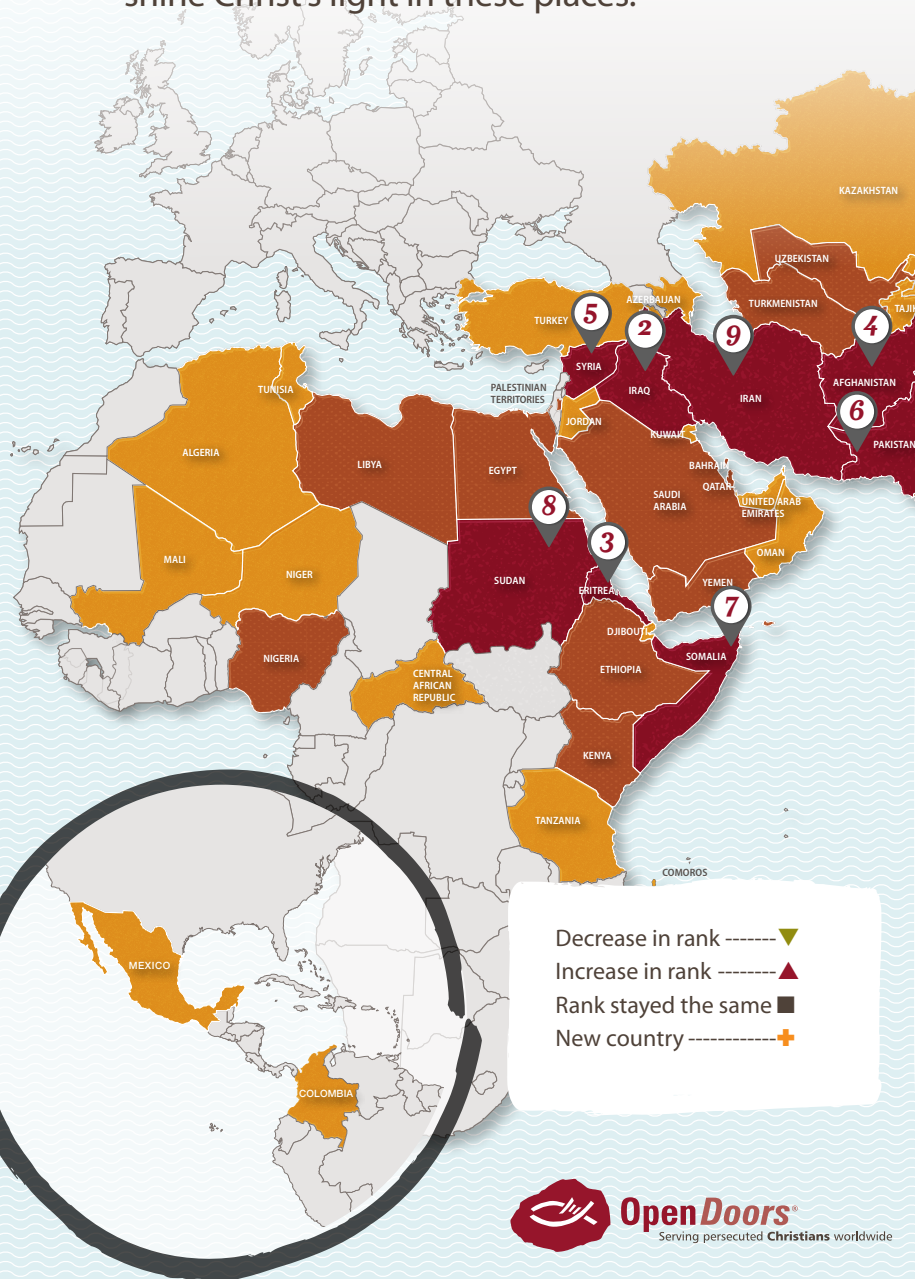


2016 WorldWatchList OpenDoors

The World Watch List is a ranking of the top 50 countries where Christians face the most severe persecution for their faith.

