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RANK WWL 2015	
1	North Korea (score 92)
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015, North Korea gets 92 points (90 points in 2014). The persecution engine affecting Christians in North Korea is 'Dictatorial paranoia'. Kim Jong Un still has a lot of power, but it seems that he is not the absolute leader his father and his grandfather used to be. There is much speculation about who or which group of people might be the powerful men behind him and the leadership of the Party's Organizational Guidance Department (OGD) might be a safe bet for this. But in any case because of the personality cult, Kim Jong Un is much needed and at least from the outside his rule includes the Worker's Party, the Army, Administration and all strands of society. No one is allowed or able to challenge or question this rule. In each and every sphere of life (private, family, community, national and church), the pressure is on the highest level. For a Christian in North Korea it is very dangerous to keep a Bible for himself, to read it or to worship by himself. Sharing his faith with family members is rarely done as it can have grave consequences, if it comes to light. Christian parents hide their faith in front of their children. As social control and indoctrination are extremely high, Christians have to find other ways to keep strong. They are seen as enemies, not only of the state, but of the very society they live in. Not only Christians themselves will be punished in case of discovery, but likely also their families. Immediate family members will serve a sentence in a re-education camp if they are not discovered being Christians themselves. However, discovered, adult Christians are sent to political labor camps from which there is no release possible, meaning they will work there until they die. Meeting with other Christians under these circumstances is virtually impossible. North Korean police officials hunt down and vigorously prosecute North Koreans who convert to Christianity while in China or those who attempt to bring Christian literature, primarily Bible verses, back with them to North Korea. The regime will not loosen its tight grip and it will continue to control everyone. Christians cannot expect any relief or more space for their faith anytime soon.</p>
2	Somalia (score 90)
	<p>With a score of 90 points, Somalia ranks 2 on the World Watch List 2015. In 2014, Somalia also ranked 2 with a score of 80 points. With no functioning government in Somalia, Christians are targeted by Islamic terrorists and clan authorities but as the government gains more control state actors are joining the vicious two to persecute Christians. The only type of Christianity in</p>

Somalia is Christian converts from a Muslim background. The main persecution engines in the country are 'Islamic extremism' and 'Tribal antagonism'. 'Organized corruption' is a secondary persecution engine. Persecution in the country is very severe. Islamic religious leaders maintain publicly that there is no room for Christianity, Christians and churches in Somalia. This view is categorically expressed in the constitution and other laws of Somaliland, Somalia and Puntland where Islam is afforded the status of 'state religion', and Christianity is pushed away from public life. Islamic terrorists, in the form of al-Shabaab, as well as other radical Islamic groups, have intensified the persecution of Christians. The social structure underpinning the way in which Somalia is governed is tribal, and clans within this tribal system maintain their massive influence in the new government system. Radical Islamic groups like al-Shabaab, although not motivated by the tribe and clan politics, are using the clan structure to strengthen and deeply entrench their position inside the Somali society. Christians experience very serious pressure in all spheres of life: private, family, community, national and church. They have to hide their conversion to Christianity from everyone, even the immediate and extended family or clan. The family is not only non-sympathetic towards Christianity, they also fear to be suspected of being converts. People risk targeted violence from their family, clan, authorities or militias when discovered being a Christian. The decision by the UN Security Council to extend the mandate of the African Union Force in the country and the defeat of al-Shabaab in major towns, have been the only positive aspects of the year. Finally, for how long the international community can protect and finance the Federal Government, a corrupt, impotent and tribal government that cannot stand by itself, also remains to be seen. If the international community decides to give up on Somalia once again, the future of the country in general and of Christians in particular will get worse.

