



## World Watch List 2019 Compilation

ALL MAIN DOCUMENTS  
(not including country dossiers)

January 2019



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research Unit

January 2019

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## WWL 2019 Compilation: ALL MAIN DOCUMENTS (not including country dossiers)

This compilation is a collection of the main documentation prepared to accompany the publication of the Open Doors World Watch List 2019 in January 2019. Updated 25-page country dossiers giving in-depth information on the situation of Christians in the countries mentioned are available on the Open Doors Analytical website: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/country-dossiers/>.

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# 1. WWL 2019 Statistics

## 1.1 WWL 2019 Table and scores – Top 50 countries

World Watch List 2019: Top 50 (minor revision: 2018-12-07)													
WWL 2019		1. Private life	2. Family life	3. Community life	4. National life	5. Church life	6. Violence score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2019	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2017	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2016	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2015	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2014
Rank	Country	(Max. score per block is 16.7)											
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.9	94	94	92	92	92	90
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	93	89	88	81	78
3	Somalia	16.3	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.4	8.9	91	91	91	87	90	80
4	Libya	15.3	15.0	15.1	16.0	16.3	9.6	87	86	78	79	76	71
5	Pakistan	14.3	14.1	13.9	15.0	13.2	16.7	87	86	88	87	79	77
6	Sudan	14.7	15.0	14.6	15.6	16.1	10.6	87	87	87	84	80	73
7	Eritrea	14.7	14.9	15.8	16.0	15.2	9.4	86	86	82	89	79	72
8	Yemen	16.6	16.3	16.4	16.7	16.7	3.1	86	85	85	78	73	74
9	Iran	14.0	14.3	14.3	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	83	80	77
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	14.8	13.2	15.2	83	81	73	68	62	55
11	Syria	13.6	14.0	13.1	13.8	14.2	13.0	82	76	86	87	83	79
12	Nigeria	12.3	11.8	13.4	12.9	12.9	16.7	80	77	78	78	78	70
13	Iraq	13.9	14.4	14.1	14.6	13.6	8.1	79	86	86	90	86	78
14	Maldives	15.2	15.5	13.5	15.9	16.7	1.1	78	78	76	76	78	77
15	Saudi Arabia	15.1	13.6	14.0	15.3	16.5	2.4	77	79	76	76	77	78
16	Egypt	11.7	13.2	10.7	13.2	11.0	15.9	76	70	65	64	61	61
17	Uzbekistan	15.4	12.9	13.9	12.3	15.9	3.1	74	73	71	70	69	68
18	Myanmar	11.4	11.8	13.3	12.1	11.8	11.1	71	65	62	62	60	59
19	Laos	13.0	9.1	14.2	14.7	14.9	4.6	71	67	64	58	58	62
20	Vietnam	12.7	8.2	12.7	13.5	14.2	9.1	70	69	71	66	68	65
21	Central Africa Republic	10.2	9.7	11.9	10.6	11.1	16.1	70	61	58	59	67	67
22	Algeria	13.1	14.2	10.1	11.8	12.7	7.6	70	58	58	56	55	54
23	Turkmenistan	14.6	10.8	13.8	13.3	15.1	1.3	69	68	67	66	63	62
24	Mali	11.4	10.1	11.5	9.2	9.9	15.4	68	59	59	55	52	54
25	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	12.2	13.0	13.3	0.6	67	57	55	(not in Top 50)	50	51
26	Turkey	12.4	11.1	10.7	13.2	10.9	7.2	66	62	57	55	52	(not in Top 50)
27	China	10.4	8.0	10.3	11.8	14.5	10.0	65	57	57	57	57	51
28	Ethiopia	10.0	10.0	10.3	10.8	10.4	13.5	65	62	64	67	61	65
29	Tajikistan	13.8	11.9	11.6	12.1	12.9	2.4	65	65	58	58	50	47
30	Indonesia	10.6	11.1	11.3	10.2	9.3	12.0	65	59	55	55	50	46
31	Jordan	13.0	13.1	11.8	11.5	12.2	3.0	65	66	63	59	56	56
32	Nepal	12.4	11.4	10.6	10.9	11.9	7.0	64	64	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)
33	Bhutan	12.9	11.1	12.3	12.4	14.0	0.9	64	62	61	56	56	54
34	Kazakhstan	13.2	10.8	10.3	12.2	13.5	3.1	63	63	56	55	51	49
35	Morocco	12.2	13.3	9.6	12.0	14.4	1.5	63	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	47
36	Brunei	13.4	14.3	10.5	10.3	13.4	0.7	63	64	64	61	58	57
37	Tunisia	12.1	13.2	10.7	11.2	12.0	3.3	63	62	61	58	55	55
38	Qatar	13.0	12.6	10.3	11.0	14.1	1.1	62	63	66	65	64	63
39	Mexico	8.3	7.5	12.2	10.2	9.7	13.5	61	59	57	56	55	(not in Top 50)
40	Kenya	11.7	10.6	10.1	8.3	11.5	8.3	61	62	68	68	63	48
41	Russian Federation	12.5	8.4	10.7	10.4	12.0	5.7	60	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)	(not in Top 50)
42	Malaysia	11.8	14.2	12.1	11.7	8.6	1.5	60	65	60	58	55	49
43	Kuwait	13.2	12.2	10.1	10.5	12.2	1.5	60	61	57	56	49	50
44	Oman	12.9	12.5	9.8	9.6	12.8	1.7	59	57	53	53	55	56
45	United Arab Emirates	12.8	12.0	9.1	10.5	12.2	1.9	58	58	55	55	49	51
46	Sri Lanka	11.0	8.3	10.5	11.5	10.0	7.0	58	57	55	(not in Top 50)	51	55
47	Colombia	7.9	7.6	11.8	9.4	8.5	12.6	58	56	53	55	55	56
48	Bangladesh	11.0	9.1	11.6	10.5	7.8	7.8	58	58	63	57	51	46
49	Palestinian Territories	11.4	12.3	9.0	10.6	11.8	2.4	57	60	64	62	58	53
50	Azerbaijan	13.2	9.9	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	(not in Top 50)	57	50	(not in Top 50)

## 1.2 WWL 2019 Table and scores – Persecution Watch Countries

World Watch List 2019: Persecution watch countries (PWC) - Countries scoring 41 points or more, but not reaching the Top 50									
WWL 2019		1. Private life	2. Family life	3. Community life	4. National life	5. Church life	6. Violence score	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2019	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018
Rank	Country	(Max. score per block is 16.7)							
51	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.4	56	56
52	Kyrgyzstan	12.7	9.9	10.9	9.2	11.9	1.9	56	54
53	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56
54	Congo DR (DRC)	5.6	6.7	9.3	7.4	10.3	16.1	55	(Below 41 points)
55	Bahrain	11.9	12.2	8.6	10.2	10.2	1.5	55	57
56	Cameroon	9.9	7.3	10.0	7.8	7.5	11.3	54	(Below 41 points)
57	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.8	4.8	52	53
58	Niger	11.5	9.7	8.1	8.1	10.0	4.8	52	45
59	Cuba	8.8	4.4	9.1	10.5	11.8	3.9	49	49
60	Chad	11.5	8.2	9.0	8.0	8.7	3.0	48	(Below 41 points)
61	Burkina Faso	9.0	8.0	8.8	6.6	7.9	7.2	48	(Below 41 points)
62	Uganda	11.4	8.0	7.7	6.9	9.6	3.7	47	46
63	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.0	46	(Below 41 points)
64	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.5	5.8	8.0	15.0	44	(Below 41 points)
65	Mozambique	6.7	4.3	6.0	6.9	6.0	13.3	43	(Below 41 points)
66	Gambia	7.7	8.2	8.2	8.3	8.8	1.9	43	(Below 41 points)
67	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.7	8.2	5.5	6.4	4.3	43	(Below 41 points)
68	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	3.3	43	(Below 41 points)
69	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.1	8.7	10.4	6.1	42	(Below 41 points)
70	Togo	8.8	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	2.0	42	(Below 41 points)
71	Venezuela	3.3	3.8	10.5	9.0	8.8	5.9	41	(Below 41 points)
72	Nicaragua	2.4	3.6	6.4	8.9	7.9	11.9	41	(Below 41 points)
73	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	6.7	41	(Below 41 points)

### 1.3 Country Religious Statistics – WWL 2019 Top 50 and Persecution Watch Countries<sup>1</sup>

World Watch List 2019: Religious statistics for Top 50 countries						
Rank	Country	Region	Sub-region	Total population (UN figure as compiled by WCD; accessed January 2018, mid-2018 estimations)	Number of Christians (WCD, accessed January 2018, mid-2018 estimations; or OD estimate)	Indication if OD estimate used instead of WCD data
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	25,611,000	300,000	OD estimate
2	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	36,373,000	thousands	OD estimate
3	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	15,182,000	a few hundreds	OD estimate
4	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	6,471,000	37,900	
5	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	200,814,000	3,981,000	
6	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	41,512,000	1,910,000	
7	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	5,188,000	2,474,000	
8	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	28,915,000	a few thousands	OD estimate
9	Iran	Asia	South Asia	82,012,000	800,000	OD estimate
10	India	Asia	South Asia	1,354,052,000	65,061,000	
11	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	18,284,000	814,000	
12	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	195,875,000	91,122,000	
13	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	39,340,000	225,000	
14	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	444,000	a few thousands	OD estimate
15	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	33,554,000	1,419,000	
16	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	99,376,000	9,937,600	OD estimate
17	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	32,365,000	349,000	
18	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	53,856,000	4,342,000	
19	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	6,961,000	225,000	
20	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	96,491,000	8,555,000	
21	Central Africa Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	4,737,000	3,456,000	
22	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	42,008,000	125,000	
23	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	5,851,000	69,800	
24	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	19,108,000	425,000	
25	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	4,540,000	10,100	
26	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	81,917,000	194,000	
27	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	1,415,046,000	97,200,000	OD estimate
28	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	107,535,000	64,037,000	
29	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	9,107,000	61,700	
30	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	266,795,000	32,379,000	
31	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	9,904,000	130,000	
32	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	29,624,000	1,225,000	
33	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	817,000	30,000	OD estimate
34	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	18,404,000	4,576,000	
35	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	36,192,000	31,400	
36	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	434,000	57,400	
37	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	11,659,000	23,700	
38	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	2,695,000	220,000	
39	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	130,759,000	125,347,000	
40	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	50,951,000	41,650,000	
41	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	143,965,000	118,127,000	
42	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	32,042,000	2,946,000	
43	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	4,197,000	436,000	
44	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	4,830,000	198,000	
45	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	9,542,000	1,226,000	
46	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	20,950,000	1,962,000	
47	Colombia	Latin America	South America	49,465,000	46,955,000	
48	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	166,368,000	869,000	
49	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	5,053,000	46,600	
50	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	9,924,000	321,000	

World Watch List 2019: Religious statistics for Persecution Watch Countries						
Rank	Country	Region	Sub-region	Total population (UN figure as compiled by WCD; accessed January 2018, mid-2018 estimations)	Number of Christians (WCD, accessed January 2018, mid-2018 estimations; or OD estimate)	Indication if OD estimate instead of WCD data
51	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	832,000	4,300	
52	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	6,133,000	299,000	
53	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	971,000	11,300	
54	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	84,005,000	80,052,000	
55	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	1,567,000	192,000	
56	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	24,678,000	14,969,000	
57	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	59,091,000	33,251,000	
58	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	22,311,000	72,500	
59	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	11,489,000	7,038,000	
60	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	15,353,000	5,434,000	
61	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	19,752,000	4,937,000	
62	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	44,271,000	37,493,000	
63	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	13,053,000	472,000	
64	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	12,919,000	7,934,000	
65	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	30,529,000	16,510,000	
66	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	2,164,000	96,600	
67	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	24,906,000	8,583,000	
68	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	11,216,000	10,515,000	
69	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	30,774,000	29,004,000	
70	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	7,991,000	3,816,000	
71	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	32,381,000	29,889,000	
72	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	6,285,000	5,964,000	
73	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	12,501,000	11,478,000	

<sup>1</sup> Sources: 1) WCD: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018) and 2) OD: Open Doors estimate.

## 1.4 Ranking for Pressure experienced by Christians

World Watch List 2019: SQUEEZE TOP 10 (based on Top 50 countries only)										
WWL 2019 Rank	Country	Region	Subregion	1. Private life	2. Family life	3. Community life	4. National life	5. Church life	TOTAL SQUEEZE	Squeeze ranking
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	1
2	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	2
8	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	16.6	16.3	16.4	16.7	16.7	82.6	3
3	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	16.3	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.4	82.3	4
4	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15.3	15.0	15.1	16.0	16.3	77.7	5
14	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	15.2	15.5	13.5	15.9	16.7	76.8	6
7	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	14.7	14.9	15.8	16.0	15.2	76.6	7
6	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	14.7	15.0	14.6	15.6	16.1	76.0	8
9	Iran	Asia	South Asia	14.0	14.3	14.3	15.8	16.5	74.8	9
15	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	15.1	13.6	14.0	15.3	16.5	74.5	10
13	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	13.9	14.4	14.1	14.6	13.6	70.6	
5	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	14.3	14.1	13.9	15.0	13.2	70.5	
17	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	15.4	12.9	13.9	12.3	15.9	70.4	
11	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	13.6	14.0	13.1	13.8	14.2	68.8	
23	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.6	10.8	13.8	13.3	15.1	67.6	
10	India	Asia	South Asia	12.9	13.0	13.5	14.8	13.2	67.5	
25	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	13.9	14.0	12.2	13.0	13.3	66.4	
19	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13.0	9.1	14.2	14.7	14.9	65.9	
12	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	12.3	11.8	13.4	12.9	12.9	63.3	
33	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	12.9	11.1	12.3	12.4	14.0	62.7	
29	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	13.8	11.9	11.6	12.1	12.9	62.2	
22	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	13.1	14.2	10.1	11.8	12.7	62.0	
36	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	13.4	14.3	10.5	10.3	13.4	61.9	
31	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	13.0	13.1	11.8	11.5	12.2	61.6	
35	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	12.2	13.3	9.6	12.0	14.4	61.5	
20	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.7	8.2	12.7	13.5	14.2	61.4	
38	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	13.0	12.6	10.3	11.0	14.1	61.0	
18	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.4	11.8	13.3	12.1	11.8	60.3	
34	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	13.2	10.8	10.3	12.2	13.5	60.1	
16	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	11.7	13.2	10.7	13.2	11.0	59.8	
37	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	12.1	13.2	10.7	11.2	12.0	59.2	
42	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.8	14.2	12.1	11.7	8.6	58.4	
43	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	12.2	10.1	10.5	12.2	58.3	
26	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	12.4	11.1	10.7	13.2	10.9	58.3	
44	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	12.9	12.5	9.8	9.6	12.8	57.6	
32	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	12.4	11.4	10.6	10.9	11.9	57.2	
45	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	12.8	12.0	9.1	10.5	12.2	56.6	
50	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	9.9	9.3	11.1	12.4	56.0	
49	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	11.4	12.3	9.0	10.6	11.8	55.1	
27	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10.4	8.0	10.3	11.8	14.5	55.0	
41	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	12.5	8.4	10.7	10.4	12.0	54.1	
21	Central Africa Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	10.2	9.7	11.9	10.6	11.1	53.6	
30	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10.6	11.1	11.3	10.2	9.3	52.5	
40	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	11.7	10.6	10.1	8.3	11.5	52.2	
24	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	11.4	10.1	11.5	9.2	9.9	52.2	
28	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	10.0	10.0	10.3	10.8	10.4	51.5	
46	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	11.0	8.3	10.5	11.5	10.0	51.3	
48	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	11.0	9.1	11.6	10.5	7.8	50.0	
39	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	8.3	7.5	12.2	10.2	9.7	48.0	
47	Colombia	Latin America	South America	7.9	7.6	11.8	9.4	8.5	45.2	

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## 1.5 Ranking for Violence against Christians

World Watch List 2019: SMASH TOP 10 (based on Top 50 countries only)					
WWL 2019 Rank	Country	Region	Subregion	6. Violence score / SMASH	Smash ranking
12	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	16.7	1
5	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	16.7	2
21	Central Africa Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	16.1	3
16	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	15.9	4
24	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	15.4	5
10	India	Asia	South Asia	15.2	6
28	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	13.5	7
39	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	13.5	8
11	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	13.0	9
47	Colombia	Latin America	South America	12.6	10
30	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.0	
18	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.1	
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	10.9	
2	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	10.6	
6	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10.6	
9	Iran	Asia	South Asia	10.4	
27	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10.0	
4	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	9.6	
7	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.4	
20	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	9.1	
3	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.9	
40	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.3	
13	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	8.1	
48	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	7.8	
22	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	7.6	
26	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	7.2	
32	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	7.0	
46	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	7.0	
41	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	5.7	
19	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	4.6	
37	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	3.3	
8	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	3.1	
17	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	3.1	
34	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	3.1	
31	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	3.0	
15	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	2.4	
29	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	2.4	
49	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	2.4	
45	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	1.9	
44	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	1.7	
35	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	1.5	
42	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1.5	
43	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	1.5	
50	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	1.5	
23	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	1.3	
14	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	1.1	
38	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	1.1	
33	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	0.9	
36	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	0.7	
25	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	0.6	

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## 1.6 The total number of persecuted Christians<sup>2</sup>

### WWL 2019: Total number of persecuted Christians “Over 245 Million”

1. The number of Christians experiencing “high” levels of persecution, is estimated for all Top 50 countries. It comes to 245 million (see detailed level 2 table in Appendix). Countries that have 41 points or more but have not entered the Top 50, are not included. If included, it would add another 35 million. To be able to use a single number and still recognize there is persecution outside the WWL 2019 Top 50 too, OD communicators should best use the phrase **“over 245 million”**.

So please use either of the two following options for WWL 2019 communication to the general public:

**“245 million Christians in the WWL 2019 Top 50 experience ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

Or:

**“Over 245 million Christians in the world experience ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

2. In the WWL-Methodology, “high” levels of persecution occur when the score-range is 41 to 60 points. Above this there are two other categories: “very high (61-80pts)” and “extreme (81-100pts).” Based on the WWL-questionnaire, the level of persecution was estimated for regions within a given country. If this estimate came within the range of “high” and above, the Christian population in that region was counted, especially when all categories of Christianity were deemed to be affected one way or another.

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

**Do not take out the qualifier “high”.** This is crucial, since there are other definitions of persecution that would give a much higher figure.

3. In case questions regarding the breakdown of persecuted Christians per country are asked, or your office sees the need to address this issue, **it should be pointed out politely that it is not possible to provide a public version of the breakdown of the numbers of persecuted Christians per country,**

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<sup>2</sup> There is an appendix for this document showing a statistical breakdown per country. However, it contains sensitive information and is not available for publication. Details can be obtained on request.

as this is highly sensitive information that could be used by persecuting governments/agents to persecute the church even more.

APPENDIX:

A table showing the breakdown per country of the 245 million persecuted Christians in the WWL 2019 Top 50 countries has been prepared for Open Doors internal use only. [Return to Contents \(page 1\)](#)

## 1.7 Statements concerning the number of persecuted Christians

### WWL 2019: Statements concerning the number of persecuted Christians in the world - the “OVER 245 Million” number

1. As stated in the [WWL 2019 Total number of persecuted Christians](#) document, there are TWO options for Development communication:

**“245 million Christians in the WWL 2019 Top 50 experience ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

Or:

**“Over 245 million Christians in the world experience ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

This document now focuses on the second option: OVER 245 million in the world. **Pleased never take out the qualifier “high”.** (For the definition of this qualifier see the [“WWL 2019 Total number of persecuted Christians”](#) document.) This is crucial, since there are other definitions of persecution that would give a much higher figure.

