

FREEDOM *of* RELIGION *and the* PERSECUTION *of* CHRISTIANS

The Open Doors Report, 2015



OpenDoors

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

Contents

3	Introduction
4	Key findings
5	Increased persecution of Christians worldwide
7	North Korea is still the most difficult place in the world to be a Christian
8	Islamic State violence
11	Islamic extremism
11	Other engines of persecution
15	Africa: the most rapidly growing area of persecution
17	Countries of special concern
20	Regions of special concern
22	Women and girls: the gender dimension of persecution
24	The 'hard facts' of persecution
25	Cross-border Christian/Muslim dialogue
26	Recommendations



In July 1955, a young Dutch missionary travelled to Poland – and discovered the reality of Christians facing persecution because of their faith. He became known as Brother Andrew, ‘God’s Smuggler,’ as he responded to their expressed need for Bibles. It was the start of a journey that led to the establishment of Open Doors, linking support bases in 23 countries in their support of Christians under pressure in around 60 countries across the world. **The world has changed dramatically in the past 60 years. But still there are millions of Christians facing persecution.**

Cover photo: The mother of one of the 276 female students kidnapped by Boko Haram from Chibok, Nigeria, 14.04.2014

Introduction

Open Doors UK & Ireland is part of an international NGO network which has for 60 years supported and strengthened persecuted Christians. It now works in around 50 countries worldwide, in close consultation with church leaders and Christians who experience first-hand the reality of the denial of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Each year for 14 years the World Watch Research Unit of Open Doors International has published the World Watch List, highlighting the 50 countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian. This report uses data from Open Doors field workers and independent experts to track the deep structures of persecution, not merely specific incidents of persecution. It measures the degree of freedom a Christian has to live out their faith in five spheres of life – private, family, community, national and church life – plus a sixth sphere measuring the degree of violence. The data is translated into points and countries ranked accordingly. The list is independently audited by the International Institute of Religious Freedom.

On the basis of the research behind Open Doors World Watch List this paper highlights the most important trends of persecution affecting Christians and Christian communities at the start of 2015 – how and why individual Christians experience the denial of their rights as expressed in Article 18.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) includes the statements: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” It is truly astonishing how many countries are signed up to the ICCPR and yet continue to actively and intentionally deny their citizens these rights and/or fail to protect their citizens from the denial of these rights.

Open Doors firmly believes that every human being has the right to full freedom of religion or belief as defined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As an organisation dedicated to supporting and strengthening Christians facing persecution it recognises that positive action in support of Article 18 on a global, international and national level would dramatically impact the life and well-being of millions of Christians, as well as those of other faiths or none.



Stephen Rand
Open Doors
January 2015

“It is truly astonishing how many countries are signed up to the ICCPR and yet continue to actively and intentionally deny their citizens these rights and/or fail to protect their citizens from the denial of these rights”

Key findings

The **key findings** in this report are:

- There continues to be an increase in the persecution of Christians worldwide: in 2014 persecution became *more* intense in *more* countries of the world
- North Korea is still the most difficult place in the world to be a Christian
- Islamic State violence in Iraq and Syria has increased the pace of the exodus of the Christian population from the Middle East and is having a global impact
- Islamic extremism is a significant engine of persecution in 40 of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian
- The most rapidly growing area of persecution is in the countries of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa
- Iran, Sudan, Turkey, Mexico, Azerbaijan, India and Malaysia are countries of special concern; Asia and Latin America are areas of special concern; women and girls are people of special concern



An Indian Christian woman protests in New Delhi about the burning of St. Sebastian church

Increased persecution of Christians worldwide

The past year has seen appalling outrages carried out in the name of religion. Some of these have been explicitly aimed at Christians. One result has been greater attention accorded to religious violence and the persecution of Christians in both the media and the UK Parliament. So it may not seem that surprising that our research shows a continuing increase in the persecution of Christians worldwide.

The Open Doors World Watch List is compiled on the basis of a detailed questionnaire that scores the reality of religious freedom in individual states in various spheres of life: the *forum internum*, the private realm, that comprises not only the individual's absolute freedom to choose his religion or belief, including the right to change the faith, but also the right to live accordingly to this faith as an individual person; the *forum externum*, the right to live according to your faith in the wider communities of family, community and nation; the *status collectivus*, the collective dimension that recognises the right to worship and organise together as a religious community. The questionnaire also explores the status of the rule of law and wider minority rights.

It is on this basis that we can state that in 2015 scores have increased: there has been an average increase of 3 points in the top 50; the threshold for reaching this group rose by nearly 4 points. But the increased scores have mainly come in the five spheres of life through which we track the more subtle 'squeeze' dimensions of persecution – private, family, community, church and national life.

Our research does also measure violence. In many countries there has been a modest increase in violence (of course, dreadfully high in

countries such as Iraq, Syria and Nigeria). But for many Christians persecution comes mainly in the form of family exclusion, or the loss of a job, or even rejection by a church community: this kind of experience is significant and often devastating. Indeed, the average increase in violence is very modest compared to the average increase in social pressure.

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IS STILL INCREASING

- **In 8 countries the level of persecution increased seriously** (Kenya, Djibouti, Mexico, Tanzania, Turkey, Somalia, Iraq, Comoros)
- **In 16 countries the level of persecution increased** (Sudan, Nigeria, Eritrea, India, Azerbaijan, China, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Palestinian Territories, Libya, Syria, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Iran, Tajikistan)
- **In 23 countries the level of persecution stayed more or less the same** (North Korea, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Algeria, Turkmenistan, Maldives, Tunisia, Qatar, Central African Republic, Brunei, Burma, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Mali, Colombia, Oman, Mauritania, United Arab Emirates)
- **In 3 countries the level of persecution decreased** (Ethiopia, Laos, Sri Lanka).

We are clear: in most of the top 50 countries, daily life for the Christian is getting harder and harder. Worldwide levels of persecution have risen, but this has not been primarily due to increased violence (the smash), but increased social pressure (the squeeze).

The smash and the squeeze

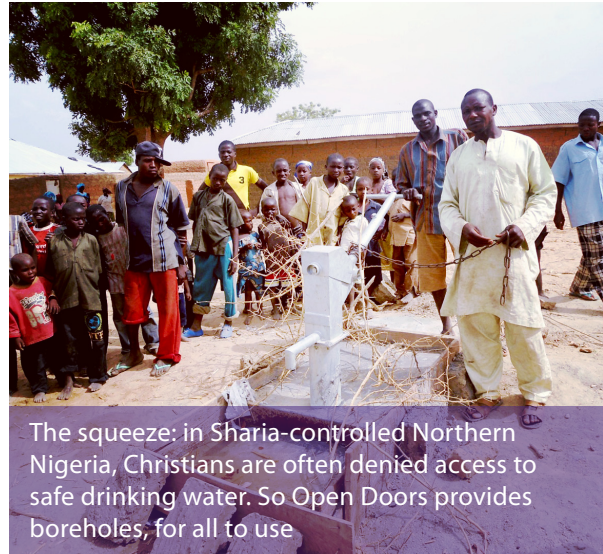
Open Doors defines persecution as ‘any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians both from within and outside Christianity’.

