WORLD WATCH RESEARCH

MALI: Country Dossier

June 2018

Open Doors
Serving persecuted Christians worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research Unit

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World Watch List 2018

Rank	Country	1. Private Life Score	2. Family Life Score	3. Community Life Score	4. National Life Score	5. Church Life Score	6. Violence Score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018 Score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2017 Score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2016 Score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2015 Score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2014 Score
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	**94**	92	92	92	90
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	**93**	89	88	81	78
3	Somalia	16.0	16.2	16.1	16.3	16.4	10.4	**91**	91	87	90	80
4	Sudan	14.2	14.5	14.3	15.6	16.0	12.0	**87**	87	84	80	73
5	Pakistan	14.4	13.5	13.8	15.0	13.1	16.7	**86**	88	87	79	77
6	Eritrea	15.2	14.5	15.8	16.1	15.2	9.4	**86**	82	89	79	72
7	Libya	15.2	15.3	14.2	15.7	15.5	10.4	**86**	78	79	76	71
8	Iraq	14.7	14.7	14.9	14.9	15.1	11.3	**86**	86	90	86	78
9	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.4	16.5	16.7	2.6	**85**	85	78	73	74
10	Iran	14.0	14.1	14.5	15.8	16.4	10.0	**85**	85	83	80	77
11	India	12.6	12.7	13.2	14.7	12.9	14.4	**81**	73	68	62	55
12	Saudi Arabia	14.9	13.7	14.2	15.5	16.4	4.1	**79**	76	76	77	78
13	Maldives	15.2	15.5	13.5	15.8	16.7	1.1	**78**	76	76	78	77
14	Nigeria	11.8	11.5	13.1	12.1	12.1	16.5	**77**	78	78	78	70
15	Syria	14.4	14.3	14.1	14.5	14.7	3.7	**76**	86	87	83	79
16	Uzbekistan	15.5	12.1	13.0	13.1	16.0	3.5	**73**	71	70	69	68
17	Egypt	11.3	12.8	12.2	11.7	9.5	12.4	**70**	65	64	61	61
18	Vietnam	12.4	8.4	12.7	14.2	13.8	7.4	**69**	71	66	68	65
19	Turkmenistan	15.2	10.3	12.9	12.8	15.2	1.9	**68**	67	66	63	62
20	Laos	12.9	8.6	13.6	13.9	14.9	3.5	**67**	64	58	58	62
21	Jordan	13.2	13.3	11.5	10.9	13.0	4.3	**66**	63	59	56	56
22	Tajikistan	13.3	11.3	11.8	11.8	12.9	4.3	**65**	58	58	50	47
23	Malaysia	12.0	14.9	12.8	12.4	9.3	3.9	**65**	60	58	55	49
24	Myanmar	11.6	11.1	13.2	10.4	11.0	7.8	**65**	62	62	60	59
25	Nepal	12.6	11.9	10.7	11.5	12.4	4.6	**64**	(not in WWL)			
26	Brunei	14.3	14.2	10.7	10.2	13.5	0.9	**64**	64	61	58	57
27	Qatar	13.4	12.9	11.7	11.3	14.1	0.0	**63**	66	65	64	63
28	Kazakhstan	12.8	10.0	10.2	12.2	13.7	3.7	**63**	56	55	51	49
29	Ethiopia	9.8	10.0	10.8	10.9	10.5	10.4	**62**	64	67	61	65
30	Tunisia	11.9	13.2	10.6	10.7	12.0	3.9	**62**	61	58	55	55
31	Turkey	12.5	9.7	9.8	11.7	9.6	8.7	**62**	57	55	52	(not in WWL)
32	Kenya	12.0	10.9	10.0	7.9	11.7	9.4	**62**	68	68	63	48
33	Bhutan	11.9	11.6	12.4	11.4	13.1	1.1	**62**	61	56	56	54
34	Kuwait	13.4	12.6	11.6	10.9	12.3	0.4	**61**	57	56	49	50
35	Central African Republic	9.0	8.1	10.1	8.9	8.8	16.1	**61**	58	59	67	67
36	Palestinian Territories	12.1	12.8	10.7	10.5	12.6	1.1	**60**	64	62	58	53
37	Mali	11.4	9.6	11.2	8.1	9.2	9.6	**59**	59	55	52	54
38	Indonesia	10.3	11.0	11.5	10.0	9.3	6.9	**59**	55	55	50	46
39	Mexico	8.3	7.6	12.1	10.7	9.7	10.4	**59**	57	56	55	(not in WWL)
40	United Arab Emirates	13.6	12.2	10.0	10.4	11.8	0.2	**58**	55	55	49	51
41	Bangladesh	10.4	8.8	11.4	9.6	7.5	10.0	**58**	63	57	51	46
42	Algeria	12.3	13.1	7.5	10.4	12.4	2.0	**58**	58	56	55	54
43	China	9.2	7.2	8.0	10.7	13.3	9.1	**57**	57	57	57	51
44	Sri Lanka	11.1	7.6	10.5	11.3	10.1	6.9	**57**	55	(not in WWL)	51	55
45	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.1	9.3	11.1	12.4	2.4	**57**	(not in WWL)	57	50	(not in WWL)
46	Oman	12.1	12.2	9.9	9.4	12.6	1.1	**57**	53	53	55	56
47	Mauritania	11.5	11.3	11.1	12.2	11.0	0.0	**57**	55	(not in WWL)	50	51
48	Bahrain	12.9	13.1	10.2	9.9	10.3	0.2	**57**	54	54	(not in WWL)	48
49	Colombia	7.9	7.6	11.9	8.6	8.5	11.9	**56**	53	55	55	56
50	Djibouti	12.2	12.2	10.3	9.9	11.7	0.0	**56**	57	58	60	46

