



World Watch List

2013

**COUNTRY
EXPLANATIONS**



OpenDoors
Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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2013 WORLD WATCH LIST

			2013								2012	2011	2010
			1. Private	2. Family	3. Community	4. National	5. Church	6. Violence	TOTAL		Rank	Rank	Rank
ABSOLUTE PERSECUTION	I	North Korea	16.668	13.101	15.483	16.656	16.686	8.880	87		I	I	I

EXTREME PERSECUTION	2	Saudi Arabia	14.970	10.719	14.557	14.343	16.411	3.700	75		3	4	3
	3	Afghanistan	14.044	11.513	14.292	14.574	16.274	3.700	74		2	3	6
	4	Iraq	12.501	10.587	12.307	11.682	12.085	15.170	74		9	8	17
	5	Somalia	14.662	11.910	14.557	15.037	16.686	1.480	74		4	5	4
	6	Maldives	16.668	11.381	12.439	15.962	16.549	0.740	74		6	6	5
	7	Mali	12.964	10.057	13.630	14.111	14.489	7.585	73		-	-	-
	8	Iran	14.662	10.454	14.424	14.343	15.931	2.590	72		5	2	2
	9	Yemen	14.816	10.719	14.027	13.880	15.450	3.330	72		8	7	7
	10	Eritrea	11.729	9.131	10.719	13.186	15.519	11.285	72		11	12	11
	11	Syria	11.575	8.602	10.984	10.988	13.596	15.170	71		36	38	41
SEVERE PERSECUTION	12	Sudan	11.575	8.999	11.116	11.798	12.291	14.430	70		16	35	30
	13	Nigeria	8.643	7.808	12.572	11.104	12.703	15.355	68		13	23	27
	14	Pakistan	10.649	9.263	13.101	12.608	9.064	8.325	63		10	11	14
	15	Ethiopia	12.347	8.602	10.984	10.526	13.115	7.400	63		38	43	44
	16	Uzbekistan	14.507	7.543	10.719	11.335	15.038	2.960	62		7	9	10
	17	Libya	14.044	9.793	10.322	11.451	12.497	2.035	60		26	25	22
	18	Laos	10.032	7.675	10.454	11.451	14.145	4.810	59		12	10	9
	19	Turkmenistan	13.736	5.955	9.925	11.914	14.969	1.295	58		18	15	15
	20	Qatar	12.810	8.999	10.587	11.798	13.390	0.000	58		22	17	18
	21	Vietnam	10.649	5.690	8.602	13.186	13.802	5.180	57		19	18	21
	22	Oman	12.347	8.734	10.851	10.988	13.390	0.000	56		27	26	28
MODERATE PERSECUTION	23	Mauritania	11.421	9.793	11.778	10.757	12.223	0.000	56		14	13	8
	24	Tanzania	8.180	7.940	10.851	10.294	10.369	7.400	55		-	-	-
	25	Egypt	9.723	7.543	10.719	8.675	7.210	10.545	54		15	19	20
		United Arab											
	26	Emirates	12.810	9.131	9.793	10.063	12.085	0.185	54		37	34	33
	27	Brunei	12.192	7.543	8.999	9.600	14.626	0.000	53		28	29	29
	28	Bhutan	10.340	6.881	9.528	9.022	13.390	2.775	52		17	14	12
	29	Algeria	12.964	7.014	7.940	10.988	10.163	1.665	51		23	22	25
	30	Tunisia	13.427	8.205	9.396	6.824	9.751	2.590	50		35	37	43
	31	India	8.025	7.014	8.072	9.600	7.553	9.620	50		32	32	26
	32	Myanmar	5.247	3.573	8.999	9.485	10.781	11.655	50		33	27	23
	33	Kuwait	10.649	8.469	8.999	9.253	11.467	0.555	49		30	28	31
	34	Jordan	10.649	8.469	8.999	9.022	9.133	2.220	48		40	40	39
	35	Bahrain	11.112	7.543	8.866	9.716	10.643	0.000	48		46	45	47
		Palestinian											
	36	Territories	10.649	7.808	9.528	8.559	10.163	0.925	48		44	44	46
	37	China	8.025	5.558	6.087	6.593	12.017	9.250	48		21	16	13
	38	Azerbaijan	9.723	6.352	8.999	6.709	13.527	2.220	48		25	24	24
SPARCE PERSECUTION	39	Morocco	6.636	8.205	8.866	10.063	13.115	0.555	47		29	31	37
	40	Kenya	6.019	6.749	7.808	5.899	7.691	13.135	47		-	-	-
	41	Comoros	8.488	6.087	7.278	7.981	14.557	0.555	45		24	21	16
	42	Malaysia	9.723	8.337	7.940	8.906	7.210	2.775	45		50	50	-
	43	Djibouti	9.877	7.940	9.528	8.097	8.858	0.000	44		39	39	36
	44	Tajikistan	11.421	4.102	6.087	7.056	11.673	1.480	42		34	33	32
	45	Indonesia	7.562	6.220	5.823	6.477	7.553	7.400	41		43	48	48
	46	Colombia	3.241	3.441	9.660	4.164	5.768	14.615	41		47	-	-
	47	Uganda	5.865	7.014	9.925	8.212	8.583	0.555	40		-	-	-
	48	Kazakhstan	8.025	4.102	7.411	5.321	11.742	1.665	38		45	-	-
	49	Kyrgyzstan	8.180	5.161	7.278	5.783	9.682	1.295	37		48	46	49
	50	Niger	3.395	7.675	8.999	6.362	4.326	4.440	35		-	-	-

COUNTRY EXPLANATIONS WITH SUMMARIES

1. North Korea (score: 87)

In North Korea, the main persecution dynamics are ‘Communist oppression’ and ‘Dictatorial paranoia’. The country, as one of the remaining communist states, promotes two ideologies vehemently opposed to religion of any kind: the self-reliance of man or ‘Juche’, and the God like worship of the leaders (‘Kimilsungism’). Fuelled by a rampant communist ideology, North Korea believes Christianity to be linked to the West and therefore a real threat which could inflict harm on North Korea’s social disciplines. In the vision of its leaders, this threat must therefore be eradicated. Exact information is difficult to obtain due to the country’s inaccessibility and the inability to gain timely information. Apart from some church buildings in Pyongyang serving to showcase religious freedom in the country, there is an underground church movement. Open Doors estimates that the number of believers may be between 200,000 and 400,000. Christians are classified as ‘hostile’ and face discrimination, arrest, detention, torture or even public execution. There is a system of labour camps including the renowned prison No. 15 (‘Yodok’) which could reportedly house 6,000 Christians alone. Koreans, having converted after defecting to China and are later repatriated are in particular danger and there is a vigorous elimination program in existence to re-convert, imprison, banish or execute individuals who have converted to Christianity in China. Spies have reportedly been sent to China to expose networks; Christians helping defectors there have been killed. Christians are likely to remain targets of this regime. North Korea ranks first on the WWL (the 11th consecutive year), in the category ‘Absolute Persecution’.

North Korea is singular in the true meaning of the word. It is perceived as one of the few remaining communist states in the world, but in fact it is far more than this: the God-like worship of the rulers leaves no room for any other religion. Every reverence not concentrated on the Kim dynasty will be seen as dangerous and state-threatening. The country’s political system is based upon two ideologies. One is called Juche, basically saying that man is self-reliant. The other is “Kimilsungism”, the worship of the leaders. They are the all-powerful entities who lead and guide North Korea. Everyone has to attend at least weekly meetings and memorize more than 100 pages of ideological learning materials, including documents that tribute the morals and majesty of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong-Un, and various poems and songs praising them.

The persecution dynamic describing this unique situation best is ‘Communist oppression’. But as Communism imperfectly describes the regime, a second even stronger dynamic is ‘Dictatorial paranoia’. The rulers will do whatever they deem necessary to stay in power. The recent succession by Kim Jong-Un fits into this picture. He has shown a different style than his father, trying to resemble his grandfather more, being more communicative in public and presenting himself as more benevolent. But this does not mean that ideology will become less important or leadership decentralized. Kim Jong-Un was proclaimed the “Great Successor” and announced as “Supreme Leader” and “Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces”. More importantly, he holds central positions in all important powerhouses: party, state and army by holding positions as First Secretary of Korea’s Workers Party.

With a well-known communist belief, religion is seen as “the opium of the people” and a means for the bourgeoisie to rule the masses. Therefore, North Korea’s rulers consider it has to be eradicated. Christianity, in particular, is perceived as dangerous as it is assumed it has ties with the West and thus will hinder the development of a “truly socialist” nation. Accordingly, the regime counts the adherents of the different religions officially as being 10.000 Protestants, 10.000 Buddhists, 4.000 Catholics and 40.000 followers of an indigenous religion called “Chondogyo”.

In a 2002 report to the UN, the country mentioned the existence of several church buildings in the capital Pyongyang as well as around 500 “family worship centers” all over the country. The official Chosun Christian League confirms those numbers, but most likely these are mere Potemkin villages. Supporting this conclusion, defectors from North Korea testify that they never heard of them.

In any case, the so-called “underground churches” exceed this numbers by far. Estimations vary up to the number of several hundred thousands of Christian believers, but what all experts agree upon is

that all of these believers face very difficult circumstances. Open Doors estimates the number of believers ranging between 200.000 and 400.000.

All defectors consistently testified that one would certainly be persecuted for practicing religion on a personal level. The fundamental reason for North Korea's difficulty in guaranteeing freedom of religion in accordance with its socialist Constitution stems from its belief that religions are a means of foreign encroachment and would inflict harm on North Korea's social disciplines.

Consequently, in the social stratification system called "Songbun", all Christians are classified as "hostile" and even considered as own subclasses, namely 37 for Protestant Christians and 39 for Catholic Christians. Not only the believers themselves will be harmed, but possibly also their families up to the third generation.

Refugees and defectors stated that they witnessed or heard of arrests and possible executions of underground Christian church members in prior years. Due to the country's inaccessibility and the inability of foreigners to gain timely information, the continuation of arrests and executions during the year remained difficult to verify, as the US State Department stated in its Annual Report 2012. The same report says that defector reports indicated that the government increased its investigation, repression, and persecution of unauthorized religious groups in recent years, but access to information on current conditions was limited.

Anyone discovered engaging in clandestine religious activity will possibly be subject to discrimination, arrest, arbitrary detention, disappearance, torture, and public execution. Refugees repatriated from China are reported to be particularly vulnerable as the risk of arrest is high. Most times, they will get a comparably light sentence like several months in a labor camp, though, as long as they did not participate in Christian activities in North Korea.

A large number of religious believers are incarcerated in North Korea's infamous penal labor camps (kwan-li-so), though the exact number is difficult to verify as stated in the most recent US Commission for International Religious Freedom report. The estimation of numbers widely relies on accounts of defectors which sometimes date back far, hence, leaving a time gap.

According to recent reports about the labor camp systems, estimations about political prison camps comprise about 150.000 to 200.000 inmates, not including all those imprisoned in the other prison types of the country. For prison No. 15 – better known as political prison camp Yodok – alone, experts by defectors' explanations estimate there could be up to 6.000 Christians incarcerated.

The Kim regime's elimination of religious individuals from North Korean society was a detailed process that focused on ideological indoctrination to eliminate, or "convert" Christians to an atheistic belief in socialist ideology, imprison or banish them to remote areas if this conversion did not take hold, and execute religious leaders or those who attempted to convert others to their religion.

North Korean police officials hunt down and vigorously prosecute North Koreans who convert to Protestant Christianity while in China or those who attempt to bring Christian literature, primarily Bible verses, back with them to North Korea. Every defector caught and repatriated to the country will have to answer a lot of questions. According to all reports, these include: "Did you meet any Christians in China?" and "Have you visited a church in China?" The consistent high pressure despite the transition to the new leader is also witnessed by the fact that the number of defectors from North Korea fell sharply in the reporting period, around 50 percent. Reportedly, the regime enhanced its border security, also by using modern technics.

Kim Jong-Un has reportedly dispatched over a hundred spies to China to expose (Christian) networks engaged in helping refugees. The situation in the border area is very tense. In September 2011, a South Korean missionary was assassinated in Dandong/China by North Korean agents. Another missionary escaped narrowly. In the reporting period, three South Koreans were allegedly killed by North Korean secret agents. One was stabbed with poisonous needles and two died in suspicious traffic accidents.

As Kim Jong-Un still has to prove that he is able to lead the country like his ancestors did, most likely the country will not see any major changes. Christians, if discovered, will remain targets of the regimes' wrath.

For the eleventh consecutive year, North Korea tops the World Watch List ranking. Reports by defectors and circumstantial evidence as well as international observers' reports show that the situation for Christians rather deteriorates than that it improves. Christian contacts inside the country

do not report any improvements. The new leader, Kim Jong-Un, may have a different style in leading, but this will not likely disburden Christians. Despite all the pressure and horrible treatment Christians face, there is a hopeful message: Jesus Christ still is in the country. Not even the hardest pressure imaginable was strong enough to drive his followers out.

2. Saudi Arabia (score: 75)

The main persecution dynamic in Saudi Arabia is 'Islamic extremism.' Centuries ago, there was a large Christian population in Saudi Arabia. During the conquest of Islam, this population was Islamised or was expelled. Now, citizens are only allowed to adhere to Islam, and Christian worship is forbidden. There are no provisions for religious freedom in the Kingdom's constitution or basic laws and anti-Christian sentiments are strong throughout society. The legal system is based on Sharia law and conversion to another religion is punishable by death. The government generally allows non-Muslims to worship in private homes yet the religious police ('Muttawa') do not always respect this. Men and women from different families are prohibited from intermingling and worshippers risk imprisonment, lashing, deportation and torture. Evangelising Muslims and distributing non-Muslim materials is illegal. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) risk honour killings and migrant workers have been exposed to verbal, physical and sexual abuse from employers who still have tremendous power over foreign workers. Despite this, the migrant community of believers is growing and converts are responding to Christian TV programmes and to God given dreams where God is revealed. Christians risk further persecution and oppression in the future due to the rising number of converts and their boldness in sharing their faith. Saudi Arabia ranks second on the WWL, in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

Centuries ago, Saudi Arabia had a large Christian population and there were even churches with clergy and synagogues. During the conquest of Islam, from the 7th to the 10th century, Jews and Christians were expelled or forcibly converted to Islam. Today, public Christian worship is forbidden in Saudi Arabia and its citizens are only allowed to adhere to Islam.

PEW Forum on Religion and Public Life labels Saudi Arabia as one of the 18 countries (9.1 per cent) with "very high" government restrictions on religion, based on the fact it does not include any provisions for religious freedom in its constitution and basic laws. Saudi Arabia – one of the West's most significant allies in the Middle East - also ranks as "very high" in PEW Forum's Social Hostilities Index, which means it is part of the 15 countries (7.6 per cent) where anti-religious sentiments are very strong in all parts of society.

The Kingdom's legal system is based on Islamic law (Sharia). Apostasy – conversion to another religion – is punishable by death if the accused does not recant. Though there are no recent reports of Saudi citizens being officially convicted and sentenced to capital punishment for apostasy, the risk of extra-judicial killings cannot be excluded, though these were not reported. Although the government recognises the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, the religious police, 'the Muttawa', often do not respect this right. As the law is not formally codified, the situation of private religious practice remains vague.

Freedom of assembly is also seriously restricted by the strict gender segregation, prohibiting men and women from different families to intermingle. Worshippers who engage in such activities risk arrest, imprisonment, lashing, deportation, and sometimes torture. Evangelising Muslims and the distribution of Christian and other non-Muslim literature, e.g. Bibles, is illegal. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) also run the great risk of honour killing if their family or community discover their faith and some have fled the country because of this.

Most Christians in Saudi Arabia are expatriates who live and work temporarily in the country. The majority of them are from the Philippines and India, others are from Africa and the West. Asian and African workers, besides being exploited and poorly paid, are regularly exposed to verbal and physical violence because of their Christian faith. Whereas slavery has been illegal in Saudi Arabia since 1962, the Saudi employer or 'sponsor' has a tremendous amount of power over foreign workers, showing that there is still a mentality of 'owning foreign workers'. Female migrant domestic workers are even threatened with rape unless they convert to Islam. Instead, there are repeatedly reports that migrant workers convert to Christianity. Often, migrant workers come from their home country as Christians or Muslims or Hindus, but during their stay on the Arabian Peninsula they make a firm decision to

follow Jesus. As a result, the number of migrant communities of believers is growing. In December 2011 a group of 35 Ethiopian Christians were arrested after their fellowship meeting in Jeddah was raided.

They were accused of 'mixing of genders outside of family' but according to the prisoners they were arrested for practicing Christianity. Several of them were abused in prison. They were eventually deported during the months of July and August.

There are a number of converts from Islam who live their faith in deepest secret. Many of them responded to Christian programmes via satellite TV or became Christians after God revealed Himself in a vision or a dream. MBBs have testified to being on Hajj - the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca – with a sincere desire to obey God and receiving a divine vision showing them that they need Jesus. Internet access also plays a role as this enables locals to get access to Christian materials. However, the use of the Internet is quite controlled and regulated in Saudi Arabia.

The small number of Saudi MBB's is slowly growing and they are also becoming more expressive about their faith, sharing it with others on the Internet and Christian satellite TV channels. Nevertheless, this has not been without repercussions. In July 2012 the media reported the story of a young Saudi woman who allegedly converted to Christianity after her Lebanese employer shared the Gospel with her. With his and a Saudi colleague's aid, she fled abroad. The lady's family filed charges against the employer. Later reports, amongst others from her family, suggested that the lady was still a Muslim and may be 'a victim of an international organisation trafficking in people'. Saudi media were also eager to give the impression that the woman was an emotionally unbalanced 'girl'. These reactions clearly reflect the utter shame a conversion to Christianity represents in the Wahhabist Kingdom – Wahhabi Islam is a conservative strand of Islam. The Saudi government is reportedly cooperating with Interpol and local Western authorities to return the lady to her homeland. In August, it was reported that the Saudi authorities had started to block several Christian websites, presumably in a reaction to this situation.

Moreover, this 'Khobar girl' story was confused in many media reports with the situation of a female Saudi MBB ('Maryam') whose interview on Christian satellite TV spread rapidly via You Tube in early August. Veiled for security reasons, she shared how she was brought up to hate Judaism and Christianity. Tired of the compulsory prayers and fasting in Islam, she converted through a dream and testified of the peace she found in Christianity.

It is hard to predict how the situation of Christians in Saudi Arabia will develop. As the political and economic situation is not expected to change in the short run, the situation for Christians is not expected to improve. However, the number of Christian converts from Islam is increasing, along with their boldness in sharing their new faith, and therefore Christians face the risk of more persecution and oppression in Saudi Arabia in the near future.

3. Afghanistan (score: 74)

'Islamic extremism' as well as 'Organised corruption' are the main persecution dynamics in Afghanistan. Family and societal pressure combined with government persecution makes the situation for Christians in the country very difficult despite international agreements designed to protect the freedom of religion. Seeing itself as the 'defender of Islam', the state treats converts coming from a Muslim background in a very hostile manner. Christians cannot meet in public. Gatherings in private houses require extreme caution. No church buildings exist, even for expatriates, and both local and expatriate Christians risk abduction, killing and having to flee the country. The Taliban is regaining strength in the country and has vowed to purge all Christians from Afghanistan. Relief organisations and non-governmental organisations are accused of evangelising. Christian relief workers are a prime target. The future does not look bright for Christians: Afghanistan is entering a new phase with the withdrawal of troops in 2013-14, different ethnic factions struggle for their share of power, the election in April 2014 is approaching and the volatile situation in neighbouring Pakistan, where the Taliban have a stronghold, is complicating the situation. The church has been pushed underground – and is likely to remain there. Afghanistan ranks third on the WWL, in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

10 years after the Taliban regime was dispelled from the country by international forces, the situation regarding religious freedom remains desolate, especially for minority groups, including the small Christian community. Despite having signed all international agreements designed to protect freedom of religion, the government in the current setting is not even able to guarantee the most basic tenets of this right. On the contrary: it is hostile towards other religions and sees itself as the defender of Islam. In addition, Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, partly coming from its role in drug planting and trafficking, but corruption and organized crime is not restricted to this business. At least parts of the government are involved in this and will target all groups endangering their gains. The government is one source of persecution.

All Afghan Christians come from a Muslim background, neglecting the small number of expat Christians from diplomat and development backgrounds. If it becomes known that someone has converted to Christianity, he or she will face heavy societal and familial pressures which are the dominant sources of persecution. If believers are discovered, they often face discrimination and hostility, even outright persecution by their family, friends and community. Muslim clergy are likely to be involved, as well as local authorities. Converts will therefore be put under heavy pressure to recant their faith. Those who decide to leave Islam and who are considered to be apostates are in an extremely difficult situation. Therefore, 'Islamic extremism' is the main source of persecution in Afghanistan. "Organized corruption" is another identifiable source as from time to time Christians are just in the way, especially in regions where drugs are planted.

Under such circumstances the tiny Christian minority cannot meet in public. Meetings in private homes are possible, yet require great caution. Consequently, not a single official church building remains, not even for the expatriate believers. The Afghan government treats converts in a hostile manner and will use every means to bring them back to Islamic faith. This was proven once more in 2011 by the examples of two Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) who were freed from prison only due to enormous international efforts. Being treated as apostates, applying blasphemy laws is the usual way these "dissenters" are dealt with as the state sees itself as the "defender of Islam".

Open hostility, however, is not confined to the authorities. Although the Taliban was weakened and forced into hiding for a time, the terrorist group is regaining strength. In October 2011 they issued a statement via one of their websites vowing to purge all Christians from the country – whether foreign or local. They emphasised targeting foreign relief and non-governmental organisations, accusing them of evangelising Afghans. The Taliban named about 200 organisations, further stating that they have a plan to target the groups one by one. Christian relief workers continue to be a prime target for all kinds of insurgents. In August 2011, several Western development aid workers were kidnapped and later killed. There were additional reports of kidnappings and other difficulties, which show the tenuous situation of all Christians, expatriates as well as locals.

In summary, it is hardly surprising that Afghanistan ranks among the countries where Christians face the highest conceivable pressure. Reports on killings, abductions and believers having to flee the country are underlining the extremely difficult situation.

It is not likely that the situation for Christians will improve in the near future; western forces will withdraw from Afghanistan in 2013-2014. After this, it is expected that Afghanistan will enter a new phase in which the current regime will have to deal with the threat of the Taliban as well as the different ethnic factions in the country. In April 2014, there will be presidential elections. Finally, there is the very volatile situation in Pakistan that affects the situation in Afghanistan. It is difficult to imagine how the situation could deteriorate for the Christian minority, but given all of the aforementioned elements adding to potential instability, and given the strict social and state-driven monitoring and squeezing, the church has been pushed underground and will most likely remain there in the near future.

Afghanistan ranks high in the World Watch List as there is huge family and societal pressure on all Christians – nearly all converts – to come back to the Islamic creed. As already said, the government sees itself as the defender of Islam. Therefore, Christians are not the only ones targeted - Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Bahai will be treated similarly. Even Shi'ites are sometimes aimed at. Christianity continues to be widely seen as a Western religion and viewed as hostile to Afghan culture and society and to Islam. Therefore, the pressure from society, family and government will stay high. The expected growing influence of countries with a more extremist perception of Islam like Pakistan, Iran and Saudi-Arabia will not in all likelihood improve the situation of Christians. Afghanistan will most probably stay high on the World Watch List.

4. Iraq (score: 74)

The main persecution dynamic in Iraq is 'Islamic extremism' and 'organized corruption' as a secondary dynamic. There is a long history of Christians living in Iraqi cities such as Baghdad and Mosul. Christians have lived here for two millennia but are currently on the verge of extinction. Sharia is the primary source of law and makes it impossible to apply freedom of belief. There are estimated to be approximately 330,000 Christians left from the 1.2 million at the beginning of the 1990s. Large numbers have fled abroad or to the (until recently) relatively safer northern Kurdish region where they face problems such as unemployment and inadequate schooling, medical care and housing. The situation in Kurdistan used to be better than in the areas around Baghdad or Mosul. However, the situation in Kurdistan is also rapidly deteriorating (Christian businesses were attacked in December, 2011). Structural uncertainty, conflict and instability are on the rise since US troops started to withdraw at the end of 2011. The church faces many challenges –members succumbing to pressure, fleeing or being killed or abducted and a lack of capable leaders. The situation is the worst in the Middle and the South of the country where traditional Christians are suffering as much as MBBs and possibly encounter more violence as a result of their visibility. Both groups are suffering in all spheres of life, though MBBs are suffering more in the realm of family. There is a lot of fear among Christians in the country, ever since the bloody attack against Christians during a church service in Baghdad two years ago and many Christians have been attacked in church during 2011 and 2012 as well. Iraq ranks fourth on the WWL, and is included in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

Iraq has a long church history. It is assumed that the Paradise was located here. Related to today's borders, Abraham was an Iraqi. Mosul is the current name of the former city Nineveh, from the book of Jonah. There is a long tradition of Christians living in Iraqi cities like Baghdad and Mosul. Only one decade ago, Iraq was home to one of the largest Christian communities of the Middle East. Christians have lived here for two millennia but are currently on the verge of extinction.

During the regime of Saddam Hussein, religious freedom for Christians was restricted but they were more or less tolerated. There were no threats and open attacks on Christians as there are today. In those days even the Minister of Foreign Affairs was a Christian, as well as four other ministers, while today the Christian community feels that they do not have a voice in Iraqi politics, although five Members of Parliament and one government minister are Christians. As a consequence many leaders of the Assyrian church of the East and the Chaldean church (with the exception of the Armenian leaders) are promoting the idea of having their own semi-autonomous region in the Nineveh plain.

Since the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the situation has clearly deteriorated, with anti-Western (and as such anti-Christian) sentiments mounting together with considerable levels of violence by Islamist militants and insurgent groups. The main persecution dynamics in Iraq are 'Islamic extremism' (violent attacks, threats) and 'Organised corruption' (impunity).

Iraq's Federal Constitution says each individual has freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Moreover, Sharia is the primary source of law, which forbids conversion of Muslims to other religions. This makes it legally impossible to apply freedom of belief in the cases of converts from Islam as they are not able to change the religious affiliation on their ID cards. Also, children automatically take the religion of their father which means they will be marked Muslims even if their father is a MBB.

At present, only an estimated 330,000-350,000 Christians are left, out of more than 1.2 million at the beginning of the 1990s. Large numbers have either fled abroad (Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) or to the northern Kurdish region as a result of the severe anti-Christian violence; e.g. church attacks, kidnappings, killings, robberies, rapes and threats. Those who fled to Kurdistan are now considered refugees inside Iraq; they face high unemployment and inadequate housing, plus difficulty in finding schooling (especially university) for their children, adequate medical care and monthly food rations due to registration problems and discrimination by Kurdish officials. Because many of the Iraqi Christians that fled Mosul or Baghdad speak Arabic, they often find themselves without access to a Christian community that worships in their language, as most of the traditional churches in the KRG region or Nineveh area use their native languages such as Chaldean or Assyrian.

A bad omen is that even in this relatively freer semi-autonomous Kurdish region, the security situation of Christians is deteriorating due to rising Islamic extremism. From 2-5 December 2011, Islamic rioters attacked Christian-owned businesses in some mainly Christian villages. Analysts think that one

of the reasons for the growing Islamic extremism is Iraq's drift into Iran's orbit while the United States' influence is diminishing in the country. In this context, Sunni-Shi'ia tensions are growing.

Since the US troops have started to withdraw from the country, Iraq has suffered from structural uncertainty, conflict and instability under a government incapable of enforcing the rule of law and providing a minimum of security. Corruption levels are soaring and sectarian violence does not seem to stop.

Iraqi Christians feel that the current government fails to give them security. During 2010, there was a marked increase of killings of Christians and attacks on churches. One of the deadliest attacks against Christians since 2003 was the bomb attack on the Syrian Catholic church of Baghdad at the end of October 2010, in which 58 Christians were killed and at least 60 injured. It was this attack that has considerably increased fear among Iraqi Christians and caused thousands to flee. Violence was and still is part of the Iraqi society in 2011 and 2012, although there were fewer reports of casualties than in 2010. In 2011, there were bomb attacks on several churches in Mosul (January), Baghdad (April) and Kirkuk (August).

As a minority, Christians are an easy target for kidnappers as they are not part of a tribe who can protect them nor are they likely to react violently. According to Iraqi Christians, religion is also a major part of the motivation, apart from financial profit. Though many Christians are not hiding their Christian identity and are willing to suffer for Christ, the church seems to succumb under the violent aggression: marriages are in trouble, children are being abused by parents who are using alcohol and drugs to cope with the suffering. Amidst all this, the clergy finds itself over challenged by all the needs and specifically targeted by extremists. Many of them have either fled or been killed and the church lacks capable leaders.

Unfortunately the deep ethnic, political and religious divisions are also felt in the diverse denominations, which lead to increasing tensions among Christians. The establishment of an Assyrian state on the Nineveh plain is an example of such a divisive issue that can also lead to problems with local authorities. Finally, there are tensions and distrust between traditional and evangelical churches.

The Economist Intelligence Unit expects that "the government of national unity... will continue to be weak and divided, and some blocs are likely to pull out to join the parliamentary opposition." This weakness of the state is expected to benefit insurgent groups who are expanding their power base, making the situation of Christians even more difficult. The exodus of Christians means a loss of pluralism in Iraqi society and also a loss of tolerance of dissenting groups. An increase of intolerance combined with a more and more Islamic Iraqi society is not very promising for the future of (religious) minorities in Iraq.

5. Somalia (score: 74)

'Islamic extremism' is the main persecution dynamic in Somalia. Terrorist groups such as al-Shabab are a threat to Christians and the general Muslim population, in addition to the backdrop of 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Organised corruption'. Christians in Somalia, made up of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) and expatriate aid workers, face persecution from radical Islam. When MBBs are identified, they are eliminated and aid workers, Christian or otherwise, require tight security due to the risk of abduction. Islamic leaders maintain that Somalia remains a strictly Islamic state with no room for Christians. Children attend mandatory Madrasa Islamic classes, people are buried with Islamic burial rites whatever their religion might be and it is extremely difficult to openly declare faith. It is too dangerous to meet openly and families of converts are fearful that they too might be suspected of conversion and risk execution. All regions in Somalia are affected and al-Shabab remains a threat as it has backing from al-Qaeda. In September 2012, the election of a president by the new parliament created a framework for a more accountable, legitimate and transparent government. However, for Christians and the church the prospects are significantly less positive, bearing in mind that the provisional constitution that was passed does not allow for religious freedom. There is some hope though as returnees have been exposed to Christianity, and are bringing more tolerance towards Christians. The government is starting to take charge and house fellowships are emerging. Somalia ranks fifth on the WWL, and is included in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

'Islamic extremism' is the main persecution dynamic in Somalia. Christians in Somalia are either Muslim Background Believers (MBB) or (very few) expatriate aid workers. In the country's very recent history MBBs were often killed on the spot when discovered. Even persons suspected of being MBBs were 'identified' and eliminated. Aid workers, Christians and non-Christians alike, had to be given tight security for risk of being abducted. Terrorist groups like al-Shabab were not only a threat to Christians but also to the general Muslim population. 'Islamic extremism' operated against a background of 'Tribal antagonism' - Somalia has actually been ruled by different clans with their own militias - and 'Organised corruption' - general climate of violence, impunity and corruption.

For many years the situation for Christians and the Church has been exceptionally hard in Somalia. In 2012 the situation remained the same. No one is expected to be a Christian in Somalia. Islamic religious leaders maintained publically that Somalia must remain a strictly Islamic state without room for Christians or churches. It is difficult for Christians to openly declare their faith in Christ as being known to be a Christian or even suspected of Christian sympathies might mean a death sentence. Christian parents teach their children the Christian faith secretly. All children in Somalia attend mandatory *Madrasa* Islamic classes. Everyone who dies in Somalia is buried with Islamic burial rites, whatever their religion. In Somalia the Church doesn't exist openly, it is too dangerous for Christians to meet in public. Believers are organised in very small fellowships and scattered across the country. The situation is made dangerous for Christians not only by the community and the government, but also by the family. Apart from betrayal to the religious tradition of the family, the family members fear that they would all be suspected to be converts and be in danger of execution by religious groups and clan militias, most notably al-Shabab.

Persecution of Christians was not limited to one part of the country. Somalia can be distinguished in five different regions: (1) The South Central (under influence by al-Shabab), (2) Somaliland as self-declared independent nation, (3) Puntland as autonomous region, (4) Galmudug (between Puntland and the South) as autonomous region, and (5) Azania (Southern part of the South of the country) as autonomous region. All these five regions of Somalia are governed by different clans, with their own militia groups, that are all opposed to Christianity in Somalia. Threats of execution of Christians existed in all regions, except that the South Central that was manned by al-Shabab was more highlighted by the media, mainly because of the insecurity, upheaval and the ungovernable state they caused the region to be. Therefore, the peace that was observed in the other regions shouldn't be mistaken for tolerance towards Christianity.

The offensive of the joint forces of the Kenyan Army, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and the Transitional Federal Government managed to drive out al-Shabab from Mogadishu (2011) and further back, from their coastal stronghold Kismayo (2012), thus depriving them of important sources of income (among others extortion, piracy). Al-Shabab remains however an imminent threat since it has not been fully wiped out. It migrated to the rural areas of the South Central part of the country, or to neighbouring countries. The possibility of it re-emerging as a stronger outfit is given since it has backing from well-established terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. Especially so, since the terrorist organisation has been also building up a foothold in North Eastern Kenya, including attacks on Somalis in Kenya and terrorist attacks on non-Somalis in their 'host country'.

On 21 August 2012, the Transitional Federal Government made place for a new, permanent Federal Government. Parliament chose Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president in September 2012. Though fragile, the approval of a provisional constitution, and the election of a parliament and president created a framework for a more accountable, legitimate and transparent government that is expected to restore peace and democracy to the war ravaged country. With these efforts being made both nationally and internationally, the Somalis are looking to the future with a lot of excitement. This can be seen by the number of returnees streaming back, and starting to rebuild Somalia. However, for Christians and the church the prospects are significantly less positive, bearing in mind that the provisional constitution that was passed does not allow for religious freedom. Although a bill of rights declares that everyone is "equal, regardless of clan or religion" (Article 17: sub article 1 and 2 of the constitution of Somalia), the Constitution states, "Islam is the only religion of the state, and no other religion can be propagated in the country" (Article 2: sub article 1, 2 and 3; and Article 3: sub article 1 of the constitution of Somalia). So, from our perspective the contradiction that existed prior to 21 August, continues.

Although the situation in 2012 was very harsh for Christians, the future may hold some relief. The al-Shabab terrorist group has lost its grip on the South Central territory, a relief for Christians and non-Christians alike. The returnees to Somalia from places like Canada, Europe, and the USA, are bringing in ideas on good governance from the experiences they have gathered all over the world. They have

also been exposed to Christianity, and are bringing more tolerance towards Christians. The new Federal Government is slowly taking charge, and the rule of law is expected to start being exercised. The (expected) increasing accessibility of gadgets like radios, televisions, cell phones, internet etc., will provide better avenues for evangelism and ministry to believers. Among Christians, more house fellowships are emerging. It remains to be seen what the influence of a possibly better organised Federal Government will be: firm anchoring of persecution of religious minorities in better functioning state regulations and institutions, or provision of certain guarantees against it.

6. Maldives (score: 74)

'Islamic extremism' and 'Tribal Antagonism' are the main persecution dynamics in the Maldives. It is the only country in the world which requires its citizens to be Muslim by law. The Islamic government sees itself as the 'protector of Islam' and its laws prohibit Maldivians from converting to other faiths. According to Sharia law, converts face the death penalty although this is not implemented in the Maldives. Every convert discovered will immediately face the heaviest pressure by family and society, and often have to leave the country. There is extensive control by the authorities to keep watch and to correct any deviation from the path of Islam. There are no church gatherings or buildings. The Wahhabi form of Islam arrived in the 1990s. Radical Islam was rarely associated with the Maldives until September 2007 when a bomb exploded in the capital. This posed a great challenge to the seemingly peaceful country. The September 2011 amendment to the Protection of Religious Unity Act reinforced Islam as an inseparable part of the Maldivian's cultural identity. Religion in the Maldives is moving towards Deobandi Islam, the sect of the Taliban, whose mission is to cleanse Islam of all other influences. The Chief Justice even criticised a silent protest for religious tolerance in 2011 as weakening the country's Islamic faith. Unsurprisingly, there are very few indigenous believers and even foreign Christians need to be careful. The Maldives ranks sixth in the WWL, in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

There are two main dynamics of persecution within the country. The Islamic Government sees itself as the protector of Islam, instituting a set of laws that basically prohibits a Maldivian to convert to other faiths, otherwise facing harsh consequences including losing citizenship. Therefore, Christians face 'Islamic extremism'.

The country is the only one in the world which requires all citizens to be Muslim by law. Consequently, a Muslim turning to Christ will lose his citizenship. According to Sharia law, the convert faces death penalty. Until now, this is not implemented in the country although there are voices in society demanding it.

The Muslim population uses extensive social control to keep watch over every single person to correct any deviation from the path of Islam. As the population density is extremely high, the private sphere is virtually non-existent. Traditionalism is very high, the persecution dynamic being tribal antagonism, though this dynamic is mixed with Islamic extremism as on several islands Islam is mixed with animistic traditions.

Consequently, there are no church gatherings and buildings in the Maldives. The few domestic Christians take all possible precautionary measures of not being discovered.

After the old and more liberal President Nasheed had to flee the country after being ousted in a coup a new President, former Vice-president Mohamed Waheed Hassan was installed. He reiterated that his government aims to respect the values of Islam and upholds the rule of law as envisioned in the country's 2008 constitution. The direction that the country will most likely take in the future will depend on when the new government will call for elections. In an address to the nation in April 2012 the President said that development and civilisation in the country should be formed by Islamic values and customs. He said all leaders of the country must strive to preserve the Islamic faith in the people, because "Islam is the most civilised religion". Maldivian authorities capitalise on the remoteness of the Islands to keep a powerful grip on all perceived religious deviations.

The September 2011 amendment of the existing "Protection of Religious Unity Act" shows an increasing adherence to Islam. According to the new law, every person must avoid creating hatred towards people of other religions. While this may initially sound good, it effectively reinforces the existing government policy that Islam is an inseparable part of a Maldivian's cultural identity. The

legislation, forbidding the practice of any religion except Islam, is therefore confirmed once again. A comment from the independent news service Minivan News on the Religious Unity Act said the regulations have provided the clearest indication of the official direction religion is taking in the country, which is Deobandi Islam, the religion of the Taliban.