Persecution is therefore a denial of Article 18: any hostility directed towards an individual on the basis of their religious belief has the effect of limiting freedom of religion, whether or not that is the specific intention.

Violence directed against people because of their faith (the smash) is obvious and abhorrent. In 2014, the countries where Christians experienced the most violence were, in order: Nigeria, Iraq, Syria, Central African Republic, Sudan, Pakistan, Egypt, Burma, Mexico and Kenya.

But it is also persecution when the implicit and indirect power of culture, over decades, creates a society or situation that freezes Christians out of normal life. Massive pressure from friends, neighbours, family and the government can make it practically impossible to function as a Christian – this is the squeeze.

The countries that put the greatest squeeze on Christian activity in the reporting period of 1 November 2013 to 31 October 2014 were: Somalia, North Korea, Afghanistan, Maldives, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Iran and Libya.



The squeeze: in Sharia-controlled Northern Nigeria, Christians are often denied access to safe drinking water. So Open Doors provides boreholes, for all to use

“It is also persecution when the implicit and indirect power of culture, over decades, creates a society or situation that freezes Christians out of normal life”

North Korea is still the most difficult place in the world to be a Christian

For the past 13 years the Open Doors World Watch List has indicated that North Korea is the most difficult country in the world to be a Christian. In 2014, after the kidnapping and arrest of South Korean missionary Kim Jeong-Wook, dozens of people were caught and many tortured and murdered. This came against a background of nationwide purges, in which allegedly over 10,000 people were banished, arrested, tortured and/or killed because of their supposed links with Kim Jong-Un's uncle, Jang Song-Thaek.

In each and every sphere of life (private, family, community, church and national), the pressure is on the highest level. For a Christian in North

called *Songbun*, all Christians are classified as 'hostile'.

In February 2014, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) released a 372-page report documenting chronic, wide-spread human rights abuses in the DPRK. The COI concludes "There is no effective freedom of religious belief in the DPRK. Such belief is treated as basically incompatible with, and hostile to, the state-sponsored personality cult surrounding Kim Il-sung and his descendants. Countless numbers of persons in the DPRK who attempt to practise their religious beliefs have been severely punished, even unto death."



Sketch by a former North Korean prisoner – up to 100,000 Christians are believed to be held in closed villages, prisons or labour camps

Korea it is very dangerous to keep a Bible, to read it or to worship, even alone. Sharing 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 is extremely high, Christians are seen as enemies, not only of the state, but of the very society they live in. Consequently, in the social stratification system

"Countless numbers of persons in the DPRK who attempt to practise their religious beliefs have been severely punished, even unto death"

Based on information from inside the country, Open Doors estimates that the number of Christians is somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 – and slowly but steadily growing. We also estimate that up to 100,000 of these are held in closed villages, prisons or labour camps.

Islamic State violence

Islamic State violence in Iraq and Syria has increased the pace of the exodus of the Christian population from the Middle East and is having a global impact.

The violence of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (IS) dominated international news headlines in 2014. A UN report stated that in the first eight months of 2014, IS terrorist and militants from associated groups killed approximately 8,500 Iraqi civilians.

Many videos recorded by the militant Islamists categorically call for complete elimination of non-Sunni Muslims and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria; others show mass killings. The victims are members of civilian minorities, targeted because of their religion. The perpetrators vow to eliminate them; Christians are one of those targeted groups.

There is a growing debate as to whether this constitutes genocide – with all the implications of that definition for action by external forces. Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International's Senior Crisis Response Adviser, has stated that the aim of IS is "to obliterate" all trace of non-Arabs and non-Sunni Muslims'.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Simonovic, commented in October that "Actions taken against Yazidis may amount to attempt of genocide. Why? Because they are defined by their religion and the only option they have is either to convert or to be killed." He added, controversially, that Christians were treated differently: given the choice to convert, leave the area, or stay and pay taxes.

A commentator disagrees: "In a nutshell, minorities in Iraq, especially Christians, are on the brink of complete elimination and they

have found themselves in a position where they cannot defend themselves. The onus is on the international community to act as swiftly as possible, so that remaining lives could be spared. That starts with calling the crimes genocide."



In Syria, Christians' relative pre-civil war amount of freedom has virtually disappeared with the coming of violent Islamic jihadist groups, reaching a new low with the Islamic State caliphate. Most Christians have fled IS-controlled areas. In Syria, of the 1.8 million pre-war Christian population, only 1.1 million remain: since the civil war began in 2011, 700,000 Christians have fled the country, of which 200,000 left in the past year. Many more are internally displaced.

In Iraq, in regions controlled by Islamic State such as Mosul and the Nineveh plain, virtually the whole Christian community has disappeared. It is reported that 140,000 Christians have fled from there, either to the Kurdish region or abroad. Those who stayed behind were forced to convert to Islam. 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.

An Open Doors field worker stated, "Since 20

August till now [15 October], approximately 5,000 Christian families have emigrated. Most of them left for Jordan and Lebanon, and a few to Turkey. Most of these emigrants were not Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), but Christians who have been living in Ankawa (a mainly Christian suburb of Erbil in the Kurdish region of Iraq) for many years. Fortunately for them, they mostly have money to buy tickets, as well as passports, while most IDPs have lost everything, their papers, their money, as well as hope.”

“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”

In June 2014, IS took hold of large parts of north and west Iraq, including the second largest city in the country, Mosul. It proclaimed a caliphate (which includes the region they control in Syria) and implemented specific rules. The punishments for breaking these rules are cruel, varying from cutting off hands to execution. Christians were forced to pay a tax for religious minorities; when an Assyrian family was not able to pay, the mother and daughter were raped, in front of the father. He was so traumatised by this event that he committed suicide later.

After 17 July, IS began marking houses owned by Christians with the Arabic ‘N’, which stands for ‘Nazarene’, Arab for ‘Christian’. These houses were taken over by IS militants. The militants gave Christians in Mosul an ultimatum until 19 July to convert to Islam, pay a tax, or be executed.

On 25 July, IS declared Mosul to be free of Christians, and this event was celebrated on the streets of Mosul. Since then, several churches and monasteries have been razed to the ground, burned, or have been changed into IS offices, animal breeding houses, or storages. Christian and Shiite gravesites have been blown up and destroyed. Christian women and children who have remained in the areas controlled by IS have been abducted, raped, sold as sex slaves or subjected to forced marriage.

The impact of IS

Local: The radicalising impact is clear, not only in areas they control, but also on the jihadist movement as a whole. Former ‘moderate’ Muslims have become stricter as they do not want to give the impression that they are heretics. This has clear implications for the situation of Christians: the pressure on them is increased. This is true for all Christians, but especially those from a Muslim background who have chosen to become Christians.

