

WWL 2014 Top 50 Country Summaries

1. North Korea (score: 90 (89,683))

North Korea is an outstanding exception in many respects. For the 12th consecutive year it heads the World Watch List. In North Korea there is one all-encompassing strong persecution engine, excluding all other possible engines: Communist oppression. The rule of Kim Jong Un and his Workers` Party is absolute and strict. No one is allowed or able to challenge or question this rule. This ideology is based on Communist ideas, therefore, it is justified to name this as main persecution engine. It is inextricably tied with an unimaginable personality cult. The country 'exists' to serve the leaders. The God-like worship of the rulers leaves no room for any other religion. Every reverence not concentrated on the Kim dynasty will be seen as dangerous and state-threatening.

Christians face the highest imaginable pressure. They are pushed deeply underground and in most cases do not dare to show their Christian faith in their own families, especially not to young children, out of fear that they will be revealed as Christians. Every entity the government is not able to control will be eradicated and therefore the underground churches remain as secret as possible. In each and every sphere of life, the pressure is of the highest level. All defectors consistently testified that one would certainly be persecuted for practicing religion on a personal level. The fundamental reason for North Korea's difficulty in guaranteeing freedom of religion in accordance with its socialist Constitution stems from its belief that religions are a means of foreign encroachment and would inflict harm on North Korea's social disciplines. Consequently, in its social stratification system called "Songbun", all Christians are classified as "hostile" and even considered as own subclasses. Not only the believers themselves will be punished in case of discovery, but likely also their families. Immediate family members, who are not discovered being Christians themselves, will serve a sentence in a re-education camp. Discovered, mature Christians are sent to political labor camps from which there is no release possible. North Korean police officials hunt down and vigorously prosecute North Koreans who convert to Protestant Christianity while in China or those who attempt to bring Christian literature, primarily Bible verses, back with them to North Korea.

2. Somalia (score: 80 (80,013))

With a score of 80 points, Somalia ranks 2nd on the WWL 2014. In 2013, Somalia ranked 5 with a score of 74 points. The main type of Christianity in Somalia is the Christian converts from a Muslim Background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) and there is a very tiny population of expatriate aid workers. The position of Christians in Somalia has deteriorated and Somalia is included in the category 'Extreme Persecution'.

In Somalia, the main persecution engine relates to 'Islamic extremism' and to a lesser extent to 'tribal antagonism' and 'Organized corruption'. However, an OD researcher reports that in the case of Somalia the line between Islam extremism and organized corruption is not easy to draw. Somalia is Muslim majority country. Islamic religious leaders and government officials publicly maintain, uphold and reinforce that there is no room for Christians. Within this context, the militant Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab uses its presence in various parts of the country to radicalize communities at the expense of Christianity in general and individual Muslim background believers within their midst in particular. Within this context squeeze and smash pressures have increased at the expense of the tiny Christian community in Somalia.

Like in 2012, in 2013 the situation in Somalia continued to be very difficult for Christians. In all spheres of live, there is a strong drive to purge Christianity from Somalia. In addition, as a reflection of this anti-Christian sentiment, most Western NGOs have pulled out; because of their (supposed) affiliation with Christianity. Within this frame, whereby processes of 'Islamic extremism', 'Tribal antagonism', and 'Organized corruption' shape the persecution dynamics in Somalia, it remains to be seen how the Somalian church will develop in the future.

3. Syria (score: 79 (78,542))

For the first time in the history of the WWL, Syria enters the top ten. In the deteriorated situation of Syrian Christians, the rise of extremist Islamist elements plays a predominant role. The face of persecution in Syria has changed. Whereas the main persecution engine in pre-civil war Syria was Totalitarian paranoia, the current predominant engine has become Islamic extremism. Nearly half of rebels fighting in Syria have a jihadist or hardline Islamist background. As the conflict is becoming more and more sectarian, targeted violence against Christians has increased during the WWL reporting period. In fact, the Syrian opposition is increasingly "Islamizing". With the civil war, Syria's society is derailed in such a way that pressure for every Syrian citizen is high. Within this context of war and with the rising influence of Islamic jihadis in the opposition forces, Christians have become an increasingly vulnerable group, facing increasing faith-related pressure in all spheres of life. We have received reports of many Christians being abducted, physically harmed and killed. Within the context of civil war, many churches are damaged or destroyed, in many cases deliberately. On 21 October, Sadad, a predominantly Christian town was invaded by Islamist militias, before being re-taken by the Syrian army on October 31. The increasing influence of radical Islamist and jihadist groups will further inflame sectarian tensions and more specific Christian persecution, added to the pressure Christians already experience being stuck in the middle of the crossfire. With the sectarian component of the civil war rising, Christians are expected to suffer increasingly for faith-related reasons. If the conflict results in an extremist Islamic take over – the situation will even be worse for Christians and other minority groups.

4. Iraq (score: 78 (78,165))

Iraq's score rose from 74 to 78 points. The situation for Christians in central and south Iraq is as bad as last year, however the north is developing into a more and more dangerous place for Christians. The main persecution engine in Iraq is Islamic Extremism. Islamic extremist groups desire a religious cleansing of Iraq and wish to make the country purely Islamic. The traditional churches (Assyrian Orthodox Church, Chaldean Catholic or Syrian Catholic Church, Armenian Church), the evangelical churches (Nineveh area, Bagdad and Basra) and the Muslim converts to Christianity (Muslim Background Believers) are all equally affected by persecution. Local Christians are faced by persecution or discrimination mostly from authorities, non-Christian religious leaders and fanatical movements. MBBs and to some extent evangelical Christians are also opposed by the (extended) family. The expatriate Christian community is increasingly monitored by authorities. In Iraq's, pressure on Christians is high in all spheres of life. Sharia is the primary source of law, which forbids conversion of Muslims to other religions. This makes it legally impossible to apply freedom of belief in the cases of converts from Islam as they are not able to change the religious designation on their own ID cards. As a minority, Christians are also an easy target for kidnappers as they are not part of a tribe who can protect them nor are they likely to react violently. Reports from local sources seem to indicate that there has been an increase in individual attacks and threats against Christians during 2013. According to a local official in Mosul, every two or three days a Christian is killed, kidnapped or abused. A bad omen is that even in the relatively freer semi-autonomous Kurdish region, the security situation of Christians is deteriorating due to rising Islamic extremism.

5. Afghanistan (score: 78 (78,029))

The persecution engines prevalent in Afghanistan are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Organized corruption'. 'When Satan fell to earth, he fell in Kabul' is an often quoted Afghan saying. All Afghan Christians come from a Muslim background. If it becomes known that someone has converted to Christianity, he or she faces heavy societal and familial pressure. Muslim clergy most likely will be the instigators and local authorities can be involved, too. Those who decide to leave Islam and who are considered to be apostates are in an extremely difficult situation, illustrated by the recent appeal of MP Nazir Ahmad Hanafi to execute such people. People are deeply entrenched in their families, villages, tribes and own people. If someone dares to turn from his tribe and age-old values and to embrace something new and maybe even foreign, this results in high pressure to return to tradition or otherwise be branded a traitor and excluded from the community. This applies to all 'deviations' but even more so if someone turns to Christianity. The Christian religion is still considered to be a Western religion and hostile to Afghan culture, society and Islam.

Afghan Christians face enormous pressure in all spheres of life. There is no public church, even for the expats. As conversion is seen as an act of apostasy, converts will keep it a secret from everybody. It is dangerous for Christians to pray and sing or to keep Christian materials with them – any connection with Christianity is dangerous. Children of converts also live a life of secrecy and always have to be careful of what to say and to whom. Afghanistan is one of the best examples of a country where pressure (squeeze) is so high that no additional violence (smash) is needed in order to push Christians underground.

It is unlikely that the situation for Christians will improve in the near future. The withdrawal of the international forces in 2014, will probably lead to a new phase in which the current regime will have to deal with the threat of the Taliban as well as the different ethnic factions in the country.

6. Saudi Arabia (score: 78 (77,727))

Scoring 78 points, Saudi Arabia holds the sixth position on the World Watch List 2014. The main persecution engine is 'Islamic extremism'. The desert kingdom controls the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina (birth and resting place of Mohammed, the prophet of Islam) and is defined by Wahhabism, a purist and strict interpretation of Islam. Other religions are not allowed to be openly practiced. Extremist breeding ground is widely present in the kingdom. Most Christians in Saudi Arabia are expatriates who live and work temporarily in the country. Asian and African workers, besides being exploited and poorly paid, are regularly exposed to verbal and physical violence also because of their Christian faith. There are some converts from Islam who often live their faith in God in deepest secret. There are no provisions for religious freedom in the kingdom's constitution or basic laws and anti-religious sentiments are strong throughout society. The legal system is based on Sharia law and conversion to another religion is punishable by death. Evangelising Muslims and the distribution of Christian literature, such as Bibles, and other non-Muslim literature is illegal. Muslim Background Believers also run the great risk of honor killing if their family or community discovers their faith and some have fled the country because of this. During 2013, several Christian migrant fellowships were raided by the police and the religious police. Several tens of worshippers were detained and all with out-of-date residency status were deported. As the political and economic situation is not expected to change in the short run, the situation for Christians is not expected to improve. However, the number of Christian converts from Islam and other religions is increasing, along with their boldness in sharing their new faith.

7. Maldives (score: 77 (77,170))

The main persecution engine affecting Christians in the Maldives is 'Islamic extremism'. The Islamic Government sees itself as the protector of Islam, instituting a set of laws that basically prohibits a Maldivian to convert to other faiths, on the penalty of facing harsh consequences including losing citizenship. To be Maldivian is equated with being a Muslim, leaving no room for every deviation towards other faiths or to no faith. Officially, there are no Maldivian Christians, only expat Christians.

