

FINAL WWL 2019 COUNTRY DOSSIER

MALI

LEVEL 3/EMBARGO

(Reporting period: 1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018)

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Copyright Notice	3
Introduction.....	3
WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Mali.....	4
Link for general background information	4
Recent country history	4
The religious landscape	4
The political landscape.....	4
The socio-economic landscape	5
Concluding remarks.....	5
WWL 2019: Church History and Facts.....	6
How many Christians?.....	6
How did Christians get there?.....	6
What church networks exist today?	6
Religious context	7
Notes on the current situation.....	7
External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts	7
WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile	8
Introduction.....	8
What type of persecution dominates?	8
Who is driving persecution?.....	8
What it results in	8
Violence.....	8
Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period	9
External Links - WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile.....	9
WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics	10
Introduction.....	10

Position on World Watch List (WWL)..... 10

Persecution engines 10

Drivers of persecution 11

Context 12

Christian communities and how they are affected..... 12

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence 13

5 Year trends 14

Gender specific persecution..... 16

Persecution of other religious minorities 16

Future outlook..... 16

External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics 17

Additional Reports and Articles 18

 WWR in-depth reports 18

 Open Doors article(s) from the region 18

 World Watch Monitor news articles 18

 Recent country developments 18

Introduction

Copyright Notice

Introduction

World Watch List Mali	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2019	68	24
WWL 2018	59	37
WWL 2017	59	32
WWL 2016	55	44
WWL 2015	52	40

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country was among the fifty highest scoring countries (Top 50) in the WWL 2015-2019 reporting periods.

Please note: 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”.

WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Mali

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881370>

Recent country history

Before modern-day Mali came into existence, there were several kingdoms and empires that flourished in the territory that forms part of Mali today. After the short-lived Wassoulou Empire, France established a colony called French Sudan in 1892. French colonial administration came to an end in 1960 and Mali became independent. After experimenting with one party rule and military rule for decades, Mali adopted a new constitution in 1992 and made a successful transition to democratic rule. Before the coup that overthrew the democratically elected Malian government in March 2012, the country was considered exemplary among African countries for protecting civil liberties and political rights. The media, in particular, was vibrant and open and not subject to governmental pressure or restrictions. For instance, during the presidential election of 2007, the results were considered valid and there was little or no electoral violence. 70 parties ran in the election and the right to vote was extended to all citizens of Mali.

However, in 2012 Tuareg rebels (who had been active in northern Mali for a number of years) formed an alliance with radical Islamic groups, including some foreign fighters mainly coming from Algeria. They overran government forces and took control of several cities and a sizable portion northern Mali. Consequently, a military coup ousted the civilian administration, but civilian administration was restored after the presidential election in 2013 was won by Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, a veteran politician and a former prime minister. The Malian government was able to push back the advance of the rebels and reclaim most of the occupied territory with the help of French troops. Despite the persistence of occasional clashes between rebels and government forces, as of 2013 a peace agreement has been concluded between the rebels and the government and the UN has established and sent a 12,000 strong peacekeeping force called the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. However, the central government has still not managed to regain control and assert its authority over a significant portion of Malian territory. In addition to this political problem, the country faces several economic challenges related to the high poverty level. Most people live in the remote parts of the country which face various environmental problems like rapid desertification and lack of access to water. In July/August 2018, the country conducted a successful presidential election in which President Keïta managed to win a second term. This can be seen as a positive development in the country.

The religious landscape

Mali is a predominantly a Muslim country and most Malians are adherents of Malikiite Sunni Islam which is a version of Islam influenced by Sufism. This brand of Islam is moderate and tolerant of other faiths. In northern Mali, especially among the ethnic Tuareg, the influence of more radical versions of Islam has grown over the past few years. There is also a significant presence of Ethno-religionists or Animists in Mali. As with many of the Muslim population in Mali, Malian Christians often combine their faith with indigenous animist beliefs.

