

## Contents

21.....	4
India (score 62).....	4
22.....	4
Ethiopia (score 61).....	4
23.....	5
Egypt (score 61).....	5
24.....	6
Djibouti (score 60).....	6
25.....	6
Myanmar (score 60).....	6
26.....	7
Palestinian Territories (score 58).....	7
27.....	8
Brunei (score 58).....	8
28.....	9
Laos (score 58).....	9
29.....	10
China (score 57).....	10
30.....	11
Jordan (score 56).....	11

31.....	12
Bhutan (score 56) .....	12
32.....	13
Comoros (score 56) .....	13
33.....	13
Tanzania (score 56).....	13
34.....	14
Algeria (score 55).....	14
35.....	15
Colombia (score 55).....	15
36.....	16
Tunisia (score 55) .....	16
37.....	16
Malaysia (score 55).....	16
38.....	17
Mexico (score 55) .....	17
39.....	18
Oman (score 55) .....	18
40.....	18
Mali (score 52).....	18
41.....	19
Turkey (score 52).....	19

42.....	20
Kazakhstan (score 51).....	20
43.....	20
Bangladesh (score 51) .....	20
44.....	21
Sri Lanka (score 51) .....	21
45.....	22
Tajikistan (score 50).....	22
46.....	23
Azerbaijan (score 50).....	23
47.....	23
Indonesia (score 50) .....	23
48.....	24
Mauritania (score 50).....	24
49.....	25
United Arab Emirates (score 49) .....	25
50.....	25
Kuwait (score 49).....	25

<b>21</b>	<b>India (score 62)</b>
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015 India gets 62 points (55 points in 2014), ranking 21. The main persecution engine is 'Religious nationalism', while other, secondary persecution engines are: 'Islamic extremism', 'Tribal antagonism', 'Communist oppression' and 'Organized corruption'. India has a population of more than 1.2 billion people. The oppressive caste system is blocking social mobility. Economic wealth is unevenly distributed. A new Hindu government (in power since May 2014 and led by Hindu hardliner Narendra Modi) is radicalizing society. All types of Christianity are affected by persecution in India, but Christian converts from a Hindu Background and non-traditional Protestant groups are suffering most. India's Christians face pressure in all spheres of life, nearly equally distributed (private, family, community, national and church). At the top level the influence of fundamentalist Hindus has increased. A number of states have got anti-conversion legislation. Hindu radicals have started monitoring Christian activity in much detail. Many of them have planted spies in churches. Violence against Christians in India is rampant and occurs especially 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. Incidents of violence are increasing in number and occur almost daily. Under the current regime the Hindus who attack Christians and Muslims can do so with impunity.</p>
<b>22</b>	<b>Ethiopia (score 61)</b>
	<p>With a score of 61 points (65 points in 2014), Ethiopia ranks 22 on the World Watch List 2015. At present, the main persecution engines affecting Christians in Ethiopia are 'Islamic extremism' and 'Ecclesiastical arrogance'. 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Tribal antagonism' are secondary persecution engines. These four persecution engines make up for a complex persecution dynamics in the country. They exert pressure on Christians in all spheres of lives: private, family, community, national and church. Even though there are several persecution engines present, the country remains silent on persecution of Christians: the persecutors don't speak loudly and Christians suffer in silence. Persecution due to the rise in Islamic extremism affects all types of Christianity. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) mainly orchestrates persecution of non-traditional Protestant churches and</p>

Christians who joined the renewal movements within the EOC. Furthermore, pressure from government and tribal leaders has made the life of Christian's difficult in the reporting period. These all cumulatively affect the life of all Christians in all fronts. There were many violent incidents orchestrated by Islamic extremism and Ecclesiastical arrogance. The future of Christians in Ethiopia will be shaped by many factors. Radical Islam is rising. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church keeps persecuting non-traditional Protestants and the reformists. The government is closing space for freedom of expression and association. Moreover, identity politics based on history, culture and language of different ethnic groups is dominating the life of the public and private spheres.

**23**

**Egypt (score 61)**

For the WWL 2015, Egypt scores 61 points, ranking 23. The country has the same score as for the World Watch List 2014. In recent years, the position of Christians in Egypt – not only Christian converts from a Muslim background, but also the large indigenous Coptic community – has become increasingly under pressure. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Egypt are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine), and to a lesser extent 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Organized corruption' (secondary engines). Former 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 backed by the majority of the Egyptians. Shortly after the ouster of Morsi, there was an upsurge in sectarian violence on Coptic Christians. During this reporting period, 65 churches, Christian bookshops, Christian schools and convents were completely burned down, destroyed or looted by mobs, which are often turned on by radical Islamic movements. In the case of Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs), their family members are often a source of persecution. MBBs face severe limitations within their homes and extended families. Family members might 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. In the church sphere of life, 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 radical Islam is fervently trying to take over the country's culture, there is a growing sentiment to reject Christians.