Regional: Under the influence of IS, radical sentiments have increased in the Middle East region. IS cells (either sleeping or awake) are present in several countries, e.g. Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza. This has led to increased levels of fear for local Christians, and also local non-Christians, who in some cases have started to arm themselves. There is also a danger that in other Muslim Middle East countries governments either clamp down on all signs of dissent, which may also have the effect of making life more difficult for Christians; or they are less willing to defend the rights of non-Muslims for fear of being thought to be less authentically Muslim.

Global: Never before have so many violent extremists been seen by so many as heroes.

The violent jihadists of the Middle East, and IS in particular, are skilfully using social media to maximise their global appeal. They have become an inspiration to many individuals and many other extremist groups. Their extreme acts may even make other global organisations, such as Al Qaeda, appear 'old fashioned'. They can create intolerance, eventually breaking the well-established norms of coexistence among people and potentially threatening multiculturalism in Europe as well as in other democratic nations.

Jihadists have travelled from many nations to join IS in Iraq and Syria. Their home nations, not least in Asia and the Middle East, are already wrestling with the concern as to what will happen when the jihadists return. Many will be battle-hardened, smart in organising – and they may well also bring a new hatred of Christians into regions that have traditionally been more accepting.

IS also both undermines the concept of the nation state and exploits the weakness of failing states, though events in Ukraine, cross-border

assassinations and extraordinary renditions are all a reminder that IS and Boko Haram are not the only ones who ignore the sovereignty of national boundaries. Religious minorities, including Christians, are made more vulnerable as the stability and protection offered by a robust state are removed.

Signs of hope

There are some signs of hope. First, in that Christians are finding new unity in the face of the jihadist onslaught. Second, new co-operative relationships are being forged between Muslim and Christian in the Middle East; thrown together in their need, they are forging a new respect as they work together and help each other. Some commentators have even gone so far as to say, "Muslim leaders have become so shaken by the actions of IS that they are seeking to work with the Christians and not ignoring them, and a new understanding of Christian-Muslim relations is being born."



An internally displaced Christian Iraqi family

Islamic extremism

Islamic extremism is a significant engine of persecution in 40 of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

Islamic extremism has two global centres of gravity. One in the Arab Middle East, while the other is in sub-Saharan Africa, where in even Christian majority states individual Christians are experiencing unprecedented levels of exclusion, discrimination and even violence.

It is important to note that Islamic extremism comes in many guises. There are extremist states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia that require full observance of Sharia: religious minorities may be tolerated, but strictly as second class citizens. There are extremist movements that seek to impose Islam through political means, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. There are extremist groups that espouse violence to achieve their aims, such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and IS in Syria and Iraq. There are extremist households or individuals that are the most effective in enforcing Islam's apostasy laws.

“It is important to note that Islamic extremism comes in many guises”

In many cases, all four layers may be involved. There is no doubt that in 2014 it is the actions of the violent jihadists that have attracted the most attention. But it must not be forgotten that Islamic extremism is often more effective in stopping Christian witness through the squeeze of a strongly Islamic culture than the actions of violent jihadists, since state, tribe, family and

neighbourhood all combine to stifle the exercise of the Christian faith.

Christians may also suffer as a result of Islamic extremism either when governments with assertive Muslim minorities seek security in unhealthy 'appeasement' of Islam, or when governments try to counter the threat of Islamic extremism by fuelling Hindu or Buddhist nationalism, for example, in India, Sri Lanka and Burma.

Other engines of persecution

The Open Doors analysis of persecution recognises there are different engines of persecution – and more than one of them may apply in any one country or location.

THE MAIN ENGINES OF PERSECUTION

- Islamic extremism
- Religious nationalism
- Tribal antagonism
- Denominational protectionism
- Communist oppression
- Dictatorial paranoia
- Secular intolerance
- Organised corruption

Religious nationalism

This is when national identity is seen as inseparable from religious identity. At its most extreme it will seek this goal violently, as well as constitutionally, legally and socially.

While Islamic extremists are increasingly trans-national, Islam is still linked with national identity in many countries. In Somalia, for example, they demand that a good Somali is a good Muslim. The constitution of the Maldives states that only Muslims can be citizens of the country.

Hindu nationalists in India promote the ideology of Hindutva to justify their vision of a Hindu India; nationalist Buddhists in Sri Lanka maintain all Sinhala people must be Buddhist or they are betrayers of their heritage and country; a similar situation applies in Burma, where the Rohingya Muslims are defined as refugees and denied citizenship, and the state continues to fight against ethnic Christian minorities like the Kachin, Chin and Shan. Some Orthodox Jews would apply similar arguments to Israel.

In all these cases Christianity is argued to be a foreign religion, and Christians can be accused of being unpatriotic, walking away from their primary and ancient identity, and as a result face discrimination and sometimes violence.

This is why it can be very unhelpful to Christians facing persecution in these contexts to describe Britain as a 'Christian country'. Of course it is right and proper to underline the Christian history and heritage of the UK. But to religious nationalists in other countries the description helps to reinforce the concept of Christianity as a foreign religion; to Islamic extremists it assists their 'Crusade' rhetoric and the characterisation of UK foreign policy as being religious in nature. It also helps those who want to identify what is seen as Western

decadence and debauchery with Christianity. All these distortions impact negatively on the indigenous Christian population.

“Christians can be accused of being unpatriotic, walking away from their primary and ancient identity, and as a result face discrimination and sometimes violence”

The tendency of radical Hindus in India and Nepal (and possibly Bhutan), and of radical Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Burma to create regional alliances to counteract further expansion of radical Islam, might also lead to growing pressure and violence against Christians.

Tribal antagonism

This describes persecution coming from attempts to enforce the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in a tribal context, often in the form of traditional religion. Members of the tribe that choose to become Christians are often persecuted because they are seen to have turned their back on the traditions of their tribe. Sometimes the tribe may have its own religion, like animistic tribes in parts of Africa, or sometimes the tribe may simply be a social or blood obligation that can act as strongly as the religious ties.

There are two senses in which this applies. First a Christian may refuse to continue in the rituals of the tribe, especially the more animistic rituals which can involve immorality, blood sacrifices and idol worship. Or second, a Christian may proclaim that their deepest identity is now as a Christian, while the tribe demands that they see themselves

and act purely as a Pashtun, or a Fulani, or a Lao. This is most marked in states where tribal loyalty is greater than national identity.

The most persecuted Christians of the Far East for example are tribal Christians, who often experience a double persecution: emanating both from the state and from their tribe, i.e. Christians among the Rohingya in Burma or the Hmong in Vietnam. This is also a common experience for tribal Christians in the indigenous areas of Colombia and Mexico.

Denominational protectionism

In some countries Christians face persecution from other Christians, when one church – usually an ancient and/or majority denomination – tries to protect their status as the only legitimate or dominant expression of Christianity in the country and refuses to accept the validity of other traditions.

This is where a church tries to impose its version of Christianity on everyone, especially other Christians. This has been a problem in some countries of Latin America. In Eastern Europe some Orthodox churches have identified closely with the state, and see non-Orthodox Christians as unpatriotic: in Russia, Baptists and Pentecostals have in the past been marginalised and disempowered by the Orthodox Church. Today in Ethiopia, Pentecostal Christians can sometimes expect their severest persecution to come from radical movements within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The same applies in Eritrea.