The political landscape

Belying Mali's positive record on civil liberties and political rights, prior to 2012 there were large inconsistencies on how these rights were applied in the northern two-thirds of the country, a reality which was often overlooked by foreign observers. Political power in Mali was concentrated in the

southern one-third of the country, dominated by Muslim sub-Saharan African tribes such as the Songhai and Zarma, while the more conservative Muslim northern tribes, such as the Tuareg and the Arabs, were often left out of power. While discrimination against the Tuareg and Arabs was not official policy, in practice they received a smaller proportion of government revenue and services, which had led the Tuareg into intermittent open rebellion over several decades. The insecurity and instability that has resulted from the civil war and continued terrorist attacks by Islamic militants are major challenges in the current political landscape. Unless the peace deal among the rebels and the government is fully implemented and the grievances of the Tuareg are addressed, an improvement in the political situation in Mali is unlikely, which will mean continued insecurity and anxiety for Christians in the country. The highly contested elections in the summer of 2018 concluded with the re-election of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita for a second term as president. Given that his election required a second round of voting and that his main challenger alleged that the election had been rigged, Keita's mandate and legitimacy does not seem to be very robust. This in turn might hamper his ability to tackle effectively the political and security challenges his government faces.

The socio-economic landscape

Mali is one of the least developed countries in the world and finds itself ranked 175 out of 188 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index. (The Human Development Index - HDI - is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income per capita indicators. A country scores higher HDI when the life expectancy at birth is longer, the education period is longer, and the income per capita is higher. It is used to distinguish whether the country is a developed, a developing or an underdeveloped country.) The average life expectancy of Malians is 58.5, the adult literacy rate is 38.7 and the annual Gross National Income per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity is 2,218 USD. Most of the Malian territory is arid or semi-arid making a significant portion of the country ill-suited for farming. However, Mali, like its neighbors, has an economy based on subsistence agriculture, including rice, sorghum, and livestock. Mali is also rich in gold and other minerals, which are exploited by South African and European companies. And yet the main economic development model relies on foreign aid, including the World Bank and other international donors, and bilateral donations from the European Union, European countries and the USA. In addition, France is a main commercial partner and other countries (e.g. China and Middle-Eastern states) trade with and invest in Mali. Mali used to have strong ties with Russia and a number of its elite trained in Russia (including Dioncounda Traoré who served as president from April 2012 to September 2013 after the military coup). However, Russia no longer has a strong economic presence. French government involvement in the country's political affairs has been a major problem for the country. Although the country claimed its independence half a century ago, France continues to influence its political decisions. France was, for instance, the first country to send troops in order to contain the Tuareg uprising.

Concluding remarks

Due to its better democratic and civil liberties record compared to other Muslim majority countries in the region - as well as the influence of Sufiism - Mali was a relatively tolerant country for Christians. However, the civil war and the opportunity that it gave Islamic militant groups changed this situation and since then there has been a serious risk and challenge to Christians. Militant Islamic groups - such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) - are still active, especially in the northern region, and target UN peacekeepers. The UN Security Council has increased the number of peacekeeping troops in the country and has also expanded their mandate to allow a more robust military action against militant groups. The situation in Mali is still fragile and it will take a number of years before there is peace and stability in the country. With the proliferation of jihadist groups like Islamic State in the

Greater Sahara, the vast territory of Mali that is not under effective government control is becoming a sanctuary for Islamic militants who are a threat to the security of the entire region.

WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

Pop 2018	Christians	Chr%
19,108,000	425,000	2.2

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

How did Christians get there?

The present area called Mali was dominated by various Muslim empires and kingdoms before the French colonization. Especially the northern part of the country was predominantly Muslim and there were some followers of traditional African religion in parts of the southern areas. It was the White Fathers, a Roman Catholic missionary order, who brought Christianity to Mali in 1895. However, the growth of Christianity in Mali was very slow. Most of today's Christians are descendants of former Muslims and Animists who converted to Christianity during the colonial period. It was only in 1936 that the first African Roman Catholic priest was ordained, and it was only in 1962 that the first Malian bishop was consecrated. Protestants came to the country in 1919 via the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) from the United States. That was followed by the arrival of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1923.