2. Statements can now be derived from this overall number of persecuted Christians. The basis for these statements is the following table:

Region	Total no. of Christians	No. of persecuted Christians in the region	1 in x Christians persecuted
AFRICA	631,582,000	110,484,730	6
ASIA	403,157,000	139,962,916	3
EUROPE	571,448,000	2,362,540	242
LATIN AMERICA	601,226,000	28,964,940	21
NORTHERN AMERICA	276,597,000	0	
OCEANIA	29,406,000	0	
<b>TOTAL TOP 50 + PWCs</b>	<b>2,513,416,000</b>	<b>281,775,126</b>	<b>9</b>

3. These are the statements (which include the number of persecuted Christians in the Persecution Watch countries):

**“One in every 9 Christians experiences ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

(In WWL 2018, this was 1/11.5 or 1/12)

And:

**“In Africa one in every 6 Christians experiences ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

(WWL 2018: 1/7.5 or 1/8)

**“In Asia one in every 3 Christians experiences ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

(WWL 2018: 1/3.5 or 1/4)

**“In Latin America one in every 21 Christians experiences ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith.”**

(WWL 2018: 1/30)

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## 1.8 Explaining the rise in the total number of persecuted Christians

### WWL 2019: Explaining the rise in the total number of persecuted Christians

This document aims to answer to the question: **“Why is the total number of persecuted Christians higher in WWL 2019 than in WWL 2018?”**

In the WWL 2019 reporting period, Open Doors has estimated that there are over 245 million Christians in the world experiencing high levels of persecution. Here are reasons why there has been an increase from the number 215 million published in WWL 2018:

#### **1. Worldwide:**

The number of countries where Christians are highly persecuted has increased. In WWL 2018 there were only 8 Persecution Watch Countries, in WWL 2019 there are 23.

#### **2. China:**

The situation for Christians in China, which has around 100 million Christians, has deteriorated considerably. In the WWL 2018 reporting period, persecution was still focused on certain provinces

(Xinjiang, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiansu, Henan). However, there are now reports of pressure and violence coming from almost every region of the country.

### 3. Nigeria:

Nigeria is another country where an increasing number of Christians have been experiencing high levels of persecution. Millions of Christians have been affected in the WWL 2019 reporting period by the intensification of the ethnic-religious violence in the Middle Belt, and its appearance even in some southern states.

### 4. Mexico:

Christians and church leaders in more regions of Mexico than ever before have been experiencing pressure and violence from criminal gangs and networks.

### 5. In addition:

There have been increases in the number of Christians experiencing high levels of persecution in the Russian Federation, Egypt, Indonesia, Colombia and India.

## 2. Focus on violence against Christians<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 WWL 2019 Violence article – Part 1

#### Data on violence experienced by Christians worldwide in the reporting period 1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018

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<sup>3</sup> Please note: No data on North Korea is included in the tables on violence.

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## Introduction

This document gives a detailed overview of the data gathered on violence in the WWL 2019 reporting period and makes a comparison with the WWL 2018 reporting period. It forms Part 1 of the WWL 2019 Violence Article:

- Part 1 lists the data entered for Block 6 questions 6.1, 6.2 and a combination of 6.3 and 6.4 combined in the WWL questionnaire.

6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned

- Part 2 will give brief explanations for the highest scoring countries per question (marked yellow in the tables below).
- Part 3 depends upon the needs of OD-Development. If required, it can present data on some of the other questions related to violence in Block 6 of the WWL questionnaire.

The sets of data on violence below are organized according to:

- (1) WWL 2019 Top 50
- (2) Persecution Watch Countries (ranks 51 to 73 in WWL 2019).

However, this does not cover the whole world. To cover the whole world the following data needs to be added:

- (3) European countries observed by the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (Vienna, Austria). This data is not included in this Part 1 document.
- (4) Rest of the World. This data is not included in this Part 1 document. If Development has a clear need, it can be added.

The data given is based wherever possible on direct counting. In some cases, when it is very hard to know exact numbers and it is clear from indirect sources that there have been violent incidents against Christians, numbers are estimated. In such cases, WWR has always estimated conservatively.

Where the number given has an \*, the number is understood to be symbolic, meaning that the real number of incidents is much higher. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 etc.) is given. In cases where it is clear that 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 a minimum figure.

This overview does not pretend to be complete. The exact details of what is happening to Christians in a country are difficult to obtain, especially where there is war or where there is no Open Doors presence. It was decided not to give detailed numbers for North Korea.

## Section 1: Summary of data from WWL 2019 Top 50 and Persecution Watch Countries

### Top 50 (Ranks 1 – 50)

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2019 Top 50: Number of Christians killed	WWL 2018 Top 50: Number of Christians killed
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	4,136	2,782
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	1,266	622
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned	2,625	1,760

### Persecution Watch Countries (Ranks 51 -73)

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2019 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed	WWL 2018 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	147	247
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	201	33
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced & imprisoned	502	140

## Section 2: Detailed data from WWL 2019 Top 50

The following tables list the countries with the highest levels of violence at the top. Those countries marked yellow are discussed in more detail in the Part 2 document (as explained above).

## Violence Block Question 6.1 – Christians killed for their faith

Top 50 countries	2019	2018
Nigeria	3,731	2,000
Central African Republic	146	500
Somalia	50	23
Ethiopia	31	3
Pakistan	28	15
Kenya	20	39
Indonesia	18	1
Egypt	17	128
Mexico	15	8
Mali	14*	1
Syria	14	0
Afghanistan	10*	21
Libya	10*	10
India	10	8
Colombia	7	5
Russian Federation	6	0
Iraq	5	3
Myanmar	3	3
Bangladesh	1	4
Sudan	0	3
Turkey	0	3
Eritrea	0	1
Kyrgyzstan	0	1
Laos	0	1
Vietnam	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.1</b>	<b>4,136</b>	<b>2,782</b>

## Violence Block Question 6.2 – Churches and other Christian buildings attacked

Top 50 countries	2019	2018
Nigeria	569	22
China	171*	10
Myanmar	100*	2
India	98	34
Mexico	40	6
Pakistan	28*	168
Colombia	26	32



Egypt	25	7
Central African Republic	22	157
Ethiopia	20	19
Iran	20	17
Indonesia	19	19
Vietnam	18	6
Mali	13	13
Sudan	10*	25
Sri Lanka	10	10
Turkey	10*	10
Algeria	10	2
Eritrea	9	8
Nepal	7	4
Syria	7	1
Bangladesh	6	8
Iraq	3	10
Jordan	3	4
Kazakhstan	3	2
Kenya	3	0
Laos	3	0
Libya	2	3
Malaysia	2	3
Russian Federation	2	1
Yemen	2	0
Tajikistan	1	5
Bhutan	1	2
Palestinian Territories	1	1
Afghanistan	1	0
Mauritania	1	0
Somalia	0	4
Saudi Arabia	0	3
Azerbaijan	0	2
Oman	0	1
Tunisia	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.2</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>622</b>

### Violence Blocks Questions 6.3 and 6.4 – Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced/imprisoned

Top 50 countries	2019	2018
China	1,131*	134
Eritrea	370	375
India	207	635
Vietnam	186	25
Myanmar	154*	19
Nigeria	116*	14
Iran	67	69
Sudan	63	20
Pakistan	56	110
Uzbekistan	40	25
Laos	30	25
Nepal	25	7
Colombia	17	6
Egypt	17*	1
Bangladesh	16	3
Iraq	14	3
Kazakhstan	11	25
Tajikistan	11	5
Central African Republic	10*	83
Afghanistan	10*	37
Mexico	10	10
Mali	10*	0
Turkmenistan	7	6
Azerbaijan	5	26
Saudi Arabia	5	13
Yemen	5	1
Ethiopia	4	32
Tunisia	4	16
Libya	4	6
Maldives	4	4
Indonesia	4	2
Russian Federation	4	0
Turkey	3	4
Oman	2	10
Morocco	2	0

Kenya	1	0
Algeria	0	2
Jordan	0	2
Malaysia	0	2
Somalia	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.3 and 6.4</b>	<b>2,625</b>	<b>1,760</b>

### Section 3: Detailed data from WWL 2019 Persecution Watch Countries

The following tables list the countries with the highest levels of violence at the top. Those countries marked yellow are discussed in more detail in the Part 2 document (as explained above).

#### Violence Block Question 6.1- Christians killed for their faith

Persecution Watch Countries	2019	2018
Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	43	136
Mozambique	42	0
South Sudan	30*	0
Cameroon	18*	100
Burkina Faso	10	0
Uganda	2	2
Guinea	1	4
Venezuela	1	1
Chad	0	3
Lebanon	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.1</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>247</b>

#### Violence Block Question 6.2 – Churches and other Christian buildings attacked

Persecution Watch Countries	2019	2018
Rwanda	100*	0
South Sudan	20	0
Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	16	10
Nicaragua	15	0
Angola	10*	3
Cuba	10*	1
Venezuela	8	6
Burundi	5	0

Niger	5	0
Cameroon	3*	1
Tanzania	2	5
Ivory Coast	2	2
Guinea	2	0
Uganda	1	2
Kyrgyzstan	1	1
Gambia	1	0
Chad	0	2
<b>TOTAL 6.2</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>33</b>

Violence Blocks Questions 6.3 and 6.4 – Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced/imprisoned

<b>Persecution Watch Countries</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	216	0
South Sudan	200	0
Cuba	34	124
Ivory Coast	17*	1
Burundi	10*	0
Rwanda	10*	0
Nicaragua	5	0
Cameroon	4	10
Venezuela	3	0
Comoros	2	1
Bahrain	1	0
Uganda	0	2
Kyrgyzstan	0	1
Tanzania	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.3 and 6.4</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>140</b>

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## 2.2 WWL 2019 Violence article – Part 2

### Data on violence experienced by Christians worldwide in the reporting period 1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018

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## Introduction

This Part 2 of the WWL 2019 Violence article gives a detailed overview of the data gathered on violence in the WWL 2019 reporting period. It makes a comparison with the WWL 2018 reporting period of the data entered for Block 6 questions 6.1, 6.2 and a combination of 6.3 and 6.4 combined in the WWL questionnaire. In Sections 2-5, brief explanations are given for the highest scoring countries per question (highlighted yellow). The Block 6 questions mentioned above are:

6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned

The sets of data on violence below are organized according to:

- (1) WWL 2019 Top 50
- (2) Persecution Watch Countries (ranks 51 to 73 in WWL 2019)
- (3) European countries observed by the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (Vienna, Austria).
- (4) Rest of the World, as observed by the WWL 2019 process.

The data given is based wherever possible on direct counting. In some cases, when it is very hard to know exact numbers and it is clear from indirect sources that there have been violent incidents against Christians, numbers are estimated. In such cases, WWR has always estimated conservatively.

Where the number given has an \*, the number is understood to be symbolic, meaning that the real number of incidents is much higher. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 etc.) is given. In cases where it is clear that 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 a minimum figure.

This overview does not pretend to be complete. The exact details of what is happening to Christians in a country are difficult to obtain, especially where there is war or where there is no Open Doors presence. It was decided not to give detailed numbers for North Korea.

## Section 1: Summary of data from WWL 2019 Top 50, Persecution Watch Countries, Observatory Europe and Rest of World

All sources together (including foregoing years):

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

Different components of these totals:

Top 50 (Ranks 1 – 50)

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2019 Top 50: Number of Christians killed	WWL 2018 Top 50: Number of Christians killed
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	4,136	2,782
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	1,266	622
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned	2,625	1,760

Persecution Watch Countries (Ranks 51 -73)

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2019 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed	WWL 2018 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	147	247
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	201	33
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced & imprisoned	502	140

## Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (Vienna, Austria)

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2019 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed	WWL 2018 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	6	2
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	184	100
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced & imprisoned	0	0

## Rest of the world (through WWL 2019 process)

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2019 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed	WWL 2018 Persecution Watch Countries: Number of Christians killed
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	16	36
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	196	37
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced & imprisoned	23	5

## Section 2: Detailed data from WWL 2019 Top 50

The following Violence Block 6 tables list the countries with the highest levels of violence at the top. As explained above, the countries marked yellow are discussed in more detail in the paragraphs below each table.

### Violence Block Question 6.1 – Christians killed for their faith

Top 50 countries	2019	2018
Nigeria	3,731	2,000
Central African Republic	146	500
Somalia	50	23
Ethiopia	31	3
Pakistan	28	15
Kenya	20	39
Indonesia	18	1



Egypt	17	128
Mexico	15	8
Mali	14*	1
Syria	14	0
Afghanistan	10*	21
Libya	10*	10
India	10	8
Colombia	7	5
Russian Federation	6	0
Iraq	5	3
Myanmar	3	3
Bangladesh	1	4
Sudan	0	3
Turkey	0	3
Eritrea	0	1
Kyrgyzstan	0	1
Laos	0	1
Vietnam	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.1</b>	<b>4,136</b>	<b>2,782</b>

**Nigeria:** The number is based on different sources: Data from a Nigerian research institute, data from Open Doors' network in Nigeria, and data from the British NGO, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust. The data covers 15 Nigerian states. Much of the killings of Christians happened in the Nigeria Middle Belt states. The perpetrators were in nearly all cases Muslim Fulani herdsmen. Some reprisal attacks were recorded too. In the reporting period of the WWL 2019 (1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018) Plateau State had the worst record. On 4 July, the Nigerian House of Representatives declared killings in Plateau State to be genocide.

State in Nigeria	Number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons
Adamawa	384
Benue	333
Borno	9
Cross River	1
Edo	8
Ekiti	2
Enugu	71
Kaduna	313
Kano	2
Kogi	101

Nasarawa	405
Oyo	2
Plateau	1885
Southern	8
Taraba	207
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3731</b>

**Central African Republic:** In November 2017, the 3R killed 50 Christians in Bocaranga (27 on first day, and others later). Recent attacks in Bambari and in September 2018 in Bria killed at least 14. In Tagbara, it was reported that 21 were killed. They had encircled the Church and shot people and then burnt down the church. Two pastors were killed. One of them was told to leave his church but he stayed. Eight Christians were killed in Kouango, among them a pastor who was going from church to church for Christmas preparations. In Paoua, 12 Christians were killed.

Bangui was shattered when armed men from the predominantly Muslim neighborhood of PK5 stormed a church during a Roman Catholic service, killing 17 including a prominent priest. Retaliatory attacks on the PK5 neighborhood led to further deaths: Officially 24 people were killed and 170 others were injured. Two mosques were torched and many people saw their property looted and set on fire, on 1 May 2018.

A church elder was among six aid workers killed in an ambush in the Central African Republic. The six were traveling to a northern town to do work when their vehicle was attacked. Armed rebels assassinated the vicar general of the Diocese of Bambari in the Central African Republic amid fears of a flare-up of violence. In May 2018, 15 Christians in the Notre Dame de Fatima church in Bangui, including another priest, were killed by gunmen who opened fire inside the church. "Filled with panic, some Christians began to flee until bullets and grenades began to fall in the parish grounds, trapping those who remained in the compound," described one of the priests who survived.

**Somalia:** Somali Christians face faith-related violence from family, clan, authorities, and militias. On numerous occasions al-Shabaab has expressed in word and actions that it targets Christians both in Somalia and neighboring countries. In the interests of security, no examples can currently be published. (The number given is for victims in Somalia alone).

**Ethiopia:** Despite the fact that an evangelical Christian is now prime minister and despite the fact that there are hopes of change in the country, many Christians have been attacked by Islamic groups because of their faith. In the Ogaden region, one of the nine regional states in the country, at least 29 Christians (including Orthodox priests) were killed in August 2018 and many churches were ransacked and burnt to the ground. Two additional killings of Christians complete the 31.

**Pakistan:** On 17 December 2017, a suicide attack against the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in Quetta, claimed the lives of 11 Christians and wounded scores more. Christians continue to be killed due to blasphemy accusations, but also due to their neglected status. An example of the latter is how two

Christian sewage workers died in Bahawalnagar, Punjab, on 23 May 2018. Another one had already died in January 2018.

### Violence Block Question 6.2 – Churches and other Christian buildings attacked

Top 50 countries	2019	2018
Nigeria	569	22
China	171*	10
Myanmar	100*	2
India	98	34
Mexico	40	6
Pakistan	28*	168
Colombia	26	32
Egypt	25	7
Central African Republic	22	157
Ethiopia	20	19
Iran	20	17
Indonesia	19	19
Vietnam	18	6
Mali	13	13
Sudan	10*	25
Sri Lanka	10	10
Turkey	10*	10
Algeria	10	2
Eritrea	9	8
Nepal	7	4
Syria	7	1
Bangladesh	6	8
Iraq	3	10
Jordan	3	4
Kazakhstan	3	2
Kenya	3	0
Laos	3	0
Libya	2	3
Malaysia	2	3
Russian Federation	2	1
Yemen	2	0
Tajikistan	1	5
Bhutan	1	2
Palestinian Territories	1	1
Afghanistan	1	0

Mauritania	1	0
Somalia	0	4
Saudi Arabia	0	3
Azerbaijan	0	2
Oman	0	1
Tunisia	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.2</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>622</b>

**Nigeria:** The exact number of churches and other Christian buildings attacked is very difficult to know. Given the degree of devastation in the different Nigerian Middle Belt states, the number is likely to be much higher. The number presented (569) is based on information from Nasarawa State where, in the first six months of 2018, 539 churches were destroyed. Data was added to that figure from Plateau State:

- Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas, 23-25 June 2018, 12 churches destroyed
- Bokokos Local Government Area, 17 March 2018, 9 churches destroyed
- Bassa Local Government Area, September 2017- October 2018, 9 Churches destroyed.

**China:** The number of 171 has to be understood as an absolute minimum, most likely the number of destroyed and closed churches is several factors higher. There were many incidents (similar to the anti-cross campaign in Zhejiang from 2014 to 2016) of crosses on the outside of church buildings being destroyed, both those of TSPM and house churches alike. There were also many cases of landlords being put under pressure by the authorities to cancel renting contracts with churches. Two widely published cases were the harassment and closure of Zion house-church network in Beijing and the Golden Lampstand house-church in Shanxi. Other high-profile cases followed outside the reporting period of WWL 2019.

**Myanmar:** In September 2018, the Communist insurgent group "United Wa State Army" (UWSA), which controls parts of Eastern Shan State, closed all churches built after 1992 – at least 62. According to another report in July 2018, the Burmese army destroyed more than 60 churches in the last 18 months. Among them were Catholic and Protestant churches and schools as well.

**India:** In the reporting period, there have been attacks against Christian churches in at least 98 cases from all over India.

**Mexico:** Violence in Mexico is worsening and Christians are a frequent target for attacks. They are much easier to identify from the rest of the population – for instance, it is known in which church they regularly meet etc.; the risk of attack is greater for pastors and priests. Indeed, Mexico has the worst reputation in Latin America for the assassination of Roman Catholic priests by criminal groups. There were also violent incidents against Christians in the south of the country (Chiapas), who did not follow the religious practices of the indigenous communities.

### Violence Blocks Questions 6.3 and 6.4 – Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced/imprisoned

Top 50 countries	2019	2018
China	1,131*	134
Eritrea	370	375
India	207	635
Vietnam	186	25
Myanmar	154*	19
Nigeria	116*	14
Iran	67	69
Sudan	63	20
Pakistan	56	110
Uzbekistan	40	25
Laos	30	25
Nepal	25	7
Colombia	17	6
Egypt	17*	1
Bangladesh	16	3
Iraq	14	3
Kazakhstan	11	25
Tajikistan	11	5
Central African Republic	10*	83
Afghanistan	10*	37
Mexico	10	10
Mali	10*	0
Turkmenistan	7	6
Azerbaijan	5	26
Saudi Arabia	5	13
Yemen	5	1
Ethiopia	4	32
Tunisia	4	16
Libya	4	6
Maldives	4	4
Indonesia	4	2
Russian Federation	4	2
Turkey	3	4
Oman	2	10
Morocco	2	0
Kenya	1	0

Algeria	0	2
Jordan	0	2
Malaysia	0	2
Somalia	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.3 and 6.4</b>	<b>2,625</b>	<b>1,760</b>

**China:** Many attacks against churches went hand in hand with Christian leaders being detained (and later arrested) and with Christians being attacked and beaten. Such incidents took place in several provinces with an emphasis on Henan, a populous province with a sizeable Christian minority, but went far beyond its borders. Attacks were perpetrated most often by members of security forces or the United Front Workers Department, but sometimes locally hired mobs were the perpetrators as well.

**Eritrea:** In the WWL 2019 reporting period, government security forces have continued to conduct numerous raids on Christians and house-churches and have arrested hundreds of Christians. These Christians are being held by the government in miserable conditions, some in shipping containers in scorching temperatures. This is despite the reported release of some 30 Christians in July 2018.

**India:** It is very normal in India that church leaders are detained and later sentenced on flimsy charges. About 200 Christians were detained in India, while 7 Christians from Kandhamal were sentenced to life imprisonment.

**Vietnam:** In 2018, Vietnam sentenced and jailed a number of Catholic activists, bloggers and Protestant pastors, often for allegedly attempting to "[overthrow the government](#)". Many other Christians were arrested as well, especially those from a tribal background.

**Myanmar:** In September 2018, the Communist insurgent group "United Wa State Army" (UWSA), which controls parts of Eastern Shan State, detained more than 100 pastors, church leaders and Bible school students. The Myanmar Army, the Tatmadaw, detained more Christians.

