

World
Watch
Research

WWL 2021

Compilation of all main documents
(Excluding detailed country reports)



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

January 2021

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www.opendoorsanalytical.org (password: freedom)

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1. Brief note on methodology, sources, definitions and copyright

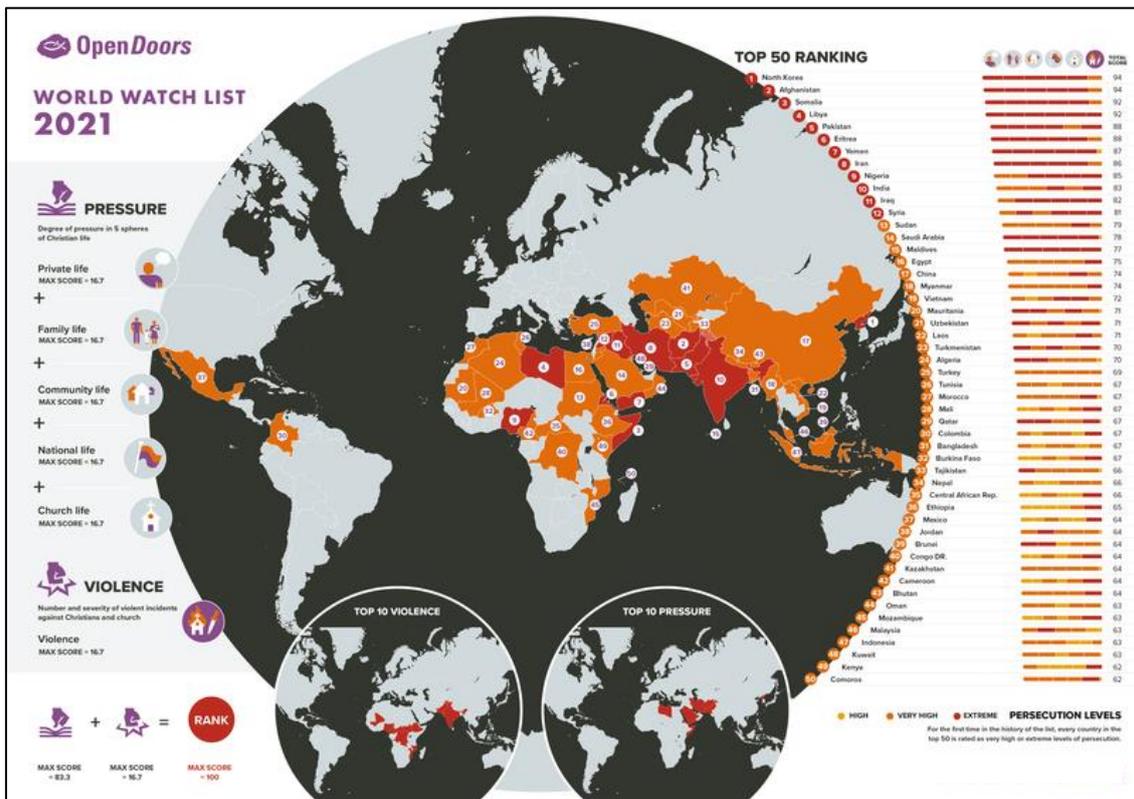
- The WWL 2021 reporting period was 1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology together with various other background documents can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#)¹ page of the Open Doors Analytical website.
- Detailed country dossiers giving in-depth information on the situation of Christians in the 74 countries listed will be available on the Open Doors Analytical website (<http://opendoorsanalytical.org/country-dossiers/>) as soon as updates are finalized.
- The collation of data and analysis presented by Open Doors in this document includes statistical information prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). Source: *Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020).*
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

¹ <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom)

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2. WWL 2021: Table of scores and ranks

The infographic and table below includes all countries scoring 41 points or more in WWL 2021 analysis. These are the countries where Christians face high (41-60 points), very high (61-80 points) or extremely high (81-100 points) levels of persecution.



World Watch List 2021													
WWL 2021				1. Private Life	2. Family Life	3. Community Life	4. National Life	5. Church Life	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2021	WWL 2020		TOTAL SCORE WWL 2020
Rank	Country	Region	Subregion	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score		Rank	Country	
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	1	North Korea	94
2	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.2	94	2	Afghanistan	93
3	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.3	9.8	92	3	Somalia	92
4	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15.6	15.4	15.9	16.3	16.3	12.4	92	4	Libya	90
5	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	13.9	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.5	16.7	88	5	Pakistan	88
6	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	14.6	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	11.1	88	6	Eritrea	87
7	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	3.9	87	8	Yemen	85
8	Iran	Asia	South Asia	14.5	14.5	13.9	15.7	16.5	10.6	86	9	Iran	85
9	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	13.3	13.2	13.9	14.1	14.1	16.7	85	12	Nigeria	80
10	India	Asia	South Asia	13.0	12.9	13.5	14.9	13.7	15.4	83	10	India	83
11	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	13.6	14.6	14.2	14.8	13.8	11.5	82	15	Iraq	76
12	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	13.3	13.9	13.5	14.5	14.0	12.0	81	11	Syria	82
13	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.6	15.7	9.1	79	7	Sudan	85
14	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	15.1	14.1	14.4	15.8	16.6	2.2	78	13	Saudi Arabia	79
15	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	15.4	15.5	13.9	15.8	16.6	0.4	77	14	Maldives	78
16	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	12.5	13.2	11.5	12.7	11.0	14.1	75	16	Egypt	76
17	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	12.6	9.7	12.0	13.2	15.4	11.1	74	23	China	70
18	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.9	12.0	13.1	12.9	12.3	11.9	74	19	Myanmar	73
19	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.1	8.8	12.7	14.0	14.5	10.0	72	21	Vietnam	72
20	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	14.3	14.0	13.5	14.1	13.6	1.9	71	24	Mauritania	68
21	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	1.3	71	18	Uzbekistan	73
22	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.1	10.2	13.6	13.5	14.3	6.9	71	20	Laos	72
23	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.5	11.3	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.5	70	22	Turkmenistan	70
24	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	13.9	13.9	11.5	13.1	13.4	3.9	70	17	Algeria	73
25	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	12.5	11.5	10.8	13.3	11.6	9.3	69	36	Turkey	63
26	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	12.0	13.1	10.4	11.5	13.2	7.4	67	34	Tunisia	64
27	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	12.6	13.5	11.2	12.4	14.1	3.7	67	26	Morocco	66
28	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	8.2	12.7	10.3	11.5	15.4	67	29	Mali	66
29	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	14.0	13.9	10.8	13.1	14.1	1.5	67	27	Qatar	66
30	Colombia	Latin America	South America	11.4	8.8	12.4	11.0	9.7	13.9	67	41	Colombia	62
31	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	11.5	10.3	13.0	11.3	10.1	10.6	67	38	Bangladesh	63
32	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.4	11.8	14.3	67	28	Burkina Faso	66
33	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.0	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	2.2	66	31	Tajikistan	65
34	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	12.4	9.7	9.9	13.0	12.3	8.5	66	32	Nepal	64
35	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	9.0	8.6	13.1	9.6	9.9	15.6	66	25	Central African Republic	68
36	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.9	8.5	10.7	10.3	10.8	14.4	65	39	Ethiopia	63
37	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	10.3	8.1	12.4	10.7	10.3	12.6	64	52	Mexico	60
38	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	13.1	13.9	11.4	11.6	12.4	2.0	64	33	Jordan	64
39	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13.9	14.6	10.7	10.9	13.5	0.7	64	37	Brunei	63
40	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	8.0	7.9	11.2	9.4	11.6	16.1	64	57	Congo DR (DRC)	56
41	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	13.2	11.5	11.0	12.5	13.4	2.4	64	35	Kazakhstan	64
42	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.0	12.3	15.7	64	48	Cameroon	60
43	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	13.1	12.1	11.9	12.7	13.8	0.0	64	45	Bhutan	61
44	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	13.5	10.3	12.5	13.0	0.9	63	42	Oman	62
45	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.3	7.6	11.3	7.9	11.1	16.1	63	66	Mozambique	43
46	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.1	14.3	12.9	11.5	10.0	2.4	63	40	Malaysia	62
47	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.5	11.4	12.4	10.7	9.3	7.8	63	49	Indonesia	60
48	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	13.5	9.9	12.2	13.2	1.1	63	43	Kuwait	62
49	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	11.7	9.2	10.5	8.0	10.3	12.8	62	44	Kenya	61
50	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.5	11.1	11.4	11.3	14.2	1.9	62	54	Comoros	57
51	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	10.9	7.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	5.4	62	61	Cuba	52
52	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	12.2	9.1	11.7	12.2	9.7	7.0	62	30	Sri Lanka	65
53	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	13.4	13.3	9.7	12.0	12.4	1.1	62	47	United Arab Emirates	60
54	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.6	10.6	62	50	Niger	60
55	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	12.9	10.3	11.2	10.4	12.0	1.3	58	55	Kyrgyzstan	57
56	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	12.5	13.3	9.1	10.4	11.7	0.9	58	51	Palestinian Territories	60
57	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	10.2	58	60	Tanzania	55
58	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.5	12.1	3.9	57	46	Russian Federation	60
59	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56	Djibouti	56
60	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	12.1	12.5	9.1	10.7	10.5	0.9	56	59	Bahrain	55
61	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	12.8	9.8	9.4	11.1	12.6	0.0	56	53	Azerbaijan	57
62	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	3.7	53	58	Chad	56
63	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	6.9	4.6	9.9	11.3	10.0	8.1	51	72	Nicaragua	41
64	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.9	48	63	Burundi	48
65	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	12.0	47	62	Uganda	48
66	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.9	47	64	Guinea	45
67	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	6.8	5.0	10.6	7.6	9.0	7.6	46		(Honduras)	(Below 41 points)
68	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	6.4	3.6	7.0	10.1	11.4	7.2	46	68	Angola	43
69	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	65	South Sudan	44
70	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	0.6	43	67	Gambia	43
71	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	0.7	43	73	Togo	41
72	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	8.1	42	71	Rwanda	42
73	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.3	42	70	Ivory Coast	42
74	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	6.6	4.9	9.8	4.2	8.7	7.8	42		(El Salvador)	(Below 41 points)

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3. WWL 2021: Ranking according to pressure score

World Watch List 2021 - Ranking according to pressure score													
					1. Private Life	2. Family Life	3. Community Life	4. National Life	5. Church Life	TOTAL SCORE SQUEEZE WWL 2021			TOTAL SCORE SQUEEZE WWL 2020
Rank WWL 2021	Rank Squeeze WWL 2021	Country	Region	Subregion	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Rank Squeeze WWL 2020	Country	Score
1	1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	1	North Korea	83.3
2	2	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	2	Afghanistan	83.3
7	3	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	83.0	4	Yemen	82.7
3	4	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.3	82.6	3	Somalia	82.8
4	5	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15.6	15.4	15.9	16.3	16.3	79.5	5	Libya	78.9
15	6	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	15.4	15.5	13.9	15.8	16.6	77.1	6	Maldives	77.5
6	7	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	14.6	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	76.7	7	Eritrea	76.6
14	8	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	15.1	14.1	14.4	15.8	16.6	75.9	8	Saudi Arabia	76.1
8	9	Iran	Asia	South Asia	14.5	14.5	13.9	15.7	16.5	75.0	10	Iran	74.7
5	10	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	13.9	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.5	71.5	11	Pakistan	71.5
11	11	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	13.6	14.6	14.2	14.8	13.8	71.0	12	Iraq	70.6
21	12	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	70.0	13	Uzbekistan	70.0
13	13	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.6	15.7	69.8	9	Sudan	75.0
20	14	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	14.3	14.0	13.5	14.1	13.6	69.5	16	Mauritania	68.0
12	15	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	13.3	13.9	13.5	14.5	14.0	69.1	14	Syria	69.0
9	16	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	13.3	13.2	13.9	14.1	14.1	68.7	22	Nigeria	63.3
23	17	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.5	11.3	13.8	13.3	15.7	68.6	15	Turkmenistan	68.5
10	18	India	Asia	South Asia	13.0	12.9	13.5	14.9	13.7	68.1	17	India	67.9
29	19	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	14.0	13.9	10.8	13.1	14.1	65.9	20	Qatar	64.1
24	20	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	13.9	13.9	11.5	13.1	13.4	65.7	19	Algeria	64.2
33	21	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.0	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	63.9	21	Tajikistan	63.5
27	22	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	12.6	13.5	11.2	12.4	14.1	63.8	24	Morocco	62.3
22	23	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.1	10.2	13.6	13.5	14.3	63.7	18	Laos	66.2
39	24	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13.9	14.6	10.7	10.9	13.5	63.6	23	Brunei	62.5
43	25	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	13.1	12.1	11.9	12.7	13.8	63.6	31	Bhutan	61.0
17	26	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	12.6	9.7	12.0	13.2	15.4	63.0	35	China	59.5
44	27	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	13.5	10.3	12.5	13.0	62.5	32	Oman	60.0
38	28	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	13.1	13.9	11.4	11.6	12.4	62.4	25	Jordan	62.2
18	29	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.9	12.0	13.1	12.9	12.3	62.2	26	Myanmar	61.9
19	30	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.1	8.8	12.7	14.0	14.5	62.2	28	Vietnam	61.8
48	31	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	13.5	9.9	12.2	13.2	62.0	29	Kuwait	61.1
41	32	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	13.2	11.5	11.0	12.5	13.4	61.7	27	Kazakhstan	61.9
16	33	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	12.5	13.2	11.5	12.7	11.0	61.0	34	Egypt	59.6
46	34	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.1	14.3	12.9	11.5	10.0	60.9	30	Malaysia	61.0
53	35	United Arab Emirates	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13.4	13.3	9.7	12.0	12.4	60.8	36	United Arab Emirates	59.0
50	36	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.5	11.1	11.4	11.3	14.2	60.4	41	Comoros	56.1
26	37	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	12.0	13.1	10.4	11.5	13.2	60.1	37	Tunisia	58.2
25	38	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	12.5	11.5	10.8	13.3	11.6	59.7	33	Turkey	59.7
34	39	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	12.4	9.7	9.9	13.0	12.3	57.2	38	Nepal	57.4
56	40	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	12.5	13.3	9.1	10.4	11.7	57.1	39	Palestinian Territories	56.5
55	41	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	12.9	10.3	11.2	10.4	12.0	56.8	43	Kyrgyzstan	55.6
51	42	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	10.9	7.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	56.7	56	Cuba	48.5
59	43	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	56.2	40	Djibouti	56.2
31	44	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	11.5	10.3	13.0	11.3	10.1	56.1	45	Bangladesh	53.7
61	45	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	12.8	9.8	9.4	11.1	12.6	55.6	42	Azerbaijan	55.9
47	46	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.5	11.4	12.4	10.7	9.3	55.3	47	Indonesia	53.3
52	47	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	12.2	9.1	11.7	12.2	9.7	55.0	51	Sri Lanka	51.9
60	48	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	12.1	12.5	9.1	10.7	10.5	54.9	44	Bahrain	54.1
30	49	Colombia	Latin America	South America	11.4	8.8	12.4	11.0	9.7	53.3	59	Colombia	47.2
58	50	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.5	12.1	53.1	46	Russian Federation	53.6
32	51	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.4	11.8	52.4	53	Burkina Faso	50.5
28	52	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	8.2	12.7	10.3	11.5	52.1	50	Mali	52.0
37	53	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	10.3	8.1	12.4	10.7	10.3	51.8	57	Mexico	48.0
54	54	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.6	51.0	54	Niger	50.5
35	55	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	9.0	8.6	13.1	9.6	9.9	50.1	48	Central African Republic	52.4
36	56	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.9	8.5	10.7	10.3	10.8	50.1	52	Ethiopia	51.0
62	57	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	49.6	55	Chad	49.6
49	58	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	11.7	9.2	10.5	8.0	10.3	49.6	49	Kenya	52.3
42	59	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.0	12.3	48.3	60	Cameroon	45.0
40	60	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	8.0	7.9	11.2	9.4	11.6	48.0	63	Congo DR (DRC)	40.6
57	61	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	47.6	58	Tanzania	47.6
45	62	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.3	7.6	11.3	7.9	11.1	47.2	72	Mozambique	31.8
63	63	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	6.9	4.6	9.9	11.3	10.0	42.6	68	Nicaragua	37.3
70	64	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	42.3	61	Gambia	42.3
71	65	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	42.1	64	Togo	39.4
66	66	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	41.2	62	Guinea	41.2
64	67	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	39.4	65	Burundi	39.4
67	68	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	6.8	5.0	10.6	7.6	9.0	38.9			
73	69	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	38.7	66	Ivory Coast	38.7
68	70	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	6.4	3.6	7.0	10.1	11.4	38.4	69	Angola	36.0
65	71	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	35.2	70	Uganda	35.2
72	72	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	34.3	71	Rwanda	34.3
74	73	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	6.6	4.9	9.8	4.2	8.7	34.2			
69	74	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	28.3	73	South Sudan	28.3
		WWL / 2020-11-20											