This development is not about mere words. Maldivian Chief Justice Ahmed Faiz Hussein criticised a silent protest by a few citizens for religious tolerance on 10 December 2011, the International Day of Human Rights. He said it “shocked the nation” and indicated weakening of the country’s Islamic faith. In November 2011, when the Maldives hosted the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit for the first time, a mob believed to be led by former President Gayoom’s supporters vandalised a banner that carried a painting of Jesus, representing Christianity as one of the religions of South Asia. Even when the alleged coup was taking place in February, extremists were vandalising Hindu and Buddhist artifacts belonging to the country’s pre-Islamic era at the Maldives national museum in the capital city of Male.

Given the tight social control and the fact that everyone who denies Islam and turns to another religion immediately loses citizenship, it is not surprising that the Christian community in the country is virtually non-existent. Even foreign Christians have to be very careful in the country as they are easily accused of propagating Christian faith, even if they just possess a bible or other Christian material. The official import of Scriptures and Christian literature is impossible. Even tourists have reported getting into trouble having a personal copy of the Bible with them.

For more than 10 years, the Maldives has ranked within the Top 10 of the WWL. Christians are pressurised highly by society – an easy task, given the high population density – and by the government. The threat of losing their citizenship for converts is unique and adds to the constant high ranking. The new Maldivian government reiterated its role as the protector and defender of Islam and the importance of Islamic values. Given the sternness of the government and the support it enjoys by Maldivian citizens, it cannot be expected that there will be substantial changes in the years to come. The new transitional government will most likely become increasingly strong on all factual or imagined divergences.

7. Mali (score: 73)

‘Islamic extremism’ is the main persecution dynamic in Mali. Mali’s appearance towards the very top of the WWL is surprising. The country has always been a typical West-African state with a moderate Islam; a constitutionally secular state which proscribes religious political parties, even though a high percentage of its population is Muslim. In the North, the situation has been more difficult than in the South, but international missionaries have even been able to work there. However, the situation changed with the capture of the Northern part of the country by Tuareg separatist rebels and Islamist fighters, and the proclamation of the creation of the independent state of Azawad in Northern Mali. The Islamists soon established an Islamic state with a stern Sharia regime in the North. Christians couldn’t stay. The Islamists also were very hard on traditional Muslims, killing people, amputating limbs and destroying Sufi sanctuaries. Since the fighting started in March 2012, tens of thousands of Malians have fled the North to the South or neighbouring countries. There is a very high degree of hostility - Christians and churches simply cannot exist. In the Southern part, Christians can live but have to be cautious. Much will depend on the success of the intended intervention of the international community against the occupation of Northern Mali. There is widespread concern that Mali is fast becoming a Jihadist hub. In October 2012, the UN stated that they were ready to send international forces to help the Malian government reclaim its lost territories in the North. Preparations for this are expected to take several months. The tendency for religious radicalisation in Malian society may continue, and increasingly put pressure or physical harm to the lives of Christians and their churches. Mali ranks seventh on the WWL, in the category ‘Extreme Persecution’.

The main persecution dynamic in Mali is ‘Islamic extremism’. Mali’s appearance in the very top of the WWL is surprising. The country has always been a typical West-African state with a (mostly) moderate Islam, constitutionally secular proscribing religious political parties, even though a high percentage of its population is Muslim. Religion is understood as private and confessional and generally stays clear of politics. Christians have always had sufficient space in Malian society, including foreign Christian missionaries. In the North, the situation has been more difficult than in the South, but international missionaries have even been able to work there. The situation for Muslim Background Believers

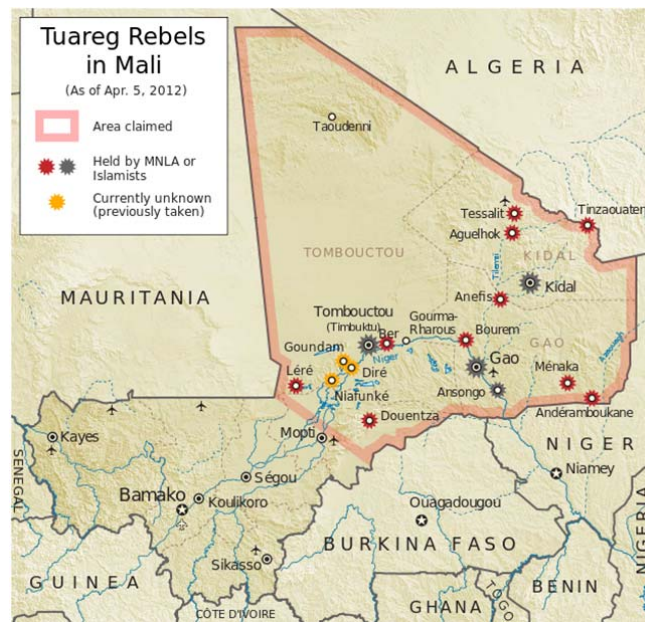
(MBBs) has always been more challenging than for other Christians, but the pressure and/or violence against MBBs has often been bearable.

However, the situation changed with the capture of the Northern part of the country by Tuareg separatist rebels and Islamist fighters, and the proclamation of the creation of the independent state of Azawad in Northern Mali (April 2012). The Islamists soon established an Islamic 'state' with a stern Sharia regime in the North. Most Christians fled before the Islamists took over. In the meantime, they destroyed churches and other Christian buildings in Timbuktu, Gao and (probably) Kidal, wanting to eradicate all traces of Christianity. They also were very hard on traditional Muslims, killing people, amputating limbs and destroying Sufi sanctuaries. Since the fighting started in March 2012, tens if not hundreds of thousands of Malians have fled the North to the South or neighbouring countries.

The Islamists in the North caused many Christians to flee. (There were several hundreds of Christians in Northern Mali; in the South there are many more Christians.) Church leaders and believers told an Open Doors Field expert of not being aware of Christians killed in Northern Mali during and after the invasion of the rebels. Most believers fled before the Islamists could get them. A pastor (name confidential) testified "that he had information before the Islamists invaded that they would kill all Christians, and he warned all church leaders to warn all their members to flee the area." So, when the Islamists arrived, the Christians had left, leaving their houses and belongings behind, which were destroyed or confiscated. Most Christians fled to the South arriving "in Bamako with their wives and children barehanded." Several had gone to Niamey (Niger), and some of them later on continued to Burkina Faso. An Open Doors Field expert claims that the Islamists "were searching house to house in the North to find Christians," particularly specifically identified pastors. There is a very high degree of hostility. In such a situation there is no way of pressurizing community or church life – Christians and churches cannot exist. Only a few hidden Christians are left in Northern Mali. In the South the situation is much better, although there are indications that Islamists in the South have gained more influence on politics through the events in the North.

The division of the territory of Mali is exceptional. The revolt of Tuareg separatist rebels and Islamists fighters has split the country into two parts. The North, proclaimed Azawad, occupies more than half of the territory. In the Northern part of Mali, it is now absolutely impossible to live as a Christian. In the Southern part, Christians can live but have to be cautious. There has always been some pressure on Christians in the South, particularly towards MBBs, but life as an MBB was often bearable. The question arises - has there been a spill-over effect from the conflict in the North to the South of Mali? In a study commissioned by Open Doors in December 2012, an external analyst reports that the High Islamic Council (HCI), the interlocutor of political authorities for all questions relative to the practice of Islam, "has exploited the increasing weakness of the Malian state to become an influential spokesperson for Muslim interests in the country ... Since the outbreak of the crisis in northern Mali, the HCI has been mediating between the Malian government and the Islamists. In return, Malian government has given in to the HCI's demand for a Ministry of Religious Affairs, which is now headed by one of its members." "There is growing concern that the leadership of the influential High Islamic Council is inching toward Wahhabi ideology. However, observers argue that the increased visibility of Islam thanks to the HCI should not be interpreted as a move toward Islamism."

Jeune Afrique, September 2012, is more pessimistic, describing how the Imams gained strength as the political class lost influence. "If in the occupied North the religious have gained influence with their Kalashnikovs, in the South, this rise to power has come at the expense of politics. The public opinion in Mali seems to have accepted the admissibility of the claim on the implementation of Sharia. It is no longer perceived as a threat to the country's future, and the secular state does not seem to be anymore the guarantee of civil liberties, including worship." The final result will also depend on the success of the intended intervention of the international community against the occupation of Northern Mali.



Map of Mali / Azawad. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia.

What is the background of the crisis in the North? In the early 1990s, the nomadic Tuareg of the North began an insurgency over land and cultural rights that persists to this day, despite central government attempts at military and negotiated solutions. The insurgency gathered pace in 2007, and was exacerbated by an influx of arms from the 2011 Libyan civil war. (BBC Mali profile, 13 November 2012) The overthrow of Malian President Amadou Touré on March 22, 2012 created a power vacuum in Northern Mali, which was immediately filled by Tuareg separatist rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), who had stepped up their attacks in the region since January, and Islamist fighters from Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). On 6 April 2012, the MNLA proclaimed the creation of an independent state of Azawad in Northern Mali. However, the MNLA was soon sidelined by the Islamists intent on creating an Islamic state in Mali. The Islamists were acting under the aegis of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which has been operating in the Sahel region for nearly a decade now. Originally known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), AQIM emerged from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) which waged a bloody war against the Algerian military regime in the 1990s. There is widespread concern that Mali is fast becoming a Jihadist hub, "an explosive cocktail of rebellion, terrorism and religious extremism [that] could spill across borders," The Washington Post, 17 August 2012.

On Friday 12 October 2012, two resolutions proposed by the French government were adopted by the United Nations (UN). The UN stated that they were ready to send international forces to help the Malian government to reconquer its lost territories in the North. They also urged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to present a military plan. In the meantime, the UN called all of its members and organisations, such as the European Union to send military instructors to train and organise the Malian government forces. They also asked the Malian government to start the process of political negotiation with the forces of occupation of the North, while a call was sent to all Islamic armed forces to dissociate from terrorist organisations such as AQIM. The BBC Mali profile (13 November 2012) reports that ECOWAS agreed to launch a coordinated military expedition to recapture the North at a meeting in Nigeria in November, with UN and African Union backing. Preparations are expected to take several months.

The future of the Church in Northern Mali, considered by violent Islamists as their new state Azawad, is very alarming. In the first place, the presence and infrastructure of Christianity has been (largely) destroyed. It will take a long time to build it up again, even if the Islamist fighters were successfully driven out of the North. Secondly, the question is *if* the international forces will succeed in driving the occupants out of Northern Mali. If not, there will be no question of building up a Christian presence in the North again. The future of the Church in Southern Mali may well be negatively affected by the rising influence in Malian politics of religious leaders from the High Islamic Council, in particular when the suspicion of their inching toward Wahhabi ideology turns out to be true. Even if the occupation of the North comes to a halt, the tendency for religious radicalisation in Malian society may continue, and increasingly put pressure or physical harm to the lives of Christians and their churches.

8. Iran (score: 72)

The main persecution dynamic in Iran is 'Islamic extremism', in combination with 'Dictatorial paranoia.' Islam is the official religion and all laws must be consistent with the official interpretation of Sharia law. Of all types of Christianity, mostly MBBs are affected, as well as Protestant Evangelicals. There is relatively less pressure on historical ethnic Christian minorities as the Armenian and Assyrian, as long as they do not evangelize Muslims. Ethnic Persians are by definition Muslim, according to the state. Evangelism, Bible training and publishing Scriptures in Farsi are all illegal, yet this has only fuelled the flames of church growth. In Iran, detentions of Christians are very common. In addition, Christians were physically harmed (a number of them in jail). Several Christians were forced to leave their homes or to flee the country. There is pressure in all spheres of life. Any Muslim who leaves Islam faces the death penalty and church services are monitored by the secret police. Pressure is increasing on Christians and comes from family and authorities. The regime's focus is on those reaching out to converts and even well-established Christian denominations are not safe from harassment. Activities are closely watched, members identified and taken note of. The Iranian authorities' fear of increasing numbers of Christians, particularly in house churches, is based on fact with many disillusioned Iranian Muslims becoming curious about Christianity. Persecution may further intensify as the authorities seek greater control over political and civil aspects of people's lives to consolidate power at home whenever international pressure increases. Iran ranks eighth on the WWL, in the category 'Extreme Persecution.'

Religious persecution of certain minorities has intensified in Iran since 2005. This is particularly aimed at the Baha'i, at Dervishes - a Sufi religious order (source: Amnesty International, 2012) - and at Christians, especially MBBs. According to the state, only Armenians and Assyrians can be Christian. Ethnic Persians are by definition Muslim, and, therefore, ethnic Persian Christians are by definition apostates. This makes almost all Christian activity illegal, especially when it occurs in Persian languages - from evangelism to Bible training, to publishing Scripture and Christian books or preaching in Farsi. Yet the regime's harsh treatment of Christians only further fuels the flames of church growth.

Islam is the official religion in Iran, and all laws and regulations must be consistent with the official interpretation of Sharia law. Although ethnic (Armenian and Assyrian) Christians are a recognised religious minority who officially are guaranteed religious freedom, they have reported imprisonment, physical abuse, harassment and discrimination because of their faith. Armenian and Assyrian churches are allowed to teach fellow countrymen in their own language, but it is forbidden to minister to people with a Muslim background (speaking Farsi).

Under the judicial interpretations of Sharia law, any Muslim who leaves Islam to embrace another religion faces the death penalty. Many church services are being monitored by the secret police. Believers, especially converts from Islam, who are active in churches or the cell group movement are being pressured: they are questioned, arrested and put in jail and beaten. Individual believers are being oppressed by society, under pressure of the authorities and family.

Pressures and attacks against Christian communities, especially Protestant Christians (including Evangelicals and Presbyterians) and their places of worship have increased. The Iranian regime's tactic seems to prohibit all Farsi speaking services of evangelical/protestant churches. This implies a further growth of house churches in the future, as it is nearly impossible to open churches.

Since September 2011, at least 46 Christians have been arrested, based on Open Doors' media research and sources in the country, and some 10 other incidents against Christians were reported.

Since religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's warning in 2010 of the ever expanding influence and numbers of home-based churches, persecution in Iran seems to have increased and treatment of Christian is worsening rapidly.

The regime's focus is to destroy those who reach out to converts and seekers by infiltration, arrests, ban of Farsi language services and closure of some churches. Also, pressures and attacks against Christian communities, especially evangelical Christians and their places of worship, have increased. The prohibition of activities in house churches is enforced more strictly.

More significantly, the leaders of Christian denominations that are long established in Iran i.e. Armenians and Assyrians, have not remained safe from harassment either. The policy of the government is to stimulate them to leave the country. The activities of long established Churches are being closely watched and the regime has identified its members and taken note of them. Some pastors and members of these churches were arrested.

The regime lost credibility following the turmoil after the 2009 elections. Several Christians were sentenced to jail or death for Christian activities. However, there were no reports of the implementation of death penalties. Very mediated was the condemnation of pastor Nadarkhani, who was finally released because of international pressure.

The Iranian authorities' fear of the increase of Christianity in the country is based on facts and not just paranoia. Curiosity and interest in Christianity (and in other non-Islamic religions) is growing strongly among Iranian Muslims who are disillusioned with Iran's state-sponsored Shi'ism, as a result of what the Iranian government has done in the name of Islam. In total, there are now 450,000 Christians in Iran, of which 80,000 are from an ethnic background (Assyrian/Armenian) and 370,000 from a Muslim background. Many ethnic Christians and MBBs are leaving the country.

Persecution may further intensify given that Iran seeks to gain a greater control over political and civil aspects of people's lives to consolidate power at home whenever international pressure increases by economic sanctions of USA and EU. They can beat the enemy by beating the "enemy" in-country. The regime is playing the Iranian nationalism card against international pressure. This flirting with the idea of nationalism and Islamism strengthens the Iranian identity and creates unity in-country against the enemy. This could be more and more concerning for Christians if they continue to be associated with 'the enemy'.

9. Yemen (score: 72)

The main persecution dynamic in Yemen is 'Islamic extremism'. The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and Sharia is the source of all legislation. There is some religious freedom for foreigners but evangelism is prohibited. Conversion is forbidden for Muslims and Yemenis who leave Islam may face the death penalty. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face persecution from authorities, family and extremist groups who threaten 'apostates' with death if they do not revert. Yemen is very unstable and has deteriorated since the Arab Spring riots of 2011. Kidnappings of foreigners occur regularly, MBBs face strong family and societal pressure and Christians are believed to be under surveillance by extremists. In Aden, there are a few official churches for several thousand Christian expats and refugees living in Yemen. In the north, no church buildings are allowed. Large numbers of expats have left the country and the number of MBBs is estimated at a few hundred. The government used excessive force to crack down on protesters after 10 months of mass protest caused by high unemployment levels and government corruption. In February 2012, elections were held and the Acting President and only candidate Mansour Hadi was sworn-in amid a climate of violence. The country is divided between pro- and anti-government forces, the south is claiming independence, there is a strong tribal system and small al-Qaeda-linked groups are struggling for power. Yemen ranks ninth on the WWL and belongs to the countries with 'Extreme Persecution'.

The government has used excessive force to crack down on the protesters after 10 months of mass protest, caused by high levels of unemployment in the country and government corruption. President Saleh, who was severely wounded, finally signed a political transition agreement on 23 November 2011, transferring power to his deputy Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. In February 2012, presidential elections were organised. Acting President Mansour Hadi was the only candidate and was sworn in as President on 25 February. The elections took place in a climate of violence.

However, as the International Crisis Group notes: "Ten months of popular protest spiked by periodic outbursts of violence have done little to clarify Yemen's political future." Yemeni politics are indeed extremely complex. The country is deeply divided between pro- and anti-Saleh forces and the south of the country is claiming its independence. In spite of President Saleh's resignation, the conflict risks getting bloodier, opposing Shi'ite Huthi rebels and Sunni Islamists. To make it even more complex, the country has a strong tribal system which is difficult to understand for outsiders. Besides that, small groups of al-Qaeda-linked groups struggle for more power in the country.

Local observers expect that governmental authorities will keep a stronger focus on foreign activities. Tourism to Yemen is said to have dropped dramatically. This shift of focus will have a rather deteriorating influence on the small Christian church mainly consisting of MBBs, especially as it is weakened by the leaving of expat Christians.

In Yemen, constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and Sharia is the source of all legislation. There is some religious freedom for foreigners, but evangelism is prohibited; several expatriate workers were deported in the past for Christian activities. Yemenis who leave Islam may face the death penalty as a result. The Government forbids conversion from Islam and proselytising of Muslims.

Christians from a Muslim background do not only face persecution from the authorities but also from family and extremist Islamic groups who threaten 'apostates' with death if they do not revert to Islam. Insecurity caused by Islamist movements makes Yemen very unstable; a situation which has even further deteriorated during the 'Arab Spring' riots of 2011. Kidnappings of foreigners in Yemen have occurred regularly, usually ending by meeting kidnapper's demands for some community assistance, funds, or release of clan members from custody.

Middle East Concern stresses the difficulties of converts to Christianity: "Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) almost always face strong family and societal pressure should their choice to follow Jesus become known. Christians are believed to be under surveillance by extremists. With the attention of the authorities on political events during 2011, there was more scope for extremists to operate."

In Aden there are four official churches (three Catholic and one Anglican) for the several thousands of expat Christians (most are Westerners, South and East Asians and Arabs) or refugees (mainly Ethiopian) living in the country. However, in the north, no church buildings are allowed. Large numbers of expats have left for security reasons as a result of the 'Arab Spring' riots. The number of MBBs is estimated at just a few hundred. When a Muslim becomes a Christian, he or she faces persecution from family and government. They are not allowed to have their own gatherings, so they meet in secret locations.

10. Eritrea (score: 72)

The main persecution dynamic in Eritrea is 'Dictatorial paranoia'. The Christian and Muslim populations are estimated at 50 per cent each. Eritrea has three types of Christianity: registered historical churches, Christian Background Believers (CBBs), and independent Christians. No Muslim Background Believer (MBB) issue was reported. Eritrea has a violent history with Ethiopia, and shares a long border with its 'arch-enemy'. A government official once declared in public that there are three enemies that need to be eradicated: HIV/Aids, the regime in Ethiopia and independent Christians. There are traces of 'Ecclesiastical arrogance' – especially by the Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC). There is also a serious potential for 'Islamic extremism'. The Eritrean Orthodox Church is the largest church in the country and its members are said to spy on the activities of CBBs and independent Christians and report them. Violence was high against CBBs and independent Christians. The horrific story of Christians being held in containers in military camps is widely known. 31 cases of deaths of Christians in prison were reported in 2012. Muslims are also subjected to government hostilities, especially groups with Wahhabi tendencies. The future for the church in Eritrea is worrying. The government is still very hard on CBBs and independent Christians, and pressurises the registered churches too. Extremist Islam seems to be preparing itself to be unleashed on Eritrean society as soon as the government releases pressure on churches and mosques. Eritrea ranks tenth on the WWL, in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

The main persecution dynamic in Eritrea is 'Dictatorial paranoia'. (Although the government in Eritrea has a Marxist background, this term applies better than 'Communist oppression' as persecution dynamic.) The Christian and Muslim populations are estimated at 50 per cent each. Eritrea has three types of Christianity: (i) registered historical churches, (ii) believers from historic church background converted to other type of Christianity (CBBs), (iii) independent Christians. 'Independent Christians' in this report are non-traditional Protestants (including other Christians not included in the other

types of Christianity). No Muslim Background Believer (MBB) issue was reported for Eritrea this year. The fellowships of Christians belonging to the CBBs and independent Christians often operate as underground churches. Eritrea has a violent history with Ethiopia, and shares a long border with its 'arch-enemy' although the country is much smaller. That is one of the reasons why the government estimates groups it can't control to be dangerous for their regime. Christians from registered churches can be controlled to a certain degree, Christians from underground fellowships can't. A government official once declared in public that there are three enemies of Eritrea that need to be eradicated: (1) HIV/ Aids, (2) the regime in Ethiopia and (3) the Independent Christians. That is why CBBs and independent Christians face very severe hostilities, throughout the country.

The situation in Eritrea is complex. Although 'Dictatorial paranoia' is the main persecution dynamic, there are also traces of 'Ecclesiastical arrogance' – the Church itself as persecutor, especially the Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC), estimated at 24 per cent of the country's population. One could argue that the EOC is not a real agent of persecution but just acts out of fear or to protect her sensitive relationship with the government. Still, Open Doors Field experts report that part of the EOC is sometimes involved in hostilities against independent Christians. In Eritrea, there is a serious potential for 'Islamic extremism'. According to an Open Doors Field expert Eritrea even has the potential to develop "a very strong Islamist agenda".

Churches that existed in 1952 are favoured: the Eritrean Orthodox church, Roman Catholic Church and Evangelical Lutheran church. The Eritrean Orthodox Church is the largest church in the country, most aligned to the government and government policies. Its members are said to spy on the activities of CBBs and independent Christians and report them to the government. However, if they start to annoy the government, they get in trouble too. Therefore, they are closer to the government, but not free. The 'underground churches' often gather in private houses. This makes the government very suspicious about what happens in houses (of Christians). They feel outside forces may be behind the Christian gatherings which may in turn remove them from power. This has seriously jeopardized the sphere of private life for CBBs and independent Christians. The overall pressure on Christians is high but the pressure in national life and especially church life is very high. Those groups – CBBs and independent Christians – shouldn't simply exist, according to the government.

The threat of persecution is often explicit. One example is the surveillance that Christians can be subjected to. This happens to people suspected of being 'underground Christians'. According to an Open Doors Field expert, "The government always assesses which homes could hold home fellowships, and these homes are kept under surveillance." At work places people suspected of being 'underground Christians' are kept under surveillance to investigate their movements and activities. However, threats can also be hidden within small details. Open Doors Field experts report, "Christians from underground churches cannot easily obtain visas to travel outside the country. When they go to the immigration office, they are required to fill in the forms and the question on religious affiliation. Indicating any of the underground churches means one is denied the visa, and runs the risk of being arrested and jailed." Once arrested, the situation is very bad. "Religious prisoners do not appeal in court for official hearings because they are never officially charged and are not allowed to be represented by a lawyer. The moment one is taken to court one is guilty even before one is charged because being a member of the underground church or attending those meetings is an automatic crime."

Violence was high against CBBs and independent Christians. The horrific story of Christians being held in containers in military camps and sometimes in hidden places not accessible to ordinary people other than government officials is widely known. It remains unknown as to how many Christians are detained in those camps. Last year WWL 2012 reported 1,500 Christians. Open Doors Field experts say, "Arrests of Christians have continued, occurring spontaneously in different places and circumstances regarded illegal by the government. Those being released from custody are supposedly equally measuring up with those that are coming in." It is, however, hard to confirm these numbers accurately, because religious prisoners in Eritrea are not confined to obvious places. That also makes it difficult to know how many Christians die in detention (or are just released before dying so as not to blame the government for their death). 31 cases of deaths of Christians in prison were reported in Eritrea in 2012.

Christians are the majority in the central and southern highland region, while Muslims are the majority in the eastern coastal lowlands as well as the western lowlands near the border with Sudan. Hostilities against Christians happen throughout the country. Also in Muslim majority parts of the country, hostilities are from the government, not from Islam. Although Islam has been among the recognised religious groups since 1952, Muslims are also subjected to government hostilities, especially groups with Wahhabi tendencies.



Eritrea Map (geographicguide.com)

The Muslim majority areas in the eastern coastal lowlands border Muslim dominated areas in Ethiopia with a serious Islamist drive. The Muslim majority areas in the western lowlands border Sudan, a country with a strong Islamist agenda. Is Eritrea susceptible to develop a radical Islamic agenda too? The answer has to do with the pressure of the government on all Christians and Muslims. Some of them are of course treated very severely, but many others from the registered churches and Islam are tolerated as long as they stay within their churches or mosques, and do not openly resist the regime. It is here we find the very fine line of the upcoming persecution story for Eritrea. The government has weakened and persecuted the churches that were bent on bringing the Gospel to the Eritrean society, and at the same time given freedom to have meetings in mosques and indoctrinate young people in Islam. Muslim spiritual leaders started to teach in the mosques in Tigrina (local language). According to Open Doors Field experts, "For at least three or four years they are indoctrinating young people aggressively for Islam, something they haven't done before. Many of them reside in Saudi Arabia but they can always come to Eritrea as Eritreans, visit family; some have their wives and children in Asmara (capital of Eritrea)."

According to Open Doors Field experts, the united struggle for Independence had created a communal life in Eritrea. "Joint mourning; sit, sing, preach, eat, pray together; no walking out of the tent. Proximity as Eritreans." Now Eritrean Christians worry a lot about where Muslims in Eritrea really stand towards the Church in Eritrea. Muslim leaders complain that the Eritrean government is more favourable to the EOC than to the Muslim community. "They call them a Christian government. They (Muslims) stand for their right and demand more Muslims in leadership positions." "Very loud megaphones proclaim from time to time from the mosque "Let us defend Islam from the invasion of other distractive teaching" – not in Arabic like before but in the local language."

Meanwhile, the actual government in Eritrea prevents Muslims to get tougher on Christians. However, the power and influence of President Isaias Afewerki is decreasing. The Eritrean military started questioning his authority for the first time. Being a dictator, his role is a one-man role and his health is not good. When he dies while in power, the group on his side will probably take over. Not much change is likely for the country in general then. When it comes to religious freedom, Open Doors Field experts however assume that they will let the churches come out from underground and be free for worship, because religious persecution in Eritrea is very much in the hands of the President. At the same time, Muslims are also likely to come to the fore too. As we saw above, they are already preparing themselves.

The future for the Church in Eritrea is worrying. The government is still very hard on CBBs and independent Christians, and pressurises the registered churches too. Extremist Islam seems to be preparing itself to be unleashed on Eritrean society and particularly on the Church as soon as the government releases pressure on churches and mosques. Many Christians live in difficult economic circumstances: food has become scarcer, prices increased; electricity and water have also become scarcer especially in recent months. The unlimited time period for military service has affected the marriages of most Christians, thereby exposing them to unfaithfulness and additional economic hardships. Persecution often adds to already difficult situations. When Christians need strong homes and churches because circumstances are difficult, the debilitation or destruction of those bases through persecution makes their survival extra difficult.

11. Syria (score: 71)

The main persecution dynamic in Syria is 'Islamic extremism'. Violence and protests against the government have lasted for almost two years, and the situation in Syria can best be described as extremely chaotic. As long as Christians did not disturb communal harmony or pose a threat to the government, they were tolerated and had freedom of worship. The recognised Church of Syria is not a hidden or secret church. It is respected in society, although every Christian meeting is monitored by the secret police. However, this is rapidly changing at present. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face many problems, mostly from family and friends but also from (foreign) fundamentalist fighters and mercenaries. During the second part of 2012, there was a clear increase in number of foreign jihadists entering the country. While earlier in the civil war, Christians were persecuted for their standing of supporting the government, or not taking sides in the conflict, a clear religious motive has been added by the influx of these foreign radicals. We have received reports of many Christians being abducted, physically harmed and killed. Within the context of civil war, many churches are damaged or destroyed, in many cases deliberately. Syria is the scene of a bloody civil war, the central government is losing its grip on the situation and tens of thousands of Christians have fled the country. Though it is hard to predict how events will unfold, a change of government is expected to lead to a situation of anarchy and struggle for power. If fanatical Muslims obtain more power, they might seek revenge from the overall Christian silence and peaceful stand in the country. Should that happen, Christians will either be isolated or driven from the country en masse - a situation comparable to the one in Iraq. Syria ranks eleventh on the WWL, in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

Violence and protests against the government of President Bashar al-Assad have lasted for more than two years, and the situation in the country can best be described as chaotic. "The current stage [of Syria] is defined by an explosive mix of heightened strategic stakes tying into a regional and wider international competition on the one hand and emotionally charged attitudes, communal polarisation and political wishful thinking on the other," is the analysis of the International Crisis Group in its 24 November 2011 brief on Syria, an analysis that still holds truth today. Three central messages can be distilled from this analysis: the social and political climate of Syria is extremely explosive, the situation of civil war is rapidly escalating and if the current regime collapses, whatever regime replaces it will not necessarily be more democratic.

The Christian community lived in relatively peaceful circumstances under the secular regime of President Bashar al-Assad. As long as Christians did not disturb communal harmony or threaten the government, they were tolerated and had freedom of worship. The recognised Church of Syria is not a hidden or secret church. It is respected in society, although every Christian meeting is monitored by the secret police. However, these churches often cannot and will not evangelise openly in Syria because of political pressure (this would be considered a threat to national security) and agreements with Muslim leaders.

Starting in June 2010, several Christian fellowships were closed by authorities, implementing a long existing law that only permits religious meetings in designated places of worship. The motivation of these steps is not clear, but it is suggested that it was prompted by complaints from traditional and/or churches because of 'sheep stealing'.

The situation of MBBs is different. They face many problems, mostly from family and friends but also from fundamentalist fighters and mercenaries.

As one of the minority religions, most Christians have been supportive of the Alawite regime – Alawites are a Muslim sect; the vast majority of the population in Syria adheres to Sunni Islam – in the past, since that regime gave them relative peace and rest, but nowadays most Christians are not supportive of any side in the conflict; they just want a peaceful agreement and situation. However, supporting the Alawite regime in the past has made them vulnerable to attacks from the opposition. They are also at risk for religious reasons, as fundamental Islamic groups oppose any religion other than Islam in the country.

The situation in Syria is rapidly worsening. According to UNHCR, 5,000 people per day flee the country. Some of those opposing the government want more freedom from a mistrusted regime, other religious opposing groups want freedom to rule and spread their Muslim faith by force and violence. Government supporters are afraid of what might come of a country that is being controlled by fanatics. Most people are afraid that outside interference could destroy the stability and future of Syria like that witnessed in Iraq and other surrounding countries. Christians in general are afraid of what might happen to them. If fanatic Muslims obtain more freedom, they might seek revenge from the overall Christian silence and peaceful stand in the country. Some have already reported acts viewed as introductory signs of more threats against Christians, even if for now they are not being directly targeted solely because of their faith.

In addition to the former, interference from Iran, is a supplementary source of potential extremism in the country.

Because of months of protests and violence against the government of Bashar al-Assad, Syria is the scene of a bloody civil war. Al-Assad is internationally criticised for his violent reaction on the protests that in the beginning were peaceful. Because of the continued crackdown on the protests, there is an international boycott in place right now. Inside Syria the central government is losing its grip on the situation. "Criminals but also radical Muslims take advantage of that", an Open Doors field worker says. He prefers to stay anonymous because of the situation in Syria. "In the city of Homs for example the Sunni Muslims have gained power on the streets when the government pulled out its troops for a few days. Some of the radical elements in this group have raided several churches. They robbed the churches of the most valuable things. The robberies were carried out at times when no people were in church." The field worker says that not only Christians are targeted. "As Assad belongs to the Alawites, this group also is targeted."

According to the worker, all around Syria you can see the consequences of the international boycott of the country. "Petrol is running out, or being preserved or thrown out by opposing groups to create more of an issue within the country, and you also see in the supermarkets that products are missing. Prices are rising because of the shortages. People stand in lines for hours just to wait to get a gasoline tank for heat and they either get it or not. With electricity getting cut for few hours a day, no gasoline and no petrol available as before, people are suffering and seeing how the country is moving backwards."

Some Christians are planning to escape Syria in case things get worse as they see that the quality of life for them decreases and their rights decline. In spite of the current deplorable human rights situation in the country, Christians prefer a continuation of a secular regime that doesn't have much religious input from Islam. Though it is hard to predict how events will unfold, a change of government is expected to lead to a situation of anarchy and struggle for power. This will likely result in an Islamist extremist take over – leading to a worse situation for Christians and other minority groups. Should that happen, Christians will either be isolated or driven from the country en masse - a situation comparable to the one in Iraq.

12. Sudan (score: 70)

Persecution dynamics in Sudan are a mix of 'Islamic extremism' and 'Dictatorial paranoia'. Sharia law has not yet been fully implemented. Christians face growing threats from Muslim communities and Islamist government officials yet the number of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) is rising. The government and society try to pressurise Christians in all spheres of life and the level of violence escalated in the past year. President Al-Bashir is losing support and his regime is in trouble. It has lost 75 per cent of its revenue with the independence of South Sudan and of its remaining revenue, the press estimates 70 per cent goes to fighting in Darfur and disputed border regions

with South Sudan. During the May 2011 invasion by Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), more than 75,000 people have been violently displaced from Abyei region. During the attacks, homes, schools and churches had been burned and looted and water supplies been sabotaged. Since April 2012 it is reported that more than 10,000 displaced Dinka Ngok people have returned. The church believes that their presence is essential in Abyei politically, but even more so spiritually, as a testimony to largely unreached tribes in that region. The future for the church in Sudan is uncertain. The level of fear among Christians is growing slowly and there is reason to fear that Sudan's leaders – be it al-Bashir or new Islamist leaders - will just continue the religious and ethnic cleansing, particularly in the border areas with South Sudan. Sudan ranks 12th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

The main persecution dynamic in Sudan is a mix of 'Islamic extremism' and 'Dictatorial paranoia'. It is questionable whether President al-Bashir's biggest worry is the spread of Islam or his desire to maintain power. The WWL 2012 gave the following as the country outlook, "in the near future persecution of Christians in Sudan will likely increase seriously, with Christians in the country being squeezed between Islamisation and Arabisation." However, full implementation of Sharia law has not yet taken place partly because of difficulties al-Bashir's regime is facing but is still in the pipeline. The Church has decreased rapidly in number, because of the Southerners leaving the country to go to South Sudan. In some areas, however, the Church is growing. The number of MBBs in Sudan is definitely rising. 'Tribal antagonism' was also briefly reported as a persecution dynamic, especially in the Abyei region with the Missirya and Dinka Ngok tribe. In the scoring this has not played a significant role and further research is needed.

Christians are facing growing threats from both Muslim communities and Islamist government officials who have long wanted to rid Sudan of Christianity. Christian leaders said Christianity is regarded as a foreign religion following the departure of hundreds of thousands of people, many of them Christians, to South Sudan since the secession. The hostilities concern all types of Christianity, to different degrees, depending on the spheres of life and the region in the country. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are, however, often heavily persecuted. The struggle for Arabisation saw its (next) apotheosis in warfare against the Nuba people, black people, many of whom are Christians.

The pressure on Christians was typical for Muslim majority countries: government and society trying to limit space for all Christians in the different spheres of lives (private, family, community, national and church). MBBs always experience the most difficulties in such situations. The average level of pressure is serious, but not very high – at least in parts of the country. It seems society gives a bit more living space than one would expect, based on the recent history and rhetoric of al-Bashir's regime. (The family sphere of life scores a bit below the average because some questions are only applicable to MBBs, one of the four types of Christianity present in Sudan.) The level of violence was, however, flagrant in the past year. The level of violence consisted of two components. The first component was violence that is directly related to the persecution dynamic in the country. An example that springs to mind is the destruction of at least three churches and the Gereif Bible school in Khartoum.

The second component was violence related to warfare in border regions with South Sudan. An Open Doors Field expert states, "The number of formally reported killings for Sudan is limited but the whole South Kordofan (with Abyei included) and Blue Nile area has seen hundreds killed. Religion played a role here but there is confusion with perceived political loyalties and control of resources." He counts these deaths as killings related to the persecution of Christians because their faith highlighted them as potential targets. In the South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions many churches were targeted by Antonov bombers hired by the regime. The expert adds, "We can safely say that they were targeted as most of the churches that were destroyed by the bombers were destroyed during church services on Sundays." Violence in South Kordofan was particularly related to warfare in the Nuba mountains against the Nuba people, many of them being black Christians. The Nuba people were consistently attacked and subjected to attempted starvation. (The number of Christian victims in the Nuba Mountains was high during the reporting period but less than from May 2011 - November 2011.) Of course Christians were not the only victims of this type of violence, but their profile is high and their vulnerability high accordingly, in a country where lust for power intertwines with religious fanaticism.

Hostilities against Christians were reported throughout in the country. However, several names came up regularly: Southern Kordofan with Abyei and the Nuba mountains; Blue Nile in the East; Darfur in the West; Khartoum. Khartoum is probably the centre of most of the regular pattern of hostilities (first component). In the Southern border provinces (Southern Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile) this pattern is overshadowed by violent warfare, with black Christians being easy targets.