WWL 2018 Persecution Watch Countries[1]

Rank	Country	1. Private Life Score	2. Family Life Score	3. Community Life Score	4. National Life Score	5. Church Life Score	6. Violence Score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018 Score
51	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.4	13.9	0.4	**56**
52	Kyrgyzstan	11.7	9.5	10.0	8.1	11.6	2.8	**54**
53	Tanzania	10.1	10.3	10.1	9.5	9.0	3.9	**53**
54	Russian Federation	11.1	8.4	10.1	8.9	10.7	2.0	**51**
55	Morocco	10.4	11.5	7.6	8.8	12.0	0.6	**51**
56	Cuba	8.5	4.9	10.7	10.4	12.2	2.4	**49**
57	Uganda	10.9	8.7	9.5	8.7	4.8	3.9	**46**
58	Niger	9.9	9.7	9.0	7.0	7.1	2.6	**45**

[1] These countries reached a score of 41 points or more but did not receive enough points to be included in the WWL Top 50.

MALI – Country Dossier (June 2018)

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Contents

World Watch List 2018 1
Introduction 2
WWL 2018: Keys to understanding MALI 3
WWL 2018: Church History and Facts 5
WWL 2018: Short & Simple Persecution Profile 6
WWL 2018: Persecution Dynamics 8
WWR in-depth reports 15
Open Doors article(s) from the region 15
World Watch Monitor news articles 15
Recent country developments 16

Introduction

This country report is a collation of documents based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL)[1] including statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations, and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD)[2]. Further news and analysis is supplied by World Watch Monitor[3] and WWR staff.

MALI		
World Watch List	**Score**	**Rank**
WWL 2018	59	37
WWL 2017	59	32
WWL 2016	55	44
WWL 2015	52	40
WWL 2014	54	33

[1] See: https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/countries/
[2] WCD website: http://www.brill.com/publications/online-resources/world-christian-database
[3] See: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/

WWL 2018: Keys to understanding MALI

Link for general background information:

BBC country profile: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881370

Recent country history

Before modern-day Mali came into existence, there were several kingdoms and empires that flourished in the territory that forms part of Mali today. After the short-lived Wassoulou Empire, France established a colony called French Sudan in 1892. French colonial administration came to an end in 1960 and Mali became independent. After experimenting with one party rule and military rule for decades, Mali adopted a new constitution in 1992 and made a successful transition to democratic rule. Before the coup that overthrew the democratically elected Malian government in March 2012, the country was considered exemplary among African countries for protecting civil liberties and political rights. The media, in particular, was vibrant and open and not subject to governmental pressure or restrictions. For instance, during the presidential election of 2007, the results were considered valid and there was little or no electoral violence. 70 parties ran in the election and the right to vote was extended to all citizens of Mali.

