

NEWS RELEASE

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Open Doors Releases World Watch List 2018

TORONTO, CANADA, JANUARY 10th, 2018 – North Korea and Afghanistan score highest in the persecution of Christians, according to the annual Open Doors World Watch List (WWL), released today. Although completely different in politics and social structure, research for the period November 2016 – October 2017 showed these two countries receiving maximum scores for pressure on Christians. Only the score for violence made a distinction between first and second place. It was however Pakistan which had the unenviable honour of being the only country to score maximum points for violence against Christians.

The ten countries where Christians currently face most persecution are:

COUNTRY	PERSECUTION SCORE out of 100
North Korea	94
Afghanistan	93
Somalia	91
Sudan	87
Pakistan	86
Eritrea	86
Libya	86
Iraq	86
Yemen	85
Iran	85

Source: Open Doors/World Watch Research

New to the Top 50 and risers

New countries entering the Top 50 are:

Nepal (64 points/Rank 25), where a strong rise in *Religious nationalism* has taken place, with Hindu radicals becoming much more active both in putting pressure on Christians and in perpetrating violence.

Azerbaijan (57 points/Rank 45), where increased access to information such as police raids and arrests has caused a rise in score among other factors.

Libya (86 points/Rank7) and India (81 points/Rank 11) both rose by 8 points, which in the case of India was clearly due to the increasing influence of radical Hinduism. In the WWL 2018 reporting period, at least 8 Christians were killed for their faith by militant Hindus, at least 34 churches were damaged, and close to 24,000 Christians suffered attacks in India.

Over 3,000 Christians killed for their faith

According to Open Doors research, an estimated 3,066 Christians were killed worldwide in the WWL 2017-2018 reporting period. As can be seen in the table below, the number of Christians killed for their faith has risen again after a decrease in WWL 2016-2017 period.

Reporting Period	Total recorded # of Christians killed
WWL 2016	7,106
WWL 2017	1,207
WWL 2018	3,066

Source: Open Doors/World Watch Research

That decrease was due especially to a reduction in Boko Haram activity in Nigeria in the WWL 2017 reporting period. However, the killings in Nigeria have risen again due to waves of attacks by well-armed Fulani Muslim herdsmen on Christian communities in the Middle Belt states and reports are naming this “religious cleansing” (ethnic cleansing based on religious affiliation).

Measuring persecution is more than just recording violent incidents

According to Open Doors, approximately 215 million Christians in countries scoring 41 points or more experience ‘high’ levels of persecution for their faith. But persecution does not always mean killings or long prison sentences. The Maldives are a good example with 78 points at Rank 13: Although reports of violent incidents against Christians are few in this supposed holiday paradise, research into church life showed that pressure is at maximum level. As the Managing Director of Open Doors’ World Watch Research team, Frans Veerman, explains: “No church meetings are possible there and even most expatriate Christians prefer not to organize meetings out of fear of repercussions. By reading the individual country profiles the numbers in the list suddenly take on real depth of meaning.”

Making the plight of persecuted Christians public

The Open Doors World Watch List and the in-depth country profiles are published annually as a tool 1) for media to raise awareness 2) for politicians to make informed decisions and 3) for churches around the world to support Christians on the frontline.

More details on the methodology used for scoring and other documentation (including WWL 2018 geographical presentation) are available <http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/persecution-trends>.

FOR INTERVIEWS AND MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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