Map of Sudan. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia.

Al-Bashir is losing the support of the ruling National Congress Party and his regime is in trouble. It has lost 75 per cent of its revenue with the independence of South Sudan, creating a huge budget deficit. Of its remaining revenue, the press estimates 70 per cent goes to fighting in Darfur and the disputed border regions with South Sudan. Salaries of Khartoum's senior state officials have been cut, and the bureaucracy downsized. Al-Bashir closed down newspapers and arrested opposition leaders and activists. The population suffers. On-going conflicts in Southern Kordofan, Darfur, and the Blue Nile state, lack of basic infrastructure in large areas, and reliance by much of the population on subsistence agriculture make that much of the population will remain at or below the poverty line for years to come. Persecuted Christians in this state of poverty often suffer double.

Since the Addis Ababa Temporary Interim Agreement between South Sudan and Sudan and the deployment of United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), Abyei citizens (mainly Dinka Ngok people) have been mobilising themselves to return to their homeland. During the May 2011 invasion by Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), more than 75,000 people (some estimates have it at 150,000) have been violently displaced from Abyei town and region prior to the negotiated Abyei referendum protocol, as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), taking effect. During the attacks, homes, schools and churches have been burned and looted and water supplies (mainly boreholes) have been sabotaged. Since April 2012 it is reported that more than 10,000 displaced Dinka Ngok people have returned and resettled in the Abyei area, north of river Kiir (which is the supposed Sudan/South Sudan border). The Ethiopian peace keeping force has been instrumental in bringing stability and re-establishing and maintaining relative security. Humanitarian concerns are high as the population missed the last planting season due to the displacement taking place at the beginning of the 2011 planting season. The churches (Episcopal Church of Sudan and Roman Catholic Church) indicated they would like some of their members and leaders in particular to return and resettle again in order to encourage other families and individuals to return to Abyei and the surrounding areas. They perceive it to be of great importance; their presence is a necessity to prevent that SAF and the Government of Sudan are not only taking their land by force but also stamping out the Christian witness and testimony. They believe that the presence of the Church is essential in Abyei politically, but even more so spiritually, as a testimony to largely unreached tribes in that region.

The future for the Church in Sudan is uncertain. The level of fear among Christians is growing slowly. It is difficult to say in what direction the hostilities against Christians will develop in the near future. Full implementation of Sharia law may be upheld by al-Bashir's internal struggles. In case his regime

falls, it is likely the new leaders will give a boost to further islamisation of Sudan. In that case the general pressure would increase in the whole country. Whether new leaders will continue spilling enormous amounts of resources for war in the border regions with South Sudan remains to be seen. It seems it is a war that no side can win. Still, there is reason to fear that Sudan's leaders – be it al-Bashir or new Islamist leaders - will just continue the religious and ethnic cleansing, particularly in the border areas with South Sudan.

13. Nigeria (score: 68)

The main persecution dynamic in Nigeria is 'Islamic extremism'. Boko Haram is often associated with the persecution of Christians. In the reporting period violence often related to this Islamic terrorist group has asked at least 800 lives of Christians in Northern Nigeria. However, the pattern of persecution is complex, especially for the 12 northern Sharia states where local government and social groups leave hardly any space for Christians to live their own lives. Conversion is dangerous and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) and Christians in many northern states face persecution. The church feels the pressure from 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Organised corruption' as well as 'Islamic extremism'. Persecution is most pronounced in the Sharia states and Christians suffer restrictions in schooling, threats of abduction and forced marriage. Christians have been denied employment and facilities such as clean water, clinics and roads. It is very difficult for churches to openly integrate new converts from Islam. Persecution levels vary across the country and are underlined by terrorist action and an unpredictable environment which leaves Christians living in fear. The Islamist agenda for Nigeria is to bring the whole country under the House of Islam. The election of the current President Goodluck Jonathan caused serious unrest (partly) because he was a southern Christian. Many Christians fear the new elections in 2015. The future does not look bright with emerging links between al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Boko Haram making more violent persecution likely. Nigeria ranks 13th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

In Nigeria the main persecution dynamic is 'Islamic extremism'. Although Boko Haram is often associated with persecution of Christians in Northern Nigerian, the pattern of persecution is much more complex than only killing or wounding of Christians – as well as Muslims – by an Islamic terrorist group. This was especially so in the 12 Northern Sharia states where local government and social groups leave hardly any space for Christians to live their own lives. Conversion from Islam to Christianity was a dangerous act that could lead to many hardships. Persecution, however, is not only focused on Muslim Background Believers (MBB) but on all Christians in many of the Northern States. There are indications that also 'Tribal antagonism' caused pressure on the Church in parts of Nigeria; persecution of believers from animistic background was reported from the Eastern States. The pressure on the Church by 'Organised corruption', among others driven by organised crime networks, reported to be abundantly present in the country, remains an open question for the moment. The scoring of Nigeria for the WWL 2013 is mainly defined by the first persecution dynamic: 'Islamic extremism'.

Persecution is most pronounced in the Sharia states, but also partly extended into neighbouring states, and played heavily upon Christians in their family and community spheres of life. Christians can't bury their deceased in public cemeteries. In public schools, especially at primary and secondary level, Christian children are forced to attend Islamic studies. Christian youngsters are not allowed access to secondary schools or Higher Education institutions, especially when those institutions are well endowed with funding, equipment and high quality teaching. Christians in education institutions were often considered and treated as second-class citizens. Christian girls were under a serious threat of abduction and forceful marriage. In Kano, for instance, a house was located where over 40 Christian girls were abducted, islamised and many married off to Muslims. Open Doors Field experts say that some of the Sharia states even have established 'ministries' of abducting and converting Christian girls. Christians with required qualifications were often denied employment, others were asked to recant their Christian faith for immediate employment. Christian communities were largely left unattended by the government. Facilities like clean water, clinics and roads were denied; Christian villages in rural areas did not get development projects. As far as church life was concerned, it was very difficult for churches to openly integrate new converts from Islam. This would attract the attention of the Umma, which could result in violent actions against the churches in their entire area. OD Field colleagues state that increasingly, pastors were targets of the Islamic extremists to stop further growth of the Church.

Persecution of Christians through Islamic extremism did not extend to the whole of Nigeria. Looking from the point of view of hostilities against Christians, Nigeria can be distinguished in different regions. The North (19 States & the Abuja Federal Capital Territory) is mainly Muslim, the South (17 States) is mainly Christian, but the South-West (Yoruba) is 50% Muslim. The Middle Belt (part of Northern Nigeria) is mainly Christian with large Muslim minorities. In creating states however Muslims made large parts of the Middle Belt become part of the 12 now-called sharia-states. E.g. Kaduna-North is Muslim majority, Kaduna-south is Christian majority, but the administration is Muslim and sharia-dominated.

Persecution is toughest in the 12 Sharia states. Apart from suffering from terrorist actions, Christians live in fear because they live in an unpredictable environment in which local government and different social groups pressurize them in their different spheres of life, sometimes assisted by Sharia Police (Hisba) and Da'awa committees. In the 7 other Northern States, the pressure is less but Islamic terrorism activity is more. In this region we also hear about retaliation by Christian youth for terrorist actions. In the South we do not hear about hostilities against Christians. Retaliation on Muslims for attacks in the North, by Christians in the South along tribal lines happens only very rarely. Meanwhile the Islamist agenda for Nigeria, as declared by leading Islamists, is to bring the whole country under the 'House of Islam'.

Nigeria has been held hostage by the current reign of President Goodluck Jonathan. When Mr Jonathan of the ruling People's Democratic Party, won the presidential elections in April 2011, there was a big debate about his candidacy, because he was a Southern Christian. Muslims felt the presidential candidates should have been Muslims, based on an agreement in Nigerian politics between Muslims and Christians. The victory of Jonathan caused very serious unrest. Islamic leaders and insurgents, vowed to make his reign impossible, Boko Haram being Jonathan's most visible opponent. In April 2012 Jonathan said that within six months he would have done with Boko Haram, receiving reply that they would finish with him in three months, and take over. Many Christians fear for a 'clash of the titans' in 2015 when new elections will be held. Meanwhile, this election period (2011 – 2015) continues to be a 'wild card' for terrorist actions against Christians and their communities who are believed to support and pray for Jonathan.

The current situation in Nigeria casts dark clouds ahead, notwithstanding good news about spiritual revitalisation of the Church under the yoke of persecution. The emerging links between al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Boko Haram, and other Islamist terrorist groups in the region, make it likely that the church will suffer more violent persecution in the near future. OD Field experts consider the danger of anti-Christian violence spilling over to the Southern Church to be real. Christian youths who are the future of the church, are tempted to retaliate by violence against Muslims, thereby adding to the danger of a vicious circle of growing violence in parts of the country. The pressure on Christians in the Sharia states, and to a lesser degree, in the states of the Middle Belt, will likely not diminish in the near future. The poverty level of many Christians in the Northern states is alarming. Islamists may use the resources at their disposal to submit Christians to financial blackmail. Christians are often deprived from access to basic public services. Meanwhile, the Nigerian Federal Government seems incapable of protecting their Christian citizens.

14. Pakistan (score: 63)

The main persecution dynamics in Pakistan are 'Islamic extremism', 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Organised corruption'. Christians are caught between Islamic militant organisations and an Islamising culture against a backdrop of a weak and corrupt government and a military which is complicit in fuelling Islamic militants. Persecution has been structural for many years. The country is set to surpass Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim population by 2030 latest. Christians account for 2.5 per cent of the population. Recent months have seen the prominent case of Rimsha Masih, a child, who was accused of having desecrated the Qu'ran and was finally released in September and later exonerated of all charges. This case prompted a debate on how blasphemy laws are misused to target innocent people. Extremist groups continue to incite hatred of Christians: at the time Rimsha was released, other Christians were facing blasphemy charges. It is a well-known pattern that not only affects Christians. Discrimination impacts all aspects of daily life. Opening a new church building is virtually impossible and emigration of Christians continues unabated. The Christian community is very vulnerable. Sexual assaults on underage Christian girls by Muslim men continue to be reported. Many Christians are uneducated manual workers who suffer unfair treatment

from employers. There is, however, freedom to run established churches. The Christian population is slowly growing. Despite this, large parts of society despise the Christian minority. Extremist views may well gain popularity in the coming elections, to the disadvantage of minorities. Pakistan ranks 14th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

Pakistan's Christians are caught between Islamic militant organisations that routinely violently target Christians, and an Islamising culture that makes Christians feel less and less a part of the country. 'Islamic extremism' is the main source of persecution. Add into the mix a weak and corrupt central government unwilling and maybe even unable to confront injustice, and a military that has been found complicit in fuelling Islamic militants to gain leverage in Afghanistan and Indian held Kashmir, and it is clear that Christians have few allies in their fight to flourish in the land of their birth. As especially the military is heavily involved in doing business, the persecution dynamic "Organized Corruption" is interwoven into this net of different dynamics. Those have been in place for many years now, and as the country is set to surpass Indonesia as containing the world's largest Muslim population by 2030 (256 million), according to a Pew Research Report released in January 2011, the country will face increasing problems of which Christians most likely will carry an over-proportionate share.

Pakistan's Christians are a beleaguered minority of about 2.5% in a country of 179.9 million inhabitants, which is 96% Muslim. The devastating consequences of Pakistan's blasphemy laws for the Christian minority were made clear once more by the case of Rimsha Masih. In mid-August 2012, she was accused of having desecrated the Qu'ran and imprisoned. Reportedly mentally retarded and, according to a court-appointed medical report, 14 years old, it quickly turned out that all accusations were fabricated and a local imam had put torn pages of a Qu'ran in her bag. Even Muslim clerics with close ties to extremist organisations called for her freedom and denounced these false accusations.

The girl was finally released on bail on 8 September 2012 and was flown in a helicopter with her family to an undisclosed location. On 20 November 2012, her case was dropped and she was exonerated from all accusations. For the first time, a debate on how the blasphemy laws are misused to target innocent people started, including also some Muslim clerics deemed as extremist. Sadly, the discussion was soon stopped by the outrage on the film "Innocence of the Muslims". Other prominent victims of the blasphemy laws such as Asia Bibi remain in prison facing execution. Christians ask themselves who might become the next Rimsha.

Extremist groups continue to incite hatred of Christians through their mosques and madrassahs (Koranic schools). Discrimination affects virtually every aspect of daily life such as education, health, livelihood and housing. Opening a new church building is almost impossible. Christians are denied opportunities to become literate. Emigration of Christians is continuing unabated.

As the US Commission on International Religious Freedom finds in its 2012 report, marginalisation and poverty make the Christian community in Pakistan vulnerable. Sexual assaults against underage Christian girls by Muslim men continue to be reported. Catholic NGOs estimate at least 700 Christian girls are kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam every year. Throughout the reporting period, multiple reports surfaced of Christian women being raped, with law enforcement either hesitant to act, which is again a consequence of "Organized Corruption". Other societal factors lead to pressuring victims to recant their allegations.

Many Christians are manual workers, earning their living on a daily basis. Many of them are uneducated and suffer from unfair and arbitrary treatment by their employers. Normally, they do not get the state-approved minimal wages. Therefore, many Christians are poor, illiterate and do not have the possibility to participate in society. They are not perceived as being on an equal footing with the majority Muslims. This is not to say that many Muslims do not suffer a lot, too. Due to poverty, social stratification and poor education, Muslims are, for example, victims of the blasphemy laws, too.

On the other hand, there is freedom in the country. The laws of Pakistan give Christians considerable freedom to run their established churches. The Christian population is growing and steady but significant trickles of Muslims are joining churches.

Society widely neglects the Christian minority. Though there are dozens of NGOs caring for Christians and other religious or ethnic groups, they do not have their say in the political process. Christians do not expect fair treatment by the police, let alone in court. Regularly, the police refuse to even issue a "First Information Report", which is the starting point for every due process.

Extremist views may very well gain popularity in the upcoming elections as religion and the “defense of (true) Islam” are a means to mobilise the masses and to gain support – to the disadvantage of minorities.

In recent years, Pakistan considerably increased in points and rank on the World Watch List. This year, the country remains on a high level as the Christian minority keeps on being despised and pushed to the edge. The attitude of society worsened and the number of extremists raising their voice against minority rights grew. Sad examples of this were the cases of Asia Bibi and Rimsha Masih and the related assassinations of politicians. The fact that the country dropped in ranks compared to last year is due to the country being overtaken by several other countries where the situation for the Christian minority deteriorated more rapidly.

There are other religious minorities suffering from societal discrimination and national laws, too. The Ahmadi minority, self-identifying as Muslim, is denied this status by official laws and hence, is widely discriminated against. Shias faced several horrible attacks recently. Hindus are targeted, too. Apart from the already mentioned blasphemy laws, the Hudood Ordinances provide for harsh punishments for alleged violations of Islamic law by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

An improvement is not to be expected soon. The strongmen are neither found in government nor in the army what especially is shown in several areas where local tribes rule unaffected. This sometimes leads to moves against minorities by which the government tries to show that it still is in power – be it to sooth radical groups, be it to please the people. Hence, one can very well speak of “dictatorial paranoia” as one of the country’s persecution dynamics. Some of the country’s observers optimistically speak of a co-rule between the civilian government (in Islamabad) and the Army High Command (in Rawalpindi). Others speak of a failed state. This view is, however, contested as the country has strong rulers. But they are rather found locally than in the central government. Be that as it may, as long as extremists influence the street’s view, minorities and Christians in particular will suffer from outright persecution from discrimination to neglect.

15. Ethiopia (score: 63)

Ethiopia has a complex mix of persecution dynamics. ‘Ecclesiastical arrogance’ is the country’s historical persecution dynamic. For years, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has been seriously persecuting believers who have left their ranks or joined the renewal movements within the EOC. Secondly, there is ‘Islamic extremism’. With around 66% Christians and 34% Muslims, the country has seen an increase in hostilities against Christians. Thirdly, ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ plays a role. The WWL 2013 saw a sharp rise of Ethiopia on the list, and Islam has overtaken the EOC as main source of persecution. Converts and ‘underground believers’ have to be very cautious to avoid being traced. The level of violence is medium compared to other Eastern African States, although it is likely that several forms of physical violence are underreported e.g. violence against Christian women. Persecution often starts in the family and there have been some violent attacks within families. The fanatic group inside the EOC (‘Mahibere Kidusan’) is a growing threat for non-traditional Protestants and renewal movements within the EOC. The group allegedly wants to control the government policies to restrict the activities of other religions. The death of Prime Minister Zenawi in 2012, who sought to crush Mahibere Kidusan, is considered a big blow for the renewal movements. Mahibere Kidusan is currently riding high. An underground fanatic Islamic group (‘Kewarjah’) is repeatedly blamed for attacks against Christians in south-western Ethiopia. Moreover, the awakening of Muslims is believed to have been initiated by a group called ‘Committee for Coordinating Muslims Demands’. A new law aimed at banning all religious messages and talks from public spaces, is expected to bring a wave of restrictions against Christians. Ethiopia ranks 15th on the WWL, in the category ‘Severe Persecution’.

Ethiopia faces a complex mix of persecution dynamics. In the first place there is ‘Ecclesiastical arrogance’ as a persecution dynamic. For many years the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has been seriously persecuting believers who left their ranks to join (mostly) non-traditional Protestant churches, or believers who joined the renewal movements within the EOC. In this write-up we call them Christian Background Believers (CBBs). Secondly there is ‘Islamic extremism’. The country is made up of around 66% Christians and 34% Muslims. The latter are spread over 60% of the territory, embedded in a wider regional dynamic in which Islamism has become very active in spreading its influence. In Ethiopia, this has led to increasing hostilities against Christians, targeting them in many

areas with a high Muslim presence. Affected are mostly Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) and CBBs, but also non-traditional Protestants and historic churches like the EOC. In the third place, there is increasing suspicion that the government is ideologically developing towards a Chinese governance model, thereby creating a new persecution dynamic, 'Dictatorial paranoia'.

The issue of 'Tribal antagonism' as an upcoming persecution dynamic is reported too. Oromo is one of the two biggest tribes in Ethiopia. Many Oromo are increasingly interested in following the traditional belief system, 'wakefeta'. Wakefeta is a form of both tradition and religion. A serious number of people are followers and some have started to distance themselves from Christianity. This dynamic has to be further investigated.

The WWL 2012 already saw a sharp rise of Ethiopia on the list and warned that "Ethiopia is a country to keep an eye on. Protestant churches are the fastest growing movement in the country. "Underground movements" both in areas where EOC or Islam dominate have been reported as making strong progress in their work. EOC and Islam will continue to see them as a threat. Besides, Islamism also targets mainstream EOC. Open Doors expects that in the short term persecution of Christians in the broad sense of the word "Christian," will increase sharply – all the more so because extremist Islam in Ethiopia is fuelled by external sources. The unresolved conflict in the eastern part of the country is also attracting some extremist groups like Al Shabab from neighbouring Somalia." A year later Open Doors Field experts add, "Roughly, a decade ago EOC was the main source of persecution. But, now it has been overtaken by Islam. However, that doesn't necessarily mean EOC has scaled down attacks against the fourth type of Christianity (non-traditional Protestants). EOC never considered this fourth type as Christian groups and still struggles to recognise them. This only means that Islam has opened the new front against the third (MBBs and CBBs) and fourth type of Christianity more frequently and harshly than EOC. As usual, Islam does not want to see other religions where it feels dominance and ability to get rid of them. This is how also EOC is experiencing some persecution."

Hostilities take different forms. There are the 'normal' hostilities represented by rather high pressures in private and church life. Ethiopia (like Eritrea) knows the use of private homes as house churches for the third and fourth type of Christianity. It intensifies the pressure on the sphere of private as well as church life. Converts and almost all of the "underground believers" should take maximum care to avoid being traced as belonging to those house churches. The pressure is a bit less tough yet still serious in community and national life. The relatively lower score in family life is partly related to the fact that the non-traditional Protestants (fourth type of Christianity) often profess and live their faith within **and** with their nuclear and/or extended families.

The level of violence is medium, although it is likely that several forms of physical violence are underreported e.g. violence against Christian women. An Open Doors Field expert reports, "It is culturally shameful to speak about it when a woman is raped. However, that doesn't mean it did not happen. The absence of reports doesn't justify the absence of harassment." A young Christian in SNNPR State was reportedly abducted by a Muslim man in forced marriage for 15 days. She was raped and kept under strict control to prevent her from escaping. Christians didn't have information on her whereabouts until she managed to escape. A church leader was stabbed to death by Muslims six hours walk from his home village in Western Ethiopia. Muslims singled out the leader because of his active role in evangelism and discipleship services in the newly started church.

Looking at the agents of persecution the situation is tough, particularly for believers of the third and fourth type of Christianity. The **broader mass of the population** is an agent of persecution. People are either incited by their religious leaders or perhaps have economic reasons to attack. **Family** is where the persecution starts. Some Muslim families are not hesitant to even kill their daughter/son if they refuse to stop the 'new faith'. A husband would divorce his wife; parents would kick their children out etc. Some families are even involved in violent attacks. **Local political parties** are sometimes involved too, not openly, but behind the scenes. An Open Doors Field expert reports, "If they feel it can give a boost to the support they seek from the dominant religious group, they would not hesitate to participate in hostilities. A church in Lalibela was closed by members of the ruling party, as a video record shows." **Religious leaders of both Islam and EOC** openly criticise Protestant churches as outsiders, accuse them of being CIA agents. Sheikhs (Muslim clerics) are the front leaders in most cases of hostilities against believers. Especially in the areas where Christianity is newly introduced, **tribal leaders and village elders** would motivate their followers to stop the spread of the 'new faith' by all means. Rather worrying is that the **local authorities** seem geared up towards anti-Christian hostilities. (For more information – see below.)

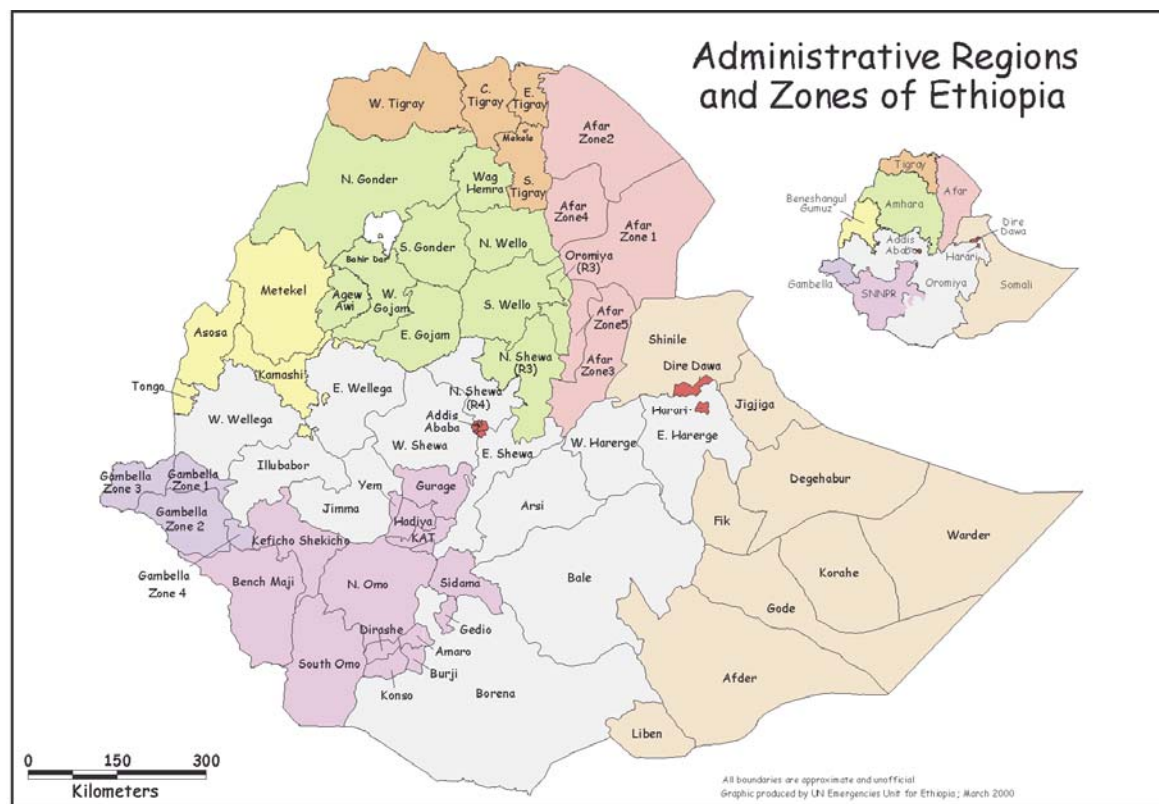
Fanatical groups both from EOC and Islam have to be mentioned. They normally monitor the churches. The fanatical group inside the EOC ('Mahibere Kidusan') has to be mentioned here

particularly. Open Doors Field experts report that the group is now a growing threat for non-traditional Protestant churches and renewal movements within the EOC. The group allegedly has an ambition to influence and control the government policies to restrict the activities of other religions. There are reports that the Mahibere Kidusan has managed to infiltrate the government's security and administrative apparatus. Already before the death of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, senior government officials are nervous about the influence of Mahibere Kidusan. In the absence of a powerful leader and the death of the relatively moderate patriarch (late leader of EOC) the next move of the group is nervously watched. An underground fanatic Islamic group ('Kewarjah') is repeatedly blamed for attacks against Christians in south-western Ethiopia. Moreover, the awakening of Muslims is believed to have been initiated by a group called 'Committee for Coordinating Muslims Demands'. Government jailed many of the group leaders and put them on trial.

RELIGIOUS GEOGRAPHY The combination of persecution by the EOC and Islam towards (i) CBBs and MBBs and (ii) non-traditional Protestants (and/or other Christians not mentioned in the other types), makes the scores for the territory element always concern the whole country: 2/3-1. To understand the situation in Ethiopia well, please consider the map and explanations below on the spread of Islam over the country. The central map gives the Zonal Administrations. The small map in the upper right corner gives the (bigger) regional States.

If one roughly calculates the areas dominated by Islam, surprisingly around 60% of the territory is covered by Islam, while they form only 34% of the population, according to reports of the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSAE). That is only because an ample part of the population is living in the highlands of central and northern Ethiopia. The trend is that the Muslim population is growing fast in numbers both in biological and mission ways.

Open Doors Field experts prepared an overview, based on the statistics report by the CSAE to show the religious demography in Ethiopia. Please find hereunder the Islam dominated areas indicated on state by state bases. Ethiopia has nine regional states and two City Administrations. The regional states themselves are again divided into Zonal and District Administrations. The map indicates the Zonal Administrative areas under each regional state.



Map of Ethiopia. From Regions & Zones idp-uk.org.

1. Tigray
 - a. There is no place where Muslims specifically dominate in this regional state. However, government officials in the regional state have made it clear that the small town of Negash [which is considered holiest by the country's Muslims as it was the place where Mohammed's first relatives took shelter in early days of his time in Mecca] is where they would not process any request by Christians to have land and church.
2. Afar
 - a. This regional state is 100 per cent Islam. There are very few Christians from other regional states. But the home tribe is all Islam.
3. Amhara
 - a. This regional state is predominantly an EOC follower (82.5%). But, there are areas under it where Islam dominates.
 - b. To name a few Zonal Administrations where Islam dominates:
 - i. South Wello
 - ii. Many parts of North Wello
4. Oromia
 - a. This regional state is evenly divided between Christians (both EOC and Protestant churches) and Islam. Also, it is widely believed to be the main battleground for being the majority. In the past two decades, EOC alarmingly has lost many of its followers to Islam.
 - b. To name some of the Islam dominated Zonal Administrations:
 - i. East Hararge
 - ii. West Hararge
 - iii. Bale
 - iv. Arsi
 - v. Jimma
 - vi. Illubabor
 - vii. Many places in West Wellega
 - viii. Many places in East Shewa
5. Somali
 - a. This regional state is also 100% Islam.
6. Benishangul
 - a. This regional state is also evenly divided between Christians (EOC and Protestants) and Islam. However, parts of it are still dominated by Islam.
 - b. To name them (Zonal Administrations):
 - i. Asosa
 - ii. Tongo
 - iii. Komashi
7. Gambella
 - a. This is the only regional state where Protestants dominate (70%). Muslims are roughly 5% and growing.
8. SNNPR
 - a. The regional state is predominantly Christian (both EOC and Protestants comprise the 75% majority). However, Muslims in this state (who are 14.1%) are one of the most violent in the country by attacking churches and believers. There are areas where Islam is dominant in this regional state as well.
 - b. To name a few:
 - i. Gurage
 - ii. Parts of Hadiya
 - iii. Parts of KAT
9. Harari
 - a. This regional state is predominantly Islam (70%).
10. Addis Ababa
 - a. Muslims in this Administrative city are 16.2%. However, they are estimated to have three times more the number of Mosques than EOC/Protestant church places.
11. Direedawa
 - a. This Administrative City is dominated by Islam (70.1%)

Looking at the religious geography of Ethiopia and combining that with the map of the wider region, Ethiopia seems to be caught in a struggle for Islamist expansion that is both national **and** regional.

POLITICAL EVENTS The death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who sought to crush Mahibere Kidusan, the fanatical group inside EOC, is considered a big blow for the renewal movements. Zenawi was not a supporter of those movements, but his actions against Mahibere Kidusan for political

survival were considered by the EOC renewal movements as helpful for less pressure. His replacement, Haile Mariam Desalegn, does not possess the political and religious background required to confront the fanatical group. Mahibere Kidusan is currently riding high and even called on government to stop labelling it as a fanatic group. In addition to this, the death of the EOC leader is a big shock for the renewal movements as he was reluctant to take action against them. Now, in his absence and with the government's reduced leverage, this fanatic group appears to be taking charge. The coming months may bring difficult times for the renewal movements inside the EOC.

The actual role of the government is causing concern. Open Doors Field experts reported that the government stopped registering new churches and the renewal process for the already registered churches is reported to be a difficult process. Building a new church is problematic too. Churches in Ethiopia complain that the government hasn't answered their call for land. Some churches have waited for more than 15 years to get land. Meanwhile many churches that had been taken by the previous regime have been returned to the owners. "The (future) role of the government is one of the areas where the main debate arises in Ethiopia. Outwardly, the government and its officials say they are not ideologically linked with anyone. However, when we think how the communist ideology and its strict interpretation helped the currently ruling party to come to power, one cannot rule out communist sympathies. China is always presented as the "best model" in almost all governance and economic endeavours." A new law which is considered to be ratified this year is expected to bring a wave of restrictions against Christians. The new law is aimed at banning all religious messages and talks from public places outside of churches and mosques. The law would apply to all religious groups. However, past experience confirms that such regulations would mainly target Protestant churches.

The situation in Ethiopia is extremely complex. The future for the Church in Ethiopia is worrying. As an Open Doors Field expert states, "We are not even sure that churches are adequately aware of the coming threats. The new law to ban religious messages from public places would directly target believers. Also, the change in government and EOC leadership is another potential trend that can open the door for fanatics to attack more churches and believers." Add to that the ever growing geographical push **and** hostilities of extremist Islam. All this in a context in which a daunting and uncontrolled inflation is affecting persecuted believers making it hard for them to survive - persecuted believers are normally extra vulnerable to economic short comings. He concludes, "2013 is a critical time in the country's life."

16. Uzbekistan (score: 62)

'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Organised corruption' drive the persecution in Uzbekistan. No religious activities outside state-controlled institutions are allowed in the country. The Russian Orthodox Church has more freedoms, though the regime will do anything necessary to stay in power. Protestants are seen by the government as a destabilising element which needs to be controlled or rather eradicated. Systemic corruption is rife and anyone opposing this, as Christians do, comes under pressure. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face pressure from family, friends and community and are perceived as bringing shame to the community. Churches live in fear of raids, termination of services and confiscation of literature, which are frequent and increasing. Church members face harassment, detention and arrest for 'illegal religious activity' or 'extremist charges' including holding private prayer meetings or possessing illegal literature. The importation of Scripture is hindered. Churches require compulsory registration and there are again frequent and increasingly heavy fines for conducting services or possessing Christian materials. The future is unlikely to see improvement for believers. The expected transition in leadership in coming years and the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in 2014 could lead to an influx of Islamic extremists. Uzbekistan also has the highest number of political prisoners among all former Soviet Union states (estimated to range between 5,000 to 10,000). If those prisoners – frequently imprisoned on true or alleged terrorist charges - are released, this could further fuel sentiments against the Christian minority. Uzbekistan ranks 16th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

No religious activities beyond state-run and controlled institutions are allowed. Both mainstream Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses are frequently branded as "extremists" for their practice of religion outside state-sanctioned structures.

This shows the major persecution dynamic in the country, 'Dictatorial paranoia': a considerable part of persecution is state-driven. The regime will do anything it deems necessary to stay in power. Church raids, the confiscation of Christian literature including Bibles and heavy fines for Christians are frequent and according to recent reports are even increasing. Pressure from this side is unlikely to dwindle as the leadership is preparing for transition, taking into account the president's age. Protestants are seen as a destabilising element in society, so they need not only to be controlled, but if necessary, eradicated. Security forces stepped up wire-tapping homes in order to find extremists which also affected believers and churches. Another strand of crackdown targets religious education, no matter what religion is concerned.

Another persecution dynamic is the 'Organised corruption' the country faces. It is endemic throughout all levels of administration and government. The power groups within the regime have no interest in losing their ability to make money. The regime is concentrating on balancing different power bases by applying tactical means. Rule of law is a remote dream as the juridical system depends widely from the executive. All people suffer from this corruption, but as soon as they dare to speak up against it, or are seen as opposing it as Christians do, they will come under pressure. From the lack of rule of law, Christians suffer in a special way as they have to face court proceedings more frequently.

Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face additional challenges; they suffer from pressure from their families and friends as well as from their local communities if their conversion is discovered. Converts are not only perceived as bringing shame to the families and villages ("mahallas"), but also as leaving traditional faith and clinging to a foreign faith, perceived as "Russian" (Orthodox) or as "Western" (Protestant). As the regime has installed people in the mahallas to watch what is going on there, pressure is high, being a sign for 'Dictatorial paranoia' as it is state-controlled, but mixed with 'Islamic extremism' as it is driven by Islamic piety.

Churches therefore face the permanent danger of being raided, their services disrupted and terminated and Christian literature confiscated. Church members face harassment, detention, and arrests for "illegal religious activity" or from time to time "extremism charges", which include holding private prayer meetings or possessing "illegal religious literature". It is up to the state to define the illegality of a meeting or a piece of literature. Frequently, these terms are used in an arbitrary way. One prominent example of this is Tohar Haydarov, a believer from an unregistered Baptist Church, who was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in March 2010 on trumped-up allegations of drug manufacturing.

The official import of scriptures and Christian literature for registered organisations, like the Bible Society, is hindered. Churches need compulsory registration, but the administration has not issued any permit during recent years and many churches have lost their registration and some even their buildings instead. Orthodox churches are starting to face problems on a smaller scale.

Christians face heavy fines for conducting services or possessing Christian material and these fines are prohibitively high. Because of these very difficult circumstances, it is not surprising that cooperation among churches is rather poor. A broader alliance or council of churches is not possible. Notably domestic churches are not widely included, even informally. In addition, it is very burdensome to conduct bigger meetings or training. This is even true for the domestic Uzbek church. Having a service in Uzbek language or singing worship songs is prohibited by the state and will not only result in a harsh reaction from the state, but also in a reaction from the mahalla neighborhood.

Even though it is difficult to predict the future, some factors make it reasonable not to expect a major improvement for the Christian minority in future. The expected leadership transition has already been mentioned. In all likelihood, this will just be a continuation of the autocratic government. Most likely not under the name "Karimov". Ruler names will change, the system will probably not. The scheduled withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan in 2014 might lead to a potential influx of Islamic extremists, returning from their fights to their Central Asian home countries. A considerable share of them is ethnic Uzbek and their home region is the border region to Afghanistan and the Fergana valley. A reflux of those Islamists is therefore entirely possible. This is highly significant for the church. If Islamic extremists return to Uzbekistan, the situation of the church will deteriorate quickly.

Another factor could aggravate the situation. As the Russian Human Rights Group Memorial reported in 2011, Uzbekistan has the highest number of all political prisoners among all states of the former Soviet Union, even more than in all the other states combined. Estimations range from 5,000 to 10,000 political prisoners, imprisoned because the government sees their views as deviant, in some way as extremist or because they practiced Islam outside state-approved structures. If these prisoners are released due to a transition of power or just due to the fact that more prison space is needed, this could fuel sentiment against the Christian minority.

For the time being, the pressure on Christians remains high. There is a growing number congregating outside state-approved structures. The government fears (and fights) every kind of possible uproar and will continue to do so for the sake of its survival. Other religious minorities deemed as dangerous, extremist or simply deviant as the followers of the Islamic Nursi group suffer as well. Most likely the government will continue its crackdown on these groups, especially under such volatile influences from neighbouring countries as just described.

Therefore the outlook for the Uzbek Christians is not bright. Authorities have started to tighten their grip on all churches. Societal hostility against them is growing, fanned by negative TV reports. At the same time, teaching their believers is increasingly challenging for local pastors. All these factors explain why Uzbekistan for the eighth consecutive year remains the highest ranking country on the World Watch List of all Central Asian states. The drop in rank should by no means be perceived as an improvement of the situation for Christians. Uzbekistan was just overtaken by the quickly intensifying horrific situation in countries as Nigeria, Syria or Mali.

17. Libya (score: 60)

The main persecution dynamic in Libya is ‘Islamic extremism’. Under Gaddafi’s rule, conditions for Christians were extremely harsh and Libya did not even have a real constitution. The feared and omnipresent secret police made sure restrictions on church activities and distribution of literature were enforced and evangelism criminalised. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are always at risk from their families and most Libyan Christians are afraid to meet as any kind of religious gathering is forbidden. Expats are allowed churches but Libyans are not allowed to attend. The revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia gave Libyans the courage to fight Gaddafi, but despite this leading to Gaddafi’s death, it is feared that the future will be worse. Because of the unrest, 75 per cent of expat Christians have left the country. The NTC, who took over after Gaddafi, have repeatedly announced their intent to implement a ‘democracy according to Sharia’ in Libya where all citizens are already considered Sunni Muslim by law. The main persecution agents today are family, community, fanatical armed groups and, to a lesser extent, the government. Importing the Bible in Arabic remains strictly forbidden and proselytising and missionary activity is officially prohibited. Some Libyan Christians are fleeing their homeland. It is unlikely that the situation will change, even with a new constitution. Libya ranks 17th on the WWL, among the countries where there is ‘Severe Persecution’.