What church networks exist today?

Church networks: Mali	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	318,000	74.8
Protestant	107,000	25.2
Independent	15,900	3.7
Unaffiliated	1,700	0.4
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-17,200	-4.0
Total	425,400	100.1
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	120,000	28.2
Renewalist movement	35,500	8.4

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.

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

Religious context

Religious Context: Mali	Numbers	%
Christians	425,000	2.2
Muslim	16,951,000	88.7
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	1,704,000	8.9
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	1,600	0.0
Atheist	1,100	0.0
Agnostic	23,600	0.1
Other	1,100	0.0

OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

Mali is a predominantly Muslim country - an estimated 88.7% of the population, according to WCD data. There is also a notable presence of indigenous animist beliefs. Most Muslims in Mali are Sunni and are strongly influenced by Sufism which is a more tolerant form of Islam. Radical Islamic groups from the Arab and Tuareg tribes in northern Mali have little respect for Sufi-influenced religious practices, as evidenced by the destruction of 13th century Sufi shrines in Timbuktu when radical Islamic groups controlled the city in 2012.

Malian Muslims have a reputation for being moderate and tolerant of other religious beliefs. There was also a high tolerance level towards converts to Christianity during the colonial period. This tolerance, however, faded as time went by and it is now highly dangerous to be known as a Christian of Muslim origin. As with many Muslims in Mali, Malian Christians (the majority being Roman Catholic) tend to combine their faith with indigenous animist beliefs. Even though most Malian Christians live in the south of the country, they have come under increasing pressure as a result of the threat from radical Islamic activities in the north.

Notes on the current situation

The main challenge that Christians currently face in Mali is the presence of radical Islamic groups in the region and country, which creates fear and insecurity among Christians. In November 2015 Islamic militants stormed a luxury hotel in Bamako and killed more than 20 people, most of whom were Western tourists. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by al-Mourabitoun, an Islamist group formed in 2013. A more recent [attack](#) was in June 2017 conducted by suspected Islamists against a resort frequented by foreigners and government officials on the outskirts of the capital, Bamako. Despite a 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed between the rebels and the government of Mali, armed clashes between government troops and rebels have also continued.

External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

- Notes on the current situation: attack
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/18/tourist-resort-mali-attack-say-security-services/>

WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

With a score of 68 points, Mali ranks 24th in WWL 2019.

What type of persecution dominates?

Islamic oppression: In April 2012, Wahhabi militants established an Islamic state system with a strict Sharia regime in the north. Although most Christians fled, churches in southern Mali have also been negatively affected by the increasing visibility of various Wahhabi groups.

Who is driving persecution?

Although Malians have traditionally practiced a relatively tolerant version of Islam, over the past few years a more militant and intolerant version of Islam has become influential especially in the northern part of the country and has resulted in an intense persecution of Christians. Militant Islamic groups in the northern part of the country, aided by foreign fighters linked to al-Qaeda, took over a significant portion of the northern part of the country in 2012 and although these groups have been pushed out of most of the territory they occupied in the north, their influence is still felt. In addition to the radicalization of the Muslim population such groups have caused, the ongoing insurgency of these groups still poses a threat to Christians in the country.

What it results in

When radical Islamic groups took control of the northern part of the country in 2012, churches were burned down and Christians had to flee. The displacement of Christians that occurred then still affects Christians who lost their homes and whose churches were destroyed. Although some Christians and congregations have returned to the north under police protection, they still live under the threat of attack by Islamic militants. Evangelistic activities in the north are especially risky and could lead to being attacked by radical Muslims. Christian missionaries operating in Mali also live under the constant threat of abduction and some have indeed been kidnapped by jihadists. Christians with a Muslim background risk violence (especially in the north) and pressure from their relatives and family members if their conversion to Christianity is discovered.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures.

Mali	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	14	26	10	13	750
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	1	144	0	13	20

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.

Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period

- Christians face abduction. An American missionary kidnapped in October 2016 was still held in captivity by Islamic militants in the WWL 2019 reporting [period](#). A Colombian [nun](#) was kidnapped from a health center in Karangasso in February 2017 and has still not been released.
- Christians in Mali live under constant threat posed by Islamic militants who also attack UN/French peacekeepers. For instance, a Malian Christian living in central Mali was still in hiding following death-threats from a radical Islamic group [in April 2017](#).
- According to the Secretary General of the Bishops' Conference of Mali, at least three churches in the diocese of Mopti (in the northern part of the central region) were attacked by Islamic militants in the WWL 2019 reporting period. The militants prevented Christians from assembling for worship and destroyed furniture, pictures, crosses and statues. In the village of Dobara these were then burned in the churchyard. In the village of Bodwal, Christians were expelled from the church by armed men who threatened them, saying they would kill them if they prayed again in church.

External Links - WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: period
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/mali-christians-can-simply-slaughtered/>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: nun
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/01/kidnapped-colombian-nun-appears-another-hostage-video/>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: in April 2017
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/mali-christians-can-simply-slaughtered/>

WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 68 points, Mali ranked 24th in WWL 2019. In WWL 2018, Mali scored 59 points. The rise in the score is primarily due to the rise in violent incidents against Christians, most of them unreported by mainstream media, and the rise in pressure on Christians, even in the capital, Bamako.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Mali	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethnic antagonism	EA	Medium
Denominational protectionism	DPR	Not at all
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	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 (long version).

Islamic oppression (Very strong):

Mali, as is typical in other West African states, has always been dominated by Islam (in a mostly moderate form) and a constitutionally secular political system which prohibits religious political parties. Apart from the northern part of the country which had always been problematic for Christians, Christians used to enjoy a fair amount of freedom in Malian society, which also allowed the presence of foreign Christian missionaries. The situation changed when the creation of the independent state of Azawad in northern Mali was proclaimed in April 2012. The Islamists, most of whom can be identified as Wahhabis, soon established an Islamic state system with a strict Sharia regime in the north. Most Christians fled before the Islamists took over. In the meantime, they destroyed churches and other Christian buildings. The Church in southern Mali has also been negatively affected by the increasing visibility of various Wahhabi groups. Although the rebels and the government have reached a peace agreement and international peacekeepers are in place, Islamic radicalization in Malian society is likely to continue, putting pressure on (and physically harming) the lives of Christians and their churches.

Organized corruption and crime (Strong):

The country is situated in the Sahel region of West Africa where there are a vast desert and arid areas which are difficult to control. Criminal gangs use this as an opportunity to expand their activities for transporting illegal substances to Western Europe. Most criminal organizations have allied themselves with radical Islamic groups and persecute Christians. The former Tuareg rebel forces have become a criminal gang themselves.

Ethnic antagonism (Medium):

Although most of the Malian population are Muslims, they still intermix their Islamic beliefs with several forms of witchcraft and sorcery. The current Wahhabi movement is trying to 'purify' Islam from such traditional practices. Many Malian Christians also combine these tribal practices with Christian beliefs. Most tribal or ethnic leaders in the remote parts of the country are hostile towards Muslims or Christians who oppose such practices and there have been clashes between tribal leaders and Christians in some instances.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Mali	IO	RN	EA	DPR	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	MEDIUM	-	-	-	-	STRONG
Government officials	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	-
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	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 (long version).

Drivers of Islamic oppression

The main drivers of *Islamic oppression* in Mali are militant Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) who are active mainly in the northern part of the country but also conduct attacks and kidnappings in southern regions. Segments of the population influenced by the radical and intolerant teaching of Wahhabism are also drivers of persecution especially and especially target Christians with a Muslim background. Therefore, generally speaking, radical Islamic movements and teachers are the major drivers of persecution in Mali, and due to their alliance with such movements, the rebels based in the north can be considered drivers of persecution too.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

There are several criminal organizations operating in Mali. The country's geographical nature with its vast desert and arid areas had helped the expansion of these organizations. These criminal organizations are involved with radical Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and

persecute Christians. Corrupt government officials who turn a blind eye to incidents targeting Christians are also a factor behind the persecution of Christians.

