

FINAL WWL 2019 COUNTRY DOSSIER

PAKISTAN

LEVEL 3/EMBARGO

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

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Introduction

Copyright Notice

Introduction

| World Watch List Pakistan | Points | WWL Rank |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2019 | 87 | 5 |
| WWL 2018 | 86 | 5 |
| WWL 2017 | 88 | 4 |
| WWL 2016 | 87 | 6 |
| WWL 2015 | 79 | 8 |

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 Pakistan

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12965779>

Recent country history

Pakistan became an independent nation separate from India at the end of British colonial rule in 1947. In 1971 East Pakistan became the independent nation Bangladesh. The territory of Kashmir remains disputed to this day. Pakistan has suffered from an unstable government system with three prolonged phases of military rule, with the last phase ending in 2008. In 2013 Nawaz Sharif became prime minister for the third time after his Muslim League party won parliamentary elections.

The attacks in December 2014 on an army school in Peshawar, leaving 141 dead, led to a hasty amendment of the constitution, re-introducing the death penalty and setting up special military courts for terrorism-linked cases, fulfilling the army's long-standing demands. The army has been accused of being behind the downfall and sentencing of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif due to corruption back in the 90s as well as of meddling in the country's most recent elections on 25 July 2018. These saw former cricket star Imran Khan as winner, although he is struggling to keep Pakistan on track as far as economic development is concerned. That in the short time until November 2018, he gave in twice to pressure from Islamic extremist groups and parties is neither a good sign for the country's development nor for the religious minorities.

The religious landscape

While Muslims make up more than 96% of the total population, by far the majority of them follow the Sunni tradition; Shiites make up less than 10% and the Ahmadi around 0.2%. The latter are targets of persecution by a plethora of radical Islamic groups, just as the Christian and the Hindu minorities are. Attacks against these minorities occur with a sickening frequency. Christian pastors can even get [arrested](#) when they do not heed to authorities wishes. This sends a message of warning to the Christian minority and intimidates them further. They are considered second-class citizens, if at all, and are discriminated against in every aspect of life.

A new census was conducted in 2017, the first since 19 years. It includes religious affiliation, but the detailed results have not been published yet. The question of religion is a highly sensitive one and it is very political. One decision connected to the census will be if and how far political representation of religious minorities will be increased at the national and state level, most recent elections in July 2018 were still conducted according to the old system with poor representation. Radical Islamic groups will oppose every change of the status quo, just as they have already violently opposed all efforts to open discussions about reviewing the country's notorious blasphemy laws. Since the introduction of the blasphemy laws in 1986, Christians have come under increasing pressure and are victims of roughly a quarter of all blasphemy accusations.

The political landscape

Pakistan has always been a very volatile country. Although the army has declared war against Islamic radicals it continues to follow a policy of trying to distinguish between "good" and "bad" jihadists. While it fights the latter, it courts the former (eg. *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, now *Jamaat-ud-Dawah*, and the *Haqqani* network) and uses them as a proxy to reach its goals in neighboring countries such as Afghanistan and India. (Another way of influencing neighboring countries – in this case Afghanistan -

is to send back hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees, who have lived in Pakistan for more than two decades, knowingly causing social and all kinds of other challenges for an already struggling country.) Given that several of the radical groups named above fielded candidates in the recent elections and that this led observers to claim that mainstream politics radicalized, it seems fair to say that the army is interested in extending its policy of distinguishing good and bad jihadists into national politics as well. The army does [act against](#) insurgent groups affiliated with the Islamic State group (IS) which observers say has a [growing presence](#) in Pakistan, as illustrated by a suicide attack on election-day in July 2018. Christians try to stay out of the way of politics and the army alike.

The socio-economic landscape

Economically, the country increasingly relies on China and its willingness to invest in Pakistan in its “New Silk Road” framework (“One Belt, One Road”) and incoming Prime Minister Imran Khan has already announced that he may strengthen the country's relationship with China, although he returned from his first trip to Beijing reportedly rather empty-handed. The port city of Gwadar is one of the hubs the Chinese are using and it has been leased by the Pakistan government for 40 years in 2017, while China is investing 57 billion USD in the so called “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC). Doubts on this policy continue to be voiced since Pakistan may well end up [heavily in debt](#) and made dependent on China by this initiative. Additionally, the [killing of two Chinese Christians](#) in Pakistan in May 2017 close to the construction site of CPEC illustrates how volatile and challenging the situation is.

Pakistan has a strong population growth, most recently reflected by the nation's census, but especially the youth lack any economic perspective. Poverty is high, leaving millions no other choice other than to work for little money, not even enough for their daily needs. This is especially affecting ethnic and religious minorities. Child labor is rampant. The whole population suffers a great deal from these poor conditions, but minority groups (such as Christians) even more so. Many of them are day-laborers (for example in brick kilns) with treatment from employers often being arbitrary and violent. Women and children are especially vulnerable groups.

According to the [UNICEF Country Report](#) from 2016, more than nine million girls in Pakistan do not receive primary or secondary education. UNICEF estimated that 24 million children between 5 and 16 years of age did not attend school in 2015, more than in any other South Asian country. The state's low investment in education over recent decades has led to a growth in the number of Islamic madrassahs. 11,000 of these (out of a total of roughly 35,000) follow the strict teachings of Deobandi Islam. Exact student numbers are unknown. While some madrassahs may make pupils literate and teach them mathematics, many others simply offer Koran reading, Islamic Studies and nothing else. As these madrassahs are not registered and supervised, the authorities have no real idea what is going on in them.

Concluding remarks

In 2017, the government announced a new focus on combatting blasphemy occurring in [social media](#) blogs. Consequently there have been an increased number of arrests of people allegedly committing blasphemy (on Facebook etc.). This would seem to contradict government efforts to limit the devastating impact of blasphemy laws on religious minorities in particular. However, Imran Khan publically defended the blasphemy laws, showing where the country may be headed towards in the next years. All in all, there have been no improvements for Christians and other religious minorities in the WWL 2019 reporting period.

