

World
Watch
Research

Central African Republic:
Country Dossier
December 2020



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2021

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	94	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.2	94	93	94	93	89
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.3	9.8	92	92	91	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.4	15.9	16.3	16.3	12.4	92	90	87	86	78
5	Pakistan	13.9	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.5	16.7	88	88	87	86	88
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	11.1	88	87	86	86	82
7	Yemen	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	3.9	87	85	86	85	85
8	Iran	14.5	14.5	13.9	15.7	16.5	10.6	86	85	85	85	85
9	Nigeria	13.3	13.2	13.9	14.1	14.1	16.7	85	80	80	77	78
10	India	13.0	12.9	13.5	14.9	13.7	15.4	83	83	83	81	73
11	Iraq	13.6	14.6	14.2	14.8	13.8	11.5	82	76	79	86	86
12	Syria	13.3	13.9	13.5	14.5	14.0	12.0	81	82	82	76	86
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.6	15.7	9.1	79	85	87	87	87
14	Saudi Arabia	15.1	13.9	14.4	15.8	16.6	2.2	78	79	77	79	76
15	Maldives	15.4	15.5	13.9	15.8	16.6	0.4	77	78	78	78	76
16	Egypt	12.5	13.2	11.5	12.7	11.0	14.1	75	76	76	70	65
17	China	12.6	9.7	12.0	13.2	15.4	11.1	74	70	65	57	57
18	Myanmar	11.9	12.0	13.1	12.9	12.3	11.9	74	73	71	65	62
19	Vietnam	12.1	8.8	12.7	14.0	14.5	10.0	72	72	70	69	71
20	Mauritania	14.3	14.0	13.5	14.1	13.6	1.9	71	68	67	57	55
21	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	1.3	71	73	74	73	71
22	Laos	12.1	10.2	13.6	13.5	14.3	6.9	71	72	71	67	64
23	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.5	70	70	69	68	67
24	Algeria	13.9	13.9	11.5	13.1	13.4	3.9	70	73	70	58	58
25	Turkey	12.5	11.5	10.8	13.3	11.6	9.3	69	63	66	62	57
26	Tunisia	12.0	13.1	10.4	11.5	13.2	7.4	67	64	63	62	61
27	Morocco	12.6	13.5	11.2	12.4	14.1	3.7	67	66	63	51	49
28	Mali	9.4	8.2	12.7	10.3	11.5	15.4	67	66	68	59	59
29	Qatar	14.0	13.9	10.8	13.1	14.1	1.5	67	66	62	63	66
30	Colombia	11.4	8.8	12.4	11.0	9.7	13.9	67	62	58	56	53
31	Bangladesh	11.5	10.3	13.0	11.3	10.1	10.6	67	63	58	58	63
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.4	11.8	14.3	67	66	48	-	-
33	Tajikistan	14.0	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	2.2	66	65	65	65	58
34	Nepal	12.4	9.7	9.9	13.0	12.3	8.5	66	64	64	64	53
35	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.1	9.6	9.9	15.6	66	68	70	61	58
36	Ethiopia	9.9	8.5	10.7	10.3	10.8	14.4	65	63	65	62	64
37	Mexico	10.3	8.1	12.4	10.7	10.3	12.6	64	60	61	59	57
38	Jordan	13.1	13.9	11.4	11.6	12.4	2.0	64	64	65	66	63
39	Brunei	13.9	14.6	10.7	10.9	13.5	0.7	64	63	63	64	64
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	11.2	9.4	11.6	16.1	64	56	55	33	-
41	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	11.0	12.5	13.4	2.4	64	64	63	63	56
42	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.0	12.3	15.7	64	60	54	38	-
43	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	11.9	12.7	13.8	0.0	64	61	64	62	61
44	Oman	13.2	13.5	10.3	12.5	13.0	0.9	63	62	59	57	53
45	Mozambique	9.3	7.6	11.3	7.9	11.1	16.1	63	43	43	-	-
46	Malaysia	12.1	14.3	12.9	11.5	10.0	2.4	63	62	60	65	60
47	Indonesia	11.5	11.4	12.4	10.7	9.3	7.8	63	60	65	59	55
48	Kuwait	13.2	13.5	9.9	12.2	13.2	1.1	63	62	60	61	57
49	Kenya	11.7	9.2	10.5	8.0	10.3	12.8	62	61	61	62	68
50	Comoros	12.5	11.1	11.4	11.3	14.2	1.9	62	57	56	56	56

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
51	Cuba	10.9	7.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	5.4	62	52	49	49	47
52	Sri Lanka	12.2	9.1	11.7	12.2	9.7	7.0	62	65	58	57	55
53	UAE	13.4	13.3	9.7	12.0	12.4	1.1	62	60	58	58	55
54	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.6	10.6	62	60	52	45	47
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.2	10.4	12.0	1.3	58	57	56	54	48
56	Palestinian Territories	12.5	13.3	9.1	10.4	11.7	0.9	58	60	57	60	64
57	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	10.2	58	55	52	53	59
58	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.5	12.1	3.9	57	60	60	51	46
59	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56	56	56	57
60	Bahrain	12.1	12.5	9.1	10.7	10.5	0.9	56	55	55	57	54
61	Azerbaijan	12.8	9.8	9.4	11.1	12.6	0.0	56	57	57	57	52
62	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	3.7	53	56	48	40	-
63	Nicaragua	6.9	4.6	9.9	11.3	10.0	8.1	51	41	41	-	-
64	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.9	48	48	43	-	-
65	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	12.0	47	48	47	46	53
66	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.9	47	45	46	-	-
67	Honduras	6.8	5.0	10.6	7.6	9.0	7.6	46	39	38	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	10.1	11.4	7.2	46	43	42	-	-
69	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	44	44	-	-
70	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	0.6	43	43	43	-	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	0.7	43	41	42	-	-
72	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	8.1	42	42	41	-	-
73	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.3	42	42	43	-	-
74	El Salvador	6.6	4.9	9.8	4.2	8.7	7.8	42	38	30	-	-

