

Persecution engines

The persecution engines are the basic elements for scoring the WWL questionnaires, and for the analysis of the persecution of Christians and their communities. The WWL methodology has defined eight different persecution engines:

Figure 5. *Persecution engines*

| PERSECUTION ENGINE | DESCRIPTION |
|---------------------------|--|
| Islamic extremism | Tries to bring the country or the world under the ‘House of Islam’ through violent or non-violent actions. |
| Other religious militancy | Tries to conquer the nation for one’s religion. Mainly Hinduism and Buddhism, but also orthodox Judaism or other religions. Please note that ‘Islamic extremism’ is a separate category due to its prevalence. |
| Tribal antagonism | Tries to enforce the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in tribal context. Often comes in the form of traditional religion or something similar. |
| Ecclesiastical arrogance | Tries to maintain one’s Christian denomination as the only legitimate or dominant expression of Christianity in the country. In most cases this Christian denomination is the majority Christian denomination. |
| Communist oppression | Tries to maintain communism as a prescriptive national ideology. |
| Aggressive secularism | Tries to eradicate religion from the public domain, if possible even out of the hearts of people. |
| Totalitarian paranoia | Does everything to maintain power, not specifically focused on realizing a vision. |
| Organised corruption | Tries to create a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means for self-enrichment. |

In many countries, more than one persecution engine is prevalent. However, one specific persecution engine is generally more prevalent than others. Often, this persecution engine creates a vacuum for other engines to flourish as well. A clear example is the advancing of organised corruption by criminal groups in contexts of violent radical Islamic expressions. In such a context, there normally exists a high degree of impunity regarding violence against Christians. Islamist rulers won’t be bothered by criminal groups trafficking Christians girls and women, as long as they get their share.

Drivers of persecution

The drivers of persecution engines are people and/or groups embodying the three main impulses. The WWL methodology studies who they are, and which

are involved in hostilities against Christians in a particular country. The WWL methodology distinguishes the following drivers of persecution:

Figure 6. Drivers of persecution

| DRIVERS OF PERSECUTION | |
|------------------------|---|
| Government | Government officials at any level from local to national |
| Society | Ethnic group leaders |
| | Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national |
| | Religious leaders of other churches at any level from local to national |
| | Fanatical movements |
| | Normal citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs |
| | Extended family |
| | Political parties at any level from local to national |
| | Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups |
| | Organised crime cartels or networks |
| | Multilateral organisations |

Often more than one driver is active in and around one or more persecution engines.

Even though the drivers of persecution cannot always be clearly distinguished, World Watch Research deems the mentioned categories clear enough to come up with a good analysis. Especially dividing the broad category “society” or “social” into ten distinctive categories, WWR considers this to be of added value to the methodology.

Pressure and plain violence

World Watch Research distinguishes two main expressions of persecution: the pressure Christians experience in all areas of life (squeeze) and plain violence (smash). Nevertheless, while it would seem that violence is the most prevalent and invasive expression of persecution, it is often the pressure that is most prevalent and invasive. The WWL methodology, therefore, negates the idea that the more violence there is against Christians, the more persecution there must be. An example of squeeze is the situation of Christians on the Maldives. From every side, they are facing massive pressure from friends, neighbours, family, and the government, which means they can hardly express their faith at all. Due to the enormous amount of pressure and control, Christians are virtually unable to express their faith in any way. They are being squeezed to death by