### Section 3: Detailed data from WWL 2019 Persecution Watch Countries

The following tables list the countries with the highest levels of violence at the top. Those countries marked yellow are then discussed in more detail (as explained above).

## Violence Block Question 6.1- Christians killed for their faith

Persecution Watch Countries	2019	2018
Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	43*	136
Mozambique	42	0
South Sudan	30*	0
Cameroon	18*	100
Burkina Faso	10*	0
Uganda	2	2
Guinea	1	4
Venezuela	1	1
Chad	0	3
Lebanon	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.1</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>247</b>

**Congo (Democratic Republic of the):** The Islamist Allied Democratic Forces-National Association for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) killed many Christians. Other criminal groups added to that number, since anyone speaking against them, is killed. At least 8 were killed by the security forces during protests by Catholic activists against the regime.

**Mozambique:** An Islamic militant group known as al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah has taken responsibility for the attacks in the northern part of the country in the WWL 2019 reporting period which caused the deaths of more than 40 Christians. Christians with a Muslim background are the most affected groups in this development.

**South Sudan:** The two major armed groups in the civil war are the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Sudan People Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO). They are responsible for numerous killings, some of them targeting Christians who have spoken out against child soldiering, injustice, corruption and other fundamental values and principles.

**Cameroon:** The Islamic militant Boko Haram group in the northern part of the country targeted Christians. For example, on 3 May 2018 alone, 13 Christians were killed in a church-attack in the village of Minawao.

**Burkina Faso:** The number 10 is really a “symbolic” number. Activities by such groups as Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Islamic State West Africa (ISWA), Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Murabitoun, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram are targeting Christians and have killed several in attacks.

## Violence Block Question 6.2 – Churches and other Christian buildings attacked

Persecution Watch Countries	2019	2018
Rwanda	100*	0
South Sudan	20*	0
Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	16	10
Nicaragua	15	0
Angola	10*	3
Cuba	10*	1
Venezuela	8	6
Burundi	5	0
Niger	5	0
Cameroon	3	1
Tanzania	2	5
Ivory Coast	2	2
Guinea	2	0
Uganda	1	2
Kyrgyzstan	1	1
Gambia	1	0
Chad	0	2
<b>TOTAL 6.2</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>33</b>

**Rwanda:** Rwandan Christians have suffered much with the recent decision by the government to close down hundreds, if not thousands of churches in the country. In Kigali alone many churches were forced to close (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43301517>). The government claimed that the closures were due to issues of public safety and noise pollution. Non-traditional church groups have been most affected by this decision. Church leaders believe that their churches were targeted because they did not support the government's agenda.

**South Sudan:** There were multiple attacks on churches because some armed groups accused them of supporting other armed or tribal groups. 20 is therefore an absolute minimum number.

**Congo (Democratic Republic of the):** The ADF-NALU is responsible for the persecution of Christians in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country. This group has violently attacked Christians and churches. For example, in Butembo a church and Catholic school were looted during an attack launched by ADF-NALU in January 2018. Furthermore, due to the public role of the Roman Catholic Church in trying to help resolve the national crisis, churches have been subjected to attacks by militants affiliated to the government.



**Nicaragua:** Church leaders who have tried to help the general population have been threatened, suffered administrative sanctions and faced violent attacks from regime supporters. Church buildings have also been damaged and many Christians arrested as 'enemies of the regime'.

**Angola:** The government has not recognized any new churches since 2004 and has put more than 1000 unregistered churches on notice to close down or face severe legal consequences. Several have been closed or abandoned.

### Violence Blocks Questions 6.3 and 6.4 – Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced/imprisoned

Persecution Watch Countries	2019	2018
Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	216	0
South Sudan	200	0
Cuba	34	124
Burundi	20*	0
Rwanda	10*	0
Ivory Coast	7	1
Nicaragua	5	0
Cameroon	4	10
Venezuela	3	0
Comoros	2	1
Bahrain	1	0
Uganda	0	2
Kyrgyzstan	0	1
Tanzania	0	1
<b>TOTAL 6.3 and 6.4</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>140</b>

**Congo (Democratic Republic of the):** This number is mainly due to the series of demonstrations. The government arrested several hundred Catholic protestors who opposed the ruling of President Kabila (apart from killing at least 8). They were protesting against injustice, driven by their faith (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/23/congo-steps-up-deadly-crackdown-after-more-protests-against-kabila>).

**South Sudan:** In November 2017 about 150 of those arrested were members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Tonj State. According to reports, the army and local police arrested and physically mistreated this group for six days before releasing them without charge.

**Cuba:** 34 Christians have been arrested due to their public criticism of government policy. Best known, but by far not alone, are the so-called “Ladies in white”.

**Burundi:** Arrests of government critics [pastors and priests] is common in Burundi.

**Rwanda:** The government has arrested numerous Christian leaders, framing them for conducting illegal meetings to defy and obstruct church closures. For example, in March 2018 6 Pentecostal preachers were arrested for protesting suspension of their church. Even though the government claimed to arrest these church leaders on legitimate ground, church leaders believe that the arrests were illegal, and that they were targeted because they did not support the government's agenda.

## Section 4: Detailed data from the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (Vienna, Austria)

The following tables list the countries with the highest levels of violence at the top. Those countries marked yellow are then discussed in more detail.

### Violence Block Question 6.1- Christians killed for their faith

	2019	2018
Greece	4	0
France	1	0
Germany	1	2
	6	2

**Greece:** Four Iranian men were attacked and stabbed for their faith after being discovered as Christian converts in an unofficial refugee camp in Athens. The International Society for Human Rights (IGFM) states that there are annually up to five unsolved deaths, including apparent suicides and unsolved accidents, whose real background are the killings of converts through their Muslim families.

**France:** In August 2018, an assailant shouting 'Allahu akbar' killed a Christian passer-by in a knife attack that also wounded four others in the heart of Paris.

**Germany:** On 22 February 2018, in a religiously motivated attack, the head of the Catholic French-speaking community was murdered in his office. He was stabbed in the head with the spike of an umbrella.

### Violence Block Question 6.2 – Churches and other Christian buildings attacked

	2019	2018
France	54	41
Germany	44	2
Spain	28	30
Italy	27	2

United Kingdom	12	2
Poland	4	1
Belgium	4	4
Sweden	3	2
Switzerland	3	3
Austria	2	9
Finland	2	0
Greece	1	1
Luxembourg	0	1
Netherlands	0	2
	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>

**France:** In the reporting period, 54 church buildings were attacked through vandalism, theft, fire, and desecration. The attacks took place in numerous churches all over France; in the center, northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest of the country.

**Germany:** Forty-Four churches witnessed arson, closing due to repeated vandalism, throwing of stones against brickwork and windows, and property damage for faith-related reasons.

**Spain:** Acts of vandalism, desecration, and robbery of churches by secularist perpetrators were the main causes of violence against 28 churches in Spain.

**Italy:** In the WWL 2019 reporting period, 27 church buildings in Italy were vandalized, robbed or set on fire.

**United Kingdom:** Twelve churches were vandalized.

Violence Blocks Questions 6.3 and 6.4 – Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced/imprisoned

None

## Section 5: Detailed data for the Rest of the World

The following tables list the countries with the highest levels of violence at the top. Those countries marked yellow are then discussed in more detail.

### Violence Block Question 6.1- Christians killed for their faith

	2019	2018
Honduras	6	1
Philippines	4	33
El Savador	4	0
Guatemala	1	1
Brazil	1	0
Lebanon	0	1
	16	36

**Honduras:** Six pastors were killed by criminal groups. Targeted were especially those who tried to help members leave such groups or offer an alternative way of life for young people.

**Philippines:** Four pastors in different parts of the country were killed, most of them by unknown gunmen.

**El Salvador:** Three pastors and a priest were killed by criminal groups. Like in Honduras (and several other Latin American countries), they were targeted were because they tried to help members to leave such groups or offer an alternative way of life for young people and ignored death-threats.

### Violence Block Question 6.2 – Churches and other Christian buildings attacked

	2019	2018
Dominican Republic	56	0
Bosnia and Hercegovina	32	0
Chile	22	15
Brazil	18	0
United States of America	17	0
Peru	7	2
Australia	6	0
Argentina	6	0
Canada	5	0
El Salvador	5	0
Guatemala	5	0
Honduras	3	1

Ukraine	3	0
Israel	2	4
Uruguay	2	1
Bolivia	2	0
New Zealand	2	0
Lebanon	1	3
Philippines	1	2
Ecuador	1	0
Kosovo	0	6
Senegal	0	2
Macedonia	0	1
	<b>196</b>	<b>37</b>

**Dominican Republic:** A total of 56 Catholic and Protestant churches and church-owned buildings were vandalized over the WWL 2019 reporting period.

**Bosnia and Hercegovina:** The reports on this type of incident are published by the national authorities. The information contains the account of 32 cases of damage to religious sites. On 4 November 2017, unknown perpetrators damaged several gravestones in the Serbian Orthodox cemetery in Sarajevo's eastern suburb of Brijesce. On 6 November 2017, one of the main Orthodox churches in Sarajevo, in the Pofalici neighborhood, was robbed in the middle of the day by a man and woman who also remain unidentified.

**Chile:** According to reports obtained concerning the smashing of windows, damage to religious statues and cases of arson, 22 church buildings were attacked in the reporting period.

**Brazil:** According to reports obtained concerning the smashing of windows, damage to religious statues and cases of arson, 18 church buildings were attacked in the reporting period. The attacks took place during the electoral period in particular. This was caused by religious intolerance in the country targeting Christians known to support candidates representing the Christian values of many churches.

**United States of America:** According to reports obtained concerning the smashing of windows and damage to religious statues, 17 church buildings were attacked in the reporting period, causing church activities to be interrupted.

## Violence Blocks Questions 6.3 and 6.4 – Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced/imprisoned

	2019	2018
Belarus	9	3
Ukraine	5	0
Lebanon	4	2
Philippines	4	0
Brazil	1	0
	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>

**Belarus:** In November 2017, at least nine Christians in total were taken for questioning to a police station and briefly detained.

**Ukraine:** In June 2018, a church service of the Baptist Union Church in Molodogvardeisk was raided and the pastor and four church members detained and interrogated.

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### 2.3 Gender specific violence

## WWL 2019: Gender-specific violence used in persecution of global Christian community

Authors: Elizabeth Miller and Helene Fisher

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### Introduction

In the five worst of the 2019 World Watch List’s 50 most difficult places to be a Christian (N. Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and Pakistan), human rights vulnerabilities which are linked to men and women’s social status are creating space for harsh religious persecution. In contexts which restrict women’s legal rights to equal representation, minority Christian communities are especially vulnerable to

having their women and girls sexually attacked, forcibly married, subjected to domestic abuse, stripped of their inheritance or even killed - all with impunity.

### Sexual violence used as a means of power and control against Christian women

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief noted in his August 2013 report that “Discrimination based on stereotypical roles of men and women is one of the most widespread human rights violations worldwide. It can assume cruel forms and deprives many women and girls of their rights to life, freedom and respect for human dignity”<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, “Gender stereotypes and stereotypical pictures of believers often exist in tandem, a problem disproportionately affecting women from religious minorities”<sup>5</sup>. World Watch List (WWL) analysts on Afghanistan record concurring evidence: “Women found to be married to new converts from Islam and sharing their husbands’ Christian faith, are punished by being raped. The same with children of converts who are at risk of child abuse.”<sup>6</sup>

Revealingly, the results for the worst five 2019 WWL countries (North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and Pakistan) all display a characteristic division, where women suffer more than men from the use of sexual violence as a means of power and control over their free exercise of Christian faith.

Indeed, analysts on Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and Pakistan have all noted the role of each country’s social or state understanding and implementation of Sharia (Islamic) Law in creating an imbalance of human rights vulnerabilities which is prejudicial for women and girls. The most consistent of these vulnerabilities is the relative impunity with which women and girls can be attacked, either because their testimony is thought to carry half the weight of a man’s or because the requirements to prosecute sexual crimes are, in practice, unattainable.

In a recent ground-breaking Human Rights Watch report, women in North Korea report that “unwanted sexual contact and violence is so common that it has come to be accepted as part of ordinary life”<sup>7</sup>. WWL researchers also similarly noted the use of sexual violence is a means of persecution to which Christian women and girls are particularly subject in North Korea.

Reports from Pakistan illustrate the compound effects of the inter-sectional discrimination of minority religion and gender inequality on future generations of vulnerable Christian girls: “Due to stories of abduction and seduction of Christian girls, most lower-middle class and working class families are apprehensive [about] sending their girls for higher education and into the job market. This further prevents them from being educated and limits their independence and ability to be economically independent.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A.68.290.pdf> , p.10-11

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A.68.290.pdf> , p.5

<sup>6</sup> Open Doors World Watch List analyst, internal documentation, November 2018.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/11/01/you-cry-night-dont-know-why/sexual-violence-against-women-north-korea>

<sup>8</sup> Open Doors World Watch List analyst, internal documentation, November 2018.

## Severe physical violence and socio-economic ostracism facing Christian men strains communities

Although there are the legal and associated social vulnerabilities unique to women of such countries, persecution targeting minority Christian men and boys in the five worst 2019 WWL countries is characterized by severe physical violence and socio-economic ostracism. Analysis of the situations in Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and Pakistan exposes the use of physical violence, including torture and death, against minority Christian men after their faith is discovered.

Furthermore, “male Christians are more prone to social discrimination since they spend more time [than women] in public life.”<sup>9</sup> This observation was made in the context where Christian men operate outside the home and “must find alternative sources of income in order to not engage in religious practices [such as Islamic prayers several times a day] taking place in the market place.”<sup>10</sup> This socio-economic attack strains the sustainability of minority communities.

In militant contexts or contexts with a stark class difference, persecution of men might also include sexual harassment and abuse. This might include “Being forced to demonstrate physically whether or not they are circumcised with everyone in their [college] class or work place coming to check”<sup>11</sup> or the fact that “Boys are particularly vulnerable in a (militia) culture where young men can be sexually abused by powerful men.”<sup>12</sup>

## Repression of ‘the one’ equals the vulnerability of ‘the whole’

The most significant unifying point of the targeting of both men and women - in all 50 of the WWL 2019 most difficult countries - is that the pain and damage of an attack on an individual Christian has a ripple-effect on those around them.

One analyst describes the most basic level: “When girls and women are persecuted, their children are traumatized and the family unit is damaged. It easily leads of generational trauma.” An analyst for Somalia gives an expansive explanation regarding men: “When the men are killed, most times the family is left unprotected, labelled ‘kaffirs’, the property is confiscated and the widow is left at the mercy of the dead man's family [or] forced to marry a Muslim man. Many are taken advantage of by male relatives, and young daughters married off [to Muslims]. The family many times ends up impoverished. The church also suffers greatly when the men are persecuted or killed because most of the other men opt to go into deeper hiding thereby damaging fellowships.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Open Doors World Watch List analyst, internal documentation, November 2018.



Contexts with restricted human rights that reinforce gender stereotypes are ripe with vulnerabilities which can be exploited to maximum effect against minority believers.

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### 3. Overview and analysis

#### 3.1 Press release – short version

##### WWL 2019 PRESS RELEASE / Short version (revised 2018-12-24)

##### From China to sub-Saharan Africa, Christians experience high levels of persecution in 73 countries

New laws in China and Vietnam seek to control all expression of religion. In China, it's the worst it's been in more than a decade; some even say since the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976.

In the north and Middle Belt of Nigeria, at least 3,700 Christians were killed for their faith - almost double the number of a year ago (an estimated 2,000) - with villages completely abandoned by Christians forced to flee, as their armed attackers then move in to settle, with impunity.

Nationalistic governments such as India and Myanmar continue to deny freedom of religion for their sizeable Christian minorities, sending the very clear message that to be Indian, one must be Hindu, or to be Burmese one must embrace Buddhism.

Extreme persecution also comes at the hands of radical Islamic militias, such as in Egypt - where the Islamic State in Sinai vowed in 2017 to 'wipe out' the Coptic Church – as well as in Libya and many other sub-Saharan countries. South-east Asia has seen suicide bombers in Indonesia attack three churches in one day.

In Mexico and Colombia, persecution mainly comes when church leaders challenge corruption and cartels.

But, globally, it also comes from family and friends, from fellow-villagers and work colleagues, from community councils and local government officials and from police and legal systems. Christian women and girls face more persecution pressure in family and social spheres; men and boys are more likely to experience the brunt of pressure from the authorities or militias.

In its latest annual survey of 150 countries monitoring how difficult it is to live as a Christian, the overall trend in the 2019 World Watch List is that almost half (73) showed extreme, very high or high levels of persecution. A year earlier, it was 58 countries.

The List, produced by global charity Open Doors International and based on extensive surveys from internal and external experts, peers behind the global headlines of cases such as Pakistani Asia Bibi and Protestant pastor Andrew Brunson, now freed from a Turkish prison, to find out how difficult it is to live as an active Christian in daily life.

The top 11 countries on the 2019 list have an 'extreme' level of persecution (scoring 81+ points out of 100); the same number of countries as 2018, though Iraq has dropped out, mainly due to the territorial defeat of Islamic State and decrease in armed conflict there. India moves up from 11 last year, its highest place ever, to the Top Ten this year.

With India at 'extreme' and China at 'very high', two of the world's most numerous Christian populations, one in a secular democracy, the other in a Communist state, face unprecedented persecution – albeit expressed through very different ways.

Of the 4,136 deaths for Christian faith that the List reports for the Top 50 countries, Nigeria alone accounts for about 90% (3,731).

29 countries (ranked 12-40) have a 'very high' level of persecution (scoring 61+ points out of 100).

33 countries (ranked 41-73) scored a 'high' level of persecution (41+ points).

While the organization publishes the Top 50, that means that this year, an extra 23 countries scored enough to be listed as 'Persecution Watch' countries (also a 'high' level of persecution, but outside the Top 50).

Including these 23 countries, Open Doors says its figures equate to 1 in every 9 Christians globally experiencing 'high' levels of persecution. Last year it was the equivalent of 1 in 12. However, across Asia (according to the UN definition, this includes the Middle East), it drops to 1 in 3, while across Africa, it's 1 in 6, and in Latin America, 1 in 21. "We have statistical evidence to back up our experience that persecution is growing both in intensity and in the number of countries and [Christians] affected", said Wybo Nicolai, who created the World Watch List in the 1990s and is now Open Doors International's chief of external services.

## Highlights of the 2019 Open Doors World Watch List

**North Korea remains no 1, as it has done every year since 2002.**

**There's no change from 2018 to the next two highest countries: Afghanistan (2) and Somalia (3).**

**Libya rises to no. 4 (7 in 2018):**

**Pakistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen and Iran (nos. 5-9): all at 'extreme' and have not moved much since 2018.**

**India rises to no. 10 (11 in 2018).**

### Most significant rises outside the Top Ten:

**Myanmar (Burma) rises to 18 (24 in 2018)**

**Central African Republic rises to 21 (35 in 2018)**

**Algeria rises to 22 (42 in 2018)**

**Mali rises to 24 (37 in 2018), Mauritania to 25 (47 in 2018); both due to more data and/or better processing**

**China rises to 27 (43 in 2018)**

**Indonesia rises to 30 (38 in 2018)**

### Into the top 50

**Morocco rises to 35 (55 in 2018), mainly due to more data and/or better processing**

**Russian Federation rises to 41 (54 in 2018)**

### Most significant falls:

**Iraq fell to 13 (8 in 2018)**

**Malaysia fell to 42 (23 in 2018) but scored only 5 fewer points than 2018**

In summary, Open Doors International estimates that, in the Top 50 countries, around 245 million Christians experience 'high' levels of persecution.

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## 3.2 Press release – long version

### WWL 2019 PRESS RELEASE / Long version (revised 2018-12-28)

## From China to sub-Saharan Africa, Christians experience high levels of persecution in 73 countries

New laws in China and Vietnam seek to control all expression of religion. In China, it's the worst it's been in more than a decade; some even say since the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976.

In the north and Middle Belt of Nigeria, at least 3,700 Christians were killed for their faith - almost double the number of a year ago (an estimated 2,000) - with villages completely abandoned by Christians forced to flee, as their armed attackers then move in to settle, with impunity.

Nationalistic governments such as India and Myanmar continue to deny freedom of religion for their sizeable Christian minorities, sending the very clear message that to be Indian, one must be Hindu, or to be Burmese one must embrace Buddhism.