However, in 2012 Tuareg rebels (who had been active in northern Mali for a number of years) formed an alliance with radical Islamic militants, including some foreign fighters mainly coming from Algeria. They overran government forces and took control of several cities and a sizable portion northern Mali. Consequently, a military coup ousted the civilian administration, but civilian administration was restored after the presidential election in 2013 was won by Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, a veteran politician and a former prime minister. The Malian government was able to push back the advance of the rebels and reclaim most of the occupied territory with the help of French troops. Despite the persistence of occasional clashes between rebels and government forces, as of 2013 a peace agreement has been concluded between the rebels and the government and the UN has established and sent a 12,000 strong peacekeeping force called the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

The religious landscape

Mali is a predominantly Muslim country and most Malians are adherents of Malikite Sunni Islam which is a version of Islam influenced by Sufism. This brand of Islam is moderate and tolerant of other faiths. In northern Mali, especially among the ethnic Tuareg, the influence of more radical versions of Islam has grown over the past few years. There is also a significant presence of ethno-religionists or animists in Mali. As with many of the Muslims in Mali, Malian Christians often combine their faith with indigenous animist beliefs.

The political landscape

Belying Mali's positive record on civil liberties and political rights, there were large inconsistencies on how these rights were applied in the northern two-thirds of the country, a

reality which was often overlooked by foreign observers. Political power in Mali was concentrated in the southern one-third of the country, dominated by Muslim sub-Saharan African tribes such as the Songhai and Zarma, while the more conservative Muslim northern tribes, such as the Tuareg and the Arabs, were often left out of power. While discrimination against the Tuareg and Arabs was not official policy, in practice they received a smaller proportion of government revenue and services, which had led the Tuareg into intermittent open rebellion over several decades. The insecurity and instability that has resulted from the civil war and continued terrorist attacks by Islamists are major challenges in the current political landscape. Unless the peace deal among the rebels and the government is fully implemented and the grievances of the Tuareg are addressed, an improvement in the political situation in Mali is unlikely which will mean continued insecurity and anxiety for Christians in the country.

The socio-economic landscape

Mali is one of the least developed countries in the world and finds itself ranked 175 out of 188 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index.[4] The average life expectancy of Malians is 58.5, the adult literacy rate is 38.7 and the annual Gross National Income per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity is 2,218 USD. Most of Malian territory is arid or semi-arid making a significant portion of the country ill-suited for farming. However, Mali, like its neighbors, has an economy based on subsistence agriculture, including rice, sorghum and livestock. Mali is also rich in gold and other minerals, which are exploited by South African and European companies. And yet the main economic development model relies on foreign aid, including the World Bank and other international donors, and bilateral donations from the European Union, European countries and the United States. In addition, France is a main commercial partner and other countries (e.g. China and Middle-Eastern states) trade with and invest in Mali. Mali used to have strong ties with Russia and a number of its elite trained in Russia (including Dioncounda Traoré who served as president from April 2012 to September 2013 after the military coup). However, Russia no longer has a strong economic presence.

Concluding remarks

Due to its better democratic and civil liberties record compared to other Muslim majority countries in the region - as well as the influence of Sufiism - Mali was a relatively tolerant country for Christians. However, the civil war and the opportunity that it afforded for Islamist militants changed this situation and poses a serious risk and challenge to Christians. Militant Islamic groups are still active, especially in northern parts of Mali. These groups - particularly al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) - target UN peacekeepers. The UN Security council has increased the number of peace keeping troops in the country and has also expanded their mandate to enable the peacekeepers to take more robust military action against the militant

[4] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income per capita indicators. A country scores higher HDI when the life expectancy at birth is longer, the education period is longer, and the income per capita is higher. It is used to distinguish whether the country is a developed, a developing or an underdeveloped country.

groups. The situation in Mali is still fragile and it will take a number of years before there is peace and stability in the country. The role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is of paramount importance in this regard.

WWL 2018: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

Pop 2017	Christians	Chr%
18,690,000	413,000	2.2

Source: WCD, May 2017

How did Christians get there?

It was the White Fathers, a Roman Catholic missionary order, who brought Christianity to Mali in 1895. However, the growth of Christianity in Mali was very slow. It was only in 1936 that the first African priest was ordained and it was only in 1962 that the first Malian bishop was consecrated. Protestants came to the country in 1919 via the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) from the United States. That was followed by the arrival of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1923.

