World
Watch
Research

Sudan: Country Dossier

January 2020

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Introduction

World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55

36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54
60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

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Brief note on sources and definitions

This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations, and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading "External links". The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: "Any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words, and actions towards Christians".

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the World Watch List Documentation page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Revised: 6 January 2020

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Sudan

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Sudan		
42,514,000	1,963,000	4.6

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List Sudan	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	85	7
WWL 2019	87	6
WWL 2018	87	4
WWL 2017	87	5
WWL 2016	84	8

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Sudan: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials , Political parties
Islamic oppression	Government officials , Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family
Organized corruption and crime	Organized crime cartels or networks, Government officials , Ethnic group leaders
Clan and ethnic antagonism	Ethnic group leaders

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of persecution situation

As in the previous reporting period, the WWL 2020 reporting period has been difficult for Christians in many ways: i) Christians are being deprived of churches that they have used for worship for years; ii) the government has arrested or intimidated many Christian leaders; and iii) the current political chaos in the country has left Christians in limbo. Even though the army and pro-democracy activists have signed a set of agreements, some unclarity remains.

The ethnic-cultural landscape of the country is also complicated: Arab versus ethnic African, Muslim versus Christian. The secession of South Sudan in 2011 did not solve these problems. This is particularly true for ethnic Africans, as a significant number are Christian and still living in the country. All Christian communities in Sudan are afraid of having conversations about their faith with Sudanese Muslims as this might be construed as being an 'act that encourages apostasy against Islam'. The level of persecution that converts and ethnic Africans face is enormous. There have been arrests; many churches have been demolished and others are on an official list awaiting demolition; many Christians have been attacked indiscriminately in areas like the Nuba Mountains where there is an ongoing conflict between government forces and rebel groups.

So as not to be discovered, converts will often refrain from raising their children as Christians because this might attract the attention of the government and community leaders (since children might inadvertently reveal the faith of their parents). This fear even extends to funerals where deceased Christians with a Muslim background are often buried according to Islamic rites in Muslim cemeteries, even though Christian and Muslim cemeteries are separate.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- The government has been demolishing and closing down churches.
- Christian converts with a Muslim background are particularly at risk since the law officially punishes conversion from Islam to another religion by death. They usually refrain from owning Christian materials or accessing Christian TV or websites. If discovered, these could be used as evidence against them by family or officials.
- Christian children are often harassed in school or playgrounds due to their parent's faith.
- A very high level of violence against Christians is evident, particularly in the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile State regions where Christians are being targeted indiscriminately by government security forces.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: demolishing - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/02/sudan-government-demolishes-church-despite-pending-appeal/

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Sudan

Introduction

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995.

Recent history

Since becoming independent from Great Britain in 1956, Sudan has experienced persistent and recurring violent conflicts, primarily driven by struggles between the central government in Khartoum and armed groups from the country's peripheries. Sudan's traditional power structures are dominated by an Islamist regime, headed by President Omar al-Bashir, who came to power in a coup in 1989. Present-day Sudan is infamous in the international community for funding radical Islamic groups, committing atrocities and fundamentally undermining freedom of religion. The government has been fighting against different rebel groups in Darfur and other parts of the country. In places such as the Nuba Mountains, the government has been using attacks by anti-government groups as a pretext for indiscriminately attacking civilians, a significant number of whom are Christians.

In 2018, the year began with demonstrations immediately following the imposition of austerity measures under the 2018 budget that effectively tripled Sudan's US dollar exchange rate and increased price of basic commodities, but the government resorted to excessive force to disperse the peaceful demonstrations; this included the use of beatings and the unlawful detention of hundreds of protesters, activists and opposition party members. In December 2018, the US categorized Sudan as one of 10 "Countries of Particular Concern" deemed guilty of severe violations of religious freedom. Meanwhile Sudan's anti-government protests grew as 2018 drew to an end, with security forces killing first 9 student protesters and then 37 protesters within a few days in demonstrations that rocked the country.

In April 2019, the unthinkable happened - one of the longest serving dictators in Africa, President al-Bashir, was overthrown. He had declared a state of emergency on 22 February 2019 and dissolved government at federal and provincial levels and appointed security chiefs to head all of the country's 18 regional states. The ensuing brutal crackdown intensified the demonstrators' defiance. The standoff continued throughout March until finally on 11 April 2019, the army removed al-Bashir from office and assumed provisional power, with Sudan's Prosecutor General later announcing that the former president would be charged for the killing of protesters. However, on 2 June 2019, the security forces killed scores of protesters who were holding a sit-in in Khartoum to protest against the military council's declaration that it would remian in power for three years. Sudan's Transitional Military Council later admitted to deciding on the action that killed more than 100 protesters.

The ex-president and some top members of his cabinet were allegedly moved to a prison and were charged with corruption. However, the protesters demanded a civilian rule and the first transitional leader (former defense minister) was forced to resign after one day. The protest leaders and the transitional council failed to agree on the course the army was taking, particularly after so many protesters had been killed in the process. Finally, the following agreements were made:

- Power-sharing will last for 39 months;
- A sovereign council, cabinet and legislative body will be formed;
- A general will head the council for the first 21 months, a civilian for the remaining 18 months;
- A prime minister, nominated by the pro-democracy movement, will head the cabinet;
- The ministers of defense and interior will be chosen by the army.

Political and legal landscape

In April 2019, one of the longest serving dictators in Africa, Omar al-Bashir, was overthrown by the pressure of a popular movement demanding more democracy. There had been signs of discontent for some time among the general population due to the rise in prices of oil, bread and other goods. Even though the ousting of the president can be seen as a triumph for the pro-democracy movement, it is also a cause for concern since former ruling Islamists are still very influential in the country. It is no wild speculation to suggest that the country could end up with another civil war on its hands. The army's Transitional Council and the leaders of the pro-democracy movement have signed an agreement that can pave the way for democracy in the next 3-4 years. However, there is no guarantee that the agreement will be honored. The existence of the Janjaweed (pro al-Bashir) militias might also sabotage the intended progress.

Sudanese politics has always been a bone of contention and the country has never been at ease with the international community nor with its own people. This was particularly the case for the indigenous Africans in the country which led to the independence of South Sudan. The secession of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 (after a referendum in January 2011) was the culmination of a painful and decades-long history of internal conflict between the powerful Muslim Arabs in the north and the Christian and indigenous African population of the south. Despite South Sudan's independence, armed conflicts over dwindling resources and political power positions (typical aspects of Sudan's post-independence situation) have persisted.

