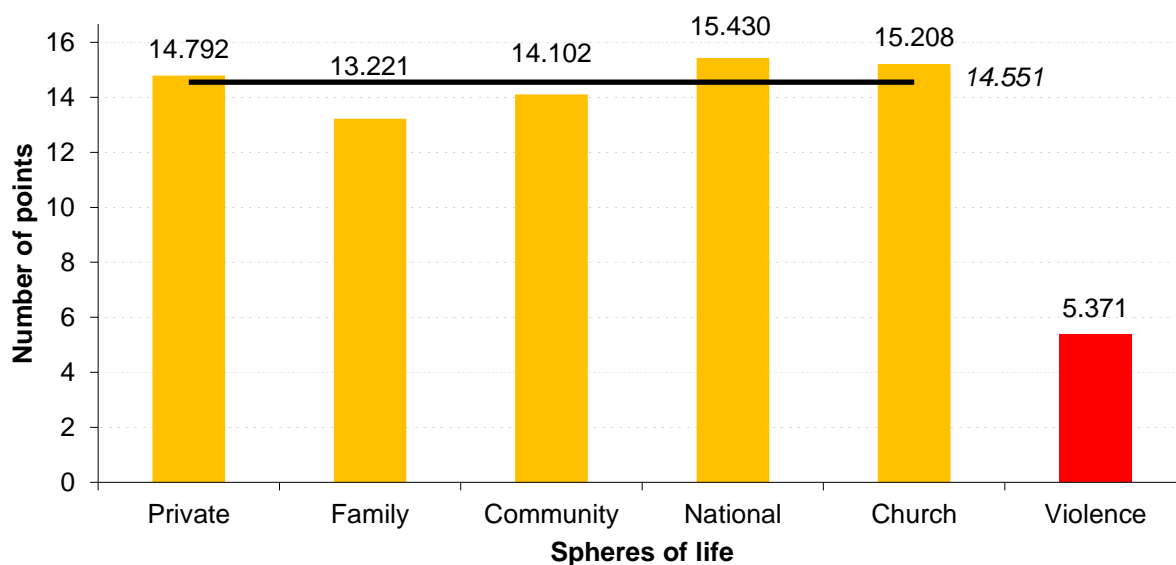


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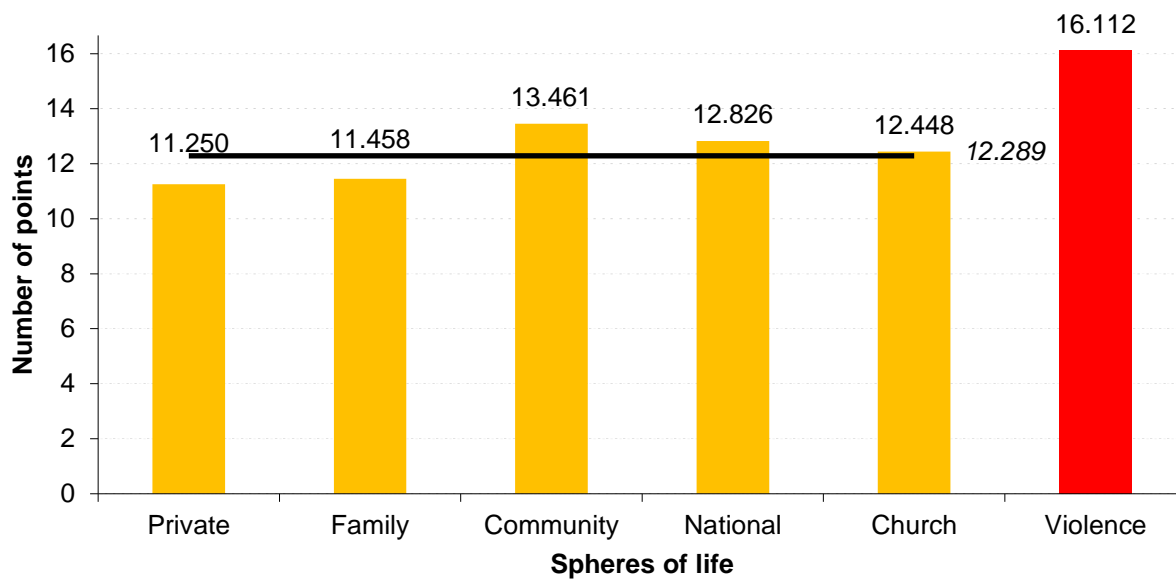
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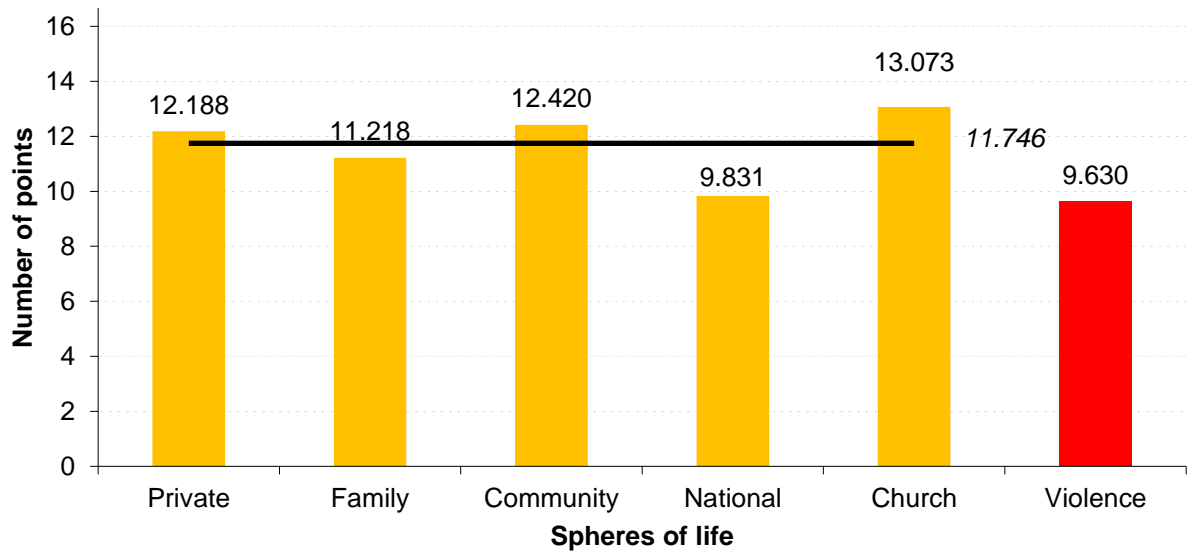
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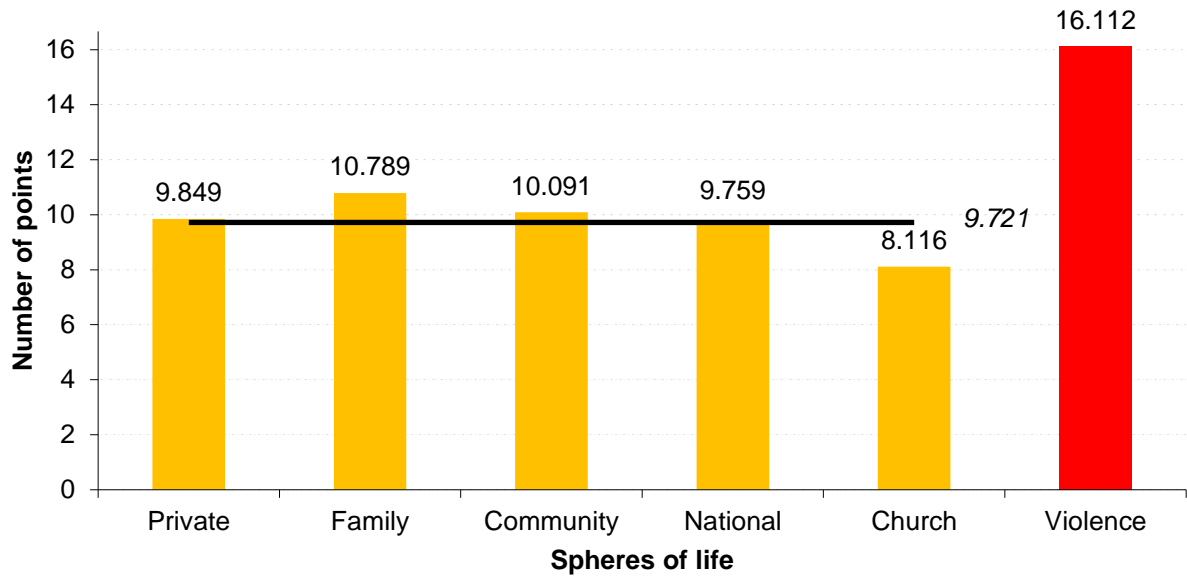
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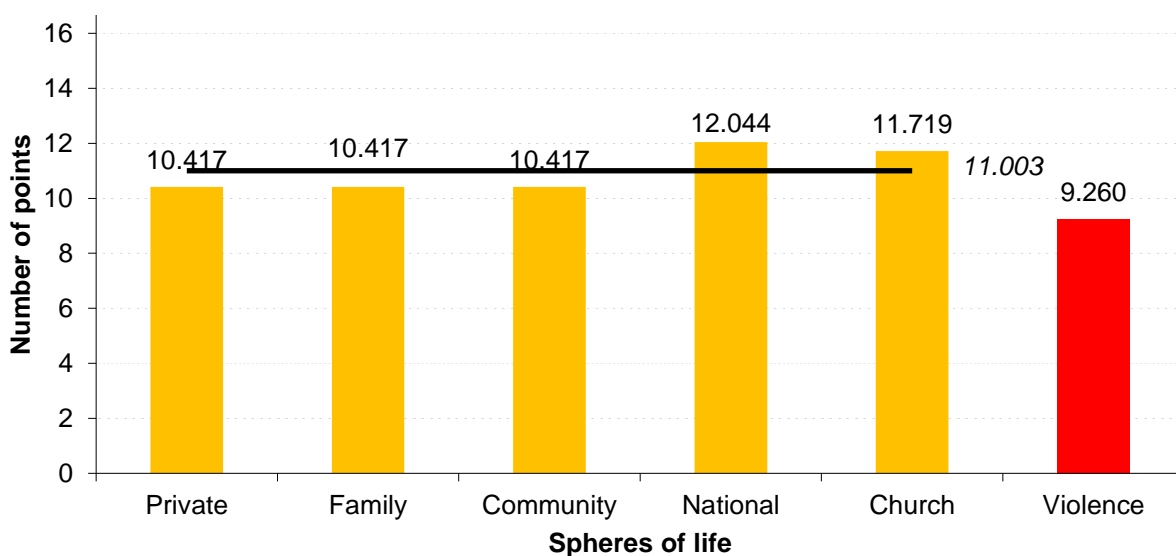
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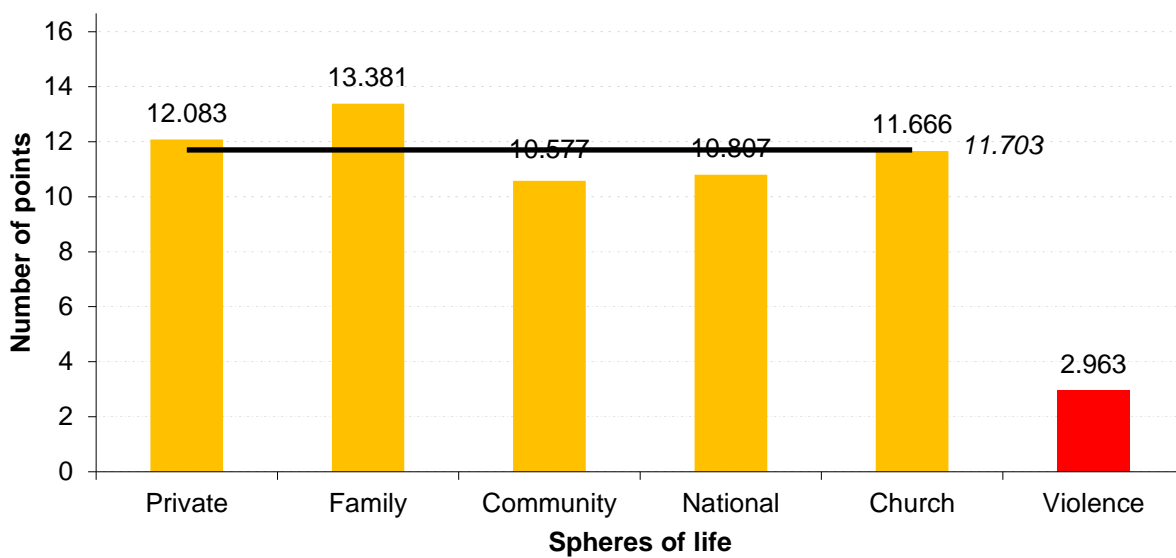
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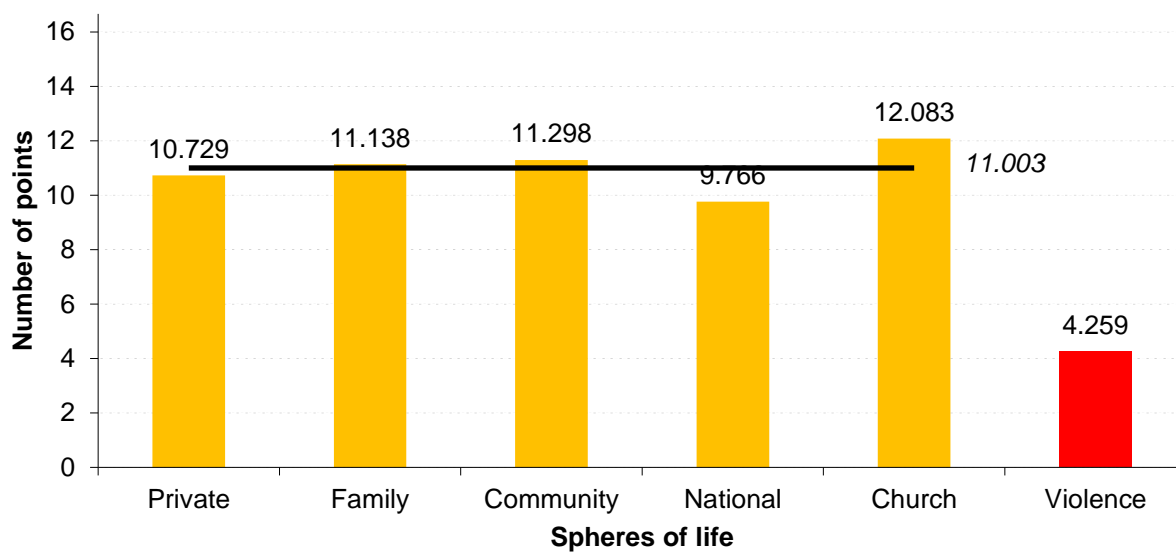
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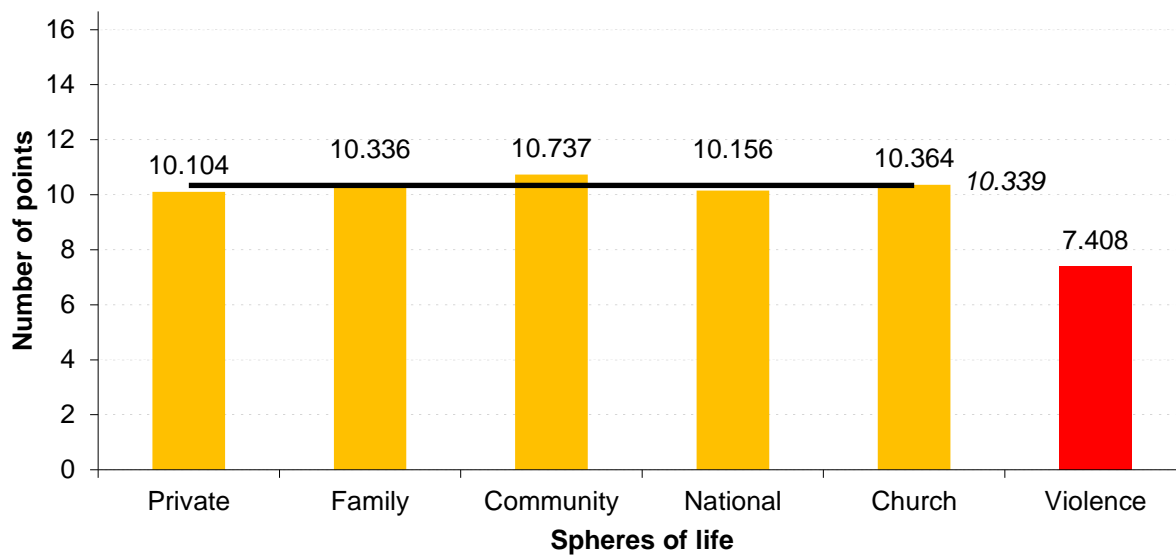
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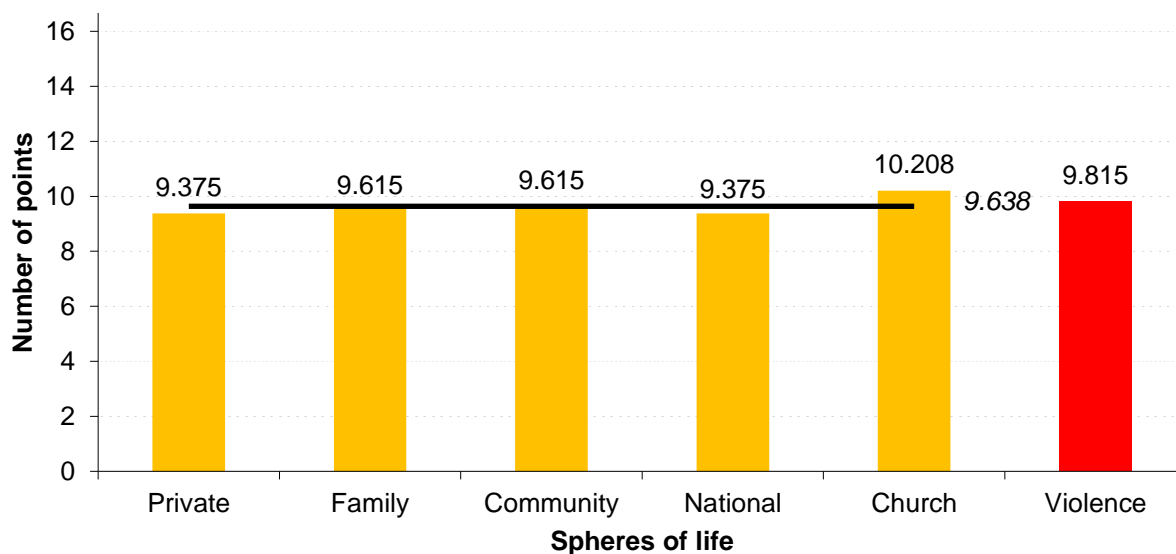
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Persecution pattern



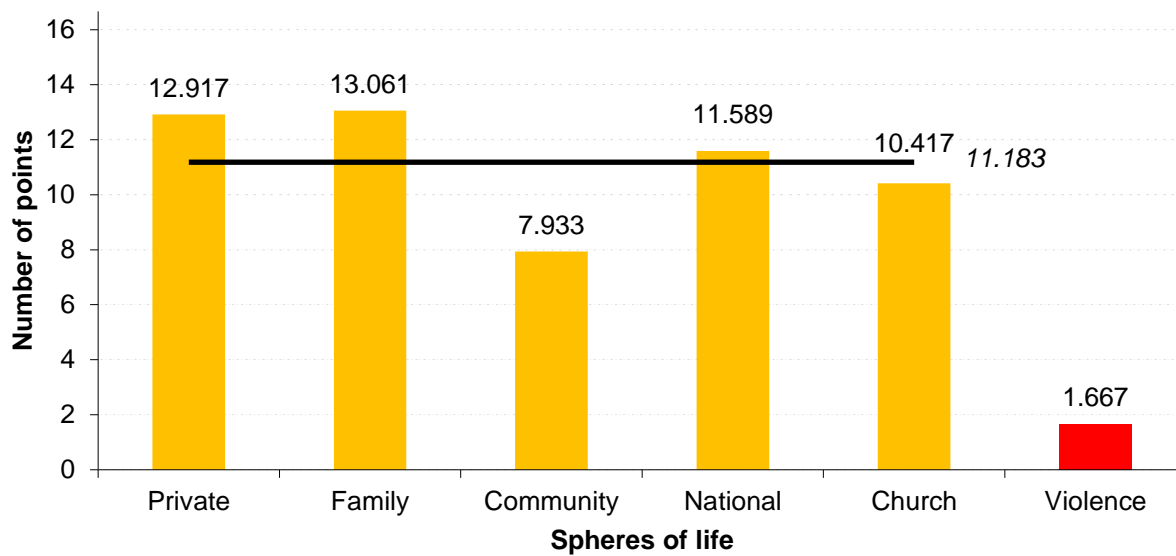
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Persecution pattern