What church networks exist today? [5]

Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Independent	Unaffiliated	Double-aff	*Evangelical*	*Renewalist*
-	303,000	105,000	16,400	1,800	-13,800	117,000	32,600

Source: WCD, May 2017

Religious context (selection)

Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Ethno-religionist	Jewish	Bahai	Atheist & others[6]
413,000	16,511,000	-	-	1,738,000	-	1,400	26,450

Source: WCD, May 2017

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

[6] This category includes Atheists, Agnostics and New religionists.

Mali is a predominantly Muslim country - an estimated 88.3% of the population, according to WCD data. There is also a notable presence of indigenous animist beliefs. Most Muslims in Mali are Sunni and are strongly influenced by Sufism which is a more tolerant form of Islam. Radical Islamic groups from the Arab and Tuareg tribes in northern Mali have little respect for Sufi-influenced religious practices, as evidenced by the destruction of 13th century Sufi shrines in Timbuktu when Islamists controlled the city in 2012

Malian Muslims have a reputation of being moderate and tolerant of other religious beliefs. As with many of the Muslims in Mali, Malian Christians (the majority being Roman Catholic) tend to combine their faith with indigenous animist beliefs. Even though most Malian Christians live in the south of the country, they have come under increasing pressure as a result of the threat from radical Islamic militants in the north.

Notes on the current situation

The main challenge that Christians currently face in Mali is the presence of radical Islamic groups in the region and country, which creates fear and insecurity among Christians. In November 2015 Islamic militants stormed a luxury hotel in Bamako and killed more than 20 people, most of whom were Western tourists. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by al-Mourabitoun, an Islamist group formed in 2013. Another recent example of such attacks in Mali was a raid conducted by suspected Islamists against a resort frequented by foreigners and government officials. Despite a 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed between the rebels and the government of Mali, armed clashes between government troops and rebels have continued.

WWL 2018: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Reporting period: 1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017

WWL 2018 Points: 59 / Position: 37

WWL 2017 Points: 59 / Position: 32
WWL 2016 Points: 55 / Position: 44

Where persecution comes from

Although Malians have traditionally practiced a relatively tolerant version of Islam, over the past few years a more militant and intolerant version of Islam has become influential especially in the northern part of the country and has resulted in an intense persecution of Christians. Militant Islamic groups in the northern part of the country, aided by foreign fighters linked to al-Qaida, took over a significant portion of the northern part of the country in 2012 and although these groups have been pushed out of most of the territory they occupied in the north, their influence is still felt. In addition to the radicalization of the Muslim population such groups have caused, the ongoing insurgency of these groups still poses a threat to Christians in the country.

How Christians are suffering

When radical Islamic militant groups took control of the northern part of the country in 2012, churches were burned down and Christians had to flee. The displacement of Christians that occurred then still affects Christians who lost their homes and whose churches were destroyed. Although some Christians and congregations have returned to the north under police protection, they still live under the threat of attack by Islamist militants. Evangelistic activities in the north are especially risky and could lead to being attacked by radical Muslims. Christian missionaries operating in Mali also live under the constant threat of abduction and some have indeed been kidnapped by the jihadists. Christians with a Muslim background, risk violence (especially in the north) and pressure from their relatives and family members if their conversion to Christianity is discovered.

Examples

- On 16 November 2016, suspected Islamic militants shot and killed the Christian deputy mayor of Kerana.[7] Moussa Issah Bary was a rare example of a Christian member of the predominantly Muslim Fulani ethnic group which is one of the most prominent Muslim ethnic groups in the whole of West Africa.
- A Colombian nun, Gloria Argoti, was abducted on 7 February 2017 in the southern part of the country which is normally considered safe.[8] The kidnappers were a consortium of Islamic groups that includes Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, Al-Mourabitoun and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
- Christians in Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao have not been allowed to rebuild churches which were destroyed a few years ago.

[7] See: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/12/murder-of-fulani-christian-mayor-in-mali-increases-concerns-over-creeping-islamic-extremism/, last accessed December 2017.

[8] See: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/07/kidnapped-missionaries-appear-video-posted-jihadist-groups-africas-sahel/, last accessed December 2017.