Under the despotic rule of Muammar Gaddafi, the situation for Christians in Libya was already extremely harsh. There were some freedoms for expat Christians, who are mostly temporary workers from neighboring African countries. Black and non-Arab Africans faced racism. Immediately after the revolution, it was difficult for them as they were seen as possible mercenaries working for Gaddafi. During Gaddafi’s reign, Libya did not have a real constitution. There was a book with some legal prescriptions called the Green Book, but in practice Gaddafi’s will was law. The feared and omnipresent secret police made sure that restrictions on the organisation of church activities and distribution of Christian literature were enforced and evangelism was criminalised.

As in most Muslim countries, converting from Islam brings social pressure. Muslim Background Believers are always at risk from their families; there were some reported cases of beatings by family members. Most Libyan Christians are afraid to meet with other believers, as any kind of religious gathering (other than Islamic) for Libyans is forbidden. Expats are allowed to have their own churches, but Libyans are not allowed to attend and the expat churches diminished considerably during the reporting period.

The revolutions in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia, and the military support by NATO, gave Libyans the courage to fight Gaddafi, who had been in power since 1969. But after a bloody civil war that led to the death of Gaddafi, it is feared the future will be worse than under Gaddafi. During the uprisings that started in February 2011 and led to civil war, Christians (both expats and MBBs) were more open about their faith in Jesus Christ. These Christians now fear the consequences of their witness. Because of the unrest, 75 per cent of the expat Christians left the country and it is not clear how many Christians remain or will return in the future.

The NTC, that took over after the overthrow of the regime, set a dangerous precedent regarding religious supervision. Under its rule, the Saint Georges Church in Tripoli was ransacked by fanatical movements when the NTC took control of Tripoli in August 2011. NTC officials have repeatedly publically announced their intent to implement a 'democracy according to Sharia,' in a country where all citizens were already considered Sunni Muslims by law. It is unclear whether Libya's current government, headed by interim head of state General National Congress Chairman Mohamed Magarief and Prime Minister Ali Zidan, who are not affiliated to Islamist factions, will move the country towards the implementation of the Sharia. However, parliamentary and social pressure for the implementation of an Islamic government system can be expected to have considerable influence on the future course of the country.

Under Gaddafi's regime, the state was the main source of oppression of Christians. The main persecution agents today are the direct family and community, fanatical armed groups (including Salafists), and to a minor extent the government.

Recent examples of persecution include the arrest of two believers in April 2011, after Bibles were discovered amongst a shipment of aid to the Benghazi area. In May 2012, Archimandrite Loakim of the Alexandria Orthodox Church was shot at whilst he was at George the Victorious Church in Tripoli.

To bring in the Bible in Arabic remains strictly forbidden. This is another factor that suppresses the growth of the indigenous Church. Proselytising of Muslims and missionary activity is officially prohibited in the country, where much anxiety remains despite the demise of Gaddafi's much feared security forces.

Because of the oppression caused by the intolerance of the society and the relatives, Libyan Christians hardly dare to talk about their faith. Many of them are (considering) fleeing their homeland. One of the problems male converts are facing is marriage difficulties (finding a partner) caused by religious differences. The country adheres to traditional Islamic law which states that a non-Muslim woman who marries a Muslim man is not required to convert to Islam, although many do so; however, a non-Muslim man must convert to marry a Muslim woman.

The government claims that all citizens are 'Sunni Muslim' by definition. This is coupled with broad prohibitions on any sort of independent political association, preventing citizens from identifying themselves as members of any religious or political group. There are a number of secret organisations, militias and spy networks that are constantly watching those designated as subversives. Foreigners, too, are closely followed. The overall situation makes evangelism in Libya virtually impossible. It is not likely this will change when the country's new Constitution is adopted. Although the source of persecution of Christians has changed after the revolution, the degree of pressure on Christians remains the same.

18. Laos (score: 59)

The main persecution dynamics in Laos are 'Communist oppression' and 'Religious militancy', partly mixed with "Tribal antagonism". Laos is unique as one of the few remaining Marxist-Leninist countries in the world as well as one of the few countries whose population follows Theravada Buddhism. The state and the ruling Communist party put heavy pressure on the small Christian community. If Christians do not participate in traditional festivities and ceremonies, they can face 'Religious Militancy' in the form of Buddhist aggression. Three Christian denominations are registered, yet Christians are considered the number one enemy of the state. On paper, the government protects the rights of Christians but this is not the case in practice. Persecution is mostly instigated by animists and spiritists who lose their trade due to conversions to Christianity. Therefore, there are high levels of persecution in tribal areas and villages. Families see Christianity as breaking family unity; being Lao is considered synonymous with being Buddhist. Evangelisation is effectively prohibited on the grounds it would create social division. The government promotes Buddhist practices as a part of Lao culture. In 2012 at least three churches were closed under Decree 92, the principal legislation defining religious practices and favouring Buddhism. There were, however, encouraging reports of an official stopping the expulsion of 10 Christian families. No major changes are expected as the government continues to favour Buddhism therefore encouraging local religious and political leaders to pressurise the Christian minority. Laos ranks 18th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

Laos is a very unique place as it is one of the few remaining Marxist-Leninist countries in the world as well as one of the few countries following Theravada Buddhism (the others being China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba on the one side and Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Sri Lanka on the other, respectively). This unique factor describes the two main sources of persecution well.

On the one hand, it is the state and the ruling communist party which put heavy pressure on the small Christian community, mainly via local authorities. Communist oppression is therefore one persecution dynamic as the rulers try to keep everything under control. On the other hand, the dominant religion and some of its clerics persecute Christians, especially at local level. If they do not agree to participate in traditional festivities and ceremonies or just want to live their faith undisturbed, they swiftly face “Religious militancy”.

Though three Christian denominations are registered (Catholic Church, Laos Evangelical Church and Seventh-day Adventist), Christians remain the number one enemy of the state (the second being the drug problem, as Laos is part of the infamous “Golden Triangle” and suffers from drug planting and trafficking – Christian getting in the way of the drug mafia will be targeted by them). On paper, the government protects the rights of Christians and other religions, but practice is completely different. Small independent Protestant congregations are especially under pressure and have been refused recognition. The activities of unrecognised churches are considered illegal by authorities, who detain and arrest their members and leaders under various pretexts.

Persecution is mostly initiated by animists and spiritists who lose their trade due to conversions to Christianity, for Christians will not use their services anymore, showing the persecution dynamic “Tribal antagonism”. They believe that putting a cross in their village invites misfortune and sickness. This leads to high levels of persecution especially in the tribal areas and villages, often accompanied by strong family pressure on converts. They face harassment by employers and local authorities, can be called in by police and are sometimes forced to take part in animistic rituals. In general, the pressure on Christians is strong throughout the country, but concentrated in the remote and rural areas. The reasons why family members persecute converts is because they see Christianity as breaking the family unity; being Lao is considered synonymous to being a Buddhist. Christianity is seen as a foreign and strange religion.

Evangelisation, though theoretically permitted by the 2002 decree on religious practice, is effectively prohibited on the grounds that it would create social division. The Prime Minister’s Decree on Religious Practice (Decree 92) is the principal legal instrument defining rules for religious practice. This decree, which is updated repeatedly, defines the government’s role as the final arbiter of permissible religious activities. Although this decree has contributed to greater religious tolerance since it was put into effect in 2002, authorities have used its many conditions to restrict aspects of religious practice, particularly at the district and local level. The government promotes Lao culture, which includes the teachings of Buddhist practices. This ordinance gives a dubious signal. Christians are not always targeted, depending on the local rulers. In general, no major changes in the coming year should be expected as the government continues to favour Buddhism, therefore encouraging local religious and political leader to pressurise the Christian minority.

In 2012, at least three churches were closed, adding to others closed down in previous years, more faced threats to be closed. The authorities use Decree 92 as their basis in taking over or closing down a church. Meetings can only be held in the church, not in houses. If a meeting is held at home, the government has the right to arrest those in attendance. The basis of closing down churches is usually their lack of proper documentation. Believers from a tribal background, which includes the vast majority of all Christian believers, are suffering most. Several Christians have been arrested, detained and pressured to renounce their faith. This is especially true among Christians from the Katin or Hmong tribes who are sometimes even killed, often in Army clashes.

Recently, an encouraging report showed that an official from the district authority on religion stopped an expulsion of 10 Christian families ordered by local rulers. Even if this might just have been a clash of competencies, it sends an encouraging signal, though much remains to be done.

In recent years, nothing has changed substantially for the Christian minority in Laos. The state remains Communist-atheist and authorities exercise tight control on all parts of society. This is also true for all religious activities. Despite isolated incidents where Christians find protection or relief by officials, the perception of Christianity by state and society remains hostile. Family and society increase their willingness to target and harass Christians. Buddhist clerics and animistic shamans are

becoming more aggressive towards Christians. In 2013, the decrease in ranks in the WWL can mainly be explained by other countries increasing their scores.

19. Turkmenistan (score: 58)

‘Dictatorial paranoia’ and ‘Organised corruption’ are the main persecution dynamics in Turkmenistan. The country is ruled by an autocratic regime which executes strict state control in order to avoid the emergence of any independent economic, social or cultural groups, which includes churches. Turkmenistan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. It is very rich, mainly due to large gas fields, but the riches only benefit a small minority. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face pressure from both their families and their community. All Christians are treated with mistrust, but MBBs face significantly more problems, including being physically harmed. All unregistered religious activity is strictly illegal and the government uses the ‘Council on Religious Affairs’ to monitor and pressurise churches. Police, the secret services and informers keep the church under surveillance. The frequency of raids, even on registered churches, has increased and getting registration is nearly impossible. The Russian Orthodox Church faces less problems in this regard. Formal religious education is almost totally banned. All religious publications are forbidden. Former President Niyazov’s book ‘Ruhnama’, which links Turkmen identity with Islam, continues to have an influence and is reportedly still used in school and university curricula. Arbitrary treatment, raids, fines and court charges will go on as long as the ruling elite perceives every group it cannot control as a threat to their absolute power. Turkmenistan ranks 19th in the WWL, in category ‘Severe Persecution’.

Turkmenistan is a country ruled by an autocratic regime which executes strict state control in order to avoid the emergence of any independent economic, social or cultural groups, which includes churches. The state is by far the biggest persecutor of Christians, the main persecution dynamic being ‘Dictatorial paranoia’. The ruling elite around President Berdymukhamedov will do whatever it deems necessary to stay in power, suppressing all groups it perceives as dangerous. The spheres of life most affected by this persecution dynamic are therefore the national and church spheres.

In addition, ‘Organised corruption’ has to be seen as a second persecution dynamic. Turkmenistan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. In terms of natural resources, it is very rich, mainly due to large gas fields, some of them just recently found. These potential riches benefit only a small minority in the country. All who dare to speak out against this injustice face immediate pressure. All Christians will become victims of persecution by this persecution dynamic if they criticise the system or simply are in the way of the rulers.

Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face additional pressure from their families and in the community sphere. Whereas all Christians can become victims of mistrust and social pressure, especially in rural areas, MBBs face significantly more problems, including being physically harmed, pointing to the persecution dynamic ‘Islamic extremism’.

Due to the high state control, all Christian assemblies need to register. All unregistered religious activity is strictly illegal and the government uses the “Council on Religious Affairs” to monitor and pressurise churches. There are informers in the churches, so Christians always have to be careful about what they say and how they say it, whether their assembly is registered or not. The police and secret services keep the church under strict surveillance. Raids on church services started in almost all regions of Turkmenistan. Even registered groups suffer from raids and questioning. According to a recent report obtained by Open Doors, the frequency of the raids has increased. Getting registration is a bureaucratic process. For indigenous Turkmen communities it is impossible to get, for the others it is next to impossible.

Formal religious education, apart from small scale basic education in some mosques and Russian Orthodox churches, is almost totally banned. Religious communities cannot arrange lectures, courses or extended study and training programs, such as setting up degree or diploma courses. As the government stated in its January 2010 report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), “Teaching of religion privately is banned.” Additionally, all religious publications or printing are forbidden. Importation and distribution need approval, and this is only very rarely granted. It has not happened in the reporting period.

Generally, the Russian-Orthodox Church faces harassment to a lesser extent than all other groups. All Christian as well as all other 'deviant' groups face the ongoing influence of the former President Niyazov's book called "Ruhnama", which links Turkmen identity with Islam and a special interpretation of Turkmen history. Ruhnama, as well as texts written by the current President, are still used in school and university curricula of the country. However, the focus is beginning to shift from a personality cult concerning the deceased President to a new cult for the ruling President. Therefore, the personality cult has only changed in terms of recipient and maybe name, but not as a fact.

After having served nearly 50% of his four year prison term, Pastor Ilmurad Nurliev was released due to a general amnesty in February 2012. The charges against him were fabricated and the court proceedings flawed. Now, he is under reporting restrictions, having to show up at the local police station every week. His experience mirrors the future the Christian minority will face in all likelihood: arbitrary treatment, raids, fines and court charges will go on as long as the ruling elite perceives every group it cannot control as a threat to their absolute power. Turkmenistan will therefore remain a prominent example of the most repressive regimes when it comes to the treatment of Christians.

In Turkmenistan, nothing has changed significantly in recent years. Pressure and harassment for the Christian minority remains high, the dictatorial regime is highly repressive, corruption is rampant and converts suffer particularly, by their own families and the community amongst others. This is why the country has not changed in rank that much on the World Watch List in recent years. Behind Uzbekistan, it is the most repressive Central Asian state for religious minorities. One thing is especially noteworthy in this context: despite the fact that several countries on the list overtook Turkmenistan due to a rapid deterioration and exponentially growing violence, the country nearly kept its rank. This is consistent with the fact that all reports available show an increase in pressure when it comes to the church. Apart from the Christian minorities, Muslim minority groups perceived as extremist also suffer from government oppression.

20. Qatar (score: 58)

The main persecution dynamic in Qatar is 'Islamic extremism' in combination with 'Dictatorial paranoia'. The state religion in Qatar is strictly conservative Islam and nearly all Qatari citizens are by definition Sunni or Shia Muslims. Christianity entered Qatar in the early centuries AD, before being driven out. Over the past 100 years, expats (including Christians) have arrived. Public worship of religions other than Islam was prohibited until recently. There are some Christian places of worship. Most Qataris are unhappy yet no explicit opposition has been displayed. There is, however, a flip side – as Christian worship will only be allowed in a designated religious complex, there is a risk of ghettoisation. Many expat labourers are denied access to the complex as they live too far away or are prevented from attending by employers. The concentration of Christian activities in one spot provides opportunity to control and monitor Christians. There are more than 100 informal fellowships gathering in homes generally tolerated by authorities. The Qatari Constitution declares that 'freedom to practise religious rites shall be guaranteed' yet in reality, expat Christians are restricted. The government prohibits proselytising of non-Muslims and foreign workers who evangelise are frequently deported. Fear is a significant factor and a Muslim who converts is considered an apostate and may face the death penalty, though it is rarely executed. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) also risk divorce and losing custody of their children. MBBs are the most persecuted, as well as Christian migrant workers who often live in labour camps. Qatar ranks 20th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

Nearly all Qatari citizens and nationals are by definition either Sunni or Shia Muslims, and the state religion is strictly conservative (Wahhabi) Islam. However, there was a time that Christianity was popular in this desert emirate. During the first centuries AD, a Persian province at the time, Qatar housed several churches and monasteries. In fact a Qatari Bishop was represented at the First Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Within a few centuries after Islam's arrival in the seventh century, Christianity disappeared in most Gulf states. Qatar adopted Islam as its official religion in the seventh century and has remained devoted to this faith ever since.

Over the past 100 years, expats – among them Christians - have entered the country, especially after the discovery of oil. In 1916 the Anglican Church became the first Christian community with a presence in the country for 14 centuries. Public worship of religions other than Islam was prohibited until recently. In 2008, the first Christian church since pre-Islamic times was built in a government

provided area on the outskirts of Doha and the land was personally donated by the Emir. It should be noted though that this Roman Catholic church lacks signage, steeple, bell and cross. Other Christian places of worship are also being constructed, to house amongst others Orthodox, Coptic, Indian and Anglican/Protestant/Evangelical congregations. In 2009, the Indian complex was officially opened and the Anglican complex - which will be used by other Protestant fellowships as well - is planned to be complete in early 2013. Though most Qatari's are not pleased with the appearance of churches in their Wahhabist country, no explicit opposition has been displayed as yet. By doing this, Qatar joined other Gulf states like Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE and Oman which have also allowed Christian churches to be built.

Although most Christians rejoice in this development, there is a flipside. As Christian worship and other activities will only be allowed in this designated religious complex, there is a risk of ghettoisation. Many expatriate labourers who live in work camps at an hour's drive from the compound don't have the time or budget to gather for worship in this special compound - if their employers allow them to attend these at all - and are therefore deprived of these legal services. In some cases, they attend underground Christian fellowships in labour camps in secret. In addition, the concentration of Christian activities in one spot provides beneficial opportunities to control and monitor Christians. Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Coptic, and Asian Christian churches have legal status but only expats can attend. Recognition is hard to obtain, at least 1,500 registered congregants are required. Other church fellowships need to register under the covering of one of these churches to be able to operate officially. There are more than 100 informal fellowships gathering in homes and other places, which are generally tolerated by authorities. Also, many Christians think that the complex will soon be too small to house all Christians in Qatar gathering for worship, with good reason: the Christian migrant community is growing. Many migrant workers - nominal Christians and Muslims - convert to a living Christian faith during their stay. Already, there are traffic and parking problems at the church complex. Allegedly, the government recognises these issues and is discussing these with church leaders.

The Qatari Constitution declares that *'freedom to practice religious rites shall be guaranteed to all persons in accordance with the law and the requirements of the maintenance of public order and morality.'* In reality, expat Christians are restricted in practicing their faith. Apart from public worship usually only being allowed in an assigned compound, the government prohibits proselytising of non-Muslims. Foreign workers who evangelise are frequently deported, a development that has continued throughout the past few years. Some have had the renewal of their visa denied afterwards. The deportations have led to an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear among expat Christians.

With a strong and uncontested ruler, 'Dictatorial paranoia' is also an important persecution dynamic in Qatar.

Fear is a significant factor in Qatari society. Families control each other, local neighbours control expats and the state is controlling all inhabitants. A Muslim who converts from Islam to another religion is considered an apostate and may face the death penalty. However no execution or other punishment for apostasy has been recorded since the country's independence in 1971. Almost all Qatari Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) converted abroad, for instance when they attended summer courses at universities in the West. The majority stay abroad out of fear. Should their conversion become known, they face severe pressure from their families and peers as well as from the government, who does not recognise their conversion and considers them Muslims still. The following quote from a Qatari citizen on what will happen if a son of a Muslim wants to convert to Christianity is characteristic of the family pressure on MBBs: "If he's 10 years old, his dad will show him verses from the Qu'ran. If he's 15 years old his dad will take him to a mosque to teach him lessons. If he's 20 years old a cousin will kill him or the family will hire someone else to kill him." From time to time, we receive reports that MBBs are physically harmed for their faith by family or peers, who view the conversion as harming the honour of the family. As a result of this oppression, MBBs strongly protect their anonymity for fear of gossip and betrayal.

What will the near future look like for Qatar? As long as people are kept happy through increased salaries or "Arab Spring pay offs", the status quo may well remain in the oil and gas rich Gulf state. Its influence on the international scene is important, financing Wahhabism in several countries and via its media service Al Jazeera. However, since the latest riots in the Middle East, the local population seems to becoming more open to change and this may be the beginning of a more open attitude towards the Gospel as well. On the other hand, it remains to be seen what effects the recent fatwa (March 2012) of a prominent Saudi Grand Mufti on destroying all churches in the Arabian Peninsula will have on Qatar. However, the Grand Mufti's call seems to have had no significant impact so far on the situation of Christians in Qatar. If it has any influence, this is likely to be on the conservative Qatari citizens

rather than on the Emir, who is more progressive. The large expat community has contributed greatly to the economic success of the nation and the availability of worship facilities could make Qatar additionally appealing to them. A continuous flow of migrant labourers is certainly no luxury considering e.g. the construction activities in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup. Also, relative progress in religious freedom serves Qatar's international relations and interests. Yet we should not forget that stability is one of the major decisive goals for the country's leadership and popular unrest is inconvenient in that respect.

21. Vietnam (score: 57)

The main persecution dynamics in Vietnam are 'Communist oppression' and 'Dictatorial paranoia', mixed with 'Tribal antagonism'. Vietnam is one of the few remaining countries in the world following a communist ideology. The authorities perceive Christianity as a foreign influence and Christians as Western agents. Many Christians from a tribal background like the Hmong face pressure to return to traditional faith, especially in rural areas. The state, with the help of local tribal leaders, watches churches closely. Converts from a Buddhist and animistic background come under additional pressure from family and the community. Gatherings are suspected as meetings to plot against the government. The government requires permits for larger gatherings and will issue them last minute – if at all – in order to deter people from attending. Obtaining recognition for churches or permission to renovate a church building is a long process. In the reporting period, at least seven churches, all Catholic, were confiscated. Training of leaders has to be done secretly and integrating converts requires caution. Importing Christian materials is prohibited. Christians face violence and are sent to prison, not officially because of their faith, but because of 'anti-government' propaganda. It is unlikely that the situation will change substantially in the coming years. The government has started to place more restrictions on Christians fearing that nationals will follow trends of the Arab Spring. Vietnam ranks 21st on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

Vietnam is one of the few remaining countries in the world following a communist ideology. Consequently, authorities still perceive Christianity as a foreign influence and Christians as Western agents. 'Communist oppression' therefore is the dominant persecution dynamic in the country. But inextricably tied with this is a certain 'Dictatorial paranoia' as the government is described by in-country sources as an "insecure regime". It used to have close ties with China, a relationship that recently came under stress when China claimed authority over the complete South China Sea, a claim vigorously denied by its South East Asian neighbours, including Vietnam, specially affected because of its very long coastal line. The changes which turned the Communist World upside down largely left the country untouched, although there is a rising private economy. Reportedly, there are additional fears that the spark that raised the so-called 'Arab Spring' might fuel movements in Vietnam, too – a fear that adds to the government's caution.

As many Christians come from a tribal background, many of them being Hmong, pressure to return to traditional faith and to take part in rituals is very high, especially in rural areas, referring to the additional persecution dynamic 'Tribal antagonism'. The tribal background of believers is also one reason why authorities watch Christians so closely as there are tribal movements aiming at a separate state. So, the government, via local branches and with the help of local tribal leaders, monitors churches closely.

Gathering converts from a Buddhist background comes under additional pressure from their family and the community they live in. This is also true if believers come from an animistic background. In remote areas especially, gatherings are suspected as meetings to plot against the government. Therefore, Christians in rural areas have to take extra precautions when they want to meet and worship. If larger groups are involved, the government requires last permits for gatherings, issued last minute if at all, in order to deter people from attending.

Apart from meetings, Christian activities in general are restricted. Obtaining recognition for churches or permission for the renovation of a church building is a long and tedious process, let alone permission to build a new church building. From time to time, the government seizes and closes down churches without reason and without the option to appeal. This affects mainly Catholic churches, but also tribal churches in rural areas. In the reporting period, at least seven churches, all Catholic, were confiscated and sometimes accompanied by large media coverage slandering the Christians. Among

others, in April 2012 a house intended to become a catholic orphanage was destroyed and the reverend beaten unconscious.

Integrating converts has to be done very cautiously. The training of leaders has to be done secretly and though recently few permissions were given to print Bibles and other Christian materials, most of it has to be done in secret. Importing Christian materials is prohibited. In rural areas, confiscation of Christian materials happens.

Christians also face violence as authorities in Vietnam's tribal villages often hire gangsters to harass and discourage Christian pastors and new believers. This is a way to prevent new churches from mushrooming. Such incidents are made to appear as simple cases of gang hooliganism, often classified in the police records as petty crimes. The reporting period saw several incidents, sometimes with severe harm done to the Christians. Another means of frightening Christians is to send them to prison. Of course, officially this is not done because of their faith, but because of "anti-government propaganda". More than a dozen Christians were affected and sentenced up to five years of imprisonment.

In coming years, it is unlikely that the situation will change substantially in favour of the Christian minority. Authorities have started to place more restrictions on areas that have experienced a more "lax" approach from the government for years. As mentioned already, one reason for the tightening situation could be the Arab Spring, as the government fears that nationals will follow the perceived worldwide trend for regime change and get infected by the idea of mass protests in order to bring change. The church is perceived as a natural social group and an easy mobilising tool for such a movement. Another explanation for the tightening situation could be a change in the Office of Religion. A high ranking general of the Communist Party was assigned to serve as head of this government entity. Pressure on Christians has increased ever since he took on this role. This summary gives a picture of the unpredictable nature of persecution in the country. In general, however, the Christian minority is expected to face ongoing and maybe even increasing pressure. The announcement for the introduction of a new law on religion came too late to be taken into account for this reporting period. However, it fits into the general trend of tightening up the Christian minority's space.

In recent years, Vietnam ranked behind Laos as the South East Asian country where Christians face most persecution and harassment. The situation has not changed as the perception of Christians as connected with the West and as bringing a foreign religion to the country has not changed. In addition, converts from Buddhist and tribal backgrounds face ongoing pressure. Despite the fact that several countries overtook Vietnam in 2013 World Watch List, the country's rank did not considerably change. This can be explained by a growing pressure on the Christian minority, especially the Hmong, most visible in the national and church spheres as well as in violent incidents. The reporting period also saw growing restrictions in areas where conditions for Christians had improved in the last years.

Whereas all citizens lack the basic freedoms in the country and tribal citizens face discrimination as they are perceived as a threat to unity, the Christian minority suffers especially unfavourable treatment as it is basically seen as foreign.

22. Oman (score: 56)

The main persecution dynamics in Oman are 'Islamic extremism' and 'Dictatorial paranoia'. There has been no visible change in recent years in the situation for Christians in Oman. Islam is the state religion and Sharia law forms the basis for legislation. Apostasy is not a criminal offense in the legal system, but the very concept of a change of faith for an Omani citizen is an anathema. An Omani convert faces problems under the Personal Status and Family Legal Code which prohibits a father from having custody of his children if he leaves Islam. Almost the entire Christian population of around 35,000 is expatriate; there are hardly any indigenous Christians. All religious organisations must register and Christian meetings are monitored for political messages and nationals attending. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) could lose their family or job, or even be killed. MBBs also risk divorce and losing custody of his/her children if their faith is known. Besides MBBs, Christian migrant workers, who often live in labour camps, also face considerable pressure. No violent persecution has been reported although there have been deportations of expat Christians in the past. This was primarily because of their open witness, which is prohibited by law.

Permission is needed from the authorities for the distribution of religious literature also. Oman ranks 22nd on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

Oman has seen protests and civil unrest since January 2011, which caused the deaths of two people. However, after promising to create 50,000 jobs, allowing citizens more freedom of speech, improving the social welfare system and changing the cabinet, most turmoil faded away.

In recent years, there has been no visible change in the situation of the local Christians. According to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2012), Oman is fairly tolerant regarding religious expressions: "Though Islam is the state religion and Sharia law forms the basis for legislation, the regime has been very tolerant of all sectarian groups. The religious establishment is under the state's firm control and can hardly express its voice without the prior consent of the ruling elite." Moreover, the Omani Constitution declares that "the freedom to practice religious rites in accordance with recognised customs is guaranteed provided that it does not disrupt public order or conflict with accepted standards of behaviour."

Additionally, because of 'Dictatorial paranoia', Christians face restrictions when their activities are considered a threat to the ruling power.

However, Islam is the state religion and legislation is based on Islamic law. All public school curriculums include instruction in Islam. Apostasy is not a criminal offense, but it is not respected by the legal system either, which assumes that all citizens are Muslims. The very concept of change of faith for an Omani citizen is an anathema. A convert faces problems under the Personal Status and Family Legal Code, which prohibits a father from having custody over his children if he leaves Islam. Deportation of foreign workers (because of their Christian activities) continues.

The US Department of State, in its International Religious Freedom Report writes: "The Government prohibits non-Muslim groups from publishing religious material, although non-Muslim religious material printed abroad may be imported. Members of all religious groups are free to maintain links with co-religionists abroad and to undertake foreign travel for religious purposes. Clergy from abroad are permitted to visit to carry out duties related to registered religious organisations." Registration is difficult, though not impossible, to obtain.

Almost the entire Christian population (around 35,000) is expatriate; there are only a few indigenous Christians. All religious organisations must register, and Christian meetings are monitored for political messages and nationals attending. Foreign Christians are allowed to discretely worship in private homes or work compounds. Their facilities are restricted in order not to offend nationals. MBBs risk persecution from family and society. MBBs can lose their family, house and job and could even be killed, though no violent incidents were documented in the reporting period.

Both Open Doors' sources and Middle East Concern did not report any violent persecution incidents of Christians since 2011, though it is known that MBBs continue to "face significant family pressure." (MEC, 2012)

Also, "in recent years there have been some deportations of expatriate Christians", primarily because of their open witness about their faith. MEC explains that "proselytising is not actually illegal but the government would act against any individual, group or institution should a complaint be made. Permission is needed from the authorities for the distribution of religious literature (other than Islamic materials)." If social unrests continue in the future, the regime might weaken, which may in fact lead to further islamisation of the country's political institutions and a stricter application of Sharia legislation.

23. Mauritania (score: 56)

The main persecution dynamic in Mauritania is 'Islamic extremism' which has become more visible demonstrating the growing influence of Salafism. In December 2010, Islamist Members of Parliament questioned the government about their attitude towards foreign Christian organisations and in July 2011, the council of Mauritanian Imams asked the government to criminalise obvious apostasy and proselytising. The influence of al-Qaeda in the Maghreb is growing and attempting to monitor Christian activity in the country. The Arab Spring has not yet had an impact but Islamic extremism is becoming more influential. Mauritania is not often in the news and seems

to have been forgotten by the international community. Very little attention has been given to the suffering of the small, local church. Harsh government restrictions make it very difficult for Christian services to operate in the country. Religious beliefs and practices are strongly restricted by government laws, policies and actions. However, the government is weak in enforcement. Mauritania is very proud to be a pure Muslim country. It does not include any provisions for religious freedom in its constitution and its laws prohibit conversion to the Christian faith. Pressure on Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) from family, tribe members and leaders of local mosques is constant throughout the country and very high. Mauritania ranks 23th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

There is no question that extremist Islam is the main factor of increasing persecution in the country. Extremist Islamic ideology has become more visible in Mauritania during this last year, showing that the Salafists are having a growing influence in their attempts to adhere to the rules of Islamic morality, notes Magharebia, a U.S.-sponsored online news website, in a recent country brief.

The Islamists create tension and opposition against Christians. In December 2012, at the National Assembly, Islamist Members of Parliament questioned the government about their attitude toward foreign Christian organisations, which led to increased monitoring of suspected Christian activities. In July 2011, the council of the Mauritanian Imams asked the government to criminalise obvious apostasy and proselytising.

Moreover, the influence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mauritania is growing. The group is gaining support among local Mauritians and is also attempting to monitor Christian activity in the country. Northern and Eastern areas of the country are increasingly under the control of extremist Muslims groups who are mostly linked to the al-Qaeda network. Mauritania shares a large border with Mali, where extremist forces have been very active during 2012.

The country, isolated from the rest of the world because of its mainly desert landscape and rule by a very oppressive regime, has not yet experienced anything related to the Arab Spring that has brought about the big social and political shifts in neighbouring countries. However, extremist Islam is becoming more influential and this will likely lead to the increased oppression of Christian believers.

Mauritania is not often in the news and seems to have been forgotten by the international community. Very little attention has been given to the suffering of its small, local Church. Because of harsh government restrictions, it is very difficult for Christian services and Christians in general to operate in the country. Mauritania also ranks as "high" on the PEW Forum's Government Restrictions Index, meaning that religious beliefs and practices are strongly restricted by government laws, policies and actions. Fortunately the government is weak in this enforcement and generally tolerates some Christian activity so long as it does not "challenge the public peace."

Mauritania, very proud to be officially a pure Muslim country, does not include any provisions for religious freedom in its constitution, and its laws prohibit conversion to Christian faith. The sentence for apostasy is death - a sentence never officially carried out in modern history.

Recent incidents of persecution include several deaths. In 2009, a U.S. teacher and community centre manager in Mauritania, Chris Leggett, was murdered by Islamic extremists for allegedly spreading Christianity. There were other allegations of a young woman, a new believer in Jesus, who died in May 2010 after she was beaten by her father and brothers because she refused to come back to the Muslim faith. In 2011 the overall situation of the country had not noticeably improved. According to our reports this year, some of the local believers in Jesus were beaten but nobody was reported killed for their faith. However, pressures upon believers did get stronger compared to last year.

In Mauritania, it is extremely difficult to be a follower of Christ. Pressure on Muslim Background Believers from family, tribe members and leaders of local mosques, is very high. There is some freedom for expat churches, but even for expats residing in the country it is complicated. It remains completely impossible for Mauritanian Christians to register their churches, so they must meet in secret. At the moment, there is no reason to expect the situation of Christians to improve in the near future.

24. Tanzania (score: 55)

Tanzania is new on the World Watch List with 'Islamic extremism' as the main persecution dynamic. The Zanzibar archipelago makes up only a very small part of Tanzania and has an own president and semi-autonomous political structure, separate from the mainland political system. Tanzania is a Christian majority country with a very substantial Muslim population. There is a strong Islamist drive towards the Tanzanian 'House of Islam'. The situation for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) is difficult though not extreme. The state hasn't declared Islam as a prescriptive national religion while local governments seem to respect this rather well. Still MBBs had to flee their homes, and their spouses were forcefully married to another Muslim. In Zanzibar there was serious violence, driven by 'Vugu vugu la uamsho' ('Revival Movement for the Preservation of Islam'). It claimed to be wiping out all Christians from the Zanzibar archipelago, mainly Zanzibar Island. Churches were burnt, church property looted and Christians, especially church leaders, were threatened with death. The Zanzibar archipelago is a very serious instigator of hostilities against Christians, not only on the islands but also on mainland Tanzania. They have strong Islamic militant groups that often persecute Christians heavily. On mainland Tanzania the push for the further spread of Islam is less violent but equally persistent. Part of this push is through the constitutional review process, and strategic infiltration of main sectors of society. If the push for secession succeeds, the presence of the church on Zanzibar and Pemba Islands is likely to be reduced to (nearly) zero. The frantic moves of Islamists in mainland Tanzania will just continue. For the church, this means difficult times are likely to be ahead. Tanzania ranks 24th on the WWL, in the category 'Severe Persecution'.

Tanzania is new on the World Watch List. In the foregoing years the Zanzibar archipelago was on the list but was taken off last year, because the focus was on countries, not on (very small) parts of countries. This year Tanzania (with the Zanzibar archipelago) is back on the list, because 'Islamic extremism' as the main persecution dynamic has grown, not only on the archipelago, but also in mainland Tanzania. The Zanzibar archipelago covers only a very small part of Tanzania; it has a president and semi-autonomous political structure, separate from the mainland political system, which explains the specific pattern of hostilities on the Islands.

Tanzania is a Christian majority country with a very substantial Muslim population. Some reports say around half and half, although the Pew Forum survey conducted in 2010 suggests that approximately 62% of the population is Christian, roughly 35% Muslim, and around three per cent adhere to other religions. The Zanzibar archipelago has however a very concentrated Muslim population (97% Muslim, three per cent Christian, Hindu or others). Tanzania has all four types of Christianity. The situation for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) is most difficult, especially in Muslim dominated areas and areas with a sizeable number of Muslims. Other types of Christianity are also often victims of hostilities, particularly in the Muslim dominated areas. In these areas also migrant Christians regularly face particular hostilities. ("Migrant Christians" are not necessarily from outside the country but are often Christians who come from other parts of the country, and have settled in the Muslim dominated areas.) All this produces a multiple picture of the Islamist drive towards the Tanzanian 'House of Islam': (i) to further the spread of (extremist) Islam on the mainland through a combination of terrorist actions and strategic infiltration in main sectors of society, (ii) to secede the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands from Tanzania mainland to revive the sultanate of Zanzibar, including the coastal areas of Tanzania and Kenya.

Hostilities towards Christians are concentrated in the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, and the other Muslim dominated areas, and to a lesser degree in areas with a sizeable number of Muslims. The pressure on Christians was less in the spheres of private and family life, higher in the spheres of community life, national life and church life. This seems to indicate that in Muslim dominated areas the pressure on MBBs, and certainly on other Christians is not (yet) extreme, like in some Muslim majority countries. This is linked to the fact that the state hasn't declared Islam as a prescriptive national religion while the local governments in Muslim dominated areas seem to have largely respected that. Nevertheless, the very typical elements of Muslim majority hostilities were reported from the Muslim dominated areas, with often special emphasis on the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands. MBBs had to flee from their homes to safer places, and their spouses would be either forcefully married to another Muslim or would remain single for a long time. Christians could be fined - however this was not openly related to faith but would be disguised as just a criminal offence. Muslim leaders were creating local policies that discriminated against Christians when they were applying to local education institutions. Christians were accused of blasphemy. In Mwanza, north-west of the country,

four Christians preached to a witch doctor, who accepted Christ and converted to Christianity. He accepted to burn his paraphernalia in which he had inserted a page of a Qu'ran. This ignited a lot of violent protests during which four churches were burnt, and church property destroyed.

In the Zanzibar archipelago there was serious violence, driven by "Vugu vugu la uamsho" translated as "Revival Movement for the Preservation of Islam". It claimed to be wiping out all Christians from Zanzibar Island (not Pemba Island). This youthful group was backed by Muslim clerics and caused a lot of violent destruction of churches and church property. Churches were burnt, church property looted and Christians, especially church leaders, were threatened with death. These riots were so severe that they caught international attention, and Christian church leaders gave a very stern warning to the government to do something to stop the violence. The government moved in and quelled the violent riots. Looking at the pattern of violence against churches and church properties, even the general threatening atmosphere on the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, it is amazing that no Christian was reported to be killed, and only few cases of physical harm were reported. Open Doors Field experts confirm this, saying that "Tanzania still has a Constitution that bars anyone against inflicting any form of violence on others on the basis of religion. The government forces have used this in enforcing law and order, especially when riots erupted."