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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 2021 reporting period was 01 October 2019 - 30 September 2020.
- 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).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2021 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of Open Doors field networks, research analysts, external experts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that the WWL 2021 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2021 Short country profile / Central African Republic

Brief country details

Central African Republic: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
4,921,000	3,691,000	75.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

Central African Republic: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	66	35
WWL 2020	68	25
WWL 2019	70	21
WWL 2018	61	35
WWL 2017	58	34

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

CAR: Main persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders
Organized corruption and crime	Organized crime cartels or networks, Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) , Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups

Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders
---------------------------	----------------------

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been embroiled in conflict since 2013 and most of the country is occupied by armed militia groups, responsible for a range of human rights abuses. Christian leaders who have publicly denounced the violence have been threatened and church buildings have been burned and ransacked. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians who have been forced to live in camps and lose their homes and livelihood. In addition to the insecurity and violence from which all Christians suffer from, converts to Christianity also face the persecution that comes from their immediate family members. The local community will often ostracize Christian converts and might also try to force them to renounce Christianity through violence.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- [25 December 2019](#): Two pastors were shot dead by Muslim militants as they traveled together by car from Batangafo to Bouca after a Christmas service (Source: Barnabas Fund, 6 January 2020).
- [8 October 2019](#): "Armed men on 8 October attacked aid workers travelling in two vehicles in the northern Kaga-Bandoro town. They robbed the aid workers, but left them unharmed. Armed attackers also robbed other aid workers in a separate incident on the same day, but they were also not hurt. The incidents were the first of their kind in two months in the country where humanitarian workers have increasingly become targets of armed groups." (Source: Reliefweb, 15 October 2019)

Specific examples of positive developments

According to [UN News](#) reporting on 20 February 2020: "One year after the signing of a peace deal in the Central African Republic (CAR), State authority is being extended throughout the country, violence against civilians has decreased, and an inclusive Government remains in place."

External Links - Short country profile

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 25 December 2019: - <https://barnabasfund.org/news/extremists-shoot-dead-two-pastors-after-christmas-day-service-in-central/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 8 October 2019: - <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/west-and-central-africa-weekly-regional-humanitarian-snapshot-8-14>
- Specific examples of positive developments: UN News - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057731>

WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Central African Republic

Link for general background information

- [Central African Republic country profile - BBC News](#)

Recent history

The Central African Republic (CAR) used to be a French colony known as Ubangi-Shari. In 1960, Ubangi-Shari gained independence from France. Since gaining independence, the country has been mired in cycles of violence. These cycles have been driven by overlapping tensions between armed groups, religious and ethnic groups, and herders and farmers. As a result, CAR has endured repeated outbreaks of conflict, population displacement, alarming food insecurity, and limited access to basic services and economic opportunities.

General François Bozizé seized power in a 2003 coup backed by neighboring Chad. The following years saw intermittent fighting between the government and various rebel groups. In 2013, a militia called Séléka (widely perceived as a coalition of Muslim fighters) took control of the capital Bangui and their leader Michel Djotodia became the first Muslim president in CAR's history. However, that same year President Djotodia resigned and was replaced by Catherine Samba-Panza due to intense pressure from the international community. Catherine Samba-Panza served as interim president from 2013-2014 until elections were held.

After much delay, in February 2016 the Interim Government managed to hold the election that was supposed to be a significant milestone in the country's history. Faustin-Archange Touadera won the election and was sworn in as a president. Since taking office, he has made peace and reconciliation his priority, but there are still clashes in some parts of the country involving the mainly Muslim Séléka and the self-defense groups, called anti-Balaka. Although these latter groups are frequently referred to as Christians, they are mostly Animists in faith and churches have strongly disassociated themselves from them. Due to the obvious religious overtones of the conflict, both Christian and Muslim civilians are victims of the violence perpetrated by the Séléka and anti-Balaka militants.

Attempts by both UN peacekeepers and government forces have not yet been able to stop the conflict and the country continues to be mired in anarchy. There have been continuous attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping forces. In February 2019, yet another agreement - the Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation - was signed with more than a dozen rebel groups. This gives hope that after all there might be light at the end of the tunnel.

According to the [UN Security Council Report](#) of 31 January 2020: "Since then [i.e. the signing of the Political Peace Agreement on 6 February 2019], there has been a notable decrease, compared to the previous year, in military confrontations between armed groups, CAR security forces, and MINUSCA and in human rights violations linked to the conflict. However, the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, which was presented

to the committee on 2 December 2019, determined that the implementation of the peace agreement 'remained limited'."

Political and legal landscape

The [2016 Constitution](#) provides for freedom of religion under conditions set by law and equal protection under the law regardless of religion - and this is generally respected in practice.

Most analysts agree that family bloodlines, local ethnic politics, and rebel militancy have been key in shaping politics in CAR. Several tribes have been waging war against each other, aggravated by the political and economic situation and social issues. Northern tribes are dominantly Islamic; before the coup by Bozizé in 2003 they fought each other for power but joined forces under the umbrella of Séléka prior to staging the 2013 coup. Across the country, relations have been tense among the various tribes, and conflicts between them have led to considerable loss of life over the years.

[Political parties](#) are legally able to form and operate (Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019). However, party members conducting political activities are at risk of intimidation and violence in areas controlled by irregular armed groups. According to the Freedom House report: "Several opposition parties exist in the parliament. However, politicians are at risk of intimidation, harassment, or violence in areas controlled by armed groups, and opposition parties are limited in their ability to garner support in those areas. Citizens are also vulnerable to pressure and intimidation from nonstate armed groups. voters outside the capital are largely unable to participate in political processes for security reasons. enduring insecurity and an accompanying lack of access to political processes precludes many minority groups from achieving political representation."