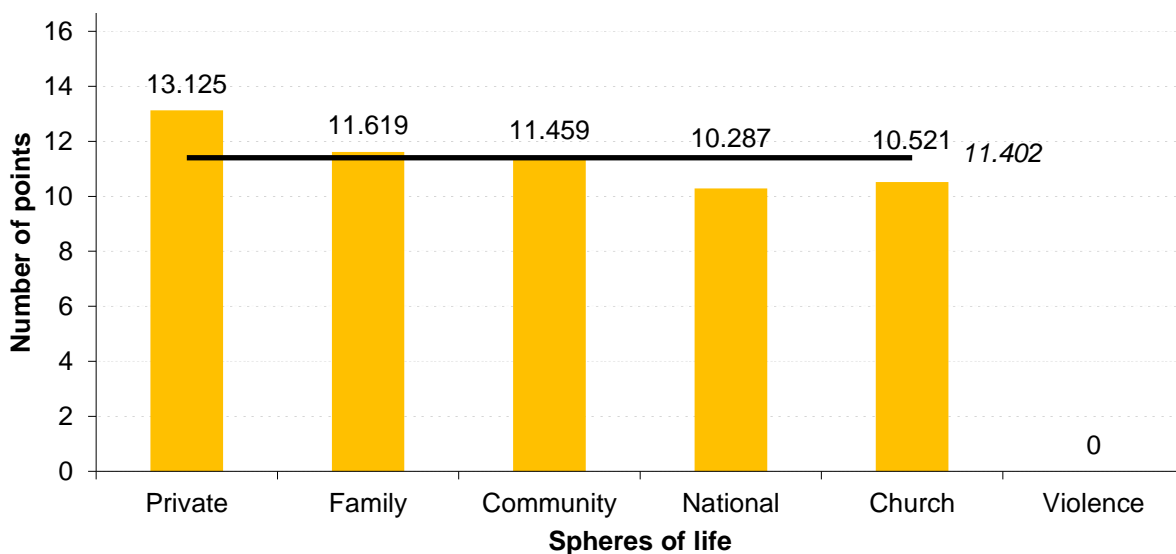
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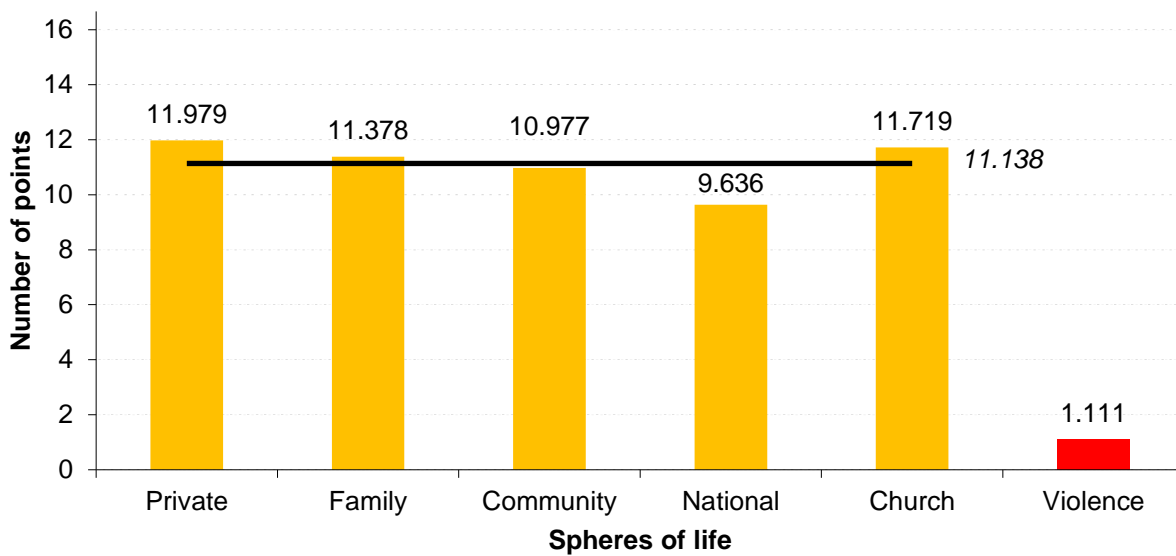
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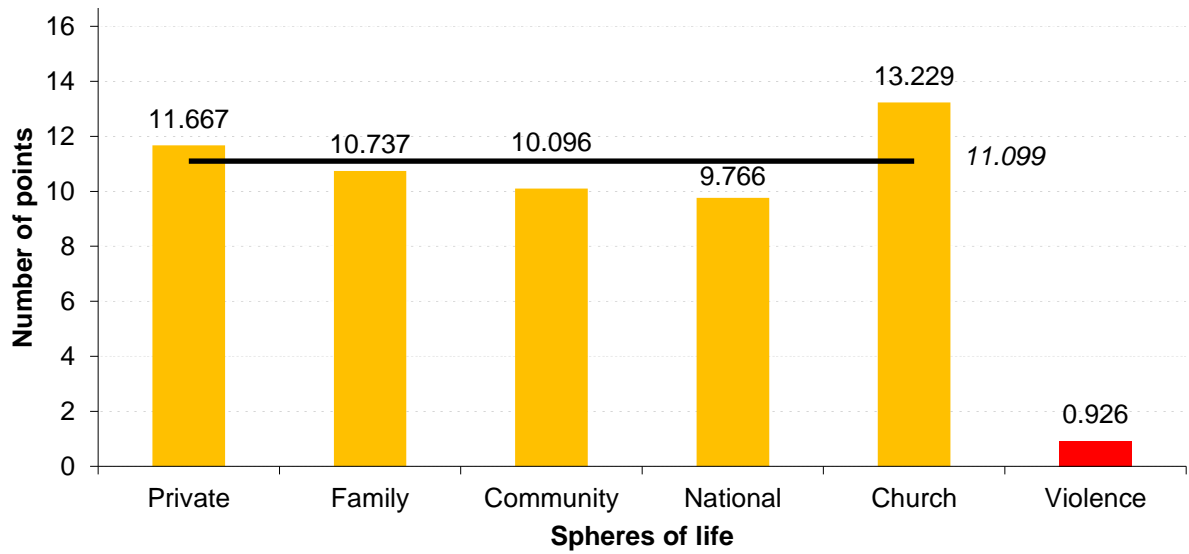
Djibouti

Persecution pattern



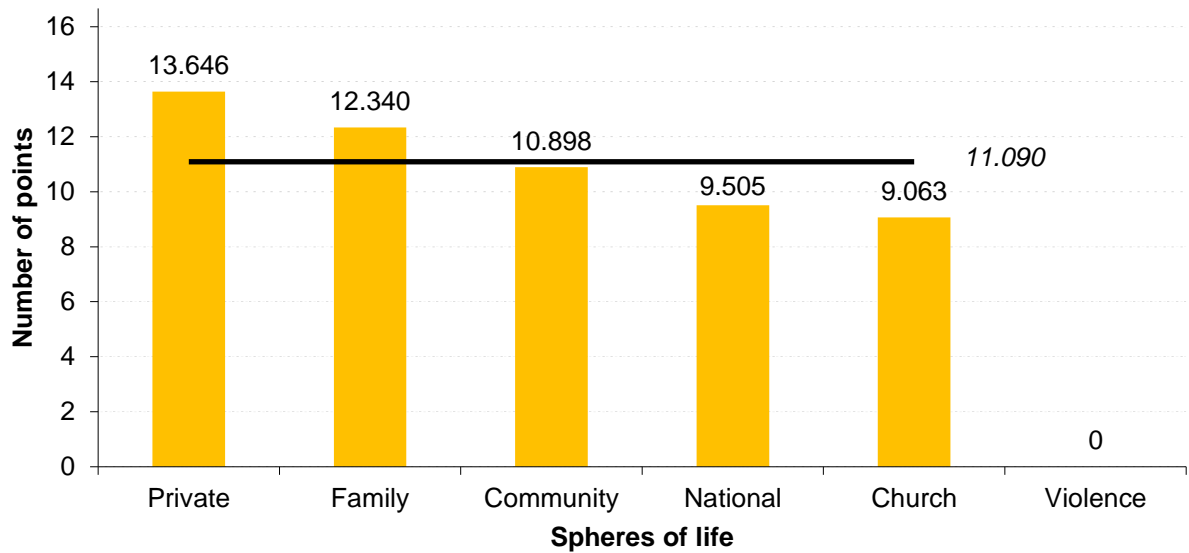
Comoros

Persecution pattern



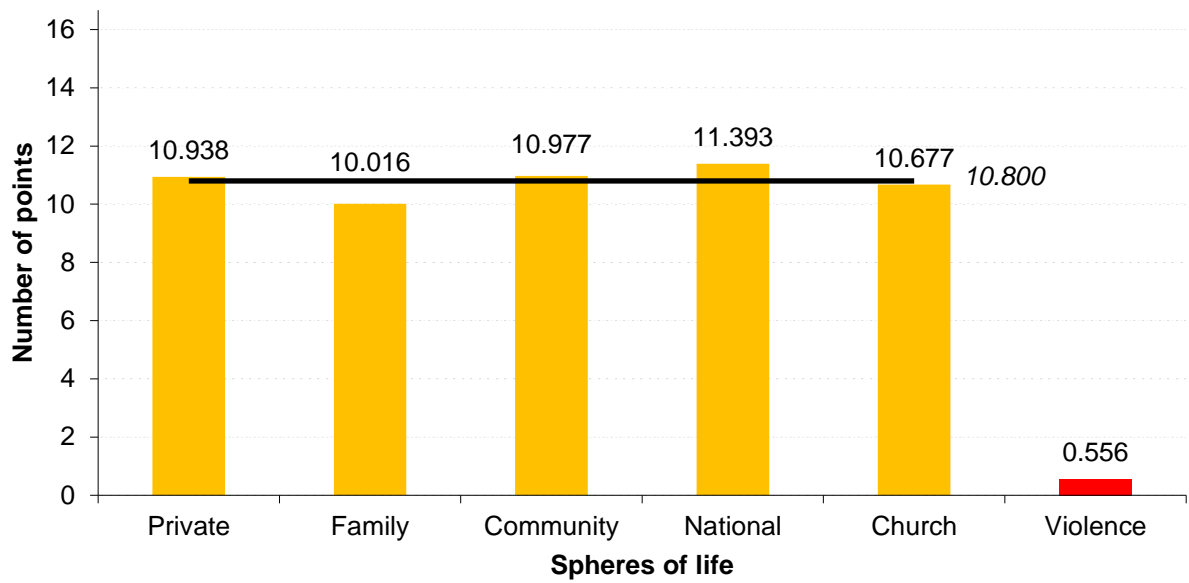
United Arab Emirates

Persecution pattern



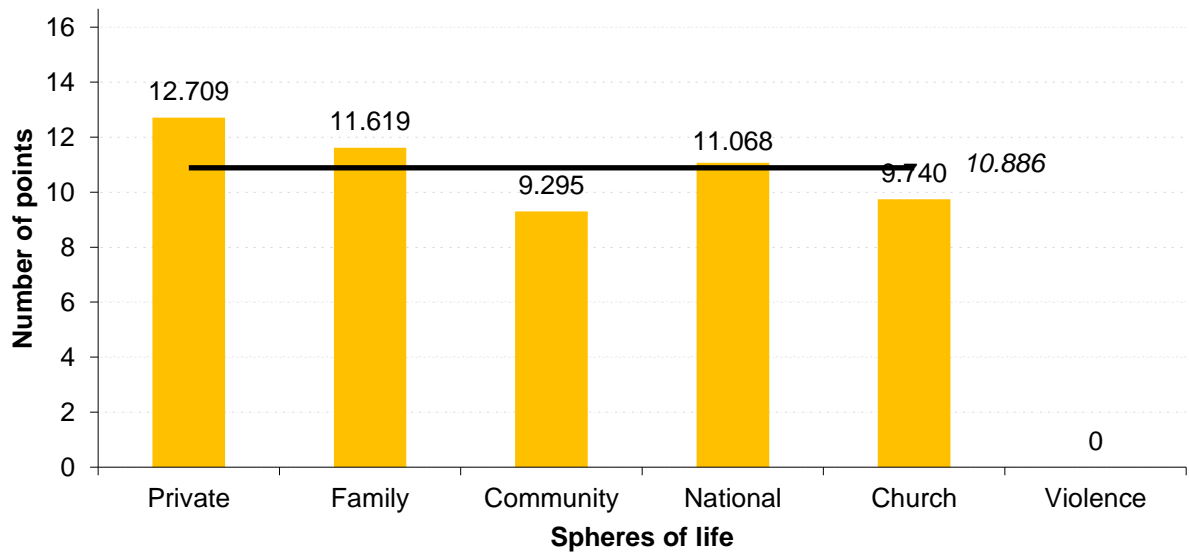
Mauritania

Persecution pattern



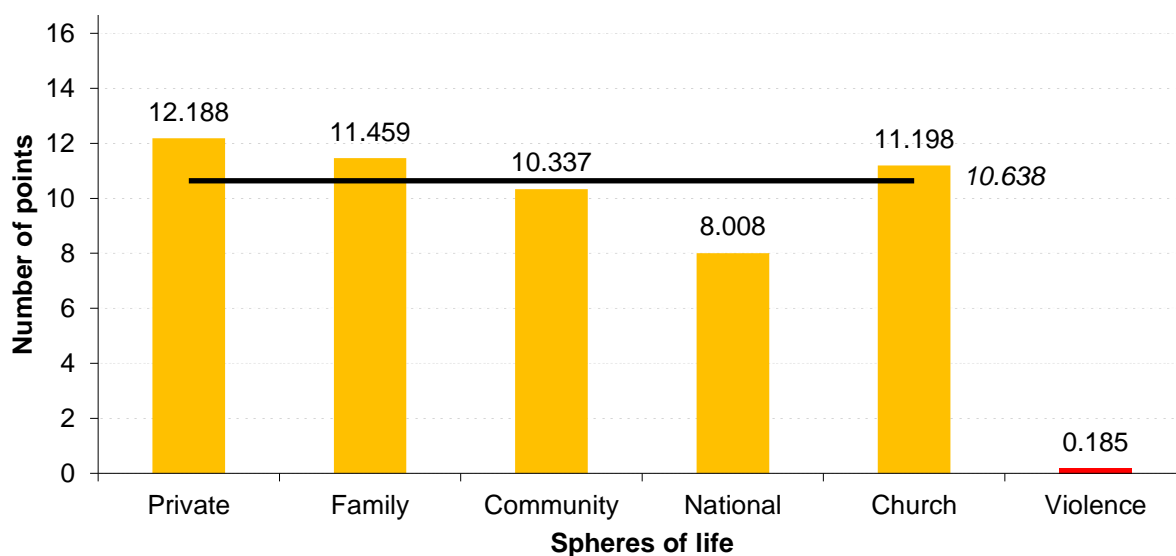
Bahrain

Persecution pattern



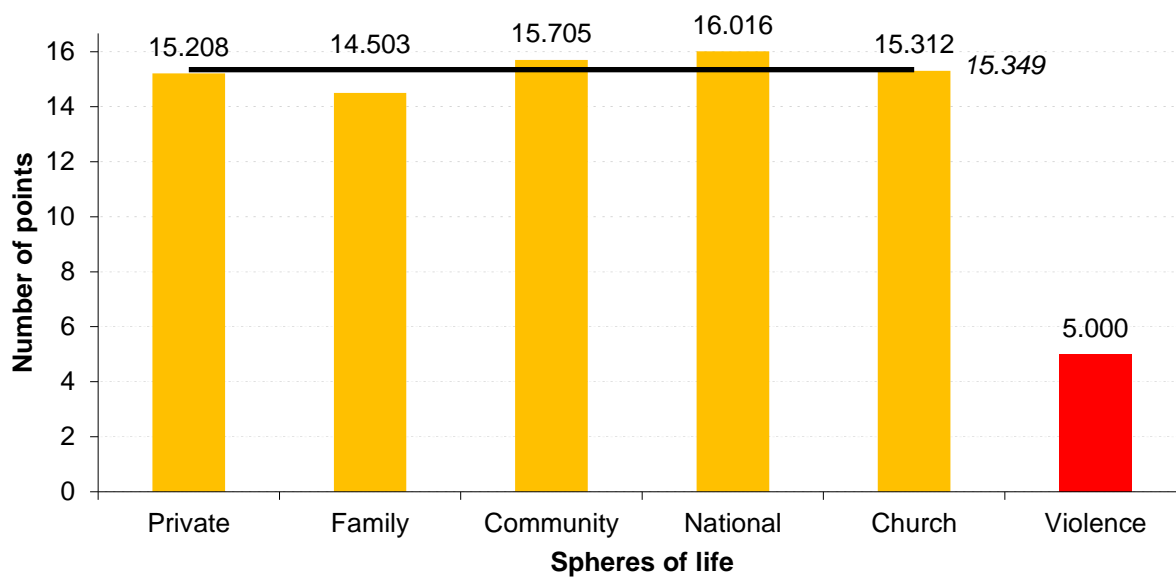
Oman

Persecution pattern



Eritrea

Persecution pattern



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WWL 2017 – Total number of persecuted Christians

215 Million Christians in WWL 2017 experience “high” levels of persecution

Approximately 215 million Christians in the WWL 2017 top fifty countries experience “*high, very high, and extreme*” levels of persecution for their faith.

That’s nearly one in every twelve Christians in the world today.²⁰

This is a number estimated by Open Doors Field Sources with the help of Open Doors World Watch Research.

Four countries alone account for more than half the total: India, Ethiopia, Nigeria and China.

In Asia the number of persecuted Christians is nearly 100 million.

In 21 of the top 50 countries, the percentage of persecuted believers is 100% of the Christian population. In other words, in twenty-one countries every single Christian in the country experiences a high level of persecution in one form or another.

In the vast majority of countries, Christians are a small and vulnerable minority. In 41 of the countries they are less than 15% of the population, and less than 5% in twenty-seven countries.

The total population of the top 50 countries is 4.8 billion according to the estimations of the United Nations, but the percentage of Christians is only 13%, which highlights their minority status. Of this number of Christians, WWU estimates that 33% of them experience high levels of persecution.

This should not be taken as a global figure of persecuted Christians however, which will be significantly higher when countries below the WWL top 50 are taken into account.

For the definition used, we have counted only from the “high,” “very high” and “extreme” categories used in the World Watch Questionnaires. In the questionnaires, “high” occurs when between 41 and 60 points are counted. Above this we have two other categories; “very high (61-80pts)” and “extreme (81-100pts).” Scores were estimated per country at the provincial or subnational levels. If this estimate came within the range of “high” and above, the Christian population in that region would be counted, especially when all categories of Christianity were deemed to be affected one way or another.

In WWL methodology “high” is defined as “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 a Christian presence in such areas as education and employment.”

²⁰ This uses a total of 2.487 billion Christians from the World Christian Database. Mathematically it is 1 in every 11.5 Christians.

We regret we cannot provide more specific details of the calculations, because persecuting governments and movements will use the intelligence to launch further crackdowns. They especially covet details about the underground Muslim Background Believer (MBB) church in many countries.

Statistics of totals often give a misleading impression by themselves, or at least do not say enough of the full orb ed experience of persecution. So from our questionnaire we have derived short statements which highlight the pressures in the various spheres of life the Christian faces in these countries. The countries that have gained maximum points in the relevant category are listed.

1. The countries where it is most dangerous for a Christian to own a Bible are:

North Korea; Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Maldives and Turkmenistan

This is derived from question 1.3 in the sphere of Private Life:

“Has it been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials?”

Six countries reach maximum points.

In North Korea to be found with a Bible means almost certain removal to a labor camp – in most cases not just for the individual, but for their whole family as well. In Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, and the Maldives, where most Christians are entirely from a Muslim background, it is not only the authorities but tribes, families and clans who would deem it their responsibility to kill the Christian if they found the Scriptures in their possession. Turkmenistan in Central Asia frowns on indigenous believers owning Scriptures, and the intrusive surveillance makes it difficult to keep away from government spies.

2. The countries where it is most difficult to arrange a Christian burial are: North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Maldives and Bhutan

This is derived from question 2.5 in the sphere of Family Life:

“Have burials of Christians been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites?”

Six countries again reached maximum points.

In the first five countries one must practice Christianity in secret except in the Maldives where expatriate Christians may meet under strict regulations, so it is impossible to bury a Christian relative and live. Bhutan on the other hand is a Buddhist country, and converts from Buddhism to Christianity find it very hard to arrange a Christian burial as Christianity is not recognized in the country. This often has to take place at night, in remote hillsides, and in secret. Apart from the countries listed above, in many North African countries, it is very

difficult for believers from a Muslim background to arrange Christian burials. The extended family and community of the deceased will not allow this to happen.

3. The countries where Christians are most likely to be abducted and/or forced into marriage are:

North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq

This is derived from question 3.3 in the sphere of Community Life:

“Have Christians been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage?”

Five countries attained maximum scores.

Every year North Korean agents snatch Christians who are working among Korean Chinese in China or inside North Korea itself. Normally it never becomes public. The Christians just disappear. Although this year the killing of Pastor Han made international headlines (see North Korea country profile). Often ordinary Christians do too. Somalia and Afghanistan, and parts of Pakistan, are essentially tribal fiefdoms, and leaders of the clan will often punish someone who has become a Christian, or is even just suspected of becoming one, by forcibly marrying them off. In Pakistan, Christian girls are abducted, raped, forcibly married and forcibly converted at the rate of two per day. Iraq has seen shocking levels of organized abduction and trafficking under the cover of civil war. Young Christian women remain especially vulnerable in these settings.