Hostilities against Christians are most severe in specific parts of the country:

1. The Muslim dominated areas in Tanzania mainland include Pwani, Lindi, Mtwara in the south-east; Ruwuma in the south; Tanga in the north-east, and Kigoma in the north-west.
2. The Islands, both Zanzibar and Pemba Islands as indicated on the map, and Mafia that is not labelled on the far south-east close to Pwani province.
3. Other areas like Mwanza, Kagera, Shinyanga, Tabora, Singida and Dodoma have Muslim domination on either sections of the province, or have a sizeable number of Muslims that are very influential in the governance and culture of the area.



[Map of Tanzania](#). From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia.

The Zanzibar archipelago is a very serious instigator of hostilities against Christians, not only on the Islands but also on mainland Tanzania. There are strong Islamic militant groups (e.g. "Vugu vugu la uamsho" or "Revival Movement for the Preservation of Islam") that often persecute Christians heavily. These organised gangs have the indirect blessing from part of the political class in Zanzibar (CCM and CUF), as well as from the already mentioned Muslim clerics. According to Open Doors Field experts, "Most anti-Christian extremist teachings and ideologies by Muslim clerics are generated from Zanzibar

Island. Secessionist groups are also pushing for the Zanzibar archipelago to secede from the mainland which they claim will give them an opportunity to re-join the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) which would open them up more to the benefits of OIC countries.” This is actually part of a regional political agenda covering the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, the coastal area of Tanzania and the coastal area of Kenya.

On mainland Tanzania the push for the further spread of (extremist) Islam is less violent but equally persistent. Part of this push is through the constitutional review process. Open Doors Field experts declare, “Currently in Tanzania there is a big contest between Christians and Muslims in this process. Muslims are claiming that in the past Christians had been favoured by the government and the Constitution. They are now determined by all means to overturn the tables, and take the leadership of Tanzania into their hands. They are keen to make sure that everything of Islamic ideals is introduced and reinforced in the (new) Constitution.” They add, “There are also external, interested forces such as the OIC, and the Islam in Africa Organization (IAO).” The IAO is not heard off much anymore but the declaration issued at the closing session of its first Assembly in 1989 is still considered by some as an important source of information on Islamist strategy for making Africa the first Muslim continent. As Open Doors Field experts say, “Muslims have positioned themselves strategically in places of authority, and use the same to harass Christians, and deny them services even in the state offices. In Muslim dominated areas and the Islands, Muslims agitated the government to send Muslim officials to work there. Christians who were posted there were mostly not respected, not promoted and sometimes threatened to leave the area. Campaigns by Muslims were run all over in Tanzania, claiming that the government is pro-Christian and anti-Islam and therefore all Muslims must work towards reversing this trend.”

What may happen in the near future with regard to hostilities against the Church in Tanzania? Open Doors Field experts noted, “Having seen the aggressiveness by which Muslims are working towards reviewing the constitution, many Christians are scared that the country could be turned into an Islamic state. They said Muslims are very united in fronting their agendas, while Christians are still divided.” If the push for secession succeeds, the presence of the Church on Zanzibar and Pemba Islands is likely to be reduced to (nearly) zero. The frantic moves of Islamists in mainland Tanzania will just continue. The struggle for Zanzibar will continue to inspire them, Zanzibar’s potential success even more. They are likely to get further inspiration from what is going on in the near region, particularly in Kenya, and probably even in countries like Mali and the ‘Arab Spring’ countries. For the Church, this means difficult times are likely to be ahead.

25. Egypt (score: 54)

‘Islamic extremism’ is the main persecution dynamic in Egypt. Egypt is home to nearly 10 million Christians but emigration is a concern and persecution is on the rise. Egypt made headlines with the October 2011 Maspero massacre that killed 26 Coptic Christians. Islam is the state religion and the population is predominantly Muslim. The revolution that ousted President Mubarak brought Muslims and Christians together but improved relations were short-lived as radical Muslims won the parliamentary elections on 25 November 2011. With the Muslim Brotherhood in control of the country’s legislative and executive power, Islam is becoming more visible. The government has been unable to impose necessary law and order to the detriment of the protection of Christians. Support for both the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Islam is growing. After the revolution, ‘Islamic extremism’ has replaced ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ as the country’s main persecution dynamic. No political answers are given to the problems of poverty and unemployment faced by the country so the people seek refuge in religion and are vulnerable to radical expressions of Islam. However, the church is growing very slowly. Egypt’s future will be determined by politics. A new constitution could drastically reshape the country though a scenario in which the church is confined to a situation of dhimmitude is more likely in light of recent developments. Egypt ranks 25th on the WWL, in the category ‘Severe Persecution’.

Egypt is home to nearly 10 million Christians – but massive emigration of Christians from the country is a concern. Tensions between this large Christian minority and the Muslim majority have always existed but seem to have increased recently and persecution of Christians is on the rise.

Egypt made headlines with the October 2011 Maspero massacre that killed 26 Coptic Christians who were peaceful protesters; hundreds were injured. In this bloody incident, the military did not do

anything to protect Christians that were being attacked and even participated in the killings. This massacre can hardly be seen as an isolated incident, but it is part of an overall negative trend that started with the 2011 New Year's Eve bomb attack in front of the Alexandria Church of the Two Saints that killed and injured many Christians.

Islam is the state religion of Egypt, and the population is predominantly Muslim. The 25 January revolution was a turning point for all Egyptians, including Christians, regarding their political participation. Many churches and civil society organisations (NGOs) became involved in political awareness programs.

The revolution that ousted President Hosni Mubarak, who stepped down 11 February 2011, brought Muslims and Christians together against a hated dictator as they demanded an end to corruption and a solution to structural poverty and rising unemployment. However, Muslim-Christian relations deteriorated afterwards. Radical Muslims won the parliamentary elections on 25 November 2011. The situation for Christians worsened in 2011 as there was a substantial increase in numbers of Christians killed, physically harmed and churches/houses attacked, particularly in rural areas.

During Mubarak's government, oppression of churches was always present. While violent assaults by fanatical movements linked to the Salafists continued in 2012, far-reaching political changes are in the making. With the Muslim Brotherhood in control of the country's Legislative and Executive Power, Islam is becoming more visible. Egypt as a whole is Islamizing and fear for Islamists is growing. The Muslim Brotherhood is acting quickly to take control of the judiciary, the press and the army. With the new Constitution that will be proclaimed in the course of next year, we expect the position of Christians will only become more difficult. Morsi's government has been unable to impose necessary law and order, to the detriment of the protection of Christians.

If civil and political rights are obtained, Christians could substantially improve their position, but this scenario does not seem very likely in Egypt where the poorly educated population is rapidly turning to Islam, expecting Islam will provide a solution to structural poverty. Support for both the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Islam is growing. The main persecution dynamic now is 'Islamic extremism' instead of 'dictatorial paranoia'.

Egypt faces a period of political uncertainty and instability in which people, particularly youths and the unemployed, feel they have no perspective. Since no political answers are given to the problems the country faces, they seek refuge in religion and are vulnerable for radical expressions of Islam. The combination of high poverty and unemployment rates, low literacy and poor education levels, implies that large numbers of the population are easy to manipulate by Islamic fundamentalist message – a breeding ground for extremism. The great number of unemployed youths is easy to mobilise against Christians.

As Islam is gradually taking over the country's culture, there is a growing sentiment of rejection of Christians. The Church is not considered as a foreign institution, though its presence is in contradiction with the dominant Islamic culture. At the same time, a minority of Egyptian Muslims is showing interest in the gospel, and the church is growing very slowly.

The elements that will determine Egypt's future are essentially political. The two new actors to the political scene have a strong Islamist identity: the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, who control the country's newly elected Parliament. The process of reform includes the drafting of a new Constitution that will drastically reshape the nature of the Egyptian state and could redefine the position of the military.

The only likely alternative to Islamism, based on our review of the main political forces in the country and the initial trends that can be witnessed, would be a continuation of an autocratic regime, depending on the capacity of the military to hold on to power and/or to pact with the Muslim Brotherhood. This implies continued restrictions on religion and no improvements for the Church. However, a scenario in which the Church is confined to a situation of dhimmitude, based on a gradual Islamisation of society, is more likely in the light of recent developments.

26. United Arab Emirates (score: 54)

The main persecution dynamic in the United Arab Emirates is ‘Islamic extremism.’ The United Arab Emirates is one of the most liberal countries in the Gulf; expatriates make up around 80 per cent of the population. The constitution provides for religious freedom on the condition that established customs, public policy or public morals are not violated. ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ also plays a role in the persecution of believers in the United Arab Emirates. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) suffer the most persecution, while expats enjoy some freedom but also face restrictions, especially migrant workers from developing countries. All citizens are defined as Muslims and the law denies Muslims the freedom to change religion under penalty of death. To avoid death, social stigma or other penalties, converts may be pressured to return to Islam, to hide their faith or to travel to another country where their conversion is allowed. There are very few local believers among the Muslim population. Evangelism is prohibited, but non-Muslim groups can worship freely in dedicated buildings or private homes. However, the government places restrictions on the development of worship facilities for Christian migrants. Though the Arab Spring did not have much effect in the United Arab Emirates, the latest developments in the Middle East have led the local people to question what good leadership is. Christians in the country have many opportunities for Muslim–Christian dialogue. The United Arab Emirates rank 26th on the WWL and belong to the countries with ‘Moderate Persecution’.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the most liberal countries in the Gulf and expatriates make up around 80 per cent of the population. The constitution provides for religious freedom on the condition that established customs, public policy or public morals are not violated. The government restricts this freedom in practice.

Christians in the United Arab Emirates, who are mainly foreign workers, are mostly hindered by the government’s discriminatory attitude towards Christians and the thoroughly Islamic society, resulting sometimes in deportation. The government places restrictions on the development of facilities for Christian migrants. This is a reality countrywide, although the smaller more conservative Emirates are more restrictive than the larger ones.

Whilst there were hardly any reports of religious violence, the differences in the extent of religious freedom of expats and the few Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are most visible in the family sphere. In the private sphere, the squeeze is systemic for MBBs.

In addition to ‘Islamic extremism’, persecution dynamics in the United Arab Emirates are best described as ‘Dictatorial Paranoia’, as the Emir continues to be a despotic ruler. Mostly MBBs suffer persecution, while expats enjoy some freedom but also face restrictions. Pressure throughout the whole territory is considerably higher on MBBs and expat MBBs. African and Asian expats have a little more freedom, but not as much as Western expats; that is as long as they do not evangelise Muslims.

MBBs are under severe pressure from relatives, family and Muslim society due to the Islamic government, law and culture. All citizens are defined as Muslims and the law denies Muslims the freedom to change religion under penalty of death. To avoid death, social stigma or other penalties, converts may be pressured to return to Islam, to hide their faith or to travel to another country where their conversion is allowed. There are very few local believers among the Muslim population. Evangelism is prohibited, but non-Muslim groups can worship freely in dedicated buildings or private homes.

Although the Arab Spring did not affect the UAE much, the latest developments in the Middle East do lead the local people to question what good leadership is about. Christians in the country have many opportunities for Muslim–Christian dialogue. Although their situation will remain difficult, Christians in the UAE are tolerated.

27. Brunei (score: 53)

The main persecution dynamic in Brunei is 'Islamic extremism'. Brunei is an Islamic nation, based on an ideology called 'Malay Muslim Monarchy'. By decree, contact with Christians in other countries, the import of Bibles and the public celebration of Christmas are banned. The monarchy is seen as the defender of the faith. Sharia law has been fully implemented since 2011. Islam governs all aspects of life in Brunei. There is a program of Islamisation for natives and entering a tribal village is monitored by government spies and police. Family, friends and neighbours can become sources of hostility for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). The government recognises only three Catholic and three Anglican churches. Unregistered churches are considered 'illegal sects' of Christianity by the government. The church is not able to function freely and churches are 'spied on' by government officials. Providing theological training is difficult. Christian bookshops are not allowed. The level of fear among Christians is very high. There are six Christian schools but they face pressure to remove Bible studies from the curriculum. Recently, the Sultan announced that in 2013 Islamic religious studies will become a compulsory subject in schools. As long as the ruling monarch perceives himself as defender of the faith and the governing authorities execute his will, the Christian minority will be targeted and discriminated against. Brunei ranks 27th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Brunei Darussalam is a very small country on the Island of Borneo, bordering the much larger Malaysia. Brunei is an Islamic nation, based on an ideology called 'Malay Islamic Monarchy'. By decree, contact with Christians in other countries, the import of Bibles and the public celebration of Christmas are banned.

In 1991, His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah introduced a conservative ideology to Brunei called Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) (or Malay Islamic Monarchy), which presents the monarchy as the defender of the faith. Having in mind this position, he has recently favoured Brunei government democratisation and declared himself Prime Minister and President. In 2004, the Legislative Council, which had been dissolved since 1962, was reopened. Sharia law has been fully implemented since 2011 for all Muslims in the country. Islam governs all spheres of life in Brunei. The government follows a plan of Islamisation among the tribal people in supporting the so-called 'Dahkwa' movement (Islamic evangelism). Christian pastors and workers are considered 'enemies'. Entering a tribal village will be monitored by government spies and police.

Hence, 'Islamic extremism' is the main persecution dynamic, mostly driven by all levels of government and religious leaders. As far as Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are concerned, families, friends and neighbours can easily become sources of hostility and even a source of outright persecution. Changing religion on one's ID card is impossible and churches have to be very careful in what they do and say and how and where they do it.

The government recognises only three Catholic and three Anglican churches as official Christian churches in the country. The unregistered churches are considered "illegal sects" of Christianity by the government. Therefore their activities and ministries are very much monitored and restricted. The church is not able to function freely. According to reports, every Sunday church services are spied on by government officials. The pastors are very careful in 'wording' their sermon every week not to offend the government or the royal family. The Bahasa Malay speaking pastors are always monitored by the government. Enlarging church buildings is forbidden.

The motion of Church leaders is especially monitored and it is difficult to train church members or to provide theological studies. Christian book shops are not allowed in Brunei and one person can carry only one Bible from outside the country for personal use. It is impossible to print Christian materials in the country and their import is forbidden. Even though there were no violent incidents reported in the covered period, the level of fear among the Christian minority is very high.

There are six Christian schools in the country run by the recognised Anglican and Catholic churches. They continue to maintain high standards of education. However, the government pressurised them to remove Bible studies from the curriculum. Christian schools do not get any financial subsidies from the state.

In the newspaper Borneo Bulletin dated 7 October 2012, the Sultan announced that all schools must have Islamic religious studies as a compulsory subject from January 2013. As long as the ruling

monarch perceives himself as defender of the faith and the governing authorities execute his will, the Christian minority will be targeted, discriminated against and continued to be pushed to the edge. Freedom to live the Christian faith will become more and more restricted and pressure and fear amongst the Christian minority will rise. The recent public announcement just mentioned points to a deteriorating environment for those believers.

Brunei remains high on this year's World Watch List. This can be explained by the sustained pressure that authorities, society, family, friends and neighbours exert on all members of the Christian minority, especially converts. This pressure does not result in obvious violence as happens in some other countries in South East Asia. It is rather an unspoken knowledge of how to behave, what to say and to always remain between limits tacitly agreed upon. Therefore, Brunei is an excellent example of the fact that persecution is not always about violence (or "smashing" as it is tagged in the WWL methodology document), but about pressure which might be difficult to trace in society, though it is always felt (the "squeeze" in the respective document). Given the Sultan's recent announcement, it is not very likely that the pressure will decrease in subsequent years.

28. Bhutan (score: 52)

The main persecution dynamic in Bhutan is 'Religious militancy', sometimes mixed with 'Tribal antagonism'. Bhutan was a Buddhist kingdom for centuries and even now, after introducing constitutional monarchy, Buddhism continues to play a dominant role. There is a lot of pressure on Christians from the local community, especially from local administrators who deny meetings and put obstacles in the way of believers. The Constitution of Bhutan promotes secularism and religious tolerance without announcing Bhutan as a secular state, but labels Buddhism as the 'spiritual heritage' of the country. The monarch is deemed to be the protector of all faiths which includes Hindus and a small, albeit increasing, number of Christians. Parliament is still considering an amendment to the penal code prohibiting 'conversion by coercion or inducement'. The church in Bhutan is no longer an underground church since Christians are able to meet in private homes on Sundays generally without interference by the authorities. The government does restrict the construction of non-Buddhist worship buildings and the public celebration of some non-Buddhist festivals. Reports of Christians being arrested, physically harmed or otherwise badly treated remain on the decline but they still face harassment. The media has not helped the Christians' case and Christianity is viewed as a religion that brings the sort of chaos and division in society that Bhutan shuns. The country ranks 28th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Bhutan used to be a Buddhist kingdom for centuries. Even now, after introducing a constitutional monarchy, Buddhism continues to play a dominant role in the country. Especially in remote and rural areas, Buddhist monks resent and oppose the presence of Christians. Thus, 'Religious militancy' is the main dynamic of persecution.

Additionally, there is a lot of pressure from the local community. Mostly it is the local administrators who exercise pressure on the believers, denying meetings and putting all kinds of obstacles in their way. Village heads, for the most part, do not allow conversions of Buddhists. When they learn of Christians living in their communities, they will keep a close eye on the believers, warning them from time to time not to convert people. The present constitution of Bhutan, adopted under a democratic parliamentary government guarantees free expression of faith, but penalises forcible conversions, which can be abused to the detriment of the believers as the term "forcible" is used quite flexible.

Under Article 3(1) of the constitution, "Buddhism is the spiritual heritage of Bhutan", which promotes amongst others "the principles and values of peace, non-violence, compassion and tolerance." Accordingly, Buddhism is not defined as the state religion. Instead, the constitution defines Bhutan as a secular state and affirms religious tolerance. The monarch is deemed to be the protector of all faiths in Bhutan, which includes Hindus and a small, albeit increasing, number of Christians among its population. Proselytising is prohibited under the constitution.

In 2011, Prime Minister Jigme Thinley stated that "democratic culture is gradually taking firm roots" in the country, but in an interview he absolutely denied the right of the small Christian minority to testify about their faith. Expressing a commonly held belief in Bhutan, he said that there is no reason why Christians should seek to induce others to join their faith. Parliament, which is largely dominated

by the royalist party, is considering an amendment to the penal code that would prohibit “conversion by coercion or inducement.” Christians in the country deny that they would seek to convert people by giving them money or by forcing them to convert.

Christian churches are not officially recognised yet, but the government explored possibilities for registration. The key issue in negotiations was and will be in future the question of evangelism. The church in Bhutan is no longer a country-wide underground church, since Christians are able to meet in private homes regularly on Sundays without any interference by authorities. Christians in remote villages encounter more difficulties though.

Christian leaders enjoy certain freedoms to practice their faith in private homes, but the government restricts construction of non-Buddhist worship buildings and the celebration of some non-Buddhist festivals.

It is not clear whether government and parliament are still sticking to its plans to introduce an anti-conversion law. What can be said is that the debate around it has died down without giving a clear decision. However, the situation for Christians will stay ambiguous as long as their status is not officially clear, bearing in mind the special role Buddhism has according to the Constitution. Reports of Christians being arrested, physically harmed, or otherwise badly treated are on the decline, but this still happens on a frequent basis. Discrimination occurs occasionally.

Frequently, the media fuels tensions in painting a wrong image about Christians in society. Christians have been dragged or linked to controversial issues. In 2012, Christians made headlines in the local newspaper, Kuensel, which reported that Christians are proselytising Buddhists in Samtse (southern Bhutan) by coercion and promises of monetary gifts. Christianity is viewed as a religion that brings chaos and division in the society, something which Bhutan (the place that is concerned with its people’s Gross National Happiness) shuns. Therefore, Christians might face ongoing difficulties, especially in remote areas.

Another major issue for Christians is burials. Since they are not provided with burial sites or lots for cemeteries, burials are very difficult to achieve if the Christians want to avoid the traditional burning of corpses. All negotiations with local and state authorities on this topic have failed so far.

In terms of rank, the country has gone down in the World Watch List in previous years, predominantly due to other countries overtaking it. But the decrease also has to do with the introduction of the new Constitution in 2008. Though reports on harassment, detentions and physically harmed Christians still are present, the situation has improved in general. If parliament and government refrain from introducing an anti-conversion bill and find a basis for the recognition of Christians, this trend most likely would continue. Therefore, Bhutan is one of the countries in the World Watch List where an improvement is a realistic perspective.

29. Algeria (score: 51)

The main persecution dynamic in Algeria is ‘Islamic extremism’, in combination with ‘Dictatorial paranoia’. Algeria is increasingly the scene of terror attacks particularly by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb as a result of growing Islamism in the region. The government is pressurised by al-Qaeda to implement more Islamic legislation, to the detriment of the country’s small but courageous Christian population, most of which are MBBs. Newly issued legislation such as Ordinance 06-03 particularly restricts Christians. Major protests in 2011 against the authoritarian regime, in which five people died and over 800 were injured, did not bring about a regime change. The military government is still largely in place. The oppression of Christians has been constant and systemic throughout all spheres of life. The young Algerian church faces discrimination by the state and family members. Imprisonment of women and pressure from village elders and imams to divorce Christians is common. Islamist groups, encouraged by the Arab Spring, are becoming more visible and monitor Christian activity. In 2012, threats to churches have increased. The church in Ouargla was attacked and a Christian lady kidnapped and threatened. The government has not registered any new churches since February 2008 so ‘house churches’ continue to meet, some openly and some in secret. The Algerian Protestant Church (EPA) finally obtained registration in 2011 but no real freedom resulted. The future of the church will depend a great deal on the political situation. Algeria ranks 29th on the WWL, in the category ‘Moderate Persecution’.

Algeria used to have a secular socialist government system. As President Bouteflika seems wanting to stay in power and to find a convenient successor, 'Dictatorial paranoia' is an important persecution dynamics. However, in the context of the growing role of Islamism in the region, Algeria is increasingly the scene of more terrorist attacks by Islamist movements, particularly al-Qaeda in the Maghreb. The Algerian government is pressurised by al-Qaeda to implement more Islamic legislation, to the detriment of the country's small but courageous Christian population.

The main persecution dynamic in Algeria therefore is 'Islamic extremism'. At this stage of its development, this dynamic extends itself throughout the whole country, and causes pressure on Christians in all spheres of life. The freedoms of Christians are particularly in the national sphere because of the newly issued anti-Christian legislation and the continued enforcement of the very restrictive ordinance 06-03.

Major protests in Algeria against the authoritarian regime in 2011 led to the lifting of the 19-year-old state of emergency, imposed to help the Algerian authorities during a brutal conflict with Islamist rebels in the 1990s. The protests, in which five people were killed and over 800 injured, were brought to a halt after only a few months due to massive police repression. Unlike in neighbouring countries, these protests did not bring about a regime change. The military government headed by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is still largely in place and its continuity was not really threatened by the lifting of the state of emergency, although it is of rather symbolic importance.

Recent Algerian politics have been characterised by high levels of instability, but the oppression of Christians has been constant. Church leaders indicate that there is an increase in pressure on Christians and that many doors are closing. The very young Algerian church (mostly consisting of first generation converts) faces many forms of discrimination by the state and by family members. Imprisonment of Christians and pressure from village elders or imams to divorce from Christians is common.

Islamist groups, encouraged by the Arab Spring in other North African countries, are increasing their pressure on a government that already works with Islamic parties. However, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) is still forbidden. Islamists are becoming more and more visible and monitor the activity of Christians. In February 2012, a Christian woman was kidnapped.

Throughout 2012, the situation for Christians in Algeria deteriorated slightly, with an increase in the number of reported incidents. In spite of some positive developments, the overall trends regarding religious liberty are negative. Although no Christians were killed or imprisoned, threats to churches and Christian media organisations have increased, and newspapers reported negatively about Christians.

The Church in Ouargla, in the Arabic part of the country, was attacked and the cross at the wall of the Church building was destroyed in February 2012. People entered by force in the courtyard of the Church to destroy the cross. The pastor, his wife and their small son were inside the building. A Christian lady was kidnapped in Bejaïa province beginning of February because of the evangelistic activity of her husband. The kidnapped Christian woman was threatened with a knife. The kidnappers wanted her to convert back to Islam but she told them that she only fears God. She was released after two hours without being mistreated.

Moreover, the government has not registered any new churches since enforcing Ordinance 06-03 in February 2008, so many Christian citizens continue to meet in unofficial 'house churches', which are often homes or business offices of church members. Some of these groups meet openly, while others secretly hold worship services in homes.

The apparently positive news that the EPA (Algerian Protestant Church) finally obtained registration in 2011 after many years turned out to be a disappointment. Although the exact reasoning for the central government to recognise the EPA as a council of protestant churches are not known, it is believed that the government wanted to give a good impression to the international community. However, no real freedom was given and every local church must still obtain her own registration. On a local level oppression has intensified and no local churches belonging to the EPA have been registered. In fact, this new situation brought also more control by the Government during end of 2011 and 2012. This is shown by the refusal of visas for foreign pastors, calls from the police to the Algerian pastors and the presence of plain-clothed police men at church services.

For the coming year, no dramatic improvements in the situation of Algerian Christians are expected. The future of the church will depend a great deal on the political situation. During May 2012 the country had parliamentary elections and the presidential party won, at the expense of the Islamist factions. This was positive for the church and church leaders report that they do not feel more pressure from the government in the past four months. During 2014 the country will have presidential elections. Sure is that Islamism is growing and that the Islamists have a realistic chance of winning these presidential elections.

30. Tunisia (score: 50)

The main persecution dynamic in Tunisia is 'Islamic extremism'. During former president Ben Ali's regime, Tunisia was a secular country in which timid expressions of Christianity were tolerated. Now, Christians face persecution from two sides; a moderately Islamic government and very visible and aggressive Salafist groups. Christians experience increasing pressure at the private and family level and pressure is clearly higher for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) than for the few expat churches. The secular legal system remains in place, but this is likely to change as the country's Islamic government is taking steps towards the implementation of Sharia law. Tunisia needs a new political system; the economy is in a bad state, unemployment is growing and tourism levels have dropped. Radical Muslims are returning to the country and spreading their fundamentalist messages. The rise of Salafism is also a stressful development for many believers. On a positive note, the small MBB church in the country seems to be growing very slowly. Although the constitution currently respects freedom of religion, importing Christian books is obstructed, national churches cannot register and local Christians are questioned and beaten once their conversion is known. With political developments looking grim and Islamic movements getting stronger, the situation of the small Christian population in the country has deteriorated and is not expected to improve. Tunisia ranks 30th on the WWL and belongs to the countries with 'Moderate Persecution'.

The revolution in 2011, which started off the revolutionary wave in other countries, raised hopes for positive changes but turned out to be a disappointment for both liberals and Christians in Tunisia. The situation in the country is rapidly deteriorating. During former president Ben Ali's regime, Tunisia was a secular country in which timid expressions of Christianity were tolerated. Now, Christians face persecution from two sides; a moderately Islamic government and very visible and aggressive Salafist groups who operate with impunity in the country.

The main persecution dynamic in Tunisia is 'Islamic extremism'. Christians particularly experience increasing pressure at the private and family level, though there are notable difference between the countryside and the country's capital Tunis where the situation is comparatively better. Pressure is clearly higher for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), than for the few expat churches. Expat churches encounter hardly any problems while almost all local believers face problems.

As far back as 2011, the International Crisis Group (ICG), insisted on the important challenges that the country faced: Tunisia "will need to balance the urge for radical political change against the requirement of stability; integrate Islamism into the new landscape; and, with international help, tackle deep socio-economic problems."

Now, in 2012, overall trends are negative. After Islamists won the elections, many analysts fear the worse. The president-elect, Moncef Marzouki, is a former exile to London, who only returned after Ben Ali's demise. On the political level the secular legal system remains in place, but this is likely to radically change in the course of next year, as the country's Islamic government is taking fast steps towards the implementation of Sharia law and its inclusion in the country's Constitution. This would imply increasing restrictions for Christians. The efforts to Islamise the country's political institutions faced strong opposition from secular political factions. At the moment, the process of drafting a new Constitution is in gridlock.

A new political system needs to be put in place in this country. The parties are still negotiating as to how this will look. The economy is in a bad state and this is affecting believers as well. Unemployment is growing and tourism (the main source of income for the country) is not anywhere near the level it used to be at. Tunisia used to be the most liberal country in North Africa. In society people feel freer to

express themselves which puts more pressure on believers; the people around them feel freer to put them under pressure.

Due to the high levels of polarisation in Tunisia between the liberal, secularist elite and the well-organised Islamists, it is still unclear how much of the Islamic agenda will be implemented. The country has, however, been affected by constant turmoil in the aftermath of the revolution.

Islamic extremists, most of them exiled to France, are returning to the country and spreading their fundamentalist messages. They are organising violent demonstrations that the weakened security services of the government find difficult to contain. Moreover, Salafist fanatical movements cause a lot of fear. Salafists are very visible, and emerge in a context of growing intolerance against Christians in the population. The rise of Salafism is without any doubt a stressful development for many believers.

On a positive note, the small MBB church in the country seems to be growing very slowly. However, the extremely violent murder of Father Marek Rybinski, a Polish priest and Salesian missionary, in February 2011. This murder reminded the Christian minority of a constant threat. Church leaders continue to receive threats. Also, there are some known cases where village elders cause persecution in rural areas.

Although the constitution of Tunisia currently respects freedom of religion and conversion from Islam is not prohibited, representatives of the administration at every level often act differently. Importation of Christian books in the Arabic language is obstructed. National churches cannot register – since independence (1956) no new church has been granted official registration – and local Christians are questioned and beaten once their conversion is known.

Reports from Open Doors field workers indicate that pressure on Christians, coming both from the authorities and from the families of MBBs, has increased. With political developments looking grim and Islamic movements getting stronger, the short democratic intermezzo is likely to make place for a new phase in the political history of the country: Islamic government. The situation of the small Christian population in the country has deteriorated and is not expected to improve. At the same time, if the Islamist government fails to promote economic development in the country, enthusiasm for political Islam might quickly fade.

31. India (score: 50)

India is extremely diverse in terms of culture, society and religion. Different persecution dynamics overlap: 'Religious militancy', 'Communist oppression' and 'Islamic extremism' as well as 'Organised corruption'. Religious militants are one of the most prominent attackers of the Christian minority and claim that every Indian has to be Hindu. Their ideology is called 'Hindutva'. The Christian minority therefore never relies on fair treatment and is discouraged from claiming their rights. The successful political party relying on this is Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). 'Anti-conversion laws' have been adopted in several federal states and are frequently used as a pretext to disturb and disrupt church services as well as to harass and accuse Christians. Permission to build or renovate a church building is almost impossible and all church activities can be perceived as 'hurting religious feelings' and 'disturbing peace and order'. A Maoist-Communist movement called 'Naxalites' which fights the government can be found in at least 12 states. They perceive Christians as enemies who have links with the government and the West. Islamic extremism also continues to grow and converts from a Muslim background have to withstand exclusion by their family, friends and neighbours, what can be also true for Hindu converts. The Hindutva movement is also targeting tribes aggressively and corruption is rife in the country. The caste system, which is deeply rooted in society, makes outreach extremely difficult. Despite all these troubles, the Indian church is growing. It is very likely that persecution will increase in 2013 and in the run up to 2014 elections. India ranks 31st on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Culturally, socially and religiously, India is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Hence, it is very difficult to describe its persecution dynamics without making generalisations. Several currents, putting the growing Christian church under pressure, shall be summarized here, but are not necessarily ordered in intensity of persecution as the picture changes from region to region.

Among the most prominent attackers of the Christian minority are religious militants, namely Hindu nationalists, who claim that every Indian has to be Hindu. Their ideology called “Hindutva” is spread by several political parties and affiliated youth movements and finds strong fundamentals in society. This ideology also has firm roots and strong support in many government structures like the police. The Christian minority therefore never counts on a fair treatment and is discouraged to claim its rights. One obvious example is the lack of justice in the court proceedings concerning the 2008 Kandhamal riots in Orissa. Even murderers were deliberately left unpunished, testifying about the strength of “Hindutva” penetration in society. In addition, many media also are spreading “Hindutva” ideology.

The most successful political party relying on this ideology is called BJP (“Bharatiya Janata Party”, translated “Indian People’s Party”), currently ruling or co-ruling seven states (of 28 in all). In five of them so-called “anti-conversion laws” were adopted (most of the time, but not necessarily, initiated by BJP), which are frequently used as a pretext to disturb and disrupt church services as well as to harass, beat up and accuse Christian believers and leaders. There is an abundant amount of reports on this, spreading all over India, more and more affecting also the South. All churches are monitored; Hindu radicals have started monitoring Christian activity in much detail. Many of them have planted spies in Churches who at occasions have risen against Christians and matters have resulted in legal cases against the Church. Permission to build or renovate a church building is almost impossible to get in some states, especially where Hindu nationalists rule, but new temples do not need any permit. Even beyond these states, Hindu radical groups and their networks have permeated the local administration in many places.

Due to the described climate of fear, in some states it is difficult for Christians to testify about their faith, to distribute Christian materials or to conduct social work. These kinds of things is not prohibited by law, but as all church activities can be perceived as “hurting religious feelings” and “disturbing peace and order”, Christians need to be very cautious. Some have been beaten up, other had to stand trials, house churches were raided and their bibles and hymn books confiscated, perceiving them as “conversion materials”. There are countless cases where the Hindu attackers are deliberately left unpunished and instead the Christian victims face accusations and trials. The laws are specifically misused against Christians and the abusers frequently get away unpunished. The persecution dynamic of “Religious militancy” therefore is the most visible one.

In at least twelve states across India the so-called “Naxalite movement”, a Maoist-communist group fighting the government, is active. In Chhattisgarh and Orissa hundreds of Christian families have been forced to leave their homes and villages at gun point because of Maoists. At least one person has been killed. The more ground this movement will gain, the more dangerous it will get for the Christian minority. By them, Christians are perceived as enemies, tied with the government and the West. In some states like Andhra Pradesh some Christians support the Maoists while others become victims because they are seen as police agents. In this context, Christians are facing crossfire. They risk to be shot by police as Maoists and by Maoists for being assumed as police informers. Though it is an insurgent movement, the persecution dynamic can be called “Communist oppression”.

“Islamic extremism” also continues to grow in certain parts of India like in Assam, the Kashmir Valley and Kerala. The Christian minority in these states faced a lot of pressure in the reporting period. Converts from a Muslim background face exclusion by their family, friends and neighbours. The same is true for Hindu background believers all over India, especially if they belong to the lower castes, the Dalit or the so-called OBCs (other backward castes).

Religious intolerance in India is growing, as religiosity is growing. Hinduism is experiencing a revival facilitated heavily by special events as well as print and electronic media. This is primarily a handiwork of the Hindutva brigade as they seek to return India to its supposed glorious Hindu past.

The ideology of Hindutva as highlighted above is spreading in influence. Hindutva made its inroads into south India a few years ago and its arrival was sealed with a victory for the BJP in Karnataka in 2008. The Hindutva movement is also targeting tribals aggressively especially in North east India, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and in other tribal dominated parts of India through its organizations like the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (Tribal Welfare Ashram) and Vanavasi Kalyan Paridhad’s (Tribal Welfare Committees). The goal of these movements is the assimilation of tribals into the Hindu fold i.e. gaining membership.

Apart from the movements tackling the Christian minority in a very active way, there are two general factors serving as basis for the whole system. One is, like witnessed in so many other countries, a systemic and organized corruption. Although all people suffer from this dynamic, Christians are

affected in a special way as a minority, all the more the believers who dare to speak out against it. The other factor intertwined with the first one is that more and more people belonging to the lower castes come to faith in Christ as they experience freedom and hope. As the caste system is deeply rooted in society, not only outreach is difficult and has to be done with much caution, but every Christian activity is likely to be perceived as mission. The more members of lower castes come to the Christian faith, the more the whole system of exploitation and taking advantage of them will stand on shaken ground. This may be one reason why Hindu extremist groups fight Christians so fiercely. The relative poverty of Christians makes them especially vulnerable to be victimized by organized corruption.

The picture would not be complete and painted in colours too dark without also mentioning Indian federal states which are quiet and where it is possible to live the Christian faith as well as other faiths. The already mentioned huge diversity of the country is the reason why it does not rank higher on the World Watch List as there are literally millions who can live according to their Christian faith unaffected.

It is difficult to give an outlook about the position of Christians in India. The situation deteriorated during the last twelve months, witnessing several attacks virtually every week and spreading also to South India. As general and state elections will be held shortly, the stakes are high for the BJP, so it is safe to say that persecution will increase. Election seasons are often seasons of increased persecution for the Church. "Beat the Christians, consolidate your votebank" is a strategy the BJP applies effectively. In addition, the government continues to ignore the problem of persecution, speaking of "criminal acts", without taking into account the religious angle. Therefore, it is very likely that persecution will increase in 2013 and in the run up to the 2014 elections.

32. Myanmar (score: 50)

Myanmar, formerly Burma, faces a threefold of persecution dynamics, namely 'Dictatorial paranoia', 'Organised corruption' and 'Religious militancy'. The country has hit international headlines in the past two years. The release of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest in November 2010 was perceived worldwide as a positive sign. The development of a democratic system has been a source of hope. The government has not yet been willing or able to agree upon a ceasefire with the biggest minority group, the Kachin, which are predominantly Christian. Being Burmese is equated with being Buddhist and this is perceived as ranking higher than tribal groups. The state runs schools which are used to introduce young people to Buddhism. Violence against the Christian Kachin is rampant and Myanmar is among the 10 most violent states on the World Watch List 2013 with at least 10 Christians killed. Converts are pressurised by family and the local community and are treated as second class citizens, widely perceived as connected with the West. The Muslim minority of Rohingya in Western Myanmar also faces heavy pressure from the government, the few Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) among them bear a double burden, as they additionally have to hide their faith from their own people. Churches are monitored and are not allowed to print or to import religious materials. The democracy has had no positive impact for the Christian minority and no improvements are expected in the near future. Myanmar ranks 32nd on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Myanmar, formerly Burma, has hit international headlines in the past two years quite frequently. The release of freedom icon and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest in November 2010 was perceived worldwide as a positive sign and helped the country to overcome its image as a pariah. In addition, several hundred political prisoners were released and temporary ceasefire agreements with different ethnic minority groups were made. The new President, Thein Sein, announced democratic reforms. The development of a more participative system which honours basic Human Rights integrates ethnic and religious minorities including Christians has been a source of hope.