24	<b>Djibouti (score 60)</b>
	<p>Djibouti, a small, poverty-stricken Muslim country, surrounded by Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Gulf of Aden, ranks 24 with a score of 60 on the World Watch List 2015 (46 points in 2014). The increase in the score with fourteen points shows that the situation for Christians in Djibouti is worsening. The dramatic increase in the pressure on Christians contributed to an increased total score. The main persecution engines underpinning the persecution of Christians in Djibouti are 'Islamic extremism' and 'Dictatorial paranoia'. 'Tribal antagonism' is also present in the country as a secondary persecution engine. Islamic radicalism is growing, and this is parallel to other East African Countries and other close by countries like Yemen and Somalia. This rise in Islamic radicalism has also become a concern for the government itself. As a result, the government has been monitoring and controlling the sermons and the activities in mosques. Located at a very strategic location of the Gulf of Aden, Djibouti has been a transit for many radical jihadists who leave their footprint behind. The country's regime is very autocratic in nature. Different types of Christianity face different levels of pressure. Expatriate Christians experience very minimal restriction. Tolerance towards Orthodox Christians originating from Ethiopia, and local Christian background believers is withering away. Life is more difficult for the non-traditional Protestant churches and Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs). MBBs face pressure in almost all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). Family life is one of the spheres where Christians face serious persecution. Hiding their faith was one of the means to protect themselves, but "the Somali culture makes it difficult to hide any change," according to a researcher. Also, (religious) leaders at the community level are exerting pressure. This year's violence against Christians also indicates a rising trend. Finally, with the general situation in Somalia always hostile to Christians and Djibouti and Somalia being very close in culture, language, and history, the animosity towards Christians in Djibouti might also increase. If there are any positive things to be taken from the reporting period, it is the fact that the government is also concerned about the rise of radical Islam in the country because it constitutes a threat to its power.</p>
25	<b>Myanmar (score 60)</b>
	On the World Watch List 2015, Myanmar gets 60 points (59 points in 2014), ranking 25. The persecution engines affecting

Christians in Myanmar are 'Religious nationalism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Dictatorial paranoia', 'Organized corruption' and 'Islamic extremism' (secondary engines). The majority of Myanmar's people are of Burmese ethnicity, also called 'Bama'. Being Bama is equated with being Buddhist. Everyone deviating from this heritage is labelled as being potentially dangerous. Pressure comes from two sides: one side is society including the movement of radical Buddhist monks called '969', the other side is the government which tacitly supports such movements. One very visible sign of this support during the reporting period are the draft laws for the protection of religion and race, discussed in parliament and demanded by the '969'. These aim at restricting interfaith marriages, limit conversions, ban polygamy and introduce birth control. The draft was introduced by the radical Buddhist movement '969' in Spring 2014, but supported with more than one million signatures of citizens across the country. Though the government still is nominally communist, it mainly does everything necessary to keep control (Dictatorial paranoia). Buddhism is used as the main tool by the regime 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 like the Chin, or have strong Christian groups like Kachin and Shan. Despite several ceasefire agreements with different ethnic groups including some Christian majority groups, the largest groups continue to be in clashes with the army. These clashes happen to be at the Chinese border and spilling over to Chinese territory. Notwithstanding the talks, at least twenty Kachin 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. In order to "protect the nation" and to preserve its religious heritage, religious nationalist movements in Myanmar are growing and are even fuelled by politicians, rather than curbed. This policy most likely will not cease.

**26**

**Palestinian Territories (score 58)**

On the World Watch List 2015, the Palestinian Territories ranks 26 with a score of 58 points (53 points in 2014). The increase in points is due to increased pressure on the Christian community, especially in Gaza. The number of Christians is diminishing and the influence of radical Islam is growing. The main persecution engine in the Palestinian Territories is 'Islamic extremism'. There are two other, secondary persecution engines in the Palestinian Territories: 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Ecclesiastical arrogance'. Generally speaking, persecution dynamics are comparable throughout the territories, though there is noticeably more pressure in Gaza than in the West Bank because of the presence of active Islamic fanatical movements. Partly as a result of their influence, Hamas takes Islamising measures from time to time. 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. Of all types of Christianity present in the Palestinian Territories, Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs) are persecuted the most, followed by all local Christian background believers (historical Christians and non-traditional Protestants) in Gaza. Expatriate Christians do not face persecution, at most some restrictions. MBBs face pressure in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church), especially in the spheres of family and church. In Gaza, all other types of Christianity face restrictions in all spheres of life as well, but only slightly in the private sphere. Apart from enjoying a relatively higher level of religious freedom in the West bank, Christians are mostly discriminated in the spheres of community, national and church life. World Watch Research received a slightly lower number of anti-Christian violent incidents compared to last year. However, this does not necessarily mean that there has been less violence against Christians as very few are reported. In Gaza, the mental pressure on all types of Christianity to convert to Islam is always present. Several MBBs and other Christians are known to have fled Gaza and relocated to the West bank, or relocated within the West bank. The situation for Christians is not expected to improve in the near future. The Islamic radicalization within the Palestinian society, both on the West Bank and in Gaza, is obviously a bad development for the Church in both areas.

27

**Brunei (score 58)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Brunei gets 58 points, ranking 27 (57 points in 2014). The 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 favored 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. The government follows a plan of Islamization among the tribal people in supporting the so-called 'Dahkwa' movement (Islamic evangelism). On 1 May 2014, sharia law was extended to penal law and will be introduced in three steps. The first step includes fines for indecent behavior or failure to attend Friday prayers. A second phase will include corporal punishment for theft and other crimes. The final phase, to be introduced in 2015, will see the capital punishment for crimes like adultery. Included in the first phase is that Christians testifying on their faith can be fined, imprisoned or sentenced to both. Several terms (like "Allah" for

“God”) are exclusively reserved for Muslims, according to a training a Sharia officer provided to government officials. Anglican and Roman Catholic churches are the only recognized Christian communities in the country, but even they have to be very careful. They are able to celebrate services, but apart from that, their functioning is restricted. Unregistered churches, which in most cases belong to the non-traditional Protestant Christians, are considered to be ‘illegal sects’ and consequently closed or at least restricted and monitored. Christian converts from Islam have to operate largely underground. Especially Christian converts with a Malay background face a high degree of pressure as it is not only illegal, but also a huge disgrace for the family and community, if a Malay Muslim leaves his or her faith in order to embrace another one. Given the growing adherence to conservative Islam, no improvements for the Christian minority can be expected for the coming year.