Drivers of Ethnic antagonism

Most ethnic tribal leaders (such as Tuareg tribal leaders) are involved in the persecution of Christians. Traditional animist tribal leaders in the south are also hostile toward Christianity and attempt to prevent the advancement of Christianity. They especially target Christian groups which try to remove elements of African traditional beliefs from Christian expressions of faith.

Context

Mali is one of the least developed countries in the world but is also rich in gold and other minerals. However the country relies heavily on foreign aid, including the World Bank and other international donors. France is the main commercial partner.

Since the Islamist take-over in northern Mali in April 2012 and the subsequent French-led effort to restore Malian authority to the entire country in early 2013, the situation of civil liberties and political rights is yet to return to pre-2012 levels in both the north and south of the country. The Tuareg rebels and Malian authorities signed a deal on 18 June 2013, paving the way for the redeployment of administration and Malian army forces to the northern city of Kidal, which was controlled by fighters of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). However, this was not a comprehensive peace agreement that put an end to the rebellion. As of May 2013, all regions of northern Mali returned to government control, except for the most north-eastern region of Kidal.

The conflict between the government and opposition militant actors in Mali is nothing new. The main opposition group which has posed the greatest threat to the government is the MNLA. The MNLA has been the representative of Tuareg independence militias since 2011, but its legacy dates back to 1916. Since 1916, there have been at least five Tuareg rebellions in northern Mali under both French rule and post-independence Mali since 1960. All of the rebellions have been part of the effort to establish a state in northern Mali, separate from national leadership, a state called Azawad. In June 2015, the Tuareg rebels belonging to the Azawad Movements Coalition entered in to a peace agreement with the government; however, the security situation in Mali is still fragile and Islamic militant groups continue to stage attacks.

Christian communities and how they are affected

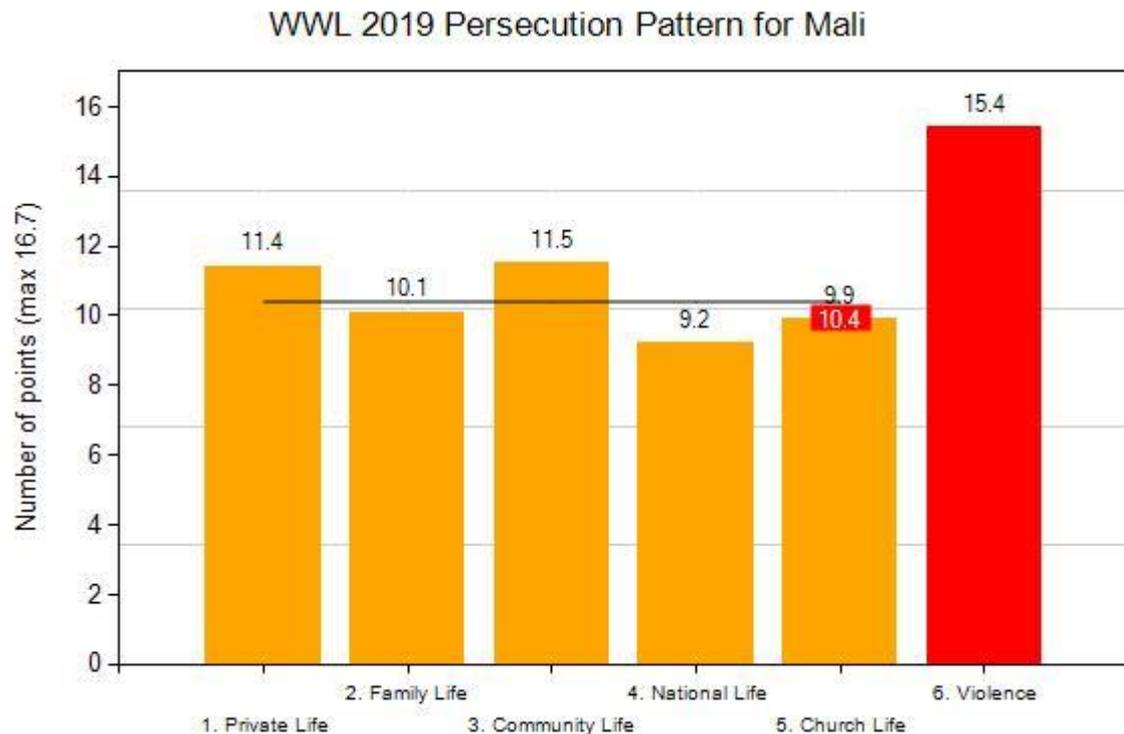
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation in Mali and so this category is therefore not included in WWL scoring and analysis.