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4. WWL 2021: Ranking according to violence score

		WWL 2021	6. Violence		WWL 2020	6. Violence
Rank	Rank Smash WWL 2021	Country	Score	Rank Smash WWL 2020	Country	Score
9	1	Nigeria	16.7	1	Nigeria	16.7
5	2	Pakistan	16.7	2	Pakistan	16.7
40	3	Congo DR (DRC)	16.1	6	Congo DR (DRC)	15.6
45	4	Mozambique	16.1	16	Mozambique	11.7
42	5	Cameroon	15.7	9	Cameroon	15.0
35	6	Central African Republic	15.6	4	Central African Republic	15.6
10	7	India	15.4	10	India	14.8
28	8	Mali	15.4	11	Mali	13.7
69	9	South Sudan	15.0	7	South Sudan	15.6
36	10	Ethiopia	14.4	15	Ethiopia	11.9
32	11	Burkina Faso	14.3	5	Burkina Faso	15.6
16	12	Egypt	14.1	3	Egypt	16.1
30	13	Colombia	13.9	8	Colombia	15.0
49	14	Kenya	12.8	31	Kenya	9.1
37	15	Mexico	12.6	17	Mexico	11.5
4	16	Libya	12.4	18	Libya	11.3
12	17	Syria	12.0	14	Syria	12.6
65	18	Uganda	12.0	13	Uganda	13.0
18	19	Myanmar	11.9	21	Myanmar	10.7
11	20	Iraq	11.5	40	Iraq	5.6
1	21	North Korea	11.1	19	North Korea	11.1
6	22	Eritrea	11.1	20	Eritrea	10.9
17	23	China	11.1	24	China	10.2
8	24	Iran	10.6	23	Iran	10.4
31	25	Bangladesh	10.6	29	Bangladesh	9.3
54	26	Niger	10.6	30	Niger	9.3
2	27	Afghanistan	10.2	25	Afghanistan	10.0
57	28	Tanzania	10.2	35	Tanzania	7.0
19	29	Vietnam	10.0	26	Vietnam	9.8
3	30	Somalia	9.8	27	Somalia	9.4
25	31	Turkey	9.3	46	Turkey	3.7
13	32	Sudan	9.1	22	Sudan	10.4
64	33	Burundi	8.9	32	Burundi	8.7
34	34	Nepal	8.5	34	Nepal	7.0
63	35	Nicaragua	8.1	45	Nicaragua	4.1
72	36	Rwanda	8.1	33	Rwanda	7.2
47	37	Indonesia	7.8	38	Indonesia	6.5

74	38	El Salvador	7.8			
67	39	Honduras	7.6			
26	40	Tunisia	7.4	42	Tunisia	5.4
68	41	Angola	7.2	37	Angola	6.7
52	42	Sri Lanka	7.0	12	Sri Lanka	13.1
22	43	Laos	6.9	41	Laos	5.6
66	44	Guinea	5.9	47	Guinea	3.7
51	45	Cuba	5.4	48	Cuba	3.5
7	46	Yemen	3.9	52	Yemen	2.6
24	47	Algeria	3.9	28	Algeria	9.3
58	48	Russian Federation	3.9	36	Russian Federation	6.9
27	49	Morocco	3.7	44	Morocco	4.1
62	50	Chad	3.7	39	Chad	5.9
73	51	Ivory Coast	3.3	49	Ivory Coast	3.5
41	52	Kazakhstan	2.4	58	Kazakhstan	1.7
46	53	Malaysia	2.4	59	Malaysia	1.5
14	54	Saudi Arabia	2.2	53	Saudi Arabia	2.4
33	55	Tajikistan	2.2	61	Tajikistan	1.1
38	56	Jordan	2.0	57	Jordan	1.7
20	57	Mauritania	1.9	71	Mauritania	0.2
50	58	Comoros	1.9	66	Comoros	0.9
23	59	Turkmenistan	1.5	56	Turkmenistan	1.9
29	60	Qatar	1.5	54	Qatar	2.2
21	61	Uzbekistan	1.3	51	Uzbekistan	3.0
55	62	Kyrgyzstan	1.3	63	Kyrgyzstan	1.1
48	63	Kuwait	1.1	69	Kuwait	0.7
53	64	United Arab Emirates	1.1	62	United Arab Emirates	1.1
44	65	Oman	0.9	55	Oman	2.0
56	66	Palestinian Territories	0.9	50	Palestinian Territories	3.1
60	67	Bahrain	0.9	67	Bahrain	0.9
39	68	Brunei	0.7	70	Brunei	0.6
71	69	Togo	0.7	65	Togo	1.1
70	70	Gambia	0.6	64	Gambia	1.1
15	71	Maldives	0.4	68	Maldives	0.7
43	72	Bhutan	0	73	Bhutan	0
59	73	Djibouti	0	72	Djibouti	0.2
61	74	Azerbaijan	0	60	Azerbaijan	1.5

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5. WWL 2021: Country religious statistics

Open Doors estimates for the number of Christians have been used for 11 countries. In all other cases, WCD estimates have been used (Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston, Brill, accessed February 2020).

WWL 2021 Rank	Country	Region	Subregion	Total population (UN figure as compiled by WCD; accessed February 2020)	Number of Christians (WCD, accessed February 2020)	Number of Christians (OD estimate)
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	25,841,000		400,000
2	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	38,055,000		thousands
3	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	16,105,000		hundreds
4	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	6,662,000	34,500	
5	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	208,362,000	4,052,000	
6	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	5,432,000	2,552,000	
7	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	30,245,000		a few thousand
8	Iran	Asia	South Asia	83,587,000		800,000
9	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	206,153,000	95,358,000	
10	India	Asia	South Asia	1,383,198,000	67,356,000	
11	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	41,503,000	175,000	
12	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	18,924,000	677,000	
13	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	43,541,000	1,970,000	
14	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	34,710,000		1,200,000
15	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	459,000		thousands
16	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	102,941,000		16,250,000
17	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	1,424,548,000		96,700,000

18	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	54,808,000	4,362,000	
19	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	98,360,000	8,924,000	
20	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	4,784,000	10,800	
21	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	33,236,000	345,000	
22	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	7,165,000	199,000	
23	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	6,031,000	68,000	
24	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	43,333,000	129,000	
25	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	83,836,000	171,000	
26	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	11,903,000	23,100	
27	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	37,071,000	31,500	
28	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	20,284,000	467,000	
29	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	2,792,000	367,000	
30	Colombia	Latin America	South America	50,220,000	47,706,000	
31	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	169,775,000	903,000	
32	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	20,903,000	4,965,000	
33	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	9,475,000	66,300	
34	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	30,260,000	1,285,000	
35	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	4,921,000	3,691,000	
36	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	112,759,000	67,491,000	
37	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	133,870,000	128,229,000	
38	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	10,209,000		180,000

39	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	445,000	52,000	
40	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	89,505,000	85,120,000	
41	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	18,777,000	4,852,000	
42	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	25,958,000	15,922,000	
43	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	835,000		30,000
44	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	5,150,000	185,000	
45	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	32,309,000	17,448,000	
46	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	32,869,000	2,991,000	
47	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	272,223,000	33,192,000	
48	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	4,303,000	513,000	
49	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	53,492,000	43,991,000	
50	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	870,000	4,200	
51	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	11,495,000	7,088,000	
52	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	21,084,000	1,914,000	
53	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	9,813,000	1,077,000	
54	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	24,075,000	63,700	
55	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	6,302,000	278,000	
56	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	5,323,000	43,700	
57	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	62,775,000	35,520,000	
58	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	143,787,000	117,848,000	
59	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	1,000,000	10,800	

60	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	1,698,000	195,000	
61	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	10,100,000	246,000	
62	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	16,285,000	5,676,000	
63	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	6,417,000	6,082,000	
64	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	11,939,000	11,220,000	
65	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	47,188,000	40,040,000	
66	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	13,751,000	467,000	
67	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	9,719,000	9,305,000	
68	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	32,827,000	30,592,000	
69	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	13,610,000	8,405,000	
70	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	2,293,000	108,000	
71	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	8,384,000	4,030,000	
72	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	13,087,000	11,949,000	
73	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	26,172,000	8,921,000	
74	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	6,479,000	6,243,000	

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6. WWL 2021: The total number of persecuted Christians and derived statements

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1) Communication

When the number of Christians living in situations of high, very high and extreme levels of persecution or discrimination is estimated for all Top 50 countries, it comes to 309 million. Countries that have scored 41 points or more but have not entered the Top 50 add another 33 million. The total for all countries is 342 million. For communication purposes and to take account of the margin of uncertainty, the total is set for 340 million.

Please use the following statement for WWL 2021 communication to the general public:

More than 340m Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. In Open Doors’ World Watch List top 50 alone, 309m Christians face very high or extreme levels.

That is one in 8 worldwide, 1 in 6 in Africa, 2 out of 5 in Asia, and 1 in 12 in Latin America.

See sections 3 and 4 below for more information concerning the “one in ...” statements.

Either figure can be used on its own.

“More than 340m Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.”

“In Open Doors World Watch List top 50 countries alone, 309m Christians suffer very high or extreme levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.”

The qualifier “more than” is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the total of the estimates for all countries that scored 41 points or more, is 342 million. More importantly, the estimates were limited to countries that scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2021. There are other countries that did not score 41 points but where there are groups of Christians that live in comparably difficult situations.

2) Explanation for the use of the qualifier “high”

In WWL-Methodology, “high” levels of persecution or discrimination occur when the score-range is 41 to 60 points. Above this there are two other categories: “very high” (61-80 points) and “extreme” (81-100 points). All countries that scored at least 41 points were taken into account for estimating the number of persecuted Christians in the world. To define the number of persecuted Christians in each of those countries, the level of persecution or discrimination was estimated for regions within that country, based on the overall country questionnaire. It would have been better if a questionnaire were completed for each region separately, but that was simply too much work. If the estimate of the level of persecution or discrimination for a specific region within the country came within the range of “high” and above, the Christian population in that region was counted as persecuted Christians. The total of such regions made up the number of persecuted Christians in that country. Alternatively, if in a country there were serious differences in persecution or discrimination of different Categories of Christianity or even Christian denominations, the number of most affected category or denomination would be chosen, and sometimes reduced by a certain percentage.

In the [WWL-Methodology](#) (page 55-56), “high” is defined as “where living as a Christian means that although there may be a tolerated church which enjoys some freedom, in practice prominent Christians are targeted, churches themselves are subject to significant restrictions, and the culture remains largely hostile to a Christian presence in such areas as education and employment.”

Thus, it does not mean that all Christians in those situations are directly facing high levels of persecution or discrimination. It means they are living in regions within their countries where the seriousness of the persecution situation is estimated to be ‘high’ (or higher).

Again, please do not take out the qualifier “high”. This is crucial, since there are other definitions of persecution that would give a considerably higher figure.

3) The basis for statements derived from the 340 million number

This document now further elaborates upon the meaning of the “340 million in the world” number. The basis for the statements to follow can be found in the table below:

Region	WWL 2021 Total no. of Christians	WWL 2021 No. of persecuted Christians	WWL 2021 1 in x Christians persecuted	WWL 2020 No. of persecuted Christians	WWL 2020 1 in x Christians persecuted
AFRICA	667,169,000	120,930,000	5.5	123,051,000	5.3
ASIA	378,735,000	165,202,000	2.3	157,778,000	2.4
EUROPE	565,416,000	2,357,000	239.9	2,361,000	241.5
LATIN AMERICA	611,964,000	53,379,000	11.5	29,252,000	20.7
NORTHERN AMERICA	267,944,000	0	N/A	0	N/A
OCEANIA	27,606,000	0	N/A	0	N/A
TOTAL	2,518,834,000	341,868,000	7.4	312,442,000	8.0

4) Statements derived from the 340 million number

The following statements include the number of persecuted Christians in all countries scoring at least 41 points:

“One in every 8 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2020 this was 1/8 too; WWL 2019: 1/9; WWL 2018: 1/11.5 or 1/12)

And:

“In Africa one in every 6 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2020 this was 1/5; WWL 2019: 1/6; WWL 2018: 1/7.5 or 1/8)

“In Asia two in every 5 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2020 this was 2/5 too; WWL 2019: 1/3; WWL 2018: 1/3.5 or 1/4)

“In Latin America one in every 12 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2020 this was 1/21; WWL 2019: 1/21; WWL 2018: 1/30)

5) The problem with publishing a breakdown of persecuted Christians per country

It is not possible to provide a public version of the breakdown of the numbers of persecuted Christians per country, as this is sensitive information.