External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Pakistan

- The religious landscape: arrested
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/adding-insult-to-injury-pakistani-church-leaders-arrested-fined-for-not-putting-security-in-place/>
- The political landscape: act against
<http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/pakistan-islamic-state/27466581.html>
- The political landscape: growing presence
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=45065&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=25f16c3408310b0463d32443ddcd6ec3](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=45065&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=25f16c3408310b0463d32443ddcd6ec3)
- The socio-economic landscape: heavily in debt
[http://www.eurasiareview.com/18052017-one-belt-one-road-plan-chinese-dominance-authoritarianism-analysis/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+\(Eurasia+Review\)](http://www.eurasiareview.com/18052017-one-belt-one-road-plan-chinese-dominance-authoritarianism-analysis/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+(Eurasia+Review))
- The socio-economic landscape: killing of two Chinese Christians
[http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/06/china-blames-christian-victims-korean.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+ChinaAid+\(China+Aid\)](http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/06/china-blames-christian-victims-korean.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+ChinaAid+(China+Aid))
- The socio-economic landscape: UNICEF Country Report
https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Pakistan_2016_COAR.pdf
- Concluding remarks: social media
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/03/pakistan-government-facebook-twitter-remove-insults-islam/>

WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

| Pop 2018 | Christians | Chr% |
|-------------|------------|------|
| 200,814,000 | 3,981,000 | 2.0 |

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

How did Christians get there?

According to the Church historian Eusebius writing in the 4th century AD, the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew were assigned to Parthia (modern Iran) and India. By the time of the establishment of the Second Persian Empire (AD 226), there were bishops of the Church of the East in northwest India, Afghanistan and Baluchistan (including parts of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), with laymen and clergy alike engaging in [missionary activity](#).

Roman Catholic missionary work took off on the Indian continent with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century and became [established in Lahore](#) in 1570. In more modern times, Christianity became firmly established through Protestant missionary work in the late 18th and 19th centuries and has continued to grow ever since. However, due to the strongly increasing pressure in recent years, many Christians have fled abroad to countries like Sri Lanka or Thailand.

What church networks exist today?

| Church networks: Pakistan | Christians | % |
|--|------------------|--------------|
| Orthodox | 0 | 0.0 |
| Catholic | 1,055,000 | 26.5 |
| Protestant | 2,435,000 | 61.2 |
| Independent | 701,000 | 17.6 |
| Unaffiliated | 20,500 | 0.5 |
| Doubly-affiliated Christians | -231,000 | -5.8 |
| Total | 3,980,500 | 100.0 |
| <i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i> | | |
| Evangelical movement | 1,070,000 | 26.9 |
| Renewalist movement | 785,000 | 19.7 |

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)

The largest group of Christians belongs to the Church of Pakistan, an umbrella Protestant group consisting of four major Protestant denominations (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran)

and is a member of the Anglican Communion. Other Protestant churches are various brands of Presbyterianism as well as many smaller denominations.

Religious context

| Religious Context: Pakistan | Numbers | % |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------|
| Christians | 3,981,000 | 2.0 |
| Muslim | 193,541,000 | 96.4 |
| Hindu | 2,632,000 | 1.3 |
| Buddhist | 117,000 | 0.1 |
| Ethnoreligionist | 213,000 | 0.1 |
| Jewish | 1,000 | 0.0 |
| Bahai | 98,300 | 0.0 |
| Atheist | 9,500 | 0.0 |
| Agnostic | 163,000 | 0.1 |
| Other | 58,600 | 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)

In 1947, the year of the country's independence, the situation for the Christian minority became more complicated as Pakistan officially became a Muslim state. According to the 2018 estimates by the World Christian Database, more than 96% of the population is Muslim, the vast majority being Sunni Muslims. However, there is also a considerable Shiite minority of 10-15%, which suffer persecution as well. Hazaras and Ahmadis are present in larger numbers in the country as well. Most Hindus left the country after the bloody partition from India, but a minority remained.

Although the ethnic question is not as great an issue in Pakistan as in many other countries, it should not be ignored. This becomes immediately clear when Pakistan is seen together with Afghanistan: The Pashtun minority in particular covers large areas on both sides of the border. The Pashtuns are one of the largest minorities worldwide without a nation state of its own. (It is frequently stated that the Kurdish people - numbering under 40 million - are the largest people without a nation. Pashtuns however number around 45 million.)

Notes on the current situation

- The frequent church attacks, especially the ones in Lahore in September 2013, March 2015 and Easter 2016, as well as the December 2017 attack against the Methodist Church in Quetta - in the reporting period for WWL 2019 - underline the precarious situation Christians are in. Sometimes, church buildings are guarded and protected by the authorities, but often enough churches need to take care of their own safety as best they can. Regardless of who is doing the guarding and protecting, attacks occur frequently.
- The country's notorious blasphemy laws continue to pose a significant challenge for Christians as mere accusations are enough to cost Christians job, living or even life. The new government will leave these laws untouched, especially after the huge protests by radical Islamic groups after the Supreme Court acquitted Asia Bibi of blasphemy on 31 October 2018. Christian girls continue to be abducted, forcefully converted, married and raped.

External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

- How did Christians get there?: missionary activity
<http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/christianity-in-pakistan/>
- How did Christians get there?: established in Lahore
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_missions

WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

What type of persecution dominates?

Islamic oppression: Pakistan suffers from a plethora of radical Islamic groups and witnesses an increasingly Islamizing culture. Well-meaning politicians, judges and religious leaders considering amendments to the country's notorious blasphemy laws, are openly threatened by those who hold a radical perspective based on Wahhabi ideology.

Organized corruption and crime: Corruption is rampant at all levels of administration and in the army which has investments in many economic fields.

Who is driving persecution?

In Pakistan, radical Islamic groups do not just exist in the background, they are increasingly entering the public sphere and expanding their influence. This is because some of them are being courted by political parties, the army and the government. Especially the army continues to follow a policy of distinguishing between good and bad Taliban, which is widely followed by the government. Until this changes, radical Islamic groups will continue to run thousands of madrassas (in which no-one knows exactly what is taught or how they are financed) and they will be able to stir up citizens (especially youth) all across the country encouraging them to act against religious minorities such as Christians. Converts face these hostile forces as well, but for them the main danger comes from their own families as conversion away from Islam dishonors both family and community.

What it results in

Historic churches have relative freedom for worship and other activities, however, they are heavily monitored and have regularly been [targeted](#) for bomb attacks (as the Quetta bomb attack on 17 December 2017 showed once again). Christian churches more active in outreach and youthwork face stronger persecution in society. All Christians suffer from institutionalized discrimination, illustrated by the fact that occupations seen as low, dirty and derogatory are officially reserved for Christians. Many Christians are anyway poor and several are [victims of bonded labor](#). On the other hand, there are many Christians belonging to the middle class as well, but this does not save them from being marginalized or persecuted. The country's notorious blasphemy laws target religious minorities (including Muslim minorities), but affect the Christian minority in particular, not just the poor.

Violence

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

| Pakistan | Reporting period | Christians killed | Christians attacked | Christians arrested | Churches attacked | Christian-owned houses and shops attacked |
|----------|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| WWL 2019 | 01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018 | 28 | 1467 | 56 | 28 | 407 |
| WWL 2018 | 01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017 | 15 | 1533 | 110 | 168 | 169 |

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

- On 17 December 2017, a [suicide attack](#) against the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in Quetta, claimed the lives of 11 Christians and wounded scores more.
- Christians continue to be killed due to blasphemy accusations, but also due to their neglected status. An example of the latter is how two Christian sewage workers [died](#) in Bahawalnagar, Punjab, on 23 May 2018. Another one had already died in January 2018.