**28**

**Laos (score 58)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Laos gets 58 points, ranking 28 (62 points in 2014). The persecution engines affecting Christians in Laos are ‘Tribal antagonism’ (main engine) and to a lesser extent ‘Communist oppression’ as well as ‘Religious nationalism’ and ‘Organized corruption’ (secondary engines). Especially in rural areas, Christians are affected by Tribal antagonism as animism is still strong in the country. Tribal leaders and villagers continue to preserve these practices and anyone who turns his back on this belief and converts to Christianity faces the risk of getting expelled from the community. Communities who practice animism see Christianity as a foreign element which may anger the spirits who protect the village. In one incident reported, authorities in one village tried to force Christians to worship ancestors and swear an oath to animist spirits, thereby proving their “loyalty, innocence, and submission” to local authorities. Refusal of this can lead to corporal punishment or to being banned from the village. In order to keep everything under control, the country’s communist party puts enormous pressure on the small Christian minority. It has a negative view on Christians and considers them to be ‘foreign agents.’ They also view Christianity to be a Western ideology that challenges communism. However, the main problem is the conduct of the local authorities who regard Christians as enemies. Christians must take extreme caution when talking about their faith. Pressure on the Church is extremely high. Only a limited number of registered Christian congregations are allowed to have services, as a result of the rule that non-Buddhist religious meetings are limited to registered congregations. Illegal church meetings can be raided and all Christian materials confiscated. Christian media like Bibles and training materials can neither be published in the country nor imported. There is also a lack of leadership and biblical training because most of the Christians are residing in remote areas and apart from the Lao Evangelical Church and the Roman Catholic Church no biblical training is

allowed. As Laos is a Communist country, every movement of Christians will be monitored and if the state considers it necessary, hindered. Especially in rural areas, if converts from a Buddhist or animist background are identified, they are first put under pressure. For example, they face threats of their children being poisoned or of them being excluded from school and community resources. In case they stay loyal to their Christian faith, many are forced to leave their homes and expelled from the community.

**29**

**China (score 57)**

On the World Watch List 2015, China gets 57 points (51 points in 2014), now ranking 29. The persecution engines affecting Christians in China are ‘Communist oppression’ (main engine) and to a lesser extent ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘Religious nationalism’ (secondary engines). The Communist government under China’s new president Xi Jinping aims at controlling religious activities. While in most regions in China, Christian activities have rather been watched than controlled, especially the unregistered house churches could be affected by a program started to eradicate so-called “evil cults” as some of those cults have – contorted – Christian roots. 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 (for example Vatican loyal Roman Catholics), 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 situation in the northwestern Muslim minority state of Xinjiang, where the Uighur minority lives, deteriorated rapidly compared to last year and dozens of Uighurs, not Christians, have been killed. Tensions in this region rose and so the situation for the small number of Christian converts from a Muslim Background – most likely a few thousand – has become more complicated and even more limited than before. They suffer from the increased general pressure from the government as described above, but additionally face persecution from their own family, friends and neighbors. What has just been said on Islamic extremism also applies to the even smaller group of Christian converts from a Tibetan Buddhist background in the Chinese region of Tibet in the far Western part of the country, numbering only a few hundred. Whereas pressure and violence are not as high as in Xinjiang at the moment, it still is on a comparable level. For Han Chinese churches, the police in most cases refrains from violence, but orders pastors or church leaders to come, not necessarily to the police station, and invite them to ‘have tea’. This is a euphemism for clarifying rules and limits of religious acts and meetings and is a very effective means in order to establish a ‘harmonious society’. Reports of violence regularly occurred in this reporting period, but virtually all were limited to the Southern province of Zhejiang, also known as “Jerusalem of China”. Here local authorities started a

campaign against religious structures, especially churches. Some were completely destroyed and allegedly more than 300 crosses on church building or church compounds were broken down. Though it is difficult to figure out the details, it does not seem to be the beginning of a wider campaign, but rather served as a point of reference that churches should not become too visible.

**30**

**Jordan (score 56)**

On the World Watch List 2015 (WWL), Jordan ranks 30 and again received a score of 56. Religious freedom in Jordan has not improved. Especially Christian converts from Islam have experienced great pressure with violence against them being more prevalent. The main persecution engines are 'Islamic extremism' and 'Tribal antagonism'. 'Ecclesiastical arrogance', 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Organized corruption' are secondary persecution engines. Tensions between moderate and radical Islamic elements in Jordanian society are on the increase, under influence of the Arab Uprisings and civil war in Syria. Tribal antagonism is clearly mixed with Islam. Jordanian society is multi ethnic - a phenomenon which is also reflected by the monarchy. Jordan hosts large groups of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria, which leads to economic, political and religious pressure and are a potential destabilizing factor. The number of Christians in the country has been declining for half a century. 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 – especially for Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs) who suffer most persecution. They face oppression in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church), but particularly in the areas of private, family and church life. Christians who evangelize Muslims or support MBBs are also under great pressure. World Watch Research received reports on Christians being killed, imprisoned, physically abused, abducted and forced to flee for faith related reasons. Most analysts expect King Abdullah II to remain in power for the next few years, despite regional and national unrest. The main trends at the moment are regional overspill from Syria and the emergence of East Bank discontent. For Christians, the growing power of radical Islam is an important warning sign. The development of the civil war in Syria is likely to influence their situation considerably, as is a possible further advance of Islamic State in the direction of Jordan.