3 **Iraq (score 86)**

Iraq continues to be high in the WWL top ten, scoring 86 and ranking 3. The situation of religious freedom for Christians has seriously deteriorated under influence of the establishment of Islamic State in large parts of Iraq. There are several persecution engines in Iraq, but the main one is 'Islamic extremism'. In June 2014, a strict version of Islamic law was implemented in the area the militants of Islamic State hold. Christians were forced to convert, flee or pay a tax for religious minorities. As a result many Christians fled. Moreover, the broader Iraqi society is turning more Islamic, with increased social control on women wearing the veil and observance of Ramadan. The role of Islam is growing within the Iraqi and Kurdish government as well, as the influence of strong neighbor Iran is increasing in the weak Iraqi state. Christians most affected by persecution are converts from Islam. However, in areas held by radical Islamic groups all Christians are under great pressure. As a result of the establishment of the Islamic State, the already high scores for all spheres of life of Christians in Iraq have further increased

(private, family, community, national and church spheres of life). Of the five spheres, pressure especially increased in the spheres of community, national and church. In areas under control of IS, churches and monasteries are in general either demolished or used for other purposes. It is practically impossible to have any kind of church life in IS held areas. Many Christians but also other religious minorities like Yazidis and Shabaq have been killed, abducted and physically harmed. In areas held by IS, virtually the entire Christian community has disappeared. In total the number of Christians left in Iraq is not higher than 300,000 – compared to more than 1.2 million at the beginning of the 1990s. The loss of a plural religious society easily leads to lower levels of tolerance of those holding different views. A more hopeful scenario is that the different ethnic and religious groups unite against their mutual jihadist enemy. This might bring more stability to the country. However at this moment, that still is a pie in the sky.

4

Syria (score 83)

Like last year, Syria is high in the WWL 2015 Top Ten with a score that has further increased from 79 to 83 points. It now ranks 4 on the list. The main reason for Syria's increased score is the rise in influence of radical Islamic groups, reaching an all-time low with the establishment of the Islamic State (IS). The main persecution engine is 'Islamic extremism'. Secondary persecution engines are 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Organized corruption'. IS introduced the caliphate in large parts of Syria and Iraq at the end of June 2014. A strict version of Sharia law was implemented. Syrian society is radicalizing especially in areas controlled by radical Islamic groups. In the meantime, most Christians have fled IS controlled areas. Another persecution engine is 'Dictatorial paranoia'. In pre-civil war Syria, Dictatorial paranoia mostly came from government officials but today, this is predominantly driven by armed groups who are willing to use any means to stay in power. Another persecution engine is 'Organized corruption', which takes place in the civil war situation of impunity and anarchy. It is a means for self-enrichment, e.g. kidnap for ransom. Christians are kidnapped out of financial, political and ideological motives. In the conflict, all Syrians are suffering greatly, but Christians are particularly vulnerable due to their concentration in strategic areas and their alleged support to the government. Though all Christians are affected by persecution, this is especially true for Christians from historical churches and converts from Islam (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs). Christians face increased faith-related pressure in all spheres of life: private, family, community, national and church. This is true for all Christians in IS controlled areas and for MBBs in the entire country. In Kurdish areas the situation for MBBs is somewhat less intense. In areas controlled by radical Islamic groups most churches are damaged, destroyed or used as Islamic centers. Public expressions of Christian faith are prohibited and church buildings or monasteries cannot be repaired or restored. Many Christians have been abducted, physically harmed and killed. An

end to the violence does not seem near despite the increasingly exhausted state of the Syrian regime. It is likely that the war will turn into a free-for-all without clear winners – and in the end, there are only losers with an economy reliant on foreign aid and humanitarian support. The exodus of Christians – who constitute a neutral element in a society containing many different facets of Islam - will lead to less stability and increased levels of conflict. Amidst all violence and persecution, there are also sparks of hope, however. Though many Christians have left the country, a growing number of people are converting to Christ in the deplorable situation of civil war.