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7. WWL 2021 Article on violence

Data on violence experienced by Christians in the countries scoring 41+ points in the reporting period 1 October 2019 – 30 September 2020

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1. Summary data of Questionnaire Block 6 questions 1-5 and WWL comparisons

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2021	WWL 2020	WWL 2019	WWL 2018	WWL 2017	WWL 2016
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	4,761	2,983	4,305	3,066	1,207	7,106
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	4,488	9,488	1,847	793	1,329	2,425
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned	4,277	4,811	3,150	1,905	-	-
6.5 Christians abducted	1,710	1,052	-	-	-	-

2. Summary statements focusing on all WWL 2021 violence data

The statements below are based on the tables giving detailed violence data per country and region in Section 4 of this document.

- **The total number of Christians killed for their faith rose from 2,983 registered cases (WWL 2020) to 4,761 (WWL 2021).** This is an increase of 60%. Violent killing of Christians for faith-related reasons was much higher in Africa than in Asia. 91% of the killings were in Africa, and 8% in Asia. The main share was from Nigeria.
- **The total number of churches attacked in differing forms of severity, decreased from 9,488 (WWL 2020) to 4,488 (WWL 2021).** This is a decrease of 53%. Attacks on churches happened most often in Asia. 77% of the attacks were in Asia, as compared to 20% in Africa and 3% in Latin America. The main share was from China.
- **The total number of Christians detained for their faith decreased from 3,420 registered cases (WWL 2020) to 2,813 (WWL 2021).** This is a decrease of 18%. The numbers of

Christians detained for their faith in Africa (43%) and Asia (55%) were comparable. Eritrea (Africa) and China (Asia) produced the main shares.

- **The total number of Christians sentenced for their faith increased from 1,391 registered cases (WWL 2020) to 1,464 (WWL 2021).** This is an increase of 5%. The number of Christians sentenced for their faith in Asia (89%) was much higher than in Africa (10%). The main share was from NN (for explanation of “NN”, see introductory notes below).
- **The total number of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons increased from 1,052 (WWL 2020) to 1,710 (WWL 2021).** This is an increase of 63%. The number of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons in Africa (90%) was much higher than in Asia (9%). The main share was from Nigeria.
- Christians raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons: The percentages in Africa (49%) and Asia (49%) were (nearly) the same. The main shares were from Nigeria (Africa) and Saudi Arabia (Asia).
- Forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians: The percentage for Asia (72%) was far higher than for Africa (28%). However, the high value for Asia was mainly due to the situation in one country: Pakistan.
- Christians who have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats): The percentage for Africa (75%) was far higher than for Asia (23%). Nigeria (Africa) has the main share, followed by India (Asia).
- Houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) that were attacked: The percentages for Africa (69%) was more than twice as high as for Asia (2005; 31%).
- Shops or businesses of Christians that were attacked: The percentages for Africa (75%) was around three times as high as for Asia (562; 25%). Nigeria (Africa) had the highest share, followed by Syria (Asia).
- Christians forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons: The percentage for Asia, after statistical adjustment (see explanation below), was 21%, against 75% for Africa 75%.
- Christians forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons: The percentage for Asia, after statistical adjustment (see explanation below), was 42%, against 57% for Africa.

3. Violence in relation to the second WWL 2021

Trend

The WWL 2021 Trends Article lists five trends. The second trend relates closely to the violence data collated by World Watch Research.

Trend 2	Violent Islamist militancy exploits COVID-19 restrictions to spread in sub-Saharan Africa
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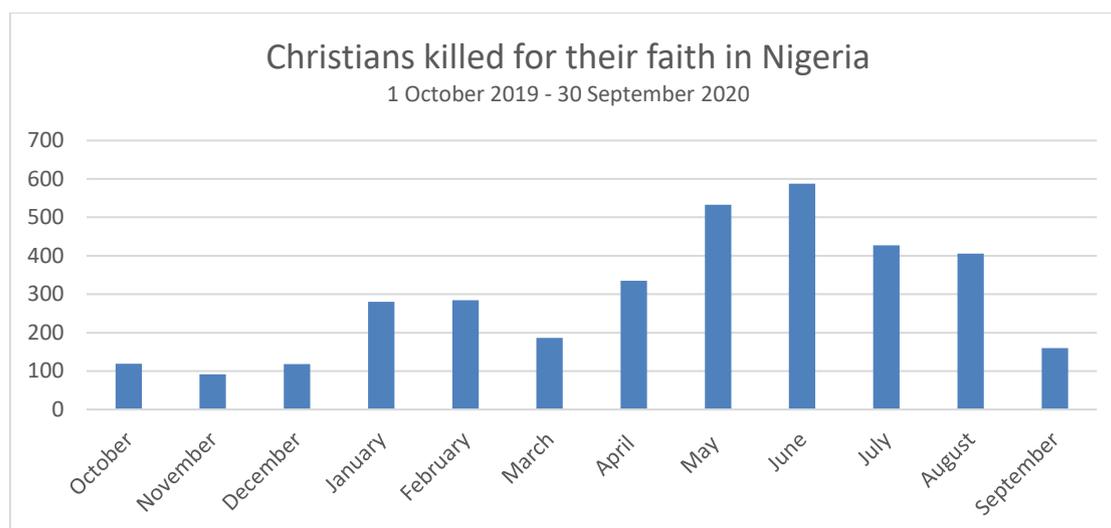
In sub-Saharan Africa, violent Islamic militants have been exploiting COVID-19 restrictions and spreading. The scope of this increased presence in sub-Saharan Africa is much more than directing hostilities against Christians alone. It often entails the establishment of some form of Caliphate. However, it is to be noted that such militants seem unable to tolerate the existence of Christians or the Church. If this is true, and if violent Islamist militants exploited COVID-19 restrictions, one would expect to see higher numbers of violence, especially Christians killed, in sub-Saharan countries.

The countries that are most closely linked with jihadist violence in sub-Saharan Africa are Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria in Western Africa, Cameroon and Congo DR (DRC) in Middle Africa and Mozambique in Eastern Africa. The total number of Christians killed in those countries rose from 1,584 to 4,216: That is a rise of 2.7 times as much. Without counting Nigeria, the increase is from 234 to 686: 2.9 times as much. (The number taken for Mozambique for WWL 2021 was a symbolic 100; the real number of Christians killed by jihadist violence is higher.)

Although the numbers for some of these countries sometimes seem quite low, it is important to realize that the number of Christians killed is only an indication of what is happening when Christian communities are attacked by jihadist (or related) groups. See Case Study Nigeria below.

There are two major reasons why the COVID-19 crisis enabled violent jihadist groups, and allegedly related groups such as the armed Fulani herdsman, to extend their influence and terrorize Christians (and others).

- i) The first reason is that the security services (armed forces, police and others) were so busy enforcing lockdowns that there was less attention paid and less capacity available for combating the jihadist groups. Especially when those countries were already systematically plagued by the lack of rule of law and good governance.
- ii) The second reason why violent jihadist groups, and related groups such as the armed Fulani herdsman, were able to continue to terrorize Christians (and others) was that it was carried out under the alleged protection of the security services. While they kept the Christian population confined in lockdown, the attackers often got a free hand. Arguably this happened in Nigeria (although not in every case where those groups carried out violent attacks). The diagram below shows the monthly data for killings in Nigeria.



The Case Study on Nigeria at the end of this document gives more background information. Here, it suffices to note that there was a spike of killings in the months April till August 2020 under lockdown restrictions. This is surprising given the relatively high quality of the Nigerian security services. In conclusion, the data on Christians killed by violent jihadists groups (and related groups such as the armed Fulani herdsman) seem to indicate that these groups were able to benefit from the COVID-19 restrictions to extend their influence in sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Introductory notes concerning detailed violence data per country and region

The WWL 2021 data given is based wherever possible on direct counting. In several cases, where it is very hard to know exact numbers and it is clear from indirect sources that there have been violent incidents occurring against Christians, numbers have been estimated. In such cases, the World Watch Research team has always estimated conservatively. (In connection with this, please see Section 2 of the WWR document “[WWL – Discussion of key themes](#)”, published in October 2020, and the discussion below.)

The tables presented below do not pretend to be complete. The exact details of what is happening to Christians in a country are difficult to obtain: For instance, especially in countries where there is conflict or a high level of secrecy, the media are often seriously curtailed by the regime or influenced by social actors. Please see the individual WWL 2021 country dossiers for more details. These are publicly available at <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/country-dossiers/> (password: freedom).

The data on violence presented is limited to all countries scoring 41 or more points in the WWL 2021 reporting period. There may be cases of violence in countries scoring 40 points or less, but these are not included here. For each question in Block 6, country and regional data is shown, followed by a set of statements based on the data provided.

For security reasons: There are 5 countries where the data on violence is presented but the names of those countries are not individually revealed. These countries are Afghanistan, Maldives, North Korea, Somalia and Yemen. The data for these countries are indicated with “NN” which stands for the Latin “Nomen Nescio” (“name unknown”).

In the tables below, where there is an asterisk (“*”) beside the name of the country, this indicates that the number given is understood to be symbolic, meaning that the real number of incidents is possibly (much) higher. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 (or even 100,000) but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.

Please note that a statistical adjustment has been made in the statements for 6.11 and 6.12. In each case, the highest number from Asia region and the highest from Africa region have been disregarded when calculating the percentages.

A further disclaimer: Even where it was possible to count exact numbers, it has to be understood that what was counted is very often the absolute minimum. Much violence goes unnoticed.

5. Detailed Block 6 violence data per country and region

6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021	Number WWL 2020	Sum total
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	3530	1350	4880
Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	460	152	612
Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	307	20	327
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	12	112
Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	53	10	63
Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	38	50	88
NN			36	10	46
Central African Rep.	Africa	Middle Africa	35	924	959
Mali	Africa	Western Africa	33	10	43
NN			20	20	40

Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	17	11	28
Colombia	Latin America	South America	16	16	32
India	Asia	South Asia	12	9	21
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	6	16
Libya*	Africa	Northern Africa	10	10	20
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	100	110
NN			9	11	20
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	9	10	19
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	8	23	31
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	7	6	13
Honduras	Latin America	Central America	6	0	6
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	5	0	5
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	5	9	14
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	4	0	4
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	3	3	6
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	3	3	6
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	2	0	2
Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	2	0	2
Niger	Africa	Western Africa	2	0	2
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	2	0	2
Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2	1	3
Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	1	0	1
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1	0	1
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	1	2	3
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	1	0	1
Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	1	0	1
Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	0	2	2
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	0	1	1
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	0	200	200
Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	0	1	1
Venezuela	Latin America	South America	0	1	1
			4761	2983	7744

Per (sub-)region:

(Sub-)region	Number WWL 2021	Number WWL 2020	Sum total
Eastern Africa	156	151	307
Middle Africa	549	1086	1635
Northern Africa	19	33	52
Western Africa	3606	1412	5018
AFRICA	4,330	2,682	7,012
Central Asia	0	1	1
Eastern Asia	20	20	40

South Asia	357	240	597
South-eastern Asia	6	4	10
Western Asia	14	13	27
ASIA	397	278	675
Central America	18	6	24
South America	16	17	33
LATIN AMERICA	34	23	57
TOTAL OVERALL	4,761	2,983	7,744

- The total number of Christians killed for their faith rose from 2,983 registered cases (WWL 2020) to 4,761 (WWL 2021). This is an increase of 60%.
- Violent killing of Christians for faith-related reasons was much higher in Africa than in Asia. 91% of the killings were in Africa, and 8% in Asia.
- Within Africa, Western Africa scored the highest number of Christians killed for their faith. 76% of the overall number, and 83% of the number for Africa.
- Within West Africa, Nigeria had the largest share of the number of Christians killed for their faith (3,530 or 74% of the overall number). The number rose for 1,350 (WWL 2020) to 3,530 (WWL 2021). The monthly numbers were highest in the months the country was in lockdown (April - August 2020).
- The countries that are most closely linked with jihadist violence in Sub Saharan Africa are Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria in Western Africa, Cameroon and Congo DR (DRC) in Middle Africa and Mozambique in Eastern Africa. The total number of Christians killed in those countries rose from 1584 to 4216: 2.7 times as much. Without counting Nigeria, the increase is from 234 to 686: 2.9 times as much. (The number taken for Mozambique for WWL 2021 was a symbolic 100; the real number of Christians killed by jihadist violence is higher.)
- Although the numbers for some of these countries sometimes seem (rather) low, it is important to realize that the number of Christians killed is only an indication of what is happening when Christian communities are attacked by jihadist (or related) groups. See Case Study Nigeria below.
- It is also important not to take numbers of Christians killed for one year alone. Take for instance the situation in Burkina Faso. In the WWL 2020 reporting period the number of Christians killed was 50; in the actual reporting period it is 38. This does not mean the situation got better. The attacks in the WWL 2020 reporting period caused many Christians to flee to other, safer parts of the country, out of the areas of action of the jihadist groups. So the 38 Christians additionally killed must not be seen on themselves, but in addition to the 50 killed before.
- The rise in number of Christians killed in Asia (43%) was mainly caused by the number recorded for Pakistan.
- Latin America (1% of the overall number) also saw a rise in the number of Christians killed (48%).

