



SENEGAL: Country Dossier

June 2018



Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research Unit

June 2018 / 2

research@od.org

www.opendoorsanalytical.org

World Watch List 2018

		1. Private Life	2. Family Life	3. Community Life	4. National Life	5. Church Life	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2017	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2016	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2015	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2014
Rank	Country	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	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 Countries¹

		1. Private Life	2. Family Life	3. Community Life	4. National Life	5. Church Life	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018
Rank	Country	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	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.

SENEGAL – Country Dossier (June 2018)

No copyright - This report is the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge WWR as the source.

Contents

World Watch List 2018.....	1
Introduction	2
WWL 2018: Keys to understanding SENEGAL.....	3
WWL 2018: Church History and Facts.....	5
WWL 2018: Short & Simple Persecution Profile	6
WWL 2018: Persecution Dynamics	7
WWR in-depth reports.....	13
World Watch Monitor news articles.....	13
Recent country developments.....	13

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.

SENEGAL		
World Watch List	Score	Rank
WWL 2018	No published details	-
WWL 2017	No published details	-
WWL 2016	No published details	-
WWL 2015	No published details	-
WWL 2014	No published details	-

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 SENEGAL

Link for general background information:

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093674>

Recent country history

Senegal (with capital city Dakar) is a country in West Africa sharing borders with Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania and the Atlantic Ocean. It gained independence in 1960, and Léopold Sédar Senghor became the country's first president, ruling the country for twenty years. During Senghor's presidency, Senegal adopted its first constitution in 1963. The country also held its first multiparty elections in 1978. Senghor fought corruption in the country. He was one of the advocates for "African socialism" and was the *de facto* spokesman for all Africa, especially regarding unfair trade.⁴ Untypical for African leaders, he resigned from office in 1980. In December 1981, the Senegambia Confederation (a step towards economic, monetary and military union between Gambia and Senegal) was agreed and signed. However, it was dissolved in 1989 after it failed to achieve its goals of integration.

Senegal is often regarded as being one of the most stable and peaceful countries in Africa; however, the country has had to deal with its own low-level civil war. The Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) was established in 1982, waging low-key guerrilla warfare against the government of Senegal. Its main objective is to gain independence for the Casamance region in southern Senegal. In 2004, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, leader of the movement, signed an agreement with Abdoulaye Wade, the then president of Senegal.⁵ However, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor died in 2007. After the death of their long-term leader, the group split into different factions and it has been difficult for the government to negotiate and resolve the conflict once and for all. The international community has shown no interest in addressing this matter and mainstream media reports are rare.

The religious landscape

Senegal is a multi-ethnic country with one dominant ethnic group, the Wolof, which makes up 41.6% of the population. Others ethnic groups are: Pular 28.1%, Serer 15.3%, Mandinka 5.4%, Jola 3.4%, Soninke 0.8%.⁶ In terms of religion, Senegal has also one dominant religious group, Islam, which makes up 91.3% of the population according to WCD statistics.

The political landscape

Senegal is a multiparty democratic republic. The president of the country is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and is eligible for a second term. The country has a bicameral parliament: the National Assembly with 150 seats and the Senate with 100 seats. The Supreme

⁴ See: <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Leopold-Senghor>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

⁵ See: https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/sites/default/files/accords/General_Peace_Agreement_-_30_December_2004.pdf, last accessed 23 February 2018.

⁶ See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sg.html>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

Court is the highest judicial organ. Senegal was one of the seven nations that created the West African Economic Community in 1973.

In 2016 Senegal held a referendum to adopt a set of constitutional amendments. These amendments reduced the president's term of office, gave an official recognition and status to the leader of the opposition and gave more power to the local authorities. These amendments have cemented Senegal's status as a rare example of a stable democracy in the region. Senegal is one of the few countries in Africa that is rated "free" by Freedom House. Yet the report says that the government does try to silence dissent at times. For example, according to the report, two men were arrested "after expressing criticism of government officials".⁷ In the 2017 parliamentary elections, the coalition supporting the president won more than 50 of the seats. The country is set to hold presidential elections in 2019.