WWL 2018: Persecution Dynamics

Reporting period: 1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017

WWL 2018 Points: 59 / Position: 37

WWL 2017 Points: 59 / Position: 32
WWL 2016 Points: 55 / Position: 44

Contents

Position on World Watch List (WWL) 8
Persecution engines 9
Drivers of persecution 9
Context 10
Christian communities and how they are affected 11
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence 12
Gender profile of persecution 13
Future outlook 14
Policy considerations 14

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

For WWL 2018, Mali remained at the same score of 59 points as in WWL 2017. Although the score for violence more than doubled, this was countered by a fall in average pressure on Christians. However, this fall in pressure is mainly due to a refinement in WWL analysis which now takes the percentage of the national population living in an affected area rather than a whole geographical area. Given the lower population density in northern Mali where the pressure is more pronounced, the resulting score for pressure is lower than in the analysis for WWL 2017.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines in Mali[9]	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	Very strong
Religious nationalism	Very weak
Ethnic antagonism	Weak
Denominational protectionism	Not at all
Communist and post-Communist oppression	Not at all
Secular intolerance	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	Not at all
Organized corruption and crime	Weak

Islamic oppression (Very strong):
Mali, as is typical in other West African states, has always had (mostly) moderate Islam dominance and a constitutionally secular political system which prohibits religious political parties, even though a high percentage of its population is Muslim. Christians used to have sufficient freedom in Malian society, including the presence of foreign Christian missionaries (although the northern part of the country had always been problematic for Christians). The situation changed when the creation of the independent state of Azawad in northern Mali was proclaimed in April 2012. The Islamists, most of whom can be identified as Wahhabis, soon established an Islamic state system with a strict Sharia regime in the north. Most Christians fled before the Islamists took over. In the meantime, they destroyed churches and other Christian buildings. The Church in southern Mali has also been negatively affected by the increasing visibility of various Wahhabi groups. Although the rebels and the government have reached a peace agreement and international peacekeepers are in place, the tendency for Islamic radicalization in Malian society may continue, and increasingly put pressure on or physically harm the lives of Christians and their churches.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of persecution in Mali	Level of influence
Government officials at any level from local to national	Very weak
Ethnic group leaders	Weak
Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national	Very weak
Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national	Very weak
Violent religious groups	Very strong
Ideological pressure groups	Not at all
Normal citizens (people from the general public), including mobs	Medium
Own (extended) family	Weak
Political parties at any level from local to national	Not at all
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	Not at all
Organized crime cartels or networks	Not at all
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN) and embassies	Not at all

[9] The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines and Drivers in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong.

Drivers for Islamic oppression

The main drivers of Islamic oppression in Mali are militant Islamic groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) who are active mainly in the northern part of the country but also with an ability to strike and conduct attacks and kidnappings even in the southern part of the country. Segments of the population influenced by the radical and intolerant teaching of Wahhabism are also drivers of persecution especially aiming at Christians with a Muslim background. Therefore, generally speaking, fanatical Islamist movements and teachers are the major drivers of persecution in Mali, and due to their alliance with such movements the rebels based in the north can be considered drivers of persecution too.

Context

Mali is one of the least developed countries in the world but is also rich in gold and other minerals, which are mined by South African and European companies. And yet the main economic development model relies on foreign aid, including the World Bank and other international donors, and bilateral donations from the European Union, European countries and the United States. In addition, France is a main commercial partner and other countries (e.g. China and Middle Eastern states) trade with and invest in Mali.

Since the Islamist takeover of northern Mali in April 2012 and the subsequent French-led effort to restore Malian authority to the entire country in early 2013, the situation of civil liberties and political rights is yet to return to pre-2012 levels in both the north and south of the country. The Tuareg rebels and Malian authorities signed a deal on 18 June 2013, paving the way for the redeployment of administration and Malian army forces to the northern city of Kidal, which was controlled by fighters of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). However, this was not a comprehensive peace agreement that put an end to the rebellion. As of May 2013, all regions of northern Mali returned to government control, except for the most north-eastern region of Kidal.

The conflict between the government and opposition militant actors in Mali is nothing new. The main opposition group which has posed the greatest threat to the government is the MNLA. The MNLA has been the representative of Tuareg independence militias since 2011, but its legacy dates back to 1916. Since 1916, there have been at least five Tuareg rebellions in northern Mali under both French rule and post-independence Mali since 1960. All of the rebellions have been part of the effort to establish a state in northern Mali, separate from national leadership, a state called Azawad.