6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021	Number WWL 2020	Sum total
China	Asia	Eastern Asia	3088	5576	8664
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	270	150	420
Angola*	Africa	Middle Africa	100	2000	2100
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	100	10	110
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	124	224
Rwanda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	700	800
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	90	14	104
India	Asia	South Asia	76	34	110
Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	68	58	126
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	61	8	69
Central African Rep.	Africa	Middle Africa	56	47	103
Nicaragua*	Latin America	Central America	35	10	45
Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	27	21	48
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	24	7	31
Colombia	Latin America	South America	20	40	60
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	20	16	36
Iran	Asia	South Asia	17	23	40
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	16	10	26
Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	12	15	27
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	11	1	12
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	11	4	15
Burkina Faso*	Africa	Western Africa	10	50	60
Burundi*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	100	110
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	10	18	28
Mali*	Africa	Western Africa	10	100	110
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	5	15
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	10	7	17
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	10	10	20
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	10	20
Vietnam*	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	10	20
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	9	204	213
Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	9	32	41
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	8	5	13
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	8	10	18
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	7	3	10

Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	6	1	7
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	5	3	8
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	5	5	10
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	5	2	7
Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	4	13	17
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	4	0	4
Honduras	Latin America	Central America	4	0	4
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	4	3	7
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	4	10	14
Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	3	4	7
NN			3	2	5
Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	2	0	2
NN			2	2	4
Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	1	0	1
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	1	1	2
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1	0	1
Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	1	0	1
Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	0	1	1
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	0	2	2
Palestinian Terr.	Asia	Western Asia	0	2	2
Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	0	1	1
Venezuela	Latin America	South America	0	4	4
			4,488	9,488	13,976

Per region:

(Sub-)region	Number WWL 2021	Number WWL 2020	Sum total
Eastern Africa	299	982	1281
Middle Africa	271	2076	2347
Northern Africa	32	70	102
Western Africa	308	312	620
AFRICA	910	3,440	4,350
Central Asia	3	0	3
Eastern Asia	3090	5578	8668
South Asia	281	152	433
South-eastern Asia	44	229	273
Western Asia	27	14	41
ASIA	3,445	5973	9,418
Eastern Europe	4	10	14
EUROPE	4	10	14
Caribbean	5	3	8
Central America	104	18	122
South America	20	44	64
LATIN AMERICA	129	65	194
TOTAL OVERALL	4,488	9,488	13,976

- The total number of churches attacked in differing forms of severity, decreased from 9,488 (WWL 2020) to 4,488 (WWL 2021). This is a decrease of 53%.
- Attacks on churches happened most often in Asia. 77% of the attacks were in Asia, as compared to 20% in Africa and 3% in Latin America.
- Within Asia, the number of attacks on churches was highest in Eastern Asia, especially China with 3088 registered cases (90%).
- Church attacks in China varied from removals of crosses to complete church demolitions. The number of cases decreased from 5576 to 3088. It is however important to realize that churches which were affected in the WWL 2020 reporting period, were still affected in the WWL 2021 reporting period. The WWL methodology only counts new cases; it does not add churches that are still affected from the foregoing reporting period. To understand the meaning of church attacks it is thus important to look at foregoing years too. For China the total over the last two reporting periods was at least 8644.
- The number of churches attacked in Africa, decreased from 3440 to 910. This was mainly because the churches which were forced to close in the WWL 2020 reporting period in Angola (2000) and Rwanda (700) were not counted again (even though most of them still remain closed and many church leaders were still actively trying to get their churches reopened). Here too it is important to look at total over the last two reporting periods: 4350 churches attacked or closed.
- The number for Africa is actually too low. In the table, 10 out of the 11 countries that have symbolic numbers are African countries. In situations with high levels of violence it is difficult to get exact numbers for churches attacked or closed, especially because reporting is often focusing on people killed.
- This is especially the case for Nigeria (and other West African countries) where jihadist groups, including armed Fulani herdsmen, are attacking (mainly) Christian villages by the hundreds. When people flee, they leave their houses, fields, shops and **churches** behind. It is difficult to know the exact numbers. The number put for Nigeria is derived from concrete data but is in all probability (far) too low.
- For countries with jihadist violence such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Mozambique, it was only realistic to put symbolic numbers which are always (far) too low.
- Latin America (3% of the overall number) also saw a rise in the number of churches attacked (98%).
- All Latin American countries on the list saw an increase, except Colombia which saw a decrease. The increase for Mexico was the highest: From 8 (WWL 2020) to 61 (WWL 2021).

6.3 How many Christians have been detained without trial for faith-related reasons?

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	1000
Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	930
Iran	Asia	South Asia	110

NN*			100
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	100
Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	97
India	Asia	South Asia	72
Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	32
Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	31
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	26
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	25
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	19
Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	18
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	17
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	17
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	17
Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	16
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	15
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	13
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	12
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12
NN*			10
Angola*	Africa	Middle Africa	10
Burundi*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	10
Libya*	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
NN			10
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	6
Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	6
Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	5
Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	4
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	4
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	3
Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	3
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	3
Colombia	Latin America	South America	2
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	2
Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	1
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	1
Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1
NN			1
Palestinian Terr.	Asia	Western Asia	1

Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	1
			2,813

Per region:

(Sub-)region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	986
Middle Africa	42
Northern Africa	162
Western Africa	29
AFRICA	1,219
Central Asia	50
Eastern Asia	1100
South Asia	311
South-eastern Asia	52
Western Asia	30
ASIA	1,543
Eastern Europe	19
EUROPE	19
Caribbean	13
Central America	17
South America	2
LATIN AMERICA	32
TOTAL OVERALL	2,813

- The total number of Christians detained for their faith decreased from 3,420 registered cases (WWL 2020) to 2,813 (WWL 2021). This is a decrease of 18%.
- The numbers of Christians detained in Africa (43%) and Asia (55%) were comparable.
- Within Africa, Eastern Africa has by far the most Christians detained for their faith. 930 out of the 986 were detained in Eritrea.
- Within Asia, China takes the largest part, although it was difficult to come up with an exact number. Therefore a symbolic 1000 was chosen.

6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
NN*			1000
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	143
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	62

Iran	Asia	South Asia	44
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	25
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	10
NN*			10
Vietnam*	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10
Colombia	Latin America	South America	6
India	Asia	South Asia	5
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	5
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	4
Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	3
Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	3
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	2
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	2
Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	2
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	1
Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	1

1,464

Per region:

(Sub-)region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	100
Middle Africa	10
Northern Africa	6
Western Africa	30
AFRICA	146
Central Asia	4
Eastern Asia	1,010
South Asia	266
South-eastern Asia	26
Western Asia	2
ASIA	1,308
South America	6
Caribbean	4
LATIN AMERICA	10
TOTAL OVERALL	1,464

- The total number of Christians sentenced for their faith increased from 1,391 registered cases (WWL 2020) to 1,464 (WWL 2021). This is an increase of 5%.
- The number of Christians sentenced for their faith in Asia (89%) was much higher than in Africa (10%).

- Eastern Asia had by far the highest number of Christians sentenced for their faith: 1010 or 77% out of the total for Asia, and 69% out of the overall total.
- Within Africa, Eastern Africa or Eritrea had the highest number: 100 or 68% out of the total for Africa, and 7% out of the global total. Eritrea's number (100) was a symbolic number.

6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?
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From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	990
Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	250
Central African Rep.*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	100
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	50
Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	50
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12
Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	10
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Mali*	Africa	Western Africa	10
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	10
NN			10
NN*			10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	8
Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	7
NN			7
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	5
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	4
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	4
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	4
Colombia	Latin America	South America	3
Honduras	Latin America	Central America	3
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	3
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	3
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	2
India	Asia	South Asia	2
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	2

Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	2
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	2
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	2
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	2
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	1

1,710

Per region:

(Sub-)region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	88
Middle Africa	360
Northern Africa	67
Western Africa	1,017
AFRICA	1,532
Eastern Asia	10
South Asia	116
South-eastern Asia	15
Western Asia	18
ASIA	159
Caribbean	1
Central America	15
South America	3
LATIN AMERICA	19
TOTAL OVERALL	1,710

- The total number of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons increased from 1,052 (WWL 2020) to 1,710 (WWL 2021). This is an increase of 63%.
- The number of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons in Africa (90%) was much higher than in Asia (9%).
- Western Africa had the highest number of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons: 1017 or 66% out of the total for Africa, and 59% out of the overall total.
- Middle Africa followed with 360 or 23% out of the total for Africa, and 21% out of the overall total.
- The biggest contributors to the total of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons were Nigeria (990), Congo DR (250), Central Africa Republic (symbolic 100) and Pakistan (symbolic 100). These were all countries confronted with aggressive jihadist groups.
- The registered number of Christians abducted in Latin America was low (19); although 4 countries out of the 6 in the table were seriously affected by organized crime. Some cases may have been missed. Still, it turns out that the abduction of Christians for faith-related reasons is not the main way for organized crime to try to oppress the Church.

6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	1000
Saudi Arabia*	Asia	Western Asia	1000
Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Central African Rep.*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Jordan*	Asia	Western Asia	100
NN*			100
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	100
Honduras	Latin America	Central America	37
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	25
Iran	Asia	South Asia	21
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	20
India	Asia	South Asia	15
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	15
Oman	Asia	Western Asia	11
Algeria*	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Bahrain*	Asia	Western Asia	10
Burkina Faso*	Africa	Western Africa	10
Burundi*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	10
El Salvador*	Latin America	Central America	10
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	10
Kuwait*	Asia	Western Asia	10
Mali*	Africa	Western Africa	10
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	10
NN			10
Qatar*	Asia	Western Asia	10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Sudan*	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	10
Tunisia*	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Uganda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
United Arab Emirates*	Asia	Western Asia	10

Colombia	Latin America	South America	9
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	6
NN			5
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	4
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	1
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	1
NN			1

Per region:

(Sub-)region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	69
Middle Africa	301
Northern Africa	70
Western Africa	1,030
AFRICA	1,470
Eastern Asia	110
South Asia	148
South-eastern Asia	25
Western Asia	1,181
ASIA	1,464
Central America	62
South America	9
LATIN AMERICA	71

- No total is given for the number of Christians raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons. The reason is that 25 numbers in the table are symbolic numbers. As such, this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- Using symbolic number always means a gross underestimation of the reality.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the numbers in Africa (1,470; 49%) and Asia (1,464; 49%) are nearly the same.
- The highest number in Africa is for Nigeria (1000; not presented as symbolic number) and for Asia in Saudi Arabia (symbolic 1000; esp. Christian housemaids).

6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?
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From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	1000
Central African Rep.*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Nigeria*	Africa	Western Africa	100
Burundi*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	10
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Iran*	Asia	South Asia	10
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	10
NN*			10
NN			10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Sudan*	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Uganda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	5
NN			5
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	5
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	4
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	4
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	3
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	2
India	Asia	South Asia	2
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	2
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	2
Mali	Africa	Western Africa	2
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	1
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	1
Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	1
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	1
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	1
Togo	Africa	Western Africa	1

Per region:

Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	60

Middle Africa	210
Northern Africa	24
Western Africa	116
AFRICA	410
Eastern Asia	10
South Asia	1,025
South-eastern Asia	4
Western Asia	13
ASIA	1,052

- No total is given for the number of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians. The reason is that the 14 symbolic numbers account for 95% of the overall total. As such this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- Using symbolic numbers always means a gross underestimation of the reality.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the number for Asia (1,052; 72%) is far higher than the number for Africa (410; 28%). However, the high number for Asia is mainly due to the situation in one country: Pakistan.
- Forced marriage of Christians to non-Christians is not an issue in Latin America.

6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)? (Under 'mental' only death threats are included)

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	10000
India	Asia	South Asia	1500
Central African Rep.*	Africa	Middle Africa	1000
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	1000
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	1000
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	1000
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	284
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	250
Iran	Asia	South Asia	240
Angola*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Burkina Faso*	Africa	Western Africa	100
Burundi*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100

Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
El Salvador*	Latin America	Central America	100
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Honduras*	Latin America	Central America	100
Kenya*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	100
NN*			100
NN*			100
Saudi Arabia*	Asia	Western Asia	100
Sudan*	Africa	Northern Africa	100
Uganda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	83
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	78
Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	73
Colombia	Latin America	South America	62
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	62
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	61
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	60
Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	50
Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	47
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	40
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	30
NN			30
Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	29
NN			25
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	23
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	22
Mali	Africa	Western Africa	21
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	21
Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	21
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	19
Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	18
Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	15
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	12
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	12
Chad*	Africa	Middle Africa	10
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	10
Iraq*	Asia	Western Asia	10
Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	10
Kuwait*	Asia	Western Asia	10
Mauritania*	Africa	Western Africa	10
Qatar*	Asia	Western Asia	10
Rwanda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Togo	Africa	Western Africa	10

United Arab Emirates*	Asia	Western Asia	10
Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	3
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	2
Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	1
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1
NN			1
Oman	Asia	Western Asia	1

Per region:

Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	2,553
Middle Africa	2,210
Northern Africa	452
Western Africa	10,266
AFRICA	15,481
Central Asia	159
Eastern Asia	1,100
South Asia	3,150
South-eastern Asia	139
Western Asia	290
ASIA	4,838
Eastern Europe	2
EUROPE	2
Caribbean	12
Central America	323
South America	62
LATIN AMERICA	397

- No total is given for the number of Christians who have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats). The reason is that there are 28 symbolic numbers: 6 times the symbolic 1000, and 14 times the symbolic 100. As such this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- Using symbolic numbers always means a gross underestimation of the reality.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the number for Africa (15,481; 75%) is far higher than the number for Asia (4,838; 23%), although the number for Asia is also substantial.
- The highest number in the list is for Western Africa, where Nigeria took the overwhelming majority. The number for Nigeria is not a symbolic number but was derived from the number of attacks on Christian communities, and related violence. Incidents where Christian communities are attacked, and Christians are killed, often have (in average) twice or three times the number of people (seriously) wounded. In other words, the 10,000 for Nigeria is a conservative number.

- Eastern Africa (2,553), Middle Africa (2,210) and South Asia (3,150) also have relatively high numbers of Christians physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons.

6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?

From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	1000
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000
Nigeria*	Africa	Western Africa	1000
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	1000
Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	525
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	480
Central African Rep.	Africa	Middle Africa	412
Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	100
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	100
Mali*	Africa	Western Africa	100
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	78
Iran	Asia	South Asia	75
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	54
India	Asia	South Asia	45
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	38
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	30
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	17
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15
Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12
Burkina Faso*	Africa	Western Africa	10
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Kenya*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	10
NN*			10
NN*			10
Rwanda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	9
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	5

Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	5
NN			4
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	3
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	3
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	3
Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	3
Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	2
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	2
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	2
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	2
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	2
Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	1
Colombia	Latin America	South America	1
Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	1
Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	1

Per region:

Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	1,203
Middle Africa	1,513
Northern Africa	568
Western Africa	1,124
AFRICA	4,408
Central Asia	4
Eastern Asia	110
South Asia	1,215
South-eastern Asia	93
Western Asia	583
ASIA	2,005
Caribbean	3
Central America	6
South America	1
LATIN AMERICA	10

- No total is given for the number of houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) that were attacked. This is partly due to the use of 16 symbolic numbers, 4 of which are symbolic 1000's.
- Using symbolic numbers always means a gross underestimation of the reality.
- Apart from the use of symbolic numbers, it is extremely difficult to know how many houses (and other property) were destroyed in small-scale and larger attacks by jihadists and other violent religious groups or citizen mobs. As such, this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- This is for example the case in the top 4 of the table: Congo DR, Mozambique, Nigeria and Pakistan. In Nigeria alone the number of houses attacked and vacated because of attacks on (mainly) Christian communities could easily be in the thousands.