5

Afghanistan (score 81)

On the World Watch List 2015, Afghanistan gets 81 points (78 points in 2014). The main persecution engine in Afghanistan is 'Islamic extremism'. Secondary persecution engines are 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Organized corruption'. All Christians with an Afghan nationality come from a Muslim background (converts). If it becomes known that someone has converted to Christianity, he or she faces heavy societal and familial pressure. If Christians are discovered, they are subject to discrimination and hostility up to violence by their family, friends and community. Muslim clergy will most likely be the instigators and local authorities can be involved, too. Converts are put under heavy pressure to recant their faith. Additionally, the own tribe and people are more important than the country. People are deeply entrenched into 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. When this does not happen, such a person will be looked at as a traitor and excluded from the community. There is no public church no matter for which type of Christianity. Even expats do not have a place dedicated to Christian worship. Such a place would certainly be attacked by Taliban. In the past year, three expat Christians were killed because of their Christian faith. In April 2014, a US citizen working as medical doctor in Kabul motivated by Christian charity was shot by a guard. In July 2014, two aid workers from Finland, working for a Christian ministry, were also killed. In June 2014, a Catholic priest, working for refugees, was abducted and has not been released at the time of writing. Finally, in April 2014, the Taliban launched an attack against a building they suspected being used as a hidden church. The presidential elections from April and June 2014 ended in a stalemate as both candidates declared that the process was marred with fraud and considered themselves to be winners. In the end, Ashraf Ghani was declared winner. After some negotiations, a government of national unity was built which now faces huge challenges. These are security as well as political challenges. Given these, the church will remain pushed deeply underground.

6	<p>Sudan (score 80)</p>
	<p>With a score of 80 points (73 in 2014), Sudan ranks 6 on the World Watch List 2015. The persecution engines underpinning the persecution dynamics of Christians in Sudan are ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘Dictatorial paranoia’. These are main persecution engines. Islam is very well rooted in the Sudanese society. The overwhelming majority of the population in Sudan is Sunni Muslim, and Sharia law is the foundation of Sudan’s legal system. The incumbent regime is authoritarian and wants to control the life of its citizens <i>in toto</i>. Blasphemy laws are used country-wide to persecute and prosecute Christians. Apostasy is criminalized, punishable by the death penalty, and it is very harsh especially on non-Arabs. In this regard, the case of Miriam Ibrahim - a Christian woman who was sentenced to death but later freed after massive international pressure, is a microcosm of the lives of Christians in the country. Regarding violence, in the reporting year, the modus operandi is indiscriminate bombardment of Christians around Nuba mountains (the policy is: kill them, round them up, starve them and then they will submit). Many have been killed. Churches and Christian buildings have been destroyed. Those who kill and abuse Christians commit the atrocities at will, and with impunity. On an individual level, Christians face severe pressure in their different spheres of lives (private, family, community, national and church), especially the Christian converts from Islam. Even though this is mainly driven by the extended family, religious leaders, and people from the broader society, the role of the government can also be seen. Due to a severe violation of freedom of religion, Sudan is one of the two African countries designated ‘country of particular concern’ by the US State Department. The country is also in a continuous war/civil war in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile State. The president’s case for crimes committed in Darfur is also pending before the International Criminal Court. The symbiotic relationship between radical Islam and the authoritarian regime has become more intricate than ever. Considering the level of persecution in the reporting year, the life of Christians in the country will remain the same in the coming year(s).</p>
7	<p>Iran (score 80)</p>
	<p>Iran ranks 7 with a score of 80 points, two positions higher than last year. The increase of points for Iran is explained by a further deteriorated situation for Christians in Iran. The main persecution engine active in Iran is ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Ecclesiastical arrogance’ is a secondary persecution engine. Shia Islam is the official religion and all laws must be consistent with the official interpretation of Sharia law. According to the Iranian state, only Armenians and Assyrians can be Christian. Ethnic Persians are by definition Muslim, and, therefore, ethnic Persian Christians are considered apostates. This makes almost</p>