4. The top countries where Christians most often face accusations of blasphemy resulting in court-cases and/or injury are:

North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Maldives

This is derived from question 4.12 in the sphere of National Life:

“Have Christians been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups?”

Six countries again attained maximum points.

North Korea may seem an odd country for the top spot, but not for nothing has it been called “the world’s most religious state”. Worship of the Kim family is absolute. Citizens literally are forced to bow to his golden statues in scenes that belong in the Old Testament. Failure to worship is regarded as blasphemy even though the term itself would not be used. Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan and Maldives all have formal blasphemy laws, as does Pakistan. Their blasphemy law is so loosely worded you can put your neighbor in jail with just an accusation, and many use the law to steal their neighbors land. In 2010 of the 1031 accused, 162 were Christian. The most infamous blasphemy case concerns the Christian mother of five Asia Bibi, accused of making derogatory comments about the Prophet Mohammed. She was sentenced to hang in November 2010 and has languished in jail since. Two prominent politicians took up her case and were gunned down in 2011 by extremists – Punjab Governor Salman Taseer

and the Minorities' Affairs minister, Shahbaz Bhatti. Sudan also is a much tougher place in recent years in which to practice Christianity for the 2 million Christians there. Apart from the countries listed above, in many northern African countries like Mauritania, Algeria and Egypt, Christians are often accused of blasphemy.

5. The countries where it is most difficult for churches to obtain official church registration are:

North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Maldives, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Brunei, Bhutan and Tajikistan

This is derived from question 5.2 in the sphere of Church life:

“Has it been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government?”

Twelve countries in all gained maximum points.

North Korea simply does not permit any church that is not completely organized by the government. There are five official church buildings in the country maintained for propaganda purposes. Visitors one Easter found a church closed. In Somalia and Afghanistan, the church is entirely MBB and even to meet secretly risks fatal levels of harassment. Saudi Arabia regards its land as sacred for Islam. Two Central Asian states show on this list. Making it virtually impossible to have a legal church is a common stratagem to limit the growth of Christianity in this region. In Tajikistan, the registration procedure has become so difficult that for the last decade or longer no congregations have been registered. In Brunei there is a fatwa that bans a non-Muslim building of worship from being built or renovated. Apart from the countries listed above, Sudan and Eritrea have large Christian populations however, but in Sudan's case there is a strong tendency to become a much more fundamentalist Muslim state. In Eritrea the government of President Isaias has set new highs for paranoia – he sees all new churches as subversive of his rule. In Libya there are two reasons why it is impossible to set up a church – Islamic extremists and guns! Libya's church is MBB and Migrant Christian, but also to set up a church would invite a violent response from the many extremist organizations that roam the country far too well armed.

6. The top countries where church youth work is most heavily restricted are:

North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Eritrea, Libya, Maldives, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kuwait, Comoros, UAE, Bahrain and Oman

This is derived from question 5.6, also in the sphere of National Life:

“Has work among youth in particular been restricted?”

No less than 16 countries gained maximum points.

North Korea is so repressive it is impossible to organize any church life. Somalia too. Sudan has a church, but it is hemmed in more and more. Yemen is a war zone and it is impossible to organize specialized services. Eritrea is paranoid about any attempt to run a healthy church, and often wants young people to go into the army and be totally obedient to the state. Libya again is a context of violence. Here it is impossible for churches to work with youth as this will draw a very hostile and violent reaction from militant Islamic groups. Yet these are all nations bursting with youth. If you want to meet as Christians in these lands, you learn young that it costs to stand up for Christ. Often simply to try to meet invites sniper fire. The fact that this is a very long list shows the importance persecutors pay to youth work, as it is a primary way the faith is passed on from one generation to the next. The Gulf States are prominent in this list, even places like Oman where they are quick to speak of their relative openness. It is one thing to allow a church; it is quite another to let a church pass the baton of faith on. In Central Asia special laws have been put in place that prohibit work among those under age 18.

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WWL 2017 – 25 Years World Watch List

THE 7 MODERN MEGATRENDS OF PERSECUTION: 25 YEARS OF THE OPEN DOORS WORLD WATCH LIST

2017 represents the 25th year of the publication of the Open Doors World Watch List (WWL), which has been and still is the only annual survey ranking the fifty most difficult countries in which to practice the Christian faith. The consistency in the data is remarkable. Only three countries ever topped the List: Saudi Arabia, Somalia and North Korea. Indeed, in terms of the total number of points gathered over the whole period, North Korea and Saudi Arabia are numbers one and two, with Somalia fourth, with only Iran separating this group at number three. The other countries in this “total” top ten list are Afghanistan (#5), Maldives (#6), Yemen (#7), Sudan (#8), Vietnam (#9), and China (#10). Six of these countries are still in the WWL 2017 top ten.

The world has seen huge shifts in the past 25 years, and it may be appropriate to see how the World Watch List has tracked the impact of the changes, which can be so massive they are often overlooked because they sit in plain sight. In this period, we have seen six huge changes that have each impacted on the global persecution of Christians.

1. China opens to the world and the world’s largest persecuted church is seen

It all started in 1978, when Deng Xiaoping decided to modernize the Chinese economy through his “open door” policy. This was a concerted attempt by the world’s largest Communist power to enter the world trading bloc, accomplished so successfully that the Chinese economy became – by some measurements – the world’s largest economy in 2016, and by all measurements by 2023. Although political liberalization was not on the agenda to shadow this economic openness, as witnessed by the terrible massacre of pro-democracy protesters in June 1989, nevertheless as a result of the economic openness Chinese society became more relaxed and more concessions were granted to the church, especially under the presidencies of Jiang Zemin (1993-2003) and Hu Jintao (2002-2012).

This was hugely significant because the Chinese church was the largest persecuted church in the world by then, and continued to grow exponentially, doubling from fifty million from the 1980’s to nearly 100 million today, and expanded most rapidly in the cities in the 1990’s and 2000’s following the rural revival a decade before. Though the Chinese Communist Party is a long way from granting China’s Christians anything approaching what would pass for religious freedom, the days of hundreds kept in detention, a ban on Bibles, and house-church gatherings brutally broken up by police thugs seem to have receded in favor of a more sophisticated manipulation, although the latest president, Xi Jinping, since 2012 has put the clock back in terms of church-state relations.

So from 1993 to 2008 China was in the top 10 twelve times, never higher than #3 in WWL 1997, but since WWL 2008 it has fallen rapidly into the 30's in the latest lists. Despite a darkening picture under President Xi, it is most unlikely China will return to the top 20 in the foreseeable future. China is also hugely influential in the way it controls the church, as countries like Vietnam and Laos take their tone from Chinese tactics. Vietnam has often been China's companion in the top ten historically. A top 20 country first in WWL 1993, it has been in the top ten eight times, in WWL 1999 and consecutively from WWL 2001-2007, and was as high as #3 in WWL 2003 and 2005, and Laos reached #2 in WWL 2001, and was at #3 in WWL 2002 and 2004. But since WWL 2011 the country fell out of the top ten, remained a top thirty country, and Laos and Vietnam have both recently risen again, perhaps tracking President Xi's darker turn. Of course, through all this the most staunchly Communist country of all – North Korea – has dominated the top spot for many years and looks to China to prevent any possibility of regime change. In 2016, the regime isolated itself still further.

2. The Berlin Wall falls in 1989 and the USSR disintegrates, resulting in great openness in post-Communist bloc countries until 1998, when control is reasserted

When USSR leader Michael Gorbachev refused to send Russian troops to put a democratic uprising down in East Germany, it was only a matter of time when the Eastern European nations left the Soviet bloc. If the WWL had been calculated in the mid-1980s, the USSR and all the Eastern European nations would have dominated the top twenty. After 1989, they were never ranked on the WWL at all, except Russia, once, and that at joint #50 in WWL 2011.

A period of astonishing openness was used by missionaries from the West to establish new churches in Russia and in the newly independent Central Asian states, but the door slammed shut in 1998 and from then on Central Asia states – with their powerful ruling elites running the country through fear and intimidation - have featured significantly on the list. Uzbekistan, the most populous of the so-called "Stans", crept into the top 20 in WWL 1997, dropped out of it, and rose until it entered the top 10 in WWL 2008, where it stayed until WWL 2012, and has remained in the top 20 since.

Turkmenistan had an even more extravagant personality cult under Saparmurat Niyazov, and was dubbed the North Korea of Central Asia. It was a top ten country from WWL 2001 to 2004, and has also stubbornly remained a top 20 country since. Other Central Asian states, viz. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, have all virtually been permanent residents of the top 50. An overlooked and much forgotten part of the world, but where believers especially from a Muslim background face intrusive government surveillance and cultural persecution. Still, the region has seen revival among indigenous believers. Russia made the WWL at joint # 50 in WWL 2011, but if some of its republics were separate states – such as Chechnya and Dagestan – they would rank in the top 20 because of their fierce persecution of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). Most so-called post-Communist countries have remained dictatorial in their dealings with society.

3. In the mid 1990's Islamic militants began to expand their operations as well as Saudi Arabia dedicating itself to bankrolling Wahhabism globally, and sub-Saharan Africa began to become a theatre of persecution

Experts today tell us that there are two perennial tap roots of Islamic oppression in the world today – Saudi money, and Pakistani training. This is the analysis of observers like Patrick Cockburn in his influential books like, *The Rise of Islamic State*, and the *Age of Jihad*. The Saudi's use their petrochemical dollars to build and staff hardline Wahhabi mosques around the world, and prevent Western protests by buying their armaments. A person gets radicalized often in this way. But for training they need to go to northern Pakistan, where former Mujahedeen and Taliban operatives will train them in the arts of warfare. These warriors form a cadre that has taken terror around the world, to Syria, Libya, Iraq and even Indonesia and Malaysia.

Of course it is more complex than this. There is the role of Iran which has been exporting its Shia-based extremism since 1979, and also in the mid 1990's what is often forgotten is that Sudan was also a global hub of extremist ideology. After Omar al-Bashir took power in a coup in 1989, his chief Islamic ideologue was a cleric called Hasan al Turabi, who not only began to impose *sharia* on much of the country, but also offered sanctuary to key terrorist leaders and spawned new extremist movements. Osama Bin Laden famously moved his al-Qaeda operation there from 1991-1996. Other groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, Abu Nidal, Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Algerian Islamic Jihad were also given invaluable training, support and strategic guidance in Sudan at this time.

Sudan was #3 in the very first listing in WWL 1993, and #2 in WWL 1994 and 1999. From WWL 1993 to 2000 it was in the top ten, and from WWL 2002-2005, and 2007, in the top twenty. It returned to the top twenty in WWL 2012 at #16, #11 in WWL 2014, and returned to the top ten from WWL 2015 onwards. Its WWL 2017 ranking of #5 will be the highest since WWL 2000. This reflects al-Bashir's 2011 threat to turn the entire country into a *sharia* state, especially as a large portion of the Christian population became part of a new independent South Sudan in 2011. From this country in Africa some of the most deadly and violence Islamic insurgencies have taken their lead, such as al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in northern Nigeria.

4. The rebirth of Hindu and Buddhist nationalism in the 1990's began to put large Christian churches in Asia on the defensive

This was the trend the world refused to notice. Religious nationalism began to gather pace in Asia. India was the first place it began to show. Hindu nationalists reorganized themselves brilliantly in the early 1990's under their arch strategist L. K. Advani, and took advantage of a political vacuum caused by the corruption in the ruling Congress Party. They took power very briefly in 1996 but even then if you led a seminar in Delhi for pastors and asked them to prepare for persecution from Hindu extremists, they would burst out laughing. Then Hindu extremists formed a government in 1997 and it was open season for attacks on Muslims and Christians.

India was included in the first listing in WWL 1993 in the low 30's, but crept steadily up even in the period when Hindu extremists were voted out from 2004 to 2014. In WWL 2000 and 2006 it came into the top 30, and into the top 20 in WWL 2016. Now in the WWL 2017 it has attained its highest ever ranking of #15. Religious nationalism is out to reserve cultures and territories for the dominant religion only, and seeks to push out those belonging to other religions. For the Hindu nationalists, the northern Gangetic plain is sacred, and non-Hindus should not pollute it. However, it was also a reaction to the rapid growth of the Indian church especially among the downtrodden *Dalits*, who dislike the defense of the ancient caste system that Hindu nationalists espouse. They find in Christianity a much more radical empowerment. The Indian church is huge, nearly sixty four million strong by 2016.

Buddhist nationalism also grew, most significantly in Sri Lanka, where a strong nationalist movement began to become politically savvy, and also in Myanmar, where an unpopular military dictatorship sought to curry popular support by boosting the national religion and persecuting Christian and other minorities. "You are made to feel like this is not your home any more" said a Christian leader from the Chin tribe in 2010, "to be a true Burmese you must be Buddhist." At least 97 million Christians from the 215 million Christians reckoned to be persecuted by Open Doors Field Sources in the WWL 2017 top 50 countries come from Asia alone.

5. The 9/11 attacks and the aftermath of the Western occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq unleashed new waves of anti-Christian violence and sentiment in the Middle East

The attacks on the twin towers in New York on 11 September 2001 shocked Western leaders to the core, and they began to recalibrate their entire security policies. Islamic extremism was now viewed as the #1 threat to the West, and an American-led coalition fought wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, although victory was quickly achieved, it proved almost impossible to raise up tolerant and coherent societies. Iraq descended into chaos, especially as a corrupt Shia elite attempted to cleanse much of the land of Christians and Sunni Muslims. In WWL 2007-2008 the country crept into the top twenty for the first time, especially on the back of dreadful reports of the kidnapping of Christians for ransom in Baghdad. But as the country continued to struggle, and civil war took hold, Iraq entered the top 10 in WWL 2011 and has never left it since. It jumped up to #3 in the WWL 2015 as a result of Islamic State (IS) establishing a brutal caliphate in the north of the country in the reporting period.

Afghanistan on the other hand has always been a place where it was virtually impossible to live a free Christian life, and has been in the top 10 seventeen times. Indeed, over the entire period it is the fifth highest country for points. In the WWL 1993 it was second only to Saudi Arabia. The church there is almost entirely MBB, and the Muslim tribes are vicious in their punishing of converts. Pakistan was also drawn into the post 9/11 conflict. Usually a top twenty country, it has been in the consistently top ten since WWL 2014 (and was also in WWL 2002, 2003 and 2012). Its WWL 2017 ranking of #4 is the highest ever.

6. The Arab Spring of 2010 turned into a “winter” for Christians in the Middle East, and the ensuing civil wars took a terrible toll especially in the face of Western reluctance to re-engage militarily

It started promisingly. The Arab Spring was initially a pro-democracy, anti-corruption movement gaining its initial impetus in Tunisia and Egypt, but militant Islamic groups soon high-jacked the momentum. Christians in Egypt were devastated when the Muslim Brotherhood managed to get their leader Mohammed Morsi to the presidency. Misreading his mandate, he proceeded to rapidly Islamize the country, only to be deposed by the military in July 2013 to popular relief. Islamic extremist movements, being well-funded and skilled in violence, swept across the Middle East in a wave of insurgencies. Libya, Iraq, parts of Egypt, and Syria descended into civil war, displacing literally hundreds of thousands of Christians from ancient homelands. This happened in part because the USA and its allies were reluctant to intervene again after expensive and somewhat inconclusive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed Syria had not even been a top 20 country, but it has been a top 10 country since WWL 2014, and Iraq since WWL 2011.

The ripples of the instability spread south however into middle and sub-Saharan Africa, as newly armed Islamic militias in places like Mali and the Central African Republic went on the rampage. The levels of killing were frightening. In northern Nigeria alone the death rate routinely took in an average of 2000-3000 Christians a year, especially from the fierce Islamic movement called Boko Haram and the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen. This region remains the most violent for a Christian in the world today. African countries such as Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan are perennials in the top 20. What is also very significant – and not noticed enough – is that this radicalization trend has begun to affect many Christian majority countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with Kenya, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Tanzania and the Ivory Coast as targets. Kenya is the highest Christian majority country on the WWL 2017, at #18.

There is one larger trend in the world of persecution that the WWL top 50 has not tracked, though Open Doors is aware of it. That is what we call ***Secular intolerance***, and it is seen mainly in the Western world. Someday this will show up in the top 50 however, and again – like many persecution trends – sooner than we might think.

7. Secular Intolerance seeks to push religion out of public life in the West

Historically some prominent Christian thinkers such as John Locke promoted secularism as a good principle, where the State binds itself to stay neutral between denominations or religions, instead of coercively promoting one at the expense of the others. In places like India, the secular principle has been vital to prevent the State promoting Hinduism and discriminating against the other faiths – though this is now breaking down. The concept was always that the State would be happy to promote religion in public life. Now, however, a newer definition of secularism has raised its head, which claims that instead of the State being neutral between religions, it insists that the State should be atheistic, insisting that the arena of the State itself must not contain any religious activity at all. Essentially, that religion must have no place in public life, or if it does, it must be a version of religion that refuses to evangelize. This is hugely problematic since

Christian institutions have been responsible for schools, hospitals and welfare provision for generations – indeed they taught the State to take over these charitable activities. Now many of them face a loss in their public funding because of their attachment to a faith position.

The Harvard Law Professor, Stephen Carter, was moved to protest this view in his 2000 book, *God's Name in Vain*. He points out that if religion had been kept out of public life in the history of America, there would never have been the abolition of slavery in the 19th Century, the protection of works from exploitation in the early 20th Century, or the Civil Rights Movement of the late 20th Century – three epochs in the building of American democracy that were led by church initiatives.

This version of secularism is intolerant because it refuses to admit that while it seeks to ban the religious worldview, it wishes to privilege the anti-religious worldview. We are living through a period when the Western world – which has defended religious freedom so resolutely – may be in the process of undermining it. There is concern about this, even at the highest level. In 2016 the prestigious Templeton prize was given to Dr Jonathan Sacks, who for many years was the Chief Rabbi of Britain. A tireless writer and thinker about the so called “clash of civilizations,” he warned over many years that Western nations were sleepwalking into a betrayal of their tolerant heritage. Upon receiving the prize, he said: “It is not too much to say that the future of the West and the unique form of freedom it has pioneered for the past four centuries is at risk.” Others call it “aggressive secularism,” but the battle is on. There are those in the cultural elites of Western nations who really believe that you will only have peace in a society when you get rid of religion.

Through all these trends however, the Church in these lands at least, has grown with amazing rapidity. Who could have foreseen a church of nearly 100 million in China in the 1980's? Or who predicted a Protestant church of 1.5 million in Vietnam from the rubble of Saigon in 1973, when they numbered a few hundred thousand only. We have also lived through a worldwide turning to Christ among Muslims, though numbers must still be kept secret, and it is not too provocative to say that Muslim extremists have been very effective evangelists for Christ among their own kind as a result of their violent and unsympathetic swagger. The Open Doors World Watch List will, we trust, remain a vital instrument to highlight the trends that are reshaping our world and the Church. If we can stop to consider them, which is not easy in the breakneck pace of modern life, we can have our faith renewed as we see a God who is never stymied by evil, but is able to use even what seems to bring death to bring life. The resurrection pattern of God's ways with us stands out in sharp relief when we consider the story of the persecuted.

Last word to the legendary historian of mission, Kenneth Scott Latourette, who characterizes the whole history of the church in terms of the great paradoxes of persecution. He summarizes this story in a famous book called *The Unquenchable Light*, published in 1947, yet it provides the deepest explanation of Christian history afterwards as well: “In this world the Church's complete triumph is never assured. In some areas grave reverses will be met. In all areas the Church will be confronted by foes. There is that in human nature which will always be antagonized by Jesus. Yet in human nature there is always that which responds to him. People everywhere and of every race are both repelled and attracted. Always there will be some who seek to crucify Jesus.

But always, where He is seen, he will win followers. In these followers he will be reincarnated, even though never perfectly. Here and there the crucifiers will kill off His followers. Somewhere, however, followers will survive. From these survivors Jesus will again be carried to the lands from which he has been driven.”

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WWL 2017 – Q & A Session: Answers to questions discussed on 16 December 2016

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1. QUESTIONS ON WWL 2017 – scores and ranking

- What's the over-arching story about Asia and SEA?
(Five big risers based on score -- are in Asia and SEA: India, Vietnam, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Laos. Sri Lanka, too, is a newcomer on the list.)
- Is there a link between the rise of persecution in India and the rise of persecution in other Asian countries?

Answer from WWU:

Most SEA countries look to China for orientation. The situation in SEA is not directly linked to the situation in Hindu India. Asian countries are totally diverse with different main persecution engines operating (e.g. *Communist and post-Communist oppression* in Laos/Vietnam; *Islamic oppression* in Bangladesh and *Religious nationalism* in Buddhist countries.) Although there is no real over-arching story as such, the two major trends are 1) Religious Nationalism in Asia is accelerating and 2) Asian Governments are more insecure and play the nationalist card, as discussed in detail in the WWL 2017 Article on Trends.

- What can WWU say about just how little the gap between the scores have become at the top of WWL 2017?