External Links - WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

- What it results in: targeted
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/04/pakistan-prevents-another-easter-attack-christians/>
- What it results in: victims of bonded labor
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/07/pakistani-christians-mother-says-son-killed-for-asking-for-an-end-to-his-slavery/>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: suicide attack
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/adding-insult-to-injury-pakistani-church-leaders-arrested-fined-for-not-putting-security-in-place/>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: died
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/05/two-pakistani-christian-sewerage-workers-die-from-poisonous-gases/>

WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

Pakistan remains one of the countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian. The basically unchanged very high and extremely high scores for pressure in the individual *spheres of life* confirm this. The violence score has stayed at the maximum level too. (Very few WWL countries ever achieve maximum score in this category.) The deadly church bomb-attack in December 2017 was a grim reminder of how much violence Christians and other religious minorities are facing. The country's notorious blasphemy laws continue to claim their victims, however on the very last day of the WWL 2019 reporting period, on 31 October 2018, the Supreme Court bravely decided to acquit Christian mother Asia Bibi after she had languished over 8 years on death row because of blasphemy accusations. Immediately afterwards, radical Islamic groups brought the country literally to a standstill. At the time of writing (the beginning of December 2018), she was still held in protected custody at an undisclosed location in Pakistan by the government, unable to leave the country (see "Future outlook").

Persecution engines

| Persecution engines: Pakistan | Abbreviation | Level of influence |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| Islamic oppression | IO | Very strong |
| Religious nationalism | RN | Not at all |
| Ethnic antagonism | EA | Strong |
| Denominational protectionism | DPR | Very weak |
| Communist and post - Communist oppression | CPCO | Not at all |
| Secular intolerance | SI | Very weak |
| Dictatorial paranoia | DPA | Strong |
| Organized corruption and crime | OCC | Very strong |

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong):

Pakistan is experiencing an increasingly Islamizing culture and suffers from a plethora of radical Islamic groups. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, one expert contacted by Open Doors counted 65 different Islamist groups of varying power, size and influence, the most recent one entering the public sphere being Tehreek-e-Labaik (see Context below). The Christian community feels increasingly trapped between these radical groups and the Islamic culture. There are politicians, judges and religious leaders who are considering (or even advocating for) an amendment to the country's notorious blasphemy laws. However, all such well-meaning attempts are openly threatened by those who hold a radical perspective based on *Wahhabi* ideology and who continue to buy into the caliphate theology and treatment of infidels, firmly identifying themselves with supporters of the Islamic State group (IS) and the Taliban. The increasing presence of militants specifically naming Christians as their targets has worsened the situation for Christians in the region. Radical Islamic groups are flourishing - despite a continued crackdown on some of them by the army - and are used by various political groups as allies.

Their power to mobilize hundreds of thousands of predominantly young people and take them to the streets remains a political tool and offers strong leverage for enforcing political goals. One of the most influential groups in this respect is the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Party (TLP), which brought the country to a grinding standstill immediately after Asia Bibi was acquitted.

Banned radical Islamic groups do not simply dissolve into nothing; in most cases they simply re-brand and build charity fronts or [go online](#). Or, as far as elections are concerned, they simply join other existing radical parties, if the ones they had chosen or founded are banned from participating. They woo the general populace with social services and the youth with the offer of a good future perspective (which is otherwise badly lacking in the country). The majority of the population is below 25 years old (and almost one third even below 14 years of age) and so there is a great need for the state to be able to offer this younger generation good future prospects. While life expectancy is not very high at 68.1 years, the total fertility rate stands at 2.62. Although these figures are changing very slowly, they illustrate huge social challenges. If the fertility rate remains at this level, Pakistan will become the largest Muslim country in the world, overtaking Indonesia, in approximately 2030. This social structure means that there will be huge numbers of young people leaving school, dreaming of a better future. But as the country struggles to give even well-educated youth any hope for good employment, social unrest is likely to build up which in turn paves the way for Islamic militants to lure young people into their groups, where they are given a feeling of worth that they have never had before.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong):

Corruption is rampant in Pakistan on all levels of administration and in the army. The army is deeply entrenched into the country's economy and a strong competitor in many economic fields. It enjoys unfair advantages which a popular joke about the army illustrates well: "All countries have armies, but here, an army has a country". Although it is difficult to access details, estimations say that the army holds assets valued at around 10 billion USD, including around 5 million hectares of farmland. The fact that President Nawaz Sharif was ousted and finally sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by the Supreme Court due to corruption revealed through the [Panama Papers](#), shows that corruption is by no means limited to the army.

Organized crime affects Christians in particular since many of them are poor and without defense, especially in blasphemy cases. This was shown in [March 2018](#) when a court acquitted 20 suspects in a case where a Christian couple had been killed in a brick oven because of alleged blasphemy on 4 November 2014. Bonded labor is an old form of slavery and is still widespread in certain parts of Pakistan, especially in rural areas. These laborers depend completely on the mercy of their employers and have no way out since they will never be able to pay their loans back due to the high interest rates. They have no legal way of registering complaints and are left without any defense or hope for change in the future.

Ethnic antagonism (Strong):

Pakistan suffers from ethnic fragmentation, not only in society but also in the country's administration. The Baluchistan province and central Sindh regions are traditionally perceived as being beyond the reach of the state authorities. Feudal landowners maintain their own private militias, courts and prisons in parts of rural Sindh and Punjab. Corruption is rampant across the country. All this affects the generally unprotected Christian minority in Pakistan. Jurisdiction over the federally administered tribal areas (FATA) is limited and distorted. This volatile region bordering Afghanistan is still ruled according to a colonial law called "Frontiers Crime Regulation" dating back to 1901, which effectively bans intervention from police and courts and adds to the local peoples' alienation. In this region, Pakistan's constitution seems to be effectively abrogated. However, in the WWL 2019 reporting period, the

government decided to [merge](#) the FATA with neighboring [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa](#) Province (KP). As this decision was only taken in June 2018, it is too early to know if this is just another ineffective effort by the government to get a firmer grip on this unruly province. It is already clear, however, that this decision was taken due to public pressure and will be [fraught with challenges](#).