Communist oppression

However successfully states have tried to maintain Communism as a prescriptive national ideology, they have often been more successful

at maintaining the systems of control, and particularly the demand for the registration of churches. This is a feature of many post-Communist states formerly in the USSR.

Five countries are still officially Communist states: China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba and North Korea; Christians face persecution in all these states, through varying combinations of ideology and control. There are also parts of the world where ideological communists persecute Christians, such as the Maoists in Nepal and the Naxalites in India.

Dictatorial paranoia

This is when a political leader and his clique seek to dominate every aspect of society and maintain a close grip on power. The dictator is seized by fear that someone, somewhere, is plotting to overthrow them. No one is allowed to organise outside state control.

Christians are a threat to any totalitarian regime if they refuse to be dominated, and especially if they organise outside government control – the ultimate act of disloyalty. Christians may be tolerated if they allow themselves to be controlled through registration and laws.

“Christians are a threat to any totalitarian regime if they refuse to be dominated, and especially if they organise outside government control”

This dictatorial paranoia is the main persecution engine in Azerbaijan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Secular intolerance

Secularism can be understood in two ways. First, positively, where it insists that the state stays neutral (or secular) in its refusal to favour one religion or denomination over another. Second, negatively, it can campaign to insist that all religion be expunged from public life, arguing that religious expression and opinion are injurious to the public good.

It is one factor in the persecution of Christians in Kenya, for example. Within the framework of the new constitution, the county governments came into force in 2013. Following that, according to an Open Doors researcher, 'a lot of Christian discrimination from national to the county level is taking place under the guise of secularism'. This is partly in response to Islamic extremism; the danger is that many Christians feel that a double standard can apply when secularism is promoted, reducing the contributions of the church, but there is a greater sensitivity and willingness to respond to Muslim concerns.

Organised corruption

When violent cartels and mafia-style gangs create a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for self-enrichment, Christians can be targeted insofar as their ethics threaten these rackets and their leaders try to prevent young people particularly getting involved.

An obvious example would be those regions in Latin American that are run by criminal organisations who get their funds through drug trafficking. Pastors or priests who stand out against this trade are threatened and killed with sickening frequency. This engine is perhaps the most global of them all, as each society – especially where the state is weak or complicit – contains very

deliberate and organised schemes to direct riches to a pampered and often violent elite.

“Pastors or priests who stand out against this trade are threatened and killed with sickening frequency”

In Africa a pastor who speaks out against a corrupt leader can face rapid retaliation. Some geopolitical specialists talk of 'mafia states', where legitimately elected leaders rule the country like godfathers, and refuse to encourage the rule of law and the separation of powers.

Africa: the most rapidly growing area of persecution

The most rapidly growing area of persecution is in the countries of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa.

In our research, of the twelve countries that saw the most significant increase in levels of persecution, eight were from Africa. Kenya and Djibouti had the steepest climb, while Tanzania, Eritrea and Nigeria also scored significantly higher compared to last year. Islamic extremism is the main reason for this, not only because of violent extremism but also because of less obvious 'squeeze' factors.

Kenya is a Christian majority country with about ten to fifteen per cent of the Kenyan population being Muslim, of which the majority are Sunni. Kenyan Muslims seem to view politics and religion as related and two-thirds of them support the implementation of Sharia. Mainly located in the coastal areas of Kenya, they have begun to respond to perceived disenfranchisement in Kenyan society. Inspired by radical Islamic influences spilling over from Somalia, Muslim politicians representing Muslim areas have an agenda to eliminate the church from their area. Government officials with a Christian background are forced to leave Muslim majority areas or are systematically transferred from there. The north-eastern part of the country is also highly affected by Islamic extremism. Home-grown extremists and militants crossing the border from Somalia are severely persecuting Christians.

Eritrea has seen the pressure on Christians increasing, in particular the non-traditional Protestant Christian communities and Christian converts from a Muslim background. This pressure is mainly coming from President Isaias

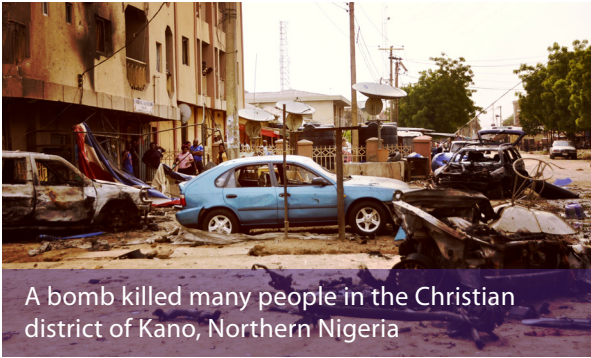
Afewerki and his ruling government, and ordinary members of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). A local Open Doors source reported that the Eritrean government intensified its crackdown on Christians, leading to more than 138 arrests of Christians and church leaders. They added, "Forty-seven of the detainees are released, and others continue languishing in jail without due process of law." Christians' homes have been raided, attacked and damaged. The high level



of pressure and the added violence contributed to Eritrean Christians leaving via neighbouring countries – Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt – and they have become an easy prey for human traffickers, especially in the Sinai desert.

In **Nigeria** religious tensions are rising in the run up to the 2015 elections. While the world media focused on the Islamic State (IS) violence in Iraq and Syria and its caliphate, Boko Haram proclaimed a similar and possibly even more violent caliphate in the city of Gwoza in northern Nigeria, which has spread to the whole of Borno State and parts of Adamawa. Boko Haram was blamed for nearly 4,000 deaths in 2014, of which the majority were Christians.

An estimated 15,000 people were displaced following a Boko Haram attack in Damboa, Borno State, on 19 July 2014 that resulted in more than



A bomb killed many people in the Christian district of Kano, Northern Nigeria

100 people being killed. On 23 June 2014, the UN High Commissioner for refugees announced that there were an estimated 650,000 internally displaced persons in the north-east of Nigeria. Nearly all local government areas in Borno State are now firmly controlled by Boko Haram.

Separate to the Boko Haram insurgency, there are also reports of the internal displacement of thousands of Christians, caused by harsh violence against Christians and their properties by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. They descend on the villages in the night or in the day and carry out cruel attacks against innocent people including women and children. As a Nigerian researcher reports, there are moves by the governments of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Taraba states to establish grazing fields for Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen. This means that swathes of land from indigenous Christian communities are taken away for that purpose, depriving Christians of their land.

Djibouti is a small, poverty-stricken Muslim country, surrounded by Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, countries where persecution is all-too familiar. The constitution has declared Islam the state religion; the government's attitude towards Christians and other non-Muslims is negative, and it attempts to control their activities. Pressure from Islamic extremism has been growing and has also become a concern for the government itself. Christian converts with a Muslim

background bear the brunt of persecution. "Christians are fearful to declare themselves openly as Christians. In such a situation, they do not feel they would win compassion," an Open Doors field worker said. Also violence against converts has increased: two places known as gathering places for converts were attacked; converts have been forced into marrying Muslims, and looting and ransacking houses has also occurred. According to the same worker: "One convert's house was looted by his relatives after he declined to return to Islam."