Answer from WWU:

Somalia rose 4 points mainly due to more data being available on violence. Due to security issues all details surrounding the killings of Christians in Somalia are Level 1.

The WWL Methodology makes it possible to compare very different countries, and indeed the gap between North Korea and Somalia at the top of WWL was close in WWL 2015 too. Both countries have nearly maximum squeeze levels but in North Korea the situation is one of control and the state government is the main driver of persecution; Somalia is a lawless country with

Islamic militant groups being the main driver of persecution. There are many more Christians and many more illegal meetings of Christians in North Korea than in Somalia. A Christian in North Korea is not usually – as in Somalia - killed on the spot when discovered. In a secretive society like North Korea information on violence is difficult to obtain.

WWU intends to carry out a comparative analysis of Christian and church life in these two countries, in 2017.

- **Why have the rankings dropped for Eritrea and Ethiopia? What has changed for Christians there? How can we explain the reduction of violence in Eritrea?**

Answer from WWU:

Eritrea:

Please read the country persecution dynamics for Eritrea. Eritrea's score decreased 7 points. The main reason is that in the WWL 2017 reporting period the level of violence decreased by over 50% but remained high. The other equally important reason is that many active Christians have fled the country. The fact that those who are oppressed are fleeing the country is an advantage for the government since those fleeing are the ones who would otherwise have been pressing the government for changes and reforms. Furthermore, the fact that many active Christians (especially Pentecostals) are either already in prison or have fled the country, also reduced the attention that the Eritrean Orthodox Church has given to the activities of those Christians.

Ethiopia:

Ethiopia's score decreased by 3 points. This was mainly due to a drop in squeeze.

Compared to WWL 2016, the score for violence increased. However, the overall pressure on Christians decreased in the country. The protests going on in the country had a marked effect. As is well known, in the past year (during the WWL 2017 reporting period), Ethiopia has experienced a great deal of political turbulence. There have been persistent and intense demonstrations particularly in Oromia and Amhara Regional States. To quell the protests, the government undertook a series of measures, including acts of violence.

In various parts of the country there were Christians protesting - including Orthodox priests and Protestant pastors. Hence, Christians have been arrested and even killed due to the violent crackdown by security forces. However, the security forces did not target any religious group in particular and acted indiscriminately, especially as far as the religion of the protestors is concerned. There have been some reports concerning attacks on one church in a Muslim dominated locality within the Oromia regional state. However, those regarded as leaders of the protest were quick to condemn the attack and called on demonstrators to make sure the protests do not lead to sectarian or religious conflict.

The overall orientation of the protests in Oromia Regional State was such that ethnic solidarity took precedence over religion. Given that the region is more or less equally divided among Christians and Muslims, those regarded as leaders of the protest were very careful to make sure that no religious group felt threatened as a result of the demonstrations. In the Amhara Regional State, most of the areas where there were protests and disturbances were areas where there is an overwhelming dominance of Coptic Orthodox Christians.

This does not mean that there were no incidents targeting Christians, however. In Ethiopia the main persecution engines are *Islamic oppression* and *Denominational protectionism*. In the reporting period, followers of different denominations within Christianity and followers of both religions (Islam and Christianity) have been protesting against the government together.

- Why did Mali go up 12 places in ranking?

Answer from WWU:

Mali's score rose by 4 points due to an overall increase in squeeze, despite less violence.

The level of pressure has remained almost the same as in WWL 2016 in the *family and private spheres of life* in Mali. However, there has been an increase in the *community, national and church spheres*. The level of violence decreased during the WWL 2017 reporting period. The overall trend in Mali suggests that even with a decline in the *smash* or violence, the prevalence and intensity of persecution in most other *spheres of life* is on the rise. This indicates that despite the success in dislodging Islamic militants from the territories they had controlled, **they leave behind a more radicalized society** that is even less hospitable to Christians than it was before. This aspect has been discussed in a WWR report entitled: [“The Sahel – Rising Islamic militancy and the persecution of Christians in the region”](#) (password for access: freedom).

- Why did Azerbaijan not score highly enough to be included in the WWL 2017 Top 50?

Answer from WWU:

WWU followed the information supplied by field and external experts. All of them indicated that they found it extremely difficult to get information about religious persecution from Azerbaijan and gave the country a lower score. The WWL 2016 scoring was actually on the high side. WWU would like to stress that the departure of Azerbaijan from the WWL Top 50 has nothing to do with any form of improvement in the situation of Christians in the country. It is known that the level of fear among believers is very high: They are extremely cautious to share information about persecution in their country – they are small in numbers and any leaked information can easily be traced back to them by the Azeri government. There is little doubt that Azerbaijan will be back in the WWL Top 50 when more verified reports become available.

- Why is Saudi Arabia so low on WWL 2017 (#14)? Aren't we letting Saudi Arabia off the hook?

Answer from WWU:

Saudi Arabia scored 76 points as in WWL 2016. The scores for pressure are extreme but the score for violence is low. Should the number of violent incidents rise, then the final score will be higher. Added to that, Saudi Arabia is extremely strict on converts (MBBs) but there is a large group of Christian migrants. They also are very seriously oppressed by Saudi government and society, but not to the same degree as the MBBs.

- Why does OD concentrate on rankings and not points?

(A fall in ranking – e.g. 40 – 43 - does not necessarily reflect an improvement in the situation for Christians.)

Answer from WWU:

This is a Development office issue and concerns their approach to today's dominant media communication styles.

It is usually the *squeeze* (pressure) element which gives the best insight into Christian life in a country. WWU can always supply two separate WWL 2017 Top 50s of *squeeze* and *smash* – as long as this does not cause any confusion with the main WWL 2017 table of scores and ranks. (These extra Top 50s will be delivered shortly.)

One participant suggested that it would be interesting to have rankings for the individual spheres of life.

2. QUESTIONS ON RELIGIOUS STATISTICS

- The number of people and the number of Christians in Syria have both risen, which seems surprising – could we check that please?

Answer from WWU:

WCD is the reliable data source used here. (The rise is not because more Muslims are becoming Christians.)

- The number of Christians in Iran has almost doubled. Is that correct?

Answer from WWU:

WWU always relies on advice from Field. WWL 2016 used a very conservative Field estimate. For WWL 2017 Field advised the actual number. Hence the WWL 2017 figure gives the false impression of a huge rise occurring within 12 months.

- Please define Asia for the purposes of “100 million Christians are persecuted in Asia”.

Answer from WWU:

The definition of Asia is based on the list of [United Nations Regional Groups of Member States](#).

A breakdown per country of the 215 million persecuted Christians in the WWL 2017 Top 50 countries is not available for public distribution.

3. QUESTIONS ON VIOLENCE

- India: Can we say: “In India, Open Doors researchers estimate that on average a church is burned down or a pastor beaten ten times a week – a threefold increase on last year’s figures”?

Answer from WWU:

No, this statement is far from correct. Only 21 churches were reported attacked in the reporting period and about 800 Christians beaten. Only a fraction of this number were pastors. (For the record: 23 churches were reported attacked and 360 Christians beaten in the WWL 2016 period.) An acceptable statement would be: “**Roughly 15 Christians are attacked every week in India.**”

- India: Please could we have a breakdown of violent incidents?

(The violence score in the PD is 13.519. Is there more information available?)

Answer from WWU:

We apologise for the delay in updating the Violent Incidents Database (VID). One very good source giving details of incidents has been prepared by the [Evangelical Fellowship of India report](#) on the first half of 2016. This report was also discussed in the WWU’s [Recent Country Developments/India](#).

- Which is the country (which are the 5 countries) with the worst levels of violence against Christians?

Answer from WWU:

Please see the detailed [WWL 2017 Article on Violence](#). There are also separate [rankings for pressure and smash](#) published. Top of the smash list are Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Mexico, Syria, India.

The data on violence against Christians in the [WWL 2017 Violence Article](#) is limited to records of Christians being killed or churches attacked for faith-related reasons. The WWL questionnaire contains questions on many more categories of violence for faith-related reasons which are then all taken into account for calculating the country score for violence. This explains why there is a difference between the ranking for violence in this article and the ranking and scoring table (block 6) of the WWL 2017. In the first place the WWL questionnaire not only looks at churches but also at other Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) that have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated. Furthermore a variety of other incidents, apart from killings, is accounted for: Detention without trial; being sentenced to prison or labor camp; being sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment; abduction; rape or other forms of sexual harassment; forced marriages; other forms of physical or mental abuse (including torture and mistreatment); attacks on houses belonging to Christians; attacks on Christians' shops or businesses or other property by being damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated; Christians being forced to leave their homes or to go into hiding in-country, or to leave their country.

- **Nigeria: Please supply violence figures.**

We would like to know the number of deaths of Christians, violent attacks on Christians and the number of churches burned down.

Answer from WWU:

Details have now been published in the [WWL 2017 Article on Violence](#). Again, WWU apologises for the delay in updating the Violent Incidents Database (VID).

More details (although partly outside the WWL 2017 reporting period) on deaths of Christians, Christians injured, violent attacks on Christians and their properties, and on churches in Nasarawa State can be found in [this report](#): "Nigeria: Investigating common narratives of violent conflict in Nasarawa State. An examination of the hostilities against Christians in the period January 2013 - May 2016". Nasarawa State is one of the Nigerian Middle Belt states where the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen have been engaged in [ethnic cleansing](#) of Christian communities. Other reports were made too giving [an overview of four states](#) in the Nigerian Middle Belt and for [Taraba State](#).

4. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS SENT IN LATER

- Questions concerning the 215 Million persecuted Christians number
 - How did WWU determine this figure of persecuted Christians? (Does Open Doors count the number Christians worldwide in order to estimate the percentage of persecuted believers worldwide?)
 - How did WWU determine which believer was persecuted and who was not?
 - Can we get a breakdown per country?
 - Why did WWU only cover the top 50?
 - What is the estimated number of persecuted Christians outside the WWL?
 - Can the countries below the top 50 influence this figure? Any specific numbers for 51-70?

Answer from WWU:

For answers to the above please see the document "[WWL 2017 The total number of persecuted Christians and Statements](#)". (Revised messaging guidelines for OD-internal use have also been issued but are not included in this compilation.)

There are no specific numbers made available for countries outside the top 50.

- **OD-NL plans to use the figure of 2.4 billion Christians worldwide in relation to the 215 million persecuted. For every 11 believers there is one persecuted Christian. Is that correct?**

Answer from WWU:

It would be better to use the ratio 12:1. As stated in the document "WWL 2017 Total number of persecuted Christians and Statements" in this compilation document above: "Approximately 215 million Christians in the WWL 2017 top fifty countries experience 'high, very high, and extreme' levels of persecution for their faith. That's a little more than one in every twelve Christians in the world today. (Footnote: This uses a total of 2.487 billion Christians from the World Christian Database. Mathematically it is 1 in every 11.5 Christians.)"

- **Country info - Will the country information contain information on the number of believers and the number of persecuted believers, as well as an explanation for the difference between those two numbers?**

Answer from WWU:

WWU has published the religious statistics for the WWL 2017 Top 50 countries (see above in this compilation document) and has distributed OD-internal guidelines concerning the 215 million persecuted Christians in the WWL 2017 Top 50 countries. Please see above: "WWL 2017 The total number of persecuted Christians and Statements".

- Turkey: Pushed toward Islamic direction. Rose two points and 8 places. ‘The Christians have yet to bear the brunt of it’. How come there is already such a rise if the effects of the coup are still to come?

Answer from WWU:

As could be seen in the Country persecution dynamics for WWL 2015 and 2016, the situation for Christians in Turkey was already getting worse. The conflict with the Kurds, the problems in Syria and Iraq with IS (which is also active in Turkey), and the stealthy Islamization instigated by the ruling AKP under President Erdogan was already taking its toll on Christians. The coup occurred on 15 July 2016 and it already has had consequences. But we have not seen all yet. Much more is yet to come. The latest information is pointing towards a deterioration. An investigation has been launched by the government to check on links between the Vatican and Gulen. An American pastor was sentenced to jail on terrorism accusations.

- Total of WWL 2017 scores = 3355 points. Is persecution rising for the fourth time or is it the method?

Answer from WWU:

Persecution is rising for the fourth time. The methodology change has mainly affected the transition from WWL 2012 to WWL 2013, slightly in WWL 2014 and not in WWL 2015 to WWL 2017. So we can say persecution is rising for the fourth time.

- Malaysia – Is there any more information available about the “purification centers”?

Answer from WWU:

Field has just finalized a study. WWU has since deleted this reference in the persecution dynamics as it now seems that most converts who are abducted are taken to a form of house arrest and not to those centers.

- Mexico is high on violence: 23 killed. Is there an article on these killings? Does it have to do with the 287,000 Christians being exiled?

Answer from WWU:

Not all 23 Christians killed were “leaders”, but most of them were. It is important to quote this right. What it says in the persecution dynamics is that at least 23 Christians were killed during the reporting period:

- December 2015: One evangelical pastor of the Mixtec ethnic group, Victor Villa Cruz, shot and killed inside the church where he pastored in Jamiltepec, Oaxaca (12 December 2015). A month earlier he had warned his church members to stay out of the corruption of the local municipality. Evidence is that the crime was ordered by the municipality. Members of the police threatened his widow and forced her into hiding. More time has gone by since then, and we were able to talk to people very close to the situation and are sure it was a true case of Christian martyrdom.
- June 2016: 11 persons from the same family were massacred in Puebla for religious reasons. See: <http://www.laprensa.hn/mundo/969021-410/un-grupo-armado-asesina-a-once-miembros-de-una-familia-en-el>, <http://www.imagenzac.com.mx/nota/matan-a-11-integrantes-de-una-familia-en-21-25-oo>.
- September 2016: On 19 September 2 Catholic priests, Alejo Nabor Jiménez Juárez y P. José Alfredo Juárez were kidnapped and murdered in Veracruz.
- September 2016: Priest José Alfredo López Guillén was killed in Michoacan.
- October 2016: Apatzingán, Michoacán: 4 lay leaders from Arcoiris evangelism group: Wilivaldo Hernández, Jesús Ayala Aguilar, Adán Valencia, Jesús López Urbina.
- October 2016: 4 deaths of Evangelicals in Sinaloa.

Concerning the question: Does it have anything to do with the IDP situation (287,000), as mentioned in the short version of the Mexico persecution dynamics?

No, not directly. One part of the IDP situation is related to *Ethnic antagonism* and another part is related to *Organized crime and corruption*, but the majority of all cases of forced displacement has nothing to do with the persecution of Christians but with other violent aims.

- **Mali: What caused the large drop in the number of Christians - from 527,000 (WCD) in WWL 2016 to 448,600 (OD) in WWL 2017?**

Answer from WWU:

WCD has revised its estimates for Mali and in fact states an even lower figure (413,000). The drop is therefore not linked to any specific event occurring within the WWL 2107 reporting period.

WWU / Q&A / 2016-12-22 (adapted for inclusion in Compilation volume)

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WWL 2017 - WWL background information (FAQ)

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A. QUICK Q&A ON WWL

More details about the background to the World Watch List (WWL) are available in the long and short versions of the WWL methodology.

1. How is the WWL compiled?

World Watch Research (WWR) distinguishes two main expressions of persecution: *squeeze* (the pressure Christians experience in all areas of life) and *smash* (plain violence). While *smash* can be measured and tracked through incidents of violence, *squeeze* needs to be tracked by discerning how Christian life and witness is being squeezed in different areas of life. Different persecution engines and drivers become identifiable from the answers to country questionnaires covering the reporting period 1 November – 31 October. A final score is calculated for each country which is then used to determine the order of countries from position 1 to 50 on the annual WWL.

2. What are persecution engines and persecution drivers?

A Persecution engine describes the reason why Christians are persecuted in a particular area or setting. WWL lists eight such persecution engines. Please note that for WWL 2017 the methodology and analysis now uses *Islamic oppression* (instead of *Islamic extremism*) and *Ethnic antagonism* (instead of *Tribal antagonism*).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Islamic oppression</i> | Tries to bring the country or the world under the 'House of Islam' through violent or non-violent actions. |
| 2. <i>Religious nationalism</i> | Tries to conquer the nation for one's religion. Mainly Hinduism and Buddhism, but also orthodox Judaism or other religions. |
| 3. <i>Ethnic antagonism</i> | 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. |
| 4. <i>Denominational protectionism</i> | 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. |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5. Communist and post-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. |
| 6. 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. |
| 7. Dictatorial paranoia | Does everything to maintain power, not specifically focused on realizing a vision. |
| 8. Organized corruption and crime | Tries to create a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for self-enrichment. |

The drivers of the persecution engines are the people and/or groups being hostile towards Christians in a particular country.

1. Government officials at any level from local to national
2. Ethnic group leaders
3. Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national
4. Religious leaders of other churches at any level from local to national
5. Fanatical movements
6. Normal citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
7. Extended family
8. Political parties at any level from local to national
9. Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
10. Organized crime cartels or networks
11. Multilateral organizations

3. What gives the WWL credibility (academic status)?

The WWL team consists of one director, five persecution analysts and one communicator, all with university degrees. Three of the team (including the director) have or are completing PhDs. 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 who have different professional backgrounds. Some are lawyers with extensive experience in the field of human rights, constitutional law and governance.

The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF; www.iirf.eu) has audited the WWL methods for arriving at country scores and their transnational comparability. It has also checked their proper application on varying sample countries for WWL 2014-2017. The main focus of the World Watch List 2017 audit is on consistency in the processing of the WWL questionnaires for the different countries with their specific persecution situations. The WWL questionnaire is the basic tool of the WWL methodology. The audit statement expresses IIRF's conclusions.

These audits enhance the quality of the WWL and contribute to the degree of objectivity and transparency of the results. Additional statements, documents and interpretations by Open

Doors based on or associated with the publication of the WWL list remain outside the scope of this audit.

4. How is it possible to measure and compare persecution in different countries?

The WWL scores are comparative scores. The pressure on Christians and the violent incidents occurring against Christians can be compared from country to country regardless of the origin of the hostilities involved. This is possible because the WWL Methodology takes as starting point the pressure and violence Christians experience in different spheres of life. Whether this pressure or violence originates from the same or different persecution engines is not relevant for the final score, though it is for the country narrative.

5. What are the “Spheres of life” used for the WWL scoring and what sort of pressure is being measured?

A ‘five spheres concept’ has been developed to track the various expressions of persecution in the different areas of a Christian’s life.

Private life: The inner life of a Christian. The guiding WWL question asked here is: “How free has a Christian been to relate to God one-on-one in his/her own space?” The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with conversion, private worship, possession of religious material, freedom of expression, e.g. in spoken word and writing, through images and symbols, access to information and media, privately sharing a belief with others, freedom of private assembly, and isolation of Christians.

Family life: The nuclear and extended family of a Christian. The guiding WWL question asked here is: “How free has a Christian been to live his/her Christian convictions within the circle of the family, and how free have Christian families been to conduct their family life in a Christian way?” The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with the forced allocation of religious identity, registration of civil affairs, weddings, baptisms, burials, adoptions, child rearing, indoctrination of children, harassment of or discrimination against children, separation of families, isolation of converts, pressure to divorce, custody of children, and inheritance rights.

Community life: This includes the workplace, business, health care, education, and local public life and civic order. The guiding WWL question asked here is: “How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions within the local community (beyond church life), and how much pressure has the community put on Christians by acts of discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?” The questions in the WWL questionnaire deal with threat or obstruction to daily life, dress codes, monitoring of Christians, abduction and forced marriage, access to community resources, community ceremonies, participation in communal institutions and forums, pressure to renounce faith, access to health care, access to and disadvantages in education, discrimination in employment and obstruction in business, and policing issues (fines, interrogations, forced reporting).

National life: This includes rights and laws, the justice system, national public administration and public life. The guiding WWL question asked here is: “How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions beyond their local community, and how much pressure has the legal system put on Christians, and how much pressure have agents of supra-local national life put on Christians by acts of misinformation, discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?” The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with national ideology, constitution, registration of religion in IDs, conscientious objection, travel within a country and abroad, discrimination by authorities, barring from public office or professional progress, policy interference with businesses, expression of opinion in public, Christian civil society organizations and political parties, reporting about religious or social conflicts, smear campaigns, toleration of public disrespect, religious symbols, blasphemy accusations, impunity, equal treatment in court, monitoring of trials.

Church life: This includes collective Christian worship and public expressions of Christian faith and also covers properties used by Christians for these purposes. The guiding WWL question asked here is: “How have restrictions, discrimination, harassment or other forms of persecution infringed upon these rights and this collective life of Christian churches, organizations and institutions?” The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with the hindrance in gathering of Christians, registration of churches, monitoring or closing of unregistered churches, church building and renovation, expropriation and non-return, disturbance or disruption of services, prevention of activities inside or outside churches or among youth, acceptance of converts, monitoring of preaching and published materials, election and training of leaders, harassment of leaders or their families, Bibles and other religious materials and their printing, importing, selling or dissemination, and confiscation, broadcasting and Internet use, interference with ethical convictions (regarding family and marriage) and personnel policy of Christian institutions, Christian civil society organizations and social activities, interaction with the global Church, and the denouncing of persecution by government or social actors.