While the root causes of the conflicts remain constant – political marginalization, land dispossession and unimplemented promises - ethnic dynamics in the various regions of Sudan and South Sudan have kept changing. For example, in Abyei, a province that is being claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan, the Misserya Arabs (the government of Sudan's main local supporters) have grown increasingly frustrated with Khartoum, while the Ngok Dinka tribe (which enjoys support from the government of South Sudan) has become vocal and strong. Although Sudan's political system is based on a decentralized system of governance and multi-party politics, real power was wielded by President al-Bashir and his ruling Islamist National Congress Party (NCP). The independence of South Sudan, which signaled the end of the Government of National Unity and the withdrawal of the South's representatives from parliament, further reinforced the dominance of President al-Bashir's political party. It also signaled the start of another civil war: SPLA-North versus the government of Sudan.

This war resulted from the fact that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) failed to solve the problem of the marginalization of Sudan's peripheral regions, in particular, the so-called 'three areas', consisting of Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Located strategically along Sudan's volatile North-South border and possessing considerable natural resources (including oil), finding solutions to the contested issues in these three areas has long been deemed critical for the stability of the two countries. Dominated by two main tribes, Abyei in particular were influential in the domestic politics of both Sudan and South Sudan. The Ngok Dinka tribe, a subset of South Sudan's largest ethnic group, have traditionally lived in Abyei, and have strong representation in both the Sudan People's Liberation Army's (SPLA) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) leadership. During the civil war years, this tribe - which has a largely African Christian population - was heavily displaced. At the same time, the Misserya, a largely Arab Muslim nomadic tribe which migrates through the region to graze their cattle, form an important constituency of the NCP and fought against the Ngok Dinka during the civil war. This problem is expected to continue in the foreseeable future.

Religious landscape

The religious composition of Sudan is another controversial issue. World Christian Database (WCD 2019) estimates the Christian population at 4.6% and the Muslim majority at 91.6%. According to the government, around 97% of the population is Muslim, which would make the Christian presence less than 3%. Various advocacy groups contest these low figures (and those of WCD), saying that non-Muslims in the country are 15-20%. Coptic Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and various Protestant denominations are present in the country. These groups are found mainly in Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gedaref, El-Obeid, El-Fashe and many parts of the Nuba Mountains.

Almost all Muslims are Sunni but significant distinctions exist, particularly among the Sufi orders. In addition, there are small Muslim minorities, including Shia and the Republican Brothers, based predominantly in Khartoum. There is also a growing (yet still small) percentage of Salafists. The main traditional Salafist group, Jama'at Ansar al-Sunna al-Mohammediya, advocates peaceful means for achieving its objectives. However, the newer radical groups tend to be more militant and confrontational, beginning with attacks on Sufi, Shia and Christian targets in 2011 and 2012.

For over a decade, Sudan has been designated by the US State Department as a "Country of Particular Concern" for its serious and systematic violations of religious freedom. Religious freedom, although guaranteed by the 2005 Interim Constitution, is not upheld in practice. Moreover, Sudan's criminal law based on Islamic law (allowing the use of amputations and floggings for crimes and acts of 'indecency' and 'immorality') has been applied indiscriminately especially against indigenous African Christians. The government continuously arrests Christians for proselytizing and apostasy. The country has also embarked on a program for demolishing Christian churches in the country.

Religious Context: Sudan	Numbers	%
Christians	1,963,000	4.6
Muslim	38,962,000	91.6
Hindu	820	0.0
Buddhist	910	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	1,130,000	2.7
Jewish	49	0.0
Bahai	2,600	0.0
Atheist	63,700	0.1
Agnostic	389,000	0.9
Other	1,900	0.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019). OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

Economic landscape

South Sudan's secession caused a watershed in Sudan's economic history. Sudan lost about 80% of its agricultural and water resources, in addition to the loss of about 75% of oil reserves and about 90% of total exports and about 50% of government revenues. Following the loss of oil and population, economic growth contracted by 4.4% in 2012. Even as it concluded an agreement with South Sudan that will cover the export of oil from South Sudan, as well as US$3.03bn of "transitional assistance" to be paid by South Sudan, Omar al-Bashir announced a series of deep budget cuts in June 2012 to control a ballooning fiscal deficit. Moreover, the World Bank projected that Sudan would fall back into the low-income country category, with 47% of Sudan's population living below the poverty line. The International Monitory Fund (IMF) also pushed for austerity measures. In 2018, the country saw a series of demonstrations protesting about the poor economic situation. (In fact, the country is bracing itself for more economic problems since it can no longer afford to provide subsidies.) The crisis and the protests finally led to the overthrow of the president.

According to one observer: the collapse started with "a major devaluation of the Sudanese pound in an effort to make the official rate for the pound drop to that of the black market. With the International Monetary Fund pushing for austerity and the rate of inflation hovering around 70%, the camel's back was finally broken."

The Transitional Council might be willing to negotiate with South Sudan to ease this economic crisis so that it can obtain payment for letting South Sudanese petroleum use its pipelines.

Social and cultural landscape

Sudan has a rich history and culture and belonged to the Nuba Kingdom and Civilization. This is the country where the art of building pyramids might have first started. The majority of the population is now made up of Arab ethnic groups. Fur, Nuba, Fallata and Beja are some of the ethnic minorities. Arabic and English are the official languages; Nubian, Fur and other minority languages are also in use.

With a score of 0.502, Sudan is in the "low human development" category. The life expectancy at birth is 64.7 years, expected years of schooling is 7.4 years and mean years of schooling is 3.7 years. The GNI per capita (2011 PPP$) is 4,119.

Technological landscape

It is true that in terms of agriculture (irrigation), the country has progressed well. However, Sudan is not a well-advanced country in terms of technology. According to Internet World Stats, there were "11,816,570 Internet users in Dec/2018, 27.8% of the population, per IWS. 2,600,000 Facebook subscribers, 6.1% penetration, in Dec/2017".

Security situation

Under ex-President al-Bashir, there was a coordinated effort by the government to mobilize and militarize tribal militias (including but not limited to Arab militias) known as Janjaweed. The aim was to use these groups to work towards creating an Islamic state at the expense of other religious groups in the country. A number of reports by different human right groups have accused these militias of committing gross violations of human rights against non-Arab citizens of Sudan.