31

**Bhutan (score 56)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Bhutan gets 56 points (54 points in 2014). The country now ranks 31. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Bhutan are 'Religious nationalism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Tribal antagonism' (secondary engine). An increasingly strict emphasis on Buddhism as the country's spiritual heritage makes it hard for the Christian minority to claim their space. Bhutan used to be a Buddhist kingdom for centuries. 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, Buddhist monks resent and oppose the presence of Christians and authorities do nothing to protect them, on the contrary, they rather side with the monks. The general mindset still is shown by an interview then-Prime Minister Jigme Thinley gave in 2011. He stated that "democratic culture is gradually taking firm roots" in the country, but in an interview he absolutely denied the right of the small Christian minority to testify about their faith. Expressing a commonly held belief in Bhutan, he said that there is no reason why Christians should seek to induce others to join their faith. 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 any interference by authorities, 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 to own a church building is not possible. Christian leaders enjoy certain freedoms to practice their faith in private homes, but since Buddhism is seen as the country's heritage and the government sees its duty in protecting Buddhism, it restricts construction of non-Buddhist worship buildings and the celebration of some non-Buddhist festivals and ignores applications for it. In March 2014, two pastors were detained and seven weeks later released on bail, without publishing formal charges. In September they were sentenced to four years and two years and four months, respectively, for allegedly committing a felony by raising funds for personal gain. Appeal procedures are on their way. Religion as part and parcel of cultural heritage will play a dominant role in securing public support for unpopular measures as it can be used to emphasize the country's uniqueness. The government will continue to fulfill the constitutional mandate referred to above of protecting Buddhism as the spiritual heritage of Bhutan.

<p><b>32</b></p>	<p><b>Comoros (score 56)</b></p>
	<p>With a score of 56 points (48 points in 2014), Comoros ranks 32 on the World Watch List 2015. The significant increase of the score shows that that the country is slowly moving backward in terms of religious freedom. The main persecution engine affecting Christians in Comoros is ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ is also very visible in the country (secondary persecution engine). The 2009 referendum led to the adoption of Islam as a state religion. This constitutional change severely curtails the existence of other religions. The rise of radical Islamic sympathies among the population at large, government officials, religious leaders and Muslim youth groups in particular caused anxiety among Christians. Christians on Comoros are facing severe pressure regarding their Christian walk of life. According to an Open Doors expert, “Islam and only Islam is effectively endorsed at the national level and converts are persecuted severely in their private lives. Foreigners are allowed to practice their Christian religion but must not proselytize at the threat of being deported.” Contrary to the relative stability and a reportedly ‘electoral democracy’, the life of Christians in the Comoros is getting harder. There seems to be less space for Christian church life to develop and flourish. The rise in radical Islam in Comoros goes hand in hand with the rise of radical Islam in East Africa and other parts of the world. The Comorian government is highly inclined towards radical Islamic states in the Gulf and Middle East. Even if some of them are not too severe on Christians on their soil, they do not hesitate to support countries that want to have an Islamic government. Consequently, in the coming year(s), it is likely that radical Islam continues rising in the country, and in a way Christians might be pushed completely away from public life as well as put under heavy pressure in private life.</p>
<p><b>33</b></p>	<p><b>Tanzania (score 56)</b></p>
	<p>With a score of 56 points (46 in 2014), Tanzania ranks 33 on the World Watch List 2015. The main persecution engine affecting Christians is ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Tribal antagonism’ has also been observed as a secondary persecution engine. Zanzibar has become the epicenter of Islamic radicalism in the country. A radical Islamic separatist group called Uamsho (a Swahili acronym for the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation, meaning Islamic Reawakening or Revolution) uses Zanzibar as a springboard to further its radical Islamic agenda in Tanzania. With more than 250 tribes, Tribal antagonism has also become</p>

visible in the country. Converts to Christianity from indigenous tribes may face pressure from their extended families to adhere to traditional practices. In the reporting year, the position of Christians has significantly deteriorated. In general, not only the situation of Christian converts with a Muslim background (MBBs) deteriorated, but also the circumstances of members of the other churches became worse within the Island of Zanzibar as well as the coastal areas of Mainland Tanzania. Persecution due to Islamic radicalism that was more or less limited to the Island of Zanzibar and the coastal part of the country has been felt in mainland Tanzania this year (expansion of radical Islam). As such, the level of pressure and violence has been significantly high in the reporting year. Even though persecution affects all Christians, in Muslim dominated areas, it appears that the MBBs are most affected by a squeeze type of persecution. As it stands, radical Islam has been growing, making Zanzibar a boiling point of Islamic radicalism in East Africa. There were targeted killings and destruction of churches. The Tanzanian Church withstood the pressure it has been under for the past, but as the persecution is going to another level, it could be challenging for the Church to withstand increasing pressure. According to an Open Doors expert, so far “a common national identity and the effect of animist religions in the country serve as a barrier for more Islamic radicalism and intolerance or pressure from radical Muslims.” This barrier might not resist forever. As it stands, radical Islam has been growing, and if this is left unaddressed properly and timely, it might eventually put the country (‘Union’) on the brink of collapse.

**34**

**Algeria (score 55)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Algeria gets 55 points (54 points in 2014) and ranks 34. The main persecution engine in Algeria is ‘Islamic extremism’, but there are also secondary engines, ‘Totalitarian paranoia’ and ‘Organized corruption’. As Islam is becoming more and more visible in Algeria’s government, the freedom of Christians is becoming more and more restricted. Increasing pressure from radical Islamic movements on government and on society, in combination with pressure of 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 radical Islam in the region, Algeria is increasingly the scene of more terror by radical Islamic movements. Church leaders indicate that there is an increase in pressure on Christians, who mostly consist of Christian converts from a Muslim Background. 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 as a persecution engine is present throughout the whole country, and causes pressure on Christians in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). The

number of reported incidents remained constant in comparison to last year. In spite of some positive developments, the overall trends regarding religious freedom 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 serious improvements in the situation of Algerian Christians are expected.