- Attacks on houses or other property of Christians in the form of raids on (mainly) Christian communities, also include destruction of harvests and occupation of fields. In other words, deprivation of Christian families from their ancestral lands and livelihoods. This is one of the hidden dimensions of the numbers given in these violence categories.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the number for Africa (4,408; 69%) is more than twice as high as the number for Asia (2,005; 31%).
- Attacks on houses (and other property) of Christians is not typical for the persecution and violence context in Latin America.

6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?
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From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Nigeria*	Africa	Western Africa	1000
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	395
Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Central African Rep.*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
Ethiopia*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Kenya*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	100
Iran	Asia	South Asia	28
Burkina Faso*	Africa	Western Africa	10
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Mali*	Africa	Western Africa	10
Niger*	Africa	Western Africa	10
NN*			10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	6
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	5
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	4
India	Asia	South Asia	4
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	3
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	3
Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	3
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	2
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	2
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	1

Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	1
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	1
NN			1
Oman	Asia	Western Asia	1
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	1
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	1
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	1

Per region:

Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	331
Middle Africa	300
Northern Africa	12
Western Africa	1,030
AFRICA	1,673
Eastern Asia	20
South Asia	137
South-eastern Asia	5
Western Asia	400
ASIA	562
Caribbean	1
Central America	7
LATIN AMERICA	8

- No total is given for the number of shops or businesses of Christians that were attacked. This is partly due to the use of 15 symbolic numbers.
- Using symbolic numbers always means a gross underestimation of the reality.
- Apart from the use of symbolic numbers, it is extremely difficult to know how many shops and businesses were destroyed in small-scale and larger attacks by jihadists and other violent religious groups or citizen mobs. As such, this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- Shops (or businesses) in the context of most of the persecution contexts covered by this overview, are often village stalls selling such products as Nescafé, sugar, biscuits, soap and shampoo in small quantities. Together with houses and other properties, these stalls are robbed and destroyed during attacks.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the number for Africa (1,673; 75%) is around three times as high as the number for Asia (562; 25%).
- Attacks on shops and business of Christians is not typical for the persecution and violence context in Latin America.

6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?
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From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	120,000
Burkina Faso*	Africa	Western Africa	1000
Cameroon*	Africa	Middle Africa	1000
Central African Rep.	Africa	Middle Africa	1000
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	1000
Mali*	Africa	Western Africa	1000
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000
Nigeria*	Africa	Western Africa	1000
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	600
India	Asia	South Asia	422
Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	255
Colombia	Latin America	South America	247
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	200
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	100
Niger	Africa	Western Africa	100
Pakistan*	Asia	South Asia	100
Vietnam*	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	91
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	71
Iran	Asia	South Asia	60
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	56
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	40
Honduras	Latin America	Central America	35
Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	32
NN			25
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	16
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15
Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	13
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	12
NN			12
Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	10
Burundi*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Chad*	Africa	Middle Africa	10
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	10
El Salvador*	Latin America	Central America	10
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10

Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	10
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10
NN			10
South Sudan*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Tunisia*	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
NN			9
Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	6
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	5
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	5
Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	5
Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	4
Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	3
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	3
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	2
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	1

Per region:

Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	1,414
Middle Africa	3,020
Northern Africa	47
Western Africa	3,113
AFRICA	7,594
Central Asia	49
Eastern Asia	20
South Asia	701
South-eastern Asia	120,206
Western Asia	834
ASIA	121,810
Eastern Europe	5
EUROPE	5
Central America	121
South America	247
LATIN AMERICA	368

- No total is given for the number of Christians who have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons. This is partly due to the use of 15 symbolic numbers, 6 of which are symbolic 1000's. As such this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- Using symbolic numbers always means a gross underestimation of the reality.
- In this case the situation is problematic, because the biggest number is from Myanmar in Asia, while all six symbolic 1000's are from countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In reality, several of them could have higher numbers than in Myanmar.

- As for the number of Christians who have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons, the bigger numbers very often concern Christians who became Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for an extended period of time. That period can even be as much as one or more years. It is difficult to count that properly and to know up to what point one should continue counting them. Some will have resettled. That depends on the specific contexts and is not easy to capture in numbers.
- Living as IDPs is a difficult life. Sometimes Christians resettle with family members, or find their way to other parts of the country. At other times, they stay in formal or informal IDP camps. Informal camps are often situated around primary schools but can also be located close to a church or health center. Taking care of one's family is often difficult in such situations. Education, health-care and employment are problematic. Women and girls might be vulnerable to abuse and human trafficking.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the number for Asia (121,810) is much higher than the number for Africa (7,594). However, after statistical adjustment for the highest number in both regions, Asia has 21% (1,810 out of 8,777) and Africa 75% (6,594 out of 8,777).

6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?
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From high to low:

Country	Region	Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10,000
Congo DR (DRC)*	Africa	Middle Africa	1,000
Eritrea*	Africa	Eastern Africa	1,000
Iran*	Asia	South Asia	1,000
Nigeria*	Africa	Western Africa	1,000
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	263
Central African Rep.*	Africa	Middle Africa	100
NN*			100
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	100
Vietnam*	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100
Mali	Africa	Western Africa	40
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	20
Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	20
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	13
Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10
Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
China*	Asia	Eastern Asia	10
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	10
Mozambique*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
NN*			10

Rwanda*	Africa	Eastern Africa	10
Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	8
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	7
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	4
NN			4
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	4
Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	3
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	3
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	2
Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	2
NN			2
Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	2
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	2
Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	2
Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	1
Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	1
Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	1
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	1

Per region:

Sub-region	Number WWL 2021
Eastern Africa	1,034
Middle Africa	1,101
Northern Africa	41
Western Africa	1,043
AFRICA	3,219
Central Asia	3
Eastern Asia	20
South Asia	1,121
South-eastern Asia	10,118
Western Asia	382
ASIA	11,644
Eastern Europe	2
EUROPE	2
Caribbean	4
Central America	16
LATIN AMERICA	20

- No total is given for the number of Christians who have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons. This is partly due to the use of 11 symbolic numbers, 4 of which are symbolic 1000's. As such, this table can only be used to get an idea about the severity of the situation in the different countries.
- Using symbolic numbers always means a gross underestimation of the reality.

- This case is comparable to the case concerning short or longer term IDPs. The biggest number is from Myanmar in Asia, while all 4 symbolic 1000's are from countries in other regions. In reality, several of them could be higher than Myanmar, especially when one considers that refugees from foregoing years are theoretically part of these numbers.
- Living as refugees is equally difficult. Especially when Christians have to stay in refugee camps outside their countries where they might encounter potential persecutors. Outside such formal refugee camps it might be difficult to survive without proper humanitarian help. Even if education and health care are provided, employment is nearly always problematic. As refugees, women and girls might even be more vulnerable to abuse and human trafficking than as IDPs, living outside their home countries, although this depends on the specific context.
- With all this in mind, the comparison between the regions shows that the number for Asia (11,644) is higher than the number for Africa (3,219). However, after statistical adjustment (i.e. taking away the highest number in both regions), Asia has 42% (1,644) and Africa 57% (2,219).

6. Case studies – The reality behind the numbers

NIGERIA - Violent attacks

More details will be given on violence in Nigeria in a special document to be produced soon. There are several countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are confronted with violent actions from jihadist groups and other religiously motivated persecutors. Nigeria is one of them, and a country in which the scale of the problem is big. In that sense, a more detailed description of violence in Nigeria can serve as a mirror for what Christians in other countries have to go through.

Christians and others killed:

WWL collaborated with two Nigerian partner organizations to obtain data on the number of people killed in the WWL 2021 reporting period (1 October 2019 – 30 September 2020). The total number is 5,678 people killed.

The people killed were categorized in 6 ways:

1. Christians killed for their faith by Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen or 'bandits'.
2. Muslims killed; mostly by Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen or 'bandits' (considered 'kafir').
3. People killed by Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen or 'bandits', but religious background not clear (Christians, Muslims or traditional religionists).
4. People killed by diverse perpetrators but not in the context of the violence of Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen or 'bandits'.
5. Security personnel killed (soldiers, police, immigration officers) by Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen or 'bandits'.

6. Members of Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen and 'bandits' killed, mostly by security personnel.

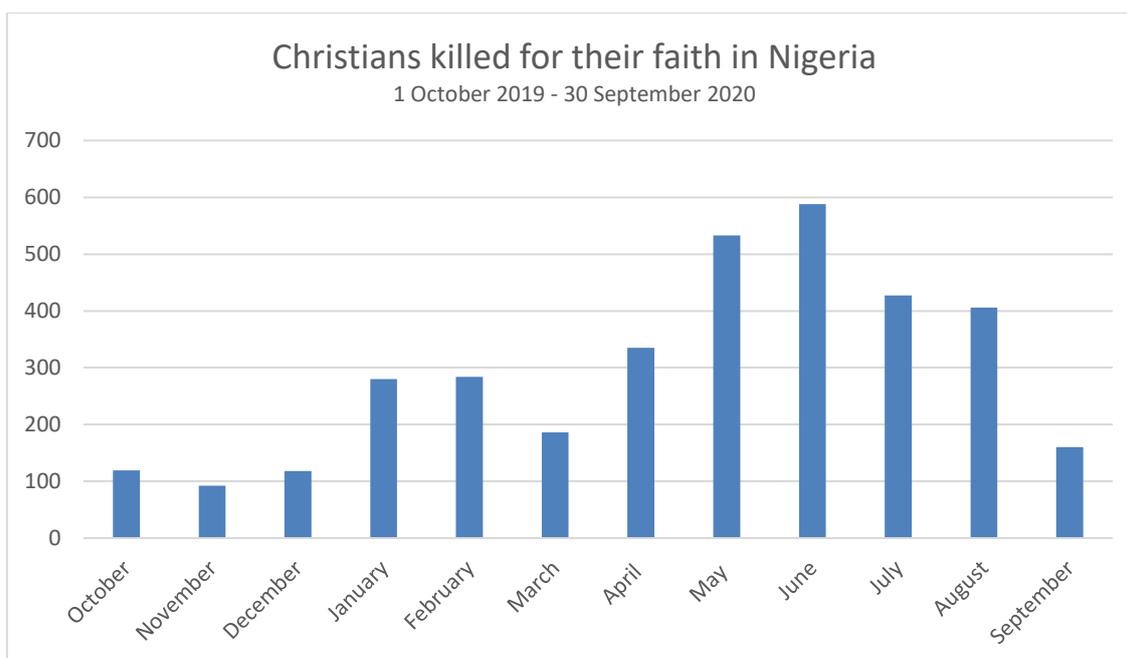
Year	Month	Christians killed	Muslims killed	Killed but religion unclear	Killed but not in the context of Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen or 'bandits'	Killed: Soldiers, police, immigration officers	Killed: Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen, 'bandits'
2019	October	119	15	1	1	32	8
	November	92	26	1	0	21	9
	December	115	20	8	25	2	7
2020	January	270	105	30	4	65	67
	February	277	160	21	3	12	30
	March	175	93	32	13	56	10
	April	305	92	90	9	24	95
	May	530	127	9	20	43	35
	June	583	132	15	105	31	83
	July	402	36	75	16	44	1
	August	381	25	76	40	5	26
	September	154	61	19	9	29	26
	TOTAL	3,403	892	377	245	364	397

To calculate the number of Christians killed, the numbers for "Christians killed" are chosen, with the addition of a third of the numbers for "Killed but religion unclear".

Violence, 'bandits' and COVID-19

The COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria started at the end of March 2020. More than bringing relief, it seems to have facilitated the killing of Christians (and others) by Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herdsmen and 'bandits' (who have links to the same Islamist agenda as the other groups named).

It is important to note that the term 'bandits' (i.e. unidentified gunmen) is being increasingly widely used by national and international media when reporting attacks on Christians (and on Muslims who do not actively buy into the Islamist agenda). The widespread use of this term is causing - in many cases deliberately - the religious-ideological agenda behind many of the attacks to be ignored. This is a typical example of how media are responsible for what can be termed 'persecution eclipse'.



Behind the bare numbers

Behind the bare numbers for the different categories of violence, much lies hidden from view. A husband or son killed leaves the mother and the younger children behind in a state of great vulnerability. A wife or daughter abducted leaves a man only being able to imagine what might be happening to them – such thoughts torment the mind incessantly.

Often the same people or communities are affected by different categories of violence.

When a (mainly) Christian community is attacked, some are killed, others are (seriously) wounded; others are abducted. Often men and boys are killed; women and girls are abducted. Many flee from their houses and fields. Their properties are robbed; their harvests destroyed or possession of their fields is taken over. When they can come back, there is always this fear it will happen again. Some communities are permanently deserted by their Christian inhabitants and occupied by Fulani herdsmen. The overlap between Fulani herdsmen and so-called 'bandits' is considerable. Boko Haram and ISWAP operate slightly differently but the consequences are comparable.

There is always fear. When the night falls, there is always the fear of an attack, and of what might happen to oneself and one's family.

Violence is acted out in different ways. It is not always that (mainly) Christian villages are attacked. But when it is, it is not likely that the assailants want to kill as many members of such villages as possible. If so, they would do it differently. It seems that the creation of an atmosphere of terror is the main goal, plus the possibility to rob other people's possessions. Or the goal might be to simply take over everything those people have for a specific period of time, if not definitively.

Abduction is also increasing. Some are abducted for sexual slavery or forced marriage. Then it is mainly about women and girls. Others are abducted for ransom - often men. Church leaders are popular, probably because they are expected to be able to raise enough money quickly from their congregations or institutions. Abduction has become a successful 'revenue model'.

Many Christians live as IDPs. Some find they can survive and carry on, while others suffer a long time lacking everything. Women and children are particularly vulnerable in such circumstances: Children being vulnerable to health issues, and women and girls to abuse and human trafficking.

CHINA – Churches attacked

More details will be given on these recent events in a special document to be produced in 2021. That document will also include some details about COVID-19 and churches in China.

It is important to consider the recent history of attacks on churches. The number for WWL 2021 may be lower than the number in foregoing years. **However, that number does not stand alone, but adds to what happened in foregoing years. In countries such as China an action against a church is not easily nullified but drags on over years.**

Origins: It started with the “Three rectification and one demolition” campaign at the end of 2013 in Zhejiang province. Reportedly, and never confirmed, a high-ranking party official went to the capital of Zhejiang, Wenzhou, and was taken aback by the forest of crosses he saw everywhere. Zhejiang is a rich coastal province with many Christian businessmen (“boss Christians”). He shared his displeasure and the campaign was set up.

It started in 2014 and took off with the very public demolition of first the cross and then the whole building of Sanjiang church in April 2014.

In the table below, please take note of the Comment column The comments show that the numbers for WWL 2017, WWL 2018 and WWL 2019 were unrealistically low. The reason is the researcher’s constant fear of exaggerating and the need to be as sure as possible about data supplied. It makes sense to draw a dotted line from the WWL 2016 value to the WWL 2020 value. Even then the comments suggest that the numbers given are still (very) conservative.