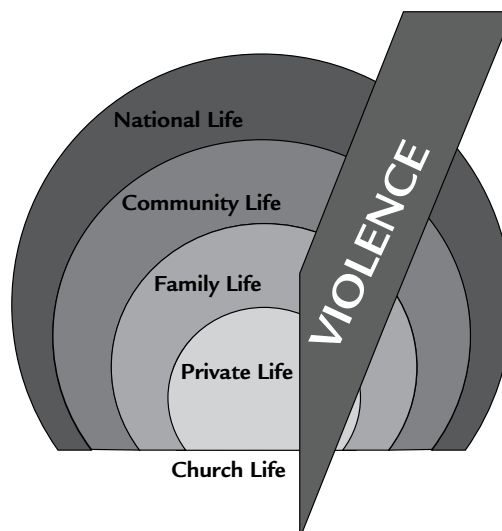
their persecutors. However, if someone were looking for a list of incidents where Christians were beaten, put in jail, deported, there would be very few. In other words, the degree of persecution can be so intense, and so all-pervasive, it actually results in fewer incidents of persecution, since acts of public witness and defiance are so rare. So while there is no evidence of smashing the church through violence and arrests, the pressure is what is killing the church. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that many persecutors prefer to squeeze the church, rather than smash it, in the belief that it is a more successful form of persecution.

The WWL methodology also seeks to negate another assumption, which is that the most violent persecutors of the church are its main persecutors. An example of this is the situation of Christians in Northern Nigeria. Their most violent persecutor in recent years has been the Islamic extremist group, Boko Haram, which has bombed churches and killed pastors. It's an unsubtle attempt to smash the church. But in fact, for most Christians the greatest threat comes from a creeping cultural Islamisation which has been stealthily progressing since the 1980's, until Christians suddenly realise they are second-class citizens in a once hospitable but now hostile culture. While plain violence can be measured and tracked through incidents of violence, pressure needs to be tracked otherwise. It needs to be tracked by discerning how the act of Christian life and witness itself is being squeezed in all the different areas of life.

Spheres of life and violence

The WWL methodology has designed the “five spheres concept” to track the expressions of persecution in different areas of life. These five spheres express the pressure in each sphere of life. A sixth building block expresses the plain violence. The sixth block potentially cuts across all five spheres of life.

Figure 7. *Spheres of life*



Private life is defined as the inner life of a Christian, the forum internum, the freedom of thought and conscience. The guiding WWL question asked is: "How free has a Christian been to relate to God one-on-one in his/her own space?" This is not limited to the private home, but can also apply to prison, for example, or a walk in the woods. This is irrespective of who the agent challenging this freedom might be. The questions deal with conversion, private worship, possession of religious material, freedom of expression, e.g. in spoken word and writing, through images and symbols, access to information and media, privately sharing a belief with others, freedom of private assembly, freedom of private communication, and freedom of movement.

Family life is defined as pertaining to the nuclear and extended family of a Christian. The guiding WWL question asked is:

How free has a Christian been to live his/her Christian convictions within the circle of the family, and how free have Christian families been to conduct their family life in a Christian way?

It also asks:

How much have Christians been discriminated against, harassed or in any other way persecuted by their own families?

The questions deal with the forced allocation of religious identity, registration of civil affairs, weddings, baptisms, burials, adoptions, child rearing, indoctrination of children, harassment of or discrimination against children, separation of families, isolation of converts, pressure to divorce, custody of children, and inheritance rights.

Community life is defined as the interaction of Christians with their respective local communities beyond the family level and below any supra-local level. This community life includes the workplace, business, health care, education, and local public life and civic order. A mobile person can have several local communities regarding different aspects of community life, e.g. origin or residence in one place and education or work in another.

The guiding WWL question asked is:

How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions within the local community (beyond church life), and how much pressure has the community put on Christians by acts of discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?

The questions deal with threat or obstruction to daily life, dress codes, monitoring of Christians, abduction and forced marriage, access to community resources, community ceremonies, participation in communal institutions and forums, pressure to renounce faith, access to health care, access to and disadvantages in education, discrimination in employment and obstruction

in business, policing issues (fines, interrogations, forced reporting), and other ways of marginalisation of Christians.

National life is defined as the interaction between Christians and the nation they live in. This includes rights and laws, the justice system, national public administration and public life. The guiding WWL question asked is:

How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions beyond their local community, and how much pressure has the legal system put on Christians, and how much pressure have agents of supra-local national life put on Christians by acts of misinformation, discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?