6. Why does the WWL only focus on Christians?

The WWL focuses only on Christians for two main reasons. First, the mandate of Open Doors 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. Secondly, via its long-standing in-country networks Open Doors can research down to “village level.” Hence, WWL is uniquely equipped for specifically researching the persecution of Christians. The research team is aware that in many situations other minority groups are also suffering alongside Christians. When relevant, this is mentioned in the country profiles.

7. Why is the WWL limited to 50 countries?

For practical purposes. The WWL team 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 that country. A list of Persecution Watch Countries with scores lower than the Top 50 is also published annually.

8. 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.
2. **Historical Christian communities:** 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.
3. **Communities of converts to Christianity:** 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. ‘Cross-denominational converts’ 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 Evangelicals, Baptists and Pentecostals) 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. 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.

B. WWL BACKGROUND DISCUSSION – SHORT VERSION

Note: Please see section C for more detailed discussion of these points.

1. Is Christianity the most persecuted religion in the world?

Yes, research confirms this clearly. Many say Christianity is the most persecuted religion simply because it is the largest religion in the world. However, when you look at the numbers of Christians compared to the total populations of the countries in which they are persecuted, these are often countries with minority Christian populations.

2. How many Christians are persecuted worldwide?

WWR has developed a new method for calculating the number of persecuted Christians. The number is now linked to the annual WWL and indicates the number of Christians who are persecuted in the 50 countries on that specific WWL. This number will change according to the exact composition of the annual WWL.

Please see the document above “WWL 2017: Total number of persecuted Christians and Statements” the number of persecuted Christians for WWL 2107 is available on 9 December 2016 and is limited to the 50 countries on the WWL. This means that globally there are more Christians who are persecuted. It would however involve too much guess-work to include them if the countries they live in are not thoroughly investigated through the WWL methodology.

3. How many Christians are killed for their faith annually?

There is an ongoing debate about the number of martyrs or Christians killed for faith-related reasons. While some organizations publish numbers often as high as 100,000 Christian martyrs per year, or ‘one Christian killed every 5 minutes’, WWL research reveals much lower numbers:

WWL 2014: 2,123 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,111 churches attacked.
 WWL 2015: 4,344 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,062 churches attacked.
 WWL 2016: 7,106 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 2,425 churches attacked.
 WWL 2017: 1,207 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,329 churches attacked.
 (See WWL 2017 Article on Violence above.)

The numbers listed above are likely much lower than reality, but they are based on what has been reported. More information on the [debate about the number of Christian martyrs](#) can be found in World Watch Monitor’s article dated 13 November 2013. Details of incidents can be accessed at the Open Doors [Violent Incidents Database](#) website.

4. How does OD’s definition of persecution compare with other definitions?

There is no international legal definition of persecution. Situations can be defined as persecution where persons experience the denial of the rights listed in Article 18 of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights. For defining the persecution of Christians, the WWL methodology has opted for a theological rather than a sociological definition. Persecution is hence: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.” This definition covers not just violence but also the full range of pressure experienced by Christians as a result of their Christian faith.

Many lawmakers have tried to set a high threshold before a situation can be termed persecution. E.g., [United States Court of Appeals, Third Circuit \(1961\)](#) states: “[Persecution] should be taken to mean confinement, torture or death inflicted on account of race, religion, or political viewpoint.” However, the rationale behind this is clearly political: 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 large numbers of people claiming ‘persecuted’ status. Hence the international community is deliberately underestimating the continuous pressure Christians (and other minorities) are often facing in their different *spheres of life*. It is exactly this pressure that the WWL methodology seeks to document and therefore its definition deliberately includes “hostile attitudes [and] words”.

5. Does ethnic cleansing apply to countries in the WWL Top 50?

Ethnic cleansing is when a competitor or those who differ in race, ethnicity or religion are forced to leave a given area by 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. The concept of *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation can thus be applied to (part of) what is happening in a number of the WWL Top 50 countries.

6. What is religious freedom?

The definition of freedom of religion in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ICCPR version) reads: “*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.*” This definition is broader than many realize. For instance, the right to “manifest his religion” contains the following rights:

- 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 these points are areas where Christians can become vulnerable, whether directly in the form of violence (*smash*), or indirectly through restrictions (*squeeze*) and can be experienced in all spheres of life: private, family, community, national and church.

7. How does persecution originate and develop?

Based on the *Religious Economies Model* of Finke and Grim, WWR describes six stages in the gradual development of persecution. 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.

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).
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).
3. The violence disturbs society but governments leave the fanatical movements unpunished while blaming the other group(s) for being the cause of the social unrest by their mere existence.
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.
5. Society, government, security apparatus and judicial system squeeze the members of the other group(s), to the point of near suffocation in all spheres of life.
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).

8. How do the duties of the State relate to persecution?

State governments have the responsibility of ensuring that human rights (e.g. Freedom of Religion or Belief) are not violated. 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 violates its duty to respect and protect. In the case where radical groups or militias violate the rights of Christians, it means the government is failing to offer protection, and is perhaps even collaborating with these groups.

9. What is meant by “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. Nigeria is a country with an alarming record of religiously-related violence. There is debate whether this is actually persecution, or just civil unrest. Is there an agenda of Islamization or is it about ‘environmental degradation and migration’? A paper, published by World Watch Monitor in June 2013, argues that this is a classic example of [persecution eclipse](#).

10. Does the WWL sometimes confuse ethnic rivalry and civil war with persecution?

Commentators often look at the situation of civilians in civil conflicts and ignore 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. Detailed research shows that religion 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. Hence, according to WWL research, conflicts such as those in Central Africa, Nigeria, Iraq and Syria are (at least in part) situations involving the persecution of Christians on grounds of faith. (See also: 9. Persecution eclipse.)

C. WWL BACKGROUND DISCUSSION – LONG VERSION

1. Is Christianity the most persecuted religion in the world?

Yes, research confirms this clearly.

When seeking an answer to the question whether Christianity is the most persecuted religion on the globe, the research of the Pew Research Center is considered normative. In an unpublished paper (February 2014) called “Persecution of Christians: Getting the Numbers Straight”, Brian Grim presents the number of countries where religious groups were harassed, any time between mid-2006 and end of 2012.²¹ The conclusion is that Christians face harassment in the largest number of countries (151), and Muslims come a close second experiencing harassment in 135 countries.

According to Grim, “Christians faced harassment from governments or groups in society in more than three-in-four countries worldwide (151 of 198 countries or territories studied). While Christians were harassed in more countries than any other religious group, the fact that Christians face problems in the largest number of countries is partly due to Christians being the most numerous faith group, accounting for approximately one-in-three people alive today.”

²¹ Brian J. Grim, Ph.D., is President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation. He was senior researcher and director of cross-national data at the *Pew Research Center's* Forum on Religion & Public Life.

Grim then compares harassment of Christians with harassment of Muslims, “Similarly, the second most populous religious group, Muslims, who account for less than a quarter of the world’s people, faced harassment in the second largest number of countries (135) during the same time period.”

It seems from Pew’s data that Christians and Muslims are more or less equally confronted with harassment. Especially so, when one considers the size of Christianity in the world being bigger than the size of Islam, as pointed out by Grim. WWR would like to amend this view in three ways.

First, many say Christianity is the most persecuted religion simply because it is the largest religion in the world. However, when you look at the numbers of Christians compared to the total populations of the countries in which they are persecuted, these are often countries with minority Christian populations. The 50 countries for the WWL 2016 had a total population of 4.781.963.000; 625.056.900 of them were Christians (see “[Country Religious Statistics](#)”²²) This amounts to a Christian population of 13% of the total population of those countries, while the world population has around 31% Christians (and 23% Muslims).

Secondly, the title of Grim’s paper refers to the persecution of Christians while the text is about harassment. According to Grim: “Harassment takes many forms, ranging from verbal abuse and discrimination to physical abuse and in some cases displacement from homes and death.” The paper mentions that the data used does not assess the severity of the harassment. The WWL also has a broad definition of persecution, and includes this type of harassment in its definition. However, the WWL also assesses the severity of persecution. The question is if (for instance) harassment of Muslims in Western European countries can be compared to harassment of Christians in Muslim majority countries.

Thirdly, according to Grim, “There are different patterns in harassment of Christians than in the harassment of Muslims. Christians tend to be harassed in a larger share of countries where they are a minority. Muslims, by contrast, are harassed in a larger share of countries where they are in the majority. Indeed, in many Muslim-majority countries, the driver of clashes within the Muslim community is often the clash over the degree to which Islam should control society and politics.” If intra-religious harassment (or persecution) were excluded out of Pew’s data, Christians would certainly turn out to be much more persecuted by people from other religions or ideologies, than Muslims, and at a higher level of intensity.

2. How many Christians are persecuted worldwide?

WWR has developed a new method for calculating the number of persecuted Christians. The number is now linked to the annual WWL and indicates the number of Christians who are persecuted in the 50 countries on that specific WWL. This number will change according to the exact composition of the annual WWL.

²² See: <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WWL-2016-Compilation-3-All-WWL-documents-not-including-Country-persecution-dynamics-Edition-2016-01-28.pdf>, page 4 (Password = Freedom).

The number of persecuted Christians for WWL 2107 is available on 9 December 2016 and is limited to the 50 countries on the WWL. This means that globally there are more Christians who are persecuted. It would however involve too much guess-work to include them if the countries they live in are not thoroughly investigated through the WWL methodology.

For many years in the past, the number of 100 million persecuted Christians was used as a global number. This was not linked to the methodology of the WWL.

The new number is linked to the WWL methodology in two senses. First, the number of persecuted Christians is only estimated for countries which were researched in detail using the WWL questionnaire and related process. Secondly, the WWL definition of persecution is broad and includes Christians that are confronted with other forms of persecution than just violence alone.

In estimating the number of persecuted Christians in the 50 countries of the WWL it should be noted that not all Christians in the 50 countries can be counted as being persecuted. In some countries persecution affects all Christians, whatever their denomination (see WWL categories of Christianity, FAQ 9). In other countries, persecution affects only part of the Christian community. This can be according to their denomination – some denominations are (for instance) less active in evangelism and/or other public activities than others. The former will draw less negative attention than the latter, and thus be less confronted with persecution. Persecution can also depend on the part of the country Christians live in. For instance, Muslim dominated areas in Christian majority countries could put heavy pressure on Christians, even commit acts of violence against them, even though the country is majority Christian.

3. How many Christians are killed for their faith annually?

There is an ongoing debate about the number of martyrs or Christians killed for faith-related reasons. While some organizations publish numbers often as high as 100,000 Christian martyrs per year, or ‘one Christian killed every 5 minutes’, WWL research reveals much lower numbers:

WWL 2014: 2,123 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,111 churches attacked.

WWL 2015: 4,344 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,062 churches attacked.

WWL 2016: 7,106 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 2,425 churches attacked.

WWL 2017: 1,207 Christians killed for faith-related reasons and 1,329 churches attacked.

The numbers reported and listed are likely to be much lower than in reality. Here are some reasons why:

- The deaths or martyrdom of some Christians never reaches the public consciousness;
- No one really knows about it;
- Their death is simply not considered worth reporting;
- Media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted;
- Media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost;

- The deaths are consciously not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).
- Christians killed in conflict areas (due to additional vulnerability) are unlikely to be reported separately: In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Examples are Sudan and the Nuba people, also Christians in Syria.
- Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately: Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other vulnerabilities that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. If we would include them in the counting, it would be an enormous number of people. However, the precise number of Christians who die due to these factors is very difficult to quantify.

More information on the [debate about the number of Christian martyrs](#) can be found in World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013. For details on individual incidents, see the Open Doors [Violent Incidents Database](#) website.

4. How does OD's definition of persecution compare with other definitions?

In its classical understanding persecution is 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.

5. Does ethnic cleansing apply to countries on the WWL Top 50?

Ethnic cleansing and the WWL Top 50 countries

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 northeastern Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan can be said to be typical examples, which in some cases are verging on *genocide*. WWR has published studies on *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation in the countries: [Nigeria \(Middle Belt Region\)](#), [Kenya](#), and [Sudan](#). Studies on *ethnic cleansing* in Saudi Arabia and Somalia are in progress.

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. The enormous pressure on converts from Islam to Christianity and isolation of Christian migrants from local Saudis, could be characterized as a form of *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation.

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

Finally, it was said above that *ethnic cleansing* can even use acts of *genocide* as a means to force others to leave a given area. Some of the acts of persecution in some countries could be characterized as a genocide. An example is what happens in Sudan. Although WWR characterized the process going on in Sudan against Christians as ethnic cleansing based on religious affiliation,

what the government of Sudan is doing against the Nuba-Christians is an example of what could be labelled *genocide*. Further research will further develop this element too.

Scope of ethnic cleansing

There is a popular misunderstanding about *ethnic cleansing*: Some think that *ethnic cleansing* can only be committed by the killing or forceful displacement (deportation) of a certain group. However, there are other means of committing the crime of *ethnic cleansing*.

- **Administrative measures:** Administrative measures such as imposing discriminatory and oppressive legal rules, dismissal of members of targeted groups from public service positions, providing no protection or ignorance when rights of such groups are violated, amount to systematic measures to cleanse certain groups off an area.²³
- **Intimidation (terrorizing) methods:** These acts usually, but not necessarily, are committed by armed civilians, soldiers or government agents and in most instances are committed against the law. Terrorizing methods towards the ethnic cleansing process include intimidation in the street, arbitrary detention of selected target groups and destruction of cultural as well as religious monuments.²⁴
- **Other Non-violent methods:** The behavior of some perpetrators may not be inherently violent but sows fear and hatred among people. The dissemination of information that inflames hatred against certain group and threatening speeches against a targeted group by powerful group representatives are instances of non-violent methods.²⁵ Another non-violent method, which is of relatively recent origin, is to release war prisoners on the condition that their families agree to leave a specified territory.²⁶

6. What is religious freedom?

Freedom of religion is a multidimensional concept and cannot stand alone. The modern legal concept 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.”

²³ Pegorier, Clotilde: *Ethnic Cleansing: a Legal Qualification*, 135 (2013), available at <http://www.worldcat.org/title/ethnic-cleansing-a-legal-qualification/oclc/841914938?referer=di&ht=edition>.

²⁴ Petrovic, Drazen: *Ethnic Cleansing- An Attempt at Methodology*, 5 *Eur. J. Int’l L.* 1 (1994). p 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Bell-Fialkoff, Andrew: *A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing*, *Foreign Affairs*, 1999. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1993-06-01/brief-history-ethnic-cleansing>.

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)*.

7. 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.²⁷ 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:

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/or a clearly visible or more invisible process.

²⁷ The Price of Freedom Denied, 2010, page 68ff.

8. 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.

9. What is meant by “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. There are two typical contexts for *persecution eclipse*.

First, *persecution eclipse* arises when specific events are wrongly interpreted. Nigeria provides a clear example. Nigeria is a country with an alarming record of religiously-related violence. There is debate whether this is actually persecution, or just civil unrest. Is there an agenda of Islamization or is it about ‘environmental degradation and migration’? A paper, published by World Watch Monitor in June 2013, argues that this is a classic example of [persecution eclipse](#). Additional reports on fact finding missions in the Nigerian Middle Belt further illustrate the case.²⁸

Secondly, *persecution eclipse* arises when conflicts catch international attention after their initial phases. An example is Boko Haram in Nigeria. In the beginning phases after its resurrection in 2010 Boko Haram killed government personnel (including security forces) and Christians. While government personnel (whether Muslims or Christians) were killed because they were linked to the government, Christians were killed because of their faith. When the international community caught attention of the situation, the conflict had already spread to everyone (Muslims too) who was not a Muslim of the type of Boko Haram. Another example is Central African Republic. Christians were cruelly persecuted by the Islamic terrorists of Séléka, on their way to power in Bangui, the capital of the country. International attention arose when the anti-Balaka (seen by some as a Christian militia) had started to commit revenge attacks on Muslims

²⁸ See the three reports: <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Nigeria-Investigating-common-narratives-of-violent-conflict-in-Nasarawa-State-2016.pdf>, <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Violent-Conflict-in-Taraba-State-2013-2015.pdf> and <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Migration-and-Violent-Conflict-in-Divided-Societies-March-2015.pdf> (Password: Freedom).

in Bangui. The origin of the conflict was then quickly forgotten, and the (near) entire blame was put on the (so-called) Christian militia.

10. Does the WWL sometimes confuse 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 (identity withheld for security reasons), argues that the Nigerian case is a classic example of what could be referred to as [persecution eclipse](#). (See FAQ 10.) 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](#), see footnote 8. The researchers call the one-sided emphasis on environmental degradation and migration a “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 others. In the complex mix of factors and motives for hostilities against civilians, many commentators look at the situation of civilians in civil conflicts without considering a) the role of religious identity on the side of the victim and b) the religious motivation on the side of the perpetrator. 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.

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WWL 2017 - Short version of WWL Methodology

This document is intended for quick reference purposes. It provides background information for a basic understanding of the World Watch List (WWL) scoring system and of the terminology used in the Country persecution dynamics. The full WWL methodology should be consulted for more detailed information.

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1. Background philosophy

Persecution situations are usually highly complex and it is not always clear if and to what extent pressure felt by Christians or even violence against them is directly related to their Christian faith. Basically, persecution is related to religions, ideologies or corrupted mind-sets, i.e. elementary human impulses seeking exclusive power in society. The WWL methodology considers these impulses to be the ‘power sources’ behind eight different ‘persecution engines’ (see Appendix 3).

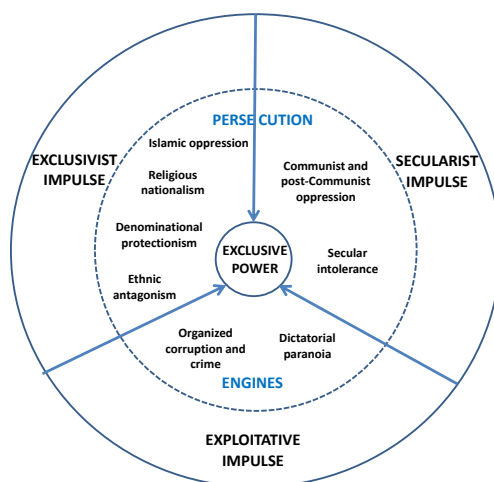


Diagram showing the persecution engines acting as vehicles for the different elementary human impulses seeking exclusive, absolute power.

2. Definition of persecution

There is no international, legal definition of persecution. Situations can be defined as persecution where persons experience the denial of the rights listed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the WWL methodology has opted for a theological rather than a sociological definition: Thus persecution is understood to be “any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.”

3. How the WWL is compiled

Open Doors has been monitoring the worldwide persecution of Christians since the 1970s. The WWL methodology gradually evolved during the 1980s and 1990s and was comprehensively revised in 2012 by Open Doors’ research unit, World Watch Research (WWR), in order to provide greater credibility, transparency, objectivity and scientific quality. Further refinements have since taken place.

The WWL methodology distinguishes two main expressions of persecution: *squeeze* (the pressure Christians experience in all areas of life) and *smash* (plain violence). While *smash* can be measured and tracked through the reporting of concrete incidents, *squeeze* is documented by discerning how Christian life and witness is placed under pressure in 5 selected spheres of life (see Appendix 2). After a series of initial research enquiries, a questionnaire consisting of 84 questions (covering the reporting period 1 November – 31 October) is sent out to Open Doors’ field staff and networks in countries experiencing persecution. An example from Block 1 of the questionnaire can be viewed below.

Block 1: Private life

Private life is defined as the inner life of a Christian, the *forum internum*, the freedom of thought and conscience.

The guiding question asked is: “How free has a Christian been to relate to God one-on-one in his/her own space?” This is not limited to the private home but can also apply to prison or a walk in the woods, etc. This is irrespective of who the agent challenging this freedom might be.

The questions deal with conversion, private worship, possession of religious material, freedom of expression, e.g. in word and writing, through images and symbols, access to information and media, privately sharing a belief with others, freedom of private assembly, freedom of private communication, and freedom of movement.

	No	Yes	Proportion of types of Christianity (1-4)	Proportion of inhabited territory (1-4)	Intensity (1-4)	Frequency (1-4)	Unknown	N/A	Please provide information to clarify your answers
1.1 Has conversion been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.2 Has it been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.3 Has it been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.4 Has it been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.5 Has it been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.6 Has it been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.7 Has it been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with <i>immediate</i> family members?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
1.8 Has it been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those <i>other than immediate</i> family (extended family, others)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

An example taken from Block 1 of the questionnaire used for WWL 2017

The completed questionnaires are cross-checked by input from external experts. Scores are calculated for each of the spheres of life with variables being taken into account. For instance, persecution can be worse for some categories of Christians than others or much worse in some parts of a country than in others. Also, the intensity and frequency of persecution is taken into consideration. Different persecution engines (see Appendix 3), persecution drivers (see Appendix 4) and a distinct Persecution pattern (see Appendix 5) become visible for analysis. An audit is made by [IIRF](#)²⁹ to confirm that all results have been calculated according to the WWL Methodology.

A final score is calculated for each country which is then used to determine the order of countries from position 1 to 50 on Open Doors' annual World Watch List. The WWL scores are comparative - not absolute – scores and make possible a detailed comparison of Christian life in the countries listed. Below is an example of the final scores for the highest ranking countries on the WWL 2016.