According to the [UN Security Council Report](#) of 31 January 2020: "The return of former presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia to the CAR on 15 December 2019 and 10 January, respectively, has raised concerns about their possible destabilizing effect on the already fragile political climate". Despite the danger of instability, in December 2020 and early 2021, CAR is set to hold presidential, legislative and local [elections](#) (International Crisis Group, 10 December 2020).

Religious landscape

Central African Republic: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	3,691,000	75.0
Muslim	650,000	13.2
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0

Ethno-religionist	530,000	10.8
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	12,600	0.3
Atheist	680	0.0
Agnostic	37,000	0.8
Other	0	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

CAR is a predominantly Christian country; although relations between Muslims and Christians appeared good on the surface in previous years, tension had been growing under the surface. In particular, converts from Islam to Christianity have always faced persecution. Christians living in Muslim-dominated areas in northern, eastern and western regions have reported discrimination and other forms of social pressure. Many Christians (and Muslims) intermix their faith with several ethno-religious practices including sorcery and witchcraft.

According to WCD estimates for 2020, Christians constitute 75.0% of the population and Muslims 13.2%. Islam has shown significant growth in the last decade - rising from 5% to well over 13% - and has been strengthened by groups settling from Chad and Sudan. Dissatisfaction at the perceived marginalization of northern Muslims was one of the root causes for the coup in March 2013 that gave rise to a deadly conflict along religious and ethnic lines. The Christian community is very concerned about the Islamic inroads being established in the country and church leaders have repeatedly pointed out that the rebellion that led to the coup had a religious agenda.

Normal church life is very difficult as meetings of Christians in many areas take place under the threat of possible attack; ex-Séléka groups attack churches in the Muslim-dominated areas of the country and especially target churches that are more involved in openly integrating converts from the Muslim community. Anti-Balaka rebel groups also attack churches and any Christians who oppose their activities. Both rebel groups have involvement in criminal activities. Christians are also face frequent harassment in the big cities - especially in Bangui close to the PK5 quarter - and in north-eastern areas.

According to [US State Department's 2019 IRF Report](#):

- "In the central and southern regions of the country, Catholicism and Protestant Christianity are the dominant religions, while Islam is predominant in the northeast. In Bangui the majority of inhabitants in the PK5 and PK3 neighborhoods are Muslim, while other neighborhoods in the capital are predominantly Christian."

Economic landscape

According to [World Bank's 2020 update](#):

- **GDP in 2019:** 4.8%, an increase from 3.8% in 2018. CAR's economic growth took a healthy turn in 2019 with the signing of the peace agreement. Although the economy has grown faster than that of the countries of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC in French) and sub-Saharan Africa, it is lagging behind comparable countries such as Burkina Faso, Malawi, Niger, and Uganda
- **Inflation:** 3.2% in 2019, an increase from 1.6% in 2018
- **Poverty:** Despite great natural wealth, CAR has a landlocked geographical location and a prevalence of subsistence agriculture. This situation, coupled with the numerous coups and unrest, have plunged the country into adverse poverty. Roughly 71% of the population was living below the international poverty line (%1.90 per day, in terms of PPP) in 2018.

According to [the World Bank projections](#) (2020):

- GDP growth is projected to ease to 3.2 percent in 2020 following the global slowdown that is expected to reduce demand for CAR's exports. Government measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, including restriction of movements, travel bans, lockdowns, and border closures, will slowdown economic activities, disrupt local businesses, reduce tax revenues collection. With neighboring countries restricting access to their territories and portal gateways and disruptions in the supply chain, CAR is likely to face inflationary pressures, especially on imported foods products. Inflation is expected at 3.5% in 2020. Global uncertainty and depressed international demand caused by COVID-19 are expected to lead to a sharp decline in the demand of wood products and commodity prices, leading to a drop in exports.

According to the [2020 Economic Freedom Index](#):

- CAR scored 50.7, ranking as the 159th freest country in the world. Among 47 countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region, it is ranked 36th with an overall score well below the regional and world average.

According to [Theodora.com](#) (accessed 20 August 2020):

- Subsistence agriculture, together with forestry and mining, remains the backbone of the economy, with about 60% of the population living in outlying areas. The agricultural sector generates more than half of the estimated GDP. Timber and diamonds account for most export earnings, followed by cotton. Important constraints to economic development include the CAR's landlocked geography, poor transportation system, largely unskilled workforce, and legacy of misdirected macroeconomic policies.

Social and cultural landscape

According to [the UNDP 2019 report](#) and [World Factbook](#) (April 2020):

- **Main ethnic groups:** Baya 33%, Banda 27%, Mandjia 13%, Sara 10%, Mboum 7%, M'Baka 4%, Yakoma 4%, other 2%
- **Main languages:** French (official), Sangho (Lingua franca and national language), tribal languages.
- **Total population:** 6 million (July 2020 est.) with a population growth rate of 2.09% (2020 est.)
- **Urban population:** 42.2% of the total population (2020)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 2.52% annual rate of change (2015-2020 est.)
- **Median age:** 17.6 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 7.6 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** 36.8%
- **Employment to population ratio (15 years and older):** 67.4%
- **Unemployment:** 6.5% of total labor force
- **Youth unemployment (15-24 years):** 11.5%

According to [World Bank](#) (update November 2019):

- **Refugees/IDPs:** Approximately 643,000 people remain internally displaced while 575,000 Central African refugees sought shelter in neighboring countries. It is expected that in 2019, 2.9 million Central Africans—more than half of the country's population—will need humanitarian assistance, with 1.6 million people in acute need. In order to meet humanitarian needs, on January 7, 2019 the Government of the Central African Republic and the Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) officially launched the \$430.7 million Humanitarian Response Plan for the year.