Christians in the Nuba Mountains and other areas in the southern parts of the country are facing aerial bombardment from government forces and ground offensives from state-sponsored militia targeting churches and Christian families. It has been reported on a number of occasions that Christians are being targeted by the militias who even conduct house-to-house searches for Christians.

In late January 2018, the joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping mission to Darfur agreed with the Sudanese government to open a temporary base in Darfur's Jebel Marra, as mandated by the June 2017 UN Security Council resolution, in the wake of sectarian violence and a suspected chemical attack that caused horrible suffering to civilians.

Reports of abuse by government forces and affiliated militias have continued to surface, including attacks that damaged or destroyed at least 45 villages in Jebel Marra between July 2018 and February 2019. Meanwhile, talk of closing the joint mission has unnerved civilians who rely on the base for protection.

Trends analysis

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, Sudan entered a new era; for the first time in three decades, the nation is being ruled without al-Bashir at the helm. However, the transition seems shaky as there have been many disagreements between the Transitional Council and the pro-democracy movement. The economy is still suffering and inflation also remains a serious problem.

Looking to the future: As economic pressure mounts and the transitional government looks to project an image of being inclusive and pro-democracy, there is a very slim possibility that a greater respect for freedom of religion could emerge. At a time when things are fluid and moving at a pace that nobody thought possible, the following points are most likely:

- Society will remain very conservative.
- The demolition of churches might cease.
- Christians will continue to find it difficult to obtain building permits for churches.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995. - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995
- Recent history: demonstrations - https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/29/sudan-stop-abuse-peaceful-demonstrators
- Recent history: Countries of Particular Concern - https://www.edition.cnn.com/2018/12/11/politics/pompeo-religious-freedom-designations/index.html
- Recent history: killing - https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/sudan-shooting-of-protestors-must-be-immediately-investigated/
- Recent history: 37 protesters - https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/sudan-protesters-dead-in-government-crackdown-on-protests/
- Recent history: brutal crackdown - https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/bashir-moves-sudan-dangerous-new-ground
- Recent history: removed al-Bashir from office - https://edition-m.cnn.com/2019/04/11/africa/sudan-unrest-intl/index.html%20
- Recent history: charged - https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/05/sudan-omar-al-bashir-must-face-justice-for-recent-and-past-crimes
- Recent history: killed scores of protesters - https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-soaring-violence-calls-for-urgent-international-response/
- Recent history: admitted - https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-urgent-un-and-au-investigation-needed-after-military-admits-deadly-decision-on-protestor-crackdown/

- Recent history: were charged with corruption - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/sudan-toppled-president-omar-al-bashir-charged-corruption-190613173532177.html
- Recent history: forced to resign - https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/12/world/africa/sudan-al-bashir-extradition.html
- Recent history: agreements - https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48511226
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WWL 2020: Church information / Sudan

Christian origins

Christianity was very influential in Sudan from the 4th century onwards and for nearly a millennium the majority of the population was Christian. Christians suffered when invading Arabs brought Islam - especially in the northern part of the country - and gradually Islamized the region by the 15th century. However, the Greek Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox churches survived. Following the defeat of the self-proclaimed Islamic Mahdi and his supporters by the British in 1898, many Christian groups entered the country. Roman Catholics, Anglicans (via the Church Missionary Society) and American Presbyterians also came from their base in Egypt. The Anglican Sudan United Mission, the Africa Inland Mission, and the Sudan Interior Mission all followed. Several African-initiated churches have also become established. Many missionaries went to South Sudan from Khartoum.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Sudan	Christians	%
Orthodox	99,800	5.1
Catholic	1,100,000	56.0
Protestant	808,000	41.2
Independent	20,800	1.1
Unaffiliated	34,100	1.7
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-99,800	-5.1
Total	**1,962,900**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	417,000	21.2
Renewalist movement	144,000	7.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. Roman Catholics: All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. Protestants: Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. Independents: Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). Unaffiliated Christians: Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. Doubly-affiliated Christians: Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. Evangelical movement: Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. Renewalist movement: Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Sudan

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 85 points, Sudan ranked 7 in WWL 2020. In the WWL 2017 - WWL 2019 reporting periods, the score was constant at 87 points.

One of the main reasons why the country dropped two points was the change in the country situation during the second half of the reporting period caused by the Sudanese population focusing on protesting against the rule of al-Bashir. Sudan has become a country where Christians face serious restrictions both as individuals and collectively. The government under President al-Bashir carried out a series of church demolitions, which was one of the results of the application of full Sharia law that he vowed to implement following the secession of South Sudan. The dictatorial, Islamist government has also continued its policy of persecuting Christians in the Nuba region. It is a country that has been consistently designated a "Country of Particular Concern" by the US government.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Sudan	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Strong
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Very strong

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Islamic oppression (Very strong):

This persecution engine is rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood ideology advocated by the founder of the (up until April 2019) ruling party, Hassan al-Turabi, who helped Omar al-Bashir consolidate power during a bloodless coup in 1989. The Sudanese government then worked towards forming an Islamic state at the expense of other religious groups in the country and has been accused of supporting radical Islamic militants for the past three decades. The USA first labeled Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism on 12 August 1993 for knowingly harboring local and international terrorists and for allowing the country to be used as a transit point for terrorists and weapons. Osama Bin Laden was there before he moved to Afghanistan, for example.

Historically, Islam - including its radical tendencies (such as the [19th century Mahdist movement](#)) - is firmly rooted in Sudanese society. Even though the overwhelming majority of the population in the country is Sunni Muslim, the government of Sudan under al-Bashir also had strong ties with Shia Iran. Sharia law is the foundation of Sudan's legal system and Sudan's elite has aimed at enforcing an Islamic regime in the country. Apostasy is criminalized, punishable by the death penalty. Blasphemy laws are being used countrywide to prosecute Christians. This engine also has a nationalist element.

Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong):

Up until April 2019, Sudan was run by an authoritarian regime ever since al-Bashir came to power through a coup in 1989. The influence of the government in private and public life was enormous. The country has its own deep-rooted challenges: The Darfur crisis has continued, the conflict with Sudan's People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) shows no sign of reaching a permanent solution even though [ceasefire agreements](#) were reached. Some argue that the agreements were made due to the pressure of sanctions from the US government and that the Sudanese government complied in the hope that the sanctions would be lifted. Whenever ex-President al-Bashir's government faced socio-economic and political challenges, support among the population at large was revived by using inflammatory language against the West. This, in turn, had an adverse effect on Sudanese Christians, as the government regards Christians as the agents of Western countries.