Example: WWL 2016

Reporting period: 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
1	North Korea	16.667	15.476	16.472	16.557	16.667	9.815	92
2	Iraq	14.868	14.732	15.039	14.803	15.147	15.556	90
3	Eritrea	16.667	14.792	16.667	16.667	14.249	10.185	89
4	Afghanistan	16.477	16.295	15.300	13.432	15.885	10.741	88
5	Syria	14.394	14.063	14.453	13.597	14.930	15.556	87
6	Pakistan	14.583	13.988	14.063	14.748	12.674	16.667	87
7	Somalia	16.667	16.667	16.667	16.667	16.667	3.333	87
8	Sudan	14.205	13.691	13.867	13.651	14.844	13.519	84
9	Iran	14.110	14.509	14.584	14.803	16.102	9.260	83
10	Libya	14.489	13.393	13.086	13.542	14.627	9.630	79

The most important reason for ranking countries is to be able to present a complex reality to the broader public. The WWL rankings must always be viewed in conjunction with the corresponding [country persecution dynamics](#) (country profiles³⁰) which explain the particularities of the persecution situation.

²⁹ International Institute for Religious Freedom, <http://www.iirf.eu/>.

³⁰ For WWL 2016 Long versions of Country persecution dynamics, see: <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WWL-2016-Compilation-2-Long-profiles-Edition-2016-02-01.pdf>.

Appendix 1:

Definition of ‘Christian’ and categories of Christians:

The WWL is a tool focusing on persecution experienced by Christians. The WWL methodology defines ‘Christian’ (sociologically) as “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.
2. **Historical Christian communities:** 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. Their situation and degree of freedom differ from country to country.
3. **Communities of converts to Christianity:** 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. Converts may be absorbed by one of the other types of churches but often gather in ‘house’ or ‘underground’ churches.
4. **Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities** (such as Evangelical, Baptist 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.

Appendix 2:

Explanation of the 5 spheres of life and violence

A ‘five spheres concept’ has been developed to track the various expressions of persecution in the different areas of a Christian’s life. The WWL questionnaire contains questions specific for each sphere and a score is recorded. The maximum for each of the 5 spheres and 1 violence block is 16.667, making a maximum overall score of 100 points when the scores for violence are added.

1. Private life

The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free has a Christian been to relate to God one-on-one in his/her own space?”

The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with conversion, private worship, possession of religious material, freedom of expression (e.g. in spoken word and writing, through images and symbols, access to information and media,

privately sharing a belief with others), freedom of private assembly, and isolation of Christians.

2. Family life

The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free has a Christian been to live his/her Christian convictions within the circle of the family, and how free have Christian families been to conduct their family life in a Christian way?”

The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with the forced allocation of religious identity, registration of civil affairs, weddings, baptisms, burials, adoptions, child rearing, indoctrination of children, harassment of or discrimination against children, separation of families, isolation of converts, pressure to divorce, custody of children, and inheritance rights.

3. Community life

Community life includes the workplace, business, health care, education, and local public life and civic order.

The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions within the local community (beyond church life), and how much pressure has the community put on Christians by acts of discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?”

The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with threat or obstruction to daily life, dress codes, monitoring of Christians, abduction and forced marriage, access to community resources, community ceremonies, participation in communal institutions and forums, pressure to renounce faith, access to health care, access to and disadvantages in education, discrimination in employment and obstruction in business, policing issues (fines, interrogations, forced reporting).

4. National life

The interaction between Christians and the nation they live in includes rights and laws, the justice system, national public administration and public life.

The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions beyond their local community, and how much pressure has the legal system put on Christians, and how much pressure have agents of supra-local national life put on Christians by acts of misinformation, discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?”

The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with national ideology, constitution, registration of religion in IDs, conscientious objection, travel within a country and abroad, discrimination by authorities, barring from public office or professional progress, policy interference with businesses, expression of opinion in public, Christian civil society organizations and political parties, reporting about religious or social conflicts, smear campaigns, toleration of public disrespect, religious symbols, blasphemy accusations, impunity, equal treatment in court, monitoring of trials.

5. Church life

Church life is understood as the collective exercise by Christians of freedom of thought and conscience, particularly as regards uniting with fellow Christians in worship, life, service and public expression of their faith without undue interference. It also pertains to properties held or used by Christians for these purposes.

The guiding WWL question asked is: “How have restrictions, discrimination, harassment or other forms of persecution infringed upon these rights and this collective life of Christian churches, organizations and institutions?”

The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with the hindrance in gathering of Christians, registration of churches, monitoring or closing of unregistered churches, church building and renovation, expropriation and non-return, disturbance or disruption of services, prevention of activities inside or outside churches or among youth, acceptance of converts, monitoring of preaching and published materials, election and training of leaders, harassment of leaders or their families, Bibles and other religious materials and their printing, importing, selling or dissemination, and confiscation, broadcasting and Internet use, interference with ethical convictions (regarding family and marriage) and personnel policy of Christian institutions, Christian civil society organizations and social activities, interaction with the global Church, and the denouncing of government persecution.

Violence is defined as the deprivation of physical freedom or as serious bodily or mental harm to Christians or serious damage to their property and can occur in all spheres of life – as illustrated in the diagram below.

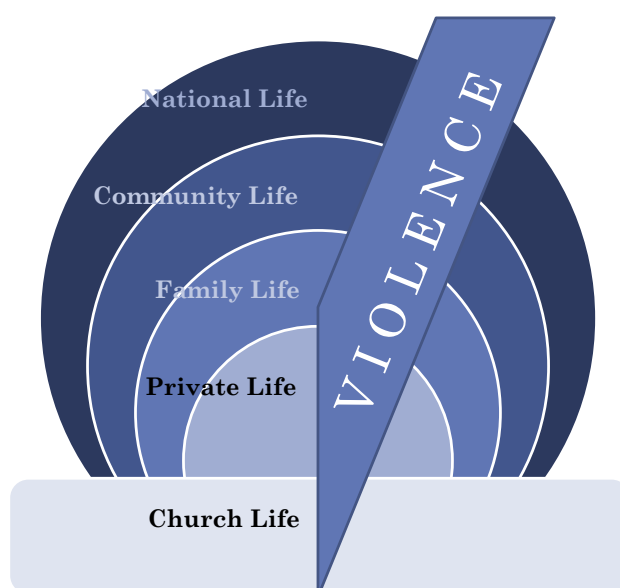


Diagram showing how violence can cut through all spheres of life (© Christof Sauer, IIRF)

Appendix 3:

Explanation of Persecution engines

The term “Persecution engine” is used to describe a primary reason why Christians are persecuted in a particular area or setting. WWL lists 8 such sources of persecution.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Islamic oppression | Tries to bring the country or the world under the 'House of Islam' through violent or non-violent actions. |
| 2. Religious nationalism | Tries to conquer the nation for one’s religion. Mainly Hinduism and Buddhism, but also orthodox Judaism or other religions. |
| 3. Ethnic 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. |
| 4. Denominational protectionism | 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. |
| 5. Communist and post-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. |
| 6. 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. |
| 7. Dictatorial paranoia | Does everything to maintain power, not specifically focused on realizing a vision.
Tries to create a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for self-enrichment. |
| 8. Organized corruption | |

Appendix 4:

List of drivers of persecution

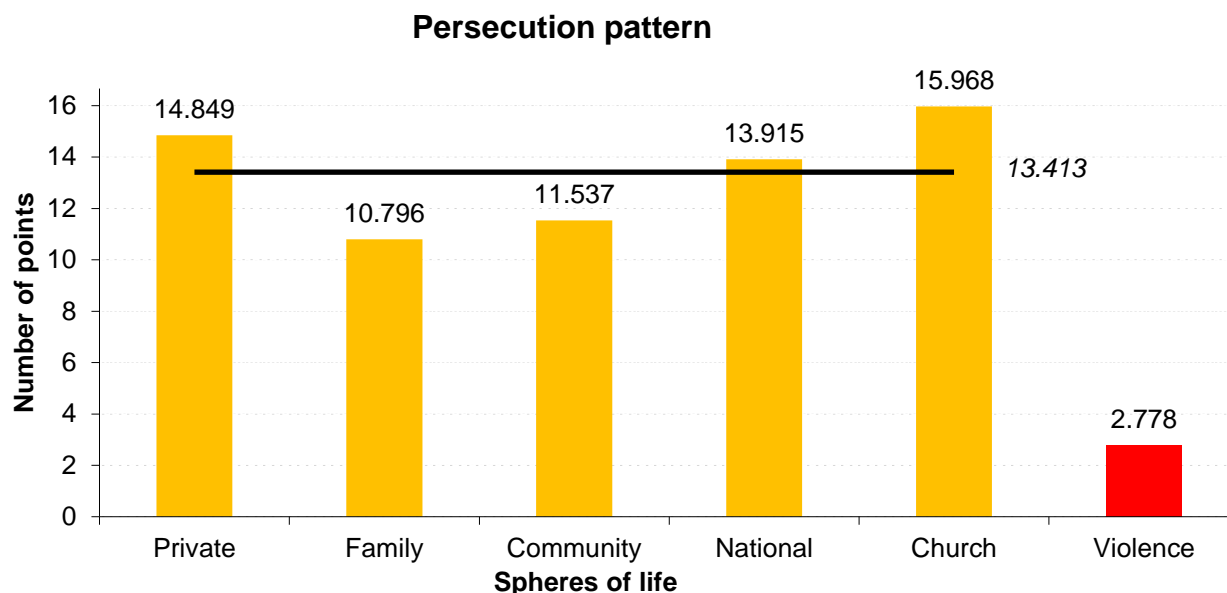
The term “drivers of persecution (engines)” is used to describe people and/or groups causing hostilities towards Christians in a particular country. WWU uses 11 drivers in its documents:

1. Government officials at any level from local to national
2. Ethnic group leaders
3. Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national
4. Religious leaders of other churches at any level from local to national
5. Fanatical movements
6. Normal citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
7. Extended family
8. Political parties at any level from local to national
9. Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
10. Organized crime cartels or networks
11. Multilateral organizations

Appendix 5:

Understanding the Persecution pattern

The detailed country scores of the 6 blocks of the WWL questionnaire converge into a specific pattern, the *country persecution pattern*. The example below is for Uzbekistan (WWL 2016).



Persecution pattern for Uzbekistan

(Please note: The numbers above are displayed to three decimal places. They are not to be read as thousands.)

The persecution pattern for Uzbekistan shows the scores for the persecution engines *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Islamic oppression*:

- The pressure on Christians has risen slightly, as can be seen by the average score over the first five blocks rising from 12.995 (WWL 2015) to 13.413.
- Pressure is strongest in the *private, national, and church spheres*. This is typical for a situation in which *Dictatorial paranoia* is the leading persecution engine, strongly driven by government officials at any level from local to national. Pressure from *Islamic oppression* is present mostly in the *private, family and community spheres* and is mainly exerted by the social environment.
- The score for the violence block has fallen from 4.074 (WWL 2015) to 2.778. This suggests that either the number of violent incidents has decreased (which does not seem very likely) or that believers have become more afraid to report incidents.

The persecution pattern can serve to predict trends in ongoing persecution in countries on the WWL.

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Please note: In the following paragraphs [ICCPR](#) is used as an abbreviation for the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.³¹

³¹ See: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>, last accessed 10 January 2017.

North Korea (1)

- Reports show that large numbers of Christians are held in labor camps. The international community should strongly denounce the existence of these labor camps and put pressure on the North Korean government to close them and to restore justice to the victims.
- Sanctions and international isolation did not stop underground exports from North Korea to China and resulted in greater tension with North Korea and a worsening situation for the population, including Christians. In the current context, China is wary of implementing sanctions, and the government is reducing space for negotiation in all areas, including religious freedom. Therefore, the international community should ensure cooperation and a common effort to engage in direct negotiation with the North Korean government and refrain from military pre-emptive approaches.
- The international community should work with countries allied to North Korea for a release of Christian foreigners who are imprisoned.
- The Seoul UN field base and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should request permission to carry out prison visits with a view to including the situation of Christian prisoners, in line with international law requirements to hold routine prison monitoring.
- The Seoul UN field base and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea might use their position to examine persecution of Christians in North Korea to provide fuller reporting on the situation, to call on the regime to allow access to Christians held in forced labor camps and prisons and to call for their eventual release.
- China should stop the forced repatriation of North Korean refugees and uphold their full human rights, including: access to housing, education and religious freedom.
- The international community should examine the human rights situation of North Korean refugees and fully investigate claims of human trafficking and slavery.

Somalia (2)

- The UN should maintain the mandate of the African Union to deal with al-Shabaab and radical Islamic organizations at regional and national level.
- The UN, African Union and international community should ensure that the electoral processes for 2017 and future mandates prioritize suffrage, participation and political representation for people of all religions and beliefs.
- The UN, African Union and international community should denounce the restrictions of Freedom of Religion or Belief in the Provisional Constitution, pressing the government of Somalia to enshrine the freedom as a fundamental right for all citizens and to repeal the newly introduced provision to prohibit apostasy.
- The UN, African Union and international community should press the government of Somalia to exempt religious minorities from application of Sharia law, granting them equal legal status and protecting their right to exist peacefully. This should be a focus for peace-building efforts in the country.

- The Somali government should allow the reopening of the Mogadishu Catholic Cathedral.
- The international community should pressure the Somali government into ensuring the safety and security of Christian minorities in the country. This should include due diligent investigation of violence against Christians.
- We welcome the objective of the new EU program for Puntland to increase inclusivity through education, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and call for the express inclusion of religious minorities within this project. This program should be expanded to the whole of Somalia with the same objective.

Afghanistan (3)

- The EU, as the biggest financial contributor to Afghanistan's National Action Plan for Women, should establish indicators for religious freedom, then monitor and report on progress across all religious groups and minorities. The EU and UNSCR should hold the government of Afghanistan accountable to setting timelines, benchmarks and institutions responsible for implementation of the [National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325](#).³²
- While Open Doors welcomes the ambitious reform agenda of the Afghan government, the government should ensure that all religious groups are treated as full citizens before the law, and are thus included in the vision to enable citizens to exert their constitutional rights with confidence. (The reform agenda is presented in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework [\[ANPDF\]](#).)³³
- While Open Doors welcomes the opening up to civil society participation in the development of policy and accountability structures, the government and international community should make a firm commitment to guarantee the participation of religious leaders and faith-based organizations.
- While Open Doors welcomes the commitment to inclusive development, poverty alleviation and economic growth, and call for the EU and international community donors of significant funding for Afghanistan to monitor and review progress against international Freedom of Religion or Belief standards. Commitments made under the ANPDF should be applied equally to people of all religious beliefs, discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or conversion should be penalized.
- The government of Afghanistan and the international community should mainstream equality for all religious groups into the strong and positive commitment to women's participation and empowerment, and full access to quality education for all. (ANPDF 5.6)
- As the EU Council seeks to stem migration and aid Afghanistan in refugee efforts, a firm commitment is needed to human rights obligations to guarantee asylum for those fleeing religious persecution.³⁴
- The EU and international donors supporting Afghanistan in the ANPDF and Self-Reliance Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) should make their financial and political contributions conditional to the respect and protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief.

³² See: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/wps-afghanistan_national_action_plan_1325_0.pdf

³³ See: <http://mfa.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/anpdf26102016112634175553325325.pdf>.

³⁴ See: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/10/05-bca-main-results/>, last accessed 6 January 2017.

- The Afghan government should implement the significant human rights commitments made under SMAF and enshrine people of all religions as equal under law.
- The Afghan government should deliver on citizen-based monitoring of development and governance benchmarks, with full participation of Christians and all religious groups;
- The Afghan government should implement the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) indiscriminately of religious belief, with particular attention to religiously motivated abuses.
- The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should hold the Afghanistan government accountable to article 57 of the [Special Report](#)³⁵ on the 23 July 2016 attacks calling for increased efforts to protect all ethnic and religious communities and to bring legal action against any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Pakistan (4)

- In line with their commitments under the ICCPR, the government of Pakistan should repeal the 1986 blasphemy laws which are broadly and vaguely defined, used largely to imprison religious minorities, and are largely applied on the basis of false accusations. The government should protect the judges dealing with blasphemy cases and guarantee a fair trial.
- Asia Bibi remains on death row, the international community should request the immediate release of Asia Bibi and others from religious minorities imprisoned under the blasphemy laws.
- The government of Pakistan should respond to the questions of the UN Human Rights Committee on Pakistan's human rights with a concrete plan on the blasphemy laws, honor killings and sexual attacks on religious minorities which are often used for forcible conversion.
- The UN and international community should urge the government of Pakistan to grant and implement protection and rights for girls and women of religious minorities.
- The government of Pakistan should expand the National Action Plan to Combat Terrorism to include the promotion of rights for religious minorities and interfaith participation in education, business and politics as the prerequisite for peace and stability.
- Given the frequency of violent incidents at family and local community level against Christians, the government should develop measures to fully investigate attacks, and end impunity.

Sudan (5)

³⁵

[http://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/23_july_suicide_attack_against_peaceful_demonstration - 18 oct 2016.pdf](http://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/23_july_suicide_attack_against_peaceful_demonstration_-_18_oct_2016.pdf).

- 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.
- The international community should urgently pressure the Sudanese government into releasing the pastor, Czech aid worker and Darfuri graduate who have been detained for a year and are facing trial on charges of 'espionage', 'waging war against the state' and 'inciting hatred against religious congregations'.
- The international community should urgently press the government of Sudan to immediately halt the indiscriminate direct (and by proxy) attacks against Christians, sanctioning a lack of action.
- The international community should urge the cessation of the sustained long-term attacks in the Nuba Mountains, amounting to ethnic cleansing, 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.
- The government of Sudan should stop demolishing Christian churches and buildings and bring those responsible for attacks on churches to justice.
- The government of Sudan should repeal the apostasy law.
- The Sudanese government should exercise due diligence when it comes to investigating, and bringing perpetrators of violence against Christians to justice.

Syria & Iraq (6 & 7)

- Iraq and Syria should ensure future legal frameworks in the countries fully promote and protect the equal and inalienable rights of all their citizens, irrespective of race, religion or other status.
- The Syrian, KRG and Iraqi governments should endorse by law the creation of a National Accountability Mechanism to monitor instances of discrimination based on religious or ethnic belonging, and to ensure accountability for violations.
- The international community should urge the Iraqi government to fully apply Article 14 of the Iraqi Constitution which recognizes and upholds the equal rights and status of people of all religions before the law without discrimination.
- The international community should ensure the dignified and continued improvement of living conditions for all citizens, but especially for the refugees and internally displaced – including the provision of adequate housing, education and jobs;
- The international community should instigate and encourage flexible funding opportunities to allow a variety of well-coordinated and non-partisan in-country Faith and Community Based Organizations (FBOs/CBOs), such as churches and mosques, to provide access to food, safe drinking water and essential medical supplies; regain normality by initiating a variety of locally-appropriate psycho-social care, reconciliation and community-building projects amongst the displaced; and initiate rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, such as housing repair and income-generating projects. EU Delegations and large NGO consortia managing local calls for proposals and funding

- should include faith-based organizations and religious leaders in their increased engagement with local CBOs and minority aid organizations.³⁶
- The international community should ensure that the government discourse and education curricula in Iraq and Syria affirms religiously pluralistic society which promotes tolerance, respect and peaceful coexistence between people of all religions and ethnicities;
 - The international community along with the Syrian, KRG and Iraqi governments should identify and equip religious leaders and faith-based organizations to play a constructive and central role in reconciling and rebuilding both Syrian and Iraqi societies;
 - All donors, the EU and its Member States should ensure they fulfil commitments to deliver humanitarian assistance swiftly, and with the express inclusion of local civil society and faith-based groups and aid organizations.³⁷
 - The EU and Iraq should uphold the human rights focus of their Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, ensuring that religious freedom as a fundamental human right is protected in all strategies to combat terrorism and boost security.
 - The EU and Iraqi government should ensure that the humanitarian law and refugee law instruments mainstreamed in the EU-Iraq Partnership Cooperation Agreement are fully implemented in refugee and IDP policies.
 - The international community should ensure follow-up reporting on EU Member State responses to the call of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and European Parliament to undertake a stronger commitment to finding protection for refugees fleeing due to persecution on religious or ethnic grounds through resettlement, humanitarian admission schemes, simplified family reunification or more flexible visa regulations.
 - The European Parliament and UN should continually monitor and report on atrocities committed against Christians and Yazidis.
 - The EU External Action Service (EEAS), EU Member States and European Commission should respond urgently to the European Parliament Resolution calling for a repatriation plan for religious groups.

Iran (8)

- The international community, taking advantage of the improved diplomatic relations with the West, should urge the government of Iran to recognize all minority religions as full

³⁶ Explanation: The EU has begun to create trust fund mechanisms to reduce the number of calls for proposal and the administrative burden that comes with that. The trust funds are normally managed by a large NGO or large NGO consortia who provide sub-grants to smaller organizations. The EU Delegations in the field are responsible for the accountability of this, and have been mandated to provide assistance to local CSOs. The difficulty here is that by championing the role of small local civil society organizations and larger NGO consortia, 'medium'-sized organizations may lose out.