all Christian activity illegal, especially when it occurs in Persian languages - from evangelism to Bible training, to publishing Scripture and Christian books or preaching in Farsi. Ecclesiastical arrogance concerns efforts to maintain one's Christian denomination as the only legitimate or dominant expression of Christianity in the country. Certain leaders of certain historical Christian communities exercise pressure on non-traditional Protestant communities. Apart from Christians, the rights of other religious minorities like Jews, Bahai's, Zoroastrians, Sunni and Dervish Muslims are violated as well. Especially religions that are not recognized in the constitution, like Bahai, are affected. Of all types of Christianity, mostly converts to Christianity from Islam are affected, as well as non-traditional Protestant Christian communities, especially those who evangelize Muslims or who are considered Muslims themselves (second generation converts). There is pressure on Christians in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). This pressure is increasing and comes particularly from authorities and family. In Iran, detentions of Christians are very common. During the current reporting period, at least 75 Christians were arrested. More Christians were sentenced to prison and pressure on those detained increased, including physical and mental abuse. Several Christians were forced to leave their homes or to flee the country. Expectations were high when President Rouhani took office in 2013. However, his powers are limited and on the short run no concrete changes are expected for religious minorities.

8

Pakistan (score 79)

On the World Watch List 2015, Pakistan gets 79 points (77 points in 2014). The main persecution engine in Pakistan is 'Islamic extremism'. 'Organized corruption' is a secondary persecution engine. 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. There were dozens of new cases filed in the reporting period and the government ignored any national or international calls for an amendment or even a ban of those laws. Christian converts from Islam, if discovered, face the strongest opposition and therefore, will keep their conversion secret or even relocate for security reasons. But if a rumor on blasphemy spreads, mobs frequently target Christians without caring about denominations. Suspicion and bias are high and it is always dangerous to keep Christian materials in one's house as allegations on proselytization can be raised on any occasion. Additionally, accusations of blasphemy are always a danger for Christians. Those allegations frequently turn out to be raised just for the sake of settling personal scores, but of course this results in Christians having to act with extreme caution. Church buildings often have to be hidden behind high walls and sometimes rather

resemble fortresses. Congregations have to hire and pay guards. Pakistan has been used to violence against its religious minorities for a long time. Christians were killed and church buildings as well as houses where Christians lived were destroyed. Moreover, women and girls are experiencing violence every day. Especially those from minority groups are vulnerable and easy targets for rape and sexual abuse. They are easy prey and considered to be inferior people. The reporting period witnessed an increasing competition of radical Islamic groups and the rise of 'franchises' of international radical Islamic groups like Islamic State, Al Qaeda and of course the Taliban. If those announcements would result in a competition of such groups, this could lead to a further radicalization of society and to deterioration for Christians.

9

Eritrea (score 79)

With a score of 79 points (72 in 2014), Eritrea ranks 9 on the World Watch List 2015. In recent years, there has been increasing pressure on Christians in Eritrea, in particular for non-traditional protestant Christian communities. The persecution engines in the country are 'Dictatorial paranoia', 'Islamic extremism', and 'Ecclesiastical arrogance'. These are main persecution engines. Eritrea has been suffering the authoritarian regime of Isaias Afewerki, which has been geared towards exercising extensive influence over the life of its citizens, for more than two decades. Islamic extremism is also rising, and the rule of the regime is creating favorable conditions for that. Well organized and with a long tradition and historic recognition, the Orthodox Church plays its own role in persecuting other types of Christianity in the form of Ecclesiastical arrogance, putting specific pressure on evangelical groups. Eritrean Christians face a lot of pressure and experience violence. The Eritrean government puts massive pressure on the Church and continuously targets individuals in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). This is closely related to the repressive nature of the Eritrean regime. Furthermore, Muslims converting to Christianity especially face intense pressure in the spheres of private, family and community life due to the rise of Islamic extremism. The government intensified its crackdown on the Christians, leading to more than 138 arrests of believers and church leaders without due process of law. The UN Human Rights Commission established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights abuses in Eritrea in June 2014. Mass exodus of young (mostly) Christian people out of Eritrea continues, which in turn is creating space for Islam to grow in size and influence. There are no indications that show the better future for Christians in Eritrea, except the step taken by the UN Human Rights Commission.