According to the [UN Global Human Development Indicators](#) (2019),

- **Human Development Index:** CAR is one of the poorest countries in the world and one of the 10 poorest in Africa ranking 188th out of 189, with an index value of 0.381.
- **Average life expectancy at birth:** 52.8 years.
- **Gender inequality:** CAR has also one of the lowest education and gender equality indicators of the world. The gender development index (GDI) is 0.795 and gender inequality index (GII) is 0.682. The youth unemployment rate (female to male ratio) is 1.12.

According to a [UN Security Council Report \(February 2020\)](#):

- "The humanitarian situation in the CAR remains dire, with OCHA estimating that approximately 2.6 million people—over half of the population—will need humanitarian assistance in 2020".

Technological landscape

According to the [World Internet Stats](#) (accessed 29 June 2020):

- **Internet usage:** 13.6% of the population- survey date 31 December 2019
- **Facebook usage:** 2.5% of the population – survey date 31 December 2019

According to the [World Bank's country profile](#) (2018):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 27.4 per 100 people

The recurring conflict in CAR and in neighboring countries has created obstacles in the establishment of technological infrastructure. Hence, in communications, financial services, agriculture and transportation sectors, the use of modern technology is not advanced.

A large-scale project was planned for the Central African Republic at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century. A [UNESCO report](#) (accessed 20 August 2020) states: “The country was included in the list of beneficiary countries for the first phase of the Spanish funded project on capacity-building in science, technology and innovation (STI) Policy in Africa during which UNESCO provided technical assistance and consultancy services to develop the national policy for STI. Throughout 2008 and 2009, missions, consultations, and interviews were held with most of the STI stakeholders in the country and a first draft of the National STI Policy framework document was produced and submitted to the Central African Government for comments and discussion.” This initiative was interrupted by the conflict that erupted in 2013.

Security situation

According to the [2019 World Report](#) by Human Rights Watch:

- Throughout 2018, fighting between and attacks by armed groups forced the displacement of tens of thousands of people from their homes: The total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Central African Republic climbed to over 642,800, and the total number of refugees was 574,600, the highest numbers since 2014.

According to the [2020 World Report](#) by Human Rights Watch:

- With at least 70% of the territory under the control of various militant groups, both the government and UN peacekeepers have very little control in most parts of the country. On 6 February 2019, the Political Peace Agreement was signed in Bangui by the CAR government and 14 armed groups. A new government was formed with several members of opposition groups holding key senior positions. After the signing of the peace deal, even though there has been a notable decrease, compared to the previous year, in military confrontations between armed groups, CAR security forces and MINUSCA and in human rights violations, armed groups continued to commit serious human rights violations. Violence between armed groups continued in the capital city, Bangui, and in various provinces amid efforts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate rebel fighters.

If the parties to the conflict continue to refuse to commit to a ceasefire and disarmament:

- The country could descend into a full-blown civil war.
- Neighboring countries would be likely to get involved in arming or training groups, based on their national interests.
- Christians are likely to continue suffering at the hands of ex-Séléka and other militants.

Trends analysis

1) The relationship between Muslims and Christians has become polarized

The conflict in the last few years has fundamentally changed the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country. Unless the reconciliation process and the attempt to end the cycle of impunity in CAR succeeds, there is a grave risk that the polarization among Muslims and Christians will continue and exacerbate the religious conflict. Despite the elections in 2015 and 2016 (which many hoped would bring a fresh chance of reconciliation), ex-Séléka militants seem unwilling to lay down their arms and there is still a serious risk of a relapse into violent conflict with religious overtones. Church leaders of the main denominations have condemned the violence perpetrated by anti-Balaka forces. Although President Touadera (elected in 2016) has made peace and reconciliation his priority since taking office, various militant groups are active. The 2020 elections to be held in late December 2020 will test the relationships between different religious groups and communities.

2) The emergence of criminal splinter-groups has made life for Christians insecure

As the instability continues in the country, the situation is becoming increasingly complex with several criminal splinter-groups emerging from the Séléka and anti-Balaka militant groups - and in some places even joining forces. These groups both attack Christians, although for different reasons. This has put tremendous pressure on the Christian community in all areas of life. Killings and the destruction of property and churches have become common and there is nothing to change this if the status quo remains as it is. In February 2019, the government and 14 armed groups [signed a peace treaty](#) (AP News, 2 February 2019). However, the impact still remains to be seen as the fighting has not stopped. A UN [report](#) in July 2020 stated that the influx of foreign fighters resulted in a "series of clashes" and was "fed by arrivals of foreign fighters and weaponry, mainly from the Sudan." (Agence France Presse, 15 July 2020)

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: Central African Republic country profile - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13150040>
- Recent history: UN Security Council Report - <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-02/central-african-republic-5.php>
- Political and legal landscape: 2016 Constitution - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Central_African_Republic_2016.pdf?lang=en
- Political and legal landscape: Political parties - <https://freedomhouse.org/country/central-african-republic/freedom-world/2019>
- Political and legal landscape: UN Security Council Report - <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-02/central-african-republic-5.php>
- Political and legal landscape: elections - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/296-reduire-les-tensions-electorales-en-republique-centrafricaine>
- Religious landscape description: US State Department's 2019 IRF Report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/central-african-republic/>

