

FINAL WWL 2019 COUNTRY DOSSIER

MYANMAR

LEVEL 3/EMBARGO

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

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Introduction

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Introduction

World Watch List Myanmar	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2019	71	18
WWL 2018	65	24
WWL 2017	62	28
WWL 2016	62	23
WWL 2015	60	25

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 Myanmar

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>

Recent country history

In 1948 Burma became independent from Britain. From 1962 to 2011 the country was ruled by an oppressive military junta. A gradual process of democratization then began, most notably visible in the elections won by noble peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2015. However, since her rule has now passed its mid-term, it has to be stated that as long as the army retains its current level of power, no major changes can be expected. The army not only has a powerful constitutional position and remains a strong political factor, it is also deeply involved in legal and illicit trade, which mainly affects predominantly Christian areas like Kachin State. Aung San Suu Kyi has initiated a series of peace conferences, the so-called "Panglong Conferences", but these still do not include all ethnic minority militant groups, especially the most powerful ones, and so there has been no real progress. It seems that things can only change if the army could extract some sort of [benefit](#) from reducing its political influence. Even then, there are enough other problems to complicate any peaceful solutions - first and foremost the Rohingya refugee crisis, decried worldwide and heavily affecting neighboring Bangladesh. In November 2018, Bangladesh announced it would [postpone the repatriation program](#) until after December elections, so that it can only get started in 2019. But even if the program would run at repatriating 150 Rohingya per day - which was what both sides had initially agreed upon - it would take 13 years for everyone to return who had fled to Bangladesh in 2017. And this does not include those who had fled earlier.

But there are also other challenges which should not be overlooked: For instance, army staff and some ethnic insurgents are involved in drug trafficking and the exploitation of resources like jade and timber. Unruly nationalist monks continue to fight for a radical Buddhism and for what they see as the much needed protection of the country. Trust-building remains key, but will be impossible as long as the army offensives against the largely Christian Kachin minority and the fighting in Kachin and northern Shan State continue, displacing tens of thousands.

The religious landscape

Myanmar is predominantly Buddhist and Buddhists played a role in rising against the military regime in 2007. Before that, radical Buddhist groups had not been very political, but when the movement "969" emerged (later called "Ma Ba Tha"), this quickly changed. This group has a nationalist agenda and calls fellow religionists to defend the country against any perceived threats. In August 2015, before the first free and fair elections, Ma Ba Tha managed to introduce the "Laws for the Protection of Race and Religion". Those are first and foremost targeted against the Muslim minority, especially the Rohingya of Rakhine State, living in the borderlands with Bangladesh. The Ma Ba Tha was banned, but re-emerged under a different name, and was banned in 2018 again.

The Muslim minority does not have citizenship and most of them have left the country due to ongoing persecution. A deadly attack against a border post in October 2016, leaving nine guards dead and claimed by a radical Islamic group, led authorities to become even more active against Muslims, pushing an estimated 700,000 across the border into refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Radical Buddhism has been targeting Muslims more than Christians, but reports say that Buddhist monks continue to convert children of Christian minorities to Buddhism by luring them into temples.

Stronger persecution comes from the army, however, where even killings of Christians are reported. Until now, persecution by monks and radical Buddhist groups has not increased - which could have happened when the delayed publication of the 2014 government census revealed a surprisingly strong increase in the number of Christians. According to the census, the number of Christians rose from 4.6% in 1973 to 6.2% in 2014, and even then there were large numbers of Christians in the war-torn regions of predominantly Christian Kachin State which were not counted. However, now that most Muslims are out of the country, radical Buddhists may start targeting other minorities more intensively.

The political landscape

The outcome of the November 2015 elections raised many hopes in the country and abroad that the [longest lasting civil war](#) in the world might finally be brought to an end. But after almost two years in government these hopes have been disappointed so far, reflecting the strong position the army retains in the country's politics. On the contrary, fighting in Kachin and Northern Shan State even increased at the start of 2018. The fact that an ethnic Chin Baptist Christian was appointed as vice-president and a Christian leads the Upper House of parliament has not changed anything on the ground.

Although the elections were important and encouraging, one should keep in mind that according to the Constitution, the army reserved 25% of the available seats. In addition, the ethnic minorities consist of several dozen groups making up more than 30% of the country's population, many of them being Christian or containing large Christian groups. The government needs to build up trust with them, which is a major challenge after decades of war. Aung San Suu Kyi, despite all her personal achievements and integrity, is basically regarded as a member of the Burmese ("Bama") nobility who is not seriously interested in the plight of ethnic and religious minorities.