There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia* since those leading the regime under al-Bashir were mainly people adhering to radical Islamic ideology; indeed, the National Congress Party (NCP) served as a means to strengthen the Islamic agenda. This implies that the role of the government in the persecution of Christians was not only driven by totalitarian tendencies but also by radical Islamist sympathies as well. In the past three decades, the willingness of the ex-president to opportunistically discard beliefs and promises in exchange for hanging on to power became increasingly evident. Almost all of his decisions – whether related to supporting armed militias groups or cracking down on all forms of dissent - were motivated mainly, if not solely, by the desire to stay in power at all costs. he was able to do this despite the International Criminal Court (ICC) indicting him of [war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide](#) for what happened in Sudan under his leadership and issued a warrant for his arrest in March 2009.

The country was rated 'not free' in Freedom House's [2019 Freedom in the World report](#) (by scoring 7/100, on the low end in its scoring grids). This situation is likely to change now that al-Bashir has been ousted from power. However, it is too early for analysis at this stage.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong):

The government of Sudan under ex-President al-Bashir employed all means available to stay in power, including the mobilization of tribal militias (See Security issues above). There have been allegations of gross violations of human rights against the non-Arab citizens and Christians are among the minorities who are victims of this sort of organized crime.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Strong):

The Sudanese population consists of about 19 different ethnic groups and almost 600 subgroups. Most of the inhabitants of the southern parts of the country are of ethnic African origin, and Arabs live predominantly in the northern parts of the country. Due to the deeply religious nature of the Sudanese people, most of the population are adherents to religious faith, mainly to Christianity or Islam, however, indigenous religions still persist. For many years, the Arabs from the North have tried to spread not only Islam but also a specific cultural and ethnic identity associated with Arabism. This led to decades of civil war and was ultimately responsible for the independence of South Sudan. However, even today, this is happening all over the country.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Sudan	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	STRONG	-	-	-	VERY STRONG	VERY STRONG
Government officials	Very strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	Strong	Strong
Ethnic group leaders	Weak	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	Medium
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- *Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):* Imams in mosques and madrassas preach anti-Christian sentiment. This comes mainly from radical Muslim clerics wanting to see Sudan become an Islamic state. There is also a Shia influence through Iran.

- *Ordinary citizens (Very strong):* Followers of Wahhabism and advocates of Sharia law (as the basis for regulating all aspects of life in Sudan) are closing the spaces available for the Christian life. Islam is deeply embedded in Sudanese society and everyone is encouraged to follow the government policy of one religion, one culture and one language. This quickly leads to the persecution of Christians.

- *Government officials (Very strong):* State security forces have been arresting, harassing and intimidating Christians and demolishing churches. Militias have also been organized by the government to attack Christians and other non-Muslims. Christian converts face serious persecution from family and can be sentenced to death if reported to the government (since apostasy carries the death penalty).

- *Violent religious groups (Very strong):* Militias organized by the government are responsible for killing Christians and for the destruction of property of Christians all over the country.

- *Extended family (Strong):* Both at the individual and family level, citizens have been involved in persecuting Christians in the country. A country expert states: "Family members fear that conversion to Christianity of a family member could lead to the whole family being barred from attending community activities for no fault of their own. Thus they will do whatever it takes to pressure coverts into renouncing their faith."

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- *Government officials (Very strong):* Government-supported groups (and all who subscribe to Islamist ideology) refuse to allow conversion or a place for Christians in the country. What is more troubling in this regard is the alleged association between the government and violent Islamic groups. Government officials are also forcing Christians to go to school on Sundays. Ten years ago an arrest warrant was issued against al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court for crimes that include many against the Christian minority. While al-Bashir was charged in his position as head of state, there were numerous officials at various levels of government involved.

- *Political parties (Strong):* The long-ruling National Congress Party (which was founded in 1996 and was led by Omar al-Bashir until he was deposed in April 2019) is Islamist and has also pushed for (and participated in) the persecution of Christians.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- *Organized crime networks (Strong):* Although officially illegal, many groups operating like gangsters towards Christians are state-sanctioned.

- *Government officials (Strong):* Sudan is one of the most corrupt countries in Africa. Politicians and corruption networks have been conspiring against Christians and undermining the rule of law. They work hand in hand so that Christians lose their churches and other property before courts of law.

- *Ethnic leaders (Medium):* Ethnic leaders also work against Christians within the existing networks of nepotism and corruption.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- *Ethnic leaders (Strong):* Some ethnic leaders have received government backing, especially where their ethnic groups see ethnicity and Islam as one and the same. Thus if they see one of their members converting to Christianity, they will persecute them. These government-supported groups with Arab ethnic background also seek to exert pressure on non-Arabs, especially ethnic African Christians. Most of the inhabitants of the southern parts of the country are of Black African origin and Christian (or Ethno-religionist) and Arabs live predominantly in the North. For many years, Arabs from the North have tried to spread not only Islam as a religion but also the cultural and ethnic identity associated with Arabism. This played a major part in the decades-long civil war that resulted in the loss of millions of lives, bodily injury and displacement of millions of others from their homes.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

- Persecution is worse outside the capital city.
- In addition to the simple harassments and threats that Christians face in their daily lives, it is very important to distinguish between what is going on in the Nuba Mountain and the Blue Nile regions of the country from what is taking place in other parts of the country. Starting in June 2011, the government of Sudan has been carrying out ground offensives and an aerial bombardment campaign against alleged "rebels." Most experts of the region know however that the intention of the government of Sudan and the militias carrying out these attacks has one goal in mind, namely the ethnic cleansing of minority ethnic groups, and most importantly of Christians. Samuel Totten, a US scholar on issues of genocide, calls this "genocide by attrition". Over a period of 8 years, thousands of Christians have been killed in attacks by government-supported groups and many thousand have been displaced from their villages for no other reason than that they have a different religion from those leading the country.