<p>10</p>	<p>Nigeria (score 78)</p>
	<p>The situation for Christians in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern provinces, has deteriorated since last year. With 78 points on the World Watch List 2015 (70 points on the World Watch List 2014), levels of pressure and violence against Christians are higher than ever. Nigeria now ranks 10 on the WWL 2015. In Nigeria, the main persecution dynamic is ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Tribal antagonism’ and ‘Organized corruption’ are secondary persecution engines. 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 twelve 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 extends into neighboring states, and plays heavily upon Christians in their different spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). Not only Christians from a Muslim Background but also other types of Christianity experience faith-related pressure and violence. These levels of violence in Nigeria remain extremely high. The abduction of the Chibok girls received substantial media coverage, but this is only the top of the iceberg, as physical aggression remains widespread. The current situation in Nigeria casts dark clouds ahead. The links between al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Boko Haram as well as other Islamic terrorist groups in the region, and especially the inspirational link with Islamic State (Iraq, Syria) which led to the declaration of the Caliphate in northeastern Nigeria, make it likely that the church will suffer more violent persecution in the near future. Non Boko Haram violence from Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria will add to this, as will the upcoming elections in 2015. All the violence has caused massive numbers of internally displaced Christians (IDPs). Many of them are not taken care of by national or international aid agencies. In the region they remain a strong, living witness of the supremacy of the persecutors and the high vulnerability of the persecuted, and as such encourage violence and impunity, and culmination of fear among the persecuted Christians. This vicious circle can only be broken when the international community intervenes by humanitarian aid and otherwise.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Maldives (score 78)</p>
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015, the Maldives get 78 points (77 points in 2014), ranking 11. The persecution engine in the Maldives is ‘Islamic extremism’. The Islamic Government continues to see itself as the protector of Islam, instituting a set of laws</p>

that basically prohibits a Maldivian to convert to other religions than Islam, on the penalty of facing harsh consequences including losing citizenship. To be Maldivian is equated with being a Muslim, leaving no room for any deviation. Officially, there are no Maldivian Christians, only expatriate Christians. They are portrayed negatively in media and do not have any place in the public square. In February 2014, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs revealed key objectives for the year 2014, including blocking all religions except Islam in the nation, ensuring that all laws and regulations adhere to Islamic principles, strengthening Islamic education, building mosques and Islamic centers and broadening the role of mosques, and developing and strengthening the Islamic Fiqh Academy to issue fatwas. Moreover, publications and media content produced in Maldives or brought in from abroad will be monitored to ensure they are not conflicting with the Islamic creed. Even tourists have reported getting into trouble having a personal copy of the Bible with them. There are no church gatherings and buildings in the Maldives. The few Maldivian Christians have no room at all to meet and take all precautionary measures possible to avoid being discovered. The violence level is not very high. Christians are deeply underground as they know about the consequences once they are discovered. The current Maldivian government, led by president Yameen, reiterated its role as the protector and defender of Islam and the importance of Islamic values. Given the sternness of the government and the support it enjoys by Maldivian citizens, the situation for the Christian minority is likely to remain the same.

12

Saudi Arabia (score 77)

Saudi Arabia received 77 points, only one point less than last year, but consequently falls six positions on the World Watch List 2015 (WWL) to rank 12. It is the first time that Saudi Arabia is outside the WWL Top Ten. The reason is the considerable increase in score of other countries. There are several persecution engines in Saudi Arabia, but the main one is 'Islamic extremism'. The desert kingdom is defined by Wahhabism, a purist and strict interpretation of Islam. It is forbidden to openly practice other religions. Apostasy – conversion to another religion – is punishable by death. Radical Islamic breeding ground is widely present in the kingdom and Saudi funding of terrorism abroad is the main source of Sunni terrorism in the world. PEW Research Forum labels government restrictions on religious freedom in general as “very high” in Saudi Arabia and social hostilities are ranked as “high”. Apart from Christians, other religious minorities’ rights are violated as well: Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and all Muslims who do not adhere to Wahhabi Islam. The two types of Christianity present in the country are both affected by persecution: communities of expatriate or migrant Christians and communities of converts to Christianity from a Muslim background. These converts face most persecution: they run the risk of being killed and physically abused by their families. Christian migrant workers – who come from low and middle income countries - are often treated as slaves, due to their