But one should not be too quick to judge. As far as the Christian minority is concerned, not that much has changed for the better. This may be caused by several facts. First, the regime still has the majority in parliament and the military seems to enjoy a certain independence from government, to put it mildly. In addition, the government was not able to agree upon a permanent ceasefire with the biggest minority group, the Kachin in the country's North. According to a report by "Chin Human Rights Organisation" released in September 2012, being Kachin and being Christian is similar, so any action

against the Kachin will also tackle the Christian minority. Recent attacks accompanied even by air strikes show not only an ongoing, but even an increasing pressure.

Christians face an inextricable mix of different persecution dynamics. One of course is 'Dictatorial paranoia', as the regime will do anything to stay in power, which is especially true for the military. This is connected with the rampant 'Organised corruption' in Myanmar. Companies are often run by military or high-ranking politicians, where nepotism rules. There is no desire to share the country's wealth with its people. And as Christians at least partly live in regions where commodities are, they will be targeted. A third factor thrown in the mix is a strong 'Religious militancy'. Being Burmese is equated with being Buddhist and both are perceived as ranking higher than the tribal groups like Chin, Kachin and Karen. Consequently, the state runs so-called "Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools" (or Na Ta La – schools), which are attractive for minority people as they are run without school fees. These schools are used to influence those young people and to introduce them to Buddhism. Some were even forced to wear nun's or monk's dresses and when they refuse to convert, the children were harassed so badly that they had to flee the schools.

Violence against the Christian Kachin is rampant and apparently so far not affected by the development in the capital Naypyidaw and the evolving democratic system there. In fact, Myanmar is among the 10 most violent states on the World Watch List 2013. During the reporting period, at least 10 Christians were killed. The army targets Christian villages and churches on purpose and dozens of houses and churches have been destroyed. Some Christians are detained; others have to flee their home towns. Due to the last fights in Kachin territories, an estimated 80.000 people were on the run. It is important to bear in mind that not all incidents have been reported due to the inaccessibility of the tribal areas which often prevent foreigners from travelling there.

Besides this very visible persecution, converts to the Christian faith especially face grave consequences. Most of them will be pressurised by family and the local community to come back to the "true faith". The degree of persecution depends on the attitude of local leaders, both political and religious. The few Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) among the Rohingya in Western Myanmar face even more pressure.

Christians in general are treated as second class citizens. Their children are often forced to join the Buddhist worship program every day before classes start. Christians do not get fair treatment when dealing with authorities or when standing trial. They are widely perceived as connected with the West. Discrimination and harassment in rural areas is worse than in cities.

In order to start a church, Christians need the permission of the village chief, so everything depends on a good relationship with him. The process of obtaining permission is a long and tiring process. Money is regularly expected to speed up the process. Local Buddhist monks' opinion will always be checked, too. Churches are monitored and are not allowed to print or to import religious materials.

So far, the unfolding democracy has had no positive impacts for the Christian minority. The increasing opening up of Myanmar will nevertheless lead to a closer focus on their record of treating minorities and of Human Rights in general. However, as the plight of the Christian minority, especially the Kachin, goes widely unnoticed and as the military seems to generally act independently of politics, it is difficult to see why the situation for the Christian minority should improve soon.

Christians in Myanmar face many different factors which lead them being targeted and persecuted. Though the country did change its international appearance with cautious democratic reforms, not that much has changed for its citizens yet, especially for the minorities who mostly live in remote areas. The Kachin Christians have not yet noticed any changes either. This on-going pressure is reflected in a comparable level in terms of rank in the World Watch List 2013. Finally, it is worth noting that not only Christians face persecution. The Muslim minority, namely the Rohingya, are persecuted by the Buddhist majority also.

33. Kuwait (score: 49)

The persecution dynamics active in Kuwait are: 'Islamic extremism', 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Tribal antagonism'. The Kuwaiti Constitution declares that the state protects freedom of belief. There are, however, some limitations: the practice of religion should not conflict with public order or morals and be in accordance with established customs. Islam is the state religion and Sharia is an important source of legislation. Conversion from Islam is not permitted and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face persecution from family, and to a lesser extent, authorities. There are only a few hundred Kuwaiti believers yet their number is growing. Converts risk discrimination, harassment, police monitoring of their activities, arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and verbal abuse. Also, a change of faith (away of Islam) is likely to lead to legal problems in personal status and property matters in court. Most Christians are expats who are relatively free to worship informally. There are four registered denominations meeting in compounds. Churches are persistently seeking permission for additional or expanded facilities. The government only granted a limited number of visas to ordained and lay staff for the recognised Christian groups. Kuwait ranks 33^d on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution.'

The Kuwaiti Constitution declares that the State protects freedom of belief. However, it also mentions some limitations: the practice of religion should not conflict with public order or morals and be in accordance with established customs. According to the constitution, Islam is the state religion and Islamic law (sharia) is an important source of legislation.

Conversion from Islam to another religion is not permitted and the government actively supported proselytism by Sunni Muslims. For MBBs, the main persecution actors are family and Muslim extremists, and to a lesser extent authorities. There are only a few hundred Kuwaiti believers (MBBs), as most Christians are migrant workers from outside the country. The MBB number is growing rapidly and they are becoming bolder and bolder in sharing their faith.

Indeed, Middle East Concern reports "There is little state-sponsored persecution of MBBs, though there is harassment and pressure from families. The government imposes some restrictions on expatriate churches, though tolerates some operating outside of officially recognised sites provided there are no complaints."

'Islamic extremism' is expressed mostly in the family sphere. Restrictions from the government can mostly be explained by 'Dictatorial paranoia', as the country's ruler does not want any organised group to threaten his hegemony. As ethnic tensions are also present, 'Tribal antagonism' is another potential source of persecution.

Converts risk discrimination, harassment, police monitoring of their activities, arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and verbal abuse. Also, a change of faith (away from Islam) is not recognised and is likely to lead to legal problems in personal status and property matters in court. The government requires Islamic religious instruction for all students in public and private schools. Teaching Christianity is prohibited, even to legally recognised Christians.

The Christian community mostly consists of foreign migrant workers. Expat Christians are relatively free to worship informally. There are four registered denominations which meet in compounds. However, these are too small for the number of people gathering and local Kuwaiti's are annoyed by the noise and traffic of these overcrowded meeting places. The extreme difficulty to obtain property to gather for worship is an extra burden. On the other hand, the sharing of meeting places has encouraged greater cooperation and fellowship among churches.

Regarding other dimensions of persecution, Middle East Concern indicates that some MBBs "suffer job discrimination should their conversion become known."

Moreover, "churches and church compounds have been persistently requesting permission for additional or expanded facilities. During 2010 the Greek Orthodox Church's landlord raised the rent disproportionately. The church looked for alternative property and also sought financial support to cover their increased costs. An application by the Roman Catholic Church for a facility in Mahloubia was blocked by the Municipal Council in November 2010. The government limits the number of ordained and lay staff for the recognised Christian groups by restricting the number of visas granted." (MEC, 2012)

34. Jordan (score: 48)

The main persecution dynamics active in Jordan are 'Islamic extremism', 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Tribal antagonism'. As one of the apparently most Western-orientated countries in the Middle East, traditional Christians experience a certain degree of religious freedom in Jordan. The church landscape is comparable to pre-civil war Syria with officially registered churches, a functioning theological faculty and relative toleration of a group of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). There is also a growing church among Iraqi refugees. Islam is the religion of the state. The legal system is based on laws of Syrian and to a lesser extent Egyptian origin. Personal status legal code is based on religious law, implying that Sharia is applied to all those whom the state regards as Muslim. However, leaving Islam is not officially recognised. The government will intervene in public evangelisation of Muslims. Muslims who become Christians still fall under the jurisdiction of Sharia courts, which means their marriages can be annulled and custody of their children can be taken from them. We received reports of a few MBBs who are faced with the latter. Though the state does not play an active role in this, it is permissive. MBBs also encounter discrimination and the threat of mental and physical abuse by their families, government officials, and at times community members. As a result of popular uprisings in the Arab Spring, pressure is rising and radical Islamic elements are becoming more active in society. We received reports on violence against MBBs, including killings, by extremists. There are a large number of Muslim refugees entering the country from Syria and Iraq, which, together with the rise of politicised Islam, puts increasing pressure on Christians. Most new believers are from historical Christian communities, but recently more Muslims are coming to faith. Whereas the church as a whole is declining in numbers, the evangelical church is experiencing encouraging growth. Jordan ranks 34th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

As one of the apparently Western-orientated countries in the Middle East, traditional Christians experience a certain degree of religious freedom in Jordan. The church landscape is comparable to pre-civil war Syria with officially registered churches, a functioning theological faculty and relative toleration of a group of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). There is also a growing church among Iraqi refugees.

According to the Jordanian constitution 'The State shall safeguard the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality.' Islam is the religion of the state. The legal system is based on laws of Syrian and to a lesser extent Egyptian origin. Personal status legal code is based on religious law, implying that Sharia is applied to all those whom the state regards as *Muslim*. However, leaving Islam is not officially recognised and public evangelisation of Muslims is against government policy.

Because of this, the main persecution dynamic in Jordan is 'Islamic extremism', as well as 'Dictatorial Paranoia' and 'Tribal Antagonism'. The Jordan king is firmly in control of the country, though his power is not uncontested. Islamism is growing in the country, in combination with ethnic tensions that can potentially upsurge.

Historically, relations between Muslims and Christians were generally peaceful. However, as a result of popular uprisings in the framework of the Arab spring, pressure is rising and radical Islamic elements are becoming more active in society. Compared to other countries in the region, church life is relatively less restricted because of the existence of a number of recognised churches. However, the situation of MBBs has worsened, mostly due to increasing activity of Islamic extremists. We received reports of violence against MBBs, including killings, by extremists. MBBs continue to suffer from family members as well. In fact, social and family pressure has increased. In some cases, the government can be a persecuting agent, mostly because violence against Christians is treated with impunity.

Moreover, Muslims who become Christians still fall under the jurisdiction of Sharia courts, which means their marriages can be annulled, custody of their children can be taken from them and they can be deprived of other civil rights as well. We received reports of several MBBs who are under threat of losing custody of their children as a result of their conversion. This situation is implicitly tolerated by the state. MBBs also encounter discrimination and the threat of mental and physical abuse by their families, government officials, and at times community members.

MBBs generally maintain a low profile to avoid harassment or interrogation. Security service personnel reportedly questioned MBBs on their beliefs, threatened court and other actions, and promised rewards for returning back to Islam, such as job opportunities. They also withheld certificates of good behaviour needed for job applications or to open a business and told employers to dismiss them.

For a few years there have been considerable tensions between evangelical churches and traditional churches in the Hashemite Kingdom. These seem to have eased off mostly but the difficulties between the various denominations have hardly been reduced. Most new believers are from the nominal Christian community, but recently more Muslims are coming to faith. Whereas the church as a whole is declining in numbers, the evangelical church is experiencing growth. As a result the authorities are increasingly monitoring churches, and security officers in civilian clothes are present outside churches of some Christian denominations. However, some church leaders said the presence of security officers was meant to protect them following threats against Christian groups in the region.

The total number of Christians has been declining since the country's independence especially due to lower birth rates and high emigration rates. On the other hand, large numbers of Iraqi Christians have entered the country – a development that is still continuing. There is also a large number of Muslim refugees entering the country from Syria and Iraq, which together with the rise of politicised Islam put increasing pressure on Christians, especially on evangelicals and MBBs.

35. Bahrain (score: 48)

The main persecution dynamic in Bahrain is 'Islamic extremism', in combination with 'Dictatorial paranoia'. In Bahrain, the majority Shiite population is demonstrating against the Sunni government, and the country is caught between competing Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Bahraini constitution declares that the religion of the state is Shi'ia Islam and that 'the State guarantees the inviolability of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country.' Sharia (Islamic law) is a principal source for legislation. This mainly Shia-Islamic country is quite tolerant in general because of its international position in banking and trade. Expatriate Christians are relatively free to practice their faith in private places of worship, but proselytising Muslims is illegal. 'Tribal antagonism' can also play a role in restricting the freedoms of Christians. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) generally do not dare to talk about their conversion. Pressure comes mostly from family and community, but to a lesser extent from the state. Pressure is highest in the private, family and community spheres for MBBs, though the government also imposes restrictions on national and church life. MBBs are still considered Muslims by the state and legal challenge to this is not permitted. However, in terms of religious freedom for foreign Christians, Bahrain remains one of the most liberal countries on the Arabian Peninsula. Bahrain ranks 35th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Bahrain, where the majority Shiite population is demonstrating against the Sunni government, is the scene of a hegemony competition between Saudi Arabia, who sent its troops in support of the Bahraini government in order to extinguish the spark of revolution coming from the Arab Spring in 2011, and Iran, whose reaction up till now was limited to threatening rhetoric.

In this country, 'Islamic extremism' is a relevant persecution dynamic, though persecution dynamics are best explained by 'Dictatorial paranoia' as the country's ruler endeavors to stay in power at all costs. The Bahraini constitution declares that the religion of the State is Islam and that 'the State guarantees the inviolability of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country.' Sharia (Islamic law) is a principal source for legislation.

This mainly Shia-Islamic country is quite tolerant in general because of its international position in banking and trade. There are several Christian bookshops and Christian hospitals. A considerable number of expatriate Christians (mainly from South Asia) work and live in Bahrain and are relatively free to practice their faith in private places of worship, but proselytizing Muslims is illegal. Since the number of compounds is limited, dozens of congregations must use the same building. They are not allowed to advertise their services in Arabic but they can in English.

Being a tribal society, 'Tribal Antagonism' can in some cases also play a role in restricting the freedoms of Christians. Traditionally, society is not tolerant towards converts from Islam to other religious groups. Families and communities often banned them. Muslim Background Believers, MBBs, generally do not dare to talk about their conversion and some of them believed it necessary to leave the country permanently. Pressure comes mostly from family and community, to a lesser extent from the state.

In Bahrain, MBBs are under considerably more pressure than the few historical Christian communities and expat communities. Pressure is systemic for MBBs. Expat Christians are often denied additional legally recognised facilities. No violence was recorded in this reporting period, but there is a lot of fear which explains the pressure in all spheres of life. Pressure is highest in the private, family and community spheres for MBBs, though government also imposes restrictions on national and church life.

Since the constitution declares Islam to be the state religion and Islamic law as an important source of legislation, it implies that Muslims are forbidden to change faith. MBBs are still considered Muslims by the state and a legal challenge to this was not permitted, which has strong implications of family law for example. However, in terms of religious freedom for foreign Christians, Bahrain remains one of the most liberal countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

36. Palestinian Territories (score: 48)

The main persecution dynamic in the Palestinian Territories is 'Islamic extremism'. Palestinian Basic Law states that the official religion is Islam and Sharia is the main source of legislation. The authorities are failing to uphold and protect the rights of individual Christians. The situation in Gaza is different from the West Bank, both territories being effectively under different governments at present. Pressure on Christians is increasing and there is noticeably more pressure in Gaza than in the West Bank because of the presence of Islamic fanatical movements. Fear is also growing in the West Bank because of the tense situation between Israel and Iran, amid a general context of political unrest in the Middle East. Overall, the church is suffering from the restrictions that result from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While the violence is mostly caused by Islamic extremists, pressure in all spheres of life is caused by both Islamic extremists and family members in the case of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). MBBs in Gaza live in total hiding. Apart from oppression from radical Muslim groups, pressure from the Hamas government and the hopeless economic and political situation continue to force Christians to leave. The situation for Christians is not expected to improve in the near future. In Gaza the authorities are increasingly under the influence of radical groups. On the West Bank the situation is different: Fatah is based on secular principles. However, the more the Fatah government loses its credibility among the Palestinians, the more radical elements will gain power, which is obviously a bad development for the local church. The Palestinian Territories rank 36th on the WWL and belong to the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

The main persecution dynamic in the Palestinian Territories is 'Islamic Extremism.' The Palestinian Basic Law – which functions as a temporary constitution – states that the official religion is Islam and Sharia (Islamic legislation) is the main source of legislation.

The dynamics of Christian persecution in the Palestinian Territories are complex. It should be stressed that the situation in Gaza is different from the West Bank, both territories being effectively under different governments at present. Pressure on Christians is increasing, especially on Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). Our reports include a few cases of forced conversions, abductions and physical harm.

Generally speaking, persecution dynamics are comparable throughout the territories, though there is noticeably more pressure in Gaza than in the West Bank because of the presence of Islamic fanatical movements. One of them was responsible for the kidnapping and forced conversion of two Christians in 2012. This incident created a lot of fear among the Christian community. Local Christians say they experience growing social and economic pressure to convert to Islam, especially in Gaza.

Fear is also growing in the West Bank because of the tense situation between Israel and Iran, amidst a general context of political unrest in the Middle East. Of the four types of Christianity in the country

(MBBs, historical Christians, non-traditional Protestant Christians and expats), MBBs are under most pressure.

Whilst the violence is mostly caused by Islamic extremists, pressure in all spheres of life is caused by both Islamic extremists and family members in the case of MBBs. Pressure is intense in the private and family sphere. The level of severity depends on the type of family (e.g. poor and lacking influence or more prominent) and region (extremely heavy in Gaza, less though still problematic in West Bank). MBBs in Gaza live in total hiding. Because of the presence of historical churches, there is a small margin in the church sphere.

The authorities are failing to uphold and protect the rights of individual Christians and in some cases they have to seek safety in flight to a so called 'safe house' somewhere else in the area. In fact, the authorities have no interest in combating impunity against Christians. In Gaza, there is also oppression from radical Muslim groups that are active in the strip, which together with pressure from the Hamas government combined with the hopeless economic and political situation continues to force Christians to leave. To a lesser extent, the latter is true for the West Bank as well. Although there is no official persecution, Christians do face some discrimination. Overall, the church is suffering from the restrictions that result from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The situation for Christians is not expected to improve in the near future. In Gaza the authorities are increasingly under the influence of radical groups, encouraged by the recent changes in the Middle East (e.g. in Egypt, where the Brotherhood is in power now and Iran which is challenging the United States and Israel). On the West Bank the situation is different: Fatah is based on secular principles. Six Christians have a seat in parliament and the mayor of Bethlehem, Victor Batarseh, is a Christian. However the more the Fatah government loses its credibility among the Palestinians, the more radical elements will gain power. This is obviously a bad development for the church.

37. China (score: 48)

The main persecution dynamics in China are 'Communist oppression', 'Organised corruption' and to a lesser extent 'Islamic extremism' and 'Tribal antagonism'. The government of China is frankly confused and scared. Wedded to a communist ideology they no longer even pay lip service to, they have unleashed the market system yet hold all the capital. This has resulted in great economic growth, increased freedoms, and rapid Westernisation. Accession to super-power status has made China's leaders more narrowly nationalistic and in some ways more anti-Western. The upshot is that China is getting harder to influence internationally – which has huge implications for advocacy work. It also means that Christianity is still seen as a Western import, and not really Chinese – which puts churches on the defensive. There are huge demographic and economic headaches to face, and with over 150,000 riots a year often protesting the chronic rise of corruption throughout the country, the leadership has to manage achieving high levels of growth while ensuring social stability. In the midst of this complicated situation, the Chinese church lives and prospers. Four issues get the church into persecution trouble in China today: when they are perceived as too powerful, when they are perceived as too political, when they are perceived as too foreign and when they are perceived as a cult. For the foreseeable future, the new Chinese leadership will not 'get' religion, but is determined to use it, rather than exterminate it. The house churches are treading warily in this unpredictable space of danger and opportunity. China ranks 37th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

China – Land of Paradox

"Right now we have the perfect amount of persecution," said two house church pastors at a recent conference organised by Open Doors, "we have it so that it makes us choose for Christ and pay a price, but it is not so intense that outreach and growth is impossible."

The government of China is confused and scared. Wedded to a communist ideology they no longer even pay lip service to, they have unleashed the market system yet hold all the capital. This has resulted in great economic growth, increased freedoms, and rapid Westernisation, so that Mao's face still beams from Tiananmen square, but Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken also grins at the other end of the square in garish neon. The tussle between these two forces – of Chinese authoritarianism and Western capitalism – gives the country its unique flavour, and its church-state relations their peculiar unpredictability.

On the one hand, the Chinese government is getting more assertive. Accession to super-power status has made China's leaders more narrowly nationalistic and in some ways more anti-Western. As a diplomat put it recently, "At every summit, they are out to show that they are the new bosses." The upshot is that China is getting harder to influence internationally. It also means that Christianity is still seen as a Western import, and not really Chinese – which still puts the churches on the defensive.

On the other hand, the Chinese government is getting more frightened. There are huge demographic and economic headaches to face down, and with over 150,000 riots a year often protesting the chronic rise of corruption throughout the country, they have to manage achieving high levels of growth while ensuring social stability. Ironically, this gives the Chinese churches their opportunity, as the government is looking for honest allies to help alleviate society's mounting ills.

In the midst of this complicated suspicion then, the Chinese church lives and prospers. No longer are Christians to be exterminated, they are to be co-opted. But this is a mixed blessing when an authoritarian state wishes you to serve its ends – hence persecution is still a factor. Four issues get the church into persecution trouble in China today:

- When they are perceived as too powerful!

It is when large, mainly rural based networks get together in unity that the government gets spooked, as they fear the power of a Messiah-like leader to unite the masses into a revolution, just like Mao. In recent years, a discreet dialogue has been occurring between the government and the leaders of these larger networks, and it is hoped that a legal registration process for house churches can be the result.

- When they are perceived as too political!

Churches have to walk a tightrope: to work for the betterment of society while not threatening the right of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to run society. One never knows what the official attitude will be in any given situation, since there are no settled laws on the question. For example, in an interior city a house church gets forcibly closed for running an orphanage because officials said, "that's the state's job – you are trying to take over from us," yet in another city a house church does the same thing because officials do not regard it as subversive. A Beijing house church, Shouwang, also illustrates the problem. The church decided to openly renovate premises and meet as a church outside the official state sanctioned church, the Three Self Patriotic Movement. But the day they opened the building on 11 April 2011, the leaders were arrested. Yet in other parts of Beijing, other house church networks meet openly in large premises, but walk the tightrope differently. One leader said, "We don't advertise our presence as aggressively as Shouwang, who were out to provoke a confrontation." Shouwang congregation became perceived as a political threat, hence their persecution.

- When they are perceived as too foreign!

If it is thought that a church is run from abroad, with mainly foreign literature and leadership, then this taps into something very deep in the Chinese psyche where they just hate foreign domination. Again, it is important that Chinese Christianity becomes more Chinese to head this off.

- When they are perceived as a cult!

If a house church has unorthodox or even extreme teaching, it will be targeted by the government, who will place it in the same category as the cult, Falun Gong. To the credit of many mission agencies however, the incidence of heresies in the house churches has gone down considerably.

For the foreseeable future, the new Chinese leadership will not "get" religion, but they are determined to use it, rather than exterminate it. The house churches are treading warily in this unpredictable space of danger and opportunity.

38. Azerbaijan (score: 48)

The main persecution dynamic in Azerbaijan is 'Dictatorial paranoia'. Azerbaijan is officially a secular state and the majority of the population are Muslim. The government has a negative attitude towards any form of religion. The authoritarian government restricts freedom of expression and assembly, and religious rights in general. Expat Christians have more freedom than indigenous believers. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face additional pressure, particularly in rural areas. The influence of Islam is growing and Christianity is associated with the country's arch-enemy, Armenia. The government has become more active in controlling religion and pressure is increasing.

Fewer and fewer churches can function legally. In 2012, a number of raids on churches and Christian houses were reported. The Greater Grace Protestant Church was even liquidated in April 2012 with no formal justification. Under the December 2010 legislation, it is illegal for unregistered churches to meet yet to get registration is near impossible. Many Christians are unable to find or keep jobs because of their faith and are watched closely by the secret services. There is also a Committee on Religious Affairs which controls almost everything. The growth of the church is encouraging, but under increasing legislative restrictions, oppression is also expected to increase. Azerbaijan ranks 38th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, bordering Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey and Iran, is officially a secular state, somewhat comparable to the Turkish model. The majority of its population is Muslim. The government has a negative attitude towards any form of religion. The attitude towards Christians is no different, particularly because Christians are associated with Azerbaijan's archenemy Armenia. Fundamentalist Islam is perceived as a destabilising factor for the country's rulers.

The main persecution dynamic in Azerbaijan is 'Dictatorial paranoia.' Azerbaijan proudly presents itself as a secular nation, which is under the rule of President Aliyev, a second-generation ruler in Azerbaijan after his father. As an authoritarian government, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and other human rights, remain restricted. Though the Azerbaijani government does not specifically target Christians, it restricts any kind of religion. Only moderate Islam is accepted.

All types of Christianity suffer from persecution, though expat Christians have more freedom than indigenous believers. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face additional pressure from society and family members, mainly in rural areas. The persecution dynamics in Azerbaijan show a pattern of restrictions on religious freedom mainly in the community sphere (caused by society and family members) and in the church sphere (legal restrictions).

The influence of traditional Islam is growing in various regions of this country. The oppression of Christians is not only religious, but also nationalistic/ethnic. Azeri believers are considered traitors as Christianity is associated with the country's archenemy, Armenia. Persecution is more intense in the countryside (especially in northern areas around Aliabad, Sumgait and Kuba), and less in bigger cities. Persecution is constant throughout the territory of the country. Human rights violations are more critical in the Nakhichevan enclave. The presence of a huge Azeri community in Islamic Iran to the south is also a cause of concern, in the context of diplomatic tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran related to hegemony over the border area and the presence of an Iranian minority in Azerbaijan.

The general perception of Christians in Azerbaijan, which hosted the Eurovision song festival in 2012, is negative. It is believed the Azeri government used the European song festival as a propaganda tool, to paint a bright picture of the country and to hide all problems. Christians are perceived as troublemakers. OD is perceived as such, too...According to our reports, official checks are becoming increasingly strict. The government has become more active in controlling religion and, compared to previous years, the position of Christians has deteriorated. The country dropped in rank on the WWL only because other countries overtook it. 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.

The pressure is constant and increasing. Fewer and fewer churches can function legally. Unregistered religious activities are punishable, and the fines on breaking the law are high, but successful registration of new churches has been impossible since 2010. Almost all Protestant denominations are still without legal status. Private homes cannot be used for holding religious services. Congregations without registration get into trouble with the police. Protestant churches are raided, with church leaders arrested or fined.

In 2012, Forum 18 reports a number of raids of churches and houses of Christians. Open Doors reports arrests of evangelists. Also, one of the biggest churches in the Azerbaijani capital Baku, the Greater Grace Protestant Church, has been liquidated following a court ruling on 25 April 2012. No formal justification was given for the liquidation. This decision implies that "any activity the Church engages in would be illegal and subject to punishment." The Church will appeal the decision, but this case is yet one more example of the increasing difficulties that Christians are facing in Azerbaijan.

In general, there is little freedom to build church buildings. Churches need explicit permission to do so, and this is hardly ever granted. Over the past year no such permission was given. Christians often refrain from even beginning the permission procedure. Under the December 2010 legislation, it is illegal for unregistered churches to meet, but some take the risk anyway. The government is using the

re-registration trap to limit the number of churches more and more. Re-registration has been required six times since 1991.

Many Christians are unable to find or keep jobs and are watched closely by the secret services. The role of the secret services and police is important, but there is also a Committee on Religious Affairs which monitors and controls any religious activity. However, the number of indigenous believers continues to grow, and some continue to be active in outreach despite the risk. The growth of the church is encouraging, but under increasing legislative restrictions, oppression is also expected to increase. Forum 18, in its 2012 Annual Survey concludes: "Azerbaijan is likely to remain a place where fundamental human rights are violated with impunity, and the state tries to make exercising human rights conditional upon state permission."

39. Morocco (score: 47)

'Islamic extremism' is the main persecution dynamic in Morocco, more so as the government is led by an Islamic party. Victims of persecution are mainly Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) although restrictions apply to the small historic Catholic and expat communities. Islamic organisations have a growing influence. The Arab Spring protests did not bring the monarchy to an end but were finally subdued in July 2011 with the King being forced to make political concessions and a greater commitment to respect civil rights and to fight corruption. The indigenous church is not always recognised by the authorities, but the expat church is. The constitution provides some freedom of religion but there are, nevertheless, a number of practical restrictions in exercising this freedom. Voluntary conversion is not a crime and is therefore implicitly accepted. However, Moroccan Muslims who convert are in practice treated as criminals by the police and face rejection from friends and family. The Arab Spring gave the younger Christian generation a feeling of hope and encouragement to struggle for more freedom. Much will depend on how moderate the Islamist government will be, and if moderate Muslims will be able to form a coalition to withstand the pressures of al-Qaeda and other fundamentalist groups. Morocco ranks 29th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

'Islamic Extremism' is the main persecution dynamic in Morocco, and even more so since the government is led by an Islamic party. In this Muslim majority country, persecution dynamics are comparable to the neighbouring Maghreb countries, though legislation may comparatively be a little less restrictive. For this reason, there is still a small margin of autonomy for Christians in their private life. This past year showed no major new developments in comparison with last year, though our survey indicates more pressure on Christians in the community sphere. Victims of persecution are mainly Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), though the same restrictions apply to the small historical Catholic and expat communities in the country.

Local government, neighbours and to some extent family members continued to be responsible for most of the hostilities against Christians, but it should be noted that the Islamist party which won the last elections is the principal cause of worry for most Christians in the country. Islamic organisations, often funded by Saudi Arabia, have a growing influence in the country.

The revolutionary wave that went through North Africa and the Middle East known as the Arab Spring has also reached Morocco. In the case of Morocco, the protests did not bring the monarchy to an end, but King Mohammed VI had to adopt a number of reforms in order to restore social peace. The protests were finally subdued in July 2011, forcing the King to make great political concessions, including government changes, a referendum on constitutional reforms, a greater commitment to respect civil rights and an end to corruption.

Out of pragmatism, Mohammed VI – who is considered a direct descendent of the prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam – has given in to the pressure of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD). In the parliamentary elections that were held at the end of 2011, the PJD obtained a huge victory, and based on the new constitutional procedures, must now provide a prime minister.

The Moroccan church is not recognised by the authorities, but the expat Church is. The expat Moroccan Church has always suffered from oppression, although it was never as harsh as in neighbouring North African countries.

Islam is the official state religion but the constitution provides some freedom of religion. There are, nevertheless, a number of practical restrictions in exercising this freedom. For example, the government prohibits the distribution of Christian religious materials, bans all proselytizing. Foreign Christian communities openly practice their faith. Voluntary conversion is not a crime in Moroccan law, and is therefore implicitly accepted. However, Moroccan Muslims who convert to Christianity are treated as criminals by the police and face rejection from friends and most family members.

Compared to previous years, the situation of Christians in Morocco has not changed much. Without doubt, the most important change affecting the Church is the arrival of the Islamist party in government. Islamist forces are becoming more visible in the country. While 2010 was characterised by big pressures on the Moroccan Church and the expulsion of over 150 missionaries and Christian expatriate workers, 2011 did not see many incidents against Christians. The authorities dedicated most of their energy and resources to control the uprisings throughout the country, which gave them less time to monitor Moroccan Christians and churches.

The Arab Spring gave the younger (Christian) generation a feeling of hope and so they are encouraged to struggle for more freedom. The future will tell whether this hope will become a reality, or if government restrictions will increase again. "Can Morocco's Islamists check al-Qaeda?" *Le Monde Diplomatique* asked in 2007. This is still a valid question today. The answer to this question will depend on how moderate the Islamists in government will be, and if moderate Muslims will be able to form a coalition to withstand the pressures of al-Qaeda and other fundamentalist groups.

40. Kenya (score: 47)

'Islamic extremism' is an important persecution dynamic against Christians in Kenya whereas 'Tribal antagonism' is upcoming. Kenya (as a complete country) is new on the World Watch List. The high level of violence against Christians or churches is remarkable and much of it has to do with al-Shabab or al-Shabab-inspired extremist groups. There is a real Islamist drive to get Kenya under the African 'House of Islam', like Tanzania and Uganda. Muslims who converted to Christianity were pressurised to revert to Islam. Christians who married Muslims were also pressurised to convert to Islam. Kenya experienced heightened insecurity in 2012 including incidents in which 22 Christians were killed. More than 10 churches were burnt, destroyed by bomb or grenade attacks, looted, or had property destroyed in them. As much as Kenya is said to be a majority Christian country (83%), the Muslim dominated areas have high intolerance and hostilities towards Christians. In the multi-year process towards the drafting of the new Constitution (approved in 2010), Muslim leaders have been putting pressure on the government to give recognition to Islam. A very significant element was their successful claim to get a provision for the right to establish Islamic family courts (khadis' courts) in all counties. The future for the church in Kenya is worrying and the level of fear among Christians is growing rapidly. The Islamist drive is diverse and strong. Kenya ranks 40th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Kenya (as a complete country) is new on the World Watch List, although its North-eastern parts have been on the list before. Kenya has come under the grip of 'Islamic extremism' more and more, serving as persecution dynamic against Christians. Kenya has an estimated Christian population of 83%, and a Muslim population of 11-12%. Muslims are not equally spread over the country but are mostly concentrated in one third of the country. In the Muslim dominated areas all types of Christianity are subject to different degrees of hostility, with most hostility directed towards Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), and Christians who convert Muslims to Christianity. Kenya also faces 'Tribal antagonism' as an upcoming persecution dynamic. This dynamic hasn't really influenced the scoring yet and more research is needed here.

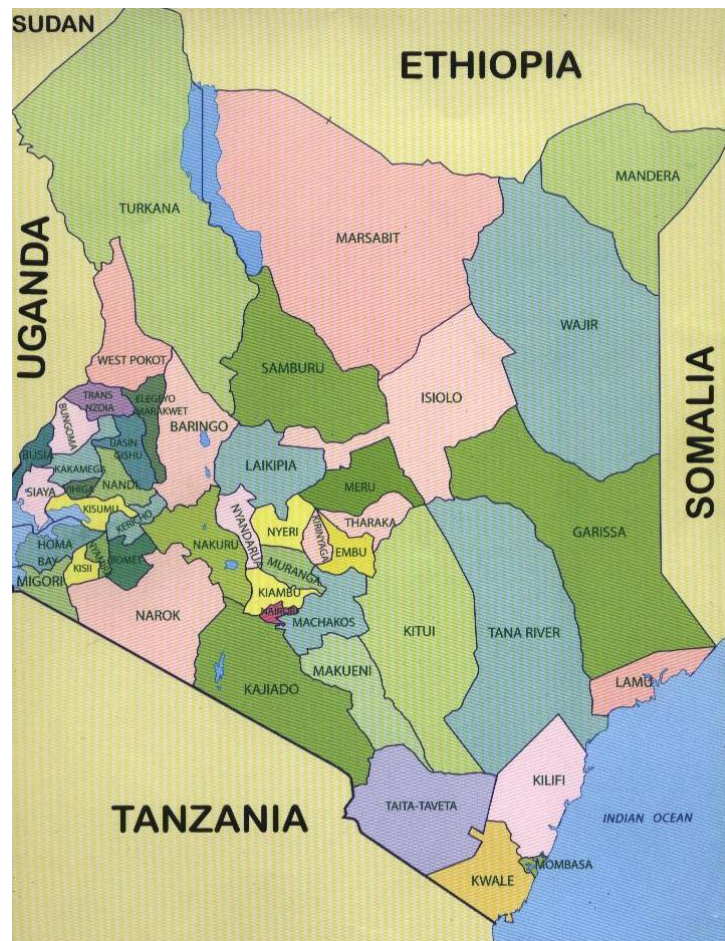
Hostilities against Christians are real in parts of Kenya, but often somehow tempered. This makes the high level of violence against Christians or churches remarkable, not only in the Muslim dominated areas but also in the region of Nairobi. A lot of it has to do with al-Shabab or al-Shabab-inspired extremist groups. Some see it (nearly) exclusively linked to Kenya's military activities in Somalia, as revenge for Kenya's incursion into the country. Some see it as a spilling-over effect from Somalia, now that part of al-Shabab has been forced to flee to, and resettle in East Kenya (among other places). Others also see it as an internal insurgency fuelled by al-Sahab extremists and their wider circle of sympathisers. Comparable to Tanzania, there is a multiple Islamist drive to get Kenya under the

(regional) 'House of Islam'. In the first place, there is the drive to encourage the spread of (extremist) Islam in the whole country through a combination of terrorist actions and strategic infiltration in the main sectors of society. Secondly, there is the drive to secede the coastal area from the rest of the country, to form an independent sultanate with Tanzanian Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, and the coastal area of Tanzania.

The pressure on Christians and/or churches is rather evenly distributed over the different spheres of life with some extra emphasis on community life and church life. However, physical violence was remarkably high. Hostilities happened mostly in Muslim dominated areas, although Nairobi experienced a serious share of violent attacks. In general MBBs were in the forefront of hostilities. Muslims who converted to Christianity had to forfeit the privilege of having a family. They were pressurised to revert to Islam or their spouses pressured to divorce them or taken away from them. Christians who married Muslims were also pressurised to convert to Islam. Christians in Muslim dominated areas were often denied shared resources, like scholarships and bursaries for school children, or slots for jobs given by the government for the area. Christians weren't allowed to express their views but were expected to watch and go along with the decisions made by Muslims. They received threats of attack if they attended church services and some were actually attacked in their churches. Some Christians feared going to church, or attending Christian gatherings. Churches had to be guarded by security operatives and worshippers screened for dangerous weapons or grenades before entering. Many Christian festivities were cancelled, or made much lower key celebrations this year due to the fear of attacks.

Kenya experienced heightened insecurity in 2012. Open Doors Field experts reported that "in incidents that targeted Christians, 22 Christians (including security officers) were killed. Over 100 were seriously injured or maimed. The incidences were labelled by the government as general insecurity in the country from the al-Shabab insurgents. These killings, however, targeted Christians through shooting directly or hauling grenades at churches as Christians worshipped, or to Christian gatherings and crusades." More than 10 churches were burnt, destroyed by bombing or grenade attacks, looted, or had property destroyed in them; mostly in north-eastern and coastal areas, but some in other towns like Nairobi. Some Christians migrated from Muslim dominated areas to avoid further attacks.