The socio-economic landscape

The Senegalese economy is not among the most vibrant on the African continent. The World Bank reported Senegal's GDP to be \$15.66 billion in 2014 with a GDP growth of 4.7%.⁸ The country's top export items are non-fillet frozen fish, phosphoric acid, and mollusks; the top three export destinations are India, France, and Ivory Coast.⁹ The Heritage Foundation 2016 Economic Index rates the country as "mostly unfree" citing concerns about property rights, corruption and labor freedom.¹⁰ In summarizing the problems, the report states: "The weakness of the overall regulatory and legal framework hinders the emergence of a more vibrant private sector."¹¹

Concluding remarks

Senegal has been stable for decades. The stability and peaceful co-existence of the country can be seen by the fact that Senghor, who was Christian, ruled the Muslim majority country without serious objections for twenty years (1960-1980) – apart from an attempted coup in 1962. The Muslim and Christian communities in the country have lived together without significant problems for centuries. However, the government is concerned about the increasing influence of radical Islam in the region. As a result, in 2015 the country's interior minister stated: "Senegal plans to ban women from wearing the full-face Islamic veil in public to curb jihadi activity".¹² Even though Senegal has not been attacked by Islamic militants so far, there is no guarantee that it will be immune from the growing threat posed by jihadist movements in the region.

⁷ See: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/senegal>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

⁸ See: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/senegal>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

⁹ See: <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/sen/>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/senegal>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

¹¹ See: <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/senegal>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

¹² See: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34854939>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

WWL 2018: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

Pop 2017	Christians	Chr%
16,054,000	833,000	5.2

Source: WCD, May 2017

How did Christians get there?

Like many other coastal countries in West Africa, Christianity came to Senegal with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century. Roman Catholics set up their first base in 1486 but missionary effort did not take off until 1819, when French Catholic nuns started working in the country. Protestantism did not become visible in the country until the 1930s.

What church networks exist today? ¹³

Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Independent	Unaffiliated	Double-aff	Evangelical	Renewalist
0	790,000	18,500	27,300	1,900	-5,200	11,800	60,800

Source: WCD, May 2017

Religious context (selection)

Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Ethno-religionist	Jewish	Bahai	Atheist & others ¹⁴
833,000	14,659,000	0	2,000	504,000	0	29,000	26,700

Source: WCD, May 2017

Considered one of the most stable countries in West Africa, Senegal is a nation of diversity. Senegal has a Muslim majority (91.3% according to WCD) and more than ten ethnic groups. The Wolof constitute more than 40% of the total population, the Pular 23.8% and the Serer 14.7% of the general population.¹⁵

¹³ **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.

¹⁴ This category includes Atheists, Agnostics and New religionists.

¹⁵ See: <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Senegal-ETHNIC-GROUPS.html>, last accessed 23 February 2018.

Notes on the current situation

The specific challenges that Christians face in the country are:

- The alarming growth in Islamic radicalization in the region;
- Although the country is officially a secular state, conversion from Islam to Christianity has adverse consequences in this Muslim majority society.

WWL 2018: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Reporting period: 1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017

Where persecution comes from

Islam is the majority religion in all 14 regions of the country. This demographic dominance of Islam is reflected in various aspects of life and in the society at large. But it is a relatively moderate and tolerant form of Islam. In most cases, religious minorities are tolerated and live at peace with their Muslim neighbors. However, occasionally there are instances where Christians experience persecution. The rise in radical Islamic influence in the region is also being felt in Senegal and has an impact on the freedom of Christians in the country.

How Christians are suffering

Parents, relatives and friends are the main drivers of persecution in Senegal. In general, if Christians are discreet and not too visible, they will not face hostility. As a result, Christians have to be careful not to attract attention in their expressions of faith or in their prayers and devotions. In Senegal, the state is secular. All children, regardless of the origin or religion of their parents, are registered by the Civil Registry without discrimination. However, if the father is Muslim, children will be automatically registered as Muslims. In most parts of Senegal, Christians do not face pressure in the Community sphere even if they are converts. However, in some places (like the cities of Touba, Tianaba, Medina, Ounas etc.) the dress code is strict, the sale and consumption of alcohol is prohibited and everyone is expected to adhere to codes of conduct that confirm to the requirements of Islam. Senegal is a country with a level of freedom of religion that could be considered exemplary for many Muslim majority countries in the region. It is common practice in Senegal that a quota of Christians serve in key sectors of the State including the National Assembly, as well as the government. Contrary to this practice, sometimes in the civil services there are isolated incidents where Christians are denied promotion and career opportunities because of their faith. New churches not belonging to the Historical Christian communities cannot easily obtain registration or legal status. All new churches will face difficulty in getting access to land to construct church buildings.