Maldivian Christians experience enormous pressure of persecution in every sphere of life. There is extensive social control to keep watch over every individual to correct any deviation from the path of Islam. As the population density is extremely high, there is virtually no privacy: you might say the private sphere barely exists. The pressure is mirrored also in family and community sphere. Consequently, there are no church gatherings and buildings in the Maldives. The few Maldivian Christians take all precautionary measures possible to avoid being discovered.

The level of violence is not very high. Christians are deeply underground as they know about the consequences once they are discovered. The Maldives are a good example of a country where the pressure (squeeze) is so enormously high that no additional violence (smash) is needed to suppress Christians.

Elections made international headlines in autumn 2013 as they were annulled and postponed when former president and Human Rights activist Nasheed turned out to be first, but failed to get absolute majority. The final elections of 9 November 2013 saw Nasheed again as frontrunner. The run-off has been won by Abdullah Yameen from Islamic Peoples' Party Maldives, half-brother of longtime president and dictator Gayoom by 1.61 percent. The current Maldivian government reiterated its role as the protector and defender of Islam and its values. Given the sternness of the government and the support it enjoys by Maldivian citizens, lately shown by

a demonstration of young Maldivian citizens for full implementation of Sharia in April 2013, it cannot be expected that there will be substantial changes in the years to come.

8. Pakistan (score: 77 (77,139))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Pakistan are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Organized corruption'. Pakistan's Christians are caught in the crossfire between Islamic militant organizations and mobs that routinely violently target Christians on the one hand, and an Islamizing culture on the other hand that results in Christians being isolated from the rest of the population. Many Christians who can afford to leave the country are leaving. Some observers are talking about the "Talibanization" of the Pakistani society. The notorious blasphemy laws continue to have devastating consequences for minorities, including Christians.

The newly elected Prime Minister is tiptoeing his way to please the strong Islamic extremist currents, so no initiative is to be expected from him. A literally devastating blow showing the growing extremism was the twin bombing attack on 22 September 2013 on Anglican All Saints Church in Peshawar, leaving 89 church visitors dead. Understanding that "church" in Pakistan is not just a place of worship for the average Christian, but also a place of social activities and so there is more than one reason to be regular in church, the church sphere deserves more attention than just in the usual understanding of the collective dimension of freedom of religion.

Attacks on a larger scale also occur apart from that, if rumors about alleged blasphemy are spread. In this reporting period, this happened during Christmas 2012 in Iqbal Town, in March 2013 in Badami Bagh and in April 2013 in Francis colony in Gujranwala and Khanewal, Multan, resulting in several wounded Christians and dozens of houses and shops destroyed.

Women and girls are experiencing violence every day. Especially women and girls from minority groups are vulnerable and easy targets for rape and sexual abuse. They are easy prey and considered to be inferior people. Frequently, they are poor, depending on landlords and employers and even if they would dare to file a complaint with police or a court case, they would not get justice. Sexual assaults against underage Christian girls by Muslim men continue to be reported. Catholic NGOs estimate at least 700 Christian girls are kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam every year.

9. Iran (score: 77 (76,696))

On this year's WWL Iran ranks 9th, with a score of 77 points, 5 more than last year. The increase in points of Iran is explained by a further deteriorated situation for Christians. The main persecution dynamic in Iran is 'Islamic extremism'. Islam is the official religion and all laws must be consistent with the official interpretation of Sharia law. Almost all Christian activity illegal, especially when it occurs in Persian languages. Christians continue to be seen as threat by the regime as their numbers are growing and allegedly even children of political and spiritual leaders are leaving Islam for Christianity. Of all types of Christianity, mostly Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are affected, as well as Protestant Evangelicals. There is relatively less pressure on historical ethnic Christian minorities as the Armenian and Assyrian, as long as they do not evangelize Muslims. There is pressure on Christians in all spheres of life. This pressure is increasing and comes particularly from family and authorities. Any Muslim who leaves Islam faces the death penalty and church services are monitored by the secret police. The regime's focus is on those reaching out to converts and even well-established Christian denominations are not safe from harassment. Although ethnic (Armenian and Assyrian) Christians are a recognized religious minority in Iran who officially are guaranteed religious freedom, they have reported imprisonment, physical abuse, harassment and discrimination because of their faith. Pressures and attacks against Christian communities have continued. Although, Iran seems to have chosen a new direction after the election of new president Hassan Rouhani in June 2013, time will tell whether this will have consequences for the treatment of Christians in the country. Meanwhile curiosity and interest in Christianity (and in other non-Islamic religions) is growing continuously among Iranian Muslims who are disillusioned with Iran's state-sponsored Shi'ism.

10. Yemen (score: 74 (74,012))

In the World Watch List (WWL) 2014 Yemen holds position 10, with a score of 74 points. The pressure Christians experience in Yemen is comparable to that in Saudi Arabia, however there are a few expat churches in the country. The main persecution dynamic in Yemen is 'Islamic extremism'. The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and Sharia is the source of all legislation. There is some religious freedom for foreigners but evangelism is prohibited. If their conversion to Christianity is known, Christians from a Muslim background do not only face strong persecution from the authorities but also from family and other parts of society. They are not allowed to have their own gatherings, so they meet in secret locations. Members of family, society and extremist Islamic groups threaten 'apostates' with death if they do not revert to Islam. Threats from family, society and extremist groups against MBBs are very serious and indigenous Christians have been killed for their faith in the very recent past. Due to this risk, many MBBs have had to go into hiding in-country or even flee from their country. Female MBBs are under threat of forced marriage once their conversion is revealed. Yemeni politics are extremely complex. The country is deeply divided between pro- and anti-Saleh forces and the south of the country is claiming its independence. Besides that, al-Qaeda-linked groups are gaining more power in the country. Tourism to Yemen has dropped dramatically. This shift of focus will have a rather deteriorating influence on the small Christian church mainly consisting of MBBs, especially as it is weakened by the leaving of expat Christians.

11. Sudan (score: 73 (72,931))

Sudan is a poverty stricken Muslim country. In the recent past, South Sudan became independent from the North. With a score of 73 points Sudan ranks 11 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, Sudan ranked 12 with a score of 70 points. The deterioration of the position of Christians can be attributed to a) the break away of Christian-oriented South Sudan from Sudan, b) efforts of the current regime to maintain its leading role and c) an increase of Islamic extremist tendencies within Sudan's society.

The main persecution engines are Islamic Extremism and Dictatorial paranoia. However, there is a fine line between 'Islamic extremism' and 'Totalitarian paranoia'. The regime's leaders are mainly radical Islamist and the ruling National Congress Party aims to further an Islamic agenda. This implies that the persecution of Christians is not primarily driven by totalitarian tendencies, but radical Islamist sympathies.

Next to a tiny expatriate Christian community, other Christians affected by persecution belong to historical Christian communities, non-traditional protestant background communities, and Muslim Background Believers. The latter suffer severely in all spheres of life.

Compared with last year, violence has reduced. However, it is still bleak compared with most other countries on the WWL. A variety of incidents are reported, such as faith related killings, damaging Christian properties, detention and forced marriage. Christians fled the country for faith based reasons as well.

The current regime will likely continue to persecute Christians, as part of attempt to maintain their power-base. Within this context an OD field research expects that the position of the church in Sudan will worsen. In part due to diminished field presence of the international community. [END]

12. Eritrea (score: 72 (72,381))

Eritrea scores 72 points and ranks 12 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, Eritrea ranked 10th with a score of 72 points. In recent years, the position of Christians in Eritrea has been increasingly under pressure, in particular non-traditional protestant Christian communities, members of Eritrean Coptic community as well as those Copts shifting towards non-traditional protestant churches, and an unknown group of Muslim background believers. This can be mainly attributed to Eritrea's current regime headed by president Mr. Isaias Aferworki.

The main persecution engine affecting Christians in Eritrea is Totalitarian paranoia. Islamic extremism is on the rise, and there are traces of 'Ecclesiastical arrogance' as well. The control-focused nature of the regime leads to persecution of Christians in all spheres of life. Moreover, Islamic extremism adds to the existing pressure on Christians in particularly Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs). The process of persecution is compounded by the Eritrean Orthodox Church and their attempt to stay close to the regime. In all spheres of life Christians of all present church types feel the dynamics of persecution, but members of the Eritrean Coptic Church enjoy a relative freedom. Then, Christians suffer relatively high level of violence as well, such as house raids, arrests, detentions and systematic torture. This type of violence, in combination with other manifestations of totalitarian paranoia contributes Eritreans leaving their country search for better living circumstances.

An OD field researcher suggests that Eritrea's society continues to develop an atmosphere of fear. Moreover, percentage wise more Christians than Muslims attempt to flee Eritrea. Subsequently, this weakens the position of the church and the vibrancy of local church life. This leads to a grim future outlook and it is not expected that positive change will occur soon.

13. Libya (score: 71 (70,648))

On the World Watch List 2014, Libya receives 71 points, 11 more than on the World Watch List 2013. The position of Christians was already extremely difficult, and has only deteriorated, making Libya the worst ranking country in North Africa. Within a context of anarchy and absent rule of law, Christians – both nationals and foreigners – are squeezed between fanatical religious groups and criminal gangs. The persecution engine affecting Christians in Libya is Islamic extremism. As in most Muslim countries, converting from Islam brings social pressure. Muslim Background Believers are always at risk from their families; there were some reported cases of beatings by family members. Most Libyan Christians are afraid to meet with other believers, as any kind of religious gathering (other than Islamic) for Libyans is forbidden. Expats are allowed to have their own churches, but Libyans are not allowed to attend.

After the demise of Gadhafi's regime, the source of persecution has changed, but Christians continue to experience high levels of pressure in all spheres of life. During Gadhafi's reign, the main source of persecution was the government and its secret services. Now, Islamist fanatical movements such as the Salafists are responsible for most of the persecution and violent incidents against Christians, in a country where there is no central government and where rule of law is absent. Violence against Christians in Libya has increased during the reporting period, with many violent incidents targeting both national and expat Christians. Salafists and other Islamist groups are responsible for most of the incidents.