**35**

**Colombia (score 55)**

Because of the overlap of distinct persecution engines and high levels of violence, Colombia obtains 55 points for the World Watch List 2015, ranking 35 (56 points in 2014). The main persecution engines 'Organized corruption' and 'Tribal antagonism', and the secondary persecution engines 'Secular intolerance' and 'Ecclesiastical arrogance', coexist in different parts of the territory of Colombia. All types of Christianity can become victims of Organized corruption by criminal groups, 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. Tribal antagonism is expressed by the fact that local fiefs consider converts to Christianity within indigenous communities a threat to their power and to 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, experience hostilities. Falling under Secular intolerance are observed signs of repeated expressions of intolerance for the participation of Christians in the public sphere, particularly in public universities. Levels of faith-related violence in Colombia, attributable to both Organized corruption and Tribal antagonism, are high. Numerous Christians have been displaced from their lands, violence targeting Christian women is on the increase and church sermons are monitored. Besides the challenges of 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.

<p><b>36</b></p>	<p><b>Tunisia (score 55)</b></p>
	<p>Tunisia gets 55 points on the World Watch List 2015, and ranks 36 (also 55 points in 2014). Although the level of violence decreased slightly, structural pressure increased slightly. The main persecution engine in Tunisia is ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Organized corruption’ is a secondary persecution engine. 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. While expatriate Christians experience a relative amount of freedom, at least within the church walls, Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs) face a variety of pressures. In Tunisia, Christians particularly experience increasing pressure at the private and family level, though there are notable differences between the countryside and the country’s capital Tunis where the situation is comparatively better. Pressure is generalized throughout the private, family, community and church spheres of life, but less so in the national sphere. Reports from the field indicate that pressure on MBBs coming from their families, has increased. Violent incidents during this year’s reporting period include one case of a Christian being abducted for his faith, several cases of Christian women who suffered some form of sexual harassment (including at least one known case of forced marriage during this reporting period), and many cases of Christians being physically harmed and their houses and shops vandalized. Moreover, a number of Christians had to leave their homes and some even fled the country. Although the political situation in the country may have stabilized, there is no guarantee that the situation of the small Christian population in the country will improve.</p>
<p><b>37</b></p>	<p><b>Malaysia (score 55)</b></p>
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015, Malaysia gets 55 points (49 points in 2014), ranking 37. The persecution engine in Malaysia is ‘Islamic extremism’, connected with ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ (both are main engines). On countless occasions, the ruling Prime Minister Najib Razak has publicly announced that Islam will always supersede politics, that the people should protect Islam, that pluralism, liberalism and other ‘-isms’ are against Islam and that human rights must have limits as they should fall “within the boundaries of Islam”. Observers of the country talk about a quick Islamization. Additionally, the government increasingly plays the religious card as being of Malay ethnicity is seen as being Muslim. The highest pressure in this sphere is put on Christian</p>

converts from Islam. They not only face the risk of being divorced, losing their children’s custody rights and inheritance rights, but families will take every means to bring the convert back to the right faith. This may start with isolation and pressure to recant the Christian faith, but often will end in a re-education center. It is almost impossible for a Malay Muslim to convert to Christianity. All conversions have to be affirmed by a Sharia court and the process demands at least three months of time for reconsideration in a re-education center. Churches have been monitored and new churches have found it difficult to register. As many churches are meeting in business or office facilities, which are not dedicated for religious purposes, they are technically worshipping illegally. Pastors and church leaders closely watch their words and in several incidents Bibles and Sunday school materials were confiscated. The media increasingly slander the Christian minority and put them in a false light. Examples of faith-related violence were the fire-bombing of a Roman Catholic Church in January 2014 and the vandalization of eight Christian graves in February 2014. More than ten Christian churches were notified by authorities to close their premises as they were meeting in structures not dedicated for religious purposes. In November 2014, plans occurred to put Sharia courts on equal footing with civil courts. This plan has been there apparently since 2011 but it now seems steps are taken to really implement it. Not only, but also for the Christian minority, Malaysia is at a crossroads and it will be a decisive year to watch which way it takes.

**38**

**Mexico (score 55)**

Mexico scores 55 points on the World Watch List 2015, entering the top 50 again at rank 38. The increase is explained mainly by the progression of organized crime in the country and the recording of more violent incidents targeting Christians. Four distinct persecution engines are present in Mexico: Organized corruption (main engine), Tribal antagonism, Secular intolerance and Ecclesiastical arrogance (secondary engines). These persecution engines coexist in different parts of the territory of Mexico. Criminal organizations and drug cartels have targeted Christians because they view churches as revenue centers (extortions) and because churches support programs for the rehabilitation of drug addicts and alcoholics. Local communities in the Southern States of Mexico are led by indigenous traditional ‘law of uses and customs’ to force all community members into a homogenous lifestyle. As soon as community members accept a different religion, the law of uses and customs becomes the noose that threatens their very existence. All types of Christianity are affected by the persecution dynamics, although there are differences between the persecution engines. Pressure caused by Organized corruption is experienced by Christians throughout all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church), but particularly in the community sphere. This engine can

also be seen to affect the church sphere, as the intense violence and repeated extortions of Christian leaders reduce freedom in this sphere as Christians are too afraid to gather at particular times. Tribal antagonism also expresses itself heavily in the community sphere, mainly by excluding Christians from basic social services. Extreme violence creates fear and pushes Christians and churches behind their front doors. The security situation in Mexico will continue to be dire in the future, as there are no signs of improvement.