The questions deal with national ideology, constitution, registration of religion in IDs, conscientious objection, travel within a country and abroad, discrimination by authorities, barring from public office or professional progress, policy interference with businesses, expression of opinion in public, Christian civil society organisations and political parties, reporting about religious or social conflicts, smear campaigns, toleration of public disrespect, religious symbols, blasphemy accusations, impunity, equal treatment in court, monitoring of trials.

Church life is defined as the collective exercise by Christians of freedom of thought and conscience, particularly as regards uniting with fellow Christians in worship, life, service and public expression of their faith without undue interference. It also pertains to properties held or used by Christians for these purposes. The guiding WWL question asked is:

How have restrictions, discrimination, harassment or other forms of persecution infringed upon these rights and this collective life of Christian churches, organisations and institutions?

The questions deal with the hindrances to the gathering of Christians, registration of churches, monitoring or closing of unregistered churches, church building and renovation, expropriation and non-return, disturbance or disruption of services, prevention of activities inside or outside churches or among youth, acceptance of converts, monitoring of preaching and published materials, election and training of leaders, harassment of leaders or their families, Bibles and other religious materials and their printing, importing, selling or dissemination, and confiscation, broadcasting and Internet use, interference with ethical convictions (regarding family and marriage) and personnel policy of Christian institutions, Christian civil society organisations and social activities, foreign Christian workers, and the denouncing of government persecution.

Plain violence is defined as the deprivation of physical freedom or as serious bodily harm to Christians or serious damage to their property. The guiding WWL question asked is:

How many cases of such violence have there been?

The questions deal with the killing of Christians, serious damage to communal Christian buildings, detention without trial, jailing, abduction, rape and sexual harassment, forced marriage, other physical or mental harm, serious damage to the homes and businesses of Christians, and eviction and flight.

PERSECUTION DYNAMICS IN AFRICA

Legal protection of religious freedom

Most national constitutions guarantee freedom of religion or belief for all, such as the Interim National Constitution (Bill of Rights) of the Republic of the Sudan (2005):

Every person shall have the right to the freedom of religious creed and worship, and to declare his/her religion or creed and manifest the same, by way of worship, education, practice or performance of rites or ceremonies, subject to requirements of law and public order; no person shall be coerced to adopt such faith, that he/she does not believe in, nor to practice rites or services to which he/she does not voluntarily consent (Art. 38).¹⁷

Sudan has also signed or ratified a number of international human rights treaties.¹⁸ However, as the case of Dr Meriam Ibrahim illustrates, this does not guarantee that all is well in Sudan regarding religious freedom.

Generally speaking, legal protection of religious freedom is included in constitutional and legal norms in the African countries studied (Figure 8), both in Christian majority countries (Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya) and in Muslim majority countries (Sudan, Niger). In practice, however, specific policies (preferential treatment of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia) or the existence of Sharia rule in Nigeria's Northern States severely limit religious freedom. Moreover, specific persecution engines, different in each country, explain why religious freedom is not always respected, as is argued in the next section.

17 The Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan, 2005. Online at: http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=241714 [Accessed: 24 March 2015].

18 "Human Rights in Sudan", Wikipedia. Online at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_Sudan [Accessed: 25 March 2015]

Figure 8. *Legal protection of religious freedom*¹⁹

| COUNTRY | CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM CLAUSE | RELIGIOUS SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE | POLICIES | REGIONAL |
|----------|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Sudan | Art. 38 | | | |
| Nigeria | Art. 38 | Two state religions: Christianity and Islam | Some infringements | Sharia States severely limit religious freedom |
| Ethiopia | 1994, Art. 27 | Art. 11 | Inconsistencies; preferential treatment | |
| Kenya | 2010, Ch.5, Sec. 78 | | | |
| Niger | 2010, Art. 30 | | | |

Persecution engines

In the methodological section of this paper, the concept of persecution engine was explained. As stated above, the presence of persecution engines varies in each country, as well as the way these engines express themselves. The interaction between these persecution engines produces a particular persecution pattern, which explains the situation of religious freedom in a country better than a mere legal-based approach. Indeed, it takes into account the de facto pressure Christians experience in different spheres of life, and describes the drivers (actors) which are responsible for this pressure. Figure 9 presents the prevalent persecution engines in each of the countries under study. The next section discusses the persecution patterns more in-depth.