In **Tanzania** the position of Christians has significantly deteriorated, including Christians coming from a Muslim background, Christians living on the island of Zanzibar, and those in the coastal areas of mainland Tanzania. At the heart of the persecution is Uamsho (the Association for Islamic Mobilisation and Propagation – also known as Awakening). It uses Zanzibar as a springboard to further its Islamist agenda in Tanzania. Uamsho and related groups aim to establish an Islamic state that includes Zanzibar and a significant section of the Tanzanian mainland along the coast. In this state, there would be no place for Christians and people with other beliefs.

The amount of violence against Christians in Zanzibar also increased. On 23 February 2014, a bomb exploded close to the Evangelical Assemblies of God Zanzibar Church just outside Zanzibar City. On 24 February, a device was detonated outside the Christ Church Cathedral in Stone Town. As a result, sending children to school, operating business and socialising with fellow residents have become very risky. An Open Doors researcher said, "Children are harassed in education and social recreation areas in the islands and Muslim majority areas. Christian children are mistreated and abused."

Countries of special concern

These countries have been identified for special concern not because they are necessarily the most difficult places to be a Christian, but because there has been significant deterioration in the treatment of Christians in the past year.

Iran

Shia Islam is the official religion and all laws must be consistent with the official interpretation of Sharia. The most important drivers of persecution against Christians are government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, fanatical movements and revolutionaries or paramilitary groups. 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 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. In 2014 pressure increased on Christians, particularly those who were detained, with interrogation methods becoming harsher. Christians were charged with more serious offences – and even though they were often convicted on lesser charges, there was an increase in prison sentences.

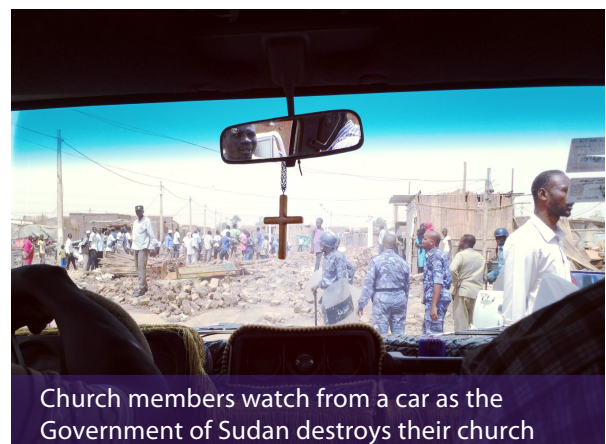
Sudan

There was a significant increase in persecution in 2014, the result of the deteriorating position for Christian converts from a Muslim background and faith-related violence against Christians living in the Nuba Mountains. Since Christian-majority South Sudan gained independence, Sudan has

become a distinctly Muslim-majority country. Radical Islamic tendencies have been increasing, adding to the already existing pressure on Christian communities. As an Open Doors researcher shared: “The registration or celebration of Christian weddings is hindered and often almost impossible as Christians first have to prove that they are Christian by providing an official document from their church. If this involves a believer from a Muslim background, it is a huge risk for them as they often have to keep their new religion a secret.”

The widely publicised story of Meriam Ibrahim is a clear example of this. She was born from a Muslim father and a Christian mother, and always considered herself to be Christian. But because her father is a Muslim, the law considered her to be Muslim. She married a Christian man, was imprisoned on the charges of adultery for this marriage and sentenced to death for allegedly committing apostasy from Islam. Only after serious international pressure was Meriam released and allowed to leave the country.

Violence against Christians in Sudan has shifted from targeting individuals to indiscriminate attacks against groups of Christians. According to Open Doors research, there has been a variety



Church members watch from a car as the Government of Sudan destroys their church

of faith-related killings, attacks on at least ten Christian properties, including churches, schools and hospitals, particularly in South Kordofan and Blue Nile state. More than 30 Christians have been killed as a result of targeted government bombings. Furthermore, the government reissued a ban on new church permits, while at the same time demolishing existing church buildings and forcibly relocating Christians to new areas devoid of church buildings.

Turkey

Turkey re-appeared in our World Watch List after three years: once again it is among the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. A combination of the persistence of legal restrictions and negative comments of some government officials towards Christians, social hostilities and the rise of stricter Islamic observance, continue to restrict Christians. They have to deal with a great amount of social control. Converts to Christianity can be ostracised, with heavy pressure exerted on them to return to Islam. Occasionally they experience physical abuse.

At the church and national level, the state imposes restrictions on Christians. Only two church denominations have been recognised: the Greek Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church: together they comprise only 70 per cent of the country's Christian population. Nevertheless, Turkish legislation has banned Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic seminaries from training clergy. Four churches in Turkey have been attacked in the reporting period. A plot to assassinate Fener Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Bartholomew was uncovered in May 2014, and on 2 July 2014 a group of men entered St Stephanos Roman

Catholic Church in Yeşilköy, Istanbul, and insulted and harassed Christians. A church official asked the nearby police for help but was ignored.

In the UK Parliament questions have been asked about religious liberty in Turkey. The government's answer has been consistent: "The Turkish government is continuing to improve protections for all religious minorities in Turkey and we welcome this. We and our EU partners assess however that more needs to be done to entrench freedom of religion for all in Turkey and we will continue to encourage the Turkish authorities to make further progress, as part of our wider human rights dialogue." (Foreign Office Minister Baroness Anelay of St Johns, 15 September).

Mexico

In recent years, the most important base of narcotic crime and its connection with drug traffickers has moved from Colombia to Central America and Mexico. Criminal organisations are targeting Christians because they are considered to be sources of revenue for extorting money and because Christianity provides alternatives to crime. Mexico has re-entered the list of the 50 countries where it is hardest to be a Christian as a result of the progression of organised crime and the recording of more violent incidents against Christians.

In the reporting period (1 November 2013 to 31 October 2014), at least 15 Christians have been killed for these reasons. In Matamoros, six Christian leaders were killed; in Monterrey and Michoacán, at least three Christian former cartel members were killed because they refused to return to organised crime. A Ugandan priest who came to Mexico as a missionary was found murdered and thrown into a ditch.

In indigenous communities, converts from traditional religions have also been victims of violence. Often, their homes were destroyed and hundreds forced to flee from their homes. Around 80 cases of physical abuse have been reported in the southern states of the country.

Azerbaijan

The position of Christians in Azerbaijan remains as difficult as before. Fewer and fewer churches can function legally. Unregistered religious activities are punishable by law, and the fines for breaking the law are high; yet successful registration for churches is close to impossible. The country's authoritarian government seeks to restrict all public expressions of religion that could become a threat to the regime. Christians are not the only victims of persecution, other religious minorities or radical expressions of Islam are also targeted. Many Christians are unable to find or keep jobs and are watched closely by the secret services.

India

With the election of Narendra Modi of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to become Prime Minister of India in May 2014, the atmosphere in India for Christians and other religious minorities has taken a turn for the worse. It was not long before the cabinet began to signal that non-Hindus should keep their heads down.

