



**Date:** 7 May 2019

**Re: Overview of Christian Persecution Worldwide**

While it is difficult to provide comprehensive data on Christian persecution worldwide, due to strenuous data collection in conflict areas and wide underreporting caused by forced migration and fear of repercussions, it is estimated that [‘one third of the world’s population’](#) suffers from religious persecution in some form, with Christians being the most persecuted group.’

Not only is Christian persecution visible and widespread, it is also on the rise. There are a number of reports (coming from civil society, faith communities, or institutional settings) that acknowledge an increase in the span and severity of Christian persecution.

### **Open Doors [2019 World Watch List](#)**

The report, which analyses 50 countries worldwide, highlights that the number of Christians who experience *high* levels of persecution increased around 14 percent, with one in nine Christians subjected to *high* levels of persecution. During the reporting period, it has been estimated that 4,200 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons, which is an average of 11 Christians killed per day just because of their faith. The report also sets out that 2,625 Christians were detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned in 2018.

In the northern and middle areas of Nigeria, around 4,000 Christians were killed just because of their faith, a number which doubled in just one year. Many villages in this area have been devastated and abandoned as Christians were forced to flee them. The greatest numbers came from the Plateau State (1,885) where Christians were targeted by Muslim Fulani herdsmen, whose actions were declared 'genocide' by the Nigerian House of Representatives. The World Watch List also highlights that 1,266 churches or Christian buildings were attacked in 2018.

### **Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) [Global Religious Freedom in the World Report \(November 2018\)](#)**

The report shows significant religious freedom violations throughout two years of research and data collection. The situation for minority faiths worsened and reached ‘significant religious freedom violations’ in almost half of the countries under analysis (18 out of the 38). At the beginning of May 2019, ACN mentioned that 2019 is [‘already one of the bloodiest years for Christians.’](#)

### **National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka [NCEASL \(2018\)](#)**

In 2018, NCEASL reported a total of 86 cases of violence against Christians in Sri Lanka, compared with 93 incidents in 2017, 80 incidents in 2016, and 90 in 2015. The highest number of incidents in 2018 came under the category of threats against Christians, with 20 cases.

In the first half of 2018, there were over 15 incidents of violence and hostility against Christians in Nepal. Some of these incidents included – filing of cases for sharing a comic book about Jesus Christ with children, running an orphanage, being a foreigner and a Christian, refusing to

give Christian charities permission to run their projects, a blanket refusal to recognise churches as legal entities, and bombing of local churches.

### **[Interim Independent Review of the British Government Support for Persecuted Christians overseas \(May 2019\)](#)**

The interim report commissioned by the Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, and the review led by the Bishop of Truro, the Right Reverend Philip Mountstephen estimated that one in three people are the victims of religious persecution, with Christians being the most persecuted faith group. The report sends an alarming signal that Christians will be ‘wiped out’ from parts of the Middle East, as Christians in Palestine have dropped to less than 1.5% of the population, while in Iraq they had fallen from 1.5 million before 2003 to less than 120,000 in 2019. [The Bishop of Truro stated](#), ‘evidence shows not only the geographic spread of anti-Christian persecution, but also its increasing severity. In some regions, the level and nature of persecution is arguably coming close to meeting the international definition of genocide.’

### **[US Commission on International Religious Freedom 2018 USCIRF \(April 2019\)](#)**

USCIRF, an independent commission which advises the President, Congress, and the Secretary of State on religious freedom issues worldwide, confirmed in its 20<sup>th</sup> report that religious persecution is expanding. USCIRF Chair Tenzin Dorjee stated that ‘In the past year, we have seen severe violations of religious freedom mount around the globe, from the imprisonment of individuals charged with blasphemy in several countries to the internment of over one million Uighur Muslims in China. We and others labouring in the realm of religious freedom must persevere in our efforts to make this right a reality for everyone, everywhere.’

### **[Annual Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB \(March 2019\)](#)**

The 2019 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB dealing with restrictions imposed on expression on account of religion or belief shows that persecution on grounds of religious faith is a global phenomenon that is growing in scale and intensity.

### **[The European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance Annual Report on FoRB \(September 2018\)](#)**

Out of the 34 focal countries assessed in the Report, 19 display severe violations of freedom of religion or belief. The most extreme violations – rated 10 out of 10 – were reported in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. The Report also introduces an analysis of the focalness of the countries considered, which relates to the ‘relevance of these countries to the EU and their sensitivity to its influence’.

### **[European Parliament Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World and the European Union’s Policy on the Matter 2015 \(December 2016\)](#)**

The report highlights that persecution against Christians is increasing and concludes: ‘Christians are currently the religious group most harassed and intimidated in countries throughout the world, including in Europe, where Christian refugees routinely suffer religiously motivated persecution, and that some of the oldest Christian communities are in danger of disappearing, especially in North Africa and the Middle East.’