Examples

In the WWL 2018 reporting period:

- A church was damaged by a mob throwing stones and a Christian cemetery was desecrated.
- A mob insulted and harassed a group of Evangelical Christians. However, the mob was quickly dispersed by locals and the police.

WWL 2018: Persecution Dynamics

Reporting period: 1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017

Contents

Position on World Watch List (WWL).....	7
Persecution engines	7
Drivers of persecution.....	8
Context	8
Christian communities and how they are affected	9
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence	10
Gender profile of persecution.....	12
Future outlook.....	12
Policy considerations.....	12

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

Score and rank are not available for publication.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines in Senegal ¹⁶	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	Medium
Religious nationalism	Not at all
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	Not at all

¹⁶ 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.

Islamic oppression (Medium):

Islam is the majority religion in all 14 regions of the country. This demographic dominance of Islam is reflected in various aspects of life and in the society at large. But it is a relatively moderate and tolerant form of Islam. In most cases, religious minorities are tolerated and live at peace with their Muslim neighbors. However, occasionally there are instances where Christians experience persecution. The rise in radical Islamic influence in the region is also being felt in Senegal and has an impact on the freedom of Christians in the country.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of persecution in Senegal	Level of influence
Government officials at any level from local to national	Weak
Ethnic group leaders	Weak
Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national	Weak
Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national	Weak
Violent religious groups	Weak
Ideological pressure groups	Not at all
Normal citizens (people from the general public), including mobs	Weak
Own (extended) family	Medium
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	Medium

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

In Senegal, the main source of persecution comes from the family. All Christians are converts from Islam or African traditional religions and are at times systematically persecuted by their families. Furthermore, there have been occasions where – for instance, in applications for land permits for building churches - the authorities have been deliberately slow and have processed requests from Muslims far more efficiently. In addition, house-churches have sometimes been closed down by the local authorities. However, such occurrences seem to be isolated incidents and not frequent occurrences.

Context

Senegal is often regarded as being one of the most stable and peaceful countries in Africa; however, the country has had to deal with its own low-level civil war. The Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) was established in 1982, waging low-key guerrilla warfare against the government of Senegal. Its main objective is to gain independence for the Casamance region in southern Senegal. In 2004, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, leader of the movement, signed an agreement with Abdoulaye Wade, the then president of Senegal. However, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor died in 2007. After the death of their long-term leader, the group split into different factions and it has been difficult for the government

to negotiate and resolve the conflict once and for all. The international community has shown no interest in addressing this matter and mainstream media reports are rare.

Senegal is a multi-ethnic country with one dominant ethnic group, the Wolof, which makes up 41.6% of the population. In terms of religion, Senegal has also one dominant religious group, Islam, which makes up 91.3% of the population according to WCD statistics. Senegal is a multiparty democratic republic and has been stable for decades. The stability and peaceful co-existence in the country can be seen by the fact that Senghor, who was Christian, ruled the Muslim majority country without serious objections for twenty years (1960-1980) – apart from an attempted coup in 1962. The Muslim and Christian communities in the country have lived together without significant problems for centuries. However, the government is concerned about the increasing influence of radical Islam in the region. As a result, in 2015 the country's interior minister stated: "Senegal plans to ban women from wearing the full-face Islamic veil in public to curb jihadi activity". Even though Senegal has not been attacked by Islamic militants so far, there is no guarantee that it will be immune from the growing threat posed by jihadist movements in the region.

Religious minorities in Senegal include small communities of Bahai, Jehovah's Witnesses and also of adherents of indigenous religions. While they could be subject to some discrimination and verbal harassment, there have not been reports of considerable hostility towards these groups. Due to their proselytization efforts, Jehovah's Witnesses are more exposed to verbal harassment, especially outside of the main cities.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians:

Communities of expatriate Christians do not exist as a separate WWL category in Senegal.