14. Nigeria (score: 70 (70,487))

The situation for Christians in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern provinces, has remained unchanged with respect to last year and has even deteriorated a little. With 70 points on the World Watch List 2014 (2 more points than in 2013), Nigeria remains a country to be watched. In Nigeria, the main persecution engine is Islamic extremism. Although Boko Haram is most often associated with persecution of Christians in Northern Nigerian, the pattern of persecution is much more complex than only killing or wounding of Christians – as well as moderate Muslims – by an Islamic terrorist group. This is especially so in the 12 Northern Sharia states where local government and social groups leave hardly any space for Christians to live their own lives. Persecution is most pronounced in the Sharia states, but also partly extended into neighboring states, and played heavily upon Christians in their family and community spheres of life.

Persecution, however, is not only focused on Muslim Background Believers (MBB) but on all types of Christians in many of the Northern States. Levels of violence in Nigeria remained extremely high. Based on media research by the World Watch Unit, 612 Nigerian Christians were killed during this reporting period, hundreds of cases of physical aggression were recorded and nearly 300 churches were destroyed. The current situation in Nigeria casts dark clouds ahead, notwithstanding good news about spiritual revitalisation of the Church under the yoke of persecution. The emerging links between al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Boko Haram, and other

Islamist terrorist groups in the region, make it likely that the church will suffer more violent persecution in the near future.

15. Uzbekistan (score: 68 (67,626))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Uzbekistan are 'Totalitarian paranoia' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Organized corruption' and 'Islamic extremism'. No religious activities beyond state-run and controlled institutions are allowed. Both mainstream Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses are frequently branded as "extremists" for their practice of religion outside state-sanctioned structures. Pressure from this side is unlikely to dwindle as the leadership is preparing for transition, taking into account the president's age and health. Protestants are seen as a destabilizing element in society, so they need not only to be controlled, but if necessary, even eradicated. Security forces increased wire-tapping homes in order to find extremists which also affected believers and churches. Another strand of crackdown targets religious education of all types, and many control systems and mechanisms derived from the communist system are still in place. Churches face the permanent danger of being raided, their services disrupted and terminated and Christian literature confiscated. Church members face harassment, detention, and arrests for "illegal religious activity" or from time to time "extremism charges", which include holding private prayer meetings or possessing "illegal religious literature". It is up to the state to define the illegality of a meeting or a piece of literature. The official import of scriptures and Christian literature for registered organizations, like the Bible Society, is hindered. Churches need compulsory registration, but the administration has not issued any permit since 1999 and many churches have lost their registration and some even their buildings instead.

Uzbekistan is the birthplace of two Islamic extremist groups which are fighting in Afghanistan at the moment. They are not known as targeting Christians, as the country's Christian minority is small and – at least as far as domestic believers are concerned – try to hide their faith. Once discovered, families and friends will push them to repent and return to their old faith. Local Mullahs will preach against them, putting additional pressure on those converts. There are also Christians imprisoned for their faith, like Tohar Haydarov who has been sentenced to ten years in 2010 and Sharofat Allamova who has been sentenced to 18 months in May 2013.

16. Central African Republic (score: 67 (66,998))

The Central African Republic (CAR) enters the World Watch List in 2014 for the first time with 67 points. The high score of the country can be explained almost exclusively by the high degree of violence against Christians caused by the rebellion of the Séléka movement. The main persecution engine in the Central African Republic is Islamic extremism. The internal revolution which saw the victory of Séléka, a coalition of rebels dissatisfied with the regime, and the ouster of President François Bozizé, is responsible for the high degree of pressure and violence against Christians. The Séléka movement, with no apparent Islamist agenda but composed in majority of (foreign) Muslims, has ravaged the country, specifically targeting Christian properties (houses and churches) and government buildings. Christians are presently embroiled in what has been termed an interfaith conflict. Since the outbreak of the rebellion by the Séléka coalition predominantly composed of Muslims from CAR associated with Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries, these mercenaries only attacked Christians and non-Muslims. The desecration of Christian churches and the violence towards Christians (rape, robbery, kidnapping, torture, murder, etc.) are evidence of this.

The Christian population – all types of Christianity – is the most vulnerable group in the current crisis in CAR. Any church and property belonging to ordinary Christians is a target for Séléka. For a Christian majority country such as CAR, the degree of pressure on Christians is surprising. Due to the uprising, the freedom of Christians is restricted heavily throughout all spheres of life, though to a lesser extent in the private and family spheres. The levels of violence in CAR are unprecedented. In fact, CAR receives the highest possible score as far as physical violence is concerned. This score includes the killing of at least 13 pastors, and the rape of many women.

17. Ethiopia (score: 65 (64,720))

With a score of 65 points, Ethiopia ranks 17th on the World Watch List 2014. Compared with 2013, the position of Christians appears to have slightly deteriorated. This does not only apply to the situation of Muslim

Background Believers (MBBs). It seems that the pressure on members of the other church types has slightly increased as well.

In Ethiopia, Christians of various kinds are affected by four persecution engines being 'Islamic extremism', Ecclesiastical arrogance, Totalitarian paranoia and Tribal antagonism. Although 34% of the population is Muslim, Christians feel the increasing prominence of Islam on local, regional and national level. Moreover, for many years, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has been seriously persecuting believers who left their ranks to join (mostly) non-traditional Protestant churches, or believers who joined the renewal movements within the EOC. Next, it appears that the government is ideologically developing towards a Chinese governance model, thereby creating a new persecution dynamic. Lastly, a traditional belief system called 'Wakefeta' is becoming more prominent in certain parts of Ethiopia causing some Christians to distance themselves of Christianity, while former 'wakefeta' believers turning to Christ, become actively isolated and marginalised from social activities within tribal communities. Drivers behind the mix of persecution engines are for example (non)-Christian religious leaders, government officials, the extended family and the public at large and tribal leaders.

A field report indicates about a covert struggle between the government and Muslim leaders, which seems to intensify. This process could backfire on the Ethiopian church including the MBB community. New laws to ban religious messages in the public domain could be very well only made applicable to non-traditional churches. It is needed to be seen how the church in Ethiopia perceives is able to respond in a fruitful way.

18. Vietnam (score: 65 (64,360))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Vietnam are 'Communist oppression' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Totalitarian paranoia'. Vietnam is one of the few remaining communist countries in the world. Authorities perceive Christianity as a foreign influence and Christians as Western agents. The regime is "guided by a high level of suspicion especially toward both the Catholic community of about eight million and the Evangelical Protestant groups approaching 1.7 million in number. Vietnam exercises a high level of control over all religious activities and severely restricts any independent religious practices" as the Working Group Report for the Universal Periodic Review on the country at the UN Human Rights Council summarized in June 2013.

Approximately two thirds of all Christians come from a tribal background, many of them being Hmong. Pressure to return to traditional faith and take part in rituals, be it by families, neighbours or local religious leaders, is very high, especially in rural areas. The tribal background of believers is also one reason why authorities watch Christians closely as there are tribal movements aiming at a separate state. The government is described by in-country sources as an "insecure regime" which explains to a certain extent why the regime harshly goes against all deviating thoughts. Reportedly, there are fears that the spark that raised the so-called 'Arab Spring' might fuel movements in Vietnam, too – a fear that adds to the government's paranoia. This affects Christians and especially the Catholic Church as it is well organized and headed by a foreigner. Vietnam's Christians face most pressure in the national and church spheres, be it that churches are monitored and unable to register, be it that training of church leaders and members or work among youth is hindered or made impossible. Catholic church and Evangelical church still face the problem of expropriation and the impossibility of claiming possessions. All printing of religious materials needs government approval, import licenses are virtually never granted.

According to Decree 92 which took effect January 1st, 2013, religious groups must register in advance, their practices with the People's Committees at local level, including the number of followers, places of worship, schedule, forms of practices, the religion's principles, and representatives' names and addresses.

19. Qatar (score: 63 (63,460))

Qatar ranks 19th on this year's World Watch List, with a score of 63 points. The increased score for Qatar is due to the fact that more is known about the bad treatment of Christian migrant workers. The main persecution engine in Qatar is Islamic extremism. Qatar adopted Islam as its official religion in the seventh century. Public

worship of religions other than Islam was prohibited until recently. Qatar – one of the richest countries in the world - is one of the largest donors of Islamic terrorism: it is known to support rebels in Syria and Mali. It is also financing the construction of mosques e.g. in Europe and Africa as a means to spread Islam. Converts to Christianity from an Islamic background, are the type of Christianity that is persecuted the most. They are considered apostates and may face the death penalty. From time to time, we receive reports that MBBs are physically harmed for their faith by family or peers, who view the conversion as harming the honor of the family. As a result of this oppression, MBBs strongly protect their anonymity for fear of gossip and betrayal. Also, migrants are not free to openly practice their faith and many among them hardly have the opportunity to attend church in a special compound in the dessert outside of Doha. MBBs are faced confronted with the strongest persecution within their own families and private life but also in all other spheres of life (community, national, church life). Expat Christians are especially limited in church, community and national life. We did not receive any reports of specific anti-Christian violence during the current reporting period. In the short run, no major changes are expected for the situation of religious freedom for Christians.

20. Turkmenistan (score: 62 (62,138))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Turkmenistan are ‘Totalitarian paranoia’ (main engine), and to a lesser extent ‘Aggressive secularism’ and ‘Islamic extremism’. Turkmenistan’s autocratic regime executes strict control in order to avoid the emergence of any independent economic, social or cultural groups, including churches. The ruling elite around President Berdymukhamedov will do whatever it deems necessary to stay in power, suppressing all groups it perceives as dangerous. A more special Turkmen feature is the emphasis the regime put on the national ideology introduced by former long-term ruler Niyazov, called “Ruhnama”. This was part of every student’s learning and omni-present in the country until recently and contained not only an emphasis on nationalism, but also on secularism. The new ruler is beginning to introduce his own ideology. Though the secularism aims at countering possible Islamic extremist currents in the region, it is easy to see that the demand to revere the ruler like a higher being will bring Christians and other religious minorities in strong conflict with their own faith.