- Economic landscape: World Bank's 2020 update - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/publication/the-central-african-republic-economic-update-explained-in-5-charts#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20second%20economic,implementation%20of%20the%20peace%20agreement.>
- Economic landscape: the World Bank projections - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: 2020 Economic Freedom Index: - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/centralafricanrepublic>
- Economic landscape: Theodora.com - https://theodora.com/wfbcurrent/central_african_republic/central_african_republic_economy.html
- Social and cultural landscape: the UNDP 2019 report - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CAF>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/attachments/summaries/CT-summary.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Bank - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/overview>
- Social and cultural landscape: UN Global Human Development Indicators - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>
- Social and cultural landscape: UN Security Council Report (February 2020) - <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-02/central-african-republic-5.php>
- Technological landscape: World Internet Stats - <https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bf>
- Technological landscape: World Bank's country profile - http://databank.worldbank.org/data/Views/Reports/ReportWidgetCustom.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=CAF
- Technological landscape: UNESCO report - <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/science-technology/sti-systems-and-governance/sti-policy-development/africa/central-african-republic/>
- Security situation: 2019 World Report - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/central-african-republic>
- Security situation: 2020 World Report - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/central-african-republic>
- Trends analysis: signed a peace treaty - <https://apnews.com/article/a250380046554b6cb0bbf6feb1510786>
- Trends analysis: report - <https://www.barrons.com/news/influx-of-foreign-fighters-in-central-african-republic-un-report-01594845905>

WWL 2021: Church information / Central African Republic

Christian origins

Like most African countries, CAR society was dominated by several traditional African religions practiced by different tribes. Most traditional religions in the area were dependent upon the animist tradition with practices differing from one tribe to another. The animist African tradition was more dominant in the southern and central parts of the country. Muslim traders in the northern part of the country introduced Islam to the region. Christianity became dominant in CAR after French colonists took power in the 1880s and became the religion of choice for many - possibly also due to its close association with powerful and respected colonial officials. While Roman Catholic missionaries came as early as the second half of the 19th century, Protestant missionaries (for instance, sent by US Baptists) did not start operating in the country until 1921. (Source: [World Atlas, 12 April 2018](#))

Church spectrum today

Central African Republic: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	1,830,000	49.6
Protestant	838,000	22.7
Independent	847,000	22.9
Unaffiliated	708,000	19.2
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-533,000	-14.4
Total	3,690,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	1,450,000	39.3
Renewalist movement	930,000	25.2

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

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:** Christians 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.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: World Atlas, 12 April 2018 - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-religious-beliefs-of-the-central-african-republic.html>

WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Central African Republic

Reporting period

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

Position on the World Watch List

Central African Republic: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	66	35
WWL 2020	68	25
WWL 2019	70	21
WWL 2018	61	35
WWL 2017	58	34

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

The reduction in score by two points in WWL 2021 is more or less a result of the fact that the conflict in the country is taking many twists and turns. In some circumstances, those who were persecuting Christians have also started fighting each other. There are also more than 15 other factions that fight with the government and with each other. More importantly, some of the jihadists are moving away from areas where Christians reside. These factors have also made the tracking of persecution more complex. The score for violence remained at an extreme level (15.6 points) which has impacted pressure in all *spheres of life*.

Persecution engines

Central African Republic: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Not at all
Christian Denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak

Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Not at all
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):

Besides the violence against Christians perpetrated particularly by the offshoots of the Séléka militia, *Islamic oppression* is also evident in the persecution of Christians by society in general in predominantly Muslim parts of the country.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong):

This engine is particularly evident where anti-Balaka militants attack churches and Christians. Although anti-Balaka began as a collection of vigilante groups, they have morphed into becoming criminal gangs. Particularly in Bangui, they have often targeted the Christians and church leaders, especially those who do not subscribe to their ideals or those who oppose their violent activities. While the group claims to protect Christians, it has become evident over the years that this is untrue since they attack Muslims and Christians alike.

Ethno-religious hostility (Medium):

There are two dimensions to this Persecution engine in CAR: i) Animism/ATR (religious and/or cultural) and ii) tribal fighting. According to a country researcher: “Both are prevalent in CAR, while ethnic and religious motives often go together.” Also: “There is pressure to participate in cultural religious practices, such as rites of passage, rituals and customs at milestones like birth, marriage and death, but also for protection (Anti-Balaka are known for this).” Further: “Some ethnic minority groups are specifically targeted, for instance, Ba’aka pygmies, who are forcibly recruited for labor. Anti-Balaka forces are mainly Animists, and they attack Muslims, but often also Christians. Sometimes they force Christians into their ranks.”

Drivers of persecution

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

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:

- Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Muslim militant and paramilitary groups (that could be considered ex-Séléka groups) are significant drivers of persecution. Two of them are the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central African Republic (FPRC), and the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC). Although many of these groups can be categorized as violent religious groups, it is also possible to view them as political parties and paramilitary organizations. These rebel groups have inflicted multiple attacks on Christian churches and private Christian property.
- Organized crime cartels (Very strong):** Some factions of the militant groups mentioned above act as organized criminal gangs and often engage in looting and frequently target churches and church-affiliated entities.

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Islamic leaders occupy all the market places, control trade and impose a huge tax on Christian businessmen and often loot the shops of Christians to reduce them to poverty. Furthermore, at a national level, figures like Michel Djotodia who was the president of the country, Nouredine Adam who was the second in command to Michel Djotodia and Ali Darassa, a Fulani ethnic Muslim leader of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) and Ex-Séléka leader, have led the persecution of Christians.
- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In the predominantly Muslim parts of the country tribal or ethnic elders also play a role in this process since they reinforce the pressure against converts to Christianity.
- **Family members (Medium):** In the northern part of the country and areas that border Sudan, Muslim family members will persecute converts to Christianity.
- **Citizens (Medium):** In the northern part of the country and areas that border Sudan, Muslim communities will persecute known converts.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Organized crime cartels (Very strong):** Some factions of the militant groups mentioned above act as organized criminal gangs and often engage in looting and frequently target churches and church-affiliated entities. In addition to militants that used to belong to the Séléka, Anti-Balaka fighters also engage in such acts. The state of lawlessness and the inability of the state to impose law and order means that Christians and the wider community have little protection from the criminal acts of these groups.
- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Violent religious groups also run criminal chains and syndicates to finance their operations.
- **Paramilitary groups (very strong):** In the context of the conflict in CAR, paramilitary groups like anti-Balaka are also attacking Christians.