**39**

**Oman (score 55)**

Located at the confluence of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, Oman is one of the few countries with Islam as the state religion, but not criminalizing conversion from Islam to other religions. Oman scores 55 points on the World Watch List 2015, one point less than the score in 2014. The country now ranks 39. The main persecution engine in Oman is ‘Islamic extremism’, with ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ as a secondary persecution engine. As Islam is the state religion, legislation is based on Islamic laws. 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. A Christian convert from a Muslim background (MBB) faces problems under the Personal Status and Family Legal Code, which prohibits a father from having custody over his children if he leaves Islam. Expatriate Christians are relatively free in exercising their freedom of religion. MBBs risk persecution from family and society. MBBs can lose their family, house, and job and could even be killed. Since the 2011 low-level protest, the regime has decided to concentrate on stabilizing and consolidating its power. There have been no violent persecution incidents in Oman recently. A positive development is that there is a tendency of tolerating Christians compared to the situations in some of the neighboring countries. As it stands, except the existing persecution issues, there are no developing situations that warrant special attention for the coming year. However, the growing in violence and dangerous Islamic radicalism in the region, especially from Yemen, might have a spillover effect on the country.

**40**

**Mali (score 52)**

Mali gets a score of 52 points on the World Watch List 2015 (54 points in 2014), which reflects the continuing pressures on

Christians in the country. The country ranks 40. The persecution engine in Mali is 'Islamic extremism'. After the French military intervention in January 2013, the threat of radical Islamic groups has been averted, at least temporarily, but in the North there is still no normal church life possible. Presence and infrastructure of Christianity have been largely destroyed and the Christians who fled are afraid to return. Those who do return, find their properties occupied by Muslims. 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 five per cent of Malians who are Christians, the majority are Roman Catholic, while there is also a significant number of Protestants. There are also small communities of converts to Christianity from a Muslim background. Even though most Malian Christians live in the South of the country, they feel threatened by the radical Islamic groups in the North. All spheres of life are affected by the persecution dynamics (private, family, community, national and church), though the national sphere to a lesser extent because of the relative freedom in the South. The levels of violence against Christians are not as high as the pressure (or squeeze). Christians have however received death threats by radical Muslims.

**41**

**Turkey (score 52)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Turkey gets 52 points (not in the list in 2014), ranking 41. The persecution engines in Turkey are 'Islamic extremism' and 'Religious nationalism' (both are main persecution engines). A very remarkable special feature in Turkey is the high level of nationalism. The general opinion is that a Turk is born a Muslim. Turkey lies on two continents: Europe and Asia. The country has many connections to both the western world but also to the Middle East. Turkey sees itself as the leading nation of the Turkic world (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), and wants to play a prominent role on the diplomatic scene in the Arab world. Europe has severely criticized Turkey on the restrictions it imposed on the media, human rights and freedom of religion. This has led to a very negative reaction from the Turkish government. In Turkey all four types of Christianity are affected by persecution at some point. Christians in Turkey experience problems in every sphere of life: private, family, community, national and church spheres. The level of violent incidents in Turkey is relatively low. Four churches have been attacked and damaged in Turkey over the past year. With President Erdoğan remaining at the helm of the Turkish government for the foreseeable future, Turkey is expected to continue on its current path of gradually enforcing Islamic influences, following an increasingly strongman ruler, and continued discrimination against its Christian and other religious

	minorities.
<b>42</b>	<b>Kazakhstan (score 51)</b>
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015, Kazakhstan gets 51 points (49 points in 2014), ranking 42. In general the position of Christians in the country remains as difficult as before, and has even worsened a little. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Kazakhstan are 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Islamic extremism' (main engines) and to a lesser extent 'Organized corruption' (secondary engine). The succession of president Nazarbayev is an important topic in Kazakh politics. The relations with Russia, Europe and the rest of the world are complicated by the huge Russian minority in the country. A growing problem is the activities of Islamic jihadists abroad who one day may return to Kazakhstan. All four types of Christianity are affected by persecution in Kazakhstan, but Christian converts from Islam and non-traditional Protestant groups are targeted most. While societal players like family, friends and community exert much pressure in the private, family and community spheres of life, pressure from the authorities at every level influences the national and church spheres of life. Though the violence is not very high, some violent incidents were reported for this period. Pastor Kashkumbayev was arrested in May 2013 (before this reporting period), and sentenced to two months pre-trial prison, but it was not until February 2014 that the state handed him a suspended four-year prison sentence and a fine. In November 2013, pastor Karim Kashkumbayev from Astana (the son of pastor Bakhytzhon Kashkumbayev) was forced to leave his family and he left the country for the United States. Protestant Christians are frequently fined precisely on account of their faith and for relatively arbitrary legal reasons. At least 71 people in 2014 alone have been fined for worshipping in unregistered, underground churches. The regime in Kazakhstan is constantly working to increase its control all over society. Radical Islam has already left its traces in Kazakhstan, and the government is anxiously awaiting what is going to happen when the jihadists come to their country. The situation for the Christian minority is getting worse. More and more legal restrictions are imposed. There are no signs that this is going to change soon.</p>
<b>43</b>	<b>Bangladesh (score 51)</b>
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015, Bangladesh gets 51 points (46 points in 2014), ranking 43. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Bangladesh are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Religious nationalism', mixed with 'Tribal</p>