³⁷ See: European Parliament Resolution, #15: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B8-2016-0149+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, last accessed 10 January 2017.

citizens before the law enjoying their full human rights including the ethnic Persian believers.

- The human rights situation should be addressed in the negotiations between Iran and Western countries, with a mainstreamed emphasis on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The increasing frequency of multimedia hate campaigns should be denounced and penalized.
- The international community should hold the Iranian government accountable to uphold these international and constitutional commitments to protect the freedom of Christians in its territories. Closing churches, appropriating church property, arresting church leaders and threatening churchgoers are violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief proscribed in Article 18 of 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 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."
- 193 Christians were arrested in the WWL 2017 reporting period, and many imprisoned and faced sexual violations during interrogation. The international community should press for the immediate release of the prisoners and legal justice for violence committed in prisons.

Yemen (9)

- The international community should 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.
- The international community should bring the Yemeni conflict to light as a visible tragedy, placing it high on the agenda, and increase the necessary humanitarian assistance. In this assistance, the vulnerability of Christians as targets of the warring Islamic militants should be of particular concern.
- The international community should work together with both the de facto government and the exiled government of Yemen to restore the rule of law and stability in the country.
- 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 should 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 cease their support to the violence, and work to prevent the empowerment of groups with a radical agenda who are seeking to take advantage of the war situation in Yemen.
- The international community should speak against the involvement of different external non-state groups who are exacerbating the situation in Yemen.

Eritrea (10)

- The UN General Assembly Third Committee should urgently follow up on the oral recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (COIE),

mandating the UN Security Council to take considerable measures to ensure the Eritrean government comply.

- The international community should encourage the Eritrean government to accept the recommendations of the COIE and cooperate with the investigation of the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom.
- The African Union should commit to investigating crimes against humanity as requested by the UN following the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (COIE) report.
- The UN and international community should continue to press for accountability from the African Union.
- In all development aid programs, the EU and national governments should ensure strong conditionality that the Eritrean government complies with the recommendations of the COIE.
- Countries with bilateral links with the Eritrean government should engage with the government on persecution of Christians and negotiate measures to uphold Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- The government of Eritrea should release all Christians arrested/detained because of their faith.
- The Eritrean government should release the deposed Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch from house arrest.

Libya (11)

- The international community should ensure the UN-backed government in Tripoli fights impunity for the gross human rights violations, and calls for the release of Christians arrested for alleged proselytization.
- The international community should ensure a minimum rule of law in the country, which would at least deal with part of the violations committed against minorities (including Christians).
- Strengthening state institutions is essential to rebuild the country. There should be guarantees that the strengthening of the state capacity is accompanied by guarantees of the protection of the rights of minorities, including Christians.
- The UN and international community should continue to monitor the power of militia groups which seek to attack or reduce Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- In the transitional process, the international community should ensure Freedom of Religious Belief in its full definition is provided for and enshrined in drafting of a Constitution, and denounce any content which may give rise to institutionalized or even state-orchestrated persecution.
- 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 UN-backed Libyan government should address this issue in order to ensure full religious freedom.
- Countries are under obligation to protect individuals in their territory/jurisdiction. In Libya, Christian African migrant workers face a double vulnerability because of their origin (racism) and because of their religion. International attention has been brought to their

vulnerability to the worst human rights violations. Consequently, the international actors working to rebuild Libya and the UN-backed Libyan government should address the very fundamental problems immigrants face in their daily life.

- Under the Trust Fund Support for North Africa, the EU should monitor and report on commitment by Libya and the region to establishing and implementing integration policies aimed at ensuring the protection of migrant rights.
- The rights of Christians, flagged as being doubly vulnerable to violent rights violations, should be mainstreamed in these integration policies.
- The international community, especially the European Union should, without any delay, address the challenges that people who want to cross the Mediterranean Sea through Libya face at the hands of militia and human traffickers in the country. This issue should also be a part of the Trust Fund Support for North Africa.

Nigeria (12)

These recommendations come from the Nigeria Renew campaign (with slight adaptations).³⁸

- The federal and individual state governments of Nigeria should ensure that all citizens are protected, regardless of their ethno-religious affiliations in all parts of Nigeria.
- The international community should monitor and advocate for the security of every Nigerian to be guaranteed by the federal and state governments. This includes the attacks of Hausa-Fulani herdsmen in the Nigerian Middle Belt states, and even some southern states. Further, the international community should pay greater attention to the regional spread of Boko Haram, take pro-active steps to contain the threat of their insurgency, and closely scrutinize and sanction the sponsors of Boko Haram.
- We appreciate the governmental and NGO provision of relief for the internally displaced and urge the checks and balances to ensure that relief materials reach all persons affected, regardless of ethno-religious affiliation.
- The international community should further request that humanitarian aid reach communities in Plateau, Southern Kaduna, Nasarawa, Taraba and Benue states.
- The federal and state governments should put in place effective measures in order to prevent or sanction violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief when they occur, and ensure accountability.
- The federal and state governments should conduct an in-depth investigation into the atrocities committed against civilians in northern Nigeria, and ask the UN Human Rights Council to mandate a Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuses in northern Nigeria.
- The federal and states governments should instigate safeguards to ensure that religion will not be used or allowed to be used to promote injustice, impunity and discrimination. The international community should monitor the application of this principle.

³⁸ See: <http://theanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Crushed-but-not-defeated-Full-Report-1.pdf>.

- The state governments should ensure equal treatment, development, and economic empowerment of all entities within the states of Nigeria, both those local to the state and those displaced from elsewhere.
- The federal and state governments should ensure needs-based assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction is provided to victims of Boko Haram, Hausa-Fulani herdsman attacks and other forms of targeted violence, regardless of location.
- The federal government should fully implement the Nigerian Constitution and the UN Charter on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to ensure equality for all religious and ethnic communities.
- The federal and state governments and the international community should give serious attention to the ongoing issue of violence against women, which is exacerbated in times of violence.
- The federal government should strengthen section 10 of the 1999 Constitution, whereby the government should not expressly or by conduct through its practice and policies adopt, or appear to adopt, any official religion at the local, state or national level.
- The international community should call the federal government to uphold true freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including for religious groups to establish and manage their religious institutions and practices, within the national legal framework.
- The federal and state governments should ensure swift reconstruction of schools in the North-East of Nigeria.
- The federal and state governments should ensure rehabilitation of un-schooled children into education, the provision for adult education and training opportunities for the internally displaced, ensuring the implementation of a curriculum encouraging religious tolerance and pluralism – including flexibility on religious education for children from non-majority faiths.

Maldives (13)

- The government of Maldives should uphold the citizens' right to change one's religion.
- 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 should amend this provision.
- 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, and integrate the Freedom of Religion or Belief standards in their business policy.
- The international community, with the guidance of the UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, should raise awareness of the situation of religious minorities in the Maldives.
- The UN, through the Special Rapporteur Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, should call for the Maldives to repeal the Defamation law ratified August 2016 in line with international Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- The international community should cooperate with the Maldives to develop a de-radicalization plan for radical Islamic fighters returning from the Middle East.
- We welcome the Maldives' pioneering role in the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, crucial for the prevention and stemming of extremism. The UN

in Maldives and UN Security Council should address Freedom of Religion or Belief under the Resolution as a fundamental right for youth and cornerstone of peace and security.

- The UN in Maldives should report on and press the government to comply with Freedom of Religion or Belief as a signatory to and active supporter of the Sustainable Development Goals: Ensuring (10.2) social, economic and political inclusion for Christian minorities and (16.10) guarantees of the fundamental freedoms under international law.

Saudi Arabia (14)

- The international community should engage with the Saudi government to call for provisions in the constitution and basic laws to protect religious minorities and decriminalize conversions.
- The country's legislation and constitution severely restricts Christian gatherings and the distribution of religious literature, in contrary to the principles of the ICCPR. Therefore, the international community should press the Saudi government to grant religious freedom to its citizens.
- The international community should press Saudi Arabia to fully investigate and punish verbal, physical and sexual abuse by employers of their domestic workers from South East Asia and Africa. Some of these migrant workers are Christians and face double vulnerability.
- Companies working with the Saudi government should take all available opportunities to discuss the status of Christians in the kingdom.
- The Saudi government should put in place a mechanism to hold the religious police accountable for violations of freedom of religion.

India (15)

- The international community should urgently integrate concern for religious freedom into bilateral and multilateral business contracts with India.
- The international community, and the EU as the biggest trading partner, should integrate Freedom of Religion or Belief concerns into their development programs with India.
- The central Indian government should withdraw attempts instigated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to enact an anti-conversion law at national level.
- The central Indian government should press states that have adopted anti-conversion laws: Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat, to repeal.
- The Indian state governments should investigate and prosecute those who are responsible for the killings, raping and kidnapping of Christians.
- The Indian state governments should investigate the damage caused to churches and Christians properties.
- In line with the express commitment to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all citizens and minorities, and as a signatory to international human rights standards setting out

ForB in its fullest definition, India should set and implement ForB and human rights standards, practices and accountability for the police and judiciary.³⁹

Uzbekistan (16)

- The international community, UN Human Rights Council and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) should strongly denounce and call for repeal of amendments to the Criminal and Administrative Code ratified 26 April 2016, which make it possible to punish those who publish, disseminate and broadcast allegedly extremist religious materials with prison terms of between five and eight years with possible fines of 300 to 400 times the minimum monthly wage.⁴⁰ The laws have been used to target Muslims and other religious groups.
- The OSCE should call the government of Uzbekistan to account insisting that it complies with commitments made to counter violent extremism and terrorism through a human rights based approach. Criminal Code Article 244-1 should specify 'religious extremist or terrorist groups' to remove the possibility of targeting any religious group on this legal basis.
- The international community should urge the government of Uzbekistan to respect freedom of association, in particular of religious groups.
- The prohibitive registration requirements for religious associations should be abolished, and monitoring of religious activities that do not threaten national security should cease. Specifically, Administrative Code 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.
- The UN Human Rights Committee should follow up its report
- Damage to churches caused by police raids should be repaired.
- All Christians who are serving jail sentences for faith-related reasons should be released immediately and the injustice committed against them should be redressed.
- The government should investigate and sanction all cases of humiliation of children and youth due to the Christian faith of their parents in schools, universities and other public institutions.
- As the European Union continues closer trade relations and development assistance through the EU-Uzbekistan Partnership Agreement, including the textiles protocol from November 2016, the EU should explicitly call for an end of violations to fundamental rights, including to freedom of religious belief as a condition for investment.
- The EU, in Human Rights Dialogue with Uzbekistan, as part of the New Partnership Agreement with Central Asia, alongside OSCE and UN participants should press the government of Uzbekistan to decriminalize by law: religious censorship, torture, religious literature and activity. Full freedom of religious belief should be enshrined in law and guaranteed in practice.

³⁹ Such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 2, 13, 30), ICCPR, and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

⁴⁰ Forum 18. http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2189, last accessed 10 January 2017.

Vietnam (17)

- The international community should urgently press the Vietnamese government to revise the new Law on Religion and Belief so that it enshrines in law and practice the full definition of Freedom of Religion or Belief according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- The international community should press the Vietnam National Assembly to urgently amend the provisions commented on below which were ratified in the new Law on Religion and Belief:
 - Compulsory legal registration is an abuse of article 18 of the ICCPR and UN definition of Freedom of Religion or Belief and should be provided as a non-legally binding offer.
 - The ban on activities which infringe on national sovereignty, social order and harm social ethics, personal lives and disunite the nation. This can give rise to discrimination, penalization and the targeting of religious groups by police and the authorities.
 - As set out in the civil society Open Letter to the Vietnam National Assembly, “good traditional cultural values” (articles 10.1) and “sowing division” (article 5.4) may give legal justification to the persecution of ethnic and indigenous minorities, the target groups of 80% of persecution in Vietnam.
 - As set out in the civil society Open Letter to the Vietnam National Assembly, provisions in the law tying the Freedom of Religion or Belief to the state and conditions of the party, giving legal justification for state interference in “the internal decisions, appointments, training, teachings and programs of religious organizations. Limitations on the manifestation of freedom of religion or belief should never exceed in either purpose or scope those permitted in article 18(3) of the ICCPR”.
- Despite participation of Christians and religious groups in the drafting process of the Law on Belief and Religion, the recommendations of civil society and the international community were not fully implemented. The international community should continue to exert pressure for increased participation and representation of civil society.
- The international community should call on the government of Vietnam to grant access to international observers to the home provinces of the 200 Montagnard Christians who fled persecution by authorities and crossed the border to Cambodia, to then be sent back. The observers should have access to monitor and report on their situation.
- The international community should call for an end to the impunity for violent attacks and killings of Christians by fully investigating the killings in 2016 of two Christians in a fake car accident, and death of a pastor a few days after release from prison.

Kenya (18)

- The Kenyan government should investigate all atrocities committed against Christians with due diligence.
- The African Union and the international community should call on and support the Kenyan government to develop a plan with legal and practical steps to fight corruption in line with Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals and in this way indirectly assure that killings and violence against Christians are fully investigated and the protection of Christians is put in place.
- The international community should help Kenya in its attempt to fight terrorism that has been taking the lives of Christians and other civilians.
- The Kenyan government should facilitate serious interfaith religious discussion in order to avoid misunderstandings and suspicions between different faiths.

Turkmenistan (19)

- The government of Turkmenistan has so far rejected the recommendation of the UN Human Rights Council (CCPR/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 17), and should now act upon the UN Human Rights Committee's list of issues for consideration of July 2016 (point 21 and 22 specifically) in the framework of ICCPR articles 2, 18 and 26.
- We welcome the focus on Freedom of Religion or Belief issues of the UN Human Rights Council, and call for additional attention in the March 2017 review on the rights of Muslim background Christian women being forced to re-convert and marry Muslims, and on sexual attacks used as a form of persecution of Christians.
- The UN Human Rights Committee should cooperate with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the full review in March 2017 to ensure that recommendations are made for the government of Turkmenistan to take ownership of developing rights-based policies for tackling violent extremism, terrorism and dealing with returning jihadists.
- The government of Turkmenistan has ignored OSCE recommendations on Freedom of Religion or Belief in the creation of the new Constitution in September 2016. The international community and OSCE should continue to cooperate with the government of Turkmenistan to convert commitments into legal policy-making and implementation.
- Foreign investors in the growing oil and gas sector should press Turkmenistan into complying with its international human rights obligations, including calling for Freedom of Religion or Belief and for an end to all fines, detainment, sexual attacks and torture in this area.

Qatar (20)

- Qatar's Fourth National Human Development Report (2015) found that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) human rights recommendations set in 2014 were falling short of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and limited by their non-binding status. The GCC Human Rights Bureau should extend 'respect for all religions' (GCC Human Rights Declaration 2014) to enshrine full freedom of religion, including conversion and the right

to association and assembly. The international community should engage with the GCC Human Rights Bureau and call for full and binding rights provisions.

- The government of Qatar should remove reservations to Article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- The international community should hold Qatar accountable on Freedom of Religion or Belief in line with international human rights treaties as part of its call for improvement of migrant worker rights.
- The government of Qatar should remove apostasy laws and guarantee the rights of all citizens to freedom of religion.
- The government should uphold article 35 of the Permanent Constitution and fully investigate and penalize discrimination against Christians, in particular of Muslim background, committed regularly by local authorities.
- The [Qatar National Vision 2030](#)⁴¹ seeks to remove barriers that people face on account of religion, and to sponsor and support dialogue among civilians, promoting coexistence between different religions and cultures. Under the QNV 2030, a plan with indicators should be created to measure progress toward full enjoyment of Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- The government should properly investigate and punish violence committed against Christians.

Egypt (21)

- The government of Egypt should end the unofficial customary-law sessions which often lead to collective punishments for the actions of an individual and unfair decisions since minority rights are not guaranteed in these sessions.
- The international community should urge Egypt to review all legislation restricting Freedom of Religion or Belief, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly to be compatible with the obligations and principles of ICCPR and other relevant treaties to which Egypt is a signatory.
- Specifically, the review of the Civic Association Law of 15 November 2016 should be reviewed, as in implementation it may give rise to curtailed space for NGOs, a punitive registration system and lack of freedom of association laid out in ICCPR article 22.⁴²
- 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.
- The government should promote: Peaceful coexistence between the diverse constituencies, interfaith engagement, education and conflict resolution.
- We welcome the Egyptian president's apology and his promise to finish rebuilding the churches burned in 2016. This step should be duplicated for the other areas of difficulty facing Egyptian Christians.

⁴¹ See: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/qatar_nhnr4_english_15june2015.pdf.

⁴² See: Christian Solidarity Worldwide: "Egypt Civil Society Law Raises Concerns", available at <http://www.csw.org.uk/2016/11/21/news/3352/article.htm>, last accessed 7 January 2017.

- The government should carry out full investigations into violent attacks on Christians in their places of worship, and implement measures to prevent such attacks in future.

Ethiopia (22)

- The government of Ethiopia should respect the citizen's right to form associations.
- The government should investigate violence perpetrated against Christians and bring those who are responsible to justice.
- The government should repeal laws introduced to restrict the establishment of broadcasting services for religious purposes.
- The government should repeal the 2009 civil society law which curtails space for civil society and bans work by foreign NGOs on political and human rights issues.
- The government should repeal the ban on religious activities which does not permit worship in groups within educational institutions.
- The international community should hold the government of Ethiopia accountable to the above, in line with its obligations under international human rights treaties through specific recommendations and letters of appeal.

Palestinian Territories (23)

- The influence of radical Islamic organizations in the country is growing. The international community should urge the political leaders of the Palestinian Territories to address the threats posed by these organizations and protect the Christian population in their territories.
- The Israeli government should increase freedom of movement for all Palestinians, including Christians in the West Bank.
- The Palestinian Basic Law should be amended to provide protection for religious minorities and to provide in law and practice for Freedom of Religion or Belief and conversion.
- The Palestinian authorities should ensure all citizens of any religion enjoy equal rights in the workplace, ensuring company policies end discrimination in appointments, salary and promotions.

Laos (24)

- The government of Laos should fully implement Article 9 of the Constitution to respect and protect all religions, and Article 43 for all citizens to have the right to believe or not to believe in any religion.
- The government should repeal the Decree 92. The 2016 revisions increase the number of government permits required for: Registering religious organizations, structuring religious activities and administering events outside the main location. Therefore Freedom of Religion or Belief remains severely hampered in law.

- The government should recognize Christian groups not included in the Laos Evangelical Church (LEC), the Roman Catholic Church, and the Seventh Day Adventists.
- The September 2014 NGO law which affects the freedom of Christians to form associations is against the principle of freedom of religion, expression and association. Therefore, it should be repealed.
- The international community should press the government of Laos to protect religious minorities in the country, especially converts and tribal believers. 2016 saw pressure on Christians increase sharply as restrictions were imposed on conversions.

Brunei (25)

- The government of Brunei should lift the decree that bans the importation of Bibles and the public celebration of Christmas.
- The international community should urge the government of Brunei to end the policy of 'Islamic evangelism' which is forcing people to change their faith and convert to Islam for financial and material benefits.
- The international community should urgently call for the government of Brunei to repeal the first phase of the Sharia penal law introduced in 2014 and next phases due in June 2017. The rights of non-Muslims are severely restricted under penal law.
- The European Union (as it prepares the EU-Brunei Partnership Agreement) and countries entering into major trade agreements with Brunei under Vision Brunei 2035, should make trade agreements conditional to compliance with repealing the Sharia penal law which violates the fundamental right to Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Bangladesh (26)

- The religious freedom provision of the Constitution of Bangladesh should be upheld.
- The constitutional definition of Islam as state religion should be deleted. The international community should urge the government of Bangladesh to not give in to any demands to introduce Sharia law or any form of legislation that restricts freedom of religion.
- The government has the duty to protect its citizens, including Christians, against any threat to harm their physical integrity. The government should properly investigate and punish those responsible for any harm done against the physical integrity of representatives of religious minorities.
- The UN and Bangladesh government should follow through on the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur ensuring that there are no ambiguities in government language and in reporting on incidents of violence against religious minorities which could incriminate the victims themselves.
- The government should develop policies to stop the influence of radical Islamic teaching coming from groups such as Islamic State into the country. In addition, the government should closely monitor and take deliberate action against the activities of radical Islamic groups who are inspired by Islamic State and similar organizations.

- The government and UN Human Rights Council should follow up on recommendations by former Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt to actively promote civil society inclusion by addressing threats and violence against Christians and minorities.
- The UN Human Rights Council should also follow up on the recommendation to ensure autonomy for Christian schools and for the proper funding for the inclusion of Christians in the recruitment and training of teachers in schools.
- The government should ensure full equal participation and representation of people of any religion or belief, ensuring political and media language is free from slander that undermines their equal status as citizens.
- The international community should urge the government authorities in Bangladesh to end impunity in cases of attacks and killings of Christians.
- While the government's effort to curb terrorism-related money-laundering into and out of the country is to be highly praised, the government should develop a mechanism making international money transactions possible which clearly serve humanitarian purposes. This would be of benefit to Bangladeshi society, regardless of whether the charities concerned are an NGO or Trust and of the religious affiliations involved.