The socio-economic landscape

Myanmar is potentially a rich country as it holds vast natural resources, for example in oil and gas, but even more in timber, gold and jade, which is all worth billions of dollars. It also has a huge potential in exporting renewable energy in providing water power to neighboring countries. However, the country faces many environmental problems and the government angered their big neighbor China by stopping the building of a large dam in Kachin State.

The military authorities still dominate some industrial sectors such as energy production. The timber industry is also managed by the army through private partnerships and illicit channels. Timber is mostly located in ethnic territories and as the logging has not been carried out in a sustainable way, supplies are decreasing. But it is still an important source of income for both the army and ethnic insurgents. Jade is another commodity the army exploits which is a multi-billion dollar business. If Christian settlements are in the way, since they belong to the ethnic minorities, the inhabitants will simply be chased away without anyone caring.

Another illicit and allegedly growing source of income is poppy cultivation and drug export. Myanmar is the second-largest producer of opium after Afghanistan and the army (as well as ethnic insurgency armies) are involved in this business. Its northern region is part of the famous so-called "Golden Triangle". There are reports providing circumstantial evidence that the army is deliberately driving ethnic minorities like the Kachin into drug addiction, especially the youth, in order to prevent them joining the ethnic militant groups, which many tend to do, lacking perspectives for the future.

Concluding remarks

Whereas Myanmar had received many positive headlines in recent years, with the actions against the Muslim Rohingya minority, the honeymoon is over. And the international outcry is well deserved as the treatment is indeed horrific. However, the intense and even increasing fighting in predominantly Christian areas like Kachin and northern Shan State should not be overlooked, simply because these areas are harder to access. Christians are being killed, detained and forced to flee to live with tens of thousands others in refugee camps in dire circumstances. As access to these regions is very limited, their situation goes widely unnoticed; even access for representatives of international organizations such as the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Societies, Peter Maurer, was restricted as he complained in [May 2017](#). In the WWL 2019 reporting period, there has been no relief; access has been blocked again and again.

External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Myanmar

- Recent country history: benefit
https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/myanmar-s-new-government-finding-its-feet?utm_source=Sign+Up+to+Crisis+Group
- Recent country history: postpone the repatriation program
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/rohingya-repatriation-to-myanmar-delayed-to-next-year/83905>
- The political landscape: longest lasting civil war
<http://time.com/4597920/myanmar-peace/>
- Concluding remarks: May 2017
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/red-cross-chief-urges-govt-allow-access-conflict-areas.html>

WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

Pop 2018	Christians	Chr%
53,856,000	4,342,000	8.1

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

How did Christians get there?

Catholic missionaries first entered Burma in 1554. Not until 1613, however, was there a permanent presence with churches in Ava, Sirian, and about three hundred Roman Catholic believers in Rangoon. But growth was so disrupted by the wars between Burma and Siam in the next two centuries that a total membership of five thousand in 1800 had fallen to about three thousand in 1832. As British control widened in the first half of the nineteenth century, Protestant growth, chiefly Baptist, made great advances. In 1813, the famous American missionary, Adoniram Judson, arrived in the country to serve there for nearly 40 years. He translated the Bible into Burmese in 1834. (Source: Moffett S.H., *Burma / 1813-1850 in: A History of Christianity in Asia*, Vol. 2, 2005, pp. 330-331.)

In 1966, the Burmese government expelled all foreign missionaries, but by then the Church had become self-supporting. As many Christians belong to the ethnic minorities such as Kachin, Chin, Shan and Karen, Christianity is viewed with some suspicion. This suspicion could increase now that the latest figures on religious affiliation (the 2014 census) have been published, which showed a strong growth in the number of Christians.

What church networks exist today?

Church networks: Myanmar	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	697,000	16.1
Protestant	2,799,000	64.5
Independent	941,000	21.7
Unaffiliated	23,200	0.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-119,000	-2.7
Total	4,341,200	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	1,703,000	39.2
Renewalist movement	1,217,000	28.0

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)

Although Roman Catholics and Anglicans have a large presence, the Baptist Church is particularly strong among the Kachin people: 85% of the whole population in Kachin State are estimated to be Christians. A plethora of other denominations also exist, some of which are affiliated with the Assemblies of God and Methodists.