Historical Christian communities:

Historical Christian communities in Senegal include Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodist and Presbyterians, all predominantly located in the southern part of the country. Particularly the Catholic Church has a presence in most regions of the country. Christians in this category enjoy a great deal of freedom and hardly face any significant persecution in comparison to converts. However, those belonging to historical Christian communities may at times face discrimination on the basis of their faith at the hands of fanatics and radical Islamic groups.

Communities of converts to Christianity:

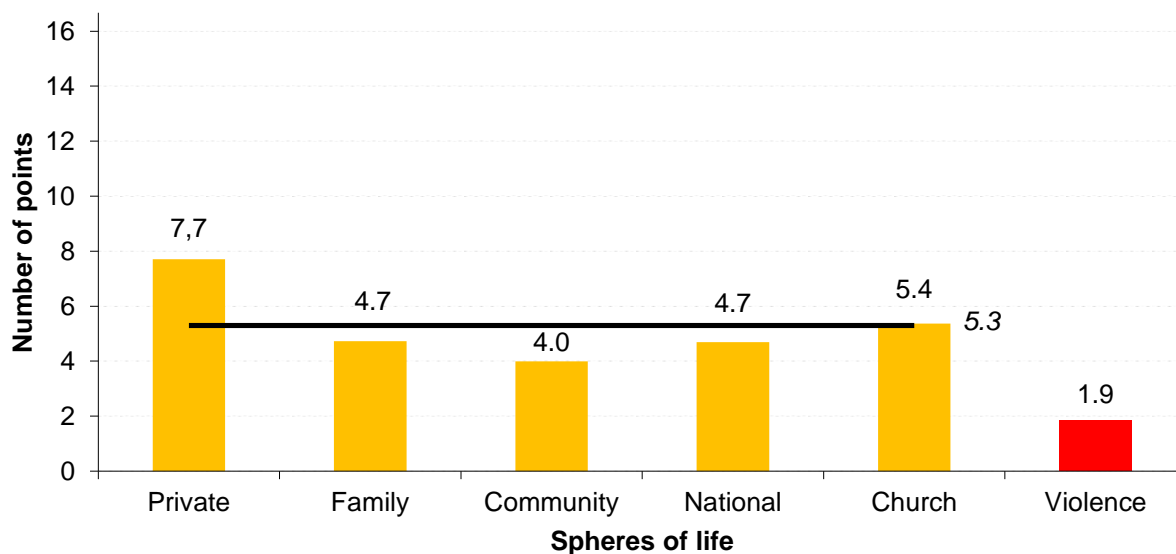
Communities of converts to Christianity are mainly present in the northern and central parts of the country - mainly in the localities of Linguere, Dhara and Louga. These are for the most part church groups composed of Christians with a Muslim background. These Christians suffer from verbal and psychological harassment. Unlike most other countries in the region, threats of physical or violent persecution against believers with Muslim background is rare. Converts face most of the pressure to renounce their faith from their family members and extended family.

Non-traditional Christian communities:

This small group is very slowly growing but not as rapidly as in other countries in the region. Christians belonging to Evangelical or Pentecostal groups are not openly persecuted by the state or communities. However, by trying to work with converts and integrate them into their churches, they can face opposition from the families and relatives of converts.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence

WWL 2018 Persecution Pattern for Senegal



(The maximum score for each block is 16.7)

The WWL 2018 Persecution pattern for Senegal shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Cameroon is 5.3 points.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Private sphere* of life which is mainly due to the restrictions and risks faced by Christians with a Muslim background.
- The score for violence is 1.9 which shows that violent incidents targeting Christians are quite rare in Senegal.

Private sphere:

Parents, relatives and friends are the main drivers of persecution in Senegal. In general, if Christians are discreet and not too visible, they will not face hostility. As a result, Christians have to be careful not to attract attention in their expression of faith or in their prayer and devotions. Christians are generally free to display Christian images or symbols. However, in areas like Touba, where radical Muslims are known to be present, this would be unadvisable. Converts living with conservative and strict Muslim families would not be able to express their faith to their family and relatives. In some cases, most pressure on converts comes from

members of the extended family. In rare cases, converts from Islam have been forced to leave their families and find refuge in Christian homes.