Hindu fundamentalists who attack Muslims and Christians can do so with more impunity than previously was the case. They have started monitoring Christian activities. Moreover, several states implemented anti-conversion laws which are used to disrupt church services as well as to



Hindu extremists brutally attacked Indian couple, Bono and Pratima, for accepting Christianity

harass, beat up and accuse Christians, adding to the already existing pressure. This happened all over India, with increasing reports from the south. Even though the level of violence can be levelled out by the sheer number of Christians not facing violence in the country, there are weekly and even daily reports of Christian meetings being interrupted, pastors and Christians being abused and assaulted. A church in Delhi has been burned.

“With the election of Modi of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party... the atmosphere in India for Christians and other religious minorities has taken a turn for the worse”

Apart from Hindu fundamentalists, Buddhist extremists in Ladakh, Neo Buddhists in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh and Sikh extremists in Punjab are adding to faith-related violence.

Malaysia

Once a liberal Islamic country, Malaysia is rapidly becoming a tough place to be a Christian. The government's stance towards Christians and other religious minorities has hardened and pressure in the private, family and church spheres of life has increased. In addition, there has been an increase in faith-related violence over the past year.

Christian converts from a Muslim background are especially targeted. Family and community members will isolate them and use any means to pressure them to recant their Christian faith. There have been cases where they have sent converts to a re-education centre. Churches are monitored and new churches have encountered major difficulties to obtain the required church registration.

“Christian converts from a Muslim background are especially targeted”

Observers of the country talk about a quick Islamisation, exemplified by calls for introducing Hudud, the criminal law dimension of Sharia that includes apostasy; enforcing fasting on religious minorities during Ramadan; the announced introduction of a Sharia Compliance Index in 2015; plans for setting Sharia courts on an equal footing with civil courts; the treatment of children's custody cases in mixed marriages and, last but not least, the decision by the Supreme Court to deny a Catholic newspaper the use of the word 'Allah' for God as it may 'confuse Muslims and might lead to conversions'. Furthermore, when Bibles previously seized by the authorities were returned, they were stamped with the words 'Strictly for non-Muslim use only'.

Regions of special concern

Asia

It used to be that in the Far East, with the startling exception of North Korea, there was a noted improvement in conditions for Christians over recent years. This has gone into reverse in many countries: twelve countries from East Asia and the Far East – North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Vietnam, India, Burma, Brunei, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos and Sri Lanka – appear in the list of the 50 countries where it is hardest to be a Christian, and in ten of those (with the exceptions of Laos and Sri Lanka where the situation has remained the same) it has become more difficult, particularly so in China, India and Malaysia.

Paradoxically, many of these countries contain large Christian churches. It is often been said that there are more people in church on a Sunday in China than in the whole of Europe. Governments often tend to be the main source of persecution in these regions, and they have become more concerned about the dangers of religious extremism in the light of events in the Middle East. But there are also leaders of religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism who feel threatened by the Christian growth, and the big surprise of the year has been how much harder life has become for Malaysian Christians.

“The big surprise of the year has been how much harder life has become for Malaysian Christians”

China is still undecided about how to deal with the church. This is actually good news. Following attacks on scores of churches, with some buildings being destroyed and about 300 crosses being removed in the heartland of Wenzhou, many assume that China is setting its face against Christianity. But there is a surprising weight of counter-evidence that suggests a vigorous debate is going on in the Chinese government over whether it should restrict or free the church. If Christianity can sound, look and be Chinese enough, it is possible that the church will continue to be invited to play a fuller role in the building of the new China.

Nevertheless, it is the Tibetan and Muslim Uyghur Christian converts who bear the brunt of persecution in China, and this greatly contributed to the rise in China's score. In Tibet and Xinjiang, which is home to the Uyghur people, the situation is very volatile. Every change of religion – whether from Buddhism or Islam – will be seen to be a disgrace to the family and treason to the community. If Christians are discovered, they run the risk of being disowned by their families and thrown out. There have been reports of family members destroying the agricultural fields of converts as a punishment for their choice to become Christian.

Latin America

Mexico and Colombia are among the 50 countries where it is hardest to be a Christian; other Latin American countries such as Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela remain causes for concern. The sources of persecution are complex and the most varied in this very Christianised region. Christians are caught in the crossfire between 'organised corruption,' 'tribal antagonism,' 'denominational protectionism,' and even rising

'secular intolerance'. Weak states allow local forces, such as drug-trafficking groups, to hold sway, and when Christians stand up and stand out they are targeted with merciless violence.

Of course, Latin America is largely Christianised, and most Christians can function freely. So persecution may not be immediately apparent to a cursory glance. In most countries, with the exception of Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia, persecution does not come from the state. Many people associate persecution with vertical pressures from the state, but the reality of Latin America is much more one of horizontal pressures coming from criminal organisations, revolutionary insurgencies and tribal authorities.

Women and girls: the gender dimension of persecution

On the night of 14–15 April 2014, 276 female students were kidnapped from the Government Secondary School in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria. Responsibility was claimed by Boko Haram.

Open Doors has in recent years been attempting to assess the nature and extent of persecution directed against women and girls. Conversations with Christian women in Egypt readily reveal the prevalence of low-level harassment, verbal abuse and intimidation directed at them. In Pakistan, and other countries, there is evidence of Christian women facing kidnapping and forced marriages, which compel Christian girls to convert to Islam – one report, released by the Muslim Pakistani organisation, Movement for Peace, estimated that between 100–700 Christian women and girls are affected by this each year.

Other attacks on women include: honour killings, frequently due to a conversion from Islam to Christianity; rape – when reporting a rape means producing male witnesses of the crime or risking being accused of adultery; physical abuse for not covering their heads or wearing ‘provocative’ clothing, which has been known to include beatings, rapes or having acid thrown in their unveiled faces; blasphemy accusations – which often result in imprisonment, and can lead to exile or death.

The World Watch Research Unit speaks of ‘double vulnerability’: women and girls are already vulnerable in many of these societies and being or becoming a Christian significantly increases the level of vulnerability.

This is demonstrated by the behaviour of IS. While all minorities suffer at their hands, Yazidi



Three of the 276 female students kidnapped by Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria

and Christian women have been singled out for abuse: in 2014 a document was found indicating the prices for Yazidi and Christian women and children abducted by IS fighters. The highest prices are requested for children aged 1 to 9.

Another report states that “On 3 August, IS herded approximately 450–500 women and girls to the citadel of Tal Afar in Ninewa where, two days later, 150 unmarried girls and women, predominantly from the Yazidi and Christian communities, were reportedly transported to Syria, either to be given to IS fighters as a reward or to be sold as sex slaves.” Many believe that a similar fate may have met the Nigerian female students from Chibok.

“Women and girls are already vulnerable in many of these societies and being or becoming a Christian significantly increases the level of vulnerability”

Many minorities have been reluctant to enter camps for refugees or IDPs, because they know that camps are frequently hotbeds of organised

crime, where sex is used as currency and it is easy to fall prey to human traffickers.