In June 2015, the Tuareg rebels belonging to the Azawad Movements Coalition entered in to a peace agreement with the government after their demands (including greater political competences, a regional security force and more investment in the region's development) were met by the government. Despite the peace agreement the security situation in Mali is still fragile and Islamic militant groups continue to stage attacks. For example in June 2017,

gunmen attacked a resort in Bamako Mali that is frequented by foreigners[10] and killed two people. An al-Qaeda affiliate in northern Mali has also staged a suicide attack against a facility housing soldiers and fighters belonging to a militia affiliated with the government, resulting in the death of 50 people[11] in January 2017. As these incidents show, the security situation in Mali is still precarious. These militant groups have shown hostility to and persecuted not only Christians but even adherents of Islam who do not subscribe to the extremist brand of Islam such groups try to impose.

Apart from Christians, animists or those who adhere to indigenous traditional belief systems can also be considered as religious minorities in Mali. Although historically such beliefs have co-existed with Islam, with the rise of more militant and intolerant versions of Islam in Mali, animists have also been targeted for violent attacks in the northern part of the country.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians:
Communities of expatriate Christians do not exist in Mali as a separate category as defined by WWL methodology.

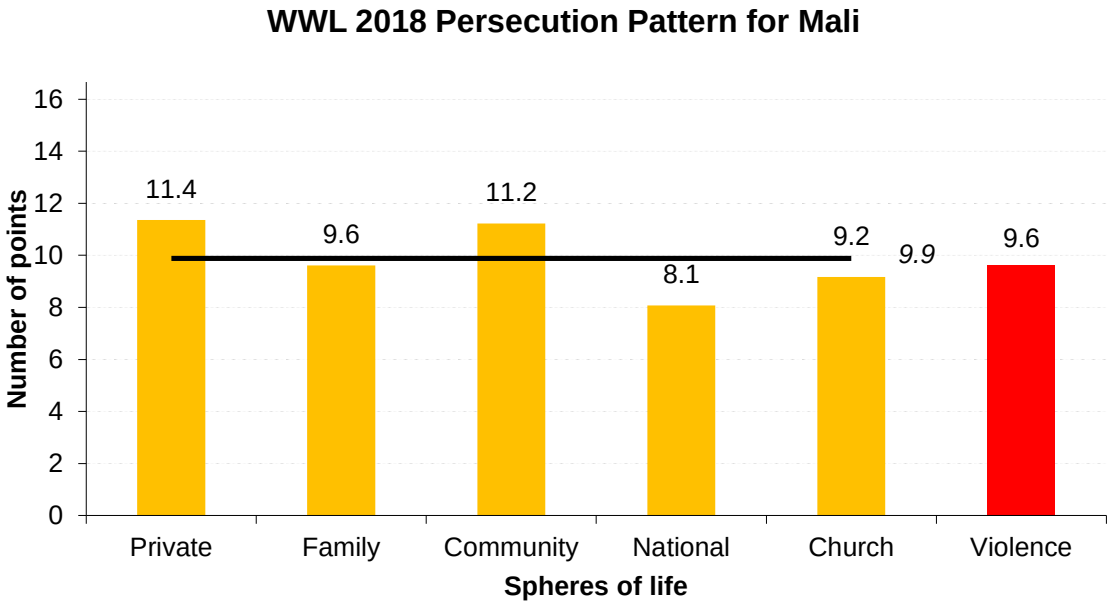
Historical Christian communities:
These include Roman Catholic churches and a significant number of various Protestant denominations. Among the less than 5% of Malians who are Christian, the majority belong to historical Christian communities. Those living in the southern part of the country enjoy freedom of religion in relative terms as compared with their counterparts in the north. Nevertheless, although the degree and intensity of the threat of attacks by Islamic militants is greater in the north than in the south, those in the south also have to face threats of attack and kidnapping.

Communities of converts to Christianity:
These small communities of Christians with a Muslim background are mainly to be found among the Bozo and the Dogon, but there are also converts living elsewhere in the country. In addition to the threat from Islamic militants that most Malian Christians face, converts to Christianity particularly face varying degrees of pressure to renounce Christianity from their family members, relatives and neighbors.

Non-traditional Christian communities:
Mali has a small number of charismatic and Pentecostal churches mainly found in the southern part of the country. Due to their style of worship and their likelihood to be more engaged in evangelism such communities are likely to draw the ire and hostility of society at large.