Year	Numbers	Regions	Comment
WWL 2015	300	Zhejiang	“did not seem to be the beginning of a wider campaign” --- obviously wrong...
WWL 2016	1,500	Zhejiang	
WWL 2017	(symbolic) 10 Brent F suggests 2,000	Zhejiang	
WWL 2018	(symbolic) 10 No further numbers	Zhejiang Incident in Catholic church in Shanxi	For the first time, another province is named.
Year	Numbers	Regions	Comment

WWL 2019	171	Emphasis on Henan	Examples of churches in Beijing and Shanxi; we are sure the number must have been four-digit, too: Reports from 26 provinces* (Anhui, Beijing, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hebei, Henan, Heilongjiang, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Nei Mongol, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanghai, Shanxi, Sichuan, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Zhejiang)
WWL 2020	5,576	Emphasis on Henan	Reports from 24 provinces (Anhui, Beijing, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Nei Mongol, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Tianjin, Yunnan, Xinjiang and Zhejiang)
WWL 2021	3,088	“emphasis on the provinces of Anhui and Jiangsu, but also elsewhere”	Reports from 26 provinces (Anhui, Beijing, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Nei Mongol, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanghai, Shanxi, Sichuan, Tianjin, Yunnan and Zhejiang)

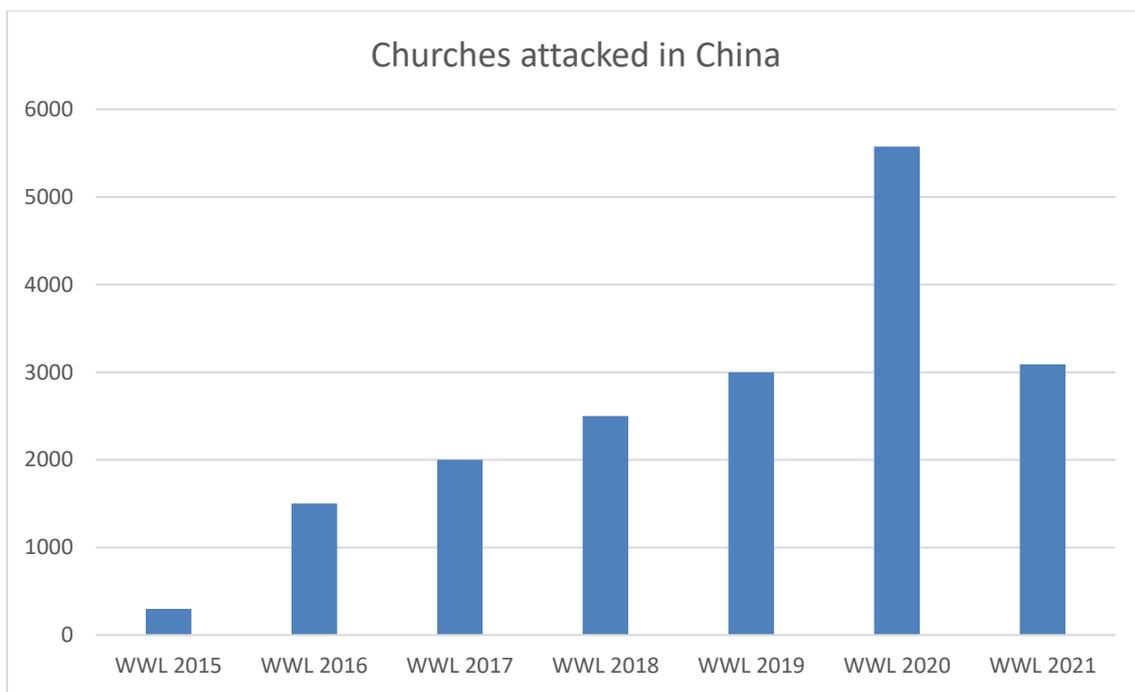
* China has 34 regional units, not all named “province”.

As stated above, the comments in the table above show that the numbers for WWL 2017, WWL 2018 and WWL 2019 were unrealistically low. Realistically, therefore, the situation for China could very well have been the following:

CHINA	Number of churches attacked
WWL 2015	300
WWL 2016	1,500
WWL 2017 ^{1/}	2,000
WWL 2018 ^{1/}	2,500
WWL 2019 ^{1/}	3,000
WWL 2020	5,576
WWL 2021	3,088

^{1/} These numbers are estimations only.

The total of churches attacked would then be close to 18,000. The special document on church attacks in China (to be produced shortly) will suggest this is very likely a conservative estimate.



If one only looks at the number of churches attacked in the WWL 2021 reporting period, 3,000 seems much less in comparison to the 5,576 attacked in WWL 2020. But because church attack in China is cumulative, the 3,000 completes a series of 18,000 church attacks (and very likely even more).

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7. WWL 2021 Article on trends

Five trends shown in World Watch List 2021 (2nd revision 2020-12-16)

The emergency that dominated the globe during the past year — the novel coronavirus — also dominated the countries of the World Watch List and the lives of the Christians who live under pressure within them. These are the trends that shaped the list for 2021:

1. COVID-19 exacerbates existing social, cultural, economic and other structural vulnerabilities 50
2. Violent Islamist militancy exploits COVID-19 restrictions to spread in sub-Saharan Africa 51
3. COVID-19 legitimizes increased surveillance and restrictions by totalitarian and authoritarian govts 52

4. Nationalism driven by majority religious identity rises in countries such as India and Turkey 54

5. COVID-19 helps Central and Latin American organized criminal groups to consolidate their control 56

1. COVID-19 exacerbates existing social, cultural, economic and other structural vulnerabilities

The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated existing social, economic and ethnic vulnerabilities of millions of Christians worldwide. It appears to be a catalyst for often-hidden attitudes of oppression and repression to surface in discriminatory acts or expression, such as online hate speech.

In **India**, of more than 100,000 Christians receiving aid from Open Doors partners, 80% reported to World Watch List researchers that they were dismissed from food distribution points. Some walked miles and hid their Christian identity to get food elsewhere. Another 15% got food aid, but reported discriminations such as lack of daily work from either government, landowners or industry. Pre-pandemic, a government survey (2017-8)² found that unemployment runs deeper among Christians than among other religious groups - so refusal of food aid left whole communities destitute.

It wasn't only in India; in at least **Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Central Asia, Malaysia, North Africa, Yemen and Sudan**, Christians in rural areas were denied aid. At times this was by government officials, more often it was by village heads and committees or others. Some reported food ration cards torn up or waved away.

In southern Kaduna, **Nigeria**, families from several villages said they received one sixth of the rations allocated to Muslim families. In **Guinea-Bissau**, when a state of emergency was imposed, some Christians said Muslim neighbors "complained" to the government about them, while in **Guinea**, one leader said church closures prompted followers of African Traditional religions to mock pastors.

Those who abandon a majority faith to follow Christ know they risk forfeiting all support from their spouses, families, tribes and communities as well as local and national authorities. If they lose income due to COVID-19, they can't fall back on customary networks for survival.

Similarly, COVID-19 affected the livelihood of church leaders. Many are not paid salaries but expect financial support from their communities' donations. When church services stop, donations drop - by about 40%, said leaders ranging from Egypt to Latin America. This also affects humanitarian assistance to their own communities, both inside and outside churches.

² <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/unemployment-rate-among-christian-men-highest-govt/story-BqMtQpHQUNLoqIBxmbiWsO.html>

Some Christians, from areas ranging from sub-Saharan Africa to Latin America, said the pandemic meant there was less pressure to participate in, or contribute to, local rituals and festivals. At the same time, however, most converts said confinement to the home locked them in with those most antagonistic, even extremely hostile, to their beliefs. This domestic vulnerability especially affected minority women and children. For millions, work, education and other outside interests provide respite from scrutiny and attack, as well as from physical, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse at home. Among the Top 10 countries, the number of women reporting psychological violence increased, alongside a loss of contact with fellow believers.

Reports of the kidnapping, forcible conversion and forced marriage of women and girls increased. A typical case is that of devout Egyptian Christian Rania Abdel-Masih, a 39-year-old mother of three daughters, who volunteered for a well-known Christian-Muslim project. After disappearing in April en route to meet her sister, she turned up on Muslim Brotherhood-linked website videos wearing the niqab, saying she'd been a Muslim for 9 years. Looking anxious, she was clearly speaking under duress. Three months later, after media coverage and Coptic Church diplomacy, she was able to return to her family, insisting she'd never converted to Islam.

2. Violent Islamist militancy exploits COVID-19 restrictions to spread in sub-Saharan Africa

In the Sahel region immediately south of the Sahara Desert, Islamist extremism is fueled by injustice and poverty. Jihadists exploit fragile governments' failures; militias spread propaganda, recruitment and attacks. Some groups pledged to wage jihad against the "infidels" because, they say, it was because of them that "Allah punishes us all" with the pandemic.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, the Church faced up to 30% higher levels of violence than last year - unlike other parts of the world, where restrictions and curfews largely meant a drop in violence against Christians. Several hundred Nigerian mostly-Christian villages were either occupied or ransacked by armed Fulani herdsmen; sometimes fields and crops were destroyed in an apparent "scorched earth" strategy.

A UNHCR official³ said that the central Sahel – **Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger** – is the epicenter of the world's fastest-growing displacement and protection crisis. In Burkina Faso, until recently known for its inter-religious harmony, 1 million people - 1 in 20 of the population - are displaced (and millions more hungry) as a result of drought, as well as violence. Conflict prevented Christians in more than 1,000 villages from voting in November's election. Last year Burkina Faso dramatically entered the World Watch List Top 50 for the first time. This year, Islamists continue to target churches (14 killed in one attack, 24 in another). In Mali, Western Christian hostages are still held, and killed.

The devastating impact of COVID-19 helps to convince unemployed youths to exploit ethnic, tribal and religious conflicts over land, resources and politics. Mix in extremist Islamism in failing states where police and security forces do not protect, and there is impunity for violence.

³ Ioli Kimiyaci, UNHCR 20th Oct, 2020 <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/10/5f7d72a04/unhcr-condemns-killing-25-internally-displaced-people-burkina-faso.html>

Trafficking in humans and arms is rife. Human Rights Watch reports that, despite COVID-19 closures, there were more than 85 attacks on education outlets in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger between January and July 2020. Christians reported that lockdown made them “sitting targets,” as security forces appeared to collude with the marauders on motorbikes. As a result, self-defense militias proliferated, even as the jihadist groups splintered⁴.

However, the leader of Nigeria-based Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, continues to build synergies between its factions, extremist Fulani militants and criminal gangs, exploiting failures of governance across northern Nigeria. Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State of West Africa, were responsible for about 400 violent incidents in Cameroon's Far North - a 90% increase on the previous 12 months; 234 of those were against civilians⁵.

In East Africa, Mozambique faces violence by a branch of Islamic State Central Africa Province, popularly called al-Shabaab but different from the Somali group. The Mozambique edition wants to impose Sharia law across the mineral-rich, but least developed northern province bordering Tanzania. Cabo Delgado has since 2017 suffered more than 1,150 deaths in 600 attacks, with more than 300,000 displaced⁶. Here, the group Anwar al Sunna is inspired by the mastermind behind the Nairobi and Dar-as-Salaam US Embassy bombings. It has also already attacked Christian villages across the border in Tanzania, where the autocratic President Magufuli won a landslide election victory in October. Tanzania's population is one-third Muslim, and there was election violence in strongly-Islamic Zanzibar, so observers watch for signs of destabilization, which would greatly affect the Church in East Africa.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** is plagued by its own Islamic State-linked group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Earlier, it sought to overthrow the Ugandan government, but once it was driven into the DRC, it settled in North Kivu Province. Here ADF has almost total control over vast rural areas, where for years it's attacked Christian-run schools and clinics, burned down churches and killed community leaders. A 2020 UN report estimates ADF – which has killed more than 1,000 DRC civilians since the start of 2019 - might have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ethiopia (60% Christian and 34% Muslim) is under pressure from ethno-political groups with religious undertones, and vulnerable to political Islam with powers such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran vying for regional influence (see below).

3. COVID-19 legitimizes increased surveillance and restrictions by totalitarian and authoritarian governments

China maintains it moved decisively to contain COVID-19, but for its 97⁷ million Christians, the cost in heavy restrictions - with the possibility of surveillance reaching into their homes, tracking online and off-line interaction and even scanning their faces into the Public Security database - is high.

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52614579>

⁵ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/boko-haram-violence-against-civilians-spiking-in-northern-cameroon>

⁶ <https://acleddata.com/tag/mozambique/>

⁷ Open Doors' estimate

Of China's estimated 570 million CCTV cameras, millions have advanced facial recognition systems often linked to police stations and local authorities. The country plans to build up a Social Credit System (SCS), which in the end will be able to monitor perceived anti-government activity in the public domain and any dissension from the Communist creed.⁸

Reports from counties in Henan and Jiangxi provinces say such cameras are now in all state-approved religious venues. Many of these cameras are reported to be installed next to standard CCTV cameras, but they link to the Public Security Bureau, meaning artificial intelligence can instantly connect with other government databases.

In February, at the height of the epidemic, the Religious Affairs Bureau of the north-eastern province of Jilin demanded that religious departments across the province investigate house churches.

Encouraged by success in controlling COVID-19, local officials want to link health apps to incorporate social-credit points. As feared, social credits are already, in places, linked to religion.

Communist Party officials in Shanxi, Henan, Jiangxi, Shandong and other provinces have threatened to withdraw social-welfare benefits, including pensions, if Christians refuse to replace Christian imagery such as crosses with pictures of President Xi Jinping. One Christian on welfare apparently reported that officials told him that since he believed in God, he should ask Him for food instead of living off the Communist Party.

Churches that resort to online services are vulnerable to monitoring; even churches affiliated with the government-registered Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council were ordered to stop online services.

"The government monitors people across the country," said the director of a government-approved church in the eastern province of Shandong. In his same city, when a woman took her child into a Three-Self church, captured on CCTV, officials immediately reprimanded the church.

The ban on under-18s from any religious activity has been in force since 2018. The "Sinicization" (or "China-fication") of Christianity was amplified and extended 1 February 2020 by [new rules](#) that govern the organization of religion, selection of leaders and hiring staff⁹.

Increasingly, both Three-Self and unregistered "house-churches" experience the confiscation of property and Christian materials including Bibles, as well as raids, fines and arrests of church leaders.