Open Doors works in the world's most oppressive countries, strengthening Christians to stand strong in the face of persecution and equipping them to shine Christ's light in these places.



Decrease in rank -----▼
 Increase in rank -----▲
 Rank stayed the same -----■
 New country -----+

COUNTRY	2016 SCORE	2015
1. North Korea	92/100	92/100
2. Iraq	90/100	86/100
3. Eritrea	89/100	79/100
4. Afghanistan	88/100	81/100
5. Syria	87/100	83/100
6. Pakistan	87/100	79/100
7. Somalia	87/100	90/100
8. Sudan	84/100	80/100
9. Iran	83/100	80/100
10. Libya	79/100	76/100
11. Yemen	78/100	73/100
12. Nigeria	78/100	78/100
13. Maldives	76/100	78/100
14. Saudi Arabia	76/100	77/100
15. Uzbekistan	70/100	69/100
16. Kenya	68/100	63/100
17. India	68/100	62/100
18. Ethiopia	67/100	61/100
19. Turkmenistan	66/100	63/100
20. Vietnam	66/100	68/100
21. Qatar	65/100	64/100
22. Egypt	64/100	61/100
23. Myanmar	62/100	60/100
24. Palestinian Terr.	62/100	58/100
25. Brunei	61/100	58/100
26. CAR	59/100	67/100
27. Jordan	59/100	56/100
28. Djibouti	58/100	60/100
29. Laos	58/100	58/100
30. Malaysia	58/100	55/100
31. Tajikistan	58/100	50/100
32. Tunisia	58/100	55/100
33. China	57/100	57/100
34. Azerbaijan	57/100	50/100
35. Bangladesh	57/100	51/100
36. Tanzania	57/100	56/100
37. Algeria	56/100	55/100
38. Bhutan	56/100	56/100
39. Comoros	56/100	56/100
40. Mexico	56/100	55/100
41. Kuwait	56/100	49/100
42. Kazakhstan	55/100	51/100
43. Indonesia	55/100	50/100
44. Mali	55/100	52/100
45. Turkey	55/100	52/100
46. Colombia	55/100	55/100
47. United Arab Em.	55/100	49/100
48. Bahrain	54/100	new
49. Niger	53/100	new
50. Oman	53/100	55/100

THE WORLD WATCH LIST BACKGROUND & TRENDS

EACH YEAR, THE WORLD WATCH LIST RANKS THE TOP 50 COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANS FACE THE MOST PERSECUTION. TYPES OF PERSECUTION, SEVERITY AND OTHER ELEMENTS ARE ALL MONITORED IN THE REPORTING PERIOD. THE WORLD WATCH LIST IS AUDITED BY AN OUTSIDE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION TO ENSURE CREDIBILITY AND AUTHENTICITY.

Last year, it was noted that 2014 had been an unprecedented year in Christian persecution, and Open Doors predicted that it would only get worse. In 2015, Christian persecution not only increased, but expanded into areas where there was not the same level of persecution in the previous year.

Here are some significant trends to note while reading the 2016 World Watch List and this report:

- + The most rapidly growing area of persecution in the WWL is in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia.
- + Islamic extremist self-styled caliphates have expanded their spheres of operation across international borders.
- + Governments became more fearful of Islamic extremism and responded by either (a) boosting nationalism as a counter-force or (b) tightening regulations and increasing surveillance over all religious expression.
- + Muslims throughout the world are becoming more Islamic out of fear that extremists may take over their areas and that IS sleeper cells may wake.
- + More states are lawless, with minorities suffering at the hands of violent groups.