Religious context

Religious Context: Myanmar	Numbers	%
Christians	4,342,000	8.1
Muslim	1,966,000	3.7
Hindu	878,000	1.6
Buddhist	40,655,000	75.5
Ethnoreligionist	4,754,000	8.8
Jewish	25	0.0
Bahai	85,800	0.2
Atheist	19,700	0.0
Agnostic	243,000	0.5
Other	910,720	1.7

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)

According to WCD statistics, Christians make up 8.1% of the population, Buddhists 75.5% and Muslims 3.7%. The 2014 government census (published in August 2016) puts Christians at 6.2%. Christians in Myanmar consider this figure far too low, as counting was not carried out in war-torn, Christian majority Kachin State. Most Christians belong to the ethnic minorities and not to the Burmese ("Bamar") majority. According to the contested government census, Buddhists make up 87.9% and Muslims 4.3% (around one million Rohingya had not been counted and less than an estimated 200,000 are still living in Rakhine State).

The "Patriotic Association of Myanmar", better known under its acronym "Ma Ba Tha", was founded in January 2014 with the goal of defending Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar against alleged threats. First and foremost this meant against the Muslim minority, especially the Rohingya, but Christians have been put under pressure by monks too.

The adoption of the so called "Laws on the Protection of Race and Religion" in [August 2015](#) was celebrated by nationalist Buddhist groups like the Ma Ba Tha countrywide. Whereas these laws are aimed chiefly at the Muslim minority in Rakhine State, Christians are affected by these laws as well: Conversions have to follow an administrative process including notification to different authorities. Any mixed marriages require in practice a conversion to Buddhism, thus protecting Buddhist women from Muslim men. Ma Ba Tha was banned in May 2017, re-emerged under a different name, and was banned again in 2018.

Notes on the current situation

- The majority of Christians are extremely poor, especially in rural areas. Many are illiterate or semi-literate, unskilled and live a hand-to-mouth existence. This is due to the government's neglect of the social development needs of the people, especially of Christians.
- Most born into a Christian family can expect a life of poverty, discrimination, and oppression. Christians frequently live close together, so their travelling can be monitored easily. They are

discriminated against in education and employment opportunities on a regular basis, especially as most belong to the ethnic minorities.

- Among the many IDPs in Myanmar, around 100,000 Christians are in camps in Kachin and Northern Shan State waiting for the fighting between government and ethnic minority armies to cease so that they can return to their villages. Additionally, ten thousands more are displaced in camps in China and Thailand.
- Around 700,000 Muslim Rohingya have been chased over the border into Bangladesh. Among them is a small group of converts to Christianity who are suffering not just from being refugees but also (and even more so) from persecution at the hands of their families and communities.
- Pastors and church workers in the countryside are hardly able to provide for their families, given their local church's inability to provide even the barest ministry support.

External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

- Religious context: August 2015
<http://www.irrawaddy.org/election/news/burma-parliament-approves-contentious-race-and-religion-bills>

WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

Myanmar scored 71 points in WWL 2019 and moved up to rank 18. In WWL 2018 it scored 65 points.

What type of persecution dominates?

- **Religious nationalism:** Radical Buddhists are generally tolerated by the government, although the Ma Ba Tha group was banned in May 2017 and again in 2018. Anyone deviating from the Buddhist heritage is regarded as an outsider and as potentially dangerous.
- **Dictatorial paranoia:** The army holds immense power and has intensified its fight against insurgent groups as well as ethnic minorities (which include Christians).

Who is driving persecution?

Buddhist leaders (monks) stir up communities to persecute Christians in predominantly Buddhist communities. The radical Buddhist movement Ma Ba Tha continues to "protect" Buddhism as the country's national religion. Its recent ban did not change anything as it found other ways to continue. Strong Buddhist, Muslim and tribal families persecute family members who convert to Christianity since conversion is seen as betrayal both of family and community. Local government officials, especially from rural areas, are often biased towards Buddhist leaders. This means that minorities like Christians, who in many cases happen to be both a religious and an ethnic minority, are disadvantaged and have no way of seeking justice. These Christians additionally suffer from the brutal and almost forgotten long-term war the Burmese army is fighting against insurgency groups, especially in the north of the country. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, the violent actions against several Christian groups by the largest insurgency group, the Communist United Wa State Army, added another driver of persecution to the already colorful mix in Myanmar.

What it results in

In predominantly Christian states like Kachin State, Karen State or in Northern Shan, even well-established historical churches are being attacked. More than 100,000 Christians live in IDP camps and are deprived of access to food and healthcare. Fighting increased in 2018, adding thousands more to the camps. In some instances, Buddhist monks have invaded church property and built Buddhist shrines within the church compounds. Converts are persecuted by their Buddhist, Muslim or tribal families and communities because they have left their former belief and have thereby removed themselves from community life. Communities who aim to stay "Buddhist only" make life for Christian families impossible by not allowing them to use community water resources. Non-traditional church groups experience opposition too, especially when they are located in the rural areas of Myanmar and/or are known for proselytizing.