Historical Christian communities: These include Roman Catholic churches and a significant number of various Protestant denominations. Of the less than 5% of Malians who are Christian, the majority belong to historical Christian communities. Those living in the southern part of the country enjoy freedom of religion in relative terms as compared with their counterparts in the north. Nevertheless, although the degree and intensity of the threat of attacks by Islamic militants is greater in the north than in the south, those in the south also have to face threats of attack and kidnapping.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background are mainly to be found among the Bozo and the Dogon, but there are also converts living elsewhere in the country. In addition to the threat from Islamic militants that most Malian Christians face, converts to Christianity particularly face varying degrees of pressure to renounce Christianity from their family members, relatives and neighbors.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Mali has a small number of charismatic and Pentecostal churches mainly found in the southern part of the country. Due to their style of worship and their likelihood to be more engaged in evangelism such communities are likely to draw the ire and hostility of society at large.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence



The WWL 2019 persecution pattern for Mali shows:

- All *spheres of life* show high or very high levels of pressure, all scoring above 9 points. The average pressure on Christians in Mali is high at 10.4, an increase from 9.9 in WWL 2018.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Community sphere* (11.5) and *Private sphere* (11.4).
- The level of violence against Christians is extreme, rising from 9.6 in WWL 2018 to 15.4 in WWL 2019.

Private sphere:

Converts with a Muslim background experience most difficulties in this *sphere of life* compared to other Christians. They cannot express their Christian beliefs openly or practice their faith in private since, due to the customary living arrangements, any deviance from Islamic rites is easily detected and will lead to persecution. Non-convert Christians living in the northern parts of the country face several forms of hindrances in their daily lives and have become increasingly in danger of attack even when they worship privately.

Family sphere:

Particularly in the northern region, the extended family of any Christian with a Muslim background is likely to exert pressure on a convert to make him/her renounce Christianity. For reasons of family

honor, having a convert within the family could make the whole family vulnerable to ostracism by the community.

Community sphere:

Christians in the north have felt less safe than in the past to openly participate in community affairs due to the influence of Islamist groups. Although the Islamic militants have been pushed back, they have not been eradicated and fears of possible new insurgencies remain. Local Muslims have often been affected by radical influences and do not want Christians to return to their homes; Christian property has often been taken over and occupied by others.

National sphere:

Christians in the north have felt threatened by the lingering influence of Islamist groups and are afraid of openly displaying Christian symbols. Government officials in the north sometimes sympathize with radical Islam and do not take measures against instigators of violence targeting Christians. Converts from Islam are the most severely affected Christian groups of all; the Muslim authorities treat them unfairly although it is not officially illegal for Muslims to convert to another religion.

Church sphere:

Church life is more stable in the southern part of the country where the Muslim community is more tolerant towards Christians. However, the recent phenomena of Wahhabi teachings reaching Muslim groups in the south is causing a move away from tolerance. Church life is more dangerous in the northern part of the country where various radical Islamic groups control day-to-day activities in society. Most Christians living in the northern part of the country do not worship in public.