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

Pakistani politics have always shown a mixture of *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*. Every government has had to struggle with opposition, radical groups, a strong independent army and corruption charges; as a result they try everything possible to hold on to power, especially as Pakistan politics means family politics as well: the PML-N is run by family Sharif (the N in the party's name stands for Nawaz), PPP is run by family Bhutto. When Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to 10 years in prison on corruption charges, his brother had already stepped in as candidate to take over his role. Nawaz Sharif and his daughter were arrested just twelve days prior to general elections. Imran Khan (Chairman of the PTI party, not linked to any of the big families) had filed a case against Prime Minister Sharif because of the leaked Panama Papers pointing to irregularities in the prime minister's personal financial affairs. As Imran Khan then became prime minister in July 2018, this does not bode well for the country's minorities since he has made it clear in many statements that they are not important to him. In the short period until November 2018 (the time of writing), he has given in to pressure from Islamist groups twice already.

Drivers of persecution

| Drivers of Persecution: Pakistan | IO | RN | EA | DPR | CPCO | SI | DPA | OCC |
|--|-------------|----|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| | VERY STRONG | - | STRONG | VERY WEAK | - | VERY WEAK | STRONG | VERY STRONG |
| Government officials | Very strong | - | Strong | - | - | - | Strong | Very strong |
| Ethnic group leaders | Medium | - | Weak | - | - | - | Weak | Medium |
| Non-Christian religious leaders | Very strong | - | Medium | - | - | - | Medium | Medium |
| Religious leaders of other churches | - | - | - | Strong | - | - | - | - |
| Violent religious groups | Very strong | - | Medium | - | - | - | Medium | Weak |
| Ideological pressure groups | Very strong | - | Medium | - | - | - | Very weak | Weak |
| Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs | Strong | - | Strong | - | - | - | Weak | Medium |
| One's own (extended) family | Very strong | - | Very weak | - | - | - | Very weak | Very weak |
| Political parties | Very strong | - | Strong | - | - | - | Strong | Medium |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---|-----------|---|---|--------|--------|-------------|
| Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups | Very strong | - | Strong | - | - | - | Medium | Very strong |
| Organized crime cartels or networks | Weak | - | Very weak | - | - | - | Weak | Strong |
| Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies | - | - | Weak | - | - | Medium | Medium | Medium |

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:

In Pakistan, several radical Islamic groups are gaining more influence and are expanding due to being courted by political parties, the army and the government. Some are even forming their own political parties. Especially the army continues to follow a policy of distinguishing between good Taliban and bad Taliban, which is copied by the government. As long as this does not change, radical Islamic groups and political parties like the TLP will continue to take to the streets (as it happened in the WWL 2019 reporting period - see Context below), they will run thousands of madrassas (with no state authority knowing exactly what they are teaching or how they are financed) and they will be able to stir up citizens all across the country, especially the youth, encouraging them to act against religious minorities, including Christians. Christians with a Muslim background are facing these hostile forces as well, but for them, their own families are the greatest danger since leaving Islam brings great shame to both family and community. Ideological pressure groups, frequently connected with political parties and Islamic religious groups, exercise enormous pressure and gained influence in Pakistan's most recent election in July 2018, although political parties directly run by Islamist groups did not receive many votes. Multilateral organizations tend to follow the country's discriminatory way of hiring staff, thus neglecting Pakistan's religious minorities.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

As a small and weak group in society, Christians are facing a double vulnerability when it comes to Organized corruption and crime and they are prone to be its victims. Thousands of Christians are still living in bonded labor conditions without having any perspective that this could ever end. Many Christians are prone to exploitation as they are poor and bonded labor is a fate that is a reality for many of them, bringing their masters great profit. Rich landlords colude with politicians and local dignitaries (both from religious and political circles), benefitting greatly from this system.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

Keeping hold of power is a strong motive behind the many actions and activities of political leaders, government officials and the religious leaders connected with them. This is the driving force behind the policy of wooing radical Islamic groups as well. Christians quickly become scapegoats or are simply used as a bargaining chip in the political system.

Drivers of Ethnic antagonism:

Ethnic leaders demand uncompromising obedience, so deviations - such as turning to another religion - are seen as betrayal. As ethnic affiliation is very strong and serves as a means for self-identification and -assurance, changing religion puts oneself outside this strong social fabric.

Context

The WWL 2019 reporting period saw many changes in Pakistan and it remains to be seen in which direction they will steer the country. Given the first months of new Prime Minister Imran Khan's tenure, it does not look too promising. The army was accused of pulling the strings behind the elections and favoring Imran Khan and his PTI party. It also continued its policy of distinguishing between "good" and "bad" jihadists. While it fights the latter, it courts the former (eg. *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, now *Jamaat-ud-Dawah*, and the *Haqqani* network) and uses these groups as a means of active intervention in neighboring countries such as Afghanistan and India. This is the policy the army has been following for decades. How dangerous this approach is, was made clear once more on election day itself in July 2018, when a suicide attack claimed by Islamic State (IS) took place. Although the army acts against those it regards as "bad" jihadists, the latter's presence is reportedly growing in Pakistan. The Taliban are still alive and carrying out attacks; whether their groups are categorized as good, bad or patriotic, the result remains the same. These are all radical and violent groups which the army and/or the government are working with, and this can only result in more violence - especially against religious minorities.

An [unprecedented number](#) of radical Muslims stood for national elections, some even calling for the [forced conversion](#) of minorities, explicitly including Christians. Even though most of the candidates did not make it to national parliament, they managed to capture the political arena, shifting more moderate parties towards radicalism, and some radicals made it to state parliaments. As observers said, religious minorities have to expect [tougher times](#) when the election is over.

One of the main challenges facing the country is to find ways of controlling madrassa education. A never-ending stream of madrassa-educated youth enters society. If madrassa teaching fails to be controlled, radical ideas will be planted in the younger generation's minds. An estimated 35,000 madrassas exist in the country, from which at least 11,000 follow conservative Deobandi Islam. Children and youth receive radical teaching and teachers instil hatred towards minorities. Many madrassas receive foreign funds from Middle Eastern states like Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. As even the listing and mapping of madrassas (let alone monitoring or regulating them) is seen as acting against Islam, the authorities in many cases do not know what is going on within the four walls of such buildings and hence hate-speech often goes unrecorded. However, the authorities have started to act against madrassas they deem as too radical.