antagonism' (secondary engines). Bangladesh continues to be a secular country and its constitution is giving freedom to all religions to practice their own faith. The country does not have blasphemy laws or an anti-conversion bill. On the other hand, the constitution also states that state religion is Islam and the government is known to give in to Islamic pressure from the streets despite fighting the Islamic party by all means. Additionally, there are fatwas implemented all over the country, especially in rural areas. Several of the radical Islamic groups try to push the government to modify the constitution as they demand thirteen major changes. Among other things, they demand to establish the Sharia Islamic law, so that it becomes visible that the country belongs to the "House of Islam". As the Christian minority is growing, it faces more and more restrictions and challenges. This is not driven by the government, what is also shown by the fact that the president in July 2014 appointed a Catholic woman as her personal secretary. Pressure is driven by radical Islamic groups, local religious leaders, and families. The competition between the large political parties of the country is also an important factor, as the government may give in to demands from Islamic pressure groups, taking to the streets. Christian converts from Islam or Buddhism face strong pressure by their family, friends and neighbors to recant the Christian faith, though conversion is not forbidden by law. Christians are discriminated in their private lives as well as in their business lives. There were several reports that Christians had to give up their shops or other businesses due to the pressure by the Muslim majority. Children of converts are facing discrimination and bias by teachers and co-students in schools. Persecution in Bangladesh has become more violent over recent years. In January 2014, Monika Mridha and her son Sushil, both Roman Catholics, were shot dead. The Christian minority will remain vulnerable in the next year, both from the side of the radicals and from that of the government.

**44**

**Sri Lanka (score 51)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Sri Lanka gets 51 points (55 points in 2014), ranking 44. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Sri Lanka are 'Religious nationalism' (main engine) and to a lesser extent 'Dictatorial paranoia' (secondary engine). Officially, as a socialist democratic republic, Sri Lanka is a secular state. However, its Constitution puts Buddhism first and evidently fosters Buddhism as state religion. This condition strengthens the Buddhist radicals' power over religious minorities in the country such as the Christians. The majority of Sri Lanka's population is Buddhist. 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 is 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 radical Buddhist groups. These

groups, namely the BBS (Bodu Bala Sena) and Sinhala Ravaya, led by Buddhist monks stir up mobs and continue to attack the Christian minority. However, in the reporting period, the Muslim minority bore the brunt of persecution. Buddhist radicals are widely perceived as being tacitly supported by the government. Christians continue to be monitored and threatened by Buddhist monks, sometimes accompanied by mobs. That is also why Christians have become cautious in keeping Christian materials or meeting privately, let alone talk to others about their faith. Converts from Buddhist - and to some extent Hindu - background have to be very secret concerning their faith and will take every precautionary measure not to be discovered. Pressure comes from the local community and neighbors and monks do not only look at Christians with suspicion and discriminate them, but many will also get active against them, also turning violent. Thus, in this reporting period, at least sixty incidents across the country show Christian services and prayer meetings were disturbed and disrupted both in church buildings and private homes. Government forces are supporting the radical Buddhist groups rather open and help to shelter them from being held accountable for attacks and hate speech. This is seen as pleasing the electorate in order to raise political support. Given that the Supreme Court cleared the way for president Rajapaksa to seek a possible third term in the early call for presidential election on January 2015, coinciding with a papal visit to the country in the same month, the poll will be a litmus test to the president's popularity. Meanwhile, radical Buddhist groups have become divided as the campaign for the election kick started.

**45**

**Tajikistan (score 50)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Tajikistan gets 50 points (47 points in 2014), ranking 45. In recent years, the position of Christians in the country remained relatively stable in terms of persecution. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Tajikistan are 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Islamic extremism' (main engines) and to a lesser extent 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Organized corruption' (secondary engines). Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country with a Persian national language; culturally Tajikistan has more affinity with Iran and Afghanistan than the other countries in Central Asia because these are all Turkic speaking countries. Tajikistan is one of the poorest countries in the region. Tajikistan relies heavily on remittances – up to twenty per cent of the whole population is estimated to work in Russia and Kazakhstan. All four types of Christianity are affected by persecution in Tajikistan, but Christian converts from Islam and non-traditional Protestant groups are targeted most. Tajikistan shares a 1,200-kilometer (750-mile) frontier with Afghanistan. This has several repercussions: a) there is a huge flow of drugs from Afghanistan via Tajikistan to the West; b) Tajiks (also living in Afghanistan) are involved in Islamic fighting; c)

western forces have left Afghanistan. The government recently announced that 300 Tajik jihadists are fighting with Islamic State - half of them women. What will happen in Tajikistan when these radical Muslims return home?

**46**

**Azerbaijan (score 50)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Azerbaijan gets 50 points (not in the list in 2014 because the country only scored 44 points), ranking 46. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Azerbaijan are 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Islamic extremism' (main engines) and to a lesser extent 'Organized corruption' (secondary engine). The government has a negative attitude towards any form of religious fanaticism. This also applies to the attitude towards Christians. Official checks are becoming increasingly strict. The government has become more active in controlling religion. Persecution is worse in the countryside (especially in northern areas around Aliabad, Sumgait and Kuba), and less in bigger cities. All four types of Christianity are affected by persecution in Azerbaijan, but Christian converts from Islam and non-traditional Protestant groups are targeted most. Pressure on Christians is constant throughout all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church), but is strongest in the private sphere and the church sphere. While community pressure is fuelled by Islamic extremism, pressure on the church usually comes from state restrictions fuelled by Dictatorial paranoia. The number of reported incidents of violence against believers in Azerbaijan is limited. "Azerbaijan is likely to remain a place where fundamental human rights are violated with impunity, and the state tries to make exercising human rights conditional upon state permission", according to news agency Forum 18.