Extreme persecution also comes at the hands of radical Islamic militias, such as in Egypt - where the Islamic State in Sinai vowed in 2017 to 'wipe out' the Coptic Church – as well as in Libya, Somalia and many other sub-Saharan countries. South-east Asia has seen suicide bombers in Indonesia attack three churches in one day.

In Mexico and Colombia, persecution mainly comes when church leaders challenge corruption and cartels.

But, globally, it also comes from family and friends, from fellow-villagers and work colleagues, from community councils and local government officials and from police and legal systems. Christian women and girls face more persecution pressure in family and social spheres; men and boys are more likely to experience the brunt of pressure from the authorities or militias.

In its latest annual survey of 150 countries monitoring how difficult it is to live as a Christian, the overall trend in the 2019 World Watch List is that almost half (73) showed extreme, very high or high levels of persecution. A year earlier, it was 58 countries.

The List, produced by global charity Open Doors International and based on extensive surveys from internal and external experts, peers behind the global headlines of cases such as Pakistani Asia Bibi and Protestant pastor Andrew Brunson, now freed from a Turkish prison, to find out how difficult it is to live as an active Christian in daily life.

The top 11 countries on the 2019 List have an 'extreme' level of persecution (scoring 81+ points out of 100); the same number of countries as 2018, though Iraq has dropped out, mainly due to the territorial defeat of Islamic State and decrease in armed conflict there. India moves up from 11 last year, its highest place ever, to the Top Ten this year. With India at 'extreme' and China at 'very high', two of the world's most numerous Christian populations, one in a secular democracy, the other in a Communist state, face large-scale persecution – albeit expressed through very different ways.

Of the 4,136 deaths for Christian faith that the List reports, Nigeria alone accounts for about 90% (3,731).

29 countries (ranked 12-40) have a 'very high' level of persecution (scoring 61+ points out of 100).

33 countries (ranked 41-73) scored a 'high' level of persecution (41+ points).

While the organization publishes the Top 50, that means that this year, an extra 23 countries scored enough to be listed as 'Persecution Watch' countries (also a 'high' level of persecution, but outside the Top 50). Including these 23 countries, Open Doors says its figures equate to 1 in every 9 Christians globally experiencing 'high' levels of persecution: last year it was the equivalent of 1 in 12. However, across Asia (according to the UN definition, this includes the Middle East), it drops to 1 in 3, while across Africa, it's 1 in 6, and in Latin America, 1 in 21.

"We have statistical evidence to back up our experience that persecution is growing both in intensity and in the number of countries and [Christians] affected", said Wybo Nicolai, who created the World Watch List in the 1990s and is now Open Doors International's chief of external services. "This List does not break the trends of the past few years; it's even worse than last year."

The rankings are based on surveys of five spheres (or categories) of life: private, family, community, national and church life. A sixth block, 'violence', cuts across all five, and measures serious 'violence' (including deprivation of freedom) to people or property.

Setting aside the 'violence' category, the median score for the top 50 in 2014 was 52.9. In 2019 it is 61.4 – an increase of 16 percent in the scores of the first five categories. This shows that persecution is not only related to outright violence but also to increasing pressure in one's daily life.

## Highlights of the 2019 Open Doors World Watch List

### **North Korea remains no 1, as it has done every year since 2002**

Despite the thawing of relations with North Korea after the Donald Trump-Kim Jong Un summit in June, experts say there is no sign of any improvement in the lives of the country's estimated 200,000-400,000 Christians; 50,000–70,000 of them are thought to be in labor camps.

### **There's no change from 2018 to the next two highest countries: Afghanistan (2) and Somalia (3).**

#### **Libya rises to no. 4 (7 in 2018):**

Continues as a 'fragile state'. In July, the National Army regained control of the last Islamist stronghold in the east, but in September, the UN-backed government had to declare a state of emergency in the capital, Tripoli, after rival militias clashed. There have been no high-profile 'foreigner' deaths this year, but since the European Union made it harder for migrants to arrive via the Mediterranean, an estimated 20,000 Christians from sub-Saharan Africa are stranded in Libya, making them extra-vulnerable to pressure or violence. Trusted sources report at least 10 killed for their faith. There are also credible reports of rape, slavery and abuse. A tiny number of Libyan nationals identify as Christians; it is incredibly dangerous to convert from Islam.

#### **Pakistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen and Iran (nos. 5-9): all at 'extreme' and have not moved much since 2018.**

#### **India rises to no. 10 (11 in 2018)**

The Hindu nationalist BJP government, ahead of national elections in 2019, has introduced an 'anti-conversion' law in Uttarakhand this year, bringing the total with this law to 8 states out of 29 (two do not implement it). Militant Hindu nationalists' stance is that Christianity is a foreign, alien religion and that to be Indian, one must be Hindu. Mobs act with impunity to destroy churches and attack church leaders, killing and injuring them and even sometimes raping their wives and children. If Christians dare to report incidents to the police, they instead find themselves falsely accused of carrying out 'forced' conversions of Hindus, which India's mass media frequently misreport.

## Most significant rises outside the Top Ten:

### **Myanmar (Burma) rises to 18 (24 in 2018).**

More than 4 million Christians comprise 8% of the total population. Most live in Kachin, where 85% are estimated to be Christians, and northern Shan State; both border China. While world attention has focused in 2018 on the persecution of the Rohingyas, ethnic and tribal conflicts involving Christian majorities -- the Karen, Chin, Kachin -- continue. At least 150,000 have been displaced since 2011 due to fighting, but international aid shipments are blocked by the Myanmar army, and even UN agencies are constantly denied access. Visitors who did get in report that the Army has bombed churches, which are replaced by Buddhist pagodas, since "to be Burmese is to be

Buddhist”. A campaign by China-backed rebels, the United Wa State Army in northern Shan State, closed dozens of churches and detained and expelled dozens of Christians in September 2018.

#### **Central African Republic rises to 21 (35 in 2018)**

The situation in CAR is still precarious. 80% is occupied by 9 or 10 armed militia groups, responsible for myriad human-rights abuses; it borders other fragile and volatile countries, which makes its conflict more challenging. Three million are in need of assistance and protection and it's one of the most dangerous places to be an aid worker. Despite the joint award-winning efforts of CAR's Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders, who consistently deny that the conflict is rooted in religious differences, numerous acts of violence are committed in which individuals and communities are targeted in ways linked to their faith. In August, Russia was the broker of the latest of a number of peace agreements which so far have not worked.

#### **Algeria rises to 22 (42 in 2018)**

No country had a greater increase in overall score from 2018 to 2019 than Algeria - where the Church is growing, especially in the Berber region in the country's north. It mostly consists of first-generation Christians who face many pressures from the state and family members; it's thought that increased boldness has brought a backlash from friends and society. At least 6 Protestant churches have been forcibly closed; dozens of others have been told to close. The Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA), although recognized since 1974, still lacks official status despite meeting all legal requirements. The EPA seeks de-regulation of places of worship, an end to anti-proselytism laws, and freedom to import Christian materials: “Some Algerians continue to be victims of bullying and prosecution for the mere fact of being in possession of a Bible,” it says.

**Mali rises to 24 (37 in 2018), Mauritania to 25 (47 in 2018); both mainly due to more data and/or better processing  
China rises to 27 (43 in 2018)**

With about 100 million Christians, the Church is the largest social force not controlled by the Communist Party (89 million members). Official data show Christians as comprising 10% of the population in some areas. Around half of them experience some form of persecution: last year it was around 20%. New [Regulations for Religious Affairs](#) came into force on 1 February 2018 as President Xi Jinping tightened control of religious affairs. These define the administration around religious activities with the stated aim of “protect[ing] citizens’ freedom of religious belief”. However, the rules are the most restrictive in 13 years – some say since the Cultural Revolution which ended in 1976 - with new restrictions on online religious expression and proselytism. Since the Party, not the government, controls implementation of the new law, restrictions are much harsher, especially for youths and children.

#### **Indonesia rises to 30 (38 in 2018)**

212 million people form the world's largest Muslim population. Ahead of Presidential/national elections in 2019, Christians (32 million of total Indonesian population) saw the high-profile trial of former Jakarta Governor ‘Ahok’ and his two year prison sentence for a faked-up, false charge of blasphemy (he's due to be freed in Jan 2019) as evidence of rising religious intolerance. The triple-suicide attack against churches in Surabaya in May 2018, committed by one Islamist family, including girls as young as nine, shocked the country, till recently known for its ‘moderate’ Islam.

### **Into the top 50:**

**Morocco rises to 35 (55 in 2018), mainly due to more data and better processing**

**Russian Federation rises to 41 (54 in 2018)**

The state regards non-traditional Christian communities - about 2% of the total population - as un-Russian, Western spies who rob the 'state' Orthodox Church of members. As a result, the activities of these communities are constantly monitored by state agents like the state intelligence service, the FSB, or police. During the past few years, the state developed tighter laws regulating religious activity, partly in response to the threat of radical Islamic violence. During the WWL 2019 reporting period, five Christians were killed, five injured in a church attack in Dagestan in February; one killed and a church destroyed in Chechnya in May. In such Muslim-majority areas, non-Orthodox Christians are also often targeted on suspicion of evangelism.

A minor factor is the difficulties that, especially, non-Orthodox churches face in the Crimea regarding their obligatory re-registration after Russia annexed this peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

### Most significant falls:

#### **Iraq fell to 13 (8 in 2018)**

With the territorial defeat of Islamic State, thousands of Christians, amongst others, returned to rebuild and resettle, especially in the Nineveh region. But that does not mean their persecution is at an end. As a minority, they continue to face harassment, discrimination, and often physical and mental harm.

#### **Malaysia fell to 42 (23 in 2018) but scored only 5 fewer points than 2018**

A general election in May ended the 62-year rule by a coalition led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Ex-Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, now 93, left retirement, switched allegiance, and won. Conversion to Christianity in Muslim-majority Malaysia is against the law in almost all states, as is evangelism among Malay Muslims. A pastor who received death threats for allegedly doing the latter, abducted in February 2017, is still missing. The new government, however, resumed an enquiry into his fate and that of others who've disappeared. (However, events immediately after the reporting period for the List, 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018, point to increasing pressure on ethnic and religious minorities).

### For the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, gender-specific persecution was researched:

Gender-specific persecution is found to be a key means of undermining the Christian community, so the differing areas of vulnerability for men and women are systematically exploited. In the top 5 most difficult countries to live as a Christian, the female experience of persecution is characterized by sexual violence, rape and forced marriage. On the other hand, Christian men are more likely to be detained without trial or summarily killed by the authorities or militias.

The 2019 trends reinforce the findings of 2018: that the persecution of men is, by and large, "focused, severe and visible" and that of women is "complex, violent and hidden". The hidden nature of women's experiences makes it challenging to report; however, the past two years have begun to unearth a growing understanding as more women are surveyed and new questions asked.

In summary, Open Doors estimates that, in the Top 50 countries, at least 245 million Christians experience 'high' levels of persecution.

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### 3.3 Trends article

#### WWL 2019: Trends article (revised 2018-01-07)

Three trends emerge from the 2019 World Watch List of countries where it's most difficult to live as a Christian

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Five years ago, only North Korea was in the 'extreme' category for its level of persecution of Christians. In the 2019 World Watch List, as in 2018, 11 countries score enough to fit that category.

From roughly 2006, and accelerating from 2012, the List has recorded more persecution of Christians around the world each year. Partly this reporting has become more possible as digital technology has enabled global communication. The technology has also enabled stricter government monitoring of its citizens. This year more countries than before have risen on the List without scoring significantly in the 'violent incidents' sphere of research. This points to greater structural, legal and societal restrictions, manifesting in discrimination and hostility, aside from violent attacks on people and property ending in death or destruction.

#### 1) State authoritarianism: More countries add laws to control religion

For the 18th year in a row, **North Korea (no. 1)** holds the top spot on the World Watch List because it is the most stiflingly authoritarian regime in the world, where any faith not placed in the Supreme Leader is a political crime.



But the trend is that state authoritarianism is increasing in many parts of the world, supported by the ever-spreading availability of personal digital technology, which governments can increasingly track through facial recognition, electronic chips and so on.

The trend is most clearly seen in **China (no. 27)**, where new [Regulations for Religious Affairs](#) came into force on 1 February 2018. Since then, a focus on prohibiting children and youth from hearing religious teaching has seen nursery and Sunday schools closed down, summer camps banned, and churches forced to place signs at the entrance forbidding anyone under 18 to enter.

In March 2018, President Xi Jinping was allowed to rule indefinitely, the first since Mao to hold such power. China also announced its 'Principle for the Promotion of Chinese Christianity in China for the Next Five Years' (2018-2022).

The State Administration of Religious Affairs has closed, its function now controlled by the Communist Party's United Front Work Department, which also manages ethnic affairs, such as those of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

A government document says "Active guidance" is provided to help religion "adapt to socialist society"; it must serve the Communist Party. The need for the Sinicization ['China-ization'] of religion attempts to use religion as a tool for stability – mirroring the approaches of other authoritarian governments, such as **Vietnam (no. 20)** or **Laos (no. 19)**. Ultimately, President Xi is using religion as one of many tools to build a socialist society of Chinese characteristics free of other belief systems.

Chinese churches have been pressured to fly the national flag higher than the cross, sing the national anthem before services and, in one area, a few Roman Catholic churches were told to replace pictures of Jesus with pictures of President Xi.

In September, the Vatican finally agreed with the government on the appointment of bishops, with the Pope only allowed to veto. (Of China's estimated 12 million Catholics, half belong to 'underground' churches). The [websites](#) of two state structures, that oversee 60 bishops who are recognized by both the Vatican and Beijing, posted a [vow](#) to adhere to the principles of "independence" from the Vatican. Other Catholic priests continue to be 'missing'. In October, authorities finished [demolishing](#) two popular Catholic pilgrimage shrines.

Church meetings continue to be disrupted in several provinces, especially rural Henan in central China where 60% of the thousands of churches have been closed (three of the big five "house church" networks started here). In Zhejiang, on the east coast, where exterior church crosses were torn down in previous years, they are now regulated in size, position and color.

Churches registered in the state-controlled Three-Self Patriotic Movement now find themselves bearing the brunt of the regulations, such as having to install CCTV cameras. (In September, Beijing's largest 'house' church, Zion - with 1,500 members - was shut down for refusing to install CCTV cameras facing the

congregation. The official reason was “illegal meetings held by an unauthorized church group in an unregistered building”). Landlords are pressured to stop renting to Christians.

However, the religious affairs departments of local governments are empowered to decide registration applications, as well as the authorization of venues as places of worship, so implementation varies. Pastors and religious teachers can be told to report to their local police station every few weeks: some are fined excessively for ‘transgressions’ such as ‘inadequate fire safety equipment’. A small number are arrested and questioned, but often released the same day. Occasionally, churches are completely destroyed.

The recent removal of Bibles from e-commerce platforms means they can’t be downloaded or sold (though they can be read) online; they are officially available only from State-sanctioned church shops, though unofficial ‘house’ churches can still sell them through their own channels.

Over 2017-18, foreigners have been forced to leave cities all across China due to perceived missionary activities and, in some cases, helping to lead a house church.

The world has recently become aware of re-education camps in the autonomous region of Xinjiang, where ethnic Uighur Muslims form 45% of the population. Of the estimated 6,000 Christians from a Muslim background there, some have disappeared into such camps and not been heard of since.

The same state authoritarianism also pressures Christians in **Vietnam (no. 20)**. Its first-ever law on religions since Vietnam was re-unified under Communist rule in 1975, the Law on Belief and Religion, came into force on 1 January 2018. Vietnam also treats religion as a social problem and potential threat to national security. It too has produced an extensive bureaucracy, the Committee on Religious Affairs, whose role is more firmly entrenched in the Ministry of Interior.

State authoritarianism combines with nationalism when it comes to **Myanmar (no. 18)**. The country’s first Catholic cardinal, Charles Bo, says that “over the decades of armed conflict, the military has turned religion into a tool of [ethnic] oppression.” More than 100,000 members of a majority-Christian ethnic tribe, the Karen, remain in refugee camps just across the border in Thailand. Meanwhile, thousands have been killed and least 120,000 displaced in majority-Christian Kachin state. Recently, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest ethnic militia in Myanmar - supported by neighboring China - declared almost all churches built after the Communist Party’s 1989 collapse must be destroyed. No new churches will be allowed. All churches, missionaries, schoolteachers, and clergy are to be investigated, with foreign workers banned and those found to support missionary activities set to be punished.

## 2) Ultra-nationalistic governments and societies where minority Christians are seen as ‘alien’

In a growing number of countries, nationalism is intensifying into an ultra-nationalism that not only considers law-abiding minority groups to be a threat, but also employs aggression to force minorities to forsake their identity or even to leave the country. Where Christians are in a minority – perhaps due to a

colonial past - they are increasingly under attack both by government and society as “Western” and “alien”.

Often laws are designed to enshrine a growing ultra-nationalistic agenda, such as in **India (no. 10)** where, increasingly, the BJP-led government promotes an extremist militant Hindu agenda, where to be Indian, one must be Hindu. Eight states out of 29 have passed ‘anti-conversion’ laws, which, among other things, require anyone who wants to change religion to give a month’s notice to local officials, and to submit to a government interview. (Two states have not implemented the law).

In India, as in many other countries, ‘foreign’ institutions such as Christian-led schools, hospitals, orphanages and charities, often churches themselves, are targeted for attack and even closure, often under new or revised laws. This year, all children’s homes run by Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity were told they must submit to inspection after a nun and a staff member in one home were accused of child trafficking.

Since Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014, the level of persecution of Christians has gone up dramatically. Every year more violent incidents are registered, mainly because government authorities such as police and local officials frequently allow a culture of impunity, especially when a mob is involved. Hindu militants target church leaders, beat them up, and try to force them out of their villages. The latest trend is not only to threaten the church leader, but also to threaten or rape his wife, and even his young children. This reflects global trends which increasingly have identified the direct targeting of women and children as part of the dynamics of persecution.

Militant Hindus see Christians as a threat to the nation because of their growth in numbers and strong presence in the tribal regions. Discrimination also is very common, based on the age-old caste system. It affects Christians all over India because most converts to Christianity come from the lower and “untouchable” (Dalit) castes.

In the most recent year, solely from documented incidents, at least 12,500 Christians and about 100 churches have been attacked. At least 200 people have been arrested solely for their faith, and at least 10 have been killed. However, many incidents go un-documented, so true figures could be much higher.

Neighboring countries, themselves majority-Hindu and -Buddhist, such as **Nepal (no. 32)** and **Bhutan (no. 33)**, also have found that appeals to national religious identity are a potent formula to boost their own position of power, especially in their rural regions.

**Turkey (no. 26):** While the case of Andrew Brunson was in the headlines, the Erdogan government was actively accusing the USA of trying to undermine the country. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been stirring up ultra-nationalistic sentiment for some time and this has caused added difficulties for Christians in Turkey, especially Evangelicals. In Turkey, Christianity is seen as a Western religion and Evangelicals in particular are considered by many to have links with the USA.

### 3) Spread of radical Islam from Middle East across sub-Saharan Africa

The third noticeable trend in this World Watch List is that, while the violent excesses of Islamic State and other Islamic militants have mostly disappeared from headlines from the Middle East, their loss of territory there means that fighters have dispersed to a larger number of countries not only in the region, but, increasingly, into sub-Saharan Africa. Their radical ideology has inspired, or infiltrated, numerous splinter groups such as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a deadly group which broke away from Nigeria's Boko Haram, and which also enslaves Christian women and girls as an integral part of their strategy.

Since 2017, Islamic militants also have gained strength in **Egypt, Somalia, Libya (and Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula)**, where they continue to recruit, and capture pockets of territory.

In **Egypt (no. 16)**, which has the Middle East's largest population of Christians (Copts) - estimated at about 10% of the close to 100 million population - Islamic State in Sinai continued to threaten to 'wipe out' the Copts by terrorizing the community with targeted murders of respected local leaders such as doctors and vets. Other Islamist groups bombed churches (once, just before Christmas 2017) and killed a bus-load of pilgrims on the same road twice within 18 months. Copts' pleas for protection largely fall on deaf government ears, though some killers and attackers have been convicted.

In **Somalia (no. 3)**, an Islamic State-affiliated group of 200+ has recruited fighters who fled Iraq and Syria, as well as ex-fighters of Somali Islamist al-Shabaab, which also continues to be active. The group choose Somalia because there is no central authority: "It represents a good possibility to continue their search for an Islamic state or, at least, they can continue their ideology without obstacles", said the Catholic bishop of Mogadishu. Though there may be only hundreds of Christians amongst its 10 million people, the intensely tribal character of Somali society also means any Muslim who converts to Christianity is likely to be immediately detected by family and friends and risks death.