One reporter highlighted that “Political and religious refugees fleeing repression and persecution in Eritrea often end up in eastern Sudan’s Shagarab refugee camps. These camps are grossly insecure and refugees are routinely kidnapped and sold to Bedouin criminals in Egypt’s lawless Sinai desert. Here they are tortured until ransom is paid. Some are released alive, but many traffickers take the ransom and then sell their victims on to other traffickers. It is estimated that some 7,000 mostly Eritrean refugees have been abused this way in the last four years and that around 4,000 may have died. Amongst the victims are many Christians who have fled persecution.”

In October 2014 the UN announced that “The Security Council recognizes that refugee and internally displaced women and girls are at heightened risk of being subject to various forms of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, and discrimination, which can occur during the various stages of the displacement cycle. The Security Council reaffirms the primary responsibility of Member States in the protection of their populations, including refugee and internally displaced women and girls.”

This reveals the ‘double vulnerability’ of women who become refugees or displaced persons. That double vulnerability already exists for Christian women in many countries; in fact, displacement brings a treble vulnerability.

The UK government has taken a lead in the campaign to prevent sexual violence in conflict; there is a pressing need for a similar campaign to prevent sexual violence in religious conflict.

“The UK government has taken a lead in the campaign to prevent sexual violence in conflict; there is a pressing need for a similar campaign to prevent sexual violence in religious conflict”



Iraqi Yazidi women – IS kidnapped many Yazidi and Christian women to sell as slaves

The ‘hard facts’ of persecution

Open Doors carefully screens media and internet sources to collect all persecution-related hard facts. This, plus data gathered by Open Doors field researchers, allows an objective description of the intensity and the scope of the violence against Christians that occurred during our most recent reporting period (November 2013 – October 2014).

This data must be interpreted as the very bottom line of killings and attacks as, clearly, many incidents may go unreported. The percentage of unreported murders and attacks will vary from country to country depending on a variety of factors, including the freedom of the press and sensitivities about reporting incidents. In particular, the scale of the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Cameroon and Central African Republic, and the lack of visibility of the situation in Burma and North Korea, make it very difficult to present reliable numbers for these countries.

“The percentage of unreported murders and attacks will vary from country to country depending on a variety of factors, including the freedom of the press and sensitivities about reporting incidents”

Further, when assessing the significance of the number of incidents, the size of the Christian population should be taken into account.

We recorded **1,062 churches attacked for faith-related reasons** in the reporting period. Most

attacks on church buildings were recorded in **China** (258), followed by **Vietnam** (116), **Nigeria** (108), **Syria** (107), **Central African Republic** (100), **Egypt** (58), **Iraq** (53), **Cameroon** (49), **Indonesia** (30), **Colombia** (20), **Sri Lanka** (20).

In total, records show **4,344 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons** during this reporting period. This is double the 2013 figure of 2123.

Nigeria regained the highest position with thousands killed (2484). It was followed by **Central African Republic** (1088), **Syria** (271), **Kenya** (119), **North Korea** (100), **Iraq** (60), **Cameroon** (55), **Egypt** (43), **Burma** (20), **Sudan** (13), **Libya** (12), **Mexico** (12), and **Pakistan** and **Somalia** both saw 10 killings reported.

Cross-border Christian/Muslim dialogue

Religious leaders from Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo have pledged to promote dialogue aimed at preventing sectarian conflict in their countries.

Twenty-one Christian and Muslim leaders gathered in November in Rwanda for a workshop entitled 'Interreligious Dialogue for Peace and Security in Great Lakes region'.

All three countries have faced traumatic communal violence. "This would commend us to draw lessons from it, in order to be able to allocate the things we can tolerate and those we cannot afford to tolerate anymore," said Bishop John Rucyahana of the Anglican Church of Rwanda.

"We need dialogue in order to strategise and set the pace for development," he said. "We critically have to expose sources of conflicts as much as we need to dialogue to establish policies, not only to eliminate those conflicts, but also do it with the intent and commitment to heal our social fabric."

Several Great Lakes countries – Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and Uganda – will hold elections in 2015. EIRENE's regional director, Tahirou Sy Issaka, said religious and ethnic affiliations may be manipulated for political purposes, creating conditions that could spark violence.

"Currently we are witnessing a stiffening of the speech – per se innocent – but if we are not careful, it can turn into violence vector," Issaka said. "That's why we want our actions to be focused on prevention, by creating a field of dialogue between different religious communities. We want to prevent a repetition of the Central African or Nigerian scenario."

Recent deadly attacks by Somali radical group al-Shabaab in Kenya have raised concern in the Great Lakes region. The Islamist group said its attacks will continue until Kenya removes its peacekeeping troops from Somalia. Uganda and Burundi also have troops in Somalia. On 3 November, Burundi's Minister of Interior Affairs, Edouard Nduwimana, met with religious leaders and warned against the risk of terrorist attacks in Burundi.

Issaka said the religious and political factors, in addition to tensions related to access to natural and mineral resources, make the Great Lakes region a tinderbox, and dialogue a priority.

"We want to draw lessons from countries that have experienced intercommunal violence. As such, the case of CAR, which has an interfaith platform, can serve as an example," he said.



Photo credit: Search for Common Ground (SFCG)

The workshop has empowered each participating country to create a national framework for dialogue, including senior representatives of various religious denominations in the country.

"An interfaith council exists already in Burundi. It is now our responsibility to pass on this experience in DRC and Rwanda," Issaka said. But "these efforts will not produce the expected results if they are not accompanied by political will and acts."

Recommendations

Foreign Office statements and Parliamentary questions reveal an understandable concern with specific incidents of violence and other abuses of religious liberty. We would urge the UK government and parliamentarians to:

- also pay close attention to the ‘squeeze’ – the constitutional, legal and cultural sources of persecution, noting early warning signs such as changes in law or jurisprudence – as well as the ‘smash’
- continue to resolutely support the right of each and any individual to change their religion and insist that this is the clear implication of the Article 18 ICCPR formulation ‘to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice’
- focus on engaging with countries where institutional behaviour encourages persecution
- encourage cross-border and multi-national responses to the underlying trends of persecution and the supra-national manifestations of religious extremism – for instance, Boko Haram, IS and Al-Shabaab – both at an inter-governmental level and a community level, focusing on all areas such as aid, trade and diplomacy
- be aware of, and highlight, overlooked ‘hot beds’ of persecution in countries that otherwise do not appear to persecute Christians, for instance Ache in Indonesia and the Northern Caucasus in Russia
- continue to work for freedom of religion or belief for all: we are confident that this is ultimately the best way to reduce the vulnerability of Christians to persecution, rather than identify them as a special case
- explore the value and impact of raising religious freedom as a dimension of women’s rights – and when discussing the rights of women ensure that the religious dimension is not overlooked
- encourage informed debate at the EU and UN level about state responses to the full breadth of extremism, with a special focus on how religion can be allowed to play an appropriate role in the public arena, and avoid the tendency for states to either take on religious extremism themselves or become aggressively secular, forcing all expressions of faith into the private sphere whether or not they are extreme in their views
- combat corruption, which is increasingly an intensifying factor in persecution, particularly in ‘failed states’ such as Somalia and Libya
- use appropriate fora to work to encourage the member nations of the Commonwealth to positively respond to the Commonwealth Charter, not least in respect of freedom of religion or belief
- build on the launch of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, bringing parliamentarians from different countries together to focus on issues of religious liberty
- pursue the recommendations of the report of the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief on their report *Religion and Belief in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*. In

particular: ensure that all discussions on the DPRK at the UN and the EU include human rights and especially the 'orphaned right' of freedom of religion or belief (Article 18); continue to critically engage with the DPRK bilaterally on human rights with the UK's Ambassador in Pyongyang elevating religious freedom to a high priority