Many hostilities took place in only one third of the country, the Muslim majority areas. These are situated in the north-east and coastal areas. Kenya has a long porous border with Somalia, and the population along the border has the same tribal background as the Somalis on the other side. According to Open Doors Field experts, "The people there are keen to replicate a strong Islamic culture preferably with Sharia law governing the area, like it applies in Somalia." Therefore as much as Kenya is said to be a majority Christian country, the Muslim dominated areas (north-east and some parts of the coastal area) have high intolerance and hostilities towards Christians. MBBs there either have to flee or live as secret believers, just like in Somalia. The region of Nairobi is sometimes involved in hostility too, but then (mostly) in the form of violent attacks on churches. While the coastal area (counties of Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi, Tana River and Lamu) has the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), one of the key inspirators for the Islamist drive in Kenya, the amount of violence in this area is relatively low. According to Open Doors Field experts, "the local church is courting the Mombasa Republican Council, without recognising the clearly extremist undertones of the MRC. The MRC in turn does not want to alienate the local pastors, and their churches, because they need their votes." This keeps most violence away from the coastal areas though not all.



Guide 2 Kenya (<http://www.guide2kenya.com/information/53/Counties-of-Kenya>)

In the multi-year process towards the drafting of the new Constitution (ratified in 2010), Muslim leaders have been putting pressure on the government to give recognition to Islam, claiming that they are a minority group that should be protected, and that Christianity is favoured against Islam in Kenya. They have also done this through Human Rights pressure groups (not necessarily Muslim), and Muslim clerics and legislators in parliament that champion for Muslims' rights or Islam. A very significant element was their claim to get a provision in the new Constitution for the right to establish Islamic family courts (khadis' courts) in all counties of Kenya, even counties with a low presence of Muslims. This is what they got. Kenyan analysts expressed their worries, "The kadhīs' courts are in the Constitution. Now they have that, they will become more forceful. Those counties can declare themselves Sharia counties." They then mentioned 10 counties with high presence of Muslim populations, from Kwale in the south-east to Marsabit in the north-west, and all counties to the East, indicating they are liable to develop themselves as a future split of Kenya (like Northern Nigeria versus Southern Nigeria).

The future for the Church in Kenya is worrying. The level of fear among Christians is growing rapidly. The Islamist drive is diverse and strong. According to Open Doors experts, "The government is fearful, does not know how to handle the Islamist drive, and thus has a tendency to give in easily to demands, sometimes at the expense of the churches." What will happen next, will the coastal area break away? If so, the Church in that part of country will face very difficult times. Will Islamism get more and more of a hold on the rest of Kenya? That is very possible, the more so because the process and events in Kenya seem more regional than only national. Tanzania faces the same type of Islamist drive. On the one hand, there are constitutional changes in combination with permeation of all main sectors of society and violent incidents against Christians and/or churches. On the other hand, there is a strong secessionist movement wanting to establish a Sharia state in part of the territory of the country. The situation in Uganda is comparable, although the dynamic limits itself to the first point there. The intention is to bring the region under the 'House of Islam' – which always is to the detriment of Christians and the churches.

41. Comoros (score: 45)

The main persecution dynamic in the Comoros Islands is 'Islamic extremism'. Comoros is a Muslim majority country, the Christian population is estimated at several thousands of Christians. A referendum passed in May 2009 installed Islam to be the state religion, infringing seriously upon the freedom of religion. Any converts from Islam to Christianity can be prosecuted in court. The positive trend is that new Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) have withstood a lot of pressure, and found some acceptance in parts of society. For instance, in Grand Comoros the MBBs have to worship in secret because police, mosque leadership and extremists resist them. However, their relatives in many cases have accepted their new faith. In the region of Anjouan the believers and their places of worship are often known but nobody has bothered them. This positive tendency is, however, balanced by a pattern of hostilities from a conservative mainstream society. The pressure on the sphere of church life is remarkably higher than on the other four spheres (private, family, local community, national) while hardly any violence was reported. In the Comoros most believers are men. Because the Comoros is a matriarchal society, the groom moves to live with the bride's family. Demands on the Christian husband are even higher in such a situation. Meanwhile, the church is growing slowly. There is an increase in the number of believers, as well as a growth in boldness and Christian witness. Comoros ranks 41st on the WWL, in the category of 'Moderate Persecution'.

Comoros went down on the World Watch List (WWL) this year. The main persecution dynamic in the country is 'Islamic extremism'. Comoros is a Muslim majority country, the Christian population is estimated at 6,400 Christians, living on the three Islands: Gran Comoros, Moheli and Anjouan.

A referendum passed in May 2009 installed Islam to be the state religion, infringing seriously upon freedom of religion. The penal code prohibits proselytising for any religion except Islam. Any converts from Islam to Christianity can be prosecuted in court. Therefore, Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) operate in underground fellowships. There are many Malagasy Christians (from Madagascar) who live and work on the islands. Only expatriates are allowed to operate churches in the country, with restrictions. Comoros has no other types of Christianity reported.

The slightly positive trend that was indicated in the WWL 2012 has continued in WWL 2013. New believers (MBBs) have withstood a lot of pressure, and found some acceptance in parts of society. For instance, in Grand Comoros the MBBs have to worship in secret because police, mosque leadership and extremists resist them. However, their relatives in many cases have accepted their new faith. In the region of Anjouan the believers and their places of worship are often known but nobody has bothered them. This positive tendency is, however, balanced by a mainstream society that sternly guards Muslim rules and worship, and radical elements from Iran who eagerly correct any signs of the weakening of anti-Christian sentiment. Whether actively involved or not, government has, through the 2009 referendum, established the necessary framework for this persecution dynamic.

Open Doors Field experts report the following groups as being agents of persecution:

- government officials - significant
- tribal leaders – rare
- religious leaders – significant
- ordinary people (mainstream society) - significant
- extended family - rare

This translates into a pattern of hostilities in which the pressure on the sphere of church life is remarkably higher than on the other four spheres (private, family, local community, national). MBBs can't have their churches, expatriate Christians have to be cautious and public display of their existence is not tolerated. Attendance of local Christians to their assemblies is likely monitored so locals fear to go there. The police are vigilant and question foreigners closely so that they don't bring religious materials into the country. Hardly any violence was reported.

In the Comoros most believers are men. Few women have made decisions for Christ. Being an Islander means to marry a Muslim woman, which then presents a huge challenge in parenting and family life. When the men are not able to provide for the family well enough, they are despised by their wives. This can be because of lack of opportunities for believers, or lack of opportunities generally. Because the Comoros is a matriarchal society, the groom moves to live with the bride's family. Demands on the Christian husband are even higher in such a situation. This can be a great strain for believers.

Open Doors Field experts report pressure from Iran to enforce strict dressing codes and to clamp down on Christianity. Iranian influence goes back to Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi, the previous President of Comoros elected in May 2006. He was a cleric and businessman who studied Islamic political theory in Iran and was a close friend to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. They developed bilateral ties on economic issues and exchange of research, technology and information in 2006. Ever since, the two countries have had cultural and political commonalities, and have maintained close relations. The political and religious influence of Iran has been strong.

Open Doors Field experts report, "The Comoros have experienced a good measure of political stability in the recent past. This has given the Christians there some sense of safety, as the rule of law has been respected more than before when anything could happen because of the coups and counter-coups."

They went on to say, "At the moment the Comoros in general seems to be hit by a wave of modernity, secularism and a 'carefree' attitude that does not indicate an increase in persecution from Islam."

"However, in Anjouan the rise of an extremist Islamic sect and the push by nations like Iran is a worrying concern as they are pushing for radical displays of Islam and once they feel they have restored the proper Muslim culture and practice they will certainly wish to clamp down on Christians."

Meanwhile, the church is growing slowly. There is an increase in the number of believers, as well as a growth in boldness and Christian witness.

42. Malaysia (score: 45)

'Islamic Extremism' is the main persecution dynamics of Malaysia. Being Malay is seen as being synonymous with being Muslim. Citizens with other ethnic origins such as Chinese or Indian can be Buddhist, Hindu or Christian – as they prefer – but being Malay is being Muslim. Prime Minister Najib Razak called on the people "to protect Islam, the faith of its followers, its teachings, Islamic law and infrastructure" and to avoid disunity and exploitation of the 'enemies'. Christians widely perceive that they have to be very cautious as their services are watched and materials controlled by the authorities. Integrating converts is strictly forbidden. It is almost impossible for a Malay Muslim to convert to Christianity, still Muslims come to accept Christian faith. Testifying about other beliefs to Muslims is forbidden. Officially, the Constitution provides for freedom of religion. However, in recent years, judges in the country have offered restrictive interpretations of parts of the Constitution. As a result, people who want to change their religious affiliation on their ID cards from Islam to anything else now have to go to Sharia Courts. Once converts are found, they are sent to a re-education centre, where they are held until they agree to reconvert. Relief for the Christian minority is not to be expected. Much will depend on the outcome of general elections scheduled for 2013. If the moderate opposition wins, things might change for the better as they tend to follow a more inclusive policy. Malaysia ranks 42nd on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Malaysia is a country aiming strongly to preserve what it perceives as national and cultural heritage. Being Malay is seen as being a Muslim. Citizens with other ethnic origins such as Chinese or Indian can be Buddhist, Hindu or Christian, but Malays have to be Muslim. Moreover, Islamist rhetoric and action have made it into politics. Relying on Islam also gains votes – but it is more than that.

In the eyes (and words) of Prime Minister Najib Razak, Islam will always 'supersede' politics. In fact, he called on the people "to protect Islam, the faith of its followers, its teachings, Islamic law and infrastructure" and to avoid disunity and exploitation of the "enemies". His statement came amid the country's celebration of Ramadan in August 2012 and a reported attempt by two Europeans to teach their Christian faith in Penang state. The Penang Islamic Religious Council was urged to take appropriate action against the non-Muslim foreign tourists who share their faith in the country. In a separate speech, Najib warned that greater liberalism is a threat to the country. "Pluralism, liberalism? All these 'isms' are against Islam and it is compulsory for us to fight these," he said to more than 10,000 Islamic leaders, days before the Muslim feast began. Consequently, Najib's support of human rights also has limits, saying the rights should fall "within the boundaries set by Islam."

The predominant persecution dynamic in the country therefore is 'Islamic extremism'. Though it is possible to have churches and there is freedom of worship which is cherished by believers, Christians widely perceive that they have to be very cautious as their services are watched. Published materials are controlled by authorities. Outreach and testifying about their faith is very difficult for Christians; integrating converts is strictly forbidden.

Converts are therefore the ones who bear the brunt of persecution in Malaysia. All Malaysians are allowed to convert, except the Malay people, what of course is contradictory as they are the majority population, but reality in the country. Another qualification for conversions to other faiths is that one has to have reached the age of majority.

Given these strict rules, it is almost impossible for a Malay Muslim to convert to Christianity. Proselytizing Muslims is forbidden. In five states — Perak, Malacca, Sabah, Terengganu, and Pahang — conversion is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or jail term. In Pahang, convicted converts may also be punished with up to six strokes of the cane.

Officially, the Constitution provides for freedom of religion. However, in recent years, judges in the country have offered restrictive interpretations on parts of the Constitution. As a result, people who want to change their religious affiliation on their ID cards from Islam to another or even to no religion now have to go to Shariah Courts. Therefore, the actual situation in the country differs from what is stated in the Constitution. In March 2012, a Member of Parliament urged the federal government to come up with an apostasy law to address an alleged rise in apostasy among Muslims. Furthermore, 21 Muslim non-government organisations (NGOs) urged the federal government to formulate anti-apostasy laws. One Methodist church was raided because it was suspected the church was active in converting Muslims.

Once converts are found, they are sent to a re-education centre, where they are held until they agree to reconvert. Several Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) had to leave their families and communities. Some have even been forced to leave the country in order to escape re-education. Also, the Malaysian government is active in Islamising the province Sarawak, by providing funds and supporting the policy of "Dakhwa" (Islamic Mission Strategy). This program is called "Unit Saudara Kita" (USK) or "Our brother's Unit".

Given the fact that Islam serves as an identification mark and a sign of unity within the country, relief for the Christian minority is not to be expected. Much will depend on the outcome of next general elections scheduled for spring 2013. If the moderate opposition wins, what at this moment is impossible to predict, things might change for the better. But even in this case, a more liberal stance concerning the issue of conversion is not to be expected.

Malaysia is a relative newcomer to the World Watch List. The country made it to the list in 2004 and re-entered it narrowly for two consecutive years. Its score can be explained by an increasingly hostile rhetoric, especially in politics, an ongoing social conviction that Malays have to be Muslims, connected with raising pressure on converts e.g. by sending them to re-education camps. The Christian minority enjoys relative freedom of worship and the ability to live according to their faith, but it always has to be careful in what to say and do. As the hostility both – of society and authorities – increased, the country's position on the World Watch List increased in rank and score.

43. Djibouti (score: 44)

'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Islamic extremism' are the main persecution dynamics in Djibouti which is more than 95% Sunni Muslim. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians form the largest Christian group, followed by foreign service persons and native Djiboutian Christians. Non-Ethiopian Christians are very small in number. Pressure on Christians tends to come mostly from the family. The government does generally respect the constitutional protection of freedom of religion, although its general attitude towards Christians and other religious minorities is negative. Expatriate Christians are rarely restricted in their activities and Orthodox Christians from neighbouring Ethiopia are tolerated. MBBs, however, suffer great pressure mostly from their extended family and the community. It is likely that anyone who converts will be rejected by their family, clan, and the community. Saudi Arabia has a strong religious influence in Djibouti and Yemen is a concern as it hosts al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and has a history of secessionism. Al-Shabab is known to have tried to win Djiboutian supporters in recent years. Djibouti is unusual in that foreign troop presence and foreign investment make

the government keen to prevent extremist forces from harming foreigners. With 40 to 50% unemployment in Djibouti and the Arab uprisings sweeping through the region, the president's unwillingness to reform could lead to protests. If Islamic fanatical movements manage to get a foothold in Djibouti in the near future, this would only add to the pressure on the small church. Djibouti ranks 44th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

The main persecution dynamic in Djibouti is 'Dictatorial paranoia', in combination with 'Islamic extremism.' Djibouti is more than 95% Sunni Muslim; therefore, Sunni Islam is the main type of Islam in the country. They traditionally adhere to the Shafi'i school of religious law, which is similar to Yemen and Somalia, but not present-day Saudi Arabia.

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians form the largest Christian group, followed by foreign service persons in Djibouti and native Djiboutian Christians, who are most likely to be converts to Christianity from Islam or children of those converts or those who have inter-married with Ethiopian Orthodox or foreign Christians. However, non-Ethiopian Christians are very small in number. There are reports of Mennonite missionaries in Djibouti, but their numbers are small and they are unlikely to have very large following in the country. In summary, there are extremely few Christians in Djibouti, let alone Christian Djiboutian citizens. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are the most prominent Christians in Djiboutian society, while foreign service persons are the most prominent Christians within diplomatic and military circles.

Pressure on MBBs, which is constant throughout the country, tends to come mostly from the family, and translates into relatively high pressure in the private, family and community spheres. There is slightly more freedom in the national and church spheres. The government does generally respect the constitutional protection of freedom of religion, although its general attitude towards Christians and other religious minorities is negative.

There is an important difference in the treatment of expatriate Christians and Ethiopian Orthodox on the one hand and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) on the other hand. Expatriate Christians are rarely restricted in their activities and Orthodox Christians from neighbouring Ethiopia are tolerated. It is important to note that Ethiopians and Djiboutians, despite their different religions, lived amongst each other for millennia and are generally tolerant of each other's forms of worship. MBBs, however, suffer great pressure mostly from their extended family and the community.

In predominantly Muslim countries in sub-Saharan Africa, conversion from Islam is an insurmountably powerful social stigma. Djibouti citizens who convert to Christianity from Islam need to keep quiet. In Djibouti, it is likely that anyone who converts from Islam will be rejected by his or her family, clan, and the community. However, reports of attacks on churches or churches being forcibly shut down are rare.

Saudi Arabia has a strong religious influence in Djibouti because it is building religious schools and pouring money into local communities in order to have an immediate impact on them. Yemen, which is just across the Red Sea from Djibouti, is worrisome because it hosts al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and has a history of secessionism – also a concern for Djibouti. Djibouti has cultural, familial and religious connections with Yemen. The influence of Somalia should not be discounted either; most Djiboutians are ethnic Somalis and al-Shabab could appeal to ethnic Somali Djiboutians. Al-Shabab is known to have tried to win Djiboutian supporters in recent years.

Djibouti is atypical for its region because the foreign troop presence and foreign investment in the energy sector make the government receptive to preventing extremist forces from harming foreigners who are stationed in or who are investing in Djibouti. Perhaps for this reason, Djibouti has until now been able to prevent outright persecution of its Christian minority.

At the same time, the authoritarian style of government in Djibouti and potential for political and inter-ethnic unrest are causes of concern. With 40-50% unemployment in Djibouti and the Arab uprisings sweeping through the region, the president's unwillingness to reform could lead to protests in the country.

In other countries in the region, Islam has been a unifying factor among the politically discontent. This scenario is a real possibility in Djibouti, especially if foreign Muslim countries with interests in Djibouti begin funding or supporting religious extremists, as Djibouti's enemy Eritrea has done in Somalia and Ethiopia. If Islamic fanatical movements manage to get a foothold in Djibouti in the near

future, this would only add to the pressure on the small church in the country, including the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians.

44. Tajikistan (score: 42)

The main persecution dynamics in Tajikistan are ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ and ‘Organised corruption’. The persecution of Christians in Persian-speaking Tajikistan is mainly driven by the government. The ruling elite will do everything to stay in power. Organised corruption is rampant. The authorities focus their attention on Christians. Church registration is compulsory and can only be obtained after a long, cumbersome and often arbitrary process. A new youth law came into force in August 2011 which prohibits any religious activity for those aged under 18. All youth work must now be done in secret. This law affects more than 50 per cent of the Tajik population. In July 2012, Tajik citizens were prohibited from going abroad in order to receive religious education or to establish ties with foreign religious organisations. The government tightly controls the importation and distribution of religious literature. Violence is a means the government rarely relies on but from time to time, there are raids against churches, Christians are physically harmed or even have to leave their villages. In the medium term, the situation for the Christian minority in Tajikistan is unlikely to improve. Given its shared border, Tajikistan will no doubt be affected by what will happen in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of international troops in 2014. Tajikistan ranks 44th on the WWL, in the category ‘Moderate Persecution’.

Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country with a Persian national language. Apart from that specificity, it is a typical Central Asian country. The persecution of Christians is mainly driven by the government. The main persecution dynamic is ‘Dictatorial paranoia’, not for Islamic-extremist motives, but rather out of a desire to protect the existing authorities. The ruling elite under President Rahmon will do everything to stay in power. This is not to say that there are no Muslim extremists in the country, as was proven by the recent upsurge in July 2012 in the Gorno-Badakshan region, but there were no reports that the small Christian community is affected by them yet. As their main goal is some kind of political autonomy, it is unlikely that this will affect Christians for the time being. Should the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan change for the worse, this might change quick, though.

The government fights the extremist elements also for a second reason typical of Central Asia: organised corruption is rampant and serves as another persecution dynamic as every perceived entity endangering the ruling elite’s efforts to get rich will be fought against. Therefore all social and religious groups have to be state-controlled. Christians denying this claim will come into the focus of authorities.

Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face additional pressure from their families and local communities and will take precautions not to be discovered, what brings the dynamic ‘Islamic extremism’ back into the picture.

Officially, there is a strict distinction between registered churches and unregistered or house churches. Registration is compulsory and can only be obtained after a long, cumbersome and often arbitrary process. However, even registration does not allow freedom of religion as required by the international treaties that Tajikistan is part of. Building permission for churches or the permission to have an open air worship service is virtually impossible to obtain.

The country’s youth law is particularly worrying. This new law came into force in August 2011 and prohibits any religious activity for those aged under 18. All youth work must now be done in secret. Children and teens are not allowed to attend Sunday school or be trained. Whether this law also affects parental rights in raising the children according to the parents’ belief remains unclear. In any case, this law affects more than 50% of the Tajik population, as this proportion of the population is under 18.

In July 2012 another law came into force prohibiting Tajik citizens from going abroad in order to receive religious education, preach and teach religious doctrines or to establish ties with foreign religious organisations. Though this law is aimed at every religion, including minority Muslim groups, Christians are greatly affected by it. There is no domestic Bible school or religious training centre in the country. Any learning course on local or church level must be reported to the local authorities.

Another restriction typical for Central Asian countries is the requirement to obtain permission for printing or importing any religious materials. The responsible authority is the Committee for Religious Affairs, which in most cases does not give permission or relies on alleged procedural flaws. The government also tightly controls the importation and distribution of religious literature. Religious organisations were required to submit copies of all literature to the Ministry of Culture for approval one month prior to delivery. Under the Law on Freedom of Conscience, religious associations may import an unspecified "proper number" of religious materials. In the past, officials have not permitted large shipments of books by Christian organisations, including Jehovah's Witnesses.

Violence is a means the government rarely relies on, but every now and then there are raids against churches, Christians are physically harmed or even have to leave their villages. This is the case for MBBs especially.

In the midterm, the situation for the Christian minority in Tajikistan is unlikely to improve. The regime puts heavy pressure on all "deviating" groups. As stated already, there is an external factor which is difficult to judge: Tajikistan will no doubt be affected by what will happen in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of international troops in 2014. Another worrying sign was the army campaign against Islamic militants in the East of the country in July 2012. It not only showed that there is already a Muslim extremist group in the country, but also that the authorities are trying to find a compromise. Recently, an agreement was concluded, but the government will take much care that this group will not spread to other regions. If and how this might affect believers is still unknown. But if Christians become known, their situation is likely to deteriorate.

Though Tajikistan fell in rank in the 2013 World Watch List, situation did not improve at all. It was overtaken by developments in several other countries as well as new entering countries. However, by tightening already existing laws and by enforcing them, the government is putting additional pressure on the Christian minority. The new youth law in particular has left Christians and other affected religious minorities in legal limbo as it is not clear what is allowed and what is denied by law. New legal provisions restricting religious freedom show that the authorities follow a certain track and are determined to put additional pressure on deviating minorities. It might also show the regime's increasing nervousness. Be that as it may, the situation in Tajikistan has not improved and is unlikely to improve in the near future.

45. Indonesia (score: 41)

'Islamic extremism' and 'Organised corruption' are the main persecution dynamics in Indonesia. The country is known as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. 86% of its 240 million citizens are Muslim. More than 360 different ethnicities and more than 700 dialects add to an already complex situation. The country's founding ideology called 'Pancasila' promotes unity. Indonesia is also known as a model of democracy in a Muslim country. As there are several radical Islamic organisations, generally it is not the government persecuting Christians, but Muslim extremist groups. Though they do not have strong political representation, their influence is large as they take to the streets and influence public opinion. The closure of 17 churches in Aceh in May 2012 and the adoption of at least 151 local Sharia bylaws have shown a new level of hostility towards Christians. The increasing number of radical Muslim organisations in the country is affecting the existence of churches in Indonesia by putting pressure on believers. The secular Setara Institute reported 129 incidents of violence against Christians and 179 violations of religious freedom from January to June 2012. The unsuccessful suicide bombing at the Gereja Bethel Injil Sepenuh church in Java on 25 September 2011 took everyone by surprise and shocked the Christian community across the country. As the country prepares for the 2014 national elections, Christians might become increasingly easy targets as politicians try to gain votes. Indonesia ranks 45th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Indonesia is known as the largest Muslim country in the world, comprising of around 240 million citizens, 86% of them being Muslims. This island nation consists of more than 17,000 islands, spread over 5,000 kilometers in an East to West direction, which leads to great challenges in terms of infrastructure and development. More than 360 different ethnicities and more than 700 dialects add to an already complex situation.

Hence, in 1945, the founding father of the country, President Sukarno, proclaimed an all-encompassing and binding state ideology named 'Pancasila'. Its five principles are belief in the one and only God (not favouring one of the monotheistic religions), a just and civilised humanity, the unity of the country, democracy guided by inner wisdom and social justice. In the following years, Indonesia became known as a model of democracy in a Muslim country and was frequently highlighted as the model of tolerance in an ethnically and religiously diverse country. Pancasila still has a prominent place in the country's constitution, but less so in every day's life.

Generally, it is not the federal government persecuting Christians, but Muslim extremist groups. Though they do not have strong political representation, their influence is large as they take to the streets and make and steer public opinion. When it comes to church closures, it is mostly the local or regional government giving in to pressure, rather than the national government. The closure of GKI Jasmin church in Bogor is maybe the best example of this. Despite a Supreme Court ruling, neither the mayor nor the national government was able or willing to enforce the believers' right to worship.

'Islamic extremism' therefore is the main persecution dynamic in Indonesia. Indonesia has been shaken by religious rifts, the instigators being predominantly Muslim extremist organisations. Several radical Islamic organisations are present in the country such as Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia, Islamic Defender Front (FPI) and Islamic Front (FUI). These organisations follow strict and exclusive religious interpretations to justify the implementation of Sharia law and the infringement of the rights of religious minorities. Apart from that, some of these groups are involved in social work and mobilizing support for their understanding of Islam. Additionally, there are groups like Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT) striving for a jihadi way of life, targeting Muslim minorities like Ahmadis as well as mainstream Muslims, if they deviate from perceived 'true Islam', but also Christians as they are perceived as to follow the wrong religion.

The other major source of persecution is 'Organised corruption'. Indonesia is well known for corruption at all levels of government. Of course, every citizen is affected by corruption, but Christians are singled out as a minority which does not want to take part in this culture and largely opposes it. Especially Christians speaking up in the political arena or participating in politics are targets of this engine, which affects virtually every Indonesian citizen.

Churches need a permit to be allowed to worship, which in certain areas is difficult to obtain. Based on the revised Joint Ministerial Decree in 2006, a church can operate if it has at least 90 members, gets the consent from 60 neighbours of other faiths, approval from the regency chief and the inter-faith harmony forum. However, the law does not work well in practice. Many churches find the permit extremely hard to obtain, even if they have met all the necessary requirements. In strong Muslim areas in particular, getting permission is a long and cumbersome process. In contrast, Muslims can generally easily build mosques. Even if a church has a permit, the local regency can easily revoke it.

Compared to 2011, there were more cases of church closures and attacks on churches and properties belonging to Christians. The closure of 18 churches in Sharia-ruled Aceh in May 2012 has shown a new level of hostility towards Christians. Across the country, at least 151 local Sharia bylaws on distinct topics have been adopted and implemented in Java, Sulawesi, Sumatra and West Nusa Tenggara in recent years. The increasing number of radical Muslim organisations in the country is affecting the existence of churches in Indonesia, not so much by influencing laws, but by putting pressure on believers and churches. These extremist groups are bold in putting pressure on local government to implement Sharia Law all over the country, as they do not face strong opposition and enjoy certain support from political parties.

The domestic religious freedom advocacy group Setara Institute for Peace and Democracy released a report on 2 July 2012 revealing 129 incidents of violence and 179 violations of religious freedom from January to June 2012. The figures are already more than half of the total in 2011, which had 244 incidents and 299 violations. Setara added that Christians have replaced the Islamic minority sect Ahmadi as the group whose religious freedom has been violated the most. The government, particularly local officials, were identified by the group as the worst offenders and said most administrations were guilty of sealing off and prohibiting entry into places of worship.

When it comes to the Christian population, a highly significant and shocking incident in the country was the suicide bombing at the Gereja Bethel Injil Sepenuh (GBIS) church in Kepunton, Solo, Central Java on Sunday 25 September 2011 at around 11 AM. This was the first of its kind in Indonesia's history, and took everyone by surprise. The attack killed the bomber and injured more than 30 people, of which 22 were hospitalised.

Furthermore, two believers were caught on accusations of evangelisation in May 2012 and held for two months in prison in Aceh. More were harassed, threatened, mocked or narrowly escaped violence.

As the country prepares for the 2014 national elections, Christians might become increasingly easy targets. As a minority, they are always in danger of being used as scapegoats.

The House of Representatives has completed a draft of the so-called religious tolerance bill which, according to observers' claims, would threaten the very essence of pluralism and tolerance. This bill would regulate religious sermons and segregate graves within public cemeteries according to religion and is perceived as a potentially giant fan that would spread the growing flames of religious intolerance in the country. Violent conflicts across the nation already have sparked over the past three years. And what is even more: the bill does not propose an alternative regulation to the current problematic house of worship licensing system.

The country's position in this year's World Watch List reflects the increasing trend to give in to Muslim extremist groups when it comes to minorities, especially Christians. Despite of all the problems reported above, a lot of Christians can still live their faith undisturbed. Hence, Indonesia ranks comparably low on the list. But as recent developments, proposals and drafts show, this relative peace is challenged – by the government, but even more by Muslim extremist groups taking to the streets and influencing public opinion. Taking all this into account, Indonesia is already damaging its good reputation as a model of tolerance in a Muslim society. This affects not only Christians, but the Muslim minority of Ahmadis among others, too.

46. Colombia (score: 41)

The main persecution dynamic in Colombia is 'Organised corruption'. Colombia is a modern democratic country where the rule of law is formally established and religious freedom is guaranteed. However, large areas of the country are under the control of criminal organisations, drug cartels, revolutionaries and paramilitary groups. Although 'Organised corruption' is the main persecution dynamic in Colombia, 'Tribal antagonism' likewise leads to high levels of Christian persecution. Indigenous converts are often denied access to basic social services, equal participation in decision-making, and risk being tortured or displaced. 'Radical secularism' is slowly gaining importance as a persecution dynamic in Colombia. Under the current President, Juan Manuel Santos, there has been a resurgence of armed groups, which are specifically targeting Christians. Criminal organisations view Christians as a threat. In addition, they know the Christian faith is not compatible with their ideals. Two pastors were killed in 2012 and about 300 Christians were displaced from their homes in indigenous territories. Pagan indigenous populations receive material support from guerrillas to persecute indigenous Christians. These territories have also become a safe haven for the guerillas' drug trafficking activities. The security situation is unstable and drug cartels and illegal armed groups continue to operate with impunity. Christians will continue to be targeted for persecution because of their presence as an alternative pillar of society and their witness through their involvement in social and political activities. Colombia ranks 46th on the WWL, in the category 'Moderate Persecution'.

Colombia is a country with multiple realities. Formally, Colombia is a modern democratic country where the rule of law is established and religious freedom is guaranteed. However, large areas of the country are under the control of criminal organisations, drug cartels, revolutionaries and paramilitary groups. Although most revolutionaries may have communist ideological roots, the main persecution dynamic in Colombia is 'Organized corruption.' Revolutionary and anti-revolutionary paramilitary groups – intimately linked to organised crime – operate within a context of impunity, corruption, anarchy, drug wars and structural violence. Within such a context, Christians are a vulnerable group that, because of its mere presence, constitutes a threat to the hegemony of criminal organisations. Christianity represents an alternative way, especially for youths, which makes churches a direct competitor of criminal organisations.

All types of Christianity can become victims of this persecution dynamic, though it affects mostly the more outspoken brothers and sisters who play prominent roles in social or public life, or fulfill leadership positions, both at the communal and national levels. Within this persecution dynamic, the most affected sphere of life is the community sphere.

Although 'Organized corruption' is the main persecution dynamic in Colombia, 'Tribal antagonism' likewise leads to high levels of Christian persecution in indigenous communities. Indigenous converts to Christianity are often denied access to basic social services and equal participation in decision-making, and risk being tortured or displaced. Sometimes, this dynamic overlaps with 'Organized corruption', particularly when guerrillas conspire with tribal leaders against Christians. Guerrillas offer indigenous communities protection and financial benefits, in exchange for the possibility to use their territories to resource themselves.

Finally, 'Radical secularism' is slowly gaining importance as a persecution dynamic in Bogotá and other major cities of Colombia, just as in other countries in Latin America. Signs of the former are repeated expressions of intolerance for the participation of Christians in the public sphere, particularly in public universities.

The two consecutive governments of President Alvaro Uribe Velez were quite successful in weakening the influence of criminal groups, but these efforts did not succeed in completely neutralising their activities, which continue to threaten national security.

Under the current administration of President Juan Manuel Santos, there has been a resurgence of armed groups, with negative consequences for believers. In spite of the start of a dialogue between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) to find a solution to the conflict, guerrilla groups and criminal organisations continue to cause harm to the church in Colombia and are specifically targeting Christians, whom they view as a threat for their activity.

Persecution of Christians, particularly by criminal organisations, is generally motivated by a combination of two elements. Organised crime views Christians who openly oppose their activities as a threat, especially when Christians get involved in social programs or in politics. In addition, they know the Christian faith is not compatible with their ideals. They fear Christians will influence members of the community or even members of their own organisations to oppose their activities.

According to reports obtained by Open Doors' researchers in Colombia and local press, two pastors were killed in 2012. One of them was murdered by a criminal organisation in La Guajira, because he publicly opposed the recruitment of youths from his community by these gangs. In Cordoba, a pastor was displaced by the FARC, and the pastor who replaced him was murdered a week later. Another pastor, who was running a drug rehabilitation project, was murdered in Bogotá under unclear circumstances. In the indigenous territories, especially in Cauca, about 300 Christians were displaced from their homes - two of them were imprisoned and tortured and its main leaders were threatened - with support from state authorities.

In Colombia, probably the most persecution suffered by the rural Christian indigenous population (no reliable numbers available) comes from the alliances that exist between "pagan" (non-Christian) indigenous populations and guerrillas. These pagan indigenous populations receive material support from guerrillas to persecute indigenous Christians. Guerrillas (FARC and others) mislead these indigenous groups, telling them that their Christian brothers are a threat to their culture and traditions. In fact, the FARC uses indigenous populations as an advance army to terrorise the indigenous Christians.

Indigenous territories in Colombia are protected by a national law that gives them autonomy. Because of this autonomy, government security forces (police and military) are not allowed to enter these territories. The indigenous territories are administrated by indigenous organisations, but these are so weak that they are being infiltrated by guerrillas. The national army is constitutionally prohibited from entering indigenous communities because of the autonomy status. Because there is virtually no government presence or enforcement of the rule of law, these territories have become a safe haven for the guerrillas' drug trafficking activities. This situation contributes to the persecution of Christians.

In Colombia, the security situation is unstable. Rebels have reconquered part of the territories they had lost to the army during the administration of President Alvaro Uribe Velez. Notwithstanding the current dialogue between the Colombian government and FARC in Cuba and Norway, many analysts consider that the guerrillas will use these territories to resource their organisations, which could lead to increasing levels of Christian persecution.

In spite of the capture of important FARC commanders in recent years, violence in Colombia is structural. In areas where the government has lost control of public security, drug cartels and illegal armed groups continue to operate with impunity. Christians will continue to be targeted for

persecution because of their presence as an alternative pillar of society and their witness through their involvement in social and political activities.

47. Uganda (score: 40)

The main persecution dynamic in Uganda is 'Islamic extremism' although there have been reports of 'Tribal antagonism' also. Uganda is new on the World Watch List. The country has a 12% Muslim minority, and 85% Christian majority. Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are most pressurised in the Muslim dominated areas, and to a lesser degree in the areas with a sizeable number of Muslims. Local authorities in Muslim dominated areas also add pressure to the lives of Christians by not assisting them properly, by barring them from public office or denying them promotion. The level of physical violence was low in the reporting period. Recently Uganda has, however, experienced a worrying rise in the Tabligh Movement of Muslim Youth. Although Ugandan Muslims are spread over the whole country, they live in pockets. These are areas with majority Muslim population and present a serious threat to the church. Open Doors Field experts report that there has been a strong push by Muslim leaders to ensure that the majority of lawyers in Uganda are Muslims. This is significant because Muslim leaders have pushed and entrenched Islamic family courts (kadhis' courts) in the Constitution, and have now been fighting for the operationalisation of the same. The increase in the Muslim youth population aged 10-25 receiving radical teachings is an indicator that in the next five to 10 years Christians and the church in Uganda may face severe persecution. Uganda ranks 47th on the WWL, in the category 'Sparse Persecution'.

Uganda is new on the World Watch List. Last year it nearly made it, now it has. The main persecution dynamic in Uganda is 'Islamic extremism'. The country has a 12% Muslim minority, and 85% Christian majority. The country has all four types of Christianity. The intensity of hostilities against Christians is mostly in the lower scorings. This suggests that although there is sometimes serious pressure on Christians in Muslim dominated areas, and on the Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) in particular, it is not extreme; probably a bit less than in the Muslim dominated areas in Tanzania, and a bit more than in the Muslim dominated areas in Kenya. The level of violence is however remarkably low compared to Tanzania and especially compared to Kenya. Recently Uganda has experienced a rise in the Tabligh Movement of Muslim youth.

What is remarkable for Uganda is a rather strong report on 'Tribal antagonism' as a persecution dynamic. Open Doors Field experts state, "There is a strong push of "Let's return to our traditions", a movement that promotes witchcraft, human sacrifice and eating human flesh in Eastern Uganda (in Bugiri and Jinja districts). This movement is totally opposed to the Church and has not hidden their intentions of eradicating the Church from this area. The Church is experiencing extreme pressure from the movement to either join them in these diabolic practices or relocate from these areas. Incidentally these areas have a huge Muslim population too." This phenomenon has not yet seriously influenced the scoring for Uganda, because more research is needed on the scale and intensity.

MBBs are most pressurised in the Muslim dominated areas, and to a lesser degree in the areas with a sizeable number of Muslims. Pressure (squeeze) and/or physical violence (smash) come from different sources. One of those are fanatical movements, consisting of young people who have made it their business to harass and intimidate MBBs. Pressure also comes from the local community. Open Doors Field experts report, "The Muslim Community has relentlessly persecuted MBBs purely because they have converted to Christ and turned away from Islam." They add, "Many MBBs have also been seriously persecuted by the nuclear family and/or the extended family in the form of abuse, beatings, attempted poisoning, death threats, denied access to medical care, and ostracism." Open Doors Field experts report that "the violence against MBBs is severe. It is just that cases go unreported, because the Church is not fully aware of this being the initial stages of persecution." Local authorities in Muslim dominated areas also add pressure to the lives of Christians by not assisting them properly, by barring them from public office or denying them promotion. Christians were sometimes prevented from building churches so that some regions would remain Muslim-only zones. In some Muslim dominated areas, hate speech against Christians propagated by Muslim clerics right from the Mosques, was the order of the day.

The level of violence was low in the reporting period. However, the rise of the Tabligh Movement of Muslim youth is very worrying. According to Open Doors Field experts, the Tabligh's have continued

to grow and pose a grave danger as they are now owning business e.g. the transport sector. That gives them a lot of possibilities to further develop their radical activities. Last year on 24 December they viciously attacked Pastor Umar Mulinde scalding him with a highly corrosive acid and were set on killing him. Many MBBs and some pastors have received death threats from the same group. In August 2012 during the month of Ramadan, a Christian was forced to flee away from his home together with his family. The Open Doors Field experts confirm, "It was good that they did not get him at home, otherwise one cannot rule out him being killed."