Christian communities and how they are affected

In Sudan all Christian communities face persecution. However, the persecution faced by Christians who are ethnic Africans or converts with a Muslim background is severe. Many of them have been arrested and charged with crimes like espionage; many churches have been demolished; many Christians have been attacked indiscriminately in areas such as the Nuba Mountains region where government forces and rebel groups are in conflict. Many churches are under pressure to close down.

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriates are being forced to close their churches. These are groups mainly from Western countries and South Sudan. Their churches have been denied registration and many have faced demolition. Some expatriate Christians face arrest and detention without due process of law.

Historical Christian communities: Christians belonging to historical churches such as the Coptic Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches face persecution resulting from both *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*. Judging by the program of church demolition in the country, the government under al-Bashir set its agenda to close the majority, if not all, churches in the country, including those belonging to the Historical Christian communities.

Converts to Christianity: This group, which consists mainly of Christians with a Muslim background, experiences the most intense pressure. Not only do converts feel the pressure of persecution in the *national* and *church spheres of the life*, but also in severe form from family and neighbors in their community, family and private life.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Sudanese who belong to Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations also face persecution in the form of *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*. This group is also facing the prospect of having most of its churches in the country closed down.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Sudan
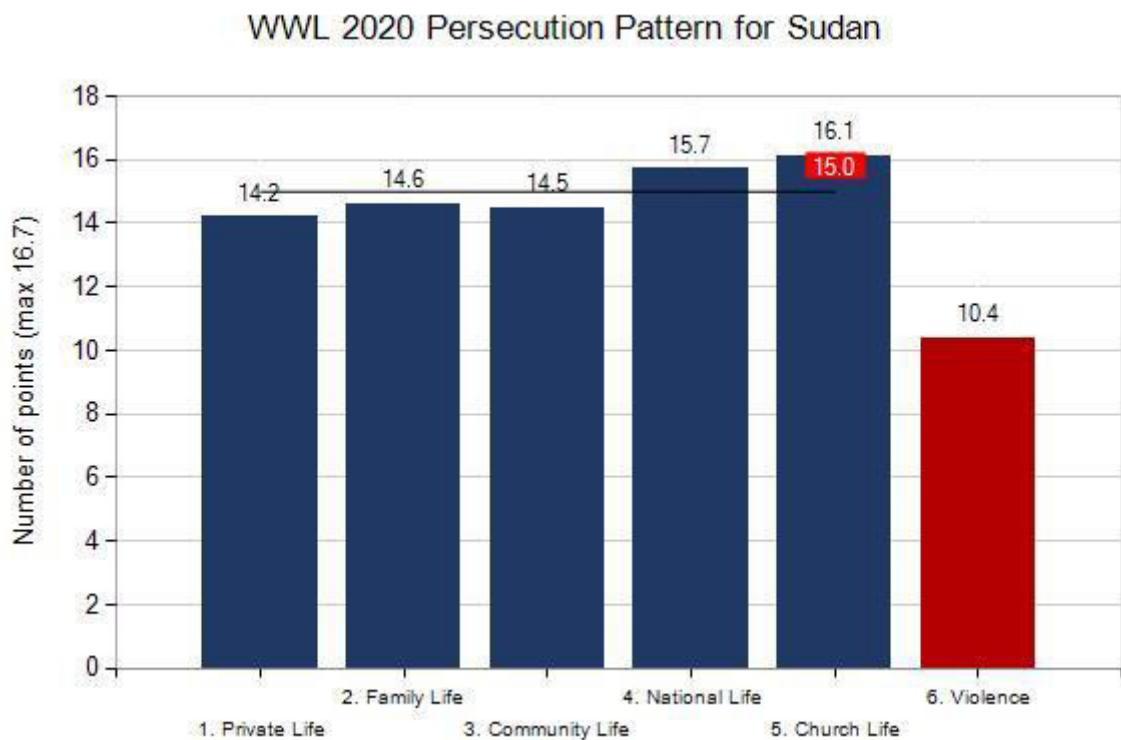
The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Sudan shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Sudan is at the extremely high level of 15.0 points.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Church sphere*, which reflects how the government under al-Bashir was continuously targeting church life in the country in a variety of ways, followed by the *National sphere*, an indication that Christians do not enjoy equality with Muslims in the country.
- The score for violence was 10.4 points, down from 10.6 in WWL 2019.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest-scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale 0 – 4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

- *It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.) (Block 1:4 / Score: 4 points):* The country remains a risky place to openly demonstrate Christian faith. If Christians mention details about their faith in written form, it is likely that they will be traced and attacked. That is why Christians often prefer to meet and pray privately, not publicly. This affects all categories of Christianity in the country.

- *It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians (Block 1:9 / Score: 3.75 points):* Meeting with other Christians (especially for converts) always carries the danger of abduction or arrest by government security agents. A country expert adds: "This is one of the issues that all Christian communities in the country face. There is this constant surveillance and follow-up by the community and the police."

- *It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1:8 / Score: 3.75 points):* Christians tend to avoid talking about their faith to guests or other members of the local community for safety reasons: It can lead to arrest or mob attack. An expert says: "It could be seen as evangelizing and is a problem that everyone has to avoid."

- *Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1: 1 / Score: 3.25 points):* Sudan is known for charging converts with apostasy. According to one country researcher: "Due to the risk of discovery and use as evidence against them by family, society and officials, [converts] refrain from owning Christian materials or accessing Christian TV or websites." There have been instances where converts have been put under house-arrest by family members due to their conversion to Christianity. Article 126 of the Criminal Code clearly indicates punishment for active Christians, particularly converts coming from a Muslim background: "Whoever propagates the renunciation of Islam or publicly renounces it by explicit words or an act of definitive indication is said to commit the offense of apostasy." In the past, there were cases where converts to Christianity were sentenced to death for holding mere conversations. Furthermore, all categories of Christians are afraid of having conversations about their faith with Sudanese Muslims as these might be construed as being "acts that encourage apostasy against Islam".

Family sphere:

- ***Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2:9/ Score: 4 points):*** Christian children are often harassed in school or playgrounds due to their parent's faith. As a result of this, Christians (especially converts) often hesitate or avoid talking about their faith to their children. They way they dress, or if they have any symbols that indicate their faith, is widely regarded as a symbol of inferiority among Islamic groups in the country and can cause persecution.