In late 2020, the Vatican extended by two years a 2018 agreement with the Communist Party. Details are secret but it is believed that it gives the party "the power to appoint Catholic bishops, pending the Pope's final approval". Before the extension, priests in Jiangxi province were forbidden from "engaging in any religious activity in the capacity of clergy", after they refused

⁸ Digital Authoritarianism, China and COVID (lowyinstitute.org); The Global Expansion of AI Surveillance - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Designing Alternatives to China's Repressive Surveillance State - Center for Security and Emerging Technology (georgetown.edu)

⁹ International-LaCroix, 7 February 2020

to join the government-approved Catholic Patriotic Association. They were monitored in their homes. To avoid detection, some underground churches hold Mass only once every six months.

The Bishop of the “underground” Catholic Church in Mindong diocese, long harassed by the authorities, resigned to make way for his government-approved successor, who then promptly led a delegation of 33 priests to learn about the “Sinicization” of religion.

This includes [reinterpreting](#) the Bible guided by Socialist core values¹⁰. In Shandong and increasingly elsewhere, churches must display government-prepared posters with Bible verses illustrating the 12 principles: prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendship.

A registered church reported it was forbidden to re-open after the pandemic because the priest’s sermon, about the heroes of pandemic prevention, had to be pre-approved – it wasn’t.

This so-called “rectifying” of religion has resulted in a twisted re-telling of a New Testament incident, when religious leaders dragged a woman in front of Jesus, before intending to stone her for adultery. He challenged them and they left. But in an official ethics textbook, Jesus waits for her accusers to leave, then stones the woman himself, saying “I too am a sinner. But if the law could only be executed by men without blemish, the law would be dead.”

As China’s global influence spreads its “soft power,” not least via its “Belt and Road Initiative,” China exports its all-pervasive systems for “protection” and “security” - now seen as they control the Uighur population in Xinjiang. Chinese companies, including Huawei, supply AI surveillance technology to 63 countries, some known for human rights violations and targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, including **Myanmar, Laos, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela**.

4. Nationalism driven by majority religious identity rises in countries such as India and Turkey

Amidst a surge of Hindu nationalism, Indian Christians are daily pressured by strident propaganda. A Hindu temple is being built on the site of the Babri mosque - which Hindus insist was built over Lord Ram’s birthplace. Hindu mobs demolished the mosque in 1992 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi made construction of the temple a key election promise. Now in his second term, it’s a huge success for his nationalist support base because the message “To be Indian, you must be Hindu” means mobs continue to attack and harass Christians, as well as Muslims.

Millions who follow these faiths fear that contact-tracing apps such as Aarogya Setu will have “function creep;” another app, already in use, can predict age, gender and race. India’s [data protection bill](#) does not cover surveillance. Indeed, it has provisions to allow the government to bypass protection standards and even consent in circumstances such as national security or crime investigation.

¹⁰ China Scope, 1 January 2020

India also continues to block the flow of foreign funds to many Christian-run hospitals, schools and church organizations.

President Erdogan of **Turkey** likewise has fulfilled the expectations of *his* popular vote over the leading religious site in *his* country. Hagia Sophia, the biggest structure in the world when built as an Orthodox Christian cathedral for Roman Emperor Justinian, was turned into a mosque after the 1453 fall of then-Constantinople to the Turks. The founder of secular Turkey, Atatürk, decreed it should be a museum. But in July, Erdogan persuaded a court to make it a mosque again, strengthening Turkish nationalism. A month later, much less publicized, another UNESCO World Heritage church, Chora - was changed from a museum to a mosque.

Near Turkey's southeast border in January 2020, a Chaldean Christian couple was abducted from their isolated village, whose centuries-long Christian history had been destroyed by Turkish army attacks and Kurdish discrimination. The couple returned to their home a decade ago. Having resisted the authorities' repeated intimidation to leave, they were the last Christians left. The wife's body was found in March; the husband is still missing.

Turkish influence spreads beyond its borders, most notably in its backing of Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia over the largely Christian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. During the conflict, Armenians and Chaldean Christians in the Turkish capital, Ankara, were beaten while others in Istanbul were threatened by right-wing mobs, showing how century-long inter-religious animosity can be stirred up.

In northern **Iraq**, Turkey continues to attack the Kurdistan Workers Party, which it considers a terrorist organization. At least 25 Christian villages have been emptied as a result of such attacks since the beginning of 2020.¹¹ Many Christians, who fled Nineveh Plains and Mosul during Islamic State's control, moved to the Dohuk area only to endure attacks by Turkey. This makes their situation additionally vulnerable. Livelihoods as well as security remain key for Christians who have now returned to the Nineveh Plains.

Turkey's relocation of its refugees from other parts of Syria back into northeast Syria continues to change the demographics of the region. This leaves Kurdish Christian converts from Islam especially vulnerable, as well as the historic faith communities. In October 2019, Turkish air attacks and shelling, as well as attacks by Turkish forces together with mercenary Syrian Islamist groups, forced hundreds of Christians to flee. In 2020, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria said "The Turkey-backed Syrian National Army may have committed war crimes of hostage-taking, cruel treatment, torture and rape" and called on Turkey to halt violations committed by armed groups under its control, including killings, kidnappings, unlawful transfers, seizures of properties and forcible evictions. (Properties of Christians were reported marked with an "N", in the same way as Islamic State did in 2014).

Turkey also has strong geo-strategic interests in **Libya** - not least in its offshore oil and gas – as it's key to regional expansion based on ambitions for a resurgent Ottoman Empire. Turkey is

¹¹ AsiaNews, 15 September 2020

known to support local jihadist factions, as well as for bringing in more than 4,000 Syrian jihadists.

5. COVID-19 helps Central and Latin American organized criminal groups to consolidate their control

In **Mexico**, the fight to contain the coronavirus strains national and local institutions' ability to deal with organized crime; across four regions, narco-trafficking groups imposed their own COVID-19- related curfews. Catholic bishops, priests and Protestant pastors who challenge them can be extorted, ambushed, robbed, shot and even killed. To add insult to injury, many narco-groups build political and social capital by meeting the gap in government services of food, education and jobs. In some provinces such as Guerrero, despite the government ban on religious services during quarantine, criminal groups threatened to kill priests who did not perform them.

In **Colombia**, in several places where guerrillas and paramilitaries control rural areas, Christian pastors were forced to guard the entry and exit points, to prevent virus transmission. This then affected the pastors' credibility with their congregations.

There was a similar pattern in **El Salvador** and **Honduras** (both outside the Top 50 but nevertheless score "high" levels of persecution this year). Here, before the pandemic, illegal groups ruled territories. In El Salvador, groups such as MS13 are known to weaponize rape. This year, there have been reports of the rape of Christian pastors' daughters as a strategy to destroy the families.

Finally, some good news:

Sudan has abolished the death penalty for apostasy (i.e., renouncing Islam). Its new constitution guarantees freedom of religion, omits sharia as its primary source of law and no longer specifies Islam as its state religion - although after 30 years there is still a lot of resistance to such sweeping changes; changing a constitution is easier than changing a cultural mindset. But life for Sudan's 6% Christians is improving, such as when a court found eight church leaders innocent of charges that have hung over them for three years.

Iraq: After surviving the occupation of Mosul by Islamic State militants, a group of young Muslim volunteers have, since 2017, been consistently cleaning up destroyed churches and homes, saying they want to encourage displaced Christians to return and stay, because their history is rooted in that part of the Middle East.

During the period covered (1 Oct 2019 - 30 Sept, 2020), COVID-19 restrictions necessitated adaptations in on-ground data collection. With additional digital tools and experts' research, Open Doors believes the WWL 2021 scoring and analysis maintains its quality and reliability.

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8. WWL 2021: Press release

Global coronavirus pandemic exacerbates systemic discrimination against minority Christians

- **Christians refused coronavirus aid in countries from India to Yemen to West Africa**
- **COVID-19 legitimizes increased surveillance and restrictions by authoritarian governments**
- **Organised criminal groups use the virus as means to extend their control, including over churches**
- **Nationalism driven by majority religious identity rises in countries such as India and Turkey**
- **Ten Nigerian Christians beheaded on Christmas Day, 2019, by Islamic State West Africa Province**

The global coronavirus pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated underlying systemic discrimination, un-equal treatment and even persecution experienced by at least 340 million Christians around the world. That's the conclusion of the 2021 World Watch List, the latest annual survey of countries around the world to monitor how difficult it is to live as a Christian, produced by the global charity Open Doors International. This year, for the first time ever, all top 50 countries score levels of at least "very high" persecution; the top 12 scoring "extreme" levels of persecution, up from 11 the year before.

Beyond the top 50, four more countries also score "very high," showing the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. Overall, **74** countries — one more than the previous year — showed extreme, very high or high levels of persecution, affecting at least 1 of every 8 Christians worldwide.

The List, released today (Jan. 13) based on extensive surveys combined with expert interviews, looks behind the global headlines of unremitting violence in **Nigeria**, as well as of the surveillance systems used in **China** and **India** to monitor citizens for their own "protection" and "security." It also reveals the ways in which organised criminal networks, in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Latin America, consolidate their power in the absence of state systems' capacity to meet local needs for health provision, food, work and other daily essentials. Lack of governance and even collusion of the authorities mean, too often, there's impunity for religiously-based violence or discrimination.

COVID-19 has been a catalyst for repression of minority Christians, who in countries from **Bangladesh**, **India** and **Pakistan** to **Yemen** and **Sudan** were at times denied aid; some were told it was because "your Church or your God should feed you" or even "the virus was created and/or spread by the West."

The violent Islamist group Al Shabaab in **Somalia** blamed Christians for the coronavirus, announcing it was spread "by the crusader forces who have invaded the country and the disbelieving countries that support them."

Sometimes, such as in an incident in **Sri Lanka**, coronavirus was the pretext for police to visit Christians' homes to investigate church members and activities.

In **North Korea**, which tops the list for the 20th year in a row, Kim Yong Un's sister has made her presence felt a little more. In September, she ordered the daily lesson about the Leaders' "Greatness" for all children from nursery age upwards to increase from 30 minutes a day to 90 minutes. In the face of such extensive indoctrination, parents are often too afraid to tell even their own children about their Christian faith.

The main changes in the top 10 countries from WWL 2020 are that **Nigeria** has entered it - for the first time since 2015 - at no. 9, up from no. 12 last year. **Yemen** and **Iran** have both risen one place. **India** stays at no. 10, where it entered the top 10 for the first time in 2020, due to rising Hindu nationalism where 'to be Indian is to be Hindu'.

Nigeria again scores the maximum for violence (as in previous years), due mainly to armed Fulani herdsmen laying waste to several hundred Christian villages, as well as to Boko Haram and a range of criminal groups who continue to kill, kidnap and rape with impunity.

Sudan, however, has abolished the death penalty for apostasy (i.e., renouncing Islam). Its 2019 interim constitution guarantees freedom of religion, omits sharia as its primary source of law and no longer specifies Islam as its state religion - although there is still a lot of resistance to such sweeping changes after 30 years. It has dropped from no. 7 to no. 13.

Iraq has risen from no. 15 to no. 11, partly due to the ongoing insecurity of Christians returning to their homes. Christians continue to be killed, kidnapped and subjected to physical, psychological, sexual and emotional abuse. Also, many who fled inside the country came under Turkish attacks on the Dohuk area in summer 2020.

Syria has dropped one place from no. 11 to 12. Despite better conditions, especially in Kurdish-Controlled Areas, there are still violent Islamist attacks: one in November 2019 killed 7 Christians and wounded 70.

Beyond the top 12's "extreme" score, this year a further 62 countries registered scores indicating "high" or "very high" levels of persecution.

China is in the top 20 for the first time in a decade, rising to no. 17 from no. 23 in 2020. The Communist Party extended its regulation of all religions in 2020, and even government-approved churches, both Catholic and Protestant, are under ever-more surveillance, both online and offline. Under-18s are still officially banned from all religious activity. The "China-fication" of Christianity continues, even including so-called "rectification" of Bible passages.

Mostly there have been few changes since WWL 2020 among the countries ranking 13-50. Here are the main exceptions:

Vietnam has risen to **no. 19** from 21: many ethnic minority Christians reported exclusion from COVID-19 aid.

Turkey has risen to **no. 25** from no. 36 due mainly to an increase of its score for violence. Christians say that, since the 2016 attempted coup against President Erdogan, there's a much more open Islamist and nationalist agenda, with a general atmosphere of "hate speech" and actions against minorities such as Armenian and Greek Orthodox communities. In Oct 2019, Erdogan, as host of the 3rd African Muslim Religious Leaders Summit in Istanbul, criticized

missionaries for converting African Muslims, saying they were acting “under the protection of the Western powers.”

Colombia has risen to **no. 30** from no. 41. After the breakdown of the 2016 peace deal, organized crime groups continue to control parts of the country, especially rural areas. During quarantines, their control grew as they appropriated government curfews and other restrictions for their own ends. They were even able to build local social capital when state structures and institutions could not. When Christian leaders tried to provide material or spiritual assistance to others, they were prevented and even fined by the criminal groups. Sometimes they were treated as "informants" for other rival groups, or for the police and state. At times, pastors or their family members were killed.

Bangladesh has risen to **no. 31** from no. 38. There has been much coverage of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in Cox’s Bazaar. Amongst them are about 2,000 Muslim converts to Christianity. After a mob attack in January, apparently by violent Islamists, two men are still missing, while a 14-year-old girl, also abducted, was reportedly forcibly married to a militant.

Mexico rose again, to **no. 37** (from no. 52 in 2020, though it was no. 39 in 2019).

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** rose to no. 40 (from no. 57 in 2020) mainly due to the Islamist group ADF, which the UN says has killed 1,000 civilians since 2019, while **Mozambique** entered the Top 50 (at no. 45 from last year at no. 66) due to its own Islamist violence in Cabo Delgado. **Cameroon**, battling an Anglophone/Francophone conflict and violent expansion from Boko Haram and other Islamist groups rose to no. 42 from no. 48 in 2020.

The **Comoros** Islands, east of Mozambique, re-entered the Top 50 (from no. 54 last year) after many years’ absence. The government has openly denied freedom of religion for its citizens. A Christian seen preaching can face a year in prison.

Two countries that dropped out of the Top 50, **United Arab Emirates** and **Niger**, nonetheless increased their scores compared to 2020, showing how the levels of discrimination and violence are still mostly rising year by year.

The CEO of Open Doors International, Dan Ole Shani, commented on this year’s World Watch List:

“In a world where the persecution of Christians is relentlessly increasing, not least due to coronavirus restrictions, the good news for such Christians is that they are never alone because of God’s presence with them, prayers for them globally and the heightened advocacy for them by churches, organizations and others who believe in religious freedom.”