Muslim dominated areas cover no more than one third of the territory. Although the 12% Ugandan Muslims are spread over the whole country, they live in strong pockets namely Mbale, Iganga, Jinja, Kampala, Kasese, Bwera and Yumbe. These are areas with majority Muslim populations and present a serious threat to the Church, especially to MBBs. Apart from the Muslim dominated areas there are also areas with a sizeable number of Muslims. A sizeable number of Muslims means that they are many in number, and in most cases making a serious impact in the governance or politics of the area for example, but are not in the majority.

Open Doors Field experts report that there has been a strong push by Muslim leaders to ensure that the majority of lawyers in Uganda are Muslims. They have devised a system of facilitating Muslim young men to pass the A-level examinations and join law courses at University. For one to be admitted to law they need at least 14 points in the A-level final examination. As a result, they have ensured that Islam and Arabic are two subjects examinable at the A-Level for University qualification. Muslim students are given straight passes because these same subjects are taught and examined by Muslims. That gives Muslim candidates 12 points and from that point on they need just two points on another subject and general paper, and they are through. This is significant because Muslim leaders have pushed and entrenched Islamic family courts (kadhis' courts) in the Constitution and have now been fighting for the operationalisation of the same. Legislation is in parliament.

What may this bring for the future of the Church in Uganda? According to Open Doors Field experts, the increase in the Muslim youth population aged 10-25 receiving radical teachings is an indicator that in the next five to 10 years Christians and the Church in Uganda may face severe persecution. They observe, "Children in Madrassas are taught that they are to kill Jews and Christians, which earns them automatic entry into heaven with all the pleasures that brings. They are taught that their enemies are America and Israel and their allies who are Christians and Jews." While the Church needs to 'stand strong through the storm' some observers see a shift in focus to the prosperity Gospel, caused by the hard economic times. According to the Open Doors Field experts, "the prosperity Gospel is often a source of great disappointment to believers. Ultimately many are discouraged and give up their faith, because the preachers teach that if they don't receive after planting a seed, then they planted in doubt, selfish motive or greed, or they have not won God's favour - in other words God is not pleased with them." That does not help in creating strong churches that are able to face increasing persecution creatively and powerfully.

48. Kazakhstan (score: 38)

'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Organised corruption' are the main persecution dynamics in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is a paradoxical country. On the one hand, it seems to be very open and strongly interested in international cooperation and in participating in international organisations. On the other hand, the state is still biased against Christians not belonging to the Russian-Orthodox Church. In order to get things done, it is normal to pay bribes and anyone who speaks out against this will get into trouble quickly. For indigenous believers, especially converts from Islam, village clergy as well as their own family and neighbourhood, frequently became sources of pressure and harassment. Kazakhstan enforced harsh new laws which restrict religious freedom. Some pastors were detained for short periods and there was an increase in raids against churches and heavy fines. Religious materials are censored. Training of Christian leaders has also become much more complicated through the new legislation, and youth work now requires the permission of both parents. Over 100 incidents by Islamic fanatical movements have been reported, the most visible being bomb attacks in October 2011. The Christian minority was not targeted in these attacks. But as the government is tightening its grip on religious extremist groups – perceived or real - this policy will also affect the Christian minority in the years to come. Kazakhstan ranks 48th on the WWL, in the category 'Sparse Persecution'.

Kazakhstan is a very particular country. On the one hand, it seems to be wide open, strongly interested in international cooperation and in participating in international organisations. The country even took responsibility for assuming the rotating chairmanship in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2010. This highly visible role restrained the rulers from introducing a religion law which would have complicated the situation of religious minorities, including the Christian minority.

Despite all international warnings, this very law titled "The Law on Religious Activity and Religious Associations" was introduced once the country left international focus in October 2011. A second law titled "The Law on introducing Amendments and Additions to several legal acts questions of Religious Activity and Religious Associations" was introduced as well. These laws require a new registration of all religious organisations, which makes it virtually impossible for smaller organisations to register. It might as well have important implications for the religious education of children as well as for youth work of the churches.

The main persecution dynamic is 'Dictatorial paranoia'. The President is not as idolised as in other Central Asian countries, but there is still a bias against the Christian minority who is denied registration and thereby faces strict state control as it is deemed "illegal". The president being a Muslim plays no role, as far as can be seen by now. So, at least concerning the government, persecution is not driven by "Islamic extremism". The struggle with 'Organised corruption' is highly typical for the region and also affects Christians. In order to get things done, it is normal to pay bribes and anyone who speaks out against this or simply tries to act with honesty will get into trouble quickly.

For indigenous believers, coming from a Muslim background, village clergy as well as their own family and neighbourhood, frequently are sources of pressure and harassment. Several believers have been physically harmed by their relatives or have had to flee their homes. To a lesser degree, the Russian-Orthodox Church, which is more concentrated in the North of the country, sometimes has a negative effect on other denominations.

Kazakhstan not only introduced harsh new religion laws, but also began to apply them in the reporting period. Some pastors were detained for short periods. There was an increase in raids against churches and fines. The obligatory re-registration of religious organisations is a long and tedious process. The chairman of the authority in charge, the Agency for Religious Affairs (ARA), Kairat Lama Sharif, announced in October 2012 that he estimates at 1:3 the ratio of organisations to be shut down, meaning that only one third of all religious groups might expect re-registration. The number of protestant churches facing dissolution by court ruling reportedly exceeds 200.

With the new legislation it has become more difficult to produce and to use religious literature. Religious materials are censored. While the law states that everyone may acquire or own religious literature, importation and distribution of literature can only be done by registered communities. In-country production requires the full official name of the religious organisation which produced it. Imported literature gets the same treatment as other materials: registered communities must first receive permission. This again is a long and opaque process. All other work with literature is strictly banned.

Training of Christian leaders has also become much more complicated through the new legislation. Professional educational programs to prepare them can only be carried out by organisations that are registered regionally or nationally. There still are some Protestant seminaries which need to operate carefully. It is not yet known what the changes in legislation will mean for them. Another restriction in the law can be found when working with youth. Youth work requires the permission of both parents. What happens if these requirements are not met remains to be seen.

As these laws have been newly implemented, the situation for the Christian minority is likely to worsen in the future. The announcement by the head of the ARA, as well as the fact that the regime will have to prepare for a leadership transition rather sooner than later taking into account the president's age, both point to increasing pressure on minority groups including Christians. Finally, the country was reached by Islamic extremism in the reporting period with over 100 incidents reported not directed against Christians, the most visible being several bomb attacks in October 2011. Therefore, the government is tightening its grip on religious extremist groups, a policy which will also affect the Christian minority in the years to come as all "deviant" religious groups are perceived as extremist.

Kazakhstan is a relative newcomer on the World Watch List. It had a single appearance in 2009 and then reappeared in 2012 as the regime's grip tightened and affected the Christian minority more. The reporting period has seen a set of harsh new laws restricting religious freedom being implemented.

Despite the fact that believers and religious leaders have become more vulnerable due to this new context, the country dropped in terms of rank. This does not mean an improved situation for Kazakhstan. Several other newcomers made it to the list, pushing Kazakhstan down maybe more than it deserved.

49. Kyrgyzstan (score: 37)

‘Dictatorial paranoia’ and ‘Organised corruption’ are the main persecution dynamics of Kyrgyzstan, especially when Muslim Background Believers are concerned, ‘Islamic extremism’ is another dynamic. In 2010 ethnic clashes occurred among the Kyrgyz majority and the Uzbek minority, ending up in violence leaving more than 420 dead. Kyrgyzstan is the first Central Asian country ever with a democratically elected head of state. Persecution of believers comes mainly from family, friends and community. This makes Kyrgyzstan unique compared to the other Central Asian countries where the main source of persecution is the state. In rural areas especially, Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face an enormous amount of pressure to recant their new faith. The Islamic clergy has a lot of influence and sometimes pressurises the Christian minority. Organised corruption is widespread and if the Christian minority is perceived as being in the way, they will run into trouble. In order to get registration a religious group needs to present 200 members, a threshold which is nearly impossible to cross for minority religions, especially in villages. Production, importation, exportation and distribution of religious materials by religious organisations all are allowed, but these materials must be approved by a group of state experts. This approval is difficult to obtain. The government has been considering introducing new rules on the censorship of religious materials. The introduction and implementation of these laws as well as the consideration of new similar laws might endanger the country’s position as the most liberal in Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan ranks 49th on the WWL, in the category ‘Sparse Persecution’.

Kyrgyzstan made it big in the news in 2010, when ethnic clashes occurred among the Kyrgyz majority and the Uzbek minority, ending up in violence leaving more than 420 dead. Christians were not more affected than other parts of the population. One outcome of these horrific events was that elections for the legislative assembly as well, in October 2011, presidential elections were held, making the country the first Central Asian country ever with a democratically elected head of state.

Therefore it is not so much the state or dictatorial paranoia Christian believers face as a source of persecution, but rather family, friends and community, if converts are affected. This makes Kyrgyzstan unique compared to the other Central Asian countries where the main actor of persecution is the state. Especially in rural areas, Muslim Background Believers face an enormous pressure to recant their new-won faith. Sometimes they are physically harmed or their possessions destroyed. In one case, Christian believers were not allowed to bury a deceased person at the local cemetery and had to evade to a larger city.

If there is oppression, it is mostly exerted by local authorities and people. In rural areas, Islamic clergy has a lot of influence, too and sometimes pressurizes the Christian minority.

Apart from this distinction, Kyrgyzstan resembles other Central Asian countries in two respects: first of all, organized corruption is well-known, even if it is to a smaller extent than in its neighbouring countries. If the Christian minority is perceived as being in the way of the actors, they will run into trouble. Reportedly, gangs attacked churches “being in the way” in one respect or another in the past.

The country also resembles its neighbours in the way registration for religious groups needs to be obtained. In order to get registration, the group needs to present 200 members, a threshold nearly impossible to reach for all minority religions including Christians, especially in villages. Even if they overcome this hurdle, authorities generally will find other reasons to postpone or even deny registration. Production, importation, exportation and distribution of religious materials by religious organizations all are allowed, but these materials should be approved by a group of state experts and can only be used in places of worship and sold in special shops. Obtaining this approval is a difficult process. The existing law raises the additional question whether people have the option to obtain and use religious literature at home. Distribution of religious literature is forbidden in public places, at entrances to apartments, in children's establishments, schools and institutions of higher learning, all pointing to the persecution dynamic “dictatorial paranoia”.

Though one might expect to see this dynamic vanish with the new democratically elected government, signs rather point in the opposite direction: according to reports issued by Forum 18 in summer 2012, the government considered to introduce new rules censoring religious materials. Up to the publication of this year's World Watch List, these plans are still pending. Even if these amendments aim at curbing Islamic minority and/or extremist groups, it is most likely that Christian groups will be affected, too as there is made no distinction to the perceived "extremist" groups. The introduction and implementation of these laws as well as the pondering about new similar laws might endanger the countries' position as the most liberal when compared to the other Central Asian countries. This is not to say that the Christian minority enjoys freedom of religion in the true meaning of the term. But compared to its neighbouring countries, there is a little more room for Christians to live their faith.

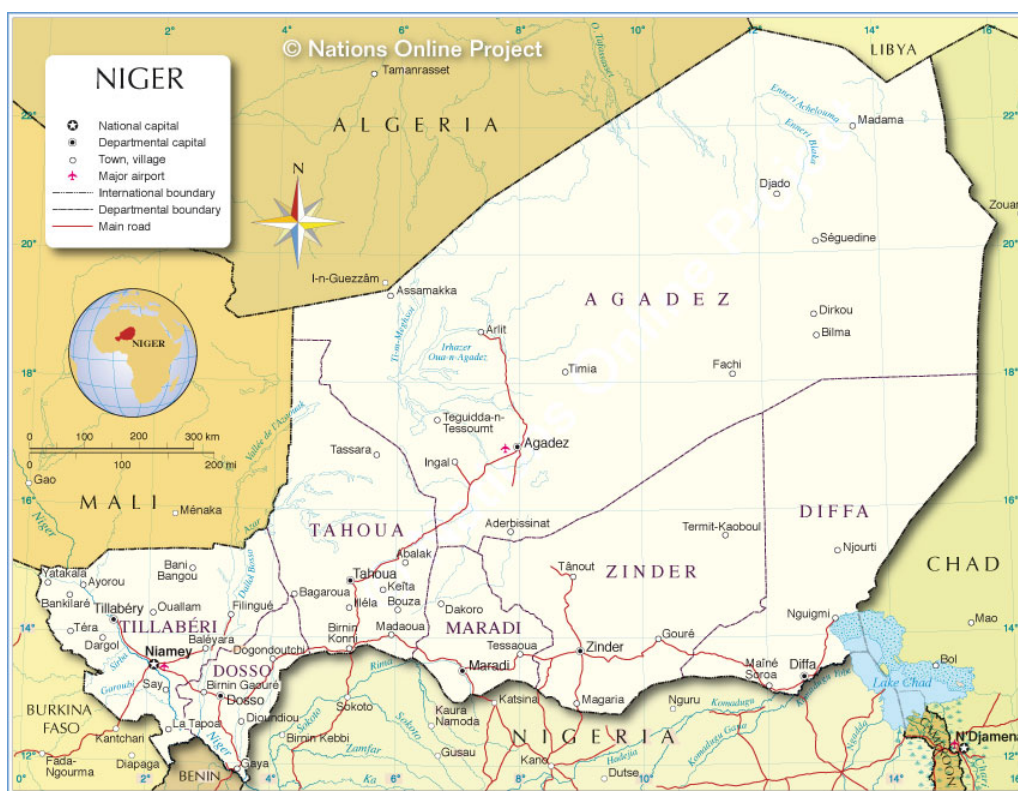
50. Niger (score: 35)

Niger is new on the World Watch List. The main persecution dynamic in Niger is 'Islamic extremism'. Niger has a very high percentage of Muslims (more than 98%). Christians are estimated between 50,000 and 150,000. Islamic terrorist groups like Boko Haram which are active in Nigeria sometimes spill-over into Niger. Hostility comes more from society than from the government. Parents and relatives may oppose the conversion to Christianity yet the government doesn't. Niger experienced serious violence in the wake of the movie about Muhammed on YouTube in summer 2012. Islamic pressure groups like Izala and Tariqa are active and their focus seems to be on creating stringent pressure for minority religions rather than on direct violence. Historically, the Islam that took hold in West Africa was moderate and tolerant, which stressed the religious coexistence of Muslims and 'unbelievers'. Up until the 1990s, Niger's numerous military regimes clamped down on real and potential sources of dissent or threat. However, after the liberalisation of the associational space in 1991, dozens of Islamic associations emerged. In Niger, Wahhabis mostly belong to the Izala movement which rejects Sufi Islam and other 'un-Islamic practices'. The main danger of movements like the Izala movement are their efforts to very seriously pressurise the living space of 'deviant Muslims', together with minority religions like Christianity. The future for the church in Niger seems worrying and the churches do not seem prepared for higher pressure from extremist Islam. Niger ranks 50th on the WWL, in the category 'Sparse Persecution'.

The main persecution dynamic in Niger is 'Islamic extremism'. Niger has a very high percentage of Muslims (more than 98%). Christians are estimated between 50,000 to 150,000 (we took 52,000). Last year Niger was on the list of countries that 'nearly made it'. Last year's short write-up stated it was "too early to say the influence of Islamism is growing, but as this is a regional trend and some violent incidents against Christians have occurred, Niger is a country to watch out for". This year Niger appears as number 50 on the WWL. Why is this? In recent years the country has been gradually shaking off the characteristics of the typical West-African state with a (mostly) moderate Islam, constitutionally secular state, even though a high percentage of its population is Muslim; religion is understood as private and confessional and generally stays clear of politics. However, this gradual shift is not the main driver causing Niger to enter the WWL 2013. The movie about Muhammed caused violent reaction in the Zinder area, close to the extreme north of Nigeria where Islamism has gained a firm grip, and Islamic terrorist groups like Boko Haram are active too, sometimes spilling-over into Niger.

The country has three types of Christianity (historic; Muslim Background Believers (MBBs); evangelicals and others). The pressure on the spheres of private and church life is lower than on the spheres of family and community life. The pressure on the sphere of national life is in-between. This seems to indicate that hostility comes more from society - (extended) family and local environment - than from the government. Sometimes the pressure on Christians only concerns MBBs, sometimes all three types of Christianity are affected. Many questions were answered with "No", which suggests that even the MBBs are often not living under high pressure in Niger. What is remarkable is that MBBs who come to Christ often join already existing churches. Parents and relatives may oppose the conversion to Christianity yet the government doesn't. There may, however, be a shift. Opposite the President's office is written 'Islam is our religion'. There are indications that the government functioning in the context of a secular state does not keep enough distance from Islamic religious leaders or vice-versa. Still, Niger would not have made it to the WWL list if not for the violence related to the Muhammed movie.

Niger experienced violence in the wake of the presentation of the movie about Muhammed on YouTube. Three churches in Zinder and a youth center were damaged or destroyed. Christian houses and businesses were damaged or destroyed, people were injured during the Zinder crisis on 14 September 2012. According to local sources, the local authorities in Tillabéry, Tahoua and Zinder region have never condemned these violent events. An Open Doors Field expert says, "There is growing hatred against Christians in Zinder, and the opponents are only looking for an opportunity, and if they get one they will attack again." He continues, "There is the presence of radical Muslim clerics of the Izala group which is known to be a radical group even in Nigeria. However, because there is reasonable security provided by the Niger authorities these groups seem to be keeping low profile. We believe therefore that if they have opportunities such as the one created by the Muhammed movie they will attack." Other Islamic pressure groups like Tariqa are also active in specific parts of the country (e.g. Maradi, Niamey). The focus of Izala and Tariqa seems to be on creating stringent pressure for minority religions and for their own coreligionists judged to be deviant Muslims rather than on direct violence.



Administrative Map of Niger (nationsonline.org)

The religious situation in Niger is embedded in the wider context of Islam in West Africa. An external analyst states that the dominant strand of Islam which emerged in West Africa is a largely moderate and tolerant Sufi-inspired syncretic Islam which draws extensively from local traditions and superstitions. This Africanised Islam was spread throughout West Africa by two main religious brotherhoods, the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya. The Qadiriyya brotherhood was introduced to West Africa in the 15th century from Mauritania and stressed charity, generosity, humility, piety, and the respect of all individuals no matter their religion or social standing. It was behind most of the Jihads of the early 19th century. Founded by Algerian-born Ahmed al Tijani in 1781, the Tijaniyya brotherhood is similar to the Qadiriyya but with simpler rituals and more flexible teaching, which explains why it displaced the Qadiriyya as the leading brotherhood in West Africa by the beginning of the 20th century. The two brotherhoods greatly influenced the nature of Islam in the region. In Niger, where Islam found its footing in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya is the largest and fastest growing Sufi religious order. The Islam that took hold in West Africa was moderate and tolerant Islam and shaped by the "Suwarian tradition" which "stressed the religious coexistence of Muslims and unbelievers [and] the attendant separation of religion and politics," and a submission to rulers even in a non-Muslim state.

Up until the 1990s, Niger's numerous military regimes clamped down on real and potential sources of dissent or threat. To this end, religious leaders were kept at arm's length and monitored. Before 1990, the Islamic Association of Niger (IAN) was the sole legal representative of the Muslim community, and served as an auxiliary to the military. However, after the liberalisation of the associational space in 1991, dozens of Islamic associations emerged. These organisations have been mostly concerned with the perceived erosion of Niger's religious identity by the secular democratic state. For example, in 2011, they successfully scuttled plans to adopt a new family law that gave more rights to women. These associations also challenge the supposed pagan practices of the brotherhoods.

(Associational space – Prior to the political liberalisation of the 1990s that swept through West Africa, the establishment of socio-political associations was strictly regulated by the state. However, following the liberalisation of the 1990, that space previously occupied solely by association accepted by the state was opened up to include all types of associations, including ones that were against the state or embraced objectives not necessarily to the liking of the state. This is what is generally referred to as the opening up of the “associational space” in Africa.)

In Niger, Wahhabis mostly belong to the Izala movement. Like the Izalas in Nigeria and Benin, the Nigerien Izalas reject Sufi Islam and other 'un-Islamic practices'. The Izalas are noted for their effective grassroots proselytisation campaigns. The creation of a National Islamic Council (NIC) in 2003 received widespread support from Sufi leaders who viewed it as a tool to control the Izalas who have been involved in a number of violent incidents over the years. For example, they led violent protests against International Festival of African Fashion (FIMA) which took place in Niamey. The Izala movement is said to be more interested in reforming Islam than overthrowing the secular state, having the Sufi brotherhoods as their primary targets, not Christians or the state. The main danger of movements like the Izala movement are their efforts to very seriously pressurise the living space of “deviant Muslims”, together with or followed by minority religions like Christianity. As recent history has shown, violent actions are still part of that pattern.

The future for the Church in Niger seems worrying. The dynamic described in this write-up seems to point to potential growth of pressure (squeeze) and plain violence (smash). A considerable part of the Southern third of the country seems prone to persistent Islamic hostilities. The proximity of hard-line Islamic expressions in the upper North of Nigeria and Northern Mali (Azawad) is far from reassuring. The churches are reported to be weak – concentration in the political capital, rivalry among different types of churches, weakness of outreach programs, etc. The churches do not seem prepared for higher pressure from extremist Islam.

APPENDICES

(A) EXPLANATION OF PERSECUTION DYNAMICS

Communist oppression <i>Maintain communism as prescriptive national ideology</i>
Islamic extremism <i>Bring the country or the world under the 'House of Islam' through violent or non-violent actions</i>
Religious militancy <i>Hindu nationalism, Buddhist aggression. Can also concern other religions, for instance Orthodox Judaism.</i>
Dictatorial paranoia <i>Do everything to maintain power, not to realize a specific vision</i>
Radical secularism <i>Eradicate the Christian faith from the public domain, if possible even out of the hearts of people</i>
Organised corruption <i>Creation of a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for getting rich</i>
Ecclesiastical arrogance <i>Churches do not recognise nor want to give room for other 'members of the Body of Christ'</i>
Tribal antagonism <i>Continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in tribal context. Can be in the 'package' of traditional religion or otherwise.</i>

(B) POPULATION STATISTICS

Country	UN population figure	Number of Christians Official figure ODI WWLU 2012	Number of Christians Official Figure ODI WWLU 2013
Afghanistan	33,397,000	Thousands	Thousands
Algeria	36,486,000	25,000	25,000
Azerbaijan	9,421,000	126,000	126,000
Bahrain	1,359,000	65,000	65,000
Bangladesh	152,409,000	1,362,500	1,442,500
Bhutan	750,000	16,500	20,000
Brunei	413,000	39,500	41,300
Burma/Myanmar	48,700,000	4,613,000	4,613,000
China	1,353,601,000	80,000,000	85,000,000
Colombia	47,551,000	44,314,000	44,460,000
Comoros	773,000	6,400	6,400
Djibouti	923,000	15,400	15,400
Egypt	83,958,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Eritrea	5,581,000	2,471,500	2,800,000
Ethiopia	86,539,000	51,563,200	57,000,000
India	1,258,251,000	71,000,000	71,000,000
Indonesia	244,769,000	36,854,000	38,854,000
Iran	75,612,000	460,000	450,000
Iraq	33,703,000	300,000	330,000
Jordan	6,457,000	320,000	150,000
Kazakhstan	16,381,000	1,914,000	1,914,000
Kenya	42,749,000		35,500,000
Kuwait	2,892,000	420,700	420,000
Kyrgyzstan	5,448,000	292,500	292,500
Laos	6,374,000	167,000	170,000
Libya	6,469,000	50,000	35,000
Malaysia	29,322,000	2,600,000	2,900,000
Maldives	324,000	Several	Several
Mali	16,319,000		351,000
Mauritania	3,623,000	4,000	4,500
Morocco	32,599,000	22,000	22,000
Niger	16,644,000		52,000
Nigeria	166,629,000	27,000,000	88,000,000
NK	24,554,000	300,000	300,000
Oman	2,904,000	35,000	35,000
Pakistan	179,951,000	5,300,000	5,300,000
Palestinian Territory	4,271,000	40,000	40,000
Qatar	1,939,000	90,000	90,000
Saudi-Arabia	28,705,000	1,250,000	1,250,000
Somalia	9,797,000	Hundreds	Hundreds
Sudan (North)	30,894,000	(no reliable data for Sudan)	(no reliable data for Sudan)
Syria	21,118,000	1,900,000	1,700,000

Tajikistan	7,079,000	73,600	73,600
Tanzania	47,656,000		29,500,000
Tunisia	10,705,000	23,500	24,000
Turkmenistan	5,170,000	94,700	94,700
Uganda	35,621,000		30,000,000
UAE	8,106,000	405,000	400,000
Uzbekistan	28,077,000	208,500	208,500
Vietnam	89,730,000	9,400,000	9,700,000
Yemen	25,569,000	A few thousand	A few thousand

NOTES

The sources used are:

For the population figures, we used the UN estimations for 2012. A UN division called: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: 'World Population Prospects DEMOBASE provides estimates of population development for the next decades. You can find the document here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/ccc?key=0AonYZs4MzIzbcGhOdG0zTG1EWkVOB3FVbVRpa0Y5SREE#gid=10>

For the number of Christians, we take into account several sources:

- Field estimations
- Operation World (which gives figures from 2010)
- Joshua Project (which gives up-to-date figures, not necessarily accurate)
- US State Department Reports on International Religious Freedom Statistics

Most of the changes in the figures on Christians for 2013 you find can be explained by various reasons:

- Natural growth of the church, respectively the population in general (e.g. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Malaysia, Tunisia and Vietnam).
- The size of the Church in China: there is a broad range of figures for the country, but 85 million seems right to OD Field.
- Nigeria is scored as the complete country, hence, there is a strong increase.
- Libya saw a decline due to migrant Christians leaving the country during the civil war, the "exodus" is on-going, only few dared to return.
- It is not possible to come up with a reliable estimation for the number of Christians in Sudan. Many 'Southern Christians' have left the country.
- The lower value for the size of the Church in Jordan is a numerical correction of ODI WWLU 2012 data.

(C) METHODOLOGY EXPLANATION

One of the tools of Open Doors to track and measure the extent of persecution of Christians in the world is the World Watch List (WWL). The WWL is based on the confrontation and comparison of expert opinions (Open Doors' field researchers, external experts, academics) and publicly available research documents. It is a qualitative instrument based on these expert opinions and through the confrontation of different opinions seeks objectivity. In 2012, the methodology of the WWL was comprehensively revised in order to provide greater credibility, transparency, objectivity and scientific quality.

For this reason, the WWL 2013 cannot be compared with the WWLs of previous years. This document will present the main changes in the methodology of the WWL and its consequences for the ranking of the countries on this list.

If you have specific questions about the WWL methodology, please send an email to Frans Veerman (fransve@od.org), director World Watch List Unit of Open Doors International.

Why does the methodology need development?

Primarily to track the effects of more varied sources of persecution and **simply to gather more data than before**, so the newer version is twice the size in terms of questions asked, though it may not take twice the time to fill it in. We must stress though, this is **not a new questionnaire** – it is primarily a revised questionnaire, enhancing the plus points of the original questionnaire. There is continuity with the older version.

There are two big myths we would like to dispel:

1. **The more incidents of persecution there are, the more persecution there must be!**

While this seems incontrovertible, in actual fact it is not quite correct. To know this, one has to understand the difference between *squeeze* (pressure) and *smash* (plain violence).

Take the Christians of the Maldives. They are surrounded on every side with massive pressure from friends, neighbours, family, and the government, which means they can hardly express their faith at all. Because they are so persecuted, they are virtually unable to witness. In other words, they are being squeezed to death by their persecutors, but if you were looking for a list of incidents where Christians were beaten, put in jail or deported, there would be very few. Sometimes the degree of persecution is so intense, and so all-pervasive, it actually results in fewer incidents of persecution, since acts of public witness and defiance are rare. So while there is no evidence of smashing the church through violence and jailings, the squeeze is what is killing the church. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that many persecutors prefer to squeeze the church, rather than smash it, in the belief that it is a more successful form of persecution.

2. **The most violent persecutors of the church are its main persecutors**

Take Christians in Northern Nigeria. Their most violent persecutor in recent years is the Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram, who have bombed churches and shot pastors. It's an unobvious attempt to smash the church. But in fact, for most Christians, the greatest threat comes from a creeping cultural Islamisation which has been stealthily progressing since the 1980's, until Christians suddenly realise they are second class citizens in a culture that was once hospitable to them, and is now hostile to them. Our point is, you can't track that squeeze trend through incidents. You must discern how the act of Christian life and witness itself is being squeezed in all the different areas of life. Only with this level of understanding, can assistance and intervention be beneficial.

How is the academic quality of the WWL ensured? Who fill in the questionnaires?

With an improvement of the questionnaire and a diversification in the presentation of its results Open Doors is now striving to make the WWL the best, the best known and the most authoritative research instrument to track and measure the extent of persecution of Christians in the world today.

The network of Open Doors (presence in about 40 countries; numerous expert contacts) and the resources produced by Open Doors' World Watch List Unit (including persecution hard facts media research) are the main primary sources of the WWL. Both field reports and expert findings are systematically verified and compared with literature review and publicly available statistical databases and indexes.

Respondents of the questionnaire are carefully selected Open Doors staff and scholars. All respondents have complementary expertise about specific countries and monitor these countries, recording incidents and observations, throughout the year.

The Open Doors workers in the field regions get the questionnaire about the countries in their region and have to fill this in. The WWL team assesses them and does the ranking. Three types of specialist fill out the questionnaires. First, the persecution analysts of the WWL Unit. Second, the researchers and specialists from Field Operations in Open Doors. Third, external experts on the country in question. External experts include academics and policy makers, researchers and people actively working in a country. Some of them work for Christian agencies, others for news services and others for academic institutions. All three sources are then aggregated together to complete the final score for the ranking.

How many countries do we monitor and how do we derive a top 50?

In order to know which countries to include into the survey, the WWL Unit uses a *Rapid Appraisal Tool (RAPT)* combining information from other sources and internet search. This tool, developed by the WWL Unit, is a simple instrument to get a quick idea of the situation in almost all countries of the world and provides justification for the countries that are included in the World Watch List. The RAPT combines information from sources like Freedom House, Pew Forum and the US State Department (world level think tanks and academic research institutes) with the results of 'hard facts' internet search by the WWL Unit (killings, arrests, church burnings etc.). The countries that score highest on the RAPT are the ones for which we will use the questionnaire. We have chosen to work this way because we cannot possibly apply the questionnaire to all countries in the world. The RAPT will be made public in the course of 2013.

What about regions or parts of countries where there is persecution of Christians? Are they included in the World Watch List?

In the World Watch List, only whole countries are scored. For example, Chechnya will not be included on the list as a separate country but is included in Russia. Also, Northern Nigeria – where persecution of Christians is rampant - will be included in Nigeria. To account for regional differences, the WWL scoring grid allows to indicate which part of the country is affected by persecution. This is taken into account in the weighing of the questionnaire.

Many of the countries in the WWL are Muslim majority countries. How can that be so?

The WWL seeks to objectively measure the hostilities against Christians. This is the case in a number of Muslim majority countries. However, the World Watch List methodology has no prejudice towards countries with Muslim populations.

Background on the methodology and definitions of the WWL

Important definitions being used for the WWL:

1. 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'.

This definition is part theological and part sociological. We include all groups who self-identify as Christians, also those that do not belong to any group that defines itself according to the theological creeds of church history like Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants. We have to opt for the broader definition though for two reasons. The first is statistical. It simply becomes too difficult to decide who is what type of Christianity and who is not, and the norms in the gathering of statistics about Christianity all opt for the broader, sociological definition. For example the long-time editor of Operation World, Patrick Johnstone, opts for this definition: "people who profess to be Christians...embracing all traditions and confessions of Christianity and does not indicate the degree of commitment or theological orthodoxy." It is important for OD to reflect this broader definition in order for the WWL data to become part of the World Christian Database. The second is tactical. A common pattern in persecution is that less orthodox or even fringe Christians get persecuted first, and then more mainstream or orthodox Christians are persecuted later. It is tactically helpful then to cover this trend, as it is often predictive of imminent persecution on the kind of churches Open Doors sets up to strengthen.

2. Persecution:

Persecution is 'any hostility, experienced from the world, as a result of one's identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians both from within and outside Christianity'.

Here we have opted for a biblical rather than a sociological definition. While the definition has its challenges because of its inclusiveness, we feel it best covers the full range of hostility that is experienced by Christians as a result of their Christian walk, rather than limit the term persecution to more purely deliberate or extreme forms of suffering. This is because it is very difficult in practice to say what is, in fact, extreme. Often losing a job can be far worse in its effects than a beating in prison. Or where being shunned by one's parents can be more psychologically scarring than being part of a skirmish on the street. Also, to say that persecution has to be deliberate underestimates the implicit and indirect power of culture which has built up over decades a society or situation that freezes Christians out of normal life.

That said, we do accept that there are degrees of persecution, and this is reflected by grades of persecution which you will see colour-coded on the final list.

1. Sparse persecution. Between 26-40.
2. Moderate persecution. Between 41-55.
3. Severe persecution. Between 56-70.
4. Extreme persecution. Between 71-85.
5. Absolute persecution: Between 86-100.

How is the questionnaire set up?

There are two main instruments. The first is the five spheres concept which seeks to better track the **contexts of persecution**. These five spheres express the squeeze (pressure) in each sphere of life. There is also a sixth block, which expresses the smash (plain violence). The sixth block potentially cuts across all five spheres of life. The second is the scoring grid which seeks to distinguish the **communities of persecution**.

I. Measuring the contexts of persecution: The five spheres.

The questionnaire assumes that a Christian lives their life before God in five distinct yet overlapping spheres.

Sphere one: Private Life. Every person has a private, interior life that is lived in their own space. The issue is, does the persecutor seek to dominate that space? In human rights language this area is called “freedom of thought and conscience” (also called forum internum). Focusing on this gives a real indication of the strategy and intensity of persecution. For example in China today, you are largely able to believe what you like in private; the issue is how you manifest that in public. Many persecutors make their aim the absolute privatisation of faith. But in countries such as North Korea, the state seeks to deprive the Christian of the right to centre even their interior spiritual life on Christ, and bans all expression of that even in a home. For Christians living in some Muslim states, there is no freedom in this area either, more often due to a hostile family culture.

Sphere two: Family Life. Every person lives in a family. The interference of persecutors against Christians in the sphere of their families is, next to their rights as individuals, the closest sphere in which a believer can be affected. This is where the state or extended family or others, sometimes even members of the nuclear family, try to stop the transmission of the faith. Particularly for those in the MBB community, this can be the toughest sphere of persecution they face.

Sphere three: Community life. Every person lives in a neighbourhood. This can have distinct characteristics, especially for those in countries where areas are organised according to tribe and race. In Pakistan for example, most Christians would be in trouble from local agents of persecution in the neighbourhood, such as local police, tribal figures or the local extremist Imam raising a mob around the corner. Colombia is another case in point.

Sphere four: National life. Every person lives in a state. The block concerns Christians in the sphere of their nation and tracks the invasiveness of the central government in any particular country and the freedom of Christians to participate in civil society and more generally in public life. In Iran it is interesting to notice that the primary persecution Christians experience often comes from the state, and less from the family or community.

Sphere five: Church Life. Every Christian is usually part of a church – even a very secret one, and we measure here the extent of freedom believers have to express their faith as a group without interference. In this respect, it is important to underline the emphasis in human rights debates on the collective dimension of freedom of religion.

There is a **sixth bloc** on the questionnaire, simply entitled “physical violence.” This block separately groups all related questions, which obviously cut across all five spheres of life. Within this block faith related killings and serious damage/destruction of communal Christian buildings each have one third of the weight. The last third is allocated to matters as such imprisonment, abduction and physical harm. Scoring this block separately gives us the advantage of ensuring that physical incidents do not skew the totals and prevent us properly measuring the squeeze.

Though each block has a different number of questions, they all count the same.

Block seven presents additional questions that are not scored but allow respondents to provide background information. In block seven, respondents are given the opportunity to describe general trends related to persecution dynamics, the main actors that are responsible for persecution, evolution of the church,

expectations for the future. The contents of this block are used for the interpretative narrative that accompanies each WWL score.

2. Distinguishing the communities of persecution: the scoring grid.

The WWL covers the persecution of Christians in political states, but within its borders there may be different communities of Christians who experience sharply contrasting amounts of persecution. This is difficult especially in supersized states such as India, where the Christians of Orissa face very different conditions than, say, the Christians in Bombay. Or in many Middle Eastern countries, Christians from historic traditions, e.g. Armenian Orthodox, face less and different kinds of persecution as a group than their brothers and sisters who are MBB's.

To cover this we have three categories of "yes" when we ask a question about persecution. Yes, absolutely; yes, significantly, and yes, but rarely.

The answer to each question in blocks one to five is an average of the three elements: (1) Types of Christianity concerned, (2) Part of country involved, and (3) Degree of persistence of the persecution pressure.

The first element, "Types of Christianity", needs some explanation. The various types of Christianity in the country could include:

- (a) Expatriate or migrant Christians;
- (b) Members of historical Christian communities (like Catholics, Orthodox, traditional Protestants) and/or government controlled churches;
- (c) Converts to Christianity from 'persecutor background' (majority religion or ideology, traditional religion, mafia, etc.) and/or house churches;
- (d) Members of non-traditional Protestant Christian Communities (like Evangelicals, Pentecostals) and other Christians not yet included.

Putting together these three answer elements, with the three grades of "yes" enables us to get the greatest amount of specificity on which kind of Christian is persecuted where and with what intensity in any given country.

Most significantly, this provides a new data stream that we will convert in the course of 2013 into a mini-WWL that ranks the top 15 persecuted "communities" in the world, and frees us from the constraints of always having to profile the general situation in the entire state.

Will there be more changes in the presentations of the WWL?

Since there is much more data gathered than before, there will be at least three more separate lists. The main event of the top 50 ranking will remain, but in addition we would like to publish:

- 1. A list ranking the top 10 most **violent places in which to live as a Christian**
- 2. A list ranking the top 15 most persecuted **Christian communities in the world.**
- 3. A list of global persecution engines, which are mentioned in the non-scoring part of the questionnaire.