Figure 9. *Persecution Pattern in Countries Under Study*

| COUNTRY (SCORE) | ISLAMIC EXTREMISM | TRIBAL ANTAGONISM | ORGANISED CORRUPTION | ECCLESIASTICAL ARROGANCE | TOTALITARIAN PARANOIA | AGGRESSIVE SECULARISM |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sudan (73) | X | | | | X | |
| Nigeria (70) | X | X | X | | | |
| Ethiopia (65) | X | X | | X | X | |
| Kenya (48) | X | (X) | (X) | | | (X) |
| Niger (45) | X | | | | | |

19 Authors' elaboration.

*Comparison of persecution patterns***Sudan**²⁰

Sudan is a poverty stricken Muslim country. In the recent past, South Sudan became independent from the North. With a score of 73 points Sudan ranks 11 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, Sudan ranked 12 with a score of 70 points. The deterioration of the position of Christians can be attributed to a) the secession of Christian-oriented South Sudan from Sudan, b) efforts of the current regime to maintain its leading role and c) an increase of Islamic extremist tendencies within Sudan's society.

The main persecution engines in Sudan are Islamic extremism and Totalitarian paranoia. However, there is a fine line between these two engines. The regime's leaders are mainly radical Islamist and the ruling National Congress Party is considered a means to further an Islamic agenda. This implies that the persecution of Christians is not primarily driven by totalitarian tendencies, but radical Islamist sympathies. Next to a tiny expatriate Christian community, all other Christians affected by persecution belong to historical Christian communities, non-traditional Protestant background communities, and Muslim Background Believers (MBB). The latter suffer severely in all spheres of life (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Persecution pattern Sudan

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 12,216 | 13,393 | 12,630 | 11,787 | 11,979 | |
| Pressure (average) | 12,401 | 12,401 | 12,401 | 12,401 | 12,401 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 10,926 |

Compared with 2013, violence has reduced. However, the picture is still bleak compared with most other countries on the WWL. A variety of incidents are reported, such as faith related killings, damaging Christian properties, detention and forced marriage. Christians fled the country for faith based reasons as well. The current regime will likely continue to persecute Christians, as part of an attempt to maintain their power-base. Within this context an Open Doors source in the country expects that the position of the church in Sudan will worsen, in part due to diminished presence of the international community.

²⁰ This section is based on the Sudan persecution profile, World Watch List 2014, Open Doors International. Online at: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/sudan> [Accessed: 25 March 2015].

Nigeria²¹

The situation for Christians in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern provinces, has deteriorated a little with respect to 2013. With 70 points on the World Watch List 2014 (2 more points than in 2013), Nigeria remains a country to be watched. In Nigeria, the main persecution engine is Islamic extremism. Although Boko Haram is most often associated with persecution of Christians in Northern Nigerian, the pattern of persecution is much more complex than only the killing or wounding of Christians – as well as moderate Muslims – by an Islamic terrorist group (Figure 11). This is especially so in the 12 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 extended into neighbouring states, and played heavily upon Christians in their family and community spheres of life.

Figure 11. Persecution pattern Nigeria

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 9,849 | 9,970 | 12,305 | 11,349 | 11,458 | |
| Pressure (average) | 10,98614 | 10,98614 | 10,98614 | 10,98614 | 10,986138 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 15,556 |

Persecution, however, is not only focused on Believers of Muslim Background but on all types of Christians in many of the Northern States. Levels of violence in Nigeria remained extremely high. Based on media research by the World Watch Unit, 612 Nigerian Christians were killed during this reporting period, hundreds of cases of physical aggression were recorded and nearly 300 churches were destroyed. The current situation in Nigeria casts dark clouds ahead, notwithstanding good news about spiritual revitalisation of the church under the yoke of persecution. The emerging links between al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Boko Haram, and other Islamist terrorist groups in the region, make it likely that the church will suffer more violent persecution in the near future.