Violence

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

Myanmar	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	3	64	154	100	10
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	3	25	19	2	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

- In September 2018, the Communist insurgent group "United Wa State Army" (UWSA), which controls parts of Eastern Shan State, closed all churches built after 1992 and detained more than 100 pastors, church leaders and Bible school students.
- According to a report in July 2018, the Burmese army destroyed [more than 60 churches](#) in 18 months. Among them were Catholic and Protestant churches and schools as well.
- On 31 January 2018, [two Christians](#) disappeared in Mansi township in Kachin State, last seen in custody of the army. Their dead bodies were found in March and it can be safely assumed that they were tortured and killed by the army, although the country's human rights commission concluded they were insurgents. Attacks by the army against Christians in Kachin or Shan State are commonplace.
- In most schools, all pupils - including non-Buddhists - are required to recite Buddhist teaching or prayers before classes begin.
- Converts are discriminated against in various ways. In one report, a teacher refused to give a Christian student a list of questions provided to others in preparation for tests. In another case, when a family sold a plot of land, the earnings were distributed to all siblings of the family except the convert.

External Links - WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: more than 60 churches
<https://www.christianpost.com/news/myanmar-bombs-60-churches-in-18-months-replaces-some-with-buddhist-pagodas-225673/>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: two Christians
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/kachin-finally-allowed-retrieve-two-missing-idps.html>

WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

Myanmar scored 71 points in WWL 2019 - a rise of 6 points compared to WWL 2018 - and moved up to rank 18. While the pressure on Christians did not increase significantly and converts (from a Buddhist, Muslim or tribal background) continued to face strong pressure especially from their family and community, the situation in Wa State deteriorated very fast and unexpectedly, increasing the violence score by more than three points. Although the authorities in Myanmar do not have any influence in this part of the country, the situation is still attributed to Myanmar, as the scoring of persecution does not only reflect persecution by a state. It also affected the *Church sphere of life* with an increase of almost one point. It should be kept in mind how difficult it is to obtain reports from war-torn Christian minority areas, as is also acknowledged by other international organizations and shown in the detention and sentencing of reporters (see "Context").

Persecution engines

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

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).

Religious nationalism (Very strong):

Buddhism is weaved into the nation's culture and there are Buddhist communities which would like to remain purely Buddhist. This is commonly emphasized by radical Buddhists and tolerated - and to some extent supported - by the national government. The majority of Myanmar's population (an estimated 60%) is of Burmese ethnicity, also called *Bama*. Being *Bama* is equated with being Buddhist. Everyone deviating from this heritage is labelled as being outside the community and therefore potentially dangerous. Pressure on Christians comes from two sides: One side is society, which includes the radical Buddhist movement once called *969*, but now notorious under their acronym *Ma Ba Tha*. The fact that this movement was officially banned in May 2017 did not have real consequences, the same is true for the second ban in 2018 (for details, see "Context" below). The other factor causing pressure is the government which is attempting to establish a peace agreement with a plethora of ethnic groups, many of them Christian. The implementation of the "Laws for the Protection of Race and Religion" is a sign of the continued influence of radical groups. (For further details see: Spheres of life and violence.) The recent emergence of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and its violent attacks in August

2017 as well as the international reactions to the Rohingya crisis will fuel *Religious nationalism* even further (see: "Context" below).

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

Myanmar has a long history of being ruled by the army and while the 2015 elected government cannot be called paranoid, Myanmar is one of the very few cases where it is the army holding almost dictatorial powers. According to the country's Constitution, written by the *Tatmadaw* (the Burmese army) in 2008, one quarter of parliament's seats are reserved for military staff. Moreover, the army holds the most important government offices, including the Ministry of defense and the Ministries of interior and border affairs. Despite all hopes for democracy, the army has intensified its fight against insurgent groups as well as ethnic minorities (which include Christians). The fact that the war has continued despite all Peace Conference meetings - and even increased in 2018 - shows where the true power lies.