[10] See: http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/18/africa/urgent--gunfire-heard-at-mali-tourist-resort/index.html, last accessed 18 September 2017.
[11] See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38663693, last accessed 18 September 2017.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence



(The maximum score for each block is 16.7)

The WWL 2018 Persecution pattern for the Mali shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Mali went down from 11.0 in WWL 2017 to 9.2. As already stated above, this fall in pressure is mainly due to a refinement in WWL analysis which takes the percentage of the national population living in an affected area rather than a whole geographical area. Given the lower population density in northern Mali where the pressure is more pronounced, the resulting score for pressure is lower than in the analysis for WWL 2017. Thus, the lower score for pressure does not really reflect a change in the level of freedom and security enjoyed by Christians as compared with WWL 2017.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Private sphere* due to the problems believers with a Muslim background will face in parts of the country where the influence of radical Islamic teachers is strongest.
- The score for violence went up from 4.3 in WWL 2017 to the very high level of 9.6. This reflects how violent militant groups in the country are becoming an increasing threat to the safety of Christians in Mali.

Private sphere:
It is particularly difficult for converts to live out their faith even in private. Living arrangements and conditions are such that their deviance from Islamic rites and their acts of private worship could easily be detected and lead to persecution.

Family sphere:
Particularly in the north, the extended family of any Christian with a Muslim background is likely to exert pressure on the convert to renounce Christianity fearing that a convert within their family could make them vulnerable to ostracism by the community.

Community sphere:
Christians in the north have felt less safe than in the past to openly participate in community affairs due to the influence of Islamist groups. Although the Islamic militants have been pushed back, they have not been eradicated and fears of possible new insurgencies remain. Even local Muslims do not want Christians to return to their homes and Christian property has often been taken and occupied by others.

National sphere:
The level of pressure in the WWL 2018 reporting period at national level was less than in the previous reporting period; however, Christians in the north have felt threatened by the lingering influence of Islamist groups and are afraid of openly displaying Christian symbols.

Church sphere:
In the south, society accepts Christian gatherings, although some Christians have felt threatened by lingering Islamist movements. Normal church life is not yet possible in the north.

Violence:

- The level of violence - especially against Christians in the northern part of the country - is very high and increased from 4.3 in WWL 2017 to 9.6. Both government and international peacekeeping forces operating in northern Mali have not been able to fully restore law and order and guarantee the security and freedom of Christians. An assortment of militant Islamic groups are still active in the north and have occasionally also attacked parts of the country that were considered to be safe.
- On 16 November 2016, suspected Islamic militants shot and killed[12] the Christian deputy mayor of Kerana. Moussa Issah Bary was a rare example of a Christian member of the predominantly Muslim Fulani ethnic group which is one of the most prominent Muslim ethnic groups in the whole of West Africa.
- A Colombian nun, Gloria Argoti, was kidnapped by a consortium of Islamic groups on 7 February 2017 in the southern part of the country[13] which is normally considered safe. The militant groups include Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, al-Mourabitoun and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
- Christians in Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao have not been allowed to rebuild churches which were destroyed a few years ago.

Gender profile of persecution

Female:
Many Christian women and girls are subjected to sexual abuse, forced marriage, under-age marriage, and are denied access to modern education. This is particularly rampant in northern Mali. Although there are national laws that protect women and girls in general, traditional and cultural practices and norms make women more vulnerable for such treatment including early

[12] See: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/12/murder-of-fulani-christian-mayor-in-mali-increases-concerns-over-creeping-islamic-extremism/, last accessed 20 December 2017.
[13] See: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/07/kidnapped-missionaries-appear-video-posted-jihadist-groups-africas-sahel/, last accessed 20 December 2017.

marriage, forced marriage, polygamy and female genital mutilation. As a result of such practices, fellow Christians are traumatized, and lose confidence in the authorities in their country, and their faith is sometimes also affected.

Male:
Young men are subjected to abduction, forced conversion and conscription in militia in the northern parts of the country. This has a devastating effect on their families and fellow Christians who are traumatized by such persecution.

Future outlook

- The main trend facing Mali is the rising influence of militant Islam and Wahhabism in the country. It will take a long time to build up a Christian presence again in the north of Mali. Islamic militants continue to be active in Mali, notwithstanding the peace deal that was signed in 2015, and will remain a threat in the years to come. The peace deal is very fragile and the government and UN peacekeepers are still unable to establish the authority of the government in some parts of the country. The restoration of law and order as well as governmental authority in the northern part of the country is a prerequisite for the improvement of the situation for Christians in northern Mali.
- The situation in Mali cannot be seen in isolation; it is part of the overall rise of Islamic militancy and Wahhabism in the entire region. Therefore, the trajectory of the political and security situation in the whole region is very crucial for the future of Mali. Furthermore, even if the government of Mali and other regional states manage to crush the armed Islamic militancy of groups like AQIM, the radicalization of the youth and society at large by this group is a more intractable problem that is creating a hostile environment for Christians for years to come.