While until now no extremist groups have appeared, Islam is an important part of Turkmen culture. The former ruler said that the only other book Turkmens should read besides Ruhnama is the Koran. Moreover, Islam plays an important role in everyday life, especially in rural areas. Communities and families will react strongly if someone decides to change his or her faith and no deviation would be accepted. The general level of pressure on Christians in Turkmenistan is high, but the church sphere and the private sphere stand out. Every meeting for religious reasons is met with suspicion. All Christian assemblies need to register. All unregistered religious activity is strictly illegal and the government uses the “Council on Religious Affairs” to monitor and pressure churches. There are informers in the churches, so Christians always have to be careful about what they say and how they say it, whether registered or not.

At the time of writing there are nine conscientious objectors from Jehovah’s Witnesses in prison because they deny the obligatory military service. Finally, at the beginning of the reporting period, in November 2012, a Baptist church in Turkmenbashi was burned to the ground.

21. Laos (score: 62 (61,559))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Laos are ‘Communist oppression’ (main engine) and to a lesser extent ‘Other religious militancy’, ‘Tribal antagonism’ and ‘Organized corruption’.

Laos is one of the five remaining Marxist-Leninist countries in the world and as such strictly opposed to any influence deemed as foreign or even Western. In order to keep everything under control, the communist party puts enormous pressure on the small Christian minority. They have a negative view on Christians and consider them to be ‘foreign agents.’ However, the main problem is the conduct of the local authorities, who regard Christians as enemies.

The Buddhist faith is deeply rooted and broadly anchored within country and society. There is a widely shared conviction that Laos and Buddhism belong inextricably together and Buddhism should always take the supreme position in the country. Every person deviating from the mainstream will be closely monitored and targeted.

The goal of local religious Buddhist leaders of keeping their country “pure” and the goal of the political leaders of keeping control are matching well as both want to control society and every possible deviation.

Believers from a tribal background – which includes the vast majority of all Christian believers - are suffering the most. Occasionally, some Christians are arrested, detained and pressured to renounce their faith. This is especially true among Christians from the Hmong tribes who are sometimes even killed, often in army clashes, where for example churches where Christian refugees try to find shelter are targeted. Pressure on church life is extremely high. Only the limited number of registered Christian congregations is allowed to have services. There is a lack of leadership and Biblical training because most of the Christians are residing in remote areas. National life in terms of religion is governed by Decree 92, which demands the government’s prior consent for any religious activity. Conversion to a new faith, sharing the Gospel, and conducting church activities require government permission. Based on the experience of Christian leaders, government rarely gives consent. Also printing or importing Christian materials is restricted by that Decree.

22. Egypt (score: 61 (60,979))

With a score of 61 points, Egypt increases in rank on the World Watch List 2014. In recent years, the position of Christians in Egypt – not only Muslim Background Believers, but also more and more the large indigenous Coptic community – has become increasingly pressured. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Egypt are Islamic extremism (main engine), and to a lesser extent Totalitarian paranoia and Organized corruption. President Morsi’s failure to adequately address the country’s economic challenges was the main trigger for the massive protests in July 2013 which led to his ouster by the military. Shortly after the military coup that ousted President Morsi, there was an upsurge in sectarian violence on Coptic Christians.

In August 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood was responsible for the burning of 38 churches and the damaging of 23 churches. Muslim Background Believers have always been victims of persecution while the large Coptic minority, while facing important difficulties, had been tolerated because of its historical presence and its demographic size (estimated at 10 million). In the case of Muslim Background Believers, their family members are often a source of persecution. Family members often punish converts to Christianity for abandoning the Islamic faith. In recent years, things have changed, causing the historical Christian communities to be targeted as well. Muslim Background Believers face severe limitations within their homes and with their extended family. In the church sphere, church autonomy is generally respected, although Copts do face administrative obstacles. As long as the political instability continues and the economic challenges are not addressed, social protests will not cease. As Islam is gradually taking over the country’s culture, there is a growing sentiment to reject Christians.

23. Myanmar (score: 59 (59,397))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Myanmar are ‘Other religious militancy’ (main engine) and to a lesser extent ‘Communist oppression’, ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘Organized corruption’. The majority of Myanmar’s people are of Burmese ethnicity (Bama). Being Bama is equated with being Buddhist. Everyone deviating from this heritage is labelled as being potentially dangerous. Pressure comes from the relatively new phenomenon of a movement of extremist Buddhist monks called “969” and also the government which tacitly supports such movements. The government still is nominally communist and does everything to keep in control. Buddhism is used as the main tool to unite the nation as Myanmar has strong ethnic minorities and Bama make up roughly two-thirds of the people. Some larger minorities are predominantly Christian. Myanmar’s Christians face the most pressure in the church and national sphere, but also in community sphere. Less pressure can be seen in private and family sphere. As most Christians belong to the ethnic minority groups which are more or less homogenous, therefore the pressure from family is less. Pressure comes mostly from the outside in dealing with the government. It is impossible to invite foreign Christian workers or publish, print or import Christian material. Churches are monitored, sometimes even closed, registration can be impossible, depending on local administrators.

Christians from Bama background, but also those of Muslim Background face additional pressure in the family and community sphere as they will be challenged to recant their new faith. All children of Christians are facing constant disadvantages in education. Myanmar remains among the 10 most violent states for Christians on the

WWL 2014. Despite several ceasefire agreements with different ethnic groups including some Christian majority groups, the largest group continues to be in clashes with the army. These clashes happen to be at the Chinese border and spilling over to Chinese territory. Therefore, China also hosts a large refugee camp with more than 100,000 Kachin having fled the attacks. This has resulted in China putting pressure on both sides to accept new peace talks. Notwithstanding the talks, dozens of Christians have reportedly been killed and church buildings as well as homes have been destroyed. Rape and the selling of child brides are used as a tactic of war. Additionally, Christians are often just caught in the crossfire of the government's predominant goal to preserve Buddhism.

24. Brunei (score: 57 (57,392))

The main persecution engine affecting Christians in Brunei is 'Islamic extremism'. Brunei is an Islamic nation, based on an ideology called 'Malay Islamic Monarchy', presenting the monarchy as the defender of the faith. By decree, contact with Christians in other countries, the import of Bibles and the public celebration of Christmas are banned.

Having in mind this position, the Sultan has recently favoured Brunei government democratization and declared himself Prime Minister and President. In 2004, the Legislative Council, which had been dissolved since 1962, was reopened. Sharia law has been fully implemented since 2011 for all Muslims in the country. Islam governs all spheres of life in Brunei. The government follows a plan of Islamization among the tribal people in supporting the so-called 'Dahkwa' movement (Islamic evangelism). Christian pastors and workers are considered 'enemies'. Entering a tribal village will be monitored by government spies and police. Restrictions are highest in the private and in the church sphere. But there is also high pressure in the family and community sphere. As far as Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are concerned, families, friends and neighbours can easily become sources of hostilities, even violence. Changing religion on one's ID card is impossible and churches have to be very careful in what they do and say and how and where they do it.

Church leaders' movements are especially monitored and it is difficult to train church members or to provide theological studies. Christian book shops are not allowed in Brunei and a person can carry only one Bible from outside the country for personal use. It is impossible to print Christian materials in the country and importing them is forbidden. Even though no violent incidents have been reported in the covered period, the level of fear among the Christian minority is very high. The regulation of Christian schools deserves a special mentioning as the Sultan announced that all schools must have Islamic religious studies as a compulsory subject from January 2013.

25. Colombia (score: 56 (56,445))

Because of the overlap of distinct persecution engines, and particular high levels of violence, Colombia obtains 56 points on the World Watch List 2014. Three persecution engines are prevalent in Colombia: 'Organized corruption', 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Aggressive secularism'. All types of Christianity can become victims of 'Organized corruption', though it affects mostly the more outspoken Christians who play prominent roles in social or public life, or fulfill leadership positions, both at community and national levels. Converts to Christianity within indigenous communities – Tribal antagonism – are seen as a threat to the power of local fiefs and indigenous ancestral traditions. Because they are seen as a threat to the perpetuation of the indigenous culture and traditions, the rural Christian indigenous population of a number of autonomous territories of Colombia, such as the territories in the Cauca, Córdoba and Putumayo departments, is victim of hostilities. Signs of repeated expressions of intolerance for the participation of Christians in the public sphere – Aggressive secularism –, particularly in public universities have also been observed.

Levels of plain violence in Colombia, attributable to both 'Organized corruption' and 'Tribal antagonism' are high. Numerous Christians are displaced from their lands, gender-based violence targeting Christians is on the increase, sermons are monitored and churches intervened. Notwithstanding the current dialogue in Cuba between the Colombian government and FARC, violence in Colombia will remain a structural phenomenon. In areas where the government has lost control of public security, drug cartels and illegal armed groups still continue to operate with impunity. This means that Christians will continue to be targeted for persecution

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

26. Jordan (score: 56 (56,236))

With a rank of 26th versus 34th last year, Jordan ranks highest in the history of the WWL. The rise is explained mainly by a further deterioration in the situation of religious freedom especially for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). The main persecution engine active in Jordan is Islamic extremism, and to a lesser extent Tribal antagonism. Tensions between moderate and Islamist elements in Jordanian society are on the increase, under the influence of the Arab Uprisings. The Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists, emboldened by their increased influence in the region, have hijacked the demands for more reforms to serve their agenda: to transform Jordan into an Islamic state. For long, Jordan has been one of the most liberal countries of the region in terms of freedom of religion. However, the tide seems to be turning for Christians. Although traditional Christians still enjoy a relatively high degree of religious freedom, MBBs are experiencing the repercussions of increased radical influences in society. Of all types of Christianity, converts from Islam to Christianity (MBBs) are persecuted the most for their faith. They especially experience pressure from the side of their families which can even result in serious violence, including death. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities also face opposition, especially from the side of government officials. Evangelical churches are not recognized by the Jordanian government. Jordan scores relatively high on the private, family and church spheres of life. This is due to the very high pressure MBBs experience in these areas. During the reporting period greater pressure on MBBs was reported and violence against them was more prevalent. Most analysts expect King Abdullah II to remain in power for the next few years, despite regional and national unrest. Meanwhile, the threat of radical Islam is a factor that has to be taken into account.