Jordan (27)

- The EU (in its role of spearheading international support for refugees in Jordan through European Neighborhood funding and the Madad Trust) should ensure that support is specifically given to ensure Jordan maintains civil society participation, interfaith dialogue and co-existence between religious groups and freedom of religion, belief and conversion.
- The EU (through the Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief outside Europe, Jan Figel) should closely monitor and report on religious pressures in Jordan occurring as society changes through the influx of large numbers of refugees and the influence of radical Islamic groups. Recommendations from this reporting should then be implemented in the programs for humanitarian assistance and education, ensuring that all citizens and refugees of any religious group are treated equally.
- Both the Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief outside Europe, Jan Figel and the EU External Action Service (EEAS) should press the Jordanian state to ensure the protection of Muslim background believers of other faiths, including Christianity, and call for the implementation of the Freedom of Religion or Belief measures introduced under King Abdullah II for inclusive education.
- The international community should support Jordan in integrating Freedom of Religion or Belief as a key concern into security policies aimed at countering religiously motivated radicalism and terrorism.
- The government of Jordan and international community should protect Christians as the influence of radical Islamic organizations grows in the country.

Myanmar (28)

- The Burmese army has intensified attacks against ethnic minorities in Kachin and Shan states. The government of Myanmar, with the support of the international community, should reach a concrete and sustainable ceasefire agreement with the army ending all violence against religious groups.
- The four bills under the “Protection of Race and Religion” introduced in August 2015 should be repealed to give legal basis for Freedom of Religion or Belief for Myanmar’s minorities. The bills violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, creating extensive hurdles for conversions out of Buddhism and complicate interfaith marriages.
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and wider international community should give constructive support to Myanmar in opening and guaranteeing equal access to humanitarian aid for both residents and citizens of all ethnicities and religions.
- The National League for Democracy (NLD) government should launch an independent and full inquiry into allegations of abuse against ethnic minorities by the Burmese army with appropriate follow-up actions.
- The NLD government should denounce the persecution of religious minorities.

Tunisia (29)

- The international community should work with the Tunisian government to clarify Article 6 of the Constitution to comply fully with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of ICCPR and leave no room for interpretation. Open Doors recommends that a plan for implementation, including full protection for those who convert from Islam be developed.
- The government of Tunisia should put in place effective legal measures to prevent, investigate and finally bring justice for violations of freedom of religion, particularly involving those of Muslim background who converted to Christianity.
- The EU should mainstream Freedom of Religion or Belief into its major investment programs aimed at bringing security and stability in Tunisia, and so ensure the protection of Christians vulnerable to radical Islamic groups and the creation of a culture of peaceful interfaith participation in politics, business and education.
- The EU and major international investors should urge the government of Tunisia to strengthen the legal protection of Freedom of Religion of Belief and act on its constitutional obligation to implement sufficient measures for protecting minorities against increasing violence by radical groups.

Bhutan (30)

- The government of Bhutan 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.
- The government should uphold article 7(4) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, ensuring full investigation into attacks and violence against Christians.
- The government should allow Christian groups to build their own places of worship.

- 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.

Malaysia (31)

- The attempt to enforce Sharia penal law (*hudud*) in the federal state of Kelantan and other states should be rejected as it severely violates rights of Christians and other non-Muslim minorities.
- The international community should increase its support to Malaysia in tackling Islamic State (IS) activities following an increased presence and the June 2016 attack in Selangor.
- The international community should demand that the Malaysian government ends the practice of putting Christian converts under house arrest.
- The international community should call for the Malaysian government to investigate and end the use of bribes and similar enticements by local authorities to encourage conversion to Islam.
- The Malaysian government should enshrine the equality of Bumiputra indigenous peoples and Chinese and Indian minorities before the law, in particular of Christians in these groups. Policies which deprive the right of Bumiputra Christians to government benefit schemes (unless they convert to Islam) should be revoked.
- The Malaysian government should repeal anti-conversion laws, laws banning Christian literature and materials, and laws that ban the use of the term 'Allah' (God) by Christians.
- The Malaysian government should allow Bumiputra Christians, who were unwillingly converted to Islam through the *National Registration Department* (NRD) because their names reflect 'bin' or 'binti' (commonly used by Malay people), to change their religious identity back to Christianity.

Mali (32)

- Through the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MINUSMA), the government of Mali and the international community together should enable religious minorities (especially Christians) to exercise their freedom of religion in northern Mali by rebuilding communities and ensuring security.
- The government of Mali should ensure that Christians are guaranteed rights as citizens of the state and therefore entitled to freedom of religion, all kinds of civil rights and deserve protection.
- Although the French-led military intervention drove many Islamic militants out of the country, churches are not yet safe to function. The government of Mali and the UN, through MINUSMA, should continue efforts to bring law and order to northern Mali.
- The international community should urgently press the Mali government to investigate and punish rampant sexual assaults and rapes in the north, taking particular action to protect Christian women and girls.

- Reports in 2016 have shown several cases of Christian girls from a Muslim background being given to relatives in forced marriage. The international community should press for the government of Mali to urgently protect these Christian girls, and bring those responsible to justice.

Tanzania (33)

- The president has implemented successful socio-economic reforms in 2016 and should use his popularity to guarantee Freedom of Religion or Belief and co-existence by countering the efforts of radical Islamic groups aiming to divide Tanzania and create a Muslim-only state.
- The government of Tanzania should also prioritize the protection of Christians in Zanzibar and the coastal regions by safeguarding their access to transport and water points, and by investigating crimes committed against Christians and bringing those responsible to justice.
- The government of Tanzania should respect the fact that Tanzania is a secular state, and drop a provision in the draft constitution regarding the establishment of Sharia courts in the whole country.
- The international community should urge the government of Tanzania to uphold full freedom of expression and allow Christians to participate in the debate on the inclusion or exclusion of the provision for Sharia courts in the draft constitution.
- The government should investigate the recent spate of arson attacks on churches in the northwest and prosecute those responsible.
- The government should set clear policies to prevent unlawful informal application of Sharia law by local governments, thus protecting Christians' rights to open butcheries in the northwestern region.

Central African Republic (34)

- The Kampala Convention of the African Union should be integrated into national legislation to ensure the protection and assistance of refugees and internally displaced people. It should be ensured that Christians and vulnerable groups enjoy status as equal citizens in its implementation.
- 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 (effectively dividing the country in two) where ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militia clash. Special concern should be given to the integration of Muslims returning to western CAR and to the safeguarding of Christians in northeastern CAR. Since January 2013, these Christians have been marginalized, discriminated against and violently targeted by ex-Séléka militia and associated groups of Muslim Fulani herdsmen.
- The government of CAR should actively pursue a working relationship with the ex-Séléka rebels in the north and northeastern regions. The process of reconciliation should be

inclusive, giving voice to groups both in support of and against the Séléka to re-establish peace and stability.

- The government and international community should engage with the concerns of the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka groups regarding the program of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and come to agreement about bringing the remaining armed groups into the program.
- Civil society and local authorities in the north and northeastern regions should be consulted in the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the DDR program.
- The EU, UN and World Bank should honor their commitments to support the completion of the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding by establishing indicators with the government; a civil society/government framework for the monitoring of its implementation; and the inclusion of religious leaders in the management of local conflicts and reconciliation.
- Under the National Plan, reconciliation among (religious) communities, the rebuilding of society, and trauma counseling among victims of the violence, should be implemented with monitoring and evaluation being carried out by the government and partners.
- The government should investigate cases of rape (of men and women) used as a weapon against the church during the crisis and bring the perpetrators to trial.

Tajikistan (35)

The government of Tajikistan puts heavy pressure on all “deviating” groups, including Christians. Open Doors urges:

- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office, and OSCE office in Tajikistan, to mainstream Freedom of Religion or Belief commitments into its meetings and training sessions on human rights and countering violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism.
- The international community, particularly the UN Human Rights Committee and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, to monitor, report and question violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in accordance with all OSCE commitments.
- The OSCE and UN Human Rights Committee to press for legal liability for cases of attacks against Christians and minorities (including the destruction of their places of worship) by state agents and community members.
- The government of Tajikistan to honor all its OSCE commitments to Freedom of Religion or Belief through full implementation in all legislation and practice. This includes:
 - Cooperating fully with the OSCE and international community to develop a human rights based approach to countering violent extremism and terrorism, in line with its commitment to interfaith, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and to counter manifestations of intolerance and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. (*Ministerial Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that lead to Terrorism, Belgrade 2015*).

- Full revision of the 2009 Religion Law, with full public consultation and parliamentary debate, removing articles requiring state permission for all exercise of Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- Removal of all articles providing for sanctions and punishment for religious teaching, education and activity from the Administrative Code (July 2012), and revision of the language to remove all ambiguities governing Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- Full revision of the youth law which leaves Christians and other affected religious minorities in legal limbo due to the ambiguities in what is allowed or denied by law.
- Legal provisions and monitoring to ensure that all citizens receive a fair trial and legal representation in court cases (with no exemption of or discrimination against religious minorities).

Algeria (36)

- The international community should urge Algeria to repeal Ordinance 06-03 which curtails freedom of worship for non-Muslims and prohibits conversion.
- In Algeria freedom of expression is severely restricted. In line with Article 19 of the ICCPR the international community and countries should urge the Algerian government to allow free press and free expression.
- The government should commit to its constitutional obligation to implement sufficient measures to protect minorities against increasing violence by radical groups.
- The government should commit to providing adequate protection of and full freedom to the growing number of Christian converts from a Muslim background in the country.
- The government should commit to providing all legal and logistical facilities for the growing indigenous Algerian church and remove any restrictions preventing them practicing their faith. Furthermore, any restrictions on obtaining or building a place of worship should be removed.
- The government should also remove any restrictions on civil and legal rights for converts, such as validating Christian marriages and permitting Christian burials.

Turkey (37)

- Implementation of European Union humanitarian aid programs in Turkey, including cash cards, should include reporting on and monitoring equal access and protection for religious minorities.
- Provisions for protecting persecuted religious minorities should be integrated into the implementation of the EU-Turkey refugee deal.
- In the wake of the 2016 attempted coup, repression of Christians and non-Sunnis has sharply increased in Turkey. The international community should press the Turkish government to comply fully with Freedom of Religion or Belief in law and practice, and fully investigate and report on the increasing violations.
- The new constitution should guarantee the rights of all citizens to Freedom of Religion or Belief, with the express protection of the right to conversion, and of Christians and

religious minorities to equal citizenship before the law, with equal access to ID cards, residential permits and permits for places of worship.

- The international community should also urge the Turkish government to ensure the return of all confiscated properties belonging to Christians that were disputed under the zoning law, and those seized, such as in Diyarbakir in April 2016.
- In Turkey, hate crimes against Christian targets are relatively frequent. The government of Turkey should 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.
- The government should fully respect press freedom, and more broadly, freedom of expression in Turkey.
- The government should allow all religious minorities to register and to function freely, without restriction, and to establish universities or seminaries to train their leaders. 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.
- The international community should urge the government of Turkey to eliminate any biases against Christians in the judiciary system. Illegal detentions and the intimidation of religious minorities should be investigated and ended.

Kuwait (38)

- The government of Kuwait should be urged to ensure the necessary protection of and Freedom of Religion or Belief for international domestic workers, a significant number of whom are Christians.
- The international community and businesses operating in Kuwait should urge the government and businesses to uphold Freedom of Religion or Belief when developing security policies aimed at stemming the influence of IS and violence by radical groups.
- 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, the international community should urge the government to ensure the full rights of converts to fully embrace the religion they choose.
- The government should encourage the establishment of interfaith discussions that can reduce religious animosities and build unity based on the peaceful co-existence of religions.

China (39)

(Policy recommendations currently not available.)

Djibouti (40)

- The government of Djibouti should protect Christians from harassments perpetrated by radical groups.
- Western governments with strong reciprocal relations with Djibouti, especially the USA and France, should engage the government of Djibouti regarding Freedom of Religion or Belief, as well as freedom of expression, the situation of Christians in particular, and counter terrorism measures as the threat of an influx of jihadists crossing from Yemen increases.
- Anti-Christian sentiment has spread within society without any controlling reaction from the government. Therefore, the international community should urge the government to establish an interfaith commission.

Mexico (41)

- The Mexican government, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, UN and international community should cooperate with indigenous authorities to integrate Freedom of Religion or Belief as a fundamental right into indigenous laws and develop a plan to set out how to preserve traditional cultures and values while guaranteeing co-existence of faiths.
- The UN should urgently clarify its position on religion in the public sphere after calling in recent years for a removal of religion from government and public life.
- The UN and Mexican government should ensure that citizens of all faiths maintain full access to the media and equal participation in public debates, tackling and countering slander and ridicule of Christian values and promoting a pluralistic and sound space for all religious groups to fully express and exercise their religion or belief.
- The government should guarantee by law and in practice the full rights of all religious minorities, including Protestant Christianity.
- The international community should pay special attention to the position of vulnerable groups in Mexico, particularly that of actively practicing Christians. 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 and drug addicts). Efforts in the fields of state reform, corruption prevention, strengthening of the rule of law and human rights education are also essential to Mexican society as a whole.
- The international community should work together with the government to create a system in which churches and Christian leaders who are victims of extortion feel safe to denounce threats against them.
- Mexico is one the signatories of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. However, corruption levels within the country are high. Mexico is also the country with the world's highest number of abductions. The international community should assist the government in tackling corruption at all levels. Also, the infiltration of organized crime in public institutions by means of corruption should be addressed.

Comoros (42)

- The government of Comoros has made great advances in electoral democracy and stability. The international community should nevertheless maintain pressure for further reform from the government of Comoros to enshrine Freedom of Religion or Belief in law and a pluralistic society.
- The government should introduce sufficient measures to tackle anti-Christian slander and sentiment, and ensure Christians and religious minorities enjoy equal status before the law.
- Therefore, the government should repeal the anti-conversion law and laws prohibiting proselytization by any religion, except Islam.
- The government upholds the rights of expatriate and migrant Christians to a certain degree, but should ensure that the implementation of freedom of religion applies equally to native Christians, especially converts to Christianity from a Muslim background.

Kazakhstan (43)

- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and international community should press the government of Kazakhstan to implement recommendations on Freedom of Religion or Belief by the OSCE within the framework for 'Countering Extremism and Terrorism'.
- The OSCE and international community should press the Kazakhstan government to amend provisions in the Religion Law and Administrative Code which enact compulsory religious censorship and legal prohibition and sanctioning of unregistered activities. There should be no prior registration for individuals and communities wishing to express Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- The government and the OSCE should cooperate closely to ensure those drafting and applying policies concerning Freedom of Religion or Belief refer to the 2015 benchmark *Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities*.⁴³
- The government should stop arbitrary arrests of Christians.
- The UN Human Rights Council and OSCE should call for the immediate release of all Christians detained on the grounds of their religious belief.
- The government should cooperate fully with the OSCE and international community to develop a human rights based approach for countering violent extremism and terrorism, in line with its commitment to interfaith, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and to counter manifestations of intolerance and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. (*Ministerial Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that lead to Terrorism, Belgrade 2015*).

- United Arab Emirates (44)

- The international community should support the UAE and Gulf countries in efforts to tackle intolerance and radicalism, and ensure that new policies actively protect people of all religions.

⁴³ See: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/139046>, last accessed 7 January 2017.

- The government of UAE should be requested to give the necessary protection to domestic workers who are from South East Asia and Africa, many of whom are Christians.
- The government should actively stop all kinds of discrimination that Christians face in the country, thereby ensuring equal civil and legal rights for residents from all religions and ethnicities.
- The international community should urge the government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in the country.
- The government should remove restrictions it imposes on Christian fellowship and construction of worship places.
- The government should remove any restrictions on the citizen's right to change his/her religion.

Sri Lanka (45)

- The government of Sri Lanka should explicitly include equal citizenship, status before the law and full Freedom of Religion or Belief for religious minorities.
- In line with Articles 10 and 14 (1) (e) of the new Constitution, the government should fully investigate, monitor and ensure a legal response to cases of attacks against Christians, particularly where local government has supported perpetrators.
- The re-emphasis on Buddhism in Article 9 of the new Constitution, placing it in the 'foremost place', risks relegating other religions and beliefs and legally reducing their equality before the law. The government should ensure full implementation of Articles 10 and 14 (1) (e) guaranteeing rights for all religions in all spheres of life: government, media and community level.
- The government should firmly oppose anti-conversion bills put forward by the Jathika Hela Urumaya party.
- The international community and the government of Sri Lanka should ensure that all reconciliation programs guarantee the participation and inclusion of ethnic groups and religious minorities within those ethnic groups.

Indonesia (46)

- The government of Indonesia should ensure that it continues to promote the values of tolerance and pluralism, in particular as it steps up efforts to maintain public order and security. Such policies should safeguard Freedom of Religion or Belief, and seek to tackle the propagation of extremism and media smear campaigns aimed at inciting hatred and unrest.
- The government should draft and enforce a policy that curbs the spread of teachings on religious radicalism, violence, and intolerance in the educational system, especially public schools, and instead promote teachings on tolerance and diversity.

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and international community should cooperate closely with Indonesia to develop a plan for dealing with radical Islamic fighters returning from Syria and Iraq.
- The international community should urge the Indonesian government and its legislative body to abolish any legal disposition that restricts freedom of religion. Islamic by-laws are in force in many regions and territories and the province of Aceh is ruled by Sharia law. These legal dispositions contradict the core principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular in relation to freedom of religion.
- The government should 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.
- The government should remove any practical or administrative obstacle regarding the registration of church buildings.
- The international community should urge the Indonesian government to repeal its blasphemy laws as they continue to be abused by radical Islamic groups.
- In light of the recent blasphemy accusation against Jakarta's Christian governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), the government and judicial body should practice complete impartiality in handling such a case, which is believed to be highly politicized given the upcoming local elections in February 2017 and to have widened the religious rift between Muslims and Christians in the country.

Mauritania (47)

- The international community should hold the Mauritanian government accountable for ensuring full Freedom of Religion or Belief as party to the major international treaties, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and ICCPR.
- In accordance to the treaties, the Mauritanian criminal law sanctioning capital punishment for apostasy should be repealed. In December 2015, this led to the son of a mayor being sentenced to death for atheism. The threat of sentencing stifles religious freedom for Muslim background Christians and atheists.
- In accordance with the treaties, the international community should investigate and monitor the xenophobic and racist attacks which have intensified against immigrants, including Christians.
- The international community should actively monitor the position of Christians and religious minorities.
- The government of Mauritania and the African regional organizations should closely monitor developments in radical Islamic activity in the country.

Bahrain (48)

- The government of Bahrain should be requested to give the necessary protection to domestic workers many of whom are Christians
- The international community and those involved in business with Bahrain should urge the government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in the country and uphold Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- The government should remove restrictions it imposes on Christian fellowship and construction of worship places.
- The government should ensure equal civil and legal rights for residents from all religions and ethnicities.
- Under rising pressure from radical Muslims, the government should introduce measures to protect religious minorities in the country and champion pluralism over any caliphate rule.

Oman (49)

- The Oman government and international community should support and engage with the work of the al-Amana Centre for freedom of religion, which is influential for establishing peace and stability in the region.
- The government of Oman should develop a plan for dealing with radical Muslims who may cross the border from war-torn Yemen.
- The government should be requested to give the necessary protection to domestic workers, some of whom are Christians.
- The government should end in law and practice all forms of discrimination that Christians face in the country, thereby ensuring equal civil and legal rights for residents from all religions and ethnicities.
- The government should repeal the family law that denies a father who has left Islam custodian rights, as it is incompatible with international standards on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Colombia (50)

- The Colombian government policies should include guarantees for reducing the vulnerability of Christians to threats from organized crime in the implementation of the FARC peace agreement.
- The respect for indigenous traditions and culture is of great importance. Human rights violations should nevertheless be addressed and penalized. In Colombia, indigenous territories are autonomous of the Colombian government and frequent incidents of repression and attacks against indigenous Christians are recorded. In coordination with indigenous leaders, the Colombian government and international community should set legal structures in place which uphold the fundamental right to Freedom of Religion or Belief, and bring perpetrators of attacks, torture and discrimination – such as restriction from access to basic services - to justice.

- The government should amend non-discrimination legislation which can be liberally interpreted to limit the rights of religious groups to full freedom of expression on issues such as family and marriage.
- The government should seek to create an open and sound space for secularism, ensuring participation of civil society of all religions. [Return to Contents \(Page 1\)](#)

WWL 2017 – Audit Statement from the International Institute for Religious Freedom



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Audit Statement on the outcomes of the Open Doors World Watch List 2017

The results of the Open Doors World Watch List 2017 are accurately presented by the World Watch Unit (WWU) within the parameters of precision reached in the processing of information.


On inspection of six sample countries the auditors found evidence that WWL's stated methodology was in general diligently and broadly applied by the WWU staff. The degree of reliability of the scores differs, mainly subject to the depth and quality of information received.

The updated methodology document (November 2016) describes various quality assurance measures by the WWU staff with regard to consistency in application of the questionnaire and methodology. WWU gave written assurance that these were applied.

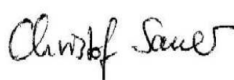
Additional statements, documents or interpretations by Open Doors International or the Open Doors national affiliates based on or associated with the publication of the World Watch List 2017 remain outside the scope of this audit statement.

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

Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo,
 this 9 January 2017



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