ethnicity and faith. In Saudi Arabia, there is severe pressure on Christians in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). Proselytism of Muslims, publishing and importing Christian materials in Arabic are illegal. There are no church buildings and Christians worship in compounds or at home. House churches – mostly of African and Asian migrant workers - are raided from time to time by police and religious police. Several tens of worshippers were detained and most of them were deported. Migrant Christians – mainly domestic maids – are vulnerable to physical abuse, including rape and sexual harassment. Though there are several elements in Saudi society that could lead to instability on the long run, no major changes are expected in the short term. This is also true for the level of religious freedom for Christians, though anti-Christian violence could increase as local Christians are growing bolder in expressing their faith.

13

Libya (score 76)

On the World Watch List 2015, Libya receives 76 points, five more than on the World Watch List 2014. The country now ranks 13. 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 main persecution engine affecting Christians in Libya is ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Organized corruption’ is a secondary persecution engine. As in most Muslim countries, converting from Islam brings social pressure. Christian converts from a Muslim background 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. Migrant Christians 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 (private, family, community, national and church). During Gadhafi's reign, the main source of persecution was the government with its secret services. Now, Islamic fanatical movements such as the Salafists are responsible for most of the pressure on 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 Libyan and migrant Christians. Salafists and other radical Islamic groups are responsible for most of the incidents.

14	Yemen (score 73)
	<p>Yemen ranks 14 in the World Watch List (WWL) 2015, with a score of 73 points – one point less than last year. There are several persecution engines active in Yemen, but the two main persecution engines are ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘Tribal antagonism’. 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 proselytization is prohibited. Muslims are forbidden to convert to another religion. Yemenis who leave Islam may face the death penalty. The Yemeni tribal society remains very strong, and the government is a secondary institution to the traditional ways of tribal governance. Tribal law and custom prohibit members of the tribe from leaving the tribe often with the punishment of death or banishment. Since the ousting of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012, Yemen has seen political turmoil and sporadic violence. In the power vacuum, militants and tribal rebels – including Al Qaida affiliated groups - are fighting to gain control of territory. In Yemen, there is pressure on Christians in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). Christian converts from Islam face persecution to such a degree that they would need to live in secret. Any impression to those around converts from Islam that they might be Christians can have serious consequences. As most Christians are foreigners, they are particularly susceptible to persecution since they are not only non-Muslims, but often seen as outside encroachers on the national and tribal identity. Foreign Christians are mostly free to worship in registered churches of which there are a few. Specific anti-Christian violence against converts from Islam occurred from the side of the family and authorities. Missionary activities by expatriates have led to detentions and deportations. As the authorities were focusing their attention on political events during the past years, radical Islamic groups had more space to operate. The increased situation of insecurity in Yemen has led to higher levels of violence and impunity and Christians are also suffering from this. On the short run, this is not expected to change, especially since the National Dialogue ended in September 2014. This can easily lead to more frustration and unrest. Islamic terrorists being an important driver of persecution in Yemen, this does not bode well for the situation of religious freedom of local and expatriate Christians in Yemen.</p>
15	Uzbekistan (score 69)
	<p>On the World Watch List 2015, Uzbekistan gets 69 points (68 points in 2014). The main persecution engines in Uzbekistan are ‘Dictatorial paranoia’ and ‘Islamic extremism’. ‘Organized corruption’ is a secondary persecution engine. The regime of President Islam Karimov continues to restrict the freedom of religion, and Christian converts from a Muslim background are</p>

facing many problems from their family, friends and community. Both forces explain to a large extent the country's score on the World Watch List. The fear of an influx of Islamic jihadists, the terrible human rights situation and the succession of President Karimov will remain important environment settings. In the past year, the oppression of Christians has been constant. Both main persecution engines cause pressure on Christians in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). Islamic extremism does so primarily in the private, family and community spheres. There is evidence of violence against Christians even though the government tries to quell any news report about this. Frequently, houses of Christians are raided and books and other materials confiscated. Most often, the state monitors and heavily fines undue religious movements in order to control them. Other violent means used are severe pressure during interrogation and sometimes even rape. For the coming year, no serious improvements in the situation of Uzbekistan's Christians are expected. The attitude of the government towards religion is negative and this is not likely to change soon. Pressure on and violence against converts from Islam from family, friends and community will continue, if not increase.