**47**

**Indonesia (score 50)**

On the World Watch List 2015, Indonesia gets 50 points (46 points in 2014), ranking 47. The persecution engines affecting Christians in Indonesia are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine), and to a lesser extent 'Religious nationalism' and 'Organized corruption' (secondary engines). The situation Christians find themselves in is diverse. While there is much hope related to the newly elected president and his public statements concerning religious minorities, on the one hand, radical Islamic groups continue to act violently when it comes to minorities, especially Christians, and they put Christians in certain parts of the country under enormous pressure. Christian converts from Islam are especially affected by this. Many churches find the permission for being allowed to worship 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 remains on a comparably high level and in this reporting period again more than 30 churches of different denominations have all been closed and partly attacked as well. It is rather unusual that Roman Catholic churches faced several attacks as well, especially in Sumatra and Java. For the coming year, there is hope for improvements. Indonesia is known for its rather tolerant interpretation of Islam and that different religions are able to live in one country. This track record was tainted in recent years as the outgoing president chose to remain silent on attacks against religious minorities. The new president 'Jokowi' has publically announced that minorities shall have a place to live and he will take care of that. First signs are promising: the new Home Minister announced that followers of indigenous beliefs should not be forced to state in their ID cards that they belong to one of the six officially recognized religions. So there is hope for the Christian minority as well. But backlashes and opposition may come from the radical Islamic groups.

**48**

**Mauritania (score 50)**

Mauritania scores 50 points on the World Watch List 2015, ranking 48 (51 points in 2014). The persecution engine affecting Christians 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 Sharia (Islamic law) as the only officially recognized source of legislation. Moreover, the influence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mauritania is growing. The group is gaining support among local Mauritians and is also attempting to monitor Christian activity in the country. Because of harsh government restrictions, it is very difficult for Christian missions and Christians in general to operate in the country. Pressure on Christian converts from a Muslim background from family, tribe members and leaders of local mosques, is very high. There is some freedom for expatriate churches, but even for expatriates residing in the country, the situation is complicated. It remains completely impossible for all Mauritanian Christians to register their churches, so they must meet in secret. No violent incidents against Christians were recorded in Mauritania during the reporting period. This is not a sign of the absence of persecution. Pressure upon Christians is still present. The prospect of an increasingly powerful militant Salafist insurgency in Mauritania is the

	greatest threat to Christians in the country.
<b>49</b>	<b>United Arab Emirates (score 49)</b>
	<p>United Arab Emirates (UAE) ranks 49 with a score of 49 points on the World Watch List 2015 (51 points in 2014). The main persecution engine in UAE is 'Islamic extremism'. 'Dictatorial paranoia' is a secondary persecution engine. Islam dominates private, public life as well as the political discourse of the Kingdom. Consequently, all citizens are defined as Muslims. In addition to Islamic extremism, Dictatorial paranoia is present in the country, as the Emir continues to rule without considering the will of the people. Islamic extremism expresses itself in many forms. The constitution provides for religious freedom only on the condition that the established customs, public policy or public morals are not violated. The government further restricts the already restricted freedom in practice. Furthermore, the law of the Kingdom does not recognize conversion from Islam to Christianity, and the legal punishment is death. The government does not allow any formal or informal education that includes religious teachings other than Islam. Evangelism is prohibited, but non-Muslim groups can worship freely in dedicated buildings or private homes. Mostly Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs) suffer high level persecution, while expatriates relatively enjoy some freedom but also face restrictions. Pressure throughout the whole territory is considerably higher on MBBs and expat MBBs. African and Asian expatriates have a little more freedom, but not as much as Western expatriates. MBBs are under severe pressure from relatives, family and Muslim society due to the Islamic government, law, and culture. No significant violent incidents have been reported in the reporting period. Whether the anti-Christian sentiment propagated by radical Sunnis following the rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq can affect the position of Christians in the UAE remains to be seen. Although the situation of Christians will continue to be difficult, Christians in the UAE will be tolerated to some extent.</p>
<b>50</b>	<b>Kuwait (score 49)</b>
	<p>The position of Christians in Kuwait has not changed significantly during the reporting period. Having obtained a score of 49 points, Kuwait ranks 50 on the World Watch List 2015 (50 points in 2014). The persecution engines active in Kuwait are 'Islamic extremism' (main engine) and 'Dictatorial paranoia' (secondary engine). Islamic extremism is expressed mostly in the private and family spheres of life. Restrictions from the government can mostly be explained by Dictatorial paranoia as the country's</p>

ruler does not want any organized group to threaten his hegemony. Under the guise of implementing the laws of blasphemy, apostasy and proselytizing, government officials harass and abuse Christians. In terms of the general population, a significant number of Kuwaitis are tolerant toward non-Muslim residents; however, there is a group of radical Muslims that does not want to see Christian in the country. The change in the political dynamics of the region is having an impact on the rise of Islamic radicalism in the country. Accordingly, the rise of Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq seems to have a resonance among some Kuwaitis. According to reports, there are hundreds of Kuwaiti fighters alongside IS. The government severely restricts freedom of expression, freedom of press and freedom of association, concepts that are fundamentally important and inseparable from freedom of religion. Most Christians in Kuwait are foreign migrant workers, who are relatively free to worship informally, while Christian converts from a Muslim background face serious restrictions in many forms. There was no violence reported in the reporting period. The development of IS in Iraq and Syria might have a negative impact on Christians in the country as its ideology is inspiring some radical Islamic groups in Kuwait.