The army will do everything to stay in control, calling upon Buddhist nationalism or ethnic heritage, if needed. The state continues to run so-called "Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools" (or *Na Ta La* - schools), which are attractive for minority people as they are run without school fees. These schools are used to influence young people and to introduce them to Buddhism. The army has continued with its practice of weakening ethnic insurgencies by encouraging ethnic youth to become drug-addicted, a practice that is affecting Christian Kachin as well. One of Asia's two largest opium-producing areas covers large parts of that region, especially Kachin State (together with parts of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand). Parts of the country are largely run by the *Tatmadaw*. As many commodities like jade, timber and various ores can be found in predominantly Christian territories like Shan State or among the Chin and Kachin, these Christians face heavy pressure from the army (and not only out of economic interest). This takes the form of being harassed, attacked and being used as porters. Companies are often run by the military or high-ranking politicians, and nepotism rules. There is no desire to share the country's wealth with its people. The recently emerging Muslim insurgency and the Rohingya crisis has made the army even bolder.

Communist and post-Communist oppression (Medium):

In the WWL 2019 reporting period, the largest insurgency group, the Communist United Wa State Army became violently active against Christians. Allegedly backed by China, they targeted Christian groups perceived as "missionaries" - mostly Baptist groups like the Lahu Baptist Convention or the Kachin Baptist Convention. This Communist crackdown resembles the one Chinese authorities are currently instigating against Christianity in China. Since the Myanmar authorities do not have control in the de facto semi-autonomous Wa region with its 450,000 inhabitants, the persecution engine here is not religious nationalism.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium): In some of the states where most Christians live, like Kachin or Shan State, some of Myanmar's most precious goods are to be found - such as jade and timber. Additionally, this region is part of the famous "Golden Triangle", one of the largest opium-producing hubs worldwide. Allegedly, government officials, the army and insurgent armies benefit from the drug producing and trafficking at different levels and stages. Anyone who opposes this or is simply in the way of traders, exploiters and traffickers is in serious danger. This is true for the Christians in these regions as well.

Drivers of persecution

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

Buddhist monk leaders stir up communities to persecute Christians in predominantly Buddhist communities. The radical Buddhist movement behind the Ma Ba Tha groups continues to “protect” Buddhism as the country’s national religion. This is intertwined with the protection of the ethnic "Burmese race" as well. The two bans on Ma Ba Tha activities do not change anything as they have always found other ways to continue their influence. Strong Buddhist, Muslim and Ethnic-animist families actively persecute family members who convert to Christianity, as conversion is seen as betrayal. Local government officials, especially from rural areas, are often biased towards Buddhist leaders, so minorities like Christians, who in many cases happen to be a religious and an ethnic minority, are disadvantaged and have no way of seeking justice. Last not least, the army continues fighting against the Christian insurgents and minorities as well. Insurgents sometimes also become drivers of persecution if they feel Christian churches are not supporting them strongly enough or when pastors are found advising young people not to join the fighting.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

The army will continue to defend its privileged place according to the Constitution which it drafted before passing on (parts of) power to a civilian government. Despite the international outcry about the

atrocities against the Rohingya minority, Aung San Suu Kyi and the government she is leading are clinging to power and have shown signs of Dictatorial paranoia in simply ignoring all criticism. This has been backed by support from non-Christian religious leaders and violent religious groups as mentioned in "Drivers of Religious nationalism" above.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

Most of Myanmar's landbound resources can be found in States which have a mainly Christian population or where Christians are a strong minority. The army together with local strongmen and politicians, but insurgents as well, collude by benefitting from this wealth on the expense of the population. Fighting continues and if Christians and others are in the way, they are simply driven away. If they dare to speak out against the prevailing injustice or give young people a perspective, they can even be actively targeted. This is even more true for all the actors benefitting from the illicit drug trade.

Communist and post-Communist oppression:

Revolutionary and paramilitary groups became very visible drivers of persecution when the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest insurgency group (estimated to have around 40,000 fighters) closed dozens of churches and detained almost a hundred Christians in a crackdown against "new churches". Allegedly, the UWSA is backed up by China and the crackdown was inspired by Chinese efforts to curb Christianity (as Shan State borders China). Reportedly, the UWSA is heavily involved in drug trafficking as well, so the actions may have had mixed motives.

Context

The landslide victory for the opposition party "National League for Democracy" (NLD) under Noble Peace Prize Winner and freedom icon, Aung San Suu Kyi, in November 2015 raised possibly too many hopes, in the country itself and worldwide. The NLD appointed an ethnic Chin Baptist Christian as vice-president and a Christian leads the Upper House of parliament (both powerless positions). Although Aung San Suu Kyi took over a plethora of positions in order to compensate from being banned from presidency, her prolonged silence on the issue of the Muslim Rohingya minority and the flight of hundreds of thousands of them showed how narrow her room for manoeuvring is, maybe combined with a lack of general interest in the issues of minorities.