27. Oman (score: 56 (55,998))

There has been no visible change in recent years in the situation for Christians in Oman. Oman ranks 22nd and scores 56 points on the World Watch List 2014, the same score as in 2013. The main persecution dynamics in Oman are Islamic extremism and Totalitarian paranoia. Islamic extremism: Islam is the state religion and legislation is based on Islamic law. Because of Totalitarian paranoia, Christians face restrictions when their activities are considered a threat to the ruling power. Almost the entire Christian population (around 35,000) is expatriate; there are only a few indigenous Christians. All religious organizations must register, and Christian meetings are monitored for political messages and nationals attending. Foreign Christians are allowed to discretely worship in private homes or work compounds. Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) risk persecution from family and society. MBBs can lose their family, house and job and could even be killed, though no violent incidents were documented in the reporting period. Oman is fairly tolerant regarding religious expressions. Yet, all public school curriculums include instruction in Islam. Apostasy is not a criminal offense, but it is not respected by the legal system either, which assumes that all citizens are Muslims. The very concept of change of faith for an Omani citizen is an anathema. A convert faces problems under the Personal Status and Family Legal Code, which prohibits a father from having custody over his children if he leaves Islam. Deportation of foreign workers (because of their Christian activities) continues. Registration is difficult, though not impossible, to obtain. Both Open Doors' sources and Middle East Concern did not report any violent persecution incidents of Christians since 2011, though it is known that MBBs continue to face significant family pressure.

28. India (score: 55 (55,401))

As one of the most diverse countries in the world, it is difficult to describe India's persecution dynamics without making generalizations, however, the principal persecution engines affecting Christians in India are 'Other religious militancy' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Tribal antagonism', 'Islamic extremism' and 'Communist oppression'. Among the most prominent attackers of the Christian minority are religious militants, namely Hindu nationalists, who claim that every Indian has to be Hindu. Their ideology "Hindutva" is spread by several political parties and affiliated youth movements and has firm roots and strong support in the media and many government structures like the police. The Christian minority, therefore, can never count on a fair treatment and is discouraged to claim its rights. One obvious example is the lack of justice in the court

proceedings concerning the 2008 Kandhamal riots in Orissa. Even murderers have deliberately been left unpunished, testifying about the strength of “Hindutva” penetration in society. The Church in India is a growing Church. Nearly 80 per cent of the Church is from the Dalit and tribal background. Being the most marginalized groups in society, the message that there is a loving God who even gave his life for them is “Good News” in the purest sense of the word. This strong movement faces strict opposition to their emphasis on traditional values and beliefs, and Hindu background believers all over India, especially if they belong to the lower castes, the Dalit or the so-called OBCs (other backward castes) face persecution.

India’s Christians face pressure on all spheres of life, nearly equally distributed. On the one hand, this reflects the challenge of showing such a complicated matter of persecution of Christians in some figures in such a diverse country as well as the permanent squeeze they face. On the other hand it shows an increase in Religious intolerance in the country. Hinduism is experiencing a revival facilitated by special events as well as print and electronic media. The most successful political party following this ideology is called BJP (“Bharatiya Janata Party”, translated “Indian People’s Party”), currently ruling or co-ruling seven states (of the country’s total 28 states). In five of them, “anti-conversion laws” were adopted (most of the time, but not necessarily, initiated by BJP), which are frequently used as a pretext to disturb and disrupt church services as well as to harass, beat up and accuse Christian believers and leaders. All churches are monitored; Hindu radicals have started monitoring Christian activity in great detail. Sometimes, matters have resulted in legal cases against the Church. It is virtually impossible to get permission to build or renovate a church building in some states, especially where Hindu nationalists rule, whereas people do not have to have permission to build new Hindu temples. Even beyond these states, Hindu radical groups and their networks have permeated the local administration in many places.

Violence against Christians in India is rampant and occurs especially in the so-called “Middle Belt” and in the states where BJP is ruling. Reports on pastors and church members beaten up because of allegations of conversion are frequent, sometimes Christians are even killed. Church buildings as well as homes of Christians were destroyed in the reporting period; many converts had to flee their place of living, including Dalit Christians.

29. Sri Lanka (55 (55,887))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Sri Lanka are ‘Other religious militancy’ (main engine) and to a lesser extent ‘Totalitarian paranoia’. The majority of Sri Lanka’s population is Buddhist. Since the end of the Civil War in 2009 and the defeat of the militant Tamil minority, not only the rhetoric, but also the acts are ruled by Buddhist Supremacy. Every Sinhalese is perceived to be a Buddhist, so not only the Tamil Christians are treated as second-class citizens, but also Sinhalese Christians are looked at with suspicion and frequently slandered and attacked. This not only done by authorities, though the ministry responsible for religion has a telling name itself (“Ministry for Religious Affairs and Buddhist Sasana”), but also by Buddhist extremist groups. These groups, namely the BBS (Bodu Bala Sena) and Sinhala Ravaya, led by Buddhist monks attack the Christian minority and are widely perceived as being tacitly supported by the government.

Ruling Sri Lanka has been a family business of a handful of different families for the last decades. The president ruling now has an extremely strong position as he obtains several minister posts and many family members, including his brothers, son, nephews and cousins are also in influential positions at the moment. Additionally, the military is in a very strong position. The defeat of the Civil War which shook the country for 26 years made the president very popular among Sinhalese, but this vanished to a certain extent by demands that atrocities of war (or even war crimes) should be investigated and that the rather poor Human Rights record of the Island should be set straight. These demands led the government to a hard-handed policy on every group perceived as critical, having ties to forces abroad or being able to organize public opposition.

The high level of fear is reflected in the score of the private sphere as Christians continue to be monitored and threatened by Buddhist monks, sometimes accompanied by mobs. That is also why Christians have become very cautious in keeping Christian materials or meeting privately, let alone talk to others about their faith. Converts have to be very secret concerning their faith and will take every precautionary measure not to be discovered. It may not come as a surprise that national and church sphere also score high. Whereas religious minorities have the constitutional right of freedom of religion, often they are left in a legal limbo as there has been a government circular demanding an additional letter of registration issued by the relevant ministry,

called the Ministry of Buddhist Sasana and Religious Affairs. Though this is against the constitution, it gives extremist monks leverage to instigate mobs against Christians and Muslims and allows local authorities to put pressure on them.

In 2013 alone there have been more than 50 attacks on churches, mainly protestant, but also catholic. Usually monks arrive while the service is going on and demand the church's immediate closure. Many times they have a mob with them (reports ranging from 40 to 800 people), putting pressure on pastors and attendants. Often things turn violent and houses and equipment gets destroyed. In at least one case a pastor and his family had to flee for their lives as they were found on a death list.

30. Tunisia (score: 55 (54,558))

Tunisia gets 55 points on the World Watch List 2014, 5 more than on the World Watch List 2013. The raise is explained by both an increase in the squeeze on the small Christian community in the country and a higher number of violent incidents involving Christians. The main persecution engine in Tunisia is Islamic extremism. The very promising revolution in 2011, which started off the revolutionary wave in other countries, turned out to be a disappointment for both liberals and Christians in Tunisia. The situation in the country is rapidly deteriorating. Christians face persecution from two sides; a moderately Islamic government and very visible and aggressive Salafist groups who operate with impunity in the country.

While expat Christians experience a relative amount of freedom, at least within the church walls, Muslim Background Believers face a variety of pressures. In Tunisia, Christians particularly experience increasing pressure at the private and family level, though there are notable difference between the countryside and the country's capital Tunis where the situation is comparatively better. Pressure is generalized throughout all spheres of life, with exception of the national sphere. Unseen violent incidents against Christians were reported this year, breaking with a trend of relative peace and religious tolerance. Reports from the field indicate that pressure on Christians, coming both from the authorities and from the families of MBBs, has increased. With political developments looking grim and Islamic movements getting stronger, the short democratic intermezzo is likely to make place for a new phase in the political history of the country: Islamic government. The situation of the small Christian population in the country is not expected to improve.

31. Bhutan (score: 54 (54,190))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Bhutan are 'Other religious militancy' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Tribal antagonism'. A strict emphasis on Buddhism as the country's spiritual heritage makes it hard for the Christian minority to claim their space. Even after introducing a constitutional monarchy and installing democratic elections, Buddhism continues to play the dominant role in the country, especially in remote and rural areas.

Another source of pressure comes from shamans following the traditional animistic Bön belief. Though most citizens are not exclusive adherents to this faith, in rural areas especially they will observe rites and traditions and pressure is put on Christians from a Buddhist or Hindu background who do not wish to participate. Bhutan's Christians face strong pressure in all spheres of life as persecution shows itself in monitoring and pressure Christians face, especially in rural areas. They are excluded from local decision-making, pressured to renounce their faith and Christians will try to send their children abroad for education if they have the financial means.

Though the church in Bhutan is no longer a country-wide underground church, since Christians are able to meet in private homes regularly on Sundays without interference, there remain many challenges. Christians in remote villages still encounter many difficulties as church meetings continue to be monitored and disturbed. Registration of churches or owning or building a church is not possible and the government restricts the celebration of some non-Buddhist festivals. Another major issue for Christians is burials as they are not provided with burial sites or lots for cemeteries. In Bhutan, it is common to burn corpses. All negotiations with local and state authorities on this topic have failed so far.