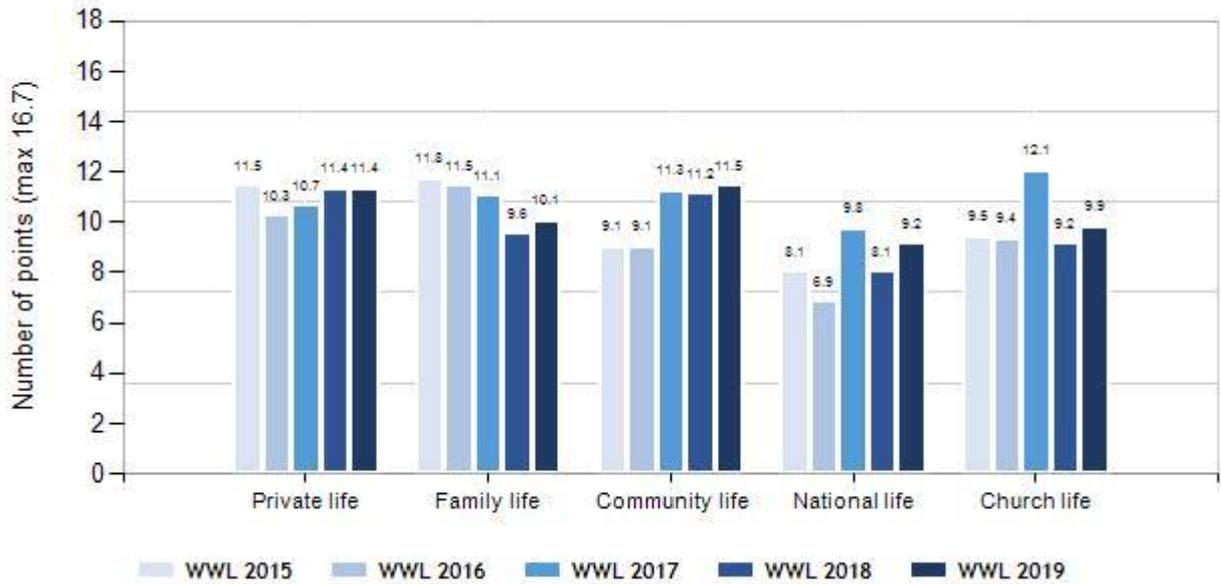
Violence:

The level of violence against Christians increased significantly in the WWL 2019 reporting period: The killing of Christians, attacks on churches, kidnapping for ransom, abduction and rape are examples of violent incidents recorded. For a summary of the statistics on violence and examples, please see the Short and Simple Persecution Profile section above.

5 Year trends

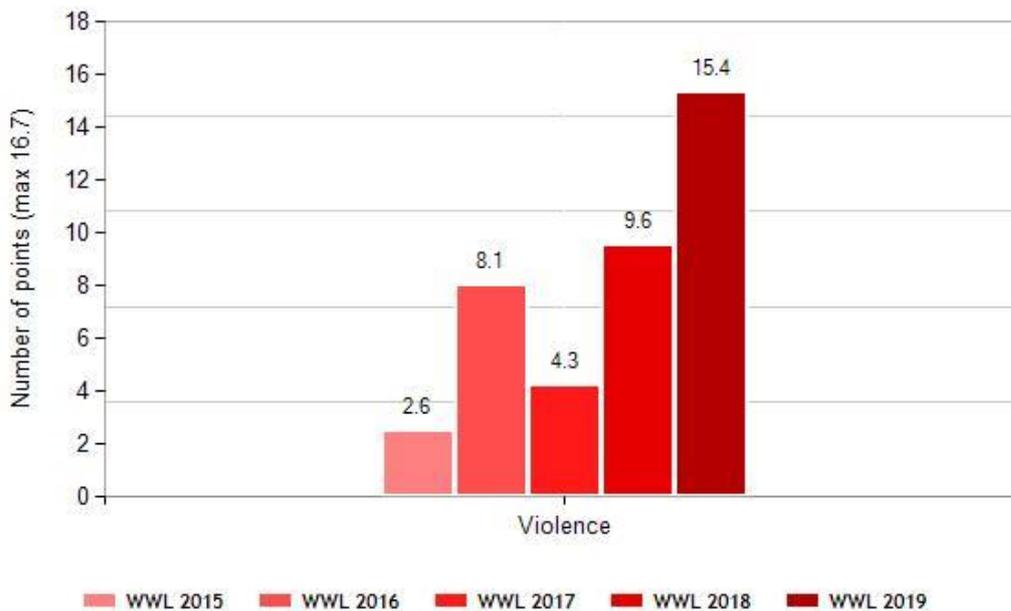
The three charts below show the pressure and violence experienced by Christians over the last five reporting periods. **Chart 1:** Except for the *National sphere of life*, all *spheres of life* show constant scores at a high or very high level. Only the scores in *Family life* show a more or less steady reduction in pressure. The very high scores for *Private* and *Community life* in the last few reporting periods suggest a levelling off around the 11.0-11.5 mark. **Chart 2:** Although there have been variations, in at least three reporting periods the level of average pressure has been at around the 10.0 point mark. **Chart 3:** With the exception of WWL 2017, the graphic shows that violence has made steady increases each year, rising from 2.6 in WWL 2015 to the extreme level of 15.4 in WWL 2019.