Family sphere:

In Senegal, the state is secular. All children, regardless of the origin or religion of their parents, are registered by the Civil Registry without discrimination. However, if the father is Muslim, children will be automatically registered as Muslims. In order to celebrate a marriage, the mayor only needs and requests the civil status documents: birth certificate, identity card, etc. More often than not, it is the Christians who marry most in the town halls in Senegal. Muslims do so only when they are civil servants in order to qualify for family allowances. It is common for Muslim friends to come and attend Christian weddings. However, sometimes family members of converts from Islam will react negatively against Christian baptisms and engagements. In the *Family sphere*, converts face pressure mostly when they are in interfaith marriages. In such situations, where the father is a Muslim, his Christian wife cannot raise their children according to Christian beliefs. In some places, like the town of Linguère, in the north of Senegal, children of converts are mocked at school by classmates and teachers. Those who have the means put their children in a private Catholic school.

Community sphere:

In most parts of Senegal, Christians do not face pressure in the *Community sphere* even if they are converts. However, in some places (like the cities of Touba, Tianaba, Medina, Ounas etc.) the dress code is strict, the sale and consumption of alcohol is prohibited and everyone is expected to adhere to codes of conduct that confirm to the requirements of Islam. Christians in these areas face harassment and pressure in their daily lives. In parts of the country where converts from Islam or ethnic religions face persecution, they are frequently cut off from their communities and families. The community also pressurizes converts from ethnic religions to take part in non-Christians festivals and rituals.

National sphere:

Senegal is a country with a level of freedom of religion that could be considered exemplary for many Muslim majority countries in the region. It is common practice in Senegal that a quota of Christians serve in key sectors of the State including the National Assembly, as well as the government. Contrary to this practice, sometimes in the civil services there are isolated incidents where Christians are denied promotion and opportunities because of their faith. Also, some radical Muslims working as civil servants do act contrary to national policy by discriminating against Christians, for instance in the allocation of land for church buildings.

Church sphere:

Radical Muslims are known to monitor, disturb and hinder activities of churches in some mainly Islamic regions. New churches not belonging to the Historical Christian communities cannot easily obtain registration or legal status. All new churches will face difficulty in getting access to land to construct church buildings. As a result, many churches are found in residential areas and as a result they risk facing difficulties due to noise pollution regulations. For activities outside of church buildings, permission must be obtained from the mayor's office. But it is often a formality and as a rule such permission is readily granted. However, during some specific periods like Ramadan, Christian activities are hindered or limited.

Violence:

Violent persecution is uncommon in Senegal but there have been a few incidents. For example, a church was damaged by a mob throwing stones, a Christian cemetery was desecrated and on one occasion a mob was insulting and harassing a group of Evangelicals Christians. However, the mob was quickly dispersed by locals and the police.

Gender profile of persecution

Female / Male: No data currently available.

Future outlook

Senegal is one of the most stable countries in West Africa. The country has largely been spared the wars, coups and other forms of instability that have been witnessed in so many other countries in the region. In the foreseeable future, Senegal is poised to remain politically stable and advance economically as well. However, the trends in the region, particularly the increasing radical Islamic influence, could slowly affect the country. The country's record of religious tolerance and freedom could be undermined if radical Imams gain more and more followers. There are parts of the country where such trends are visible and this would mean that the depth and strength of the country's tradition of tolerance for religious minorities might be increasingly put to the test.

Policy considerations

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

- The Government of Senegal should be encouraged to further consolidate and build upon its tradition of respecting the rights of religious minorities, particularly by putting in place more reasonable procedures through which the state would allocate land for new churches to be constructed.
- The Government of Senegal should be encouraged to revitalize the culture of religious tolerance and freedom in society and tackle the growing threat from radical Islamic influences entering the country and influencing attitudes in society.

WWR in-depth reports

All in-depth reports are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

- WEST AFRICA – Islam and Islamism in Francophone West Africa
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, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ivory Coast, Benin and Togo.

Open Doors article(s) from the region

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

World Watch Monitor news articles

There are currently no recent items on Senegal. Any new articles will be made available at:
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/senegal/>

Recent country developments

There are currently no recent items on Senegal. Any new articles will be made available at:
<http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Senegal> (password: freedom).

[Return to top of document](#)