- ***Christian parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs (Block 2:7 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Converts often refrain from raising their children as Christians because this might attract the attention of the government (since the children might inadvertently reveal the faith of their parents). Linking this to the school system, a country researcher states: "It is very tough to raise children according to Christian belief and faith. The school system, the welfare system and society in general complicate many things. In public schools located in majority Muslim areas of the country, the government requires instruction in Islam. In state schools in areas where Muslims are not a majority, students have a choice of studying Islam or Christianity. However, Christian courses are not offered in the majority of state schools. The reason given by the government for not offering Christian courses is a shortage of teachers or Christian students. Regardless of the reason, in practice, this means that many Christian students attend Islamic courses."

- ***Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons (Block 2: 3 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Sudan is not an easy place for Christians to marry in. If a marriage is between a Muslim and a Christian, the Christian is expected to convert to Islam. While the law (to a certain extent) allows that non-Muslims will not be subjected to the application of Islamic law, in practice a Christian wedding will not take place as smoothly as a wedding between Muslims.

- ***Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases (Block 2:12 / Score: 3.25):*** This has to be seen in the context of Sudan being a Sharia state. Such exclusion is to make sure that the next generation remains Muslim majority and is all too common as an initial reaction when one parent converts to Christianity. Hence, in the case of separation of a Christian convert and non-Christian parent, the family of Muslim faith will take the child into their custody by force.

Community sphere:

- ***Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons - e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc. (Block 3: 1 / Score: 4 points):*** Public order laws, based largely on the government's strict interpretation of Islamic law, are in force in Khartoum State and prohibit "indecent dresses" and other "offenses of honor, reputation, and public morality". Islamic morality police have been known to harass and arrest Christians for not following official dressing codes. This issue has led to the arrests of many Christians in the past.

- *Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.) (Block 3: 2 / Score: 4 points):* Christians, especially converts, are monitored by Muslim religious leaders, politicians, and vigilante groups. Sudan has been a police state and the hope since April 2019 is that the removal of the former president will change this.
- **Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons (Block 3.7 / score 4 points)**: Christians in Sudan have to face many hurdles in Muslim-dominated communities and cannot fully participate.
- *Christians have been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water) (Block 3:3 / Score: 3.75 points):* The general attitude in society and the government is that Sudanese citizens should be Muslim. The government uses all available opportunities to downgrade and punish Christians by restricting them from using community resources. Christians in the Nuba Mountains and other areas in the southern parts of the country face aerial bombardment from government forces and even house-to-house searches for Christians carried out by state-sponsored militia. For Christians living in these areas it is hardly possible to lead a normal life and share community resources without fear.

National sphere:

- *The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4: 1 / Score: 4 points):* At the national level, the general environment is not favorable to Christians since they are regarded as second-class citizens. Even though Article 38 of the Interim Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the ruling party believes that the country belongs to Muslims. Emanating from this, almost all of laws and policies are derived from Sharia and are not flexible to accommodate freedom of religion. The other laws also limit freedom of religion in their additional claw-back clauses. Christians - especially those from South Sudan and Western missionaries – are frequently monitored by government security forces.
- *Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4: 8 / Score: 4 points):* Freedom of expression in the country is highly restricted. The Church is hindered from expressing its faith, practices and opinions in public because the authorities fear they are giving Christians the chance to influence others to become Christians. The censorship affects everyone; for Christians, the risks of speaking out are higher as the state is likely to give impunity (in whole or part) to anyone acting against those whose comments could be understood as a criticism of the government or local officials.
- **Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions (Block 4.9 / 3.75 points):** Hinderance and bans occur where organizations are perceived to be critical of state institutions or are overt about the evangelistic effect of their work; many international NGOs barred from the country if known to be Christian. There are still some Christian organizations operating in the country despite the challenges. The country has numerous political parties but none have a Christian agenda.

- **Christians have been hindered in running their own businesses without interference for faith-related reasons (e.g. personnel policy, client admission policy)(Block 4: 7 / Score: 3.5 points)**: A country researcher states: "Because of Islamic law being implemented in the country, it is very difficult for non-Muslims to get licenses to open a business when compared to Muslim business owners. In addition to the legal limitation, it is also worth noting that most Christian business owners are discriminated against by customers because of their religion. In most cases, while dealing with the government, it is very difficult for Christian business owners to win government-sponsored bids because of the discriminatory attitude of the government officials in charge of the government offices responsible for these bids."

Church sphere:

- *Have activities of churches been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5: 1 / Score: 4 points):* While Christians in the capital city and other major cities are subject to monitoring and obstruction mainly from government sources, churches in the remote parts of the country, especially in areas affected by the civil war, are subject to more obstruction and monitoring from both government and non-government groups.

- *Christians have experienced interference when choosing their own religious leaders (Block 5:9 / Score: 4 points):* In the period before the removal of President al-Bashir (i.e. before April 2019), the Sudanese government increasingly interfered in the internal running of religious institutions. Due to rules issued by the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowment, pastors felt forced to censor themselves and curtail their activities. In some places, Sudanese security forces forced Christians to hand over their Christian schools.

- *Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier (Block 5:3 / Score: 4 points):* Christians have found it difficult to build new churches, the major obstacle being the government offices responsible for issuing the required permit. Even if a permit is issued, Christians then face challenges from local Islamic leaders and radical Muslims on a daily basis.

- *Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5:5 / 4 points):* This is another area where the church suffers most. Whatever activities churches want to carry out, they are required by the local authorities to only operate inside churches. Undertaking any church-related activities outside churches without express permission from local authorities will result in the arrest of individuals taking part.

Furthermore, the government has kept interfering in church business and has played a significant role in setting up [rival church committees] *that replace church-elected committees. There have been cases where the government then endorses these rival committees and allows them to sell churches behind the backs of the main congregation.*

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.

Sudan	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	0	120	12	32	110
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	31	63	10	20
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	3	120	20	25	200

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

- *Christians attacked:* Christians are often attacked in their communities on Sundays when they go to church or when they go home from church. These attacks have become so common that they are often not reported.
- *Christians arrested:* Pastors are being prosecuted for speaking out against persecution in the country. (Although this news article is taken from just a few days before the WWL 2020 reporting period began, it gives a good impression of the current situation.) In addition, Christians are being targeted indiscriminately for arrest in the Nuba Mountains region by government security forces, although the government claims it is targeting rebels.
- *Churches attacked:* The government has kept closing or confiscating church and church properties (a plan that started in 2017). Several churches were also destroyed in the Nuba Mountains region.