2018 showed once again that the army retains the strongest position, based on its constitutional claim for three important ministries and 25% of all seats in parliament. Without the army's consent, no development may take place in the country, this is especially true for all questions related to war and reconciliation. The Burmese army has continued its attacks against ethnic minorities in Kachin and Shan State and even increased them. Christians are strongly affected and the level of violence is high. Aung San Suu Kyi is basically [powerless](#) in this respect.

The emergence of a Muslim insurgency with an organized group called ARSA (already mentioned under "Persecution engines" above) and the attacks carried out against border posts in October 2016 and [August 2017](#), led to unprecedented attacks against the Muslim minority of Rohingyas, destroying dozens of villages, killing possibly hundreds and driving more than 770,000 over the border to Bangladesh. This led the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to speak of a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

Ma Ba Tha continued to annoy the government, as it simply re-grouped and re-branded under a different name. Since the ban and any punishments had to be implemented by the Ministry of the Interior, which is run by the army (which has close contact with radical Buddhist groups like Ma Ba Tha), no serious action has been taken. The re-branded organization [has been banned](#) by the leading

Buddhist council again in July 2018, but if experience is anything to go by, nothing will change and Ma Ba Tha [will continue](#) to be active against minorities under whatever name.

Aung San Suu Kyi's top priority remains the reconciliation process with ethnic minorities across the country. (Many of the ethnic minorities – like the Kachin, Chin and Karen – are predominantly Christian.) However, all 21st Century Panglong Conferences so far - scheduled to take place every six months - did not succeed in forging peace or even taking steps in trust-building and reconciliation. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, Aung San Suu Kyi managed to get two further militant groups to [sign the ceasefire](#) pact - the New Mon State Party and the Lahu Democratic Union in February 2018. Unfortunately, these are again rather small insurgent groups with very limited power. A plethora of questions still has to be solved, among them the return of IDPs and refugees (many of them from Christian ethnic minorities) displaced in China and Thailand. But even more necessary is the immediate start of a trust-building process, e.g. by implementing an immediate country-wide cease-fire. So far only the opposite has taken place: Fighting in Shan State and in Kachin State increased, where ongoing [clashes](#) created thousands of new IDPs. International organizations are hindered from entering the conflict areas in order to get humanitarian aid to the IDP camps and even the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was [refused access](#) to some ethnic minority areas in May 2017. Senior army officers, former politicians and officials from insurgent groups are cooperating to make [huge profits](#) in Kachin State. They are taking over large expanses of agricultural land deserted by its owners – mainly Christians who are now forced to survive as IDPs in camps far away from the conflict zones. Meanwhile, ethnic-based parties (especially among the Kachin, Karen, Chin and Mon) are beginning to overcome political and personal rifts and are [merging](#) in preparation for the upcoming national elections in 2020.

At the time of writing (December 2018), the most recent Panglong conference in July 2018 has not brought any tangible results, except for a statement by China's special envoy in Myanmar, saying that China "[does not have its own interests](#)" in neighboring Myanmar's peace process. This is hardly believable as China reacted understandably harshly when clashes (and grenades) spilled over its border and killed [three of its citizens in May 2018](#). Additionally, the Myanmar government announced the [opening](#) of three "New Economic Zones" on the Chinese border, situated in war-torn Kachin and Shan States, which are important for China to open access to its land-locked Yunnan Province. Therefore, China does indeed have particular interest in the situation in Myanmar and allegedly also supports some of the minority insurgent groups in the border region, particularly the Wa, two thirds of whom live in Myanmar and one third in China. The Wa include a significant Christian minority and the United Wa State Army - as already mentioned above - has closed dozens of churches and detained at least around 100 Christians in a crackdown against "new churches" in September 2018.