Persecution in Bhutan never has been very violent. In May 2013, a Christian was released from prison after three years as he had shown the Jesus movie. Another pastor and two church members were detained for interrogations with police for several days and occasionally Christians are beaten or otherwise physically harmed. But compared to the last reporting period, the level of violence has eased.

32. Algeria (score: 54 (54,148))

On the World Watch List 2014, Algeria gets 54 points (51 points in 2013). The main persecution engine in Algeria is Islamic extremism. As Islam is becoming more and more visible in Algeria's government, the freedoms of Christians are more and more restricted. Increasing pressure from Islamist movements on government and on society, in combination with pressure from family members on Christian converts from a Muslim background, explain Algeria's score on the World Watch List. In the context of the growing role of Islamism in the region, Algeria is increasingly the scene of more terror by Islamist movements, particularly al-Qaeda in the Maghreb. In the past year, the oppression of Christians has been constant. Church leaders indicate that there is an increase in pressure on Christians, who mostly are Muslim Background Believers.

The law prohibits public assembly for purposes of practicing a faith other than Islam. Individual churches are often denied registration. At this stage of its development, Islamic extremism is present throughout the whole country, and causes pressure on Christians in all spheres of life. The number of reported incidents remained constant in comparison to last year. In spite of some positive developments, the overall trends regarding religious liberty are negative. Although no Christians were killed or imprisoned, threats to churches and Christian media organizations still occur, and newspapers report negatively about Christians. For the coming year, no dramatic improvements in the situation of Algerian Christians are expected. During 2014, there will be presidential elections. Sure is that Islamism is gaining influence and that the Islamists have a realistic chance of winning these presidential elections.

33. Mali (score: 54 (53,822))

After the French military intervention in January 2013, the threat of Islamists has been averted, at least temporarily, but in the North there is still no normal church life possible and the Christians who fled are afraid to return. For this reason, Mali gets a score of 54 points in 2014, which is lower than the score of 2013, but still high to account for the continuing pressures on Christians in the country. The main persecution dynamic in Mali is Islamic extremism. Mali has always been a typical West-African state with a (mostly) moderate Islam, constitutionally secular proscribing religious political parties, even though a high percentage of its population is Muslim. The situation changed with the proclamation of the creation of the independent state of Azawad in Northern Mali (April 2012).

Among the less than 5% of Malians who are Christians, the majority are Roman Catholic, while there is also a significant number of Protestants. Even though most Malian Christians live in the south of the country, they feel threatened by the Islamists in the north. All spheres of life are affected by the combination of both dynamics, though the national sphere to a lesser extent because of the relative freedom in the South. Church life is not yet possible in the North. The levels of violence against Christians are not as high as the squeeze. Christians have however received death threats by Islamists. Even though the Islamists have been driven out of Northern Mali, the presence and infrastructure of Christianity has been (largely) destroyed. It will take a long time to build it up again. Moreover, as the Islamists have not been fully vanquished, building up a Christian presence in the North again is difficult.

34. Palestinian Territories (score: 53 (53,269))

The Palestinian Territories include Gaza and West Bank according to UN guidelines. This concerns the border of 1967 and include areas A, B and C which are partly under joint or full Israeli and/or Palestinian control.

The Palestinian Territories can be found on position 34, two places higher than last year. It scores five points this year: 53 points. The main explanation for this rise is the increased radicalization of Muslims on both the

West Bank and Gaza. This development is encouraged by the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian war. The main persecution engine active in the Palestinian Territories is Islamic extremism. Persecution dynamics are comparable throughout the territories, though there is noticeably more pressure in Gaza than in the West Bank because of the presence of Islamist fanatical movements. Partly as a result of their influence, Hamas takes Islamising measures from time to time. Gender segregation was imposed by law on schools in Gaza and all female students at Gaza University were forced to wear a veil. Christian schools were eventually exempted. Laws in the West Bank generally protect religious freedom, whereas those in Gaza are restrictive in this respect. The Palestinian Basic Law – which functions as a temporary constitution – states that the official religion is Islam and Sharia (Islamic legislation) is the main source of legislation. Dynamics of Christian persecution in the Palestinian Territories are complex. Christians are squeezed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, their ethnicity entailing many restrictions from the Israeli side and their religion putting them in a minority position within the Palestinian community. The total number of Christians has been decreasing in both areas over time, due to emigration and lower birth rates. A ray of hope is the small but growing number of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). Local Christians say they experience growing social and economic pressure to convert to Islam, especially in Gaza. We received several reports of physical harm, including a young Christian being assaulted to pressure him to adopt Islam. A number of young Christian men were threatened and fled from Gaza to the West Bank. We received a report of at least one MBB who fled the country. For MBBs – especially women – there is a clear honor killing risk. The situation for Christians is not expected to improve in the near future. In general an Islamic radicalization is seen within the Palestinian society, both on the West Bank and in Gaza - a bad development for the church in both areas.

35. United Arab Emirates (score: 51 (51,498))

The position of Christians in the United Arab Emirates remains almost completely unchanged. The country ranks 26th and scores 51 points on the World Watch List 2014, only 3 points below the 2013 score. The main persecution dynamic in the United Arab Emirates is Islamic extremism. In addition to Islamic extremism, persecution dynamics in the United Arab Emirates are best described as Totalitarian paranoia, as the Emir continues to be a despotic ruler. The United Arab Emirates is one of the most liberal countries in the Gulf and expatriates make up around 80 per cent of the population. The constitution provides for religious freedom on the condition that established customs, public policy or public morals are not violated. The government restricts this freedom in practice. Mostly Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) suffer persecution, while expats enjoy some freedom but also face restrictions. Pressure throughout the whole territory is considerably higher on MBBs and expat MBBs. African and Asian expats have a little more freedom, but not as much as Western expats; that is as long as they do not evangelise Muslims. MBBs are under severe pressure from relatives, family and Muslim society due to the Islamic government, law and culture. Whilst there were hardly any reports of religious violence, the differences in the extent of religious freedom of expats and the few Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are most visible in the family sphere. In the private sphere, the squeeze is systemic for MBBs. Christians in the United Arab Emirates, who are mainly foreign workers, are mostly hindered by the government's discriminatory attitude towards Christians and the thoroughly Islamic society, resulting sometimes in deportation. No significant violent incidents were reported, though the risk of honor killings among MBBs, especially for females, is real.

36. Mauritania (score: 51 (51,377))

Mauritania scores 51 points on the World Watch List 2014, 5 points less than in 2013. The major persecution engine in Mauritania is Islamic extremism, which is exacerbated by the country's apostasy laws which are directed against the activities of non-Muslims and its cultural norms that strongly dissuade people from associating with non-Muslims. Mauritania is one of only four official "Islamic Republics" in the world, and its constitution recognizes Islam as the sole religion of the country's estimated 3.5 million inhabitants and designates shariah (Islamic law) as the only officially recognized source of legislation. Moreover, the influence of al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) in Mauritania is growing. The group is gaining support among local Mauritians and is also attempting to monitor Christian activity in the country. Because of harsh government restrictions, it is very difficult for Christian missions and Christians in general to operate in the country. Pressure on Muslim Background Believers from family, tribe members and leaders of local mosques, is very high. There is some freedom for expat churches, but even for expats residing in the country it is complicated. It remains completely impossible for all Mauritanian Christians to register their churches, so they must meet in secret.

Very few violent incidents against Christians were recorded in Mauritania during the reporting period. This is not a sign of the absence of persecution. According to our reports this year, there were no confirmed cases this year of detainments of Christians, but it has happened in the near-past. However, pressures upon believers are still present. There are isolated reports of family pressure for believers to leave their new faith. The prospect of an increasingly powerful militant Salafist insurgency in Mauritania is the greatest threat to Christians in the country.

37. China (score: 51 (50,743))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in China are 'Communist oppression' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Islamic extremism' and 'Other religious militancy'. The communist government continues to impose control on all religious activities. In recent years, they have chosen not to strictly control Christian activities in most regions in China, but still keep a close watch on them. Concerning the ethnic Han churches, some observers speak of three kinds of churches: the 'black' ones which are illegal and which the state is fighting against, the 'red' ones which are state-approved and controlled and the 'grey' ones which are not registered, but tolerated, and which form the majority of the Christians.

The authorities have learned to invite pastors 'to have tea' in order to clarify the guidelines and limits. These are: (1) report to the authority about recent activities; (2) no participation of foreign Christians or receiving foreign funds; (3) no high-profile activities; (4) only conduct "regular" Christian activities during sensitive periods. The government tightly controls religious activities in inhabited areas of minority ethnic groups, in particular for those ethnic groups strongly influenced by their traditional religions. The most restricted regions in terms of religious activities – also for the Christian minority – are Muslim and Tibetan regions, specifically inside Xinjiang and Tibet. Christian converts from a Muslim Background (MBBs) have to deal as well with persecution from their own family, neighbourhood and friends. What has just been said on Islamic extremism also applies to the even smaller group of Tibetan Background Believers in Western China (Tibet). The engine 'other religious militancy' results into enormous pressure from family, neighbours and community.

38. Kuwait (score: 50 (49,847))

The position of Christians in Kuwait has not changed significantly during the past year. Having obtained a score of 49 points on the World Watch List 2013, the country scores 50 points for the World Watch List 2014 and ranks 33d. The main persecution in Kuwait is Islamic extremism. Islamic extremism is expressed mostly in the family sphere. Restrictions from the government can mostly be explained by Totalitarian paranoia, as the country's ruler does not want any organized group to threaten his hegemony. As ethnic tensions are also present, Tribal antagonism is another potential source of persecution. According to the constitution, Islam is the state religion and Islamic law (sharia) is an important source of legislation. The government requires Islamic religious instruction for all students in public and private schools. Teaching Christianity is prohibited, even to legally recognized Christians. The Christian community mostly consists of foreign migrant workers. Expat Christians are relatively free to worship informally. Conversion from Islam to another religion is not permitted and the government actively supported proselytism (evangelization) by Sunni Muslims. For Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs), the main persecution actors are family and Muslim extremists, and to a lesser extent authorities. Converts risk discrimination, harassment, police monitoring of their activities, arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and verbal abuse. No significant violent incidents involving Christians were reported. There are no indications that the situation of Christians might evolve in the near future.