Christian communities and how they are affected

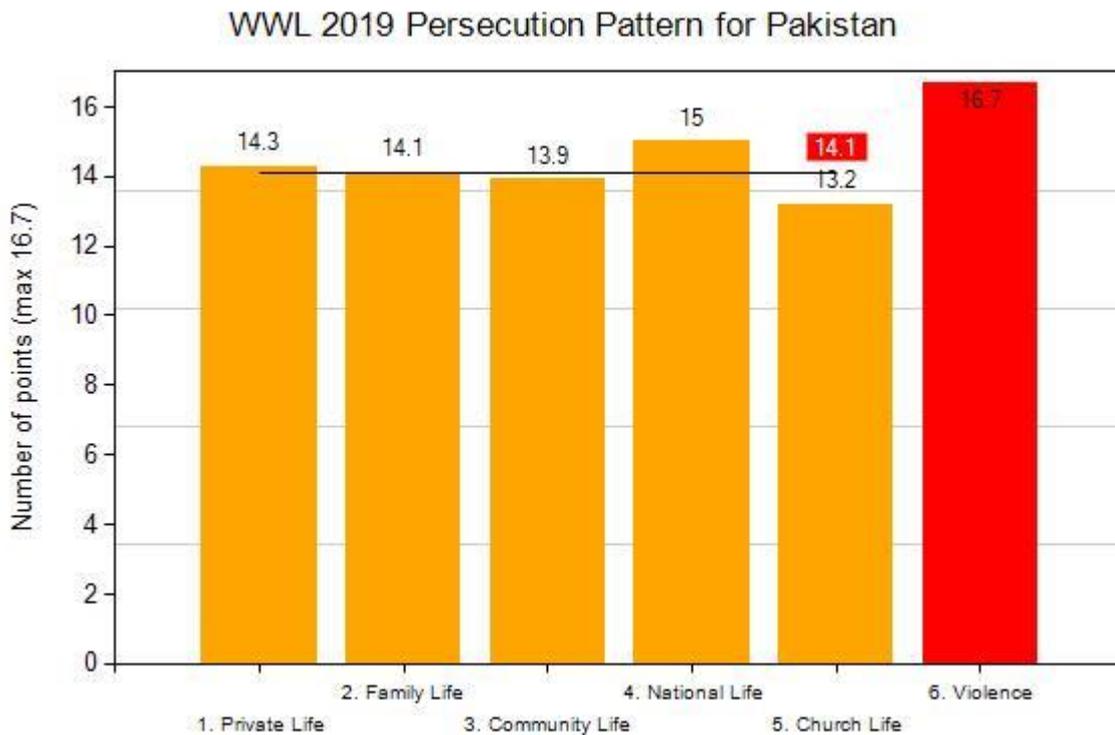
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not scored.

Historical Christian communities: The Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Church are examples. They increasingly face hostilities and experience difficulties in getting permits for certain meetings. They are still able to function as Church but have to put up with strong control and monitoring.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background suffer the brunt of persecution both from radical Islamic groups (who see them as apostates) and from families, friends and neighbors who see conversion as a shameful act of betrayal to family and community.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal groups have come under closer scrutiny and are frequently harassed and attacked, especially when they are active in outreach among Muslims.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence



The Persecution pattern shows:

- Overall, pressure remains very high (and in all but one *sphere of life*: extreme) for Christians in Pakistan. The average pressure increased from 14.0 in WWL 2018 to 14.1.
- Pressure remained the same in the *National sphere* (extreme level) and *Church sphere* (very high level), reflecting among other things how Christians continue to suffer from the country's blasphemy laws. Pressure remains at an extreme level in the *Private* and *Community spheres*, and increased in the *Family sphere*. Converts are facing the strongest pressure; Christians in general are regarded as second-class citizens and face attacks and their rights being ignored on a regular basis. The blasphemy laws and the Islamist groups "defending" them remain a major threat to all Christians.
- Violence against Christians reached the maximum level of 16.7 as has been the case consistently since WWL 2016. Apart from the Quetta bomb attack on 17 December 2017, there have been many attacks against Christians: killings, abduction of women, rape, forced marriages, evictions from homes and displacements in-country and abroad.

Private sphere:

Converts from Islam always have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian materials can be taken away by family, friends or neighbors. A case of blasphemy was brought against a teenager in Punjab who shared a photo on Facebook which was seen as offensive by Muslim friends. As a result, 800 Christian families temporarily left their homes in February 2018 fearing [repercussions](#). Social media posts are becoming increasingly

dangerous for Christians to participate in. Reports of Christians wearing a cross being spat at and targeted aggressively in the streets, in traffic or at the work-place, are indicators that the situation is becoming more difficult. While house-arrest by families is another form of punishment for privately conducting worship, a milder form is for Christian converts to be put under surveillance. Converts sometimes have to go into hiding as well.

Family sphere:

Registering one's conversion to the Christian faith is not possible. A child will be automatically registered as "Muslim" if his or her father was registered as "Muslim", no matter if in reality the religious affiliation has changed. Once converts are discovered, they face the threat of divorce (if married) and are likely to lose their inheritance rights. Organizing a baptism, Christian wedding or funeral can become difficult or even impossible. From the moment a convert from Islam decides to be baptized, he or she is put under particular pressure since baptism is seen as the ultimate form of rejecting Islam. Even if it is a Pakistani of Christian background getting baptized, there will often be guns firing from roofs and aggressive shouting against Christians, even though it is not a crime for a Pakistani of Christian background to be baptized. Baptism is simply hated as it is a visible sign of the Christian presence growing. In small townships and remote villages, all Christian families are forced to make their children attend Islamic teaching at the local madrassa while Christian teaching is restricted to the Sunday service once a week. The majority of Christian children face pressure to "come back" to Islam at an early age, therefore parents try to prevent their children from speaking or sharing about their faith with non-Christian peers. Pastors, who are ready to baptize converts, have also been questioned and threatened on many occasions. At school, Christian children are often not allowed to use the same water fountain as their classmates to avoid "defiling" the drinking-water, and they are often bullied. Schoolbooks are teaching hatred against Christians. Christians with a Muslim background face either being physically attacked and discriminated against by the Islamic community and their own family, or they may be placed under a curse through black magic, potions, amulets and other occult practices.

Community sphere:

Christians are associated with being unclean and so their use of shared facilities is thought to defile Muslims, a [heritage of the caste system](#), haunting many Christians in Pakistan. This is how the Asia Bibi case started. In work places, the pressure against the Christian minority is often so great that Christians are forced to change their jobs multiple times to avoid being made to convert to Islam. Christians are frequently forced to do menial work like sweeping or carrying water. And even access to these jobs gets more and more restricted as reports show that new cleaning companies in the country are increasingly hiring only Muslims. Many hospitals, pharmacies and other facilities have welfare schemes, which are being increasingly denied to Christians. Christians are also often told to pay exorbitant amounts for health care. Such costs are unpayable and hence block access to medical treatment. In a horrific reflection of how Christians are discriminated against in the WWL 2019 reporting period, at least three Christian [sewage workers](#) died due to lack of protective equipment, in January and May 2018 respectively. In government hospitals, Christians are not allowed to have access to the free medicines which have been supplied through *Zakat* funding. Often people in wards in hospitals do not like to share with Christians, so Christians must wait in hallways and corridors.