As a 'failed' state without unified government, **Libya (no. 4)** continues to be a deadly environment, mainly for sub-Saharan African migrants - many of whom are Christians - trapped there by tighter European migration controls. Trusted sources (who must remain anonymous) report that at least 10 Christians have been killed solely for their faith, even though they received no media attention - unlike the 21 Copts beheaded on a Libyan beach in 2015.

**Yemen (no. 8)**, at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, is the Arab world's poorest nation, with close to 29 million people. It's ruled by Sharia law. Fighting between Houthi rebels, backed by Iran, and government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, is a 'proxy' war which allows Islamic militant groups, such as Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, to gain significant influence. Most expatriate and migrant Christians have left, leaving a small but growing Church of indigenous Christians of a Muslim background. Experts say the war did not scatter this Church as might have been expected, and, with now near-famine conditions, this Church is serving society - but at extreme risk.

Of countries which have 'high' levels of persecution (scoring 41+ points), but which fall outside the top 50, 18 out of the 23 are in sub-Saharan Africa: **Comoros (no. 51), Djibouti (no. 53), the Democratic Republic**

**of the Congo DRC (no. 54), Cameroon (no. 56), Tanzania (no. 57), Niger (no.58), Chad (no. 60), Burkina Faso (no. 61), Uganda (no. 62), Guinea (no. 63), S. Sudan (no. 64) Mozambique (no. 65), the Gambia (no. 66), Ivory Coast (no. 67), Burundi (no. 68), Angola (no. 69), Togo (no. 70) and Rwanda (no. 73).**

Sub-Saharan Africa poses one of the world's most potent security challenges, as weak governance, poverty and radical Islam increasingly collide. Instability, corruption, poverty, unemployment, and lack of governance feed into Christian persecution because states are either ineffective, or sometimes actively collude in it due to ethnic, tribal or political affiliations. The effect of the ensuing accumulation of structural vulnerabilities is also borne out in distinct patterns of persecution for men and women of the region.

The chaos of Libya's collapse, leading to weapons pouring into the region, combines with the lucrative trade - for criminal gangs - of human trafficking of sub-Saharan migrants, many of whom are Christians. Increasingly sophisticated organized crime and drugs cartels stretch across sub-Saharan Africa. Young men especially seek a better life by leaving countries where they may be better educated than ever before, but lack jobs and economic and social advancement in the face of corrupt political and social elites.

Almost 30 violent Islamist groups are known to be active in the region: most perpetrate violence in more than one country. Some of them continue to hold expatriate Christian aid workers as hostages in Mali, Burkina Faso and other countries. Nigeria's Boko Haram shows the fluidity of violence across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, instigating attacks in four countries.

The potent mix of radical Islam layered on top of regional and local conflicts means that African Christians continue to die in north-east **Kenya (no. 40)**, the **Central African Republic (no. 21)**, and north and central **Nigeria (no. 12)**.

While Boko Haram continues deadly attacks - even killing Muslims working for the Red Cross, thus defying Nigerian Army claims that it has been defeated -- Christian persecution is not at the same level of intensity from the Islamist group as in the past few years.

However, in the 12 northern Nigeria states ruled by Sharia law, Christians continue to report being denied the rights, opportunities, provisions and protections afforded to Muslims - to which they are constitutionally entitled. Violations include difficulty in accessing education and denial of access to jobs in security and many other sectors.

Across the Christian-Muslim fault-line in middle Nigeria, decades of climate change and creeping desertification, combined with rapid population growth, has meant a fight for land and resources. The intensifying conflict between nomadic, predominantly Muslim Fulani cattle herders and indigenous, predominantly Christian farmers in the Middle Belt means that Christians continue to experience the highest possible levels of violence to be measured by the World Watch research (a score of 16.7 in the 'violence' category). Scored according to 'violent' persecution alone, Nigeria would tie for top place with Pakistan this year.

An increase in the use of AK-47s and heavier weapons, and the murder of entire families in their homes -- such as in the city suburbs of Jos in October 2018 -- has led many Christians to claim such attacks amount to a campaign of ethno-religious cleansing. This opinion is not helped by government accounts of incidents, which often under-report the number of victims. For instance, over one weekend in June, around 230 were killed, but the BBC and other news agencies quoted the government official figure of 86, shaping the international view of the crisis.

During the first quarter of 2018, the most recent for which comparison figures are available, 1,061 deaths were documented in 106 attacks by the Fulani militia on communities in Adamawa, Benue, southern Kaduna, Kogi, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states, with an additional 17 lives lost in attacks in the south of Nigeria. Seven instances of violence targeting Fulani herders or communities, in which 61 people lost their lives, are also documented; two of these attacks were in the south of the country.

When he met the Archbishop of Canterbury in London in April, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari told him that foreign fighters from Libya had come via the Sahara region to exacerbate the long-running, but increasing, farmers-herders conflict, which experts say has killed more people than has the Boko Haram insurgency.

The World Watch List 2019 Africa analyst said Islamist militias 'instrumentalize' existing identity-based conflicts to forge alliances to strengthen their base and widen the risk they pose to global security. There are signs of this possibly happening in a number of the countries where persecution of Christians is already at a 'high' level. These include the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – (no. 54)** an already complex conflict involving numerous political and economic factors - **Burkina Faso (no. 61)** and northern **Mozambique (no.65)**.

**So finally: any glimmers of good news?**

#### 4) Good news

**North Korea:** Despite its ranking in the top slot as in every year since the World Watch List 2002, diplomatic meetings ahead of the Donald Trump - Kim Jong Un summit did free three Korean-American Christians from a North Korean prison. Two were lecturers at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST), arrested in 2017, accused of "behavior against the regime". PUST has now changed its recruiting policy. The third was a pastor, convicted as a 'spy'.

**Pakistan:** The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mian Saqib Nisar - at risk of his own life - kept his promise to hear the Supreme Court appeal of Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi before he retires early in 2019. He and his fellow two judges ruled to acquit her, saying her accuser had been lying, and the blasphemy charge, for which she had spent 8 years on death row, was a fabrication. However, their landmark ruling was challenged by days of mass protest and disruption across Pakistan by radical Islamic groups who called for the judges and Asia Bibi to be killed. While Asia Bibi is technically 'free', she is still in fear of her life, and unable to leave Pakistan for asylum in a country where she can live safely with her family.

**Egypt:** There are 3,700 churches waiting to be registered under a 2016 law. By the end of August, 220, and by October, another 120 had been registered, making a total of 340, or 9%. However, at this rate, it will take 12 years to complete all registrations.

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## 4. Background documents

### 4.1 WWL Methodology – SHORT VERSION – edition Nov 2017

## WWL Methodology – Short version with Scoring Example

November 2017 Revised: 2018-01-04

This document was updated for WWL 2018 and remains unchanged for WWL 2019. It is intended for quick reference purposes. It provides a basic understanding of the World Watch List (WWL) scoring system and of the terminology used in the Country persecution dynamics. For further details please consult the long version of the WWL Methodology (edition: November 2017).

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## 1. Quick overview of changes made in comparison to WWL 2017

Two types of changes have been made concerning i) the content of the WWL Methodology, and ii) the processing of WWL data.

i) Changes made in the content of the methodology:

- a) There has been an alteration in the second of the four elements of the scoring grid. Instead of calculating the “proportion of inhabited territory affected by persecution”, it is now possible for the analysts to calculate the “proportion of general population living in the territory affected by persecution”. For further explanation, please see the adapted text in the long version of the WWL Methodology.
- b) The list of Drivers of persecution<sup>14</sup> has been expanded to a total of twelve by splitting the category “fanatical movements” into two: “violent religious groups” and “Ideological pressure groups”. One further change is that “multilateral organizations (e.g. UN)” has been expanded to “Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN) and embassies”.

ii) Changes made in the processing of WWL data:

This is now carried out mainly online. Automating and streamlining the WWL process makes the interaction with Field researchers etc. more efficient, and it also helps to control and even improve the quality of the results.

## 2. WWL background philosophy

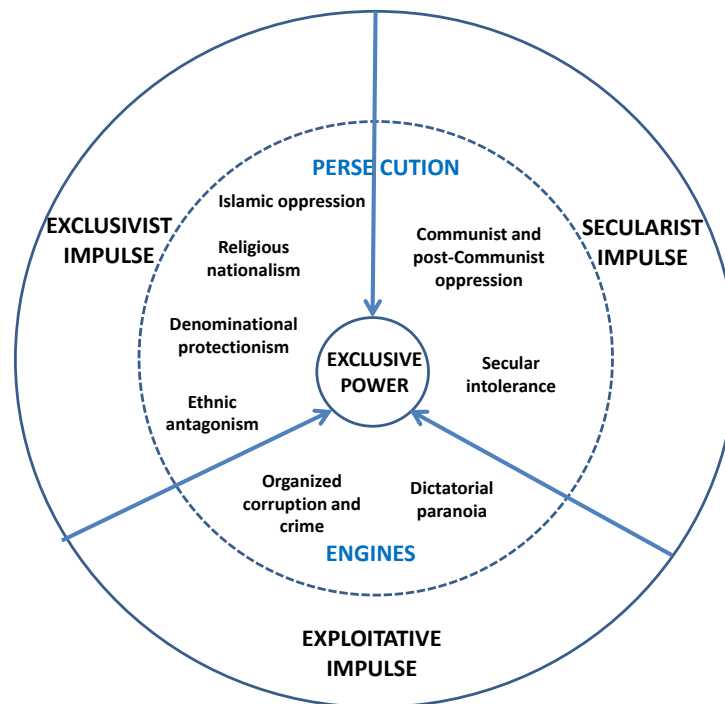
Persecution situations are usually highly complex and it is not always clear if and to what extent pressure felt by Christians or even violence against them is directly related to their Christian faith. Basically, persecution is related to religions, ideologies or corrupted mind-sets, i.e. elementary human impulses seeking exclusive power in society. The WWL methodology considers these impulses to be the power sources behind eight different “persecution engines” (see Appendix 4).

*Diagram 1: Persecution engines acting as vehicles for the different elementary human impulses seeking exclusive, absolute power.*

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 5

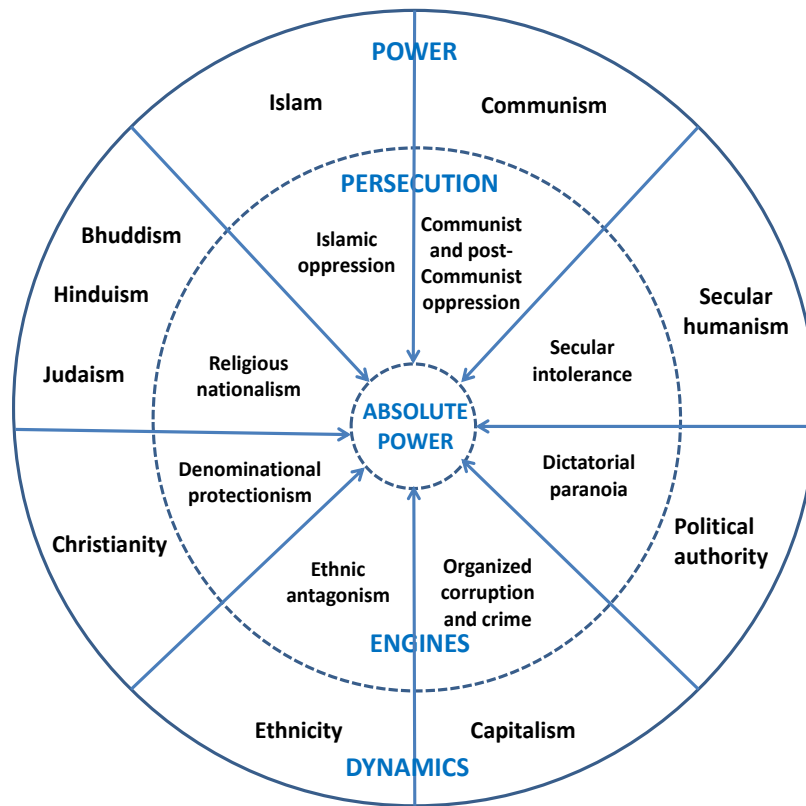




World Watch Research uses the term “Persecution engine” to describe a distinct situation which is causing Christians to be persecuted either violently or non-violently. This situation of persecution can be considered as the consequence of a societal “power dynamic”. A power dynamic normally represents a world view that has a claim of superiority over other world views. That is not a problem in itself, as long as this power dynamic is coupled with a true sense of pluralism. When this is not the case, the drivers of the power dynamic will strive for absolute submission of society to their world view. The drivers of the power dynamic are often smaller (radical) groups within the broader group of adherents of that worldview, who are not necessarily representative of that broader group, but who somehow get sufficient space to maneuver towards their aim. Examples of power dynamics are secular humanism, Islam and Communism.

In total WWR has defined 8 persecution engines corresponding to their related background power dynamics, as illustrated in the diagram below. These persecution engines each display their own brand of hostility towards Christians and are central both for scoring the WWL questionnaires and for the analysis of the persecution of Christians and their communities.

Diagram 2: Eight Persecution engines and their corresponding societal Power dynamics



### 3. Definition of persecution

There is no international, legal definition of persecution. Situations can be defined as persecution where persons experience the denial of the rights listed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the WWL methodology has opted for a theological rather than a sociological definition: Thus persecution is understood to be “any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.” The definition of “Christian” and the “categories of Christianity” used by World Watch Research can be found in Appendix 2.

### 4. How the WWL is compiled

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

The WWL methodology distinguishes two main expressions of persecution: *squeeze* (the pressure Christians experience in all areas of life) and *smash* (plain violence). While *smash* can be measured and tracked through the reporting of concrete incidents, *squeeze* is documented by discerning how Christian life and witness is placed under pressure in 5 specific spheres of life (see Appendix 3). After a series of initial research enquiries, a questionnaire consisting of 84 questions (covering the reporting period 1 November – 31 October) is filled out by Open Doors' field staff and networks in countries experiencing persecution. An example from Block 1 of the questionnaire can be viewed below.

Diagram 3: Extract from Block 1 of the questionnaire used for WWL 2018

	Question	Choice	Answer elements	Answer element value	Score	Comments
2						
3						
4	11 Has conversion been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another?					
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14	12 Has it been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.)?					
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						
22						
23						
24	13 Has it been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials?					
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						
30						
31						
32						
33						
<div> <div> <div>Intro(a)</div> <div>Intro(b)</div> <div>Intro(c)</div> <div>Intro(d)</div> <div>1.Private</div> <div>2.Family</div> <div>3.Community</div> <div>4.National</div> </div> <div> <div>Total</div> <div>0.000</div> </div> </div>						

The completed questionnaires are cross-checked by input from external experts. Scores are calculated for each of the spheres of life with variables being taken into account.<sup>15</sup> For instance, persecution can be worse for some categories of Christians than others or much worse in some parts of a country than in others. Also, the intensity and frequency of persecution is taken into consideration. Different persecution engines (see Appendix 4), persecution drivers (see Appendix 5) and a distinct Persecution pattern (see

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 1 for a detailed scoring example. The Long WWL methodology offers further discussion on these points.

Appendix 6) become visible for analysis. An audit is made by [IIRF](#)<sup>16</sup> to confirm that all results have been calculated according to the WWL Methodology.

A final score is calculated for each country which is then used to determine the order of countries from position 1 to 50 on Open Doors' annual World Watch List. The WWL scores make possible a detailed comparison of Christian life in the countries listed. Below is an example of the final scores for the highest ranking countries on the WWL 2017. (Please note that for WWL 2018 the block scores will only be presented to one decimal place to avoid giving any false impression of accuracy.)

*Diagram 4: Extract from the WWL 2017 Table and Scores  
(The highest possible score in each Block is 16.667)*

<b>WWL 2017  RANK</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>1. Private</b>	<b>2. Family</b>	<b>3. Community</b>	<b>4. National</b>	<b>5. Church</b>	<b>6. Violence</b>	<b>WWL 2017  TOTAL SCORES</b>
<b>1</b>	North Korea	16.667	15.385	16.427	16.667	16.667	9.815	<b>92</b>
<b>2</b>	Somalia	16.667	15.385	15.385	16.667	16.667	10.185	<b>91</b>
<b>3</b>	Afghanistan	16.667	16.427	15.145	15.625	14.844	10.556	<b>89</b>
<b>4</b>	Pakistan	14.792	14.023	14.183	14.974	13.125	16.667	<b>88</b>
<b>5</b>	Sudan	13.854	14.423	14.583	15.625	15.469	13.334	<b>87</b>

The most important reason for ranking countries is to be able to present a complex reality to the broader public. However, the WWL rankings must always be viewed in conjunction with the corresponding [country Persecution Dynamics](#)<sup>17</sup> which explain the particularities of the persecution situation.

<sup>16</sup> International Institute for Religious Freedom, <http://www.iirf.eu/>.

<sup>17</sup> For WWL 2017 Long versions of Country persecution dynamics, see: <http://theanalytical.org/world-watch-list-2017/> (password: freedom). The Country Persecution Dynamics are one of four documents making up a WWL Country Profile. The other three parts for WWL 2018 are: Church History and Facts, Keys to Understanding and Short and Simple Persecution Profile.

## Appendix 1:

### WWL Scoring example

The following shows how the country scores and rankings are calculated for the annual Open Doors World Watch List

#### 1. Background details required prior to scoring

For each country, the Persecution engines, Drivers of persecution and Christian communities affected are first identified.

#### 2. Six blocks of questions for each country are answered and scored

The WWR research analyst uses the information gathered from all the country staff, contacts and external experts who have filled out a WWL-Questionnaire, to now answer and score the six blocks of questions for each country. Altogether there are 84 questions to answer and score. (Further questions are asked for gathering background information in Block 7, but these are not included in the scoring process.)

Block 1: Private Life *(10 questions)*

Block 2: Family Life *(13 questions)*

Block 3: Community Life *(13 questions)*

Block 4: National Life *(16 questions)*

Block 5: Church Life *(20 questions)*

Block 6: Physical Violence *(12 questions)*

#### 3. An example showing the background considerations for answering and scoring ONE of the questions in Blocks 1-5

The score for each question can range between 0 and 16 points. For the purposes of example, we have chosen the third question in Block 1 (Private Life):

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

Please click on most appropriate answer

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐ Unknown

“No” = 0 points.

“Yes” = scoring is required taking 4 further elements into consideration. Each element can get a maximum of 4 points as shown in the following table:

	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
(1) Number of categories of Christianity affected	None	1 out of 4	2 out of 4	3 out of 4	4 out of 4
(2) Proportion of general population in territory affected	None	Above 0% – 25%	26% – 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%
(3) Intensity	None	Low	Medium	High	Very high
(4) Frequency	None	Sporadic	Quite frequent	Frequent	Permanent

In this imaginary WWL country, we shall say “Yes” - with the following scoring:

**(1) Number of categories of Christian communities affected by persecution**

In the imaginary WWL country, the danger to privately own or keep Christian materials mainly concerns three categories of Christian communities i.e. the historical Christian communities, the communities of converts to Christianity and the non-traditional Christian communities:

“3 out of 4 categories affected” = 3 points.

**(2) Proportion of general population living in the territory affected by persecution**

In the imaginary WWL country, the danger applies in the whole territory, so the proportion of the general population living in that territory is 100%:

“76-100% of population” = 4 points.

**(3) Intensity** = the degree of persecution (or level of pressure) caused by a driver of persecution.

1 point - low:	The issue in question can be dealt with or processed quite easily;
2 points - medium:	The issue in question can be dealt with or processed, but with more difficulty than if it were low;
3 points - high:	The issue in question can be dealt with or processed, but with difficulty;
4 points - very high:	The issue in question can only be dealt with or processed with very great difficulty.

The consequences of discovery in the imaginary WWL country are severe:

“high intensity” = 3 points.

**(4) Frequency** = the rate at which incidents of persecution happen.

1 point - sporadic:	The issue in question is true, but only every now and then;
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2 points - quite frequent:	The issue in question is less often not true than it is true, but is still more true than to say it is sporadically true;
3 points - frequent:	The issue in question is more often true than it is not true, but is not always true;
4 points - permanent:	The issue in question is always true or true with rare exceptions.

The danger is frequent though not permanent in the imaginary WWL country:

“frequent” = 3 points.

The total number of points for this question is therefore  $3 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 13$  (out of a maximum of 16 points).

The average score for this question =  $13/4 = 3.250$ . (Fractions to 3 decimal places are required.)