During the period covered (1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020), COVID-19 restrictions necessitated adaptations in on-ground data collection. With additional digital tools and experts’ research, Open Doors believes the WWL 2021 scoring and analysis maintain its quality and reliability.

9. WWL 2021: Article on Gender-specific religious persecution (GSRP)

December 2020

A year of massive changes in human behavior, caused by the upheaval of a COVID-19 world, has exacerbated the most intense pressures on minority Christian men and women – economic survival and the security of domestic life respectively – seen in the previous three years. Areas of vulnerability in ‘normal’ times of persecution, the COVID-19 crisis has aggravated them further.

In 2020, job losses and lack of access to food aid, combined with the tensions of intense and prolonged time confined to domestic quarters, have become familiar dynamics for populations around the world – and that’s before adding in the vulnerabilities specific to men and women in a society. Unemployment rates have skyrocketed; subsistence populations report the imminent threat of starvation; sharp rises in national rates of domestic violence and honor killings all testify to the damage of the COVID crisis beyond immediate health risks. In situations of extreme violence in parts of West Africa, especially the well-known conflict in northern Nigeria, lockdown mandates have constrained law-abiding citizens, but not the lawless jihadists. World Watch Research (WWR) estimates that more Christian men and boys were killed at the hands of opportunist jihadists in Nigeria during COVID, not fewer. During such attacks, the women and girls were often abducted for enslavement.

World Watch Research will issue a detailed Gender-specific Religious Persecution (GSRP) report in March 2021. For now, in addition to the general observations above, researchers highlight a more hidden concern as well as some good news points from 2020.

Over 2020, one of the topics of concern receiving extra attention by GSRP researchers and experts is the deliberate targeting of Christians for human trafficking, especially that of women and girls for the sex trade. This exploitative and de-humanizing business is deplorable in all manifestations. However, it becomes even more complex when the religious component is added in and is then compounded by increased COVID-related poverty. In March 2020, WWR reported on the targeting of Christian girls for trafficking into China in countries along that border. This year, we have credible reports from at least one country in every global region under study. The systemic nature of these reports was confirmed in November by a group of experts surveyed by the Religious Liberty Partnership, of whom 90% said that the COVID crisis has impacted trafficking in their region of women in either a significant or moderate increase.

However, there is good news as well. UK Parliamentarian Lord Ahmad, ahead of the FCDO¹² launch of the [Declaration of Humanity by Leaders of Faith and Leaders of Belief](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/declaration-of-humanity-by-leaders-of-faith-and-leaders-of-belief/declaration-of-humanity-by-leaders-of-faith-and-leaders-of-belief)¹³, spoke out

¹² Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

¹³ UK Government Policy Paper, 17 November 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/declaration-of-humanity-by-leaders-of-faith-and-leaders-of-belief/declaration-of-humanity-by-leaders-of-faith-and-leaders-of-belief>

about the importance of recognizing and addressing the specific difficulties experienced by women from religious minority communities:

“We (UK Government) recognize that women and girls from religious minorities can often suffer because of both their gender and their faith. That is why we ensure that our human rights policy work considers the intersectionality of human rights, for example the importance of addressing the specific difficulties experienced by women from religious minority communities.”¹⁴

At a country-specific level, the omission of Sharia as a primary source of law for the interim new Sudanese constitution will potentially reduce avenues of persecution of religious minorities that suffer because of both their gender and their faith.

Open Doors continues to call on governments around the world to recognize the double vulnerability of religious persecution and gender-based inequality, and to enact strategies to address this, such as targeted aid for women in religious minorities. Governments have the opportunity to work with faith-based organizations and actors to ensure that women have equality before the law so that perpetrators of violence against them can no longer act with impunity.

WWR/GSRP/2020-12-09

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10. WWL 2021: COVID-19 and religious persecution: Overview of initial findings

“Both Government and non-state actors have exploited this global health crisis to violate human rights, and in particular the right to freedom of religion or belief ... In countries around the world, many marginalised religious and belief communities have faced intensified discrimination since the outbreak of covid-19.” (UK Member of Parliament Fiona Bruce)¹⁵

COVID-19 has not had an equal impact globally. In many contexts, actors have exploited the pandemic to intensify the oppression of religious minorities. Open Doors’ World Watch Research has conducted a focused, preliminary study into the main impact points in Christians’ lives in those countries where their faith is most costly.

¹⁴ David Alton website, Government issues strong condemnation of forced marriages etc., 9 November 2020, available at: [Government issues a strong condemnation of forced marriages, forced conversions, abductions and abuse of women and girls from religious minorities around the world and the UK's very welcome promotion of a Declaration of Humanity.](#) – David Alton

¹⁵ *Hansard* WH Deb. Vol.684 cols.467WH-4678WH, 26 November 2020, available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-11-26/debates/33E19414-B2EA-4958-AC19-DBF68FFD1F91/Covid-19FreedomOfReligionOrBelief>

Initial findings, confirmed by World Watch List 2021 countries all ranking in either the ‘very high’ or ‘extreme’ levels, point to oppression of Christians being sharply exacerbated by the pandemic. One of the strongest global trends was the scapegoating of Christians,¹⁶ who are often disproportionately blamed for the pandemic and its transmission. This has led to hate speech, both in person and online using social media, and physical attacks. Government officials, community members, and religious extremist groups have all engaged in this. Churches have also been harassed when carrying out relief work in their communities.

‘Scapegoating’

Governments and other powerful actors blaming marginalized faith groups for the spread of COVID-19. This helps to justify increasing controlling and repressive measures against such groups.

Concretely and vitally, Christians are also commonly denied or discriminated against in the distribution of humanitarian aid, food, and water. Actors are commonly local distributors of aid, using the circumstances to deny Christians governmental or NGO aid distributed through regional and local networks.

A new discrimination tactic has been apparent in multiple cases of Christians being exposed to COVID-19 at a disproportionate rate, through work practices and government mechanisms. Christian healthcare professionals (the majority of whom are women) have been deliberately assigned COVID-19 patients, often without adequate PPE. The pandemic has also intensified more common forms of oppression, such as direct attacks on Christians and churches.

Gender-specific manifestations of COVID-related circumstances have resulted from the ripple effects of lockdown and economic crisis. Respondents from diverse global regions indicate that lockdown has resulted in increased levels of domestic violence, as “scattered families are forced to stay at home and some believers are now locked up with their persecutor.” In extreme areas of the Gulf subregion of Asia, nefarious actors are reportedly taking advantage of the situation to abduct, forcibly marry or traffic women and girls: “There are fewer people on the street, which means less protection. The number of disappearing girls and women remains very high.”

On the other hand, the effects of lockdown restrictions and attention being diverted away from Christians and onto the pandemic has, in some places, provided some respite from harassment. However, this has been seen at a lesser rate.

These observations are based upon data collected from a range of sources during 2020. It is limited in its scope, mainly focusing on Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, with more limited data for the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America. There has been some regional variation, which is unpacked below.

¹⁶ See <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/scapegoating-of-religious-minorities-during-covid-19-is-history-repeating-itself/>

Asia: Government actions to contain the pandemic have been used to increase the surveillance of churches and their members, such as in China. Community members in Bhutan and Myanmar have also been encouraged to monitor Christian activity. COVID-19 government regulations have been used to falsely arrest Christians on the pretext of pandemic containment, as in India and Nepal. Cases of disproportionate exposure to COVID-19 were recorded in the Gulf subregion.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Violent Islamic militants are powerful drivers of violence and discrimination in this region. In particular, they have used the restrictions on movement to increase attacks against Christians, as in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali, and Mozambique. Regionally, some disproportionate exposure to COVID-19 has occurred through displacement due to faith-based attacks.

Middle East and North Africa: There are indications that domestic violence was exacerbated by the pandemic in this region. Families were locked in together, often putting those already vulnerable because of their faith at even more risk. Attacks by Islamic State and disproportionate exposure to COVID-19 were also recorded. The latter was seen specifically in prison conditions for prisoners of conscience, especially in Iran.

Latin America: Key actors in this region are criminal groups, with differing treatment of Christians according to context³. Christians in Latin America were targeted through the denial or restriction of healthcare, such as in Bolivia and Cuba. This included being forced to participate in local healing rituals instead of choosing their own healthcare provision. They were also denied or restricted access to health centers and medicines by their own communities because of their faith.

Recommendations

Open Doors calls on governments and international organizations to:

1. Invest on further research and data collection showing how COVID-19 has affected religious minorities; gather comprehensive data sets that will allow to draw conclusions on the correlation between COVID-19 and violations of freedom of religion or belief and to elaborate policies addressing such conclusions;
2. Implement concrete policies and processes to ensure that the vulnerabilities of Christians and other religious minorities are considered in where, how, and to whom international aid is distributed.
3. Include targeted programming and aid for women and girls who face double vulnerabilities as members of religious minorities and Include religion as a factor of vulnerability in any assessment made in planning and programming.

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³ See OLIRE, 2020. Vulnerability of religious communities in Latin America in the context of COVID-19

Uganda

“Muslims in Yumbe, in Northern Uganda, have blamed Christians for causing the coronavirus. They allege that Christians in China burnt the Quran. As a result, Allah is punishing humans with sickness. They have threatened to put to death any person who is first identified to be positive with the coronavirus.”

11. WWL 2021: Religious persecution of children: Overview of initial findings

Globally, children are uniquely vulnerable. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, designed to protect children, is one of the most widely signed and ratified treaties ever. Yet children continue to suffer in the context of broader marginalization of religious minorities. Open Doors' World Watch Research has conducted a preliminary study into how children are targeted for their Christian faith and their association with Christian families and communities.

Children are both directly and indirectly affected by religious discrimination, harassment and intolerance, often in ways that are gender specific and particular to their context. This has a severe impact on their whole lives, along with the immediate and future life of the church.

Initial findings point to children being indirectly impacted through the oppression of parents and relatives. Arrests, widowhood, forced divorce, and denied custody of children all lead to the separation of children from their Christian parents. This is inevitably traumatic for children, but also has long term damaging effects.¹⁸ Discrimination against Christian families and communities also affects children in accessing healthcare and basic supplies, such as food and water.

Restricting the activities of churches and Christian parents leads to discrimination against children being able to explore their faith heritage. They are unable to learn about their faith or be supported and equipped by older Christians. Without access to communal support, children may face the pressures of intolerance or community rejection alone. For example, in China, children under the age of eighteen are forbidden to attend church services or receive any religious education.

Children are directly targeted through social interactions surrounding their education. Bullying from peers and teachers is common. In some contexts, children are denied access to schools and colleges based on their faith. In the most hostile places to Christianity, children are scrutinized at school for any indication of non-state approved religious affiliation, such as in North Korea. In others, they are forced to participate in the teachings and rites of the majority religion. For example, in Yemen, the school curriculum is highly Islamized, and children may be under pressure to perform Islamic prayers.

When adolescents exercise their right to identify as a Christian, they are also at risk of being directly harassed verbally by peers, teachers, community members, and even members of their own family. In India, the growing influence of extremist Hindi nationalism is a key driver of such harassment. This can lead to beatings and sexual assault, the latter being particularly common for girls. Girls are also especially at risk of abduction, commonly for the purposes of trafficking and forced marriage. Boys tend to be more vulnerable to other physical violence.

Registering a child's birth is a common action for parents across the globe. Yet for Christian parents, this act may be fraught with difficulty. They may be forced to register the child under the majority religion. This is discrimination that they undergo on behalf of their children, but

¹⁸ See for example <https://neurosciencenews.com/separation-trauma-9456/>

that the children will be impacted by throughout their life.

Iran

“A house of a Christian family was raided when all the family were home - including a 12-year-old boy and an 8-year-old girl. During the raid, the boy was taken to a separate room - away from the protection of his mother - and he was verbally abused, threatened, and even hit by the agent. The father, mother and 12-year-old were taken to a detention center for interrogation. The terrified daughter was left in the care of neighbors.”

All of the above has an immediate impact on children of Christian communities and the ripples are perceptible throughout those communities and further into the child’s life. For example, when a girl is raped because of her Christian identity, there is the immediate trauma of sexual violence as well as a likely ripple effect of shame associated with her and her family. Furthermore, the long-term ripple effects also extend to her future chances of marriage and employment. Christians may also be trapped in cycles of poverty due to limitations on education and the association of shame and stigma.

This means that churches are targeted through some of their most vulnerable members, those whose survival and growth in that faith community will in large part determine the longevity of that faith community where they currently reside. When children are removed from the church through abduction, family separation,

trafficking, and forced conversion via forced marriage then not only are hearts broken from the loss, but so also is the chain of transmission of the Christian faith. Churches which are denied the opportunity to equip their children, supporting them in their faith, are denied their fundamental right to raise the next generation to become a stable faith community in the future.

These observations are made from a focused study of eighteen countries, using data from WWL 2020 and WWL 2021 research.

Recommendations

- Governments and international organizations should devote resources to further investigate how children are directly and indirectly targeted due to their faith and association with minority religions’ families and communities.
- Governments and international organizations should include religion as a factor of vulnerability in any assessment made in planning and programming targeting vulnerable children and acknowledge how religion intensifies vulnerabilities. Assessments should be gender-specific, accounting for the differing experiences of boys and girls.
- Governments should enact legislation to counter child, early, and forced marriage, ensure such laws are enforced and that perpetrators are not left unpunished.
- Governments and international organizations should strengthen public schools to enact measures to counter discrimination and promote inclusion based on religious affiliation for all children.

12. WWL 2021: Audit Statement from IIRF



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Audit Statement on the outcomes of the Open Doors World Watch List 2021

The results of the Open Doors World Watch List 2021 are accurately presented by World Watch Research (WWR) within the parameters of precision reached in the processing of information. Country dossiers give a thorough, detailed, and differentiated account of the discrimination and persecution of Christians.

In-depth inspection of two sample countries selected by the auditors (bringing the total of countries audited since 2014 to 24) gave evidence that published methodology was diligently applied by WWR staff. Processes and sources were thoroughly documented and have been made transparently available on request. The documentation mechanisms have been improved and mechanisms are pursued that maintain the depth of information.

The scoring accurately reflects the methodology and information processed. The degree of certainty of each country score always depends on the depth and quality of the information received in the reporting period. This may vary from country to country.

The methodology document (April 2020) describes various quality assurance measures by the WWR staff with regard to consistency in application of the questionnaire and methodology. WWR gave credible written description of how these were applied. WWR also provided detailed information about the processing of plausibility checks of the scoring results by internal analysts and by IIRF.

Additional statements, documents or interpretations by Open Doors International or the Open Doors national affiliates based on or associated with the publication of the World Watch List 2021 remain outside the scope of this audit statement.

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

Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo, this 11 January 2021

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