Christian communities and how they are affected

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

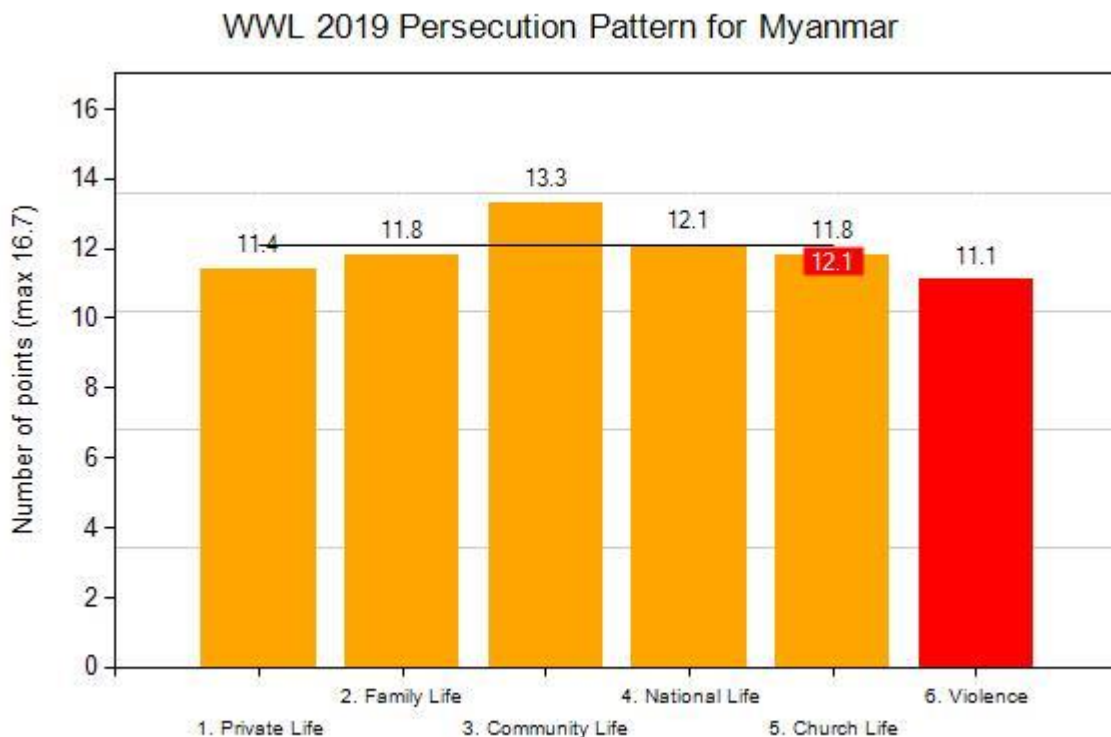
Historical Christian communities: This category consists of groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, but also traditional churches among the Christian minorities like the Kachin Baptist Church. These Christians are facing everyday pressure and occasional violent attacks, be it from the Burmese army or from radical Buddhist monks who are even building temples within church compounds in some areas.

Converts to Christianity: Converts from a Buddhist, Muslim or Ethnic-animist background are facing the strongest persecution both from the authorities and from families, friends and neighbors as well. Leaving Buddhism is not accepted for someone of Bama ethnicity. In all the publicity about Rohingya

refugees being forced to flee to Bangladesh, it is less well-known that there is a small number of Christian converts from a Muslim background among the Rohingya who are affected by the sudden upsurge in violence and have had to flee as well, where they have become more visible. These Christians not only face persecution because of their ethnic affiliation, but also because their Muslim families and communities put them under enormous pressure to return to Islam.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Groups such as Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are facing persecution from the community they live in, especially in rural areas. They are not just monitored, but are sometimes also hindered from gathering or holding Sunday school classes.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence



The WWL 2019 Persecution pattern for Myanmar shows:

- The overall pressure on Christians in Myanmar increased further in the WWL 2019 reporting period, with the average rising from 11.4 in WWL 2018 to 12.1 in WWL 2019.
- Converts are particularly affected by very high levels of pressure in the *Community, Family and Private spheres of life*. All Christians face very high pressure in the *National and Church spheres*. This pressure is fuelled i) by an increasing emphasis on Buddhism, excluding all other minorities and ii) by the continuing war against insurgencies, affecting - among others - predominantly Christian Kachin, Shan and Karen States. This war goes widely unnoticed, eclipsed by the widely publicized situation of the Rohingya. The actions against churches in Northern Shan State by the Communist United Wa State Army contributed to an increase in the scores for the *Church sphere* and violence.
- The score for violence against Christians rose from 7.8 in WWL 2018 to 11.1 in WWL 2019. However, due to ongoing fighting, especially in Kachin and Shan States, it is very difficult to obtain accurate reports on faith-based attacks against Christians and on churches attacked.

Private sphere:

Conversion to Christianity is mainly opposed by families and local communities. Converts from a Buddhist background have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family and therefore considered responsible for bringing shame on the family. Meeting with other Christians is usually not dangerous, but can pose a special challenge for converts. Known converts are closely monitored, ostracized and may face house arrest in order to hinder them from meeting with other Christians. In strong Buddhist villages, pastors are often special targets. Converts from a Muslim background are even more vulnerable since they are not only facing the above mentioned challenges, but also belong to a despised minority. There were reports of converts being ostracized and mocked for their faith during meals as well.