At school, Christian children are regularly forced to participate in Islamic practices and events. They are also under constant pressure to convert to Islam, and parents are often visited to pressure them into sending their children to Islamic events and teaching them Arabic on the pretense of bettering their grades. This confuses children and makes them vulnerable to "involuntary" conversion.

National sphere:

The 1973 Constitution declares Pakistan to be an Islamic Republic. The more recent process of Islamization started in the 1980s, when General Zia introduced the infamous laws on blasphemy in 1986. Blasphemy soon became one of the main issues the Christian minority had to face. According to a press report from 2010 (more recent data is not available), 801 of the 1,031 people imprisoned under blasphemy laws were Muslims (the vast majority of cases most likely affecting Islamic minorities). Of the remaining 230 prisoners, 162 were Christians (70.4%), 15 were Sikh (6.5%), 28 were Buddhist (12.2%), while 25 adhered to other religions.

The blasphemy laws are well known for being used for settling personal scores, making personal gains or for satisfying grudges one neighbor may have against another. They were brought back to the attention of the international community when a Christian woman, known as Asia Bibi, was accused of blasphemy and sentenced to death in 2010. She was the first woman to be on death row in Pakistan. As the blasphemy laws continue to gain prominence, it becomes increasingly difficult for courts and government to deal with them as they are highly politicized and have symbolic significance for militant Islamic groups across the country. The April 2018 announcement of Pakistan's chief justice that he will hear Asia Bibi's case "[soon](#)" bore surprising fruit on 31 October 2018, when she was acquitted from all accusations. However, for security reasons, she is not freed yet, but still in protective custody (see "Future outlook" below).

Christians and other minorities face discrimination and unfair treatment [at the workplace](#) because of their faith as well. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, an illustration of this discrimination and bias occurred during a heated budget debate at the parliament of Punjab: A Muslim lawmaker called Christian lawmaker Tariq Gill a "churra" (loosely translated "filthy person", meaning low caste). This is a common insult to all religious minorities in Pakistan, especially Christians.

Church sphere:

The NGO law introduced on 1 October 2015 allows the government to monitor and close down NGOs at their wish. Any church not registered as an NGO is immediately considered illegal and faces the threat of being closed down. The law was introduced to protect the country against terrorist organizations in the guise of charities. Hence, churches are now listed alongside terrorist organizations. In October 2018, Pakistan's Minister of the Interior ordered 18 NGOs to [leave the country](#) and cease all operations within 60 days, including World Vision and the Catholic Relief Agency. Church activities are regularly watched. Security is provided for many churches by the authorities, but these very security personnel make regular reports, listen, observe and watch in detail what is going on in the church. The reports are a form of intelligence and it is suspected that they are being passed on to radical organizations and militants too. Cases have been reported in the past of security personnel turning militant, attacking local priests and pastors and threatening them. Church buildings frequently resemble fortresses with high walls and narrow gates. Despite the fact that the state has promised to protect churches with guards, there have nevertheless been several church attacks with dozens of victims.

Churches require registration and permission to proceed with new building projects. This is a long process as churches often have to wait for more than ten years to receive registration and get discouraged from proceeding with their building plans. There is high demand for bribes, and letters from influential members of parliament and governing bodies are needed. While there is no law against the building of churches as such, the process is made hard in order to discourage Christians.

While the pressure against churches reaching out to youth increases, there have been no reported cases of outright obstruction. However, pastors and Christian workers have received warnings that their activities are being watched by the authorities and pressure groups in the neighborhood. Apart from the Bible Society of Pakistan, all other Christian organizations are strongly discouraged from owning printing presses. Also, the work of the Bible Society is closely monitored and each Bible has a serial number that can be tracked. In October 2016, eleven Christian TV channels of the thirteen available in the country were de-registered. Christians are also worried about a law on internet restrictions, [passed in August 2016](#), which has the potential to limit one of the last available ways of spreading the Christian message. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, the debate on Christian family law continued. Christians are being encouraged/compelled to allow divorce in more cases than purely on grounds of adultery.

Violence:

In Pakistan, Christians are seen as second-class citizens and so violence against them is nothing worthy of any big headlines, it is just ubiquitous. Churches are attacked, Christians are detained and arrested (e.g. under the notorious blasphemy laws), abducted, raped and forcefully married (especially girls), brutalized and driven out of the country. And each year, Christians are killed because of their faith. Because of this attitude, the score for violence is maximum for the fourth consecutive WWL.

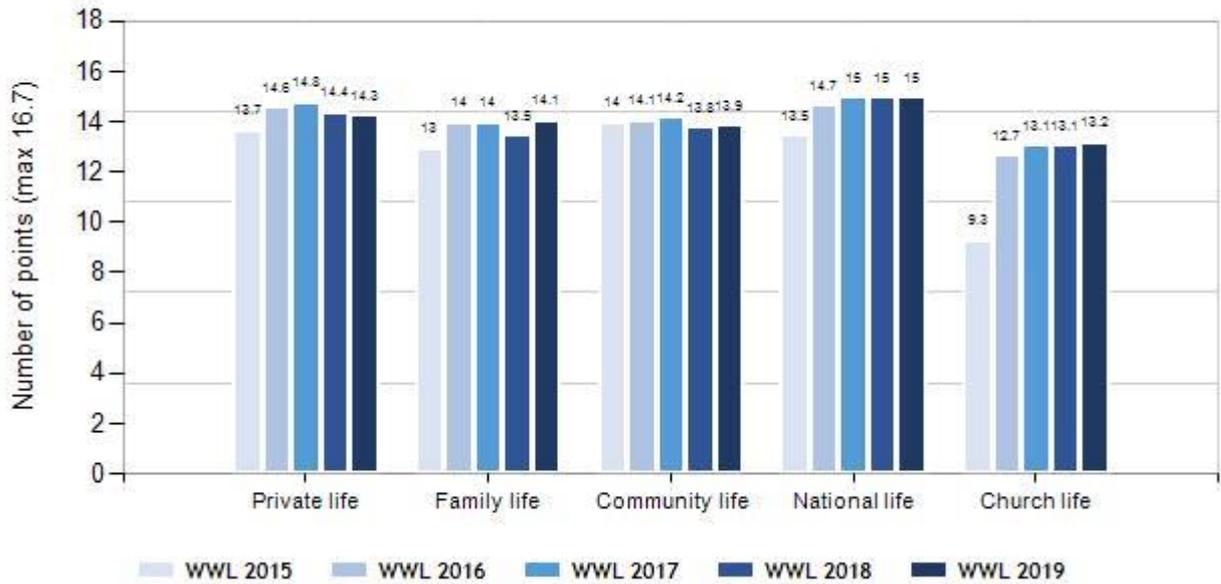
Attacks on churches are taking place with a sickening frequency, although the buildings are not always destroyed or have to be closed. However, according to interviews with many pastors, there have been frequent fires laid, broken windows, damaged property and minor harassments such as power-cuts and water restrictions targeting churches. This overt violence conceals the daily violence behind the scenes against Christian girls and women who are often abducted, raped and forcefully married and converted. In blasphemy cases, the homes of Christians are frequently attacked, forcing them and their families to go into hiding.