#### 4. An example showing the background considerations for obtaining the score for ONE whole block

The process illustrated above for 1.3 is carried out for all questions of the block, and each time the points and average score per question are listed. The table below shows the imaginary scores for our chosen WWL country.

Questions	Points	Average score per question	Block score (max. points 16.667)
1.1	13	3.250	
1.2	13	3.250	
1.3	13	3.250	
1.4	11	2.750	
1.5	11	2.750	
1.6	10	2.500	
1.7	12	3.000	
1.8	15	3.750	
1.9	13	3.250	
1.10	10	2.500	
Total	121	30.250	12.604

In the example above, the total of the average scores for all ten questions in Block 1 = 30.250 (out of a possible maximum of 40.000).

Block 1 is just one of six different blocks contributing to the maximum score of 100 points for all six blocks. So that each block is given the same weighting, they each have a maximum threshold of 16.667 points

(=100/6). Since not all blocks have the same number of questions, the FINAL BLOCK SCORE is calculated via the following equation:

FINAL BLOCK SCORE =

Total of the average scores per question / Maximum total possible of average scores per question x 100 / 6

Therefore, in our Block 1 example above, the Final Block score =  $30.250 / 40.000 \times 100 / 6 = 12.604$ .

### 5. Final block scores for Blocks 1-5 (denoting “SQUEEZE”) are added together

Blocks 1 to 5 form the ‘squeeze part’ of the questionnaire. The same scoring procedure as shown above for Block 1 is now done for Blocks 2 to 5. For our imaginary WWL country, the resulting table is as follows:

Questions	Block scores
Block 1	12.604
Block 2	10.337
Block 3	9.696
Block 4	10.547
Block 5	12.552
Total for 1-5	55.736

The SQUEEZE in our imaginary WWL country (i.e. the amount of pressure in the Five Spheres of Life) = 55.736.

Now the SMASH needs to be added ...

### 6. How the points for Violent Incidents within the reporting period are calculated for Block 6

The country score is completed by adding Block 6, which deals with many different forms of physical violence occurring within the WWL reporting period which stretches from 1 November to 31 October. To cover the various forms of violence, a different method of scoring to that used in Blocks 1-5 is required.

The first two questions deal with killings and attacks on churches and can get a maximum of 30 points each. Each killing gives 3 points. Ten or more killings give the maximum number of 30 points.



The other 10 questions dealing with other forms of physical violence can get a maximum of 3 points. The scoring for this is: 1 incident = 1 point; 2 - 9 incidents = 2 points; 10 or more incident = 3 points. The maximum possible number of points for all 12 questions = 90.

In our imaginary WWL country, we have the following reported incidents and points:

	Description of Violent incident per WWL Questionnaire	Incidents	Points	Block score (max. points 16.667)
6.1	Christians killed	0	0	
6.2	Churches attacked	0	0	
6.3	Christians detained without trial	0	0	
6.4	Christians sentenced to jail, labor camp etc.	0	0	
6.5	Christians abducted	0	0	
6.6	Christians raped / sexually harassed	15	3	
6.7	Cases of forced marriages to non-Christians	12	3	
6.8	Christians physically or mentally abused	4	2	
6.9	Houses or other property of Christians attacked	0	0	
6.10	Shops or businesses of Christians attacked	0	0	
6.11	Christians forced to leave their homes / go into hiding in-country	5	2	
6.12	Christians forced to leave their country	0	0	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1.852</b>

In the example above, the total number of points for all 12 questions of Block 6 = 10 (out of a possible maximum of 90).

Block 6 is just one of the six blocks contributing to the maximum WWL score of 100 points for all six blocks. So that each block is given the same weighting, they each have a maximum threshold of 16.667 points (=100/6). The FINAL BLOCK 6 SCORE is calculated via the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{FINAL BLOCK 6 SCORE} &= \text{Number of points} / \text{Maximum possible number of points for block} \times 100 / 6 \\ &= 10 / 90 \times 100 / 6 = 1.852.\end{aligned}$$

## 7. Finally, the scores for Blocks 1-5 and Block 6 are added together

To get the final WWL score for a country, all the Block totals are added together. The maximum for each block is 16.667 and the maximum total possible is 100.

Questions	Block scores
<b>Block 1</b>	12.604
<b>Block 2</b>	10.337
<b>Block 3</b>	9.696
<b>Block 4</b>	10.547
<b>Block 5</b>	12.552
<b>Block 6</b>	1.852
<b>Total</b>	<b>57.588</b>

Our imaginary WWL country thus has a final total score rounded to **58 points**. Its ranking on the WWL depends on the number of countries achieving a higher/lower final total score.

It should be noted that from WWL 2018 onwards, the final Block scores appearing in the official WWL Table will be displayed only to one decimal place (see example below). The reason for this is to avoid giving the impression of a degree of accuracy that would be misleading.

WWL 2018 RANK	Country	1. Private	2. Family	3. Community	4. National	5. Church	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORE DISPLAYED TO 1 DEC. PLACE	WWL TOTAL SCORE
?	Imaginary country	12.6	10.3	9.7	10.5	12.6	1.9	<b>57.6</b>	<b>58</b>

## Appendix 2:

### Definition of Christian and categories of Christians

The WWL is a tool focusing on persecution experienced by Christians. The WWL methodology defines 'Christian' (sociologically) as "anyone who self-identifies as a Christian and/or someone belonging to a Christian community as defined by the church's historic creeds". Based on this definition the WWL methodology distinguishes four types of Christianity:

1. **Communities of expatriate Christians:** This category applies to a situation in which foreign Christian residents (expatriates or migrant workers) are allowed to rent or own church buildings to a certain degree or at least to conduct church services, but they are not allowed to have contact with nationals regarding Christianity.

2. **Historical Christian communities:** This category applies to the typical historical churches, such as Catholic, Orthodox and traditional Protestant churches, which have often been part of a country's history for hundreds of years. Their situation and degree of freedom differ from country to country.
3. **Communities of converts to Christianity:** This category considers people who once belonged to a dominating religion or ideology, traditional religion, organized crime or other strong identifier and who changed identity in order to become Christian. Converts may be absorbed by one of the other types of churches but often gather in 'house' or 'underground' churches.
4. **Non-traditional Christian communities** (such as Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal congregations) and/or other Christian communities not included in the above three groups: This category deals with the great variety of new Protestant expressions and includes the independent churches in many countries. Some of them may be disputed by other Christians in terms of having a serious lack of theological orthodoxy but as long as they self-identify as Christians (see definition of Christian) they are included in this category.

## Appendix 3:

### Explanation of the 5 spheres of life and violence

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

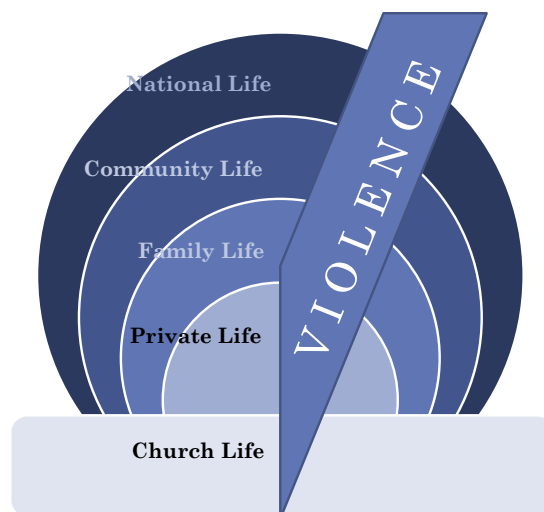
<b>1. Private life</b>	<p>The guiding WWL question asked is: "How free has a Christian been to relate to God one-on-one in his/her own space?"</p> <p>The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with conversion, private worship, possession of religious material, freedom of expression (e.g. in spoken word and writing, through images and symbols, access to information and media, privately sharing a belief with others), freedom of private assembly, and isolation of Christians.</p>
<b>2. Family life</b>	<p>The guiding WWL question asked is: "How free has a Christian been to live his/her Christian convictions within the circle of the family, and how free have Christian families been to conduct their family life in a Christian way?"</p> <p>The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with the forced allocation of religious identity, registration of civil affairs, weddings, baptisms, burials, adoptions, child rearing, indoctrination of children, harassment of or discrimination against children, separation of</p>

	families, isolation of converts, pressure to divorce, custody of children, and inheritance rights.
<b>3. Community life</b>	<p>Community life includes the workplace, business, health care, education, and local public life and civic order.</p> <p>The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions within the local community (beyond church life), and how much pressure has the community put on Christians by acts of discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?”</p> <p>The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with threat or obstruction to daily life, dress codes, monitoring of Christians, abduction and forced marriage, access to community resources, community ceremonies, participation in communal institutions and forums, pressure to renounce faith, access to health care, access to and disadvantages in education, discrimination in employment and obstruction in business, policing issues (fines, interrogations, forced reporting).</p>
<b>4. National life</b>	<p>The interaction between Christians and the nation they live in includes rights and laws, the justice system, national public administration and public life.</p> <p>The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions beyond their local community, and how much pressure has the legal system put on Christians, and how much pressure have agents of supra-local life put on Christians by acts of misinformation, discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?”</p> <p>The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with national ideology, constitution, registration of religion in IDs, conscientious objection, travel within a country and abroad, discrimination by authorities, barring from public office or professional progress, policy interference with businesses, expression of opinion in public, Christian civil society organizations and political parties, reporting about religious or social conflicts, smear campaigns, toleration of public disrespect, religious symbols, blasphemy accusations, impunity, equal treatment in court, monitoring of trials.</p>
<b>5. Church life</b>	Church life is understood as the collective exercise by Christians of freedom of thought and conscience, particularly as regards uniting with fellow Christians in worship, life, service and public expression of their faith without undue interference. It also pertains to properties held or used by Christians for these purposes.

	<p>The guiding WWL question asked is: “How have restrictions, discrimination, harassment or other forms of persecution infringed upon these rights and this collective life of Christian churches, organizations and institutions?”</p> <p>The questions set out in the WWL questionnaire deal with the hindrance in gathering of Christians, registration of churches, monitoring or closing of unregistered churches, church building and renovation, expropriation and non-return, disturbance or disruption of services, prevention of activities inside or outside churches or among youth, acceptance of converts, monitoring of preaching and published materials, election and training of leaders, harassment of leaders or their families, Bibles and other religious materials and their printing, importing, selling or dissemination, and confiscation, broadcasting and Internet use, interference with ethical convictions (regarding family and marriage) and personnel policy of Christian institutions, Christian civil society organizations and social activities, interaction with the global Church, and the denouncing of government persecution.</p>
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Violence is defined as the deprivation of physical freedom or as serious bodily or mental harm to Christians or serious damage to their property and can occur in all spheres of life – as illustrated in the diagram below.

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



## Appendix 4:

### Explanation of Persecution engines

There are different types of Persecution engine, each displaying their own brand of hostility towards Christians. WWL methodology works with 8 categories of Persecution engine.

#### **1. *Islamic oppression:***

This engine describes the persecution situation where countries, communities and households are being forced under Islamic control. This can be done gradually by a process of systematic Islamization (building up pressure) or suddenly by the use of militant force (violence) or by both together.

- An example of gradual Islamization is found in many countries where the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic NGOs and other likewise groups roll out a holistic Islamic mission strategy, coupled with a ban on conversion at the family and local community level.
- An example of the use of militant force can be seen in groups such as Islamic State, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab.

The scope of this 'Islamic movement' is global.

#### **2. *Religious nationalism***

This engine describes the persecution situation where countries, communities or households are being forced under the control of one particular religion (other than Islam). This religion can be Hinduism, Buddhism or Judaism, or even other. The process can be gradual and systematic (via a building-up of pressure), or abrupt (through violence). Often it is the combination of both that increasingly makes life for Christians in the country difficult.

- An example is Hindu mob violence in India against Christians who witness in the public domain against the background of ever increasing legislation that curtails religious freedom (e.g. anti-conversion laws).

The scope of these 'religious movements' is mostly national.

#### **3. *Ethnic antagonism***

This engine describes the persecution situation where communities and households are being forced to adhere to age-old indigenous customs established by tribes or ethnic people groups. There is a huge variety of groups here. The 'mechanics' of this engine is comparable to Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism - there often is a combination of a gradual building-up of pressure and incidental outright violence.

- An example of subtle pressure is when the authorities of an indigenous community in Myanmar or Mexico refuse to allow a Christian family's children to attend school.
- An example of outright violence is when Christian families are driven out a village because they do not want to participate in traditional ceremonies.

The scope of this 'ethnic movement' is mainly subnational (part of territory of country) but can involve the crossing of national borders depending on the regional spread of the ethnic people groups.

#### **4. *Denominational protectionism***

This engine describes the situation where fellow Christians are being persecuted by one church denomination to make sure it remains the only legitimate or dominant expression of Christianity in the country. This engine is comparable to the other engines that are related to religious expressions: It is characterized by a combination of subtle pressure and outright violence, although in practice the balance is often towards non-violence.

- Outright violence can however happen as the Ethiopian Orthodox anti-reformist movement in Ethiopia has been showing for several years now against Christians in their own churches who want to reform the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The scope of this 'ecclesiastical movement' is national, especially when the denomination involved has narrow ties with the State.

#### **5. *Communist and post-Communist oppression***

This engine describes the situation where Christians are being persecuted and churches controlled by a state system that derives from Communist values. Key for controlling churches is a rigid system of state registration and monitoring. This system may still be in use in countries after the fall of Communism, as is the case in Central Asia. Although the engine relies on a combination of pressure and violence, the violence is often not particularly visible because the system's hold on the church is complete and tight.

- An example is President Berdymukhamedov's authoritarian government in Turkmenistan, where no religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed.
- However, extreme cases such as North Korea with its concentration camps do show high prevalence of violence against Christians.

The scope of this ideological movement is national, though in the past it was global.

#### **6. *Secular intolerance***

This engine describes the situation where Christian faith is being forced out of the public domain, if possible even out of the hearts of people. Its drivers seek to transform societies into the mold of a new, radically secularist ethic. This new ethic is (partly) related to a radically new sexual agenda, with norms and values about sexuality, marriage and related issues that are alien to, and resisted by the Christian worldview. When Christian individuals or institutions try to resist this new ethic, they are opposed by (i) non-discrimination legislation, (ii) attacks on parental rights in the area of education, (iii) the censorship of the Cross and other religious symbols from the public square, (iv) the use of

various manifestations of “hate” speech laws to limit the freedom of expression, and (v) Church registration laws. Most of this is not violent, although arrests of pastors and lay people have happened.

- An example of this engine is compulsory sexual education based on gender ideology (including LGBTI insights) in nursery and primary schools in some countries, and the serious threat against parents who want to withdraw their young children from these lessons.

The scope of this ‘secularist movement’ is global.

## **7. *Dictatorial paranoia***

This engine describes the persecution situation where an authoritarian government at different levels of society, assisted by social stakeholder groups, does all it can to maintain power. There is no special focus on realizing an ideological vision; it seems lust for power and the benefits it brings with it are decisive. The dynamics of this engine is comparable to Communist and post-Communist oppression: although the engine relies on a combination of pressure and violence, often the threat of violence is sufficient to force the non-state controlled Church underground.

- Example: The government of Eritrea has been controlling the Church in Eritrea more and more. It began by reacting very strongly against the new Christian communities (e.g. imprisoning Christians in shipping containers), but has continued by putting increasing pressure on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (e.g. through curtailing the clergy).

The scope of this engine is national.

## **8. *Organized corruption and crime***

This engine describes the persecution situation where groups or individuals are creating a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for self-enrichment. It has two main ‘branches’: (i) corruption within state structures and (ii) corruption of society by organized crime. This engine expresses itself through a combination of systematic pressure caused by fear for violent repercussions in case of non-compliance, and by such violence.

- Corruption from within: Princes in Saudi Arabia are often free to do what they want. The country is theirs. The trade-off is giving radical Islamic forces a high level of influence both within and outside the country. The negative effect of this on Christians worldwide is enormous through the spread of Wahhabism (a very radical strand of Islam) in moderate Muslim countries.
- Organized crime: In Latin American countries such as Colombia and Mexico criminal groups (drugs, human trafficking etc.) use violence to keep the Church under control, especially at the level of the local community. At national level the interests of these groups are served by co-opting politicians and the security apparatus of the state.

The scope of this engine is global.



## Appendix 5:

### List of drivers of persecution

The term “drivers of persecution (engines)” is used to describe people and/or groups causing hostilities towards Christians in a particular country. WWR uses 12 drivers in its documents:

**1. Government officials at any level from local to national**

E.g. teachers, police, local officials, presidents, Kim Jong Un

**2. Ethnic group leaders**

E.g. tribal chiefs

**3. Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national**

E.g. imams, rabbis, senior Buddhist monks

**4. Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national**

E.g. popes, patriarchs, bishops, priests, pastors

**5. Violent religious groups:**

E.g. Boko Haram (Nigeria), Hamas (Palestinian Territories), *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) and the *Sinhala Ravaya* (SR) (both in Sri Lanka)

**6. Ideological pressure groups:**

E.g. LGBTI rights groups, Abortion Rights UK, National Secular Society

**7. Normal citizens (people from the general public), including mobs**

E.g. students, neighbors, shopkeepers, mobs

**8. Extended family**

E.g. one's direct family members or the wider circle of kinsmen.

**9. Political parties at any level from local to national**

E.g. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, AKP in Turkey

**10. Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups**

E.g. FARC

**11. Organized crime cartels or networks**

E.g. There are several cartels in Latin America, Italy and other parts of the world.

**12. Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN/OIC) and embassies**

E.g. UN organizations pushing for compulsory sexual education programs contrary to Christian values, OIC pushing for Islamization of the African continent.

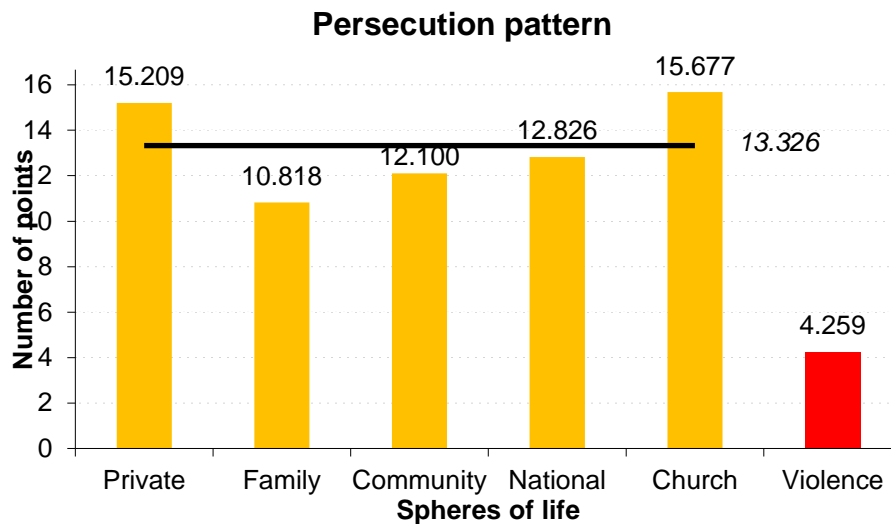
## Appendix 6: Understanding the Persecution pattern

The detailed country scores of the 6 blocks of the WWL questionnaire converge into a specific pattern, the *country persecution pattern*. This persecution pattern consists of the following elements:

- The average score over blocks 1 to 5;
- The deviance from the average score of the scores for the different spheres of life;
- The level of violence experienced by Christians in the country.

The example below is for Uzbekistan (WWL 2017).

(The maximum score in each block is 16.667, giving a maximum total of 100 points for all 6 blocks combined.)



The scores above are displayed to three decimal places and are not to be read as thousands.)

The WWL 2017 Persecution pattern for Uzbekistan shows:

- Although there have been increases in the scores for pressure particularly in the *private* and *church spheres*, the average pressure on Christians has reduced slightly from 13.413 (WWL 2016) to 13.326, but remains at a high level.
- Pressure is strongest in the *private*, *national*, and *church spheres*. This is typical for a situation in which *Dictatorial paranoia* is the leading persecution engine.
- Pressure from *Islamic oppression* is present mostly in the *private*, *family* and *community spheres* and is exerted particularly on MBBs by the social environment.
- There has been a significant number of violent incidents in Uzbekistan; the score for violence against Christians shows a marked increase rising from 2.778 (WWL 2016) to 4.259.
- The overall persecution situation in Uzbekistan is caused by a paranoid government seeking to increase its control over all areas of life.

World Watch Research recognizes the potential for using the persecution pattern as part of the consistency check for questionnaires. The persecution pattern can also serve to predict trends in ongoing persecution in countries on the WWL. Finally the persecution pattern can serve as a tool giving early indications of upcoming persecution in countries not yet on the WWL.