A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE TOP 3 COUNTRIES ON THE *WorldWatchList* OpenDoors

1 NORTH KOREA



92/100 **EXTREME PERSECUTION**

Leader: Kim Jong-Un

Population: 24.5 million (300,000 Christians)

Main Religion: Atheism/traditional beliefs

Government: Communist dictatorship

Source of Persecution: Communist oppression/ Dictatorial paranoia



North Korea heads the World Watch List for the 14th consecutive year now. Kim Jong Un has continued to consolidate his power, and no changes or even improvements have been seen in the reporting period. On the contrary: ideology again trumped everything as could be seen in the celebration of the ruling Korean Workers Party's 70th anniversary in October 2015. It remains difficult to make sense of most of the news pouring out of the country. This is even truer when it comes to topics like human rights or the situation of the Christian minority specifically. Christianity is not only seen as "opium for the people" as is normal for all communist states; it is also seen as deeply Western and despicable. Christians try to hide their faith as far as possible to avoid arrest and being sent to a labor camp. Thus, being Christian has to be a well-protected secret, even within families, and most parents refrain from introducing their children to the Christian faith in order to make sure that nothing slips their tongue when they are asked.

PRAY

- + For the 50,000-70,000 Christians imprisoned in labor camps. Ask God to sustain them.
- + That God would change the heart of Kim Jong-Un, and use him to reform the country.
- + For protection for ministry partners who are bringing practical and spiritual support to believers.



Around 24% of North Koreans have watched television programs from China and South Korea, which is strictly prohibited by the regime.

2 IRAQ



90/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki
Population: 35.9 million (*a few thousand Christians*)
Main Religion: Islam
Government: Parliamentary democracy
Source of Persecution: Islamic extremism



There has been a long tradition of Christians living in Iraqi cities like Baghdad and Mosul. Christians have lived in Iraq for two millennia but are currently on the verge of extinction. Iraq has suffered from years of structural uncertainty, conflict and instability under a government incapable of enforcing the rule of law and providing a minimum of security. Iraq is divided in two parts, the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north and the large remaining Arab part. Kurds and Arabs have their own languages and culture. Most of Iraq's oil resources are found near Kirkuk and Mosul, the border areas between the Kurdish region and Arab Iraq, and these are amongst the most violent places of Iraq. Christians are caught here in the crossfire of two different battles: one for a Kurdish autonomous country and one for a religious cleansing of Iraq by Islamic terrorist groups who wish to make the country purely Islamic. On the other hand, amidst the current crisis, there are also sparks of hope as opportunities arise for churches to reach out to refugees.

 **PRAY**

- + For Muslim Background Believers who often face opposition from their family and community.
- + For the protection of Christians fleeing from ISIS.
- + For Open Doors workers supporting displaced Christians with trauma counseling, training and income generating projects.



According to tradition, the gospel was brought to Iraq by the apostle Thomas. Christians have been living in the area for almost 2,000 years.

3

ERITREA

89/100

EXTREME PERSECUTION



Leader: President Isaias Afewerki

Population: 6.7 million (2.5 million Christians)

Main Religion: Islam/Christianity

Government: One-party state

Source of Persecution: Dictatorial paranoia/Islamic extremism/Ecclesiastical arrogance

Eritrea entered the World Watch List in 2002, and in 2004, the country jumped into the top 20. The Eritrean regime is absolutely authoritarian and intolerant towards any form of association, dissent and free expression. The government's attempt to control all religious institutions culminated in the deposing of the Eritrean Orthodox Church Patriarch who has been under house arrest since 2007. Eritrea has also consistently supported the rise and spread of radical Islam in the Horn of Africa. In the international context, it is also important to take note of the fact that Eritrea is one of the two African countries designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) by the US State Department because of severe violations of freedom of religion. The situation in Eritrea is also contributing to the global refugee crisis. One refugee stated that, "the country is almost without its youth - some of them are in the SAWA Defense Training Center and others are escaping the regime through every possible outlet. And the country has become uninhabitable." That is why Robert P. George and Thomas J. Reese from USCIRF ask: "Should Eritrea's track record on human rights crimes and religious freedom warrant a referral to the International Criminal Court at The Hague?"

PRAY

- + For the hundreds of Eritrean Christians who have been imprisoned for their faith.
- + That the government would soften its stance on evangelical Christians and give them the freedom to worship Jesus without restrictions.
- + That the rise of Islamic extremism will be stifled.



Eritrea has supplied weapons and ammunition to Al-Shabaab, an Islamic extremist group.