39. Kazakhstan (score: 49 (49,306))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Kazakhstan are 'Totalitarian Paranoia' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Islamic extremism'. Though the President is not as idolised as in other Central Asian countries, you may put your hand into the golden handprint of president Nazarbayev shown at a tower in the capital Astana. Constant rumours about the president's health fuel speculation and challenge the functioning of the government. The more important it is seen to keep everything and every group under control. That's why there is a bias against Christian minorities, especially the ethnic Kazakhs, as they are perceived to be naturally

Muslim. Christianity is something for Russians. Consequently, they are denied registration and thereby face strict state control as they are deemed “illegal”.

Islam does not play a prominent role in everyday's life, so this engine is more driven by Muslim families and neighbourhoods and reflects pressure on Christian converts from a Muslim background. The government used to follow the path of secularism, seen as a protection shield against radical Islamism. The recent involvement of institutionalized Islam (the Spiritual Board) in order to promote traditional Islam might change the picture in the future. Kazakhstan's Christians face the most pressure in the church sphere, thanks to two laws introduced in October 2011. Their implementation was harsh and left Christians and other religious minorities insecure and with a strong feeling of arbitrariness. The strict implementation is illustrated best by a court verdict of March 2013, ordering the destruction of 121 religious books, including bibles. After a public international outcry, a regional court finally ordered its halt.

Another sphere where Christians are strongly affected is the private sphere. Converts get high pressure by their relatives and neighbours to recant their newly found faith. The government even sponsors an organization offering counselling and help to rescue relatives from “sects”. This pressure also extends to the family and the community sphere, though not in the same intensity. Though the violence is not very high, some violent incidents were reported for this period. 66 year old Pastor Bakhytzhan Kashkumbaev was detained and remains in prison on charges of poisoning a member of his church with communion wine. When his imprisonment was going to be eased to house arrest in October 2013, he was immediately re-arrested on extremism charges. Another pastor, Vyatcheslav Lim, being a stateless person, was deported on the charge of “illegal missionary activities” in September 2013. Several reports of raids and the forced closure of churches add to the impression of an increasing persecution.

40. Malaysia (score: 49 (49,162))

The main persecution engine affecting Christian in Malaysia is ‘Islamic extremism’. In the eyes (and words) of Prime Minister Najib Razak, Islam will always ‘supersede’ politics. In fact, he called on the people “to protect Islam, the faith of its followers, its teachings, Islamic law and infrastructure” and to avoid disunity and exploitation of the “enemies”. His statement came amid the country's celebration of Ramadan in August 2012. In a separate speech, Najib warned that greater liberalism is a threat to the country. “Pluralism, liberalism? All these 'isms' are against Islam and it is compulsory for us to fight these,” he said to more than 10,000 Islamic leaders, days before the Muslim feast began. Consequently, Najib's support of human rights also has limits, saying the rights should fall “within the boundaries set by Islam.”

Though it is possible to have churches and there is freedom of worship which is cherished by believers, many Christians perceive that they have to be very cautious. The government has continued to remain silent on issues such as using the word ‘Allah’ for God in a Catholic newspaper – something which was interdicted by the Court of Appeal in October 2013. The government has additionally allowed mainly ethnic Malay organisations to make radical comments against Christians. Given the high pressure, it is not surprising that Private and Family Sphere show high scores reflecting the views (and acts) of society. According to the recent study “The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society” of April 2013 by Pew Forum, Malaysia ranks among the most conservative societies in South East Asia. One finding is especially worth to be highlighted. Asked about extremist groups they are worried about, 31 percent of respondents answered that they are worried most about Christian extremist groups – though never such a group showed up in the country.

It is almost impossible for a Malay Muslim to convert to Christianity. All conversions have to be affirmed by a Shariah court and the process demands three months of time for reconsideration in a re-education center. Proselytizing Muslims is forbidden. In five states — Perak, Malacca, Sabah, Terengganu, and Pahang — conversion is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or jail term. In Pahang, convicted converts may also be punished with up to six strokes of the cane. Once a convert is found, he can be sent to a re-education centre and hold until he agrees to reconvert. Several Muslim Background Believers had to leave their families and communities. Some have even been forced to leave the country in order to escape re-education.

41. Bahrain (score: 48 (48,450))

Bahrain ranks 35th of the World Watch List. As the position of Christians in Bahrain has not evolved, the score of the country in 2014 is the same as in 2013: 48 points. The main persecution engine in Bahrain is Totalitarian paranoia. In this country, Islamic extremism is a relevant persecution engine, though persecution dynamics are best explained by 'Totalitarian paranoia' as the country's ruler endeavors to stay in power at all costs. The Bahraini constitution declares that the religion of the State is Islam and that 'the State guarantees the inviolability of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country.' Sharia (Islamic law) is a principal source for legislation. This mainly Shia-Islamic country is quite tolerant in general because of its international position in banking and trade. A considerable number of expatriate Christians (mainly from South Asia) work and live in Bahrain and are relatively free to practice their faith in private places of worship, but proselytizing Muslims is illegal. Christian converts from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs) are under considerably more pressure than the few historical Christian communities and expat communities. Pressure is systemic for MBBs. Expat Christians are often denied additional legally recognized facilities. Traditionally, society is not tolerant towards converts from Islam to other religious groups. Pressure comes mostly from family and community, to a lesser extent from the state. Pressure is highest in the private, family and community spheres for MBBs, though government also imposes restrictions on national and church life. No violence was recorded in this reporting period. MBBs are still considered Muslims by the state and a legal challenge to this was not permitted, which has strong implications of family law for example.

42. Comoros (score: 48 (48,020))

With a score of 48 points, the Comoro Islands rank 42 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, the Comoro Islands ranked 41 with a score of 45 points. Despite last year's drop on the WWL, it seems that the country is slowly moving backwards as squeeze related persecution processes intensified. This affects especially Muslim Background Believers, but the tiny community of expatriate believers as well.

The main persecution engine affecting Christians on the Comoro Islands is 'Islamic extremism'. In 2009, a referendum was held enabling the government of the Comoro Islands to change the constitution and install Islam as state religion. In this Sunni dominated country, this constitutional change severely curtails the existence of other religions. In parallel, there has been a rise in sympathy for Islamic extremism, especially on the islands Anjouan and Moheli. The rise of Islamic sympathies among the population at large, government officials, non-Christian religious leaders and Muslim youth groups in particular caused anxiety among believers.

Paradoxically, the future development of the Comorian Church remains unclear. On the one hand, the space to allow Christian church life to develop and flourish shrinks. At the same time, OD field reports suggest that the number of Comorians showing interest for the Christian faith and the church is responsive to this call. However, due to the economic hardship of the Islanders and their subsequent economic dependence on each other, makes it difficult for individual Comorians to break away from the Muslim background of the families they belong to and become Christian. Hence, the growth of the Comorian church depends in part on the religious-political tide the Comoros Islands goes through in the near future and the space this offers to spread the gospel and resist various forms of persecution.

43. Kenya (score 48 (47,527))

With a score of 48 points, Kenya ranks 43 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, Kenya ranked 40 with a score of 47 points. The minimal increase misrepresents the actual increase in the level of persecution. Faith-related violence reduced firmly, while pressure in the different spheres of Christian life intensified.

The main persecution engine in Kenya is 'Islamic extremism'. However, forms of 'Tribal antagonism', 'Organized corruption' and 'Aggressive secularism' appear to impact Kenyan church life as well. The minority of Kenyans are Muslim. Recently, the Kadhi courts system has been introduced, which is currently reserved for those who are Muslim and voluntarily submit to its jurisdiction. However, in part induced by felt discrimination, lack of

development, and extreme levels of unemployment among Muslim youth, and inspired by Islamic Extremism spilling over from Somalia, the Muslim population, primarily located in the coastal areas of Kenya, has begun to respond to perceived disenfranchisement in Kenyan society. Moreover, Muslim politicians, representing Muslim dominated constituencies have an agenda to eliminate the church from these areas.

The future of the Kenyan church appears precarious. On the one hand, the church faces intensifying levels of persecution. The government posture against religious institutions is not positive. Moreover, Muslim attitudes and targeted violence against Christians are not positive either. Also, Christians have a negative view of Muslims. This negative view escalated after the recent attack on a shopping centre in Nairobi, by the Muslim extremist group al-Shabaab. Additionally, there is a complicated relationship between the leaders of the Christian and Muslim community. On the other hand, the willingness to cooperate amongst the churches is high. Therefore, it remains to be seen how the church will engage constructively with the pressure it faces.

44. Morocco (score: 47 (47,452))

Morocco gets 47 points on the World Watch List 2014, the same score as the World Watch List 2013. Islamic extremism is the main persecution dynamic in Morocco, and even more so since the government is led by an Islamic party. The revolutionary wave that went through North Africa and the Middle East known as the Arab Spring has also flooded Morocco. In the case of Morocco, the protests did not bring the monarchy to an end, but King Mohammed VI had to adopt a number of reforms in order to restore social peace and satisfy the demands of the Islamists. Victims of persecution are mainly Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), though the same restrictions apply to the small historical Catholic and expat communities in the country. In this Muslim majority country, persecution dynamics are comparable to the neighbouring Maghreb countries. Pressures seem to have increased, particularly in the community sphere. It is also increasingly difficult for foreign workers to enter the country. In this reporting period, few violent incidents against Christians were recorded. Compared to previous years, the situation of Christians in Morocco has not changed much. Without doubt, the most important change affecting the Church is the arrival of the Islamist party in government. Islamist forces are becoming more visible in the country. Many Christians are pessimistic about the future, with the Islamist party and other Islamist movements rapidly gaining influence in the country.