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## 4.2 Guidelines and FAQs

These Guidelines were updated for WWL 2018 and are in most cases still applicable for WWL 2019.

# WWL Guidelines and FAQ

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## A. QUICK Q&A ON WWL

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

### 1. How is the WWL compiled?

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

### 2. How are the countries scored?

A detailed example on the method of scoring can be found in Appendix 1 of "WWL 2018 Methodology – Short version with Scoring Example". Further discussion is to be found in the long version of the WWL Methodology.

### 3. Why are countries with the same score ranked differently?

For each country, the public version of the WWL Table and Scores gives the Total Score as a rounded number displaying no decimal places. In the event that countries are listed with the same score (e.g. in WWL 2017 Syria and Iraq; Iran and Yemen) the actual decimal fraction will determine which country appears higher in the list.

<b>WWL 2017 RANK</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>1. Private</b>	<b>2. Family</b>	<b>3. Community</b>	<b>4. National</b>	<b>5. Church</b>	<b>6. Violence</b>	<b>TOTAL SCORES DISPLAYED TO 3 DEC. PLACES</b>	<b>WWL TOTAL SCORES</b>
<b>6</b>	Syria	14.375	14.263	14.664	14.584	14.896	13.704	<b>86.486</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>7</b>	Iraq	15.104	14.904	15.465	15.104	15.209	10.370	<b>86.156</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>8</b>	Iran	14.063	14.343	14.744	15.625	16.459	10.185	<b>85.419</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>9</b>	Yemen	16.667	15.305	14.503	16.341	16.615	5.926	<b>85.357</b>	<b>85</b>

*Extract from WWL 2017 Table and Scores with added column showing Total Score to three decimal places*

Please note that from WWL 2018 onwards, the final Block scores appearing in the official WWL Table and Scores will be displayed only to one decimal place and not to three decimal places as was previously the case. The fraction is the result of mathematical calculation. As far as scoring the answers of the questionnaire is concerned, it would be misleading to understand a greater number of decimal places as denoting a greater degree of accuracy in persecution measurement.

#### 4. Why does World Watch Research use World Christian Database statistics?

Since 2007, the World Christian Database ([WCD](#)<sup>18</sup>) has been published in cooperation with [Brill](#)<sup>19</sup> publishers (USA) who aim to meet the information requirements of specialized academic target groups. For an annual fee, World Watch Research receives access to comprehensive statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations, and people groups. This information is updated regularly by staff at the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (USA).

Please note: Where Open Doors estimates differ to WCD figures, this is clearly indicated in the WWL 2018 country profile documentation and in the WWL 2018 Country religious statistics.

#### 5. What are persecution engines and persecution drivers?

Please see Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 of “WWL 2018 Methodology – Short version with Scoring Example”. For more detailed background discussion, see also the Long version of the WWL Methodology.

#### 6. What gives the WWL credibility (academic status)?

The WWL team consists of one managing director, five fulltime and two part-time persecution analysts and one communicator, all with university degrees. Three of the team (including the managing director)

<sup>18</sup> WCD website: <http://www.brill.com/publications/online-resources/world-christian-database>

<sup>19</sup> Brill website: <http://www.brill.com/about/mission-statement>

have or are completing PhDs. Five are lawyers with experience in the field of human rights, constitutional law or governance. The persecution analysts collaborate closely with researchers and other experts operating at regional, national and subnational level. Some of these are Open Doors staff, others are external experts who have different professional backgrounds.

The WWL questionnaire is the main tool behind the WWL methodology. The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF; [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu)) has audited the WWL methods for arriving at country scores and their transnational comparability. It has also audited their proper application on varying sample countries for WWL 2014-2018. The main focus of the audits is on consistency in the processing of the WWL questionnaires for the different countries with their specific persecution situations.

The WWL audit statements express IIRF's conclusions and enhance the quality of the WWL and contribute to the degree of objectivity and transparency of the results. The IIRF stresses that additional statements, documents and interpretations by Open Doors based on or associated with the publication of the WWL lists remain outside the scope of their audits.

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

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

## 8. What sort of pressure is being measured in the “Spheres of life”?

The ‘five spheres concept’ tracks the various forms of pressure being experienced in the different areas of a Christian's life. For a list and description please see Appendix 3 of “WWL 2018 Methodology – Short version with Scoring Example”. For more detailed background discussion, see also the Long version of the WWL Methodology.

## 9. Why does the WWL only focus on Christians?

The WWL focuses only on Christians for two main reasons. First, the mandate of Open Doors is to support suffering Christians worldwide. The WWL is essentially a tool for both Open Door's leadership and constituency to obtain insight into the nature, scope and spatial location of the persecution of Christians. Secondly, via its long-standing in-country networks Open Doors can research down to “village level.” Hence, WWL is uniquely equipped for specifically researching the persecution of Christians. The research team is aware that in many situations other minority groups are also suffering alongside Christians. Where relevant, this is clearly mentioned in the country profiles.

## 10. Why is the WWL limited to 50 countries?

For practical communication purposes - although it must be stressed that if a country does not make it to the top 50, this does not mean there is no persecution in that country! For WWL 2018 the WWL team will be scoring over 80 countries. A list of scores and rankings for the top 75 is being prepared for OD-internal use only.

## 11. Does the WWL look at Christians of all denominations?

Yes, the WWL looks at all Christian denominations. For details please see Appendix 2 of the “WWL 2018 Methodology – Short version with Scoring Example”. For more detailed background discussion, see also the Long version of the WWL Methodology.

# B. WWL BACKGROUND DISCUSSION – SHORT VERSION

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

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

No one is claiming that ONLY Christians are suffering severe persecution. However, there is little data comparable to the WWL available. The number of persecuted Christians is huge – well over 200 million – and the likelihood is very great that more Christians are suffering severe persecution than adherents of any other religion. There is, however, no academic research on the persecution of Muslims currently available to confirm this.

## 2. How many Christians are persecuted worldwide?

Since WWL 2017, the calculation for the number of persecuted Christians is linked to the annual WWL and indicates the number of Christians who are persecuted in the 50 countries on that specific WWL. This number will therefore change according to the exact composition of the annual WWL. For WWL 2017 the calculation was as follows:

In the WWL Top 50 countries the total population is 4.83 billion and the total number of Christians is estimated at 650 million (13%). Out of these 650 million Christians, 215 million (33%) are considered to be suffering from “high” (or “very high” or “extreme”)<sup>20</sup> levels of persecution, according to the levels set out in the WWL-Methodology.

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<sup>20</sup> In the WWL-Methodology, “high” levels of persecution occur when the score-range is 41 to 60 points. Above this there are two other categories: “very high (61-80pts)” and “extreme (81-100pts).” In the WWL-Methodology, “high” is defined as “where living as a Christian means that although there may be a tolerated church which enjoys some freedom, in practice prominent Christians are targeted, churches themselves subject to significant restrictions, and the culture remains largely hostile to a Christian presence in such areas as education and employment.” For calculating the number of Christians who suffer “high” or higher levels of persecution, these concepts are not simply applied to the total country scores but to the estimated scores of different regions within the countries. This is done because not all Christians in a country that scores 41 points or more, are suffering to the same degree.



One can also say: 215 million are considered to be suffering from “high” (or “very high” or “extreme”) levels of persecution, out of a total global Christian population of 2.48 billion, or 1 in every 12 Christians.

For WWL 2017 it was not possible to supply an accompanying Level 3 version of the break-down per country. WWR will attempt to do this for WWL 2018.

Because the number of persecuted Christians used in WWL documentation is limited to the 50 countries on the WWL, it will mean that - globally - there are more Christians who are persecuted.

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

There is an ongoing debate about the number of martyrs or Christians killed for faith-related reasons. While some organizations publish numbers often as high as 100,000 Christian martyrs per year, or ‘one Christian killed every 5 minutes’, research by WWR reveals much lower numbers. (The numbers in the table below are global totals recorded within the WWL reporting period.)

WWL	Christians killed for faith-related reasons	Churches attacked
WWL 2014	2,123	1,111
WWL 2015	4,344	1,062
WWL 2016	7,106	2,425
WWL 2017	1,207	1,329
WWL 2018	See Article on Violent Incidents (available 8 December 2017).	

The numbers listed above are likely to be much lower than in reality, but they are based on what WWR have been able to assess via a variety of sources (reports of OD Field research and external research, and media reports). Information on the [debate about the number of Christian martyrs](#) can be found in World Watch Monitor’s article dated 13 November 2013.

### 4. How does Open Doors’ definition of persecution compare with other definitions?

There is no international legal definition of persecution. Situations can be defined as persecution where persons experience the denial of the rights listed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For defining the persecution of Christians, the WWL methodology has opted for a theological rather than a sociological definition. Persecution is hence: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.” This definition covers not just violence but also the full range of pressure experienced by Christians as a result of their Christian faith.

Many lawmakers have tried to set a high threshold before a situation can be termed persecution. E.g., [United States Court of Appeals, Third Circuit \(1961\)](#) states: “[Persecution] should be taken to mean confinement, torture or death inflicted on account of race, religion, or political viewpoint.” However, the rationale behind this is clearly political: If the standard was not set high, it might lead to a situation where the international community has to face the serious challenge of affording protection to very large numbers of people claiming ‘persecuted’ status. Hence the international community is deliberately underestimating the continuous pressure Christians (and other minorities) are often facing in their different *spheres of life*. It is exactly this pressure that the WWL methodology seeks to document and therefore its definition deliberately includes “hostile attitudes [and] words”.

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

*Ethnic cleansing* is when a competitor or those who differ in race, ethnicity or religion are forced to leave a given area by unlawful means. These can be murder, destruction of property, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, confinement of civilian population in ghetto areas, forcible removal, displacement and deportation of civilian population, extra-judicial executions, rape and deliberate military or other organized attacks, or threats of attacks on civilians or even *genocide*. The situations in northeast Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan can be said to be typical examples.

It should however be noted that even in contexts not defined as conflict, *ethnic cleansing* can be in process. Saudi Arabia is an example of this, notwithstanding the massive presence of Christian migrants in the country. The enormous pressure on converts from Islam to Christianity and isolation of Christian migrants from local Saudis, could be characterized as a form of *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation.

The concept of *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation can thus be applied to (part of) what is happening in a number of the WWL Top 50 countries.

## 6. What is religious freedom?

The definition of freedom of religion in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ICCPR version) reads: “*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*” This definition is broader than many realize. For instance, the right to “manifest his religion” contains the following rights:

- To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain premises for these purposes.
- To establish religious, humanitarian and charitable institutions.
- To make, acquire and use articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief, including to follow a particular diet.

- To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications.
- To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for the purposes and to establish theological seminaries or schools.
- To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions.
- To train, appoint or elect leaders, priests and teachers.
- To celebrate religious festivals and observe days of rest.
- To communicate with individuals and communities on faith issues at national and international level.
- To display religious symbols including the wearing of religious clothing.

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

## 7. How does persecution originate and develop in society?

WWR identifies six stages in the gradual development of persecution.<sup>21</sup> The length of time that persecution engines take to develop from stages 1 to 6 can differ greatly depending on the specific context in the country, and on the type of persecution engine.

1. A small, highly 'charged' social group representing a specific religion or ideology starts to spread their ideas at the expense of (an)other group(s).
2. Fanatical movements grow out of this 'starter group' or assemble around them, and exert pressure on society and government through media strategies and/or physical mob attacks on elements of the other group(s).
3. The violence disturbs society but governments leave the fanatical movements unpunished while blaming the other group(s) for being the cause of the social unrest by their mere existence.
4. This reinforces the actions of the fanatical movements, and draws in more and more regular citizens. This leads to more pressure on the government to collaborate with their agenda.
5. Society, government, security apparatus and judicial system squeeze the members of the other group(s), to the point of near suffocation in all spheres of life.
6. Culture as a whole is taken over by the agenda of the highly 'charged' social group representing a specific religion or ideology (point 1).

## 8. Are only Christians who evangelize persecuted?

Not at all. Normally the first victims of persecution are converts to Christianity. Take for instance converts to Christianity from a Muslim background: Even when society is not yet Islamized and the nation's government has not yet adopted Sharia law, converts are very vulnerable in their private, family and

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<sup>21</sup> These stages are an adaptation of the *Religious Economies Model* in: Grim, B.J. and Finke R., *The Price of Freedom Denied*, 2010, page 68ff.

community spheres of life. (The same applies for defectors from a criminal gang, although their community sphere of life is likely to be more problematic than their private and family spheres of life.) Next, it is Christians who are active in evangelism or social-political work in the public domain who are likely to experience hostility. When the persecution situation develops further, Christians by identity are affected too. Finally, the visibility of Christianity in the public domain in the form of churches and other Christian buildings is reduced by targeted destruction and closure.

## 9. How do the duties of the State relate to persecution?

State governments have the responsibility of ensuring that human rights (e.g. Freedom of Religion or Belief) are not violated. The State has an active duty in terms of protecting the rights of Christians from different drivers (actors) of persecution. In the case where drivers of persecution are related to the persecution engines *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Secular intolerance*, it is apparent that the State itself violates its duty to respect and protect. In the case where radical groups or militias violate the rights of Christians, it means the government is failing to offer protection, and is perhaps even collaborating with these groups.

## 10. What is meant by “persecution eclipse”?

This is a situation whereby persecution and civil conflict overlap to the extent that the former is in a real or imaginative sense overshadowed or rendered almost invisible by the latter. Nigeria is a country with an alarming record of religiously-related violence. There is debate whether this is actually persecution, or just civil unrest. Is there an agenda of Islamization or is it about ‘environmental degradation and migration’? A paper, published by World Watch Monitor in June 2013, argues that this is a classic example of [persecution eclipse](#).

## 11. Does the WWL sometimes confuse civil conflict with persecution?

Commentators often look at the situation of civilians in civil conflicts and ignore the role of religious identity on the side of the victim and religious motivation on the side of the perpetrator among the complex mix of factors and motives for hostilities against civilians. Detailed research shows that religion often plays an important or even decisive role, without which the situation cannot be fully or correctly understood. This applies even when religion is not the only factor. Hence, according to WWL research, conflicts such as those in Central Africa, Nigeria, Iraq and Syria are (at least in part) situations involving the persecution of Christians on grounds of faith. (See also: 10. Persecution eclipse.)

# C. WWL BACKGROUND DISCUSSION – LONG VERSION

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

No one is claiming that ONLY Christians are suffering severe persecution. However, there is little data comparable to the WWL available. The number of persecuted Christians is huge – well over 200 million – and the likelihood is very great that more Christians are suffering severe persecution than adherents of

any other religion. There is, however, no academic research on the persecution of Muslims currently available to confirm this. Pew research comes the nearest.

Pew research has shown for the period 2006-2012, that Christians were “harassed” in 151 out of a total of 198 countries or territories studied and Muslims in 135.

### Number of Countries Where Religious Groups Were Harassed, Across All Years

*Any time between mid-2006 and end of 2012*

Christians		151
Muslims		135
Jews		95
Others*		77
Folk religionists**		52
Hindus		33
Buddhists		28
Any of the above		185

\* Includes Sikhs, members of ancient faiths such as Zoroastrianism and members of newer faiths such as Baha'is and other religious groups.

\*\* Includes a followers of African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions and Australian aboriginal religions.

This measure does not assess the severity of the harassment.

Numbers do not add to total because multiple religious groups can be harassed in a country.

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Data: Pew Research Center, Jan. 2014

The WWL also has a broad definition of persecution, and includes types of “harassment” in its definition. However, the WWL also assesses the severity of persecution. The question is if (for instance) the “harassment” of Muslims in Western European countries can be compared to the “harassment” of Christians in Muslim majority countries. Also, if intra-religious “harassment” (or persecution) were excluded out of Pew’s data (viz. the Sunni-Shia conflict), Christians would in WWR’s opinion turn out to be much more persecuted by people from other religions or ideologies, than Muslims, and at a higher level of intensity.

## 2. How many Christians are persecuted worldwide?

For many years, the number of 100 million persecuted Christians was used as a global number, but this was not directly linked to the methodology of the WWL. Since WWL 2017, the calculation for the number of persecuted Christians is linked to the annual WWL and indicates the number of Christians who are persecuted in the 50 countries on that specific WWL. This number will therefore change according to the exact composition of the annual WWL. For WWL 2017 the calculation was as follows:

In the WWL 2017 Top 50 countries the total population was 4.83 billion and the total number of Christians was estimated at 650 million (13%). Out of these 650 million Christians, 215 million (33%) were considered

to be suffering from “high” (or “very high” or “extreme”)<sup>22</sup> levels of persecution, according to the levels set out in the WWL-Methodology. One could also say: 215 million are considered to be suffering from “high” (or “very high” or “extreme”) levels of persecution, out of a total global Christian population of 2.48 billion, or 1 in every 12 Christians. For WWL 2017 it was not possible to supply an accompanying Level 3 version of the break-down per country. WWR will attempt to do this for WWL 2018. Because the number of persecuted Christians used in WWL documentation is limited to the 50 countries on the WWL, it will mean that - globally - there are more Christians who are persecuted.

In estimating the number of persecuted Christians in the 50 countries of the WWL it should be noted that not all Christians in the 50 countries can be counted as being persecuted. In some countries persecution affects all Christians, whatever their denomination (see WWL categories of Christianity, in Appendix 2 of “WWL 2018 Methodology – Short version with Scoring Example”. Further discussion is also to be found in the Long version of the WWL Methodology). In other countries, persecution affects only part of the Christian community. This can be according to their denomination – some denominations are (for instance) less active in evangelism and/or other public activities than others. The former will draw less negative attention than the latter, and thus be less confronted with persecution. Persecution can also depend on the part of the country Christians live in. For instance, Muslim dominated areas in Christian majority countries could put heavy pressure on Christians, even commit acts of violence against them, even though the country is majority Christian.

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

There is an ongoing debate about the number of martyrs or Christians killed for faith-related reasons. While some organizations publish numbers often as high as 100,000 Christian martyrs per year, or “one Christian killed every 5 minutes”, research by WWR reveals much lower numbers: (The numbers in the table below are global totals recorded within the WWL reporting period.)

WWL	Christians killed for faith-related reasons	Churches attacked
WWL 2014	2,123	1,111
WWL 2015	4,344	1,062

<sup>22</sup> In the WWL-Methodology, “high” levels of persecution occur when the score-range is 41 to 60 points. Above this there are two other categories: “very high (61-80pts)” and “extreme (81-100pts).” In the WWL-Methodology, “high” is defined as “where living as a Christian means that although there may be a tolerated church which enjoys some freedom, in practice prominent Christians are targeted, churches themselves subject to significant restrictions, and the culture remains largely hostile to a Christian presence in such areas as education and employment.” For calculating the number of Christians who suffer “high” or higher levels of persecution, these concepts are not simply applied to the total country scores but to the estimated scores of different regions within the countries. This is done because not all Christians in a country that scores 41 points or more, are suffering to the same degree.

WWL 2016	7,106	2,425
WWL 2017	1,207	1,329
WWL 2018	See Article on Violent Incidents (available 8 December 2017).	

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

- The deaths or martyrdom of some Christians never reaches the public consciousness:
  - No one really knows about it;
  - Their death is simply not considered worth reporting;
  - Media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted;
  - Media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost;
  - The deaths are consciously not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).
- In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in conflict areas are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples are Sudan and the Nuba people, also Christians in Syria.
- Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately: Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other vulnerabilities that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. If we would include them in the counting, it would be an enormous number of people. However, the precise number of Christians who die due to these factors is very difficult to quantify.

More information on the [debate about the number of Christian martyrs](#) can be found in World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013.

#### 4. How does Open Doors' definition of persecution compare with other definitions?

In its classical understanding persecution is carried out by the state or sponsored by the state. In reality that is usually not the case. Nowadays, the role of non-state actors has become massive in many ways – e.g. very radical groups like Islamic State, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab. But also a variety of other social actors could be mentioned: actors from civil society, such as ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, church leaders, fanatical movements, ordinary citizens forming mobs, the extended family, political parties, revolutionaries, paramilitary groups, organised crime cartels or networks, or multilateral organizations.