- appoint a UK special envoy for freedom of religion or belief and work to appoint an EU Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

THE COMMONWEALTH AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

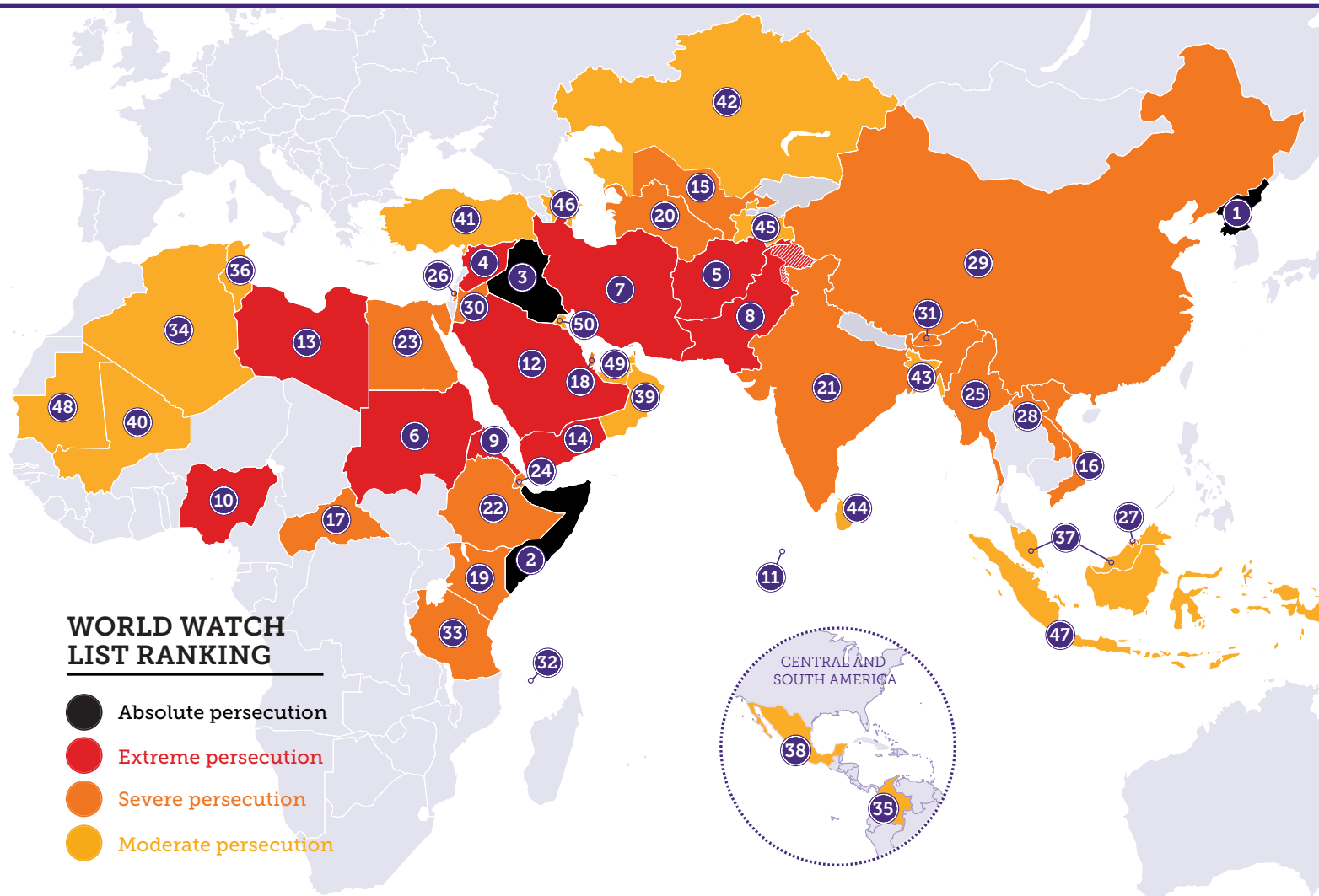
The Commonwealth Charter states: "We are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights covenants and international instruments... We emphasise the need to promote tolerance, respect, understanding, moderation and religious freedom which are essential to the development of free and democratic societies, and recall that respect for the dignity of all human beings is critical to promoting peace and prosperity."

The following Commonwealth countries appear in the Open Doors World Watch List: **Pakistan** (8); **Nigeria** (10); **Maldives** (11); **Kenya** (19); **India** (21); **Brunei** (27); **Tanzania** (33); **Malaysia** (37); **Bangladesh** (43); **Sri Lanka** (44). Some of these countries have national, regional and local laws that are inimical to their commitment to the Commonwealth Charter.

OpenDoors

World Watch Map 2015

This map illustrates the Open Doors World Watch List – a ranking of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The list is based on detailed information provided by Open Doors co-workers in over 65 countries, as well as independent experts. Data is gathered on five spheres of life – private, family, community, national and church life – plus a sixth sphere measuring the degree of violence.



1 NORTH KOREA	13 LIBYA	25 MYANMAR	37 MALAYSIA
2 SOMALIA	14 YEMEN	26 PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES	38 MEXICO
3 IRAQ	15 UZBEKISTAN	27 BRUNEI	39 OMAN
4 SYRIA	16 VIETNAM	28 LAOS	40 MALI
5 AFGHANISTAN	17 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	29 CHINA	41 TURKEY
6 SUDAN	18 QATAR	30 JORDAN	42 KAZAKHSTAN
7 IRAN	19 KENYA	31 BHUTAN	43 BANGLADESH
8 PAKISTAN	20 TURKMENISTAN	32 COMOROS	44 SRI LANKA
9 ERITREA	21 INDIA	33 TANZANIA	45 TAJIKISTAN
10 NIGERIA	22 ETHIOPIA	34 ALGERIA	46 AZERBAIJAN
11 MALDIVES	23 EGYPT	35 COLOMBIA	47 INDONESIA
12 SAUDI ARABIA	24 DJIBOUTI	36 TUNISIA	48 MAURITANIA
			49 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
			50 KUWAIT



OpenDoors

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

Open Doors UK, PO Box 6, Witney, OX29 6WG

Registered Charity in England and Wales No 1125684 and in Scotland No. SC043710

© Open Doors 2015