- *Christian homes/shops attacked:* Even though the country was more or less preoccupied with anti-government protests in the WWL 2020 reporting period, there were times when Christians homes or shops were attacked by radical Muslims or government security forces. This was particularly true in the Nuba Mountains where government security forces indiscriminately attack civilians (most of whom are Christians).

5 Year trends

Chart 1:

The first chart below shows that the average pressure on Christians has more or less plateaued at an extremely high level around the 15.0 point mark. This is consistent with how other organizations describe the situation in the country. For example, the US State Department has designated Sudan as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for more than 15 times for gross violation of freedom of religion.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Sudan	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	15.0
2019	15.2
2018	14.9
2017	14.8
2016	14.1

Chart 2:

The chart below shows the pressure on Christians in the various *spheres of life* over the last five reporting periods. It can clearly be seen that the pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been extreme and seems to be stabilizing, with the levels highest in the *National* and *Church spheres*. This is an indication that persecution in Sudan is typically targeting *Church life* with the government playing a key role. It also reflects the restrictive policies and anti-Christian sentiment projected by the government.
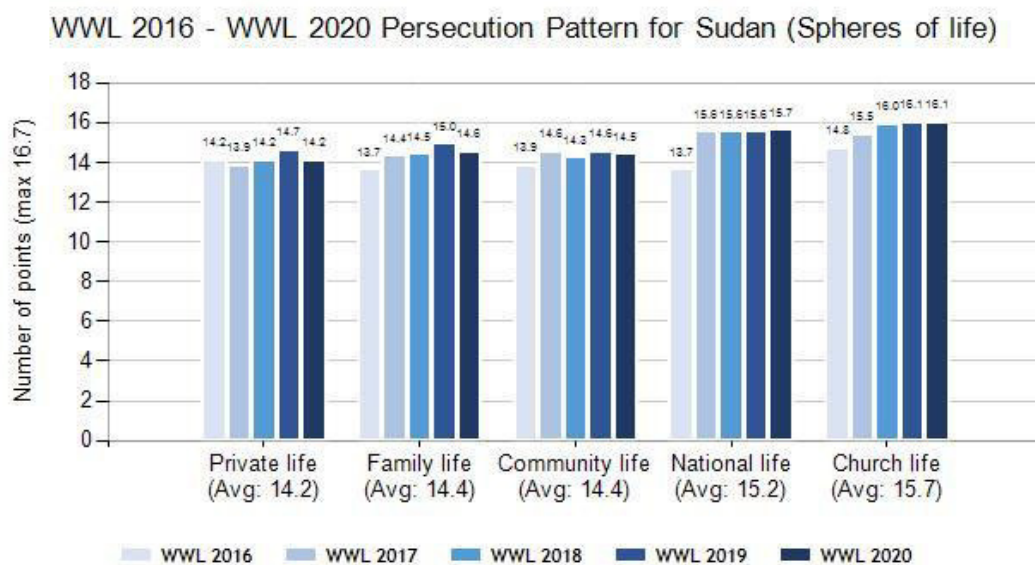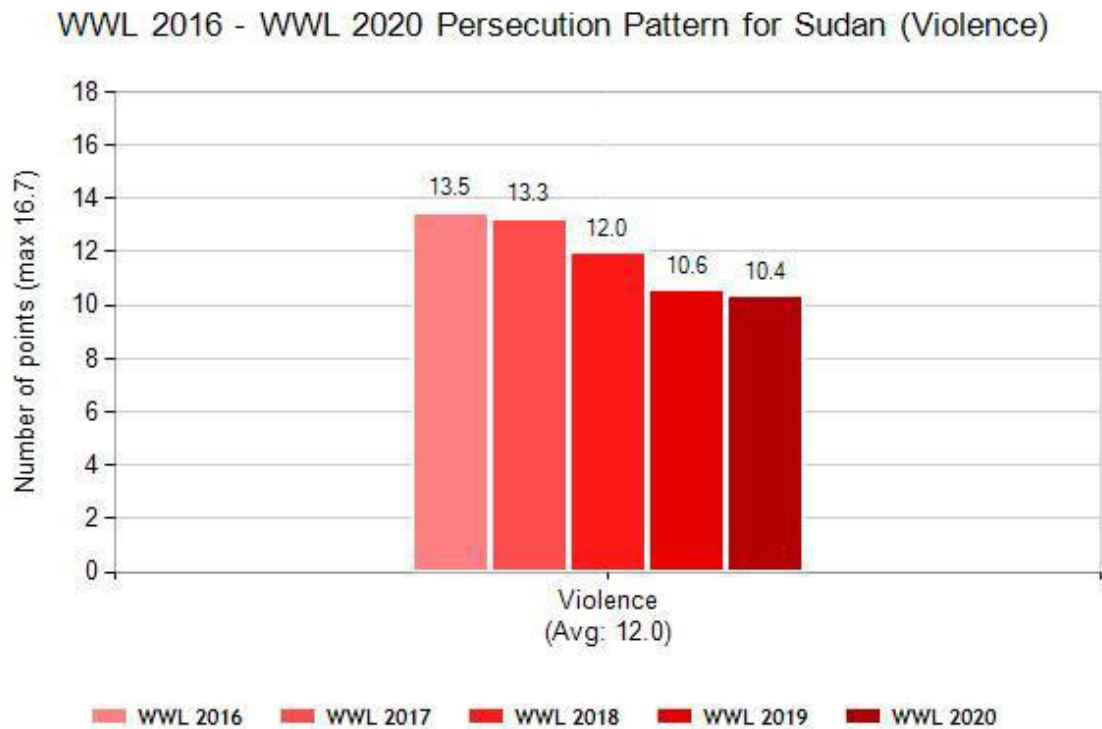

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Sudan (Spheres of life)

Chart 3:

The chart below depicts the scores for violence over the last five reporting periods. Unlike the charts above showing a stabilizing picture, the scores for violence have been decreasing over the past five years. However, this decline is due to the impossibility of verifying whether or not the killing of Christians has definitely been due to their faith. In places like Nuba Mountains, the government is still committing serious atrocities against civilians most of whom are Christians. Thus, the decrease in violence score does not necessarily lead to a conclusion that Christian life is getting better in Sudan.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Sudan (Violence)

	WWL 2016	WWL 2017	WWL 2018	WWL 2019	WWL 2020
Violence (Avg: 12.0)	13.5	13.3	12.0	10.6	10.4

Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- *Denied inheritance or possessions*
- *Enforced religious dress code*
- *Forced divorce*
- *Forced marriage*
- *Incarceration by family/house arrest*
- *Violence – sexual*

Female Christians in the country face tremendous challenges. The context in which they live deprives them of many basic rights simply because they are women and each lack of protective legislation is an avenue for religious persecution. Even if men are the breadwinners in most cases, the very existence of the family usually depends on the wife.