Drivers of Ethno-religious hostility:

- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** The main drivers of this Persecution engine are ethnic leaders and some community leaders and their members. According to a country researcher: “[T]ribal pressure is [present in the country] especially since Muslim leaders are from certain tribes, who target Christians for persecution, for instance, Peulh/Fulani and leaders of other movements and tribes.” Within the context of this Persecution engine, there is also an overlap between ethnic leaders and non-Christian religious leaders. Some Islamic leaders are also seen as ethnic leaders and can create an environment of hate and violence.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Rights violations against Christians are most severe in the northern and eastern parts of the country which is dominated by the Muslim population and where Séléka splinter-groups are operating. There are also difficulties for Christians in the eastern part of the country that borders Sudan.

Christian communities and how they are affected

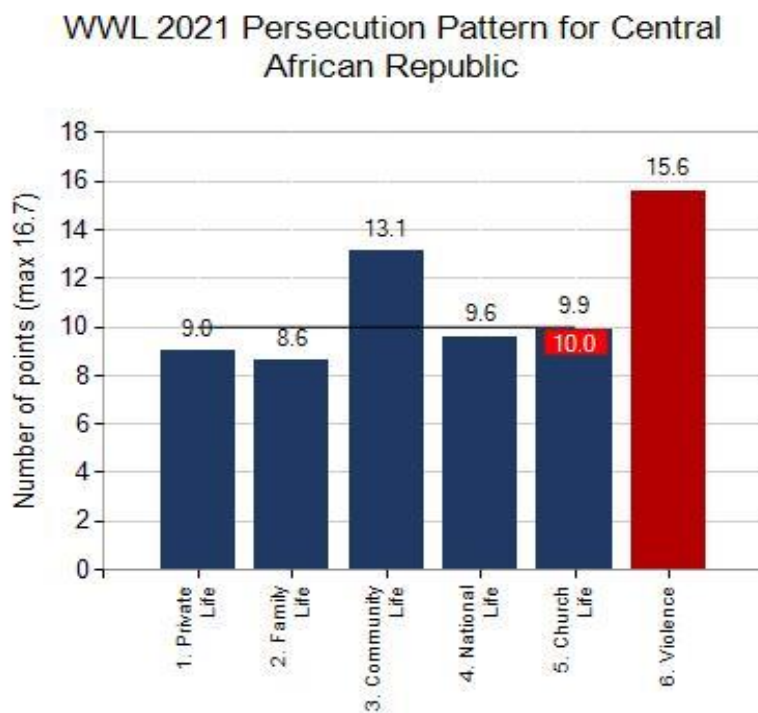
Communities of expatriate Christians: Since expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated in CAR, this category is not included for WWL analysis and scoring.

Historical Christian communities: This category is comprised of Roman Catholic and older Protestant churches. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the country with the widest network of churches, clinics and schools. When the Séléka militants were in the ascendancy, cars, computers and other valuable items were looted from church-buildings and other church properties. The Catholic Church and its leadership in CAR, alongside other religious leaders, have been a strong voice calling for peace and reconciliation and have also provided places of refuge for civilians, both Muslim and Christian, fleeing attack. As a result, Catholic churches have often been targeted for attack.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background experience opposition and pressure from family members to renounce Christianity if their conversion becomes known. They also have very limited opportunities to have fellowship with other Christians and worship collectively. Most Christians of Muslim background do not worship in public due to the fear of attacks by Muslim agitators. This is especially the case in the northern Muslim-dominated areas of the country.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Christians belonging to Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations (as well as those belonging to historical Christian communities) have been subject to attacks by ex-Séléka militants. Recently, the number of people joining these Christian congregations has increased dramatically.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2021 Persecution pattern for CAR shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in CAR is high with a score of 10.0 points, a reduction from 10.5 points in WWL 2020.
- The *Community sphere* scored highest with 13.1 points, while pressure in all other *spheres of life* was appreciably less (8.6 - 9.9 points).
- The score for violence remains at an extreme level with 15.6 points, the same as in WWL 2020.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. 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 of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.75 points)

Converts from Islam experience interference from their family members if their conversion becomes known. This category of Christians is the most persecuted of all. The backlash from Muslim families is harsh and family members are likely to cut off all financial help. There are many families where the wife is a Christian and the husband is not. The husband commonly prevents wife and children from attending church activities.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.75 points)

In the northern part of the country (which is dominated by the Muslim population and where Séléka splinter-groups are operating), converts are likely to risk their life by owning Christian materials. When ex-Séléka fighters come into a house and find someone reading a Bible, they have been known to kill them immediately.

Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (2.75 points)

Converts and non-convert Christians in areas controlled by Séléka forces face this problem. A country researcher states: "[Converts] ... will do nothing to be seen as Christians, even listening to Christian radio channels. In families, family members act as spies, sometimes children spy on their parents to tell if they have converted, so it becomes risky for them to be seen accessing Christian media."

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.50 points)

The country is divided along faith lines. If a Christian host talks about Christian faith to a Muslim guest, he/she may get into trouble.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

As the situation in the country is far from safe, it is very difficult for Christians (converts in particular) in the north-eastern provinces to register births, weddings or deaths, especially as this would attract unwanted attention.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.00 points)

In a country where groups are targeting each other based on religion, it is also difficult to openly baptize new Christians.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.75 points)

In areas controlled by rebel groups, where children's parents have been killed or have been forced to flee, any children left behind remain at the mercy of the attackers. Some have been brutally killed. Also, due to disunity between some churches, children are known to have been harassed because of the denominational faith of their parents.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.50 points)

This happens often after a spouse has converted to Christianity. Extended families and the local community will then often put pressure on the non-convert to divorce. In addition, converts almost automatically lose family inheritance rights.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.1: 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.). (3.75 points)

CAR is dominated by warring factions and the government has lost effective control over many areas. Christians are often targeted directly or indirectly (i.e. considered as siding with anti-Balaka). In Muslim dominated areas, Christians are often discriminated against, especially where Sharia law is more or less officially implemented.