There is no universally accepted definition of persecution. Courts, lawmakers and scholars have approached the concept from different angles. The preamble, the articles or the *Travaux Préparatoires* of the 1951 Refugee Convention do not define persecution. However, some have tried to put the bar high for a situation to be called persecution. The [United States Court of Appeals, Third Circuit \(1961\)](#) noted that the mere “repugnance of ... a governmental policy to our own concepts of religious freedom cannot ... justify our labelling such actions as ‘persecution’. [Persecution] should be taken to mean confinement, torture or death inflicted on account of race, religion, or political viewpoint.” [The Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court](#) also suggested that the bar has to be very high. It states: “The perpetrator severely deprived, contrary to international law, one or more persons of fundamental rights.” The WWL methodology, however, defines persecution as “any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.”

The reason for national jurisdiction setting the bar very high is clear: If the standard was not set high, it might lead to a situation where the international community has to face the serious challenge of affording protection to very many people claiming ‘persecuted’ status. This fear of the international community has the flipside of underestimating the various dimensions of persecution, especially the continuous pressure Christians (and other minorities) might face in their different *spheres of life*. The WWL methodology intends to track, document, analyze and report about these challenges that Christians face in their daily lives.

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

### **Ethnic cleansing and the WWL Top 50 countries**

The concept of *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation might well apply to (part of) what is happening in a number of the WWL Top 50 countries. Sub-Saharan Africa is an example.

In a growing number of Sub-Saharan African countries *ethnic cleansing*, one of the most recent concepts under international criminal law, would seem to apply for the dynamics created by (political) Islam opposing the presence of Christians in what Muslims consider their territory within countries. *Ethnic cleansing* is when a competitor or those who differ in race, ethnicity or religion are forced to leave a given area by different unlawful means. These can be murder, destruction of property, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, confinement of civilian population in ghetto areas, forcible removal, displacement and deportation of civilian population, extra-judicial executions, rape and deliberate military or other organized attacks, or threats of attacks on civilians or even *genocide*. The situations in northeastern Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan can be said to be typical examples, which in some cases are verging on *genocide*. WWR has published studies on *ethnic cleansing* based on religious affiliation in the countries: [Nigeria \(Middle Belt Region\)](#), [Kenya](#), and [Sudan](#).

It should be noted that even in contexts not defined as conflict, *ethnic cleansing* can be in process. Saudi Arabia is an example of this, notwithstanding the massive presence of Christian migrants in the country.



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

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

Finally, it was said above that *ethnic cleansing* can even use acts of *genocide* as a means to force others to leave a given area. Some of the acts of persecution in some countries could be characterized as a genocide. An example is what happens in Sudan. Although WWR characterized the process going on in Sudan against Christians as ethnic cleansing based on religious affiliation, what the government of Sudan is doing against the Nuba-Christians is an example of what could be labelled *genocide*. Further research will further develop this element too.

### Scope of ethnic cleansing

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

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

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

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

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

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

An example of ethnic cleansing evolving out of a process of Islamization can be seen in sub-Saharan African countries, where many Muslims live clustered together in majority-Muslim areas, or at least areas with tangible Muslim minorities. (This corresponds with advice given to Muslims by the Muslim Brotherhood writer Yusuf al-Qaradawi to live in ghettos, in his vision document 'Priorities of The Islamic Movement in The Coming Phase'.) Such ghettos facilitate the fight for the 'soul of Islam', which is a struggle to get Muslims to progress from being merely 'cultural' to 'devout' or from being 'moderate' to 'radical'. The ghettos provide very limited possibilities for Christians to live there, even less as converts to Christianity from a Muslim background. The ghettos also offer a suitable base for a gradual Islamization of surrounding areas.

*Nigeria* mirrors this situation. Currently infringements on the religious freedom of Christians occur in a variety of ways. Firstly, the rule of Sharia was unconstitutionally declared in 12 northern states. Local governments and social groups leave hardly any space for Christians to freely live their lives. This is exacerbated by Boko Haram atrocities in northern Nigeria, especially the six northeastern states, carrying out an anti-Christian agenda that could qualify as ethnic cleansing, if not genocide. In addition, Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen, often assisted by like-minded settlers, try to cleanse the Middle Belt of their original majority-Christian or African traditionalist inhabitants. This situation is a clear example of ethnic cleansing. Furthermore, mob violence all over northern Nigeria makes Christians vulnerable at any place and any time. Finally, a gradual expansion of political Islam over majority-Christian southern Nigeria with the intention to Islamize the South can be observed. Muslim leaders and their constituents pressure adherents of other religions via banking, businesses, symbolism, mosque-building, schools and NGOs to the extent that the Christians (and adherents of other religions) must either leave or gradually adopt Islamic mores and, in some cases, convert to Islam or resist this attempt to impose an Islamic identity on their land. Nigeria could be seen as a test case concerning the persecution dynamics of Islamic oppression in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. Similar dynamics can be observed elsewhere at various levels and with different intensities.

## 6. What is religious freedom?

Freedom of religion is a multidimensional concept and cannot stand alone. The modern legal concept of the multidimensionality of religious freedom can be derived directly from Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was later incorporated under Article 18 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) be it slightly modified:

*"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."*

It is important to bear in mind that the presentation of freedom of religion in Article 18 is much broader than how it is commonly understood. To remind the world about the rich tenor of the article, the UN Human Rights Committee published a [general comment on Article 18](#), adopted by the Committee on 20

July 1993. The Swedish Mission Council (2010) produced a booklet entitled “*What freedom of religion involves and when it can be limited*”, which enumerates seven specific dimensions of religious freedom:

1. Freedom to have, choose, change or leave a religion or belief;
2. Freedom to manifest a religion or belief;
3. Freedom from coercion;
4. Freedom from discrimination;
5. Right of parents to give their children religious and moral education in accordance with their own beliefs;
6. Right to conscientious objection;
7. Freedom to practice one’s religious belief in the workplace.

The second point in this list includes a set of dimensions, which are in fact different types of religious behavior. This set of dimensions can encompass other fundamental human rights principles protected under international law. As there are:

- To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain premises for these purposes.
- To establish religious, humanitarian and charitable institutions.
- To make, acquire and use articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief, including to follow a particular diet.
- To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications.
- To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for the purposes and to establish theological seminaries or schools.
- To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions.
- To train, appoint or elect leaders, priests and teachers.
- To celebrate religious festivals and observe days of rest.
- To communicate with individuals and communities on faith issues at national and international level.
- To display religious symbols including the wearing of religious clothing.

All points in this list refer to different forms of hostilities to which Christians can become vulnerable, whether directly in the form of violence (*smash*), or indirectly through restrictions of specific rights and freedoms (*squeeze*). Hostilities can be experienced in different *spheres of life*: *private sphere (forum internum)*, and *family, community, national and church spheres (forum externum)*.

## 7. How does persecution originate and develop?

The evolution of persecution was well described by the *Religious Economies Model* of Finke and Grim. In this model one can see that social groups and government are continuously reinforcing each other against religious minorities.<sup>27</sup> It normally starts with a specific social group in a country representing a specific

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<sup>27</sup> The Price of Freedom Denied, 2010, page 68ff.

religion or ideology trying to manipulate the government. From this beginning persecution begins to take root and develop.

The WWL team adapted the *Religious Economies Model*. Schematically, these would be the six stages of gradual development of most of the persecution engines:

1. A small, highly 'charged' social group representing a specific religion or ideology starts to spread their ideas at the expense of (an)other group(s). Often a social or political vacuum presents an excellent breeding ground for such ideas.
2. Fanatical movements grow out of this 'starter group' or assemble around them, and exert pressure on society and government through media strategies and/or physical mob attacks on elements of the other group(s). (These are not usually violent terrorist attacks without involvement of the general public, since these might otherwise alienate the general public from the 'sacred cause'.)
3. The violence disturbs society but governments and the security apparatus (police, military) leave the fanatical movements unpunished while blaming the other group(s) for being the cause of the social unrest by their mere existence. By doing this the government creates a climate of impunity for human rights abuses by those movements and their allies from the general public.
4. This reinforces the actions of the fanatical movements, and draws in more and more regular citizens. This leads to more pressure on the government to collaborate with their agenda, and also to more pressure and/or violence against the other group(s). Sometimes citizens will join out of fear instead of conviction.
5. In the end society and government (including the security apparatus and the judicial system) squeeze the members of the other group(s), to the point of (nearly) suffocating them. This extends to all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church spheres) and all spheres of society (family, church, school, marketplace, media, arts & entertainment, health system and government).
6. Culture as a whole is taken over by the agenda of the highly 'charged' social group representing a specific religion or ideology (point 1), and the worldview that is intrinsically linked to this agenda becomes a main cultural source.

In the second point it said violent attacks, often instigated by fanatical movements, are done through mob mobilization. That is the case when persecution gradually develops in society, co-opting the government. In cases in which the aim is to overthrow governments – as Islamic State is doing – violent attacks are more in the context of a religious (or ideological) revolutionary movement. (Consequently steps 2 to 6 will then be different.)

The length of time that persecution engines take to develop from stages 1 to 6 can differ greatly depending on the specific context in the country, and on the type of persecution engine. It can also be a continuous or a discontinuous process and/or a clearly visible or more invisible process.

## 8. Are only Christians who evangelize persecuted?

Not at all. In the context of persecution it makes sense to distinguish the following profiles of Christians.

<b>A. Convert to Christianity</b>	<b>B. Missionary active Christian</b>	<b>C. Christian by identity</b>
<p>Someone who left his or her former religion or ideological background to become a Christian (can also concern change from one type of Christianity, often the majority type, to another)</p> <p>‘Defectors’, who leave the ranks of a criminal organization after conversion to Christianity, are also part of this profile.</p>	<p>Christian who is active in the public domain by evangelism, or by social or political activities as a Christian</p>	<p>Someone with a Christian identity (or considered a Christian by antagonistic groups such as radical Islamic groups)</p> <p>This can concern people who live as Christians within the boundaries of regular church life (‘passive’ Christian lifestyle). It can also concern people who are considered Christians since ages but hardly know what the Christian faith entails.</p>

The first Christian profile is the ‘convert to Christianity’. Conversion to Christianity often causes hostilities against Christians by dominating religious or ideological groups. Conversion is normally unacceptable for these groups, especially so when that religion or ideology has radicalized i.e. has created a radical momentum in its midst. WWR takes the concept of conversion broadly so as not to limit it to religion alone. Conversion is about someone leaving his or her religious or ideological group setting or even an ‘anti-ideological’ or anarchistic group setting linked for instance to organized crime, to become a Christian.

The second Christian profile is the ‘missionary active Christian’. These Christians are often active in different forms of evangelization. Christians can also be active in other forms of Christian witness in the public domain, because they feel driven by their faith, by their King and Savior. This can concern different aspects of social or political work, such as socio-economic development workers, leaders of public opinion, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, human rights advocates, indigenous rights advocates etc. Activity in the public domain, be it evangelization or socio-political work, activates annoyance or causes feelings of threat, while at the same time Christians expose themselves clearly in the local community as potential targets.

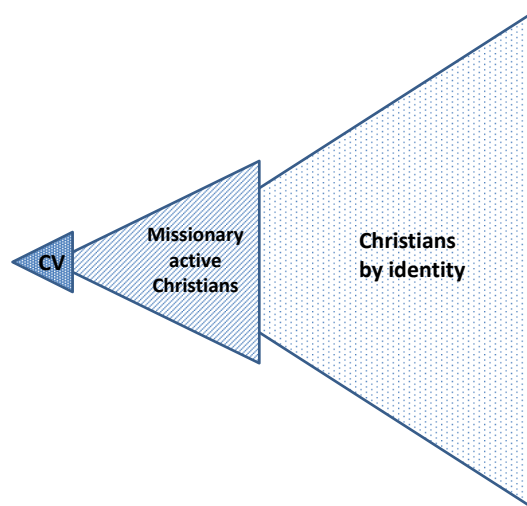
The third Christian profile is the ‘Christian by identity’. Whatever you say or do, or fail, is not important. It is sufficient to be considered a Christian as a reason for being targeted by persecutors. It can happen that people, who hardly know what the Christian faith entails, are pressurized, even killed for being (considered) Christians.

### **Gradual affection of Christian profiles by development of the persecution situation**

Which Christian profile is affected by persecution depends more on the phase of development of the persecution situation than on the type of persecution engine. Converts normally are the first victims of persecution. For instance converts to Christianity from a Muslim background. Even when society is not yet

Islamized and government has not yet adopted Sharia law, converts are very vulnerable in their private, family and community spheres of life. The same applies for 'defectors', be it that their community sphere of life is often more problematic than their private and family spheres of life. Following the converts are Christians who are missionary active in the public domain. When the persecution situation further develops, Christians by identity are affected too. In the end the visibility of Christianity in the public domain through churches and other Christian buildings is reduced by destruction and closure of buildings.

The figure shows how persecution often starts with converts, gets a boost with missionary active Christians and culminates with Christians by identity:

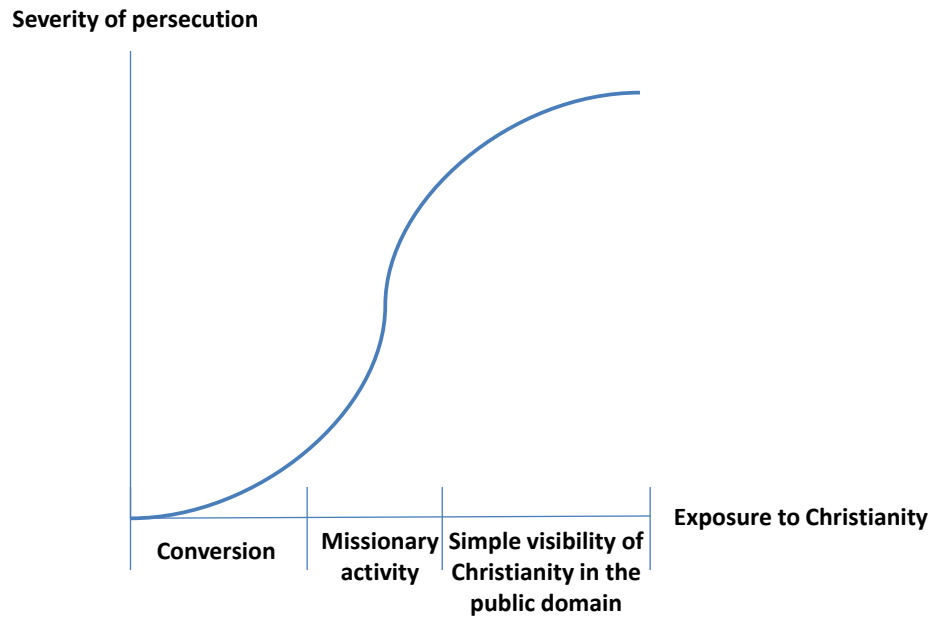


Otherwise said, converts put persecution into motion. Once people convert to Christianity, missionary activity is felt more and more as a threat and will thus be suppressed. If the Christian movement continues, all signs of Christianity in the country will be wiped out, be it Christian dress codes or church buildings or others.

### **Missionary activity as an accelerator of persecution**

Missionary active Christians bring persecution to the public domain. While persecution of converts often starts in the inner circles of converts, persecution of missionary active Christians normally happens in direct relation to public activity. That gives missionary activity a special meaning in the framework of persecution. Missionary activity is a paradoxical reality of the Christian faith. It is the undeniable vocation of Christians and producing the fruits of obedience, but it also crystallizes social and governmental tendencies to safeguard vested interests through bitter persecution of these same Christians, and even others who were not involved in missionary activity.

Missionary activity not only brings persecution to the public domain, it also accelerates the dynamics of persecution. The following figure describes this persecution development curve:



The progress of persecution and the 'role' of missionary activity could be compared to the turning point of a titration curve (chemistry). Gradually increasing numbers of converts might cause a gradually increasing awareness that something is going wrong from the point of view of (religious) social leaders (including government). However, there is a buffer capacity in society for (religious) dissent. Only when things become obvious – converts get a higher profile while missionary activity is visibly present in the public domain – alarm bells might start ringing, and there could be a turning point in persecution in the sense that it suddenly seems to increase disproportionately. The sheer visibility in the public domain of Christians, churches and other Christian buildings gives the final push to the development of persecution.

## 9. How do the duties of the State relate to persecution?

Of all entities, the State has a huge responsibility to make sure that human rights (Freedom of Religion or Belief in this case) are not violated. Generally speaking the State has the following duties:

- To respect – not breach or interfere with the enjoyment of the right
- To protect – stop and prevent violations
- To fulfill – adopt appropriate measures towards the full realization of rights; and the obligation to facilitate, provide and promote human rights.

The State has an active duty in terms of protecting the rights of Christians from different drivers (actors) of persecution. In the case where drivers of persecution are related to the persecution engines *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Secular intolerance* it is apparent that the State itself interferes with the right (duty to respect and protect). In the case where radical groups or militias violate rights of Christians, it means the government fails to protect, or even collaborates with these groups. It is clear that in these cases the State also fails to fulfill the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief.

## 10. What is meant by “persecution eclipse”?

This is a situation whereby persecution and civil conflict overlap to the extent that the former is in a real or imaginative sense overshadowed or rendered almost invisible by the latter. There are two typical contexts for *persecution eclipse*.

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

Secondly, *persecution eclipse* arises when conflicts catch international attention after their initial phases. An example is Boko Haram in Nigeria. In the beginning phases after its resurrection in 2010 Boko Haram killed government personnel (including security forces) and Christians. While government personnel (whether Muslims or Christians) were killed because they were linked to the government, Christians were killed because of their faith. When the international community caught attention of the situation, the conflict had already spread to everyone (Muslims too) who was not a Muslim of the type of Boko Haram. Another example is Central African Republic in 2012/2013. Christians were cruelly persecuted by the Islamic terrorists of Séléka, on their way to power in Bangui, the capital of the country. International attention arose when the anti-Balaka (seen by some as a Christian militia) had started to commit revenge attacks on Muslims in Bangui. The origin of the conflict was then quickly forgotten, and the (near) entire blame was put on the (so-called) Christian militia.

## 11. Does the WWL sometimes confuse civil conflict with persecution?

Conflicts such as those in Central Africa, Nigeria, Iraq and Syria are presented on the WWL – at least partly – as situations involving the persecution of Christians. The question is if WWL is thereby confusing ethnic rivalry and civil conflict with persecution. How much of it is really religious persecution?

Nigeria is a typical example where ‘persecution’ and ‘civil unrest’, ‘Islamization’ and ‘environmental degradation and migration’ are confused. The country has, in recent years, earned the reputation of being a country with an alarming record of religiously-related violence. Numerous incidents of such violence have resulted in the wanton loss of lives and property, and inflicted pain and suffering on individual people and communities, as well as undermined the fabric of the society. No one seems to be in doubt about the far-reaching and appalling implications of this for religious freedom. However, the phenomenon has also triggered a debate among analysts and commentators about the question of whether the Nigerian

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



situation is actually persecution, or just civil unrest. Is there an agenda of Islamization or is it about 'environmental degradation and migration'?

A paper, produced for WWR by a Nigerian researcher (identity withheld for security reasons), argues that the Nigerian case is a classic example of what could be referred to as [persecution eclipse](#). This is a situation whereby persecution and civil conflict overlap to the extent that the former is in a real or imaginative sense overshadowed or rendered almost invisible by the latter. Other papers illustrate the point for the [Nigerian Middle Belt region](#), see footnote 13. The researchers call the one-sided emphasis on environmental degradation and migration a "single story that gradually becomes the only story". According to the researchers, "though environmental degradation might have played a part, the conflict appears to be inspired by Islamic religious propaganda to dominate Christian territories and bring them under the *darul Islam* (house of Islam)."

Nigeria is only one example, there are others. In the complex mix of factors and motives for hostilities against civilians, many commentators look at the situation of civilians in civil conflicts without considering a) the role of religious identity on the side of the victim and b) the religious motivation on the side of the perpetrator. Religion very often plays an important or even decisive role, without which the situation cannot be fully or correctly understood. This applies even when religion is not the only factor.

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## 4.3 IIRF Audit – January 2019



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### Audit Statement on the outcomes of the Open Doors World Watch List 2019

The results of the Open Doors World Watch List 2019 are accurately presented by World Watch Research (WWR) within the parameters of precision reached in the processing of information. Country profiles give a thorough, detailed, and differentiated account of the discrimination and persecution of Christians.

In depth inspection of four sample countries selected by the auditors gave evidence that published methodology was diligently applied by WWR staff. Processes and most sources were thoroughly documented and have been made transparently available on request. The documentation mechanisms have been improved and the number of countries examined in-depth and presented has again been substantially increased which leads to a better coverage of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as Latin America and Europe.

The scoring accurately reflects the methodology and information processed. Nevertheless, the reliability 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 (November 2017) 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.

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 2019 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 14 January 2019

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09/2012

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