45. Tajikistan (score 47 (47,155))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Tajikistan are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Communist oppression'. There is Islamic extremism, especially in the eastern part of the country (Gorno-Badakhshan). So far, its effect on Christians is limited. Islamic extremists are fought by the government. But societal control is strictly exerted on converts. For converts the strongest persecution comes from family, friends and community. This is why Christians from a Muslim background (Muslim Background Believers (MBBs)) face additional pressure. They will take every precaution not to be discovered.

Though 'Communist oppression' might not be the exact term to describe what is going on in Tajikistan it at least describes the means or the mechanisms with which governmental control is exercised. This control is put on individuals and groups not for Islamic-extremist motives, but rather out of a desire to protect the existing authorities. The ruling elite under President Rahmon, who took over power in 1992 and therefore was trained in Soviet times, will do everything to stay in power. Part and parcel of this approach is that all social and religious groups have to be state-controlled. Christians denying this claim will come into the focus of authorities. Although the Communist era in Tajikistan ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the legacy of the Communist religious bureaucracy remains. For example, religious groups in the country must register under the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers. Those religious groups that do not register are considered illegal. During the Communist era, religious groups similarly could only exist if they were approved by the State. As the personality cult around president Rahmon is not comparable to that of the neighboring countries, it is not justified to call the engine 'Totalitarian paranoia'.

Christians are heavily affected by persecution in the church sphere. No church has been able to register and even if churches are able to meet and conduct services, they always face monitoring and their meetings can be interrupted and believers interrogated. A law introduced in 2011 restricts the work among youths. Another law introduced in July 2012 prohibits Tajik citizens from going abroad in order to receive religious education,

preach and teach religious doctrines or to establish ties with foreign religious organizations. Though this law is aimed at every religion, including minority Muslim groups, Christians are greatly affected by it. There is no domestic Bible school or religious training center in the country. Any learning course on local or church level must be reported to the local authorities.

Due to another law introduced in 2011, one can be punished and fined for owning, printing or importing religious material. According to a report by Forum 18, at least six Christians were fined since Summer 2013. Another special feature is that believers are forced to pay for expert analyses which are necessary for proving the legality of religious material. These fees are prohibitively high, and they add up to the fines.

46. Djibouti (score 46 (46,198))

Djibouti is a small Muslim country with a good geographical location along the Gulf of Aden. With a score of 46 points Djibouti ranks 46 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, Djibouti ranked 43 with a score of 44 points. The slight increase in reported violence contributed to an increased total score. However, it appears that the position of Christians in Djibouti, in particular non-traditional protestant Christian communities, members of orthodox churches and Muslim background believers has been relatively stable. This could be attributed to the perception among the ruling elite that their position is relatively secure, despite of the relative instability in surrounding countries.

'Islamic extremism' and 'Totalitarian paranoia' are the main persecution engines in Djibouti. Approximately 95 per cent of the Djiboutian population is Sunni Muslim. While expatriate Christians, Orthodox Christians originating from Ethiopia, and local Christian background believers hardly experience any restrictions to practice their faith, Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face pressure within the family and the community sphere. Although religious freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, the government attempts to control religious groups including Christians. Subsequently, the general attitude towards Christians and other non-Muslim minorities is at least equally negative. Subsequently, the main drivers underpinning this persecution engine are officials aligned to the Djiboutian government.

The current government controls the country firmly. Due to their relationship with Western nations, the Djiboutian government, might not want unnecessary curtail the life of Christians. Nevertheless, if Western influence diminishes - for example due to a withdrawal of a Western presence - the position of Christians in general and MBBs in particular might weaken. Moreover, it remains to be seen if and how Djibouti is able to constructively resist Islamic extremist influences.

47. Indonesia (score: 46 (46,144))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Indonesia are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine), and to a lesser extent 'Other religious militancy' and 'Organized corruption'. Generally, it is not the federal government persecuting Christians, but Muslim extremist groups. Though they do not have a strong political representation, their influence is large as they take to the streets and make and steer public opinion. There are a significant number of radical Islam organizations operating in this country such as Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia, the Islamic Defender Front (FPI) and the Islamic Front (FUI). These organizations have used strict and exclusive religious interpretations to justify the implementation of Shariah law and the infringement of the rights of religious minorities. When it comes to church closures, it is mostly the local or regional government giving in to pressure, rather than the national government, whose apathy on the increasing rights violations of religious minorities has created a degree of anger and frustration among the marginalized. The closure of GKI Yasmin Church in Bogor is maybe the best example of this. Despite a Supreme Court ruling, neither the mayor nor the national government was able or willing to enforce the believers' right to worship. Other churches in this region may share the same fate. Indonesia is a religiously diverse country, the Island of Bali being predominantly Hindu. Once Hindus turn to the Christian faith, they will find themselves under high pressure from family, friends and neighbors to return to "the right faith".

The church sphere reflects the high diversity of the country and the fact that the majority of Christians can celebrate services undisturbed. But the score blurs somewhat the fact that churches need a permit to be allowed to worship, which in certain areas is difficult to obtain. Based on the revised Joint Ministerial Decree in

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

The level of violence against Christians is quite high, especially if it is compared with other countries in the South East Asian region. More than 10 churches were attacked or closed down, others remain sealed, the GKI Yasmin Church in Bogor, West Java even despite a ruling of the Supreme Court, allowing its service. Christians were detained on false charges of proselytizing and blasphemy. Often Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), once discovered, face physical abuse and sometimes they and their families have to flee their place of living and relocate elsewhere.

48. Bangladesh (score: 46 (45,777))

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Bangladesh are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Totalitarian paranoia'. Bangladesh is a secular country and its constitution gives freedom to all religions to practice their own faith. The country does not have blasphemy laws or an anti-conversion bill, but Islamic extremist groups try to push the government to modify the constitution. Among others, they demand to establish the Sharia Islamic law, so that it becomes visible that the country belongs to the "House of Islam". These Islamic groups use political means as strikes and rallies, and block infrastructure and kill people. Imams and local influential Muslims are in the frontline to persecute Christian believers, especially converts. Another driver of persecution is family and neighbors.

Despite the fact that Bangladesh has a secular government, it is officially an Islamic state. This is also reflected in the country's constitution. Churches, especially house churches where Muslim Background Believers meet, prefer not to display any Christian symbols in order to avoid being recognized. Sometimes, even neighbours of historic or mainline churches face opposition and restrictions in putting up a cross or other religious symbols. Persecution is mainly targeted at MBBs as is reflected in the private, family and community sphere. Conversion is not forbidden by law, but pressure to recant the Christian faith will be exerted by family, friends and neighbors. There were also several reports that Christians had to give up their shops or other businesses due to the pressure by the Muslim majority. Children of converts face discrimination from teachers and co-students in schools, converts themselves are isolated from their family frequently and registration of converts' children is a problem as in most cases they are automatically registered as Muslims. Persecution in Bangladesh usually is not very violent. But in July 2013, Pastor Arun Kanti Chakma was killed in Khagrachori. At least five churches and two Bible literacy schools were destroyed, damaged or closed. Sometimes believers are detained or abducted and physical violence occurs more often. In several cases, Christian women and girls have been raped and converts face the additional danger of forced marriages. Sometimes new believers are just kicked out of their house by their family.

49. Tanzania (score 46 (45,757))

With a score of 46 points, Tanzania ranks 49 on the world watch list 2014. In 2013, Tanzania entered the list with a score of 55 points. This year, the position of Christians appears to have improved. In general, this applies not only to Muslim Background Believers but members of the other church types as well.

At present, the main persecution engine affecting Christians in Tanzania is 'Islamic extremism'. Although the majority of Tanzania's population is Christian, recent years showed an increase of political Islam, initially at the Zanzibar Archipelago – a group of islands belonging to Tanzania. The Islamist separatist group called the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation (UAMSHO) uses Zanzibar as a springboard to further the Islamic Agenda in Tanzania and the coastal zones in particular in order to establish a new Muslim state.

The idea of a new Islamic state gains popularity among Muslims even on the mainland. Currently, a constitutional review process –which includes the position of the Islam in Tanzania, is underway. Within this

context it is not sure if the Tanzanian church sufficiently realise that the observed dip in Christian persecution could very well be of a temporary nature and could easily intensify if the current constitutional review process fails. For example, the teachings in Mosques and Madrassas are still negative about Christianity and lay the groundwork for lasting negative attitudes towards Christians. Moreover, the situation could easily develop in a form of two-way persecution: Muslims targeting Christians and Christians targeting Muslims. The secular state might clamp down on both.

50. Niger (score 45 (44,665))

Niger scored 35 points on the World Watch List in 2013, and 45 points on this year's list. The increase in points is mainly explained by the growing influence of Islamism in the country. The main persecution dynamic in Niger is 'Islamic extremism'. In recent years the country has been gradually shaking off the characteristics of the typical West-African state with a (mostly) moderate Islam, constitutionally secular state. Now, there are indications that the government functioning in a secular state does not keep enough distance from Islamic religious leaders. Since 1991, dozens of Islamic associations have emerged, including Wahhabi groups. These organizations have been mostly concerned with the perceived erosion of Niger's religious identity by the secular democratic state.

The country has three types of Christianity (Catholics, Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), Evangelicals and others). Sometimes the pressure on Christians only affects MBBs, sometimes all three types of Christianity are affected. The pressure on the spheres of private and church life is lower than on the spheres of family and community life. In many ways, Christians are being obstructed in the community sphere. Violent incidents continued during this reporting period. At least seven churches were attacked in Zinder (2), Niamey (2) and Maradi (3). Christians also face death threats and threats of abduction. The future for the Church in Niger seems worrying. The dynamic described in this persecution profile seems to point to a potential increase of pressure (squeeze) and plain violence (smash). A considerable part of the Southern third of the country seems prone to persistent Islamic hostilities.