The women play a major role in raising the children, taking part in societal activities representing the family and helping the husband on the farm or raising cattle. The persecution of women and girls has a huge negative impact in the family and community.

In Sudan, Christian girls are forced to dress like Muslims and girls who are arrested for "indecent dressing" often face groping and humiliation during interrogation. The law prohibits indecent dress and it is punishable with a maximum of 40 lashes, a fine, or both. The law does not specify what it deems to be indecent dress.

Young girls are vulnerable to forced marriage, particularly since, according to UNICEF estimates, 12% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 were first married before they were 15. Further, most women do not have basic education and so are ill-equipped to search for any alternative. In 2015, the level of education for women of all faiths was 84.6% with no education, 12.5% with only primary education and 2.9% with secondary or higher education.

Christian girls are also vulnerable to rape and domestic violence, especially if they have converted to Christianity. Levels of domestic violence are extremely high and customary laws do not prohibit domestic violence. There were no reliable statistics on the prevalence of rape and domestic violence. Human rights organizations cited substantial barriers, including cultural norms, police reluctance to investigate, and the widespread impunity of perpetrators to reporting sexual and gender-based violence, including a substantial gap between the law and its implementation. In fact, women who filed claims of domestic violence have been subjected to accusations of lying or spreading false information, harassment and detention. In certain probate trials, the testimony of women is not considered equivalent to that of men; the testimony of two women is required.

Sons and daughters do not have equal inheritance rights in Sudan, and Christian women are sometimes denied their inheritance or possessions because of their faith. Further, as soon as a woman's conversion to Christianity is discovered, they will be isolated from other family members.

Male Pressure Points:

- *Forced to flee town/country*
- *Incarceration by government*
- *Military/militia conscription/service against conscience*
- *Violence - death*
- *Violence - physical*
- *Violence - verbal*

Violent Islamic militancy continues to plague many African nations and leads to an increased persecution of Christians. The government of Sudan targets male Christians with a variety of serious charges, including 'terrorism'. Church leaders are the most frequent targets and government security forces monitor their activities daily.

Mostly men and boys are subject to beating, arrest, killing and displacement.

Men are usually the head of households and breadwinners of the family, and if the men are unable to provide for their families due to persecution, the family will experience trouble financially. In addition, in remote parts of the country, men are important to their families for providing security; absence can lead to family property being looted and wife and daughters being sexually attacked.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religious minorities such as the Jewish community also face serious challenges in Sudan. In 2017, for example, football fans were seen praising Adolf Hitler and denying the 'Holocaust'. One Imam also said during a sermon that Jews are to blame for all things evil. The Bahai community is not recognized in the country and can only operate in secret. Jehovah's Witnesses also face harassment. Shia Muslims are not allowed to hold worship services. In a nutshell, any religious group apart from Sunni Islam faces tremendous challenges to exercise their faith.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- *Dictatorial paranoia:* Known for its poor record in human rights, the government of Sudan has continued violating the rights of Christians in the country. It has also been on the US State Department's list of "Countries of Particular Concern (CPC)" since 1999. Pressure from the international community helped the release of some Christians who were detained because of their faith; however, the government has not changed its general attitude and behavior towards Christians. The looting and destruction of churches, hospitals, and schools are all common, especially in the Nuba Mountains region. It remains to be seen if this persecution engine will continue to be as strong in the future now that al-Bashir has been removed from power.

- *Islamic oppression:* Besides the authoritarian government, radical imams and even radical armed groups like the Janjaweed militia are targeting Christians. These militias are funded and trained by the Sudanese government. This persecution engine will remain in operation in the coming years.

- *Organized corruption and crime:* Organized corruption in the country has served to protect the interests of the ruling party and president. The ex-president was behind the creation of the Janjaweed militias who became his most trusted forces in the country. These militias were behind the killing, rape and displacement of civilians in the Darfur region - including Christian civilians. Although in a post-Bashir situation it is to be expected that these militias will play a less dominant role, they are likely to remain potent enough to persecute Christians.

- *Clan and ethnic antagonism:* Many social, political and economic issues in the country involve a mixture of factors. In the past, al-Bashir had used ethnicity (Arab) and religion (Islam) to rally his supporters. He successfully presented Christians as villains and Christianity as the source of the problems which Sudanese society needed to combat. Despite his fall from power in April 2019, ethnic groups still possess huge political leverage in the country. However, it is very unlikely if the next leader will repeat the mistakes that the former president made as that would undermine the whole pro-democracy movement.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: 19th century Mahdist movement - http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-256
- Persecution engines: ceasefire agreements - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/11/ceasefire-holds-but-food-shortage-threatens-sudans-nuba-people/
- Persecution engines: war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide - https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2009_01514.PDF
- Persecution engines: 2019 Freedom in the World report - https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/sudan
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : rival church committees - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/10/government-pressures-sudan-church-christ-leaders/
- Violence: news article - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/sudanese-church-leader-charged-with-apostasy/
- Violence: were also destroyed - https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/8-march/news/world/dozens-of-churches-burned-in-sudan
- Gender profile of persecution: indecent dress - https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Sudan.pdf%20
- Gender profile of persecution: married - https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/252945.pdf
- Gender profile of persecution: level of education for women - https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/poww-2015-2016-en.pdf?la=en&vs=0
- Gender profile of persecution: widespread impunity - https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Sudan.pdf
- Gender profile of persecution: accusations of lying - https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/252945.pdf
- Gender profile of persecution: inheritance rights - http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/926401524803880673/pdf/125804-PUB-REPLACEMENT-PUBLIC.pdf%20
- Persecution of other religious minorities: serious challenges - http://everydayantisemitism.com/2017/11/28/football-fans-in-sudan-display-banner-of-hitlers-face-with-the-word-holocaust-in-gruesome-first-for-the-country/
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Shia Muslims - https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_SUDAN_2019.pdf

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