Ethiopia²²

With a score of 65 points, Ethiopia ranks 17th on the World Watch List 2014. Compared with 2013, the position of Christians appears to have slightly

21 This section is based on the Nigeria persecution profile, World Watch List 2014, Open Doors International. Online at: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/nigeria> [Accessed: 25 March 2015].

22 This section is based on the Ethiopia persecution profile, World Watch List 2014, Open Doors International. Online at: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/ethiopia> [Accessed: 25 March 2015].

deteriorated. This does not only apply to the situation of Believers of Muslim Background. It seems that the pressure on members of the other church types has slightly increased as well.

In Ethiopia, Christians of various kinds are affected by four persecution engines being Islamic extremism, Ecclesiastical arrogance, Totalitarian paranoia and Tribal antagonism (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Persecution pattern Ethiopia (integration of all persecution engines)

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 12,112 | 10,782 | 11,257 | 9,995 | 11,315 | |
| Pressure (average) | 11,0922 | 11,0922 | 11,0922 | 11,0922 | 11,0922 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 9,259 |

Although only 34% of the population is Muslim, Christians feel the increasing prominence of Islam on local, regional and national level. Moreover, for many years, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has been seriously persecuting believers who left their ranks to join (mostly) non-traditional Protestant churches, or believers who joined the renewal movements within the EOC. Next, it appears that the government is ideologically developing towards a Chinese governance model, thereby creating a new persecution dynamic. Lastly, a traditional belief system called Wakefeta is becoming more prominent in certain parts of Ethiopia causing some Christians to distance themselves of Christianity, while former Wakefeta believers turning to Christ become actively isolated and marginalised from social activities within tribal communities. Drivers behind the mix of persecution engines are, for example, non-Christian religious leaders, government officials, the extended family and the public at large and tribal leaders.

A field report indicates the existence of a covert struggle between the government and Muslim leaders, which seems to intensify. This process could backfire on the Ethiopian church including the MBB community. New laws to ban religious messages in the public domain could be very well only made applicable to non-traditional churches. It needs to be seen how the church in Ethiopia is able to respond in a fruitful way. The four persecution patterns that make up the integrated persecution pattern are as follows (Figures 13-16):

Figure 13. *Persecution pattern Ethiopia (Ecclesiastical arrogance)*

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 10,038 | 8,705 | 8,073 | 6,14 | 8,116 | |
| Pressure (average) | 8,2144 | 8,2144 | 8,2144 | 8,2144 | 8,2144 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 4,445 |

Figure 14. *Persecution pattern Ethiopia (Islamic extremism)*

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 9,186 | 8,929 | 9,31 | 8,169 | 9,245 | |
| Pressure (average) | 8,9678 | 8,9678 | 8,9678 | 8,9678 | 8,9678 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 4,815 |

Figure 15. *Persecution pattern Ethiopia (Totalitarian paranoia)*

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 4,83 | 2,604 | 5,729 | 6,36 | 6,684 | |
| Pressure (average) | 5,2414 | 5,2414 | 5,2414 | 5,2414 | 5,2414 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 2,222 |

Figure 16. *Persecution pattern Ethiopia (Tribal antagonism)*

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 6,724 | 7,217 | 5,664 | 5,757 | 5,903 | |
| Pressure (average) | 6,253 | 6,253 | 6,253 | 6,253 | 6,253 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 2,222 |

Kenya²³

With a score of 48 points, Kenya ranks 43 on the World Watch List 2014. In 2013, Kenya ranked 40 with a score of 47 points. The minimal increase misrepresents the actual increase in the level of persecution. Faith-related violence reduced firmly, while pressure in the different spheres of Christian life intensified (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Persecution pattern Kenya

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 8,049 | 8,110 | 8,399 | 6,195 | 8,811 | |
| Pressure (average) | 7,9128 | 7,9128 | 7,9128 | 7,9128 | 7,9128 | |
| Violence | | | | | | 7,963 |