16

Vietnam (score 68)

On the World Watch List 2015, Vietnam gets 68 points (65 points in 2014). The main persecution engine in Vietnam is 'Communist oppression'. 'Tribal antagonism' and 'Dictatorial paranoia' are secondary persecution engines. Vietnam is one of the few remaining countries in the world following a communist ideology. Consequently, authorities still perceive Christianity as a foreign influence and Christians as Western agents. The regime is based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts. The level of Communist control was recently shown when the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion and Belief, Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt in July 2014 was not only monitored, but it also became clear that representatives of religious minority groups were intimidated and meetings cancelled and postponed. As by estimation, around two thirds of all Christians come from a tribal background, including eighty percent of all Protestant Christians, many of them being Hmong, pressure to return to traditional faith and to take part in rituals is very high, especially in rural areas. Even if Christians as ethnic minority members qualify for incentives given by the government, e.g. financial support for boarding schools, it very much depends on the local authorities if they really are allowed to benefit from it, which is often not the case. Churches are closely monitored and occasionally meetings are hindered or disturbed. The publication and distribution of Christian materials is difficult and highly restricted. Work among children and youth is not officially restricted, but monitored and youth camps and trainings can be disturbed. According to Decree 92 which took effect January 1st, 2013, but is not fully implemented yet, registrations must include the number of followers, places of worship, schedule, forms of practices, the

religion's principles, and representatives' names and residences for the group. The level of violence increased during the reporting period. Several church buildings as well as houses of Christians were destroyed and more than ten Christians were sentenced to jail. Though recently the government took up talks with the Roman Catholic Church on instituting diplomatic relations and opening a Catholic university, the general approach towards Christians is likely to remain the same.

17

Central African Republic (score 67)

The Central African Republic (CAR) again scores 67 points, ranking 17 on the World Watch List 2015. The country entered the World Watch List in 2014 for the first time with 67 points as well. 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 CAR is 'Islamic extremism'. 'Organized corruption' is a secondary persecution engine. 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 formal Islamist agenda but composed in majority of (foreign) Muslims, has ravaged the country, specifically targeting Christian properties (houses and churches) and government buildings. Since the outbreak of the rebellion by the Séléka coalition predominantly composed of Muslims from CAR associated with Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries, these mercenaries have 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 (private, family, community, national and church), though to a lesser extent in the family sphere of life. The levels of violence in CAR are unprecedented. In fact, CAR receives almost the highest possible score as far as faith-related violence is concerned. In the context of violence in CAR, 'anti-Balaka' is a controversial phenomenon. The name 'anti-Balaka' (which means 'anti-machete') is a collective name for a mosaic of self-defense groups. Their militias consist of former soldiers and farmers and organized initially to protect their communities against Séléka. They have been branded as "Christian" and have stated that they are fighting to preserve and protect Christians. However, the Christian majority and Christian leaders in CAR have officially and vehemently distanced themselves from the anti-Balaka violence that is (mostly) directed towards Muslims.