Block 3.2: 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.). (3.50 points)

Monitoring by some rebel groups and their supporters has been common. In some instances, there are some vigilante groups that monitor for jihadists.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.50 points)

In the context of the ongoing conflict, Christians suffer from attack and abduction. For instance, in villages which the former Séléka have attacked, young girls have often been abducted. Christians from a Muslim background suffer most in such attacks.

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.00 points)

Muslim community members usually do not want to share community resources (such as healthcare) with converts to Christianity, especially in the remote northern part of the country.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.4: Christians have been hindered in travelling for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

In areas controlled by ex-Seleka militants, all transportation facilities are under Muslim control thus making movement for Christians difficult. When violence flares up, pastors are particularly vulnerable when travelling between churches to carry out their work.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Allegiance in the country is divided along religious lines. Christians face this problem mostly in areas where the Muslim community forms the majority or where ex-Seleka militants are in control. It is particularly difficult where Christians are considered supporters of anti-Balaka.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.25 points)

No peace negotiations or truth and reconciliation initiatives are currently helping the country return to stability. Christians in the Muslim-dominated northern part of the country do not have the right or the possibility to express their views. If they do that, they will be seen as being supporters of anti-Balaka forces and will probably then be killed by ex-Seleka militants.

Block 4.7: Christians have been hindered in running their own businesses without interference for faith-related reasons (e.g. personnel policy, client admission policy). (3.00 points)

There is no longer effective control by the government and in several regions rebel groups wield power. These groups frequently discriminate against Christians and sometimes attack them, forcing them to flee home and country.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.25 points)

Conducting religious activities outside a church is very risky as they can attract unnecessary attention. A country researcher states: "Especially in areas with a Muslim majority and that are controlled by rebel groups, churches tend to keep a lower profile. Even in areas where there is no direct crisis, sometimes churches are hindered, for instance in regions where there are many Muslims or animists."

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.00 points)

Although there is no official surveillance from government security officers, civilians are being watched by various rebel groups to discover their possible sympathy for or links to other groups. Many attacks have been reported, with church services being interrupted and churches burned.

Block 5.3: 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. (3.00 points)

The situation in the country is volatile and where churches have been severely damaged and need to be rebuilt or renovated, the Christian communities face difficulties, particularly where Muslim rebels are in 'authority'.

Block 5.4: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities inside their place of worship. (3.00 points)

Freedom of religion, movement, or expression and even the right to life is frequently being fundamentally challenged in CAR. When it comes to the hindering of church events inside church compounds, a country researcher stated: "Indirectly it happens in rebel-controlled areas because of the fear and insecurity of what may happen if the activity happens to be disrupted. There, prayer nights are forbidden, in places like Ndele; they say it makes noise. During the heat of the crisis, the Seleka occupied even churches and thus, activities could not take place there."

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The 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. The symbol "x" denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security considerations.

Central African Republic: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	35	924
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	56	47
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	152
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	100	100
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100	1000
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	100	10
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000	1000
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	412	100
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	100
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000	10
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	100	0

5 Year trends

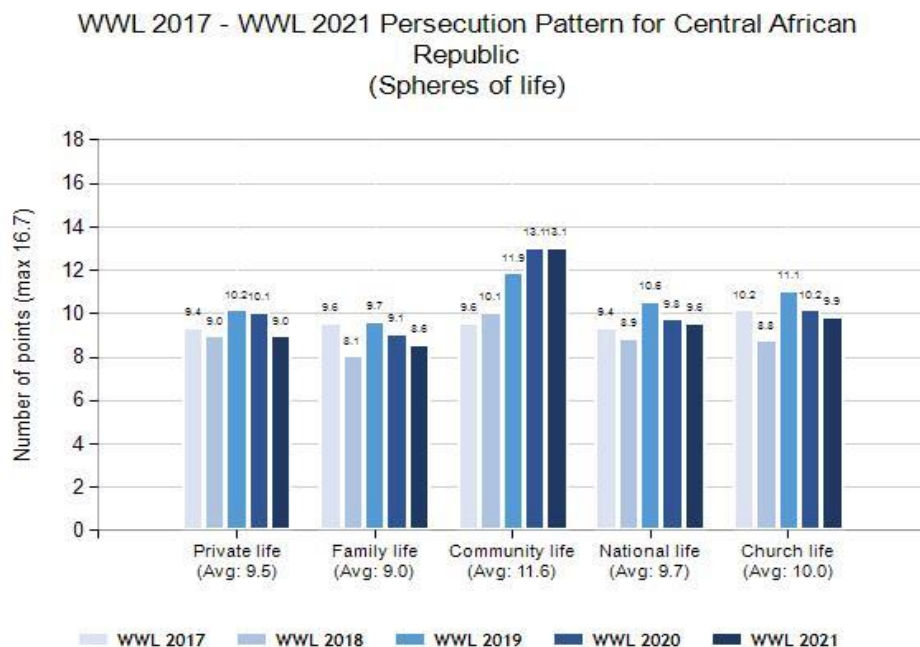
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

CAR: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	10.0
2020	10.5
2019	10.7
2018	9.0
2017	9.6

In the table above it can be seen that the average pressure on Christians has oscillated between 9.6 and 10.7 points. The numbers show that after reaching its highest level during WWL 2019 (10.7 points) and WWL 2020 (10.5 points), the overall pressure on Christians would seem to be on the decrease again.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above clearly shows that the pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has most often been high or very high. Since WWL 2019 pressure in all *spheres of life* - except *Community life* - has been steadily falling. The average pressure has been most high in the *Community sphere of life*; in WWL 2020 and WWL 2021 the scores plateaued at 13.1 points.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Over the five year period, the level of violence against Christians has been stable at an extreme level, as the average score shows - 14.6 points, with the last four WWL reporting periods each reaching 15.6 - 16.1 points. The lower score registered in WWL 2017 reflected the initial lull in violence following President Faustin-Archange Touadéra's election in 2016.