The main persecution engine in Kenya is “Islamic extremism”. However, forms of “Tribal antagonism”, “Organised corruption” and “Aggressive secularism” appear to impact Kenyan church life, as well. The minority of Kenyans are Muslim. Recently, the Kadhi courts system has been introduced, which is currently reserved for those who are Muslim and voluntarily submit to its jurisdiction. However, in part induced by perceived discrimination, lack of development, and extreme levels of unemployment among Muslim youth, and inspired by Islamic extremism spilling over from Somalia, the Muslim population, primarily located in the coastal areas of Kenya, has begun to respond to perceived disenfranchisement in Kenyan society. Moreover, Muslim politicians, representing Muslim dominated constituencies have an agenda to eliminate the church from these areas.

The future of the Kenyan church appears precarious. On the one hand, the church faces intensifying levels of persecution. The government posture against religious institutions is not positive. Moreover, Muslim attitudes and targeted violence against Christians are not positive either. Also, Christians have a negative view of Muslims. This negative view escalated after the recent attack on a shopping centre in Nairobi, by the Muslim extremist group al-Shabaab. Additionally, there is a complicated relationship between the leaders of the Christian and Muslim community. On the other hand, the willingness to cooperate amongst the churches is high. Therefore, it remains to be seen how the church will engage constructively with the pressure it faces.

²³ This section is based on the Kenya persecution profile, World Watch List 2014, Open Doors International. Online at: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/kenya> [Accessed: 25 March 2015].

Niger²⁴

Niger scored 35 points on the World Watch List in 2013, and 45 points on the 2014 list. The increase in points is mainly explained by the growing influence of Islamism in the country. The main persecution dynamic in Niger is Islamic extremism (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Persecution pattern Niger

| | 1. PRIVATE | 2. FAMILY | 3. COMMUNITY | 4. NATIONAL | 5. CHURCH | 6. VIOLENCE |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Pressure (absolute) | 8,902 | 10,119 | 10,612 | 4,989 | 5,599 | |
| Pressure (average) | 8,044 | 152 | 8,044 | 152 | 8,044 | 1515 |
| Violence | | | | | | 4,445 |

In recent years the country has been gradually shaking off the characteristics of the typical West African state with a (mostly) moderate Islam, constitutionally secular state. Now, there are indications that the government functioning in a secular state does not keep enough distance from Islamic religious leaders. Since 1991, dozens of Islamic associations have emerged, including Wahhabi groups. These organisations have been mostly concerned with the perceived erosion of Niger’s religious identity by the secular democratic state. The country has three types of Christianity (Catholics, Believers of Muslim Background (BMBs), Evangelicals and others). Sometimes the pressure on Christians only affects MBBs, sometimes all three types of Christianity prevalent are affected. The pressure on the spheres of private and church life is lower than on the spheres of family and community life. In many ways, Christians are being obstructed in the community sphere. Violent incidents continued during this reporting period. At least seven churches were attacked in Zinder (2), Niamey (2) and Maradi (3). Christians also face death threats and threats of abduction. The future for the Church in Niger seems worrying. The dynamic described in this persecution profile seems to point to a potential increase of pressure and plain violence. A considerable part of the Southern third of the country seems prone to persistent Islamic hostilities.

CONCLUSION

Often, the analysis of religious freedom is limited to the legal aspects of it or to the degree of freedom in the church sphere. Assessing and interpreting religious persecution is complex as many religious conflicts involve numerous variables. As was stated, a persecution situation presents a complex reality. Indeed,

²⁴ This section is based on the Niger persecution profile, World Watch List 2014, Open Doors International.

religious freedom is a multidimensional phenomenon which requires an analytical framework that accounts for this multidimensionality. Limiting the assessment of religious freedom to describing the legal protection of religious freedom only is insufficient to portray the actual persecution dynamics.

The methodology of the World Watch List, which was used in this paper and illustrated by the cases of five African countries, offers a multidimensional framework for the assessment of religious freedom. This framework looks at the degree of freedom for religious expression in each sphere of life, identifies the persecution engines and drivers of persecution that are relevant to each national context, as well as the types of Christianity that are affected by the persecution situation.