For a summary of the statistics on violence and examples, please see the Short and Simple Persecution Profile section above.

5 Year trends

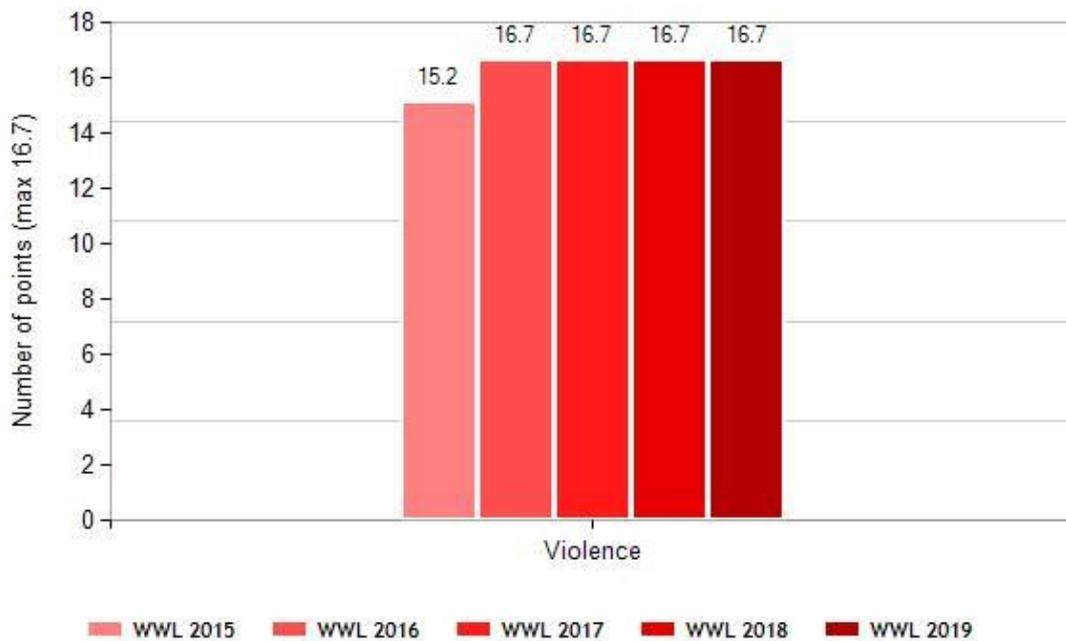
As the first chart below shows, since WWL 2016 Christians in Pakistan have been experiencing increasing pressure in the communities they are living in. This is because radical Islamic groups have gained more influence and have caused society to take on a strongly conservative tone. Corresponding to this, church life has come under more pressure since it is closely watched, often with suspicion and outright hostility, and the score for National life has levelled off at an extremely high level since it is not only society and radical Islamic groups who make life for Christians complicated, but also the authorities at all levels as well. In the third chart, the score for violence has been the maximum possible for four WWLs in a row, which is exceptional for the World Watch List. Almost every year, a deadly bomb attack targetting a church or a gathering of Christians has contributed to this very sad uniqueness.

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



| WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Pakistan | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
|--|--|
| 2019 | 14.1 |
| 2018 | 14.0 |
| 2017 | 14.2 |
| 2016 | 14.0 |
| 2015 | 12.7 |

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



Gender specific persecution

Female:

Christian women and girls are vulnerable and marginalized in Pakistani society, so they are easy targets. Girls are often abducted, raped and converted by force. The authorities do not take any action, on the contrary, usually they side with the Muslim families abducting the girls. That is why parents of such victimized women and girls become feel it is pointless to take legal action. Even when a case comes to the courts, the girls are forced to testify that they converted voluntarily. As quoted by the [Human Rights Watch 2018](#) report: "A report by the Movement for Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan found that at least 1,000 girls belonging to Christian and Hindu communities are forced to marry Muslim men every year." If a Christian family is bold enough to challenge the abduction and marriage, they often face accusations of harassing the "voluntarily converted" girl and her new family.

Male:

As one country expert shared, Christian men and boys are compelled to take lower status jobs and are considered impure. They are often referred to as "Chura", a derogatory word meaning "filthy" and which is used for road sweepers. Christian workers live in constant fear of blasphemy allegations and have a permanent inferiority complex in relations with Muslims. Whereas there is also a Christian middle class and not all hold lower status jobs, discrimination and social inferiority are ubiquitous. Islamic laws and practices promote an attitude of Muslim superiority in society; thus Muslims are encouraged not to accept Christian men being in more senior positions to them in work places.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Besides Christians, other religious minorities have also been victims of the blasphemy laws and attacks. The Hindu minority suffers at the hands of radical Sunni militants as do Islamic minorities like Ahmadis, Shiites and Sufis, since these are not regarded as being true Muslims, but rather as deviating sects. For example: In February 2017 an attack on a Sufi shrine in Sindh province claimed 75 lives. Alleged atheists can also be targeted by the country's blasphemy laws as was shown when a university student in the city of Mardan [was lynched](#) by an enraged mob in April 2017. In this case, which caused much unrest in Pakistan, the killer was [sentenced to death](#) in February 2018. One prominent example of discrimination against the Ahmadi minority took place in the government sphere (see "Future Outlook")

Future outlook

Political outlook - The Islamist challenge

The main challenge for Pakistan is the question of how to deal with militant Islamic groups. The immediate hope after the attack on the Peshawar Army School in December 2014 was that the army would withdraw protection from certain militant groups. This hope has not been fulfilled. The army and government are still trying to distinguish between "good" and "bad" jihadi groups, and it is the religious minorities - including Christians - who continue to pay the price for this approach. The August 2017 decision by the US government to increase the number of troops in Afghanistan and the connected stern warning to Pakistan (as a major ally) not to support radical Islamic movements, followed by several other warnings and even a cut in financial support, did not change anything visibly. The influence of even relatively small radical Islamic groups was shown once more in November 2017, when a group of 3,000 people managed to [block a major intersection](#) of Islamabad, effectively stopping traffic in the whole capital. They were demanding the removal of a minister and the strict implementation of the blasphemy laws, including the execution of Asia Bibi. At the end of November

2017, their demands were partly given in to when the [justice minister resigned](#). As Imran Khan backs the [blasphemy laws](#) and needs radical groups for a majority in parliament as well as for public support on the street, this does not bear well for Christians.