<p>18</p>	<p>Qatar (score 64)</p>
	<p>Qatar ranks 18 on this year's World Watch List, with a score of 64 points (63 points in 2014). The situation for Christians in the country remains the same, i.e. Christian converts from a Muslim Background and Christian migrant workers continue to be pressured. The main persecution engine in Qatar is 'Islamic extremism'. 'Dictatorial paranoia' is a secondary persecution engine in the country. The state religion is strictly conservative Wahhabi Islam. While Muslims are free to worship in public, non-Muslim religious groups are restricted to private houses or designated places. Proselytizing is outlawed and criticism of Islam is punished. Conversion from Islam to another religion constitutes apostasy, an offense which carries a capital punishment. Family law is controlled by Sharia, the Islamic legislation. The world's richest country in GDP per capita is composed almost entirely of migrant labourers. Expatriates, including many migrant workers (mostly from Asia and Africa) are generally perceived and treated by Qataris as slaves. Forced labour and human trafficking are major problems. Qatar is one of the largest financial supporters of Islamic terrorism: it reportedly supports Islamic rebels in war zones. Both foreign migrant workers and converts from Islam to Christianity face persecution. The Christian faith of low skilled migrant workers can add to their already vulnerable and low status. Converts face the strongest persecution within their own families and their private life but also in all other spheres of life (community, national and church). Expatriate Christians are especially limited in their community, national and church spheres of life. They run a serious risk of being detained and deported if they are involved in missionary activities. The political, social and economic situation of Qatar seems quite stable. On the short run, this means that the level of religious freedom for Christians is not expected to change.</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>Kenya (score 63)</p>
	<p>With a score of 63 points, Kenya ranks 19 on the World Watch List 2015. It is the highest riser on the list by gaining 15 points. The main persecution engine affecting Christians in Kenya is 'Islamic extremism'. 'Secular intolerance' and 'Tribal antagonism' are secondary persecution engines. The level of persecution related violence has increased in Nairobi, Northeast, and Coastal regions, and the squeeze related persecution processes in the different spheres of Christian life (private, family, community, national and church) intensified in the majority of the country. Homegrown radical Muslims and militants crossing the border from Somalia are severely persecuting Christians. The government's approach to pushing for an unbalanced secularist agenda also has an impact on the Kenyan Church, as some of the agenda being pushed by the government contradicts with the values</p>

and principles of Christianity. In some parts of the country, there has been persecution as a result of Tribal antagonism. Persecution in the country affects expatriate churches, historical churches, the non-traditional Protestant churches, and the Christian converts from a Muslim background. Violence has increased in different parts of the country particularly where Islamic radicalism is vivid. The other emerging engines Secular intolerance and Tribal antagonism also resulted in an increase in squeeze. The overall picture related to the persecution of Christians in Kenya dramatically changed, and a jump in the score from 48 to 63 is testament to this. Lacking government capacity and unwillingness to take the issue seriously, let the perpetrators behind persecution get off scot-free. The media continue reporting biased issues about Christians and church leaders. The future of the Kenyan Christians will continue deteriorating as long as the underlying issues are not properly and adequately tackled.

20

Turkmenistan (score 63)

On the World Watch List 2015, Turkmenistan gets 63 points (62 points in 2014), ranking 20. The main persecution engines in Turkmenistan are 'Dictatorial paranoia' and 'Islamic extremism'. 'Organized corruption' is a secondary persecution engine. The regime of President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov continues to restrict the freedom of religion, and Christian converts from a Muslim background are facing many problems from their family, friends and community. Both forces explain to a large extent the country's score on the World Watch List. The uncertain economic prospects, the fear of an influx of Islamic jihadists, and the almost total state control will remain important environment settings as well. In the past year, the oppression of Christians has been constant. Both main persecution engines cause pressure on Christians in all spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church). Islamic extremism does so primarily in the private, family and community spheres, while Dictatorial paranoia is dominant in the national and church spheres. There are but few incidents on freedom of religion reported. As far as we know there currently is one religious prisoner in Turkmenistan: Umid Gajayev, a Protestant believer from Dashoguz, who was arrested in April 2012 on charges of hooliganism and sentenced the following month to four years' imprisonment on charges of hooliganism. His arrest followed an argument with neighbors, and local Protestants insist the criminal charges were brought disproportionately because of his religious beliefs. The attitude of the government towards religion is negative and this is not likely to change soon. Pressure on and violence against converts from Islam from family, friends and community will continue, if not increase.