Gender-specific religious persecution Female

Female Pressure Points

Abduction

Denied access to Christian religious materials

Denied access to social community/networks

Discrimination/harassment via education

Economic harassment via fines

Enforced religious dress code

Forced marriage

Forced out of home – expulsion

Targeted Seduction
Trafficking
Violence – psychological
Violence – sexual
Violence – Verbal
Violence – Verbal

The many years of violence and instability in CAR has left Christian women and girls particularly vulnerable to rape, displacement, abduction and forced marriage as forms of religious persecution. “Rape in the Central African Republic is a weapon of war” explains a country expert. It is “used by armed groups to terrorize, influence, intimidate and traumatize their enemies.” Some girls who are abducted are subjected to sexual slavery; sexual abuse is a source of shame for women and girls, and they can struggle to move on from the trauma, particularly if they become pregnant.

Within the context of high poverty rates, parents are sometimes enticed into giving their Christian girls in marriage in exchange for significant gifts. In other cases, Christian girls who thought they would be free to practice their faith once married to a Muslim discover that they are instead forced to convert. Students, especially female students, face the risk of abduction and sexual violence while on the way to and from school. This has discouraged parents living in high-risk areas from sending their daughters to school. Girls who are abused and become pregnant are likely to drop out of school.

In CAR, women are generally more dependent on their families than men, so family-driven persecution affects them more. Because CAR is one of the poorest countries in Africa, ranking near the bottom of almost every indicator, financial need can drive Christian women with many children to agree to convert to Islam in order to survive. Converts to Christianity face further pressures from family members. They can be put under house arrest to prevent them from meeting with other Christians or forcibly married to a much older Muslim. There are reports that sometimes a Christian mother is only allowed to attend Christian gatherings on condition that her children are sent to the mosque.

Christian women also face pressure to follow an Islamic dress code. Some women have been harassed and fined for not covering their heads according to the dress code.

Gender-specific religious persecution Male

Male Pressure Points
Abduction
Denied inheritance or possessions
Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Imprisonment by government
Military/militia conscription/service against conscience
Violence – death
Violence – physical
Violence – psychological

When Christian families are targeted by radical militias, Christian women in CAR are usually sexually assaulted and left alive, while men are killed for their faith or detained by the militia. A country expert explained: “The jihadists kill Christian men because they think they are reducing ‘potential enemy’.” Pastors are especially targeted and sometimes false accusations revolving around resources are used as a pretext. Pastors have even been attacked during church services.

Christian men also experience discrimination in the workplace. The Islamic leaders occupy all the market places, control trade and impose large taxes on Christian businessmen or even loot the shops of Christians to keep them in poverty. Boys and men are at times forcibly recruited into rebel militant groups and they are also targeted for torture and assault. Within national military service, too, they can experience discrimination on the grounds of their faith. Abduction, killing, threats and the tactical impoverishment of men is greatly affecting Christian families.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the [US State Department’s IRF 2019 report](#) (pages 28-32):

Muslim civilians in southern parts of the country (where they are a minority) have at times been targeted and attacked by the predominantly animist anti-Balaka groups. These militias have committed atrocities that shocked the international community. [The International Criminal Court](#) currently has two war criminals on trial, both of them leaders of anti-Balaka forces.

In the context of the ongoing conflict, religious minorities are not the main targets. However, adherents of small religious minorities do face challenges in the communities where they live.

Future outlook

The outlook below may be fundamentally changed by the result of the December 2020 elections. As it currently stands, here is the outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

There are reports indicating that there are also foreign Islamic fighters in the country supporting the ex-Seleka groups. As long as ex-Seleka militia are armed and operating in the country, violent oppression will continue and the chances of peace in CAR are very unlikely. As far as the ordinary Muslim population in the country is concerned (i.e. excluding the jihadist groups), the level of *Islamic oppression* is only a problem where family and community put pressure on converts. The influence of this engine might be impacted by the election scheduled for late December 2020.

Organized corruption and crime

The levels of corruption and crime in the country go hand in hand with the breakdown in law and order. Thus, through the lens of this Persecution engine, the future depends on how the country can enforce its laws and how it can prosecute criminal networks and co-opted government officials. It is important to note that criminal networks are working hand in hand with various militant groups. The measures imposed to restrict COVID-19 infection have served to benefit organized criminal networks in the country. The influence of this engine might be impacted by the election scheduled for late December 2020.

Ethno-religious hostility

Again, the future development of this Persecution engine depends upon how the country emerges from the current crisis. If the country manages to bring concrete peace through truth and reconciliation and justice initiatives, then the influence of this Persecution engine will decrease. It is also important to mention that there is - to a certain extent - a link between religion and ethnicity in the country; thus how *Islamic oppression* develops will also shape the future of this engine.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis

The impact of COVID-19 is likely to lead to food shortages in the country. That could, in turn, fuel further conflict which might then be fought along religious lines.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution of other religious minorities: US State Department's IRF 2019 report - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: The International Criminal Court - <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-warcrimes-centralafrica-soccer/central-african-militia-suspects-one-a-soccer-boss-hear-war-crimes-charges-idUKKBN1W40UZ>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Central African Republic>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Central African Republic>