As already stated, within three months of his government, Prime Minister Imran Khan already gave in two times to radical Islamic groups and parties, especially to the demands of the TLP. In September 2018, a member of the Ahmadi minority was [removed](#) from a top economic adviser post. As international experts have widely acknowledged, Atif Mian is one of the top experts in economic affairs in Pakistan. However, he is a member of the Ahmadiyya, a Muslim sect not recognized as Muslim in Pakistan and especially not by radical Sunni groups. The TLP succeeded in their policy of holding the country captive to their demands once more. But the more illustrative example was the countrywide blockade after the Supreme Court had acquitted Asia Bibi of charges of blasphemy. The radical Islamic groups and parties not only called for the judges and lawyers to be held to account, they also called for mutiny as they - rightly - concluded that such a verdict would not be issued without having first checked with the powerful Pakistani army. The latter remained surprisingly silent., unlike Imran Khan. In his first reaction in a TV speech, he publically challenged the radical groups, but behind the scenes his minister for religion was soon forging a compromise with them and promising to check if Asia Bibi can be put on a no-fly list, until another - extra-ordinary - appeal against her acquittal can be decided by the Supreme Court. In an effort to win back the upper hand, the government took one of the leaders of the TLP, Khadim Hussein Rizvi, in ["protective custody"](#) on 24 November 2018 and reportedly detained more than a thousand TLP members.

Whereas these actions are courageous, it is highly doubtful if they can bring any real change. Concerning the blasphemy laws, the government will not dare to make any changes as they know they would be faced with strong opposition. The fact that Asia Bibi is still not free and that meanwhile another series of blasphemy charges has been brought against Christians, all goes to show how sensitive this issue is. Given the growing strength of radical groups, and the TLP in particular, no relaxation of these laws can be expected anytime soon, leading one commentator to say that Imran Khan is trying to [ride the tiger](#).

Political outlook - The socio-economic challenge

Political stability is again very allusive. Instability occurred when Prime Minister Sharif was ousted (mentioned above under "Dictatorial Paranoia") but even more when radical Islamic groups and parties like TLP set up their blockades. Although not elected, they enjoy an disproportionately high influence in society and politics. Another important source of unrest could be the publication of the country's most recent census results. The authenticity of the first statistics since a 1998 census have already been [challenged](#) by opposition politicians and certain province authorities. The fact that Pakistan's total population of well over 200 million has increased by 60% since the last census in 1998 and [continues to grow](#) at a rate of 2% annually, shows what challenges Pakistan is facing. This is especially true for the urban areas, illustrated by Lahore, the country's second biggest city, which grew in population by 53% in this time. If these rates of growth continue, the country's population could double again over the next decades. The fact that the statistics for religious affiliation have not yet been released shows how sensitive these numbers are; they could support religious minorities in their [fight for political representation](#).

There is a [second development](#) worth noting as well: The proportion of voters from religious minorities is growing faster than the proportion of Muslim voters. Hindus make up the largest minority group, but proportionally, the number of voters from the Christian community (who make up the second-largest minority group) grew even faster - by almost one third - to 1.64 million. Even though

these numbers only show registered voters and does not correspond to any growing political representation, they are still surprising.

Another challenge the country has to face is how it is going to deal with its struggling neighbor Afghanistan. Reports emerged in June 2016 that Pakistan plans to send back an estimated three million refugees to Afghanistan. This would multiply problems in Afghanistan, increase the appeal of militant groups to those with no perspectives (and add to competition between rival groups) and have repercussions for Pakistan itself. However, until now, Pakistan has "only" sent back 600,000 refugees, causing enough problems already for its weak neighbor.

The outlook for Christians - through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** Competition between the Taliban and IS increases the pressure on both groups to recruit followers. Their recruitment strategy requires each group to appear closer to the heart of Islam than the other. In their efforts to appear more Islamic, one strategy has been to attack the "dhimmi" as they are most vulnerable to the ideology of "pure Islam". This competition is beginning to affect politics too, so that observers say that Christians and other minorities may well be facing [tougher times](#) ahead. Striving for a stronger Islamic identity (as carried out by the radical Islamic groups) therefore includes more persecution of Christians and the removal of as many of their rights as possible at a time when the government is not particularly interested in granting rights to minorities. This in turn fits well into wider society's negative attitude towards Christians. Islamic oppression will thus most likely remain strong in Pakistan.
- **Organized corruption and crime:** Christians will continue to be discriminated against and often exploited. The increasing knowledge about their their dire working environments and the basis of discrimination in the caste system, is hardly likely to bring any change.
- **Ethnic antagonism:** To which ethnic group one belongs will continue to play an important role in the political and social fabric of Pakistan, although interwoven with and increasingly dominated by religious motives.
- **Dictatorial paranoia:** Whereas the old political parties are not ruling anymore and the influential political families experienced a setback with the sentencing of former Prime Minister Sharif, this Persecution engine will not necessarily become weaker. Pakistan's politicians have a track record of clinging to power and if needed, religious minorities will continue to be victims and at times scapegoats.

Conclusion: Pakistan faces very volatile times: 2019 will show whether Prime Minister Imran Khan manages to ride - or even tame - the tiger or if the tiger will swallow him. Another factor which may become clearer over time is the position of the army towards radical Islamic groups and parties. Will they still be seen as "good Taliban", even when they call for open mutiny?

[External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics](#)

- Persecution engines: go online.
https://www.apnews.com/8ef62cab253941ec8169427bdac62886/Many-organizations-banned-in-Pakistan-thrive-online?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=d2519be1c5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_07_11&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-d2519be1c5-399904105

- Persecution engines: Panama Papers
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-36092356>
- Persecution engines: March 2018
<https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews/court-in-pakistan-acquits-20-muslims-suspected-in-brick-kiln-killing-of-christian-couple?e=7633765c31>
- Persecution engines: merge
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- Persecution engines: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-reopens-churches-after-outcry/81313>
- Persecution engines: fraught with challenges
https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/b150-shaping-new-peace-pakistans-tribal-areas?utm_source=Sign+Up+to+Crisis+Group%27s+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=2497a9534e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_20_08_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1dab8c11ea-2497a9534e-359283577
- Context: unprecedented number
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- Context: tougher times
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- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: heritage of the caste system
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/11/untouchable-caste-identity-haunts-pakistani-christians-like-asia-bibi/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: sewage workers
<https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/two-pakistani-christians-perish-after-inhaling-toxic-gas-in-a-sewage-pit/>

- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: soon
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- Persecution of other religious minorities: was lynched
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