Policy considerations

Taking in to account the above persecution dynamics, Open Doors International makes the following policy recommendations:

- 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, therefore entitled to freedom of religion and deserving protection.

WWR in-depth reports

In-depth reports are available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/ (password: freedom).

- WEST AFRICA – Islam and Islamism in Francophone West Africa – re-issued – 2017
  September 2017 (based on 2012 unpublished report)
  Using the Islamist occupation of Northern Mali as the background and starting point, this 20 page report offers an overview of the current state of Islam in eight further French-speaking countries of West Africa: Mauritania, Senegal, Republic of Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ivory Coast, Benin and Togo.

- THE SAHEL – Rising-islamic-militancy-and-the-persecution-of-christians-in-the-region – 2016
  August 2016
  9 page report providing background information on the Sahel and the rise of Islamic militancy in the region. A particular focus is on Mali and Niger.

Open Doors article(s) from the region

There are currently no Open Doors articles on Mali available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/ (password freedom).

World Watch Monitor news articles

Up-to-date articles are available at: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/mali/

- Kidnapped Colombian nun appears in another hostage video
  30 January 2018
  A new video of the Colombian nun kidnapped in the south of Mali almost a year ago has been released on the Internet.

- Mali: 'Christians can simply be slaughtered'
  11 December 2017
  Sory was threatened by Islamists when they heard about his work at a church in Djalloube, central Mali, and fled, leaving his family traumatised. "I started to face serious problems when the Islamists heard about me and the conversion of some of the people [from Islam to Christianity]," Sory says.

- Kidnapped missionaries appear in video posted by jihadist groups in Africa's Sahel
  3 July 2017
  A coalition of jihadist groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda released a video showing six foreign hostages, including three missionaries, just hours before France president Emmanuel Macron's visit to Mali, where France agreed to help support anti-terrorist efforts in the Sahel.

- Mali: 2 months on, still no news of kidnapped nun
  12 April 2017
  It's been more than two months since a Colombian nun was kidnapped in southern Mali, a relatively safe part of the country, which has been mainly unaffected by Islamist attacks.

- Colombian nun kidnapped in southern Mali
  8 February 2017
  A Colombian nun was kidnapped by armed men last night (7 Feb) in southern Mali, a relatively safe part of the country, which has been mainly unaffected by Islamist attacks.

- UPDATE: 1 year on, new video of kidnapped Swiss missionary in Mali
  11 January 2017
  A video released by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) on Tuesday (10 Jan) shows a new proof of life of the Swiss missionary Beatrice Stockly, held captive in Mali.

- Murder of Fulani Christian mayor in Mali increases concerns over creeping Islamic extremism
  16 December 2016
  The motive behind the murder of a Fulani Christian politician in Mali last month remains unknown, but locals suspect an Islamist agenda.

Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=mali (password: freedom).

- Mali: "Massacres" in Menaka region
  23 May 2018
  According to FDD's Long War Journal reporting on 4 May 2018, "dozens of civilians from Tuareg and Fulani communities have been killed in massacres" in the West African nation's Menaka region.

- Mali: Militants use disguise to attack UN base

  4 May 2018

  A UN base in Timbuktu was attacked by militants on 14 April, leaving one UN peacekeeper dead and 10 French soldiers wounded.

- Mali: 400 schools targeted by militants and shut down

  11 March 2018

  Close to 400 schools in central Mali have shut down as Islamic militants expand their operations in the region.

- Mali: Islamic militants still active

  21 February 2018

  Islamic militants belonging to al-Qaeda stormed an army camp in northern Mali, killing at least 14 soldiers and wounding 18 others.

- Mali: Wave of attacks on Catholic churches

  21 October 2017

  September proved to be a month of attacks on Roman Catholic churches in Mali. Whereas in some places, armed groups broke into churches and burned various items, in other areas the gunmen forced worshipers out of churches and threatened them with death if they continued to use the church.

Return to top of document