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Mali (Spheres of life)



WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Mali	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2019	10.4
2018	9.9
2017	11.0
2016	9.4
2015	10.0

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Mali (Violence)



Gender specific persecution

Female:

Many Christian women and girls are subjected to sexual abuse, forced marriage, under-age marriage, and are denied access to modern education. This is particularly common in northern Mali. Although there are national laws that protect women and girls in general, traditional and cultural practices and norms make women more vulnerable for such treatment including early marriage, forced marriage polygamy and female genital mutilation. As a result of such practices, some Christians are traumatized, lose confidence in the authorities and their faith can sometimes also be affected.

Male:

Young men are subjected to abduction, forced conversion and conscription in militia in the northern parts of the country. This has a devastating effect on their families and fellow Christians who are traumatized by such persecution.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Apart from Christians, those adhering to indigenous traditional belief systems are also religious minorities in Mali. Although historically such beliefs have co-existed with Islam, with the rise of more militant and intolerant versions of Islam in Mali, Animists have also been [targeted](#) for violent attacks in the northern part of the country.

Future outlook

The political outlook: The main trend facing Mali is the growing influence of militant Islam and Wahhabism. It will take a long time to build up a Christian presence again in the north of Mali. Islamic militants continue to be active in Mali, notwithstanding the peace-deal that was signed in 2015, and will remain a threat in the years to come. The peace-deal is very fragile, and the government and UN peacekeepers are still unable to establish the authority of the government in some parts of the country. Despite all the challenges that the country has faced in the past five years, it managed to hold a relatively peaceful and successful presidential election in 2018.

The outlook for Christians: Christians in Mali have suffered from the chaos and instability in the country. Islamic militants have worked hard to destroy evidence of any Christian presence in the northern part of the country. The restoration of law and order and of government authority in the northern part of the country are a prerequisite for the improvement of the situation for Christians. The country is not safe for Christians, even in [the capital city- Bamako](#). In the short term, Mali remains a very dangerous place for Christians.

Conclusion: As Mali is located in one of the hotbed regions for jihadists, the situation in country cannot be seen in isolation; it is part of the overall rise of Islamic militancy and Wahhabism in the entire region. Therefore, the trajectory of the political and security situation in the whole region is crucial for the future of Mali. Furthermore, even if the government of Mali and other regional states manage to crush the armed Islamic militancy of groups like AQIM, the radicalization of the youth and society at large by this group is a more intractable problem and is creating a hostile environment for Christians for years to come. Even though the country has managed to conduct a successful presidential election in July/August 2018, there is still a long way to go to ever return to the Mali that was once considered 'the model for African democracy'.

External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution of other religious minorities: targeted
<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
- Future outlook: the capital city- Bamako
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/mali-the-epicentre-of-jihadist-groups-in-the-sahel/>

Additional Reports and Articles

WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

Open Doors article(s) from the region

A selection of articles is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/> (password freedom).

World Watch Monitor news articles

Use the country search function at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

Recent country developments

Use the country search function at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/> (password: freedom).