Family sphere:

Converts do not necessarily face the threat of losing their inheritance or custody rights, but women converts may well face the threat of divorce (if married). Organizing a baptism or a Christian wedding or funeral can become difficult - for converts with a Buddhist or Muslim background it has to be done in secret. The latter are also subjected to the wider Muslim minority's problem of being denied citizenship. Muslim Rohingya - and with them the minority of Christians from a Muslim background - are perceived as being Bengalese and effectively lack any legal status. Most of them are now residing in refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh. Parents face difficulties in raising their children according to Christian values as they face pressure from neighbors in Buddhist majority areas. In most schools, cultural and religious practice dictates that prior to the beginning of the class, pupils are required to recite some of Buddha's teachings. Dhama Schools are conducted by Buddhist monks in order to teach children about Buddhist doctrines and are increasingly spreading across the country. Children are required to participate and contribute financially to the Buddhist festivals of water and light. In Na Ta La schools, children are taught Buddhist prayers, their heads are shaven, and they have to beg for food every morning. Christian children are regularly bullied by Buddhist children in school. In the village schools it is normal to blame Christian children for anything. Christian children in school also receive less opportunities and will not be chosen for further education or special honors.

Community sphere:

There are communities that do not allow Christians in their villages. If a person converts in such a village they are subjected to strong harassment until they leave. But even in other villages, if Christians stop giving alms to Buddhist monks, refuse to contribute to the renovation or building of Buddhist temples, or desist from participating in Buddhist festivals, they are usually harassed, forced to make donations and threatened with expulsion from the village. Christians, especially those gathering in house-churches, are monitored, pressured into renouncing their faith and excluded from communal decisions and resources. This pressure is also felt in everyday life when they are refused help in gathering bamboo for repairing houses or denied access to water. Areas with a high percentage of Christians are deliberately disadvantaged through poor infrastructure and health care and the government prefers to build Na Ta La schools instead of regular state-run schools. In conflict zones, humanitarian aid to Christians is not allowed or is only given in minimal portions and international monitoring (or even access) is blocked.

Children of converts are facing discrimination by teachers and pupils at school. In one case a girl was removed from her class because of her faith; in another, a girl was not allowed to prepare for a test like the rest of the class. Children of Christians, not just of converts, have to attend non-Christian classes and can be forced to participate in Buddhist prayers or ceremonies. Especially if the families are poor and they come from an ethnic minority background, children will be sent to the *Na Ta La*

schools, referred to above. Discrimination in grades, and the bullying and mocking of Christian children are common occurrences. Another problem Christians are facing are the local oral laws ("Gamma laws"), declared in several communities and villagers by Buddhist monks and officials in order to restrict Christians.

National sphere:

Section 361 of the 2008 Constitution reads: "The Union recognizes the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union" while also recognizing the presence of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism in section 362. This "special position of Buddhism" has been abused by Buddhist radicals. In order to gain additional support from such groups and the *Bamar* majority in August 2015, the previous government adopted four religious conversion bills which aim to protect Buddhism by controlling conversion to other faiths, banning interfaith marriages and polygamy, and introducing birth controls. Buddhist women wishing to marry non-Buddhist men must first receive permission from their parents and local government officials and the non-Buddhist men would first need to convert to the Buddhist faith.

Concerning conversion, the law states that anyone seeking to change their faith needs to get permission from the Religious Conversion Registration body, which is comprised of local religion and immigration officials, a local administrator, the women's affairs chairman and a local education officer. Thus, the community knows if a person wants to convert and they are given 3-6 months to try to convince him or her to withdraw their papers. The law's first target is the Muslim minority, but all other minorities are affected likewise and it discourages both citizens considering conversion and converts from testifying about their new faith. In Myanmar, some tribes have their own additional laws which are used by some communities to drive out Christians from their villages. Christians also have less access to loans and state benefits than non-Christian business partners or customers.

The strict denial of all genocide claims against Rohingya and the Christian minority Kachin (where the situation may amount to [crimes against humanity](#)) shows that Christians can neither expect a fair treatment before courts nor an international monitoring of their dire situation.

Church sphere:

While there are Christian church buildings in various parts of Myanmar, restrictions are in place to make it difficult to obtain permission for building new churches. There are up to eight different levels of permission required to build a church, and applications must pass through various military-run departments and district and township-level administrative offices often led by former army officers. As a result, permission for land ownership for churches almost never materializes. The US State Department's Country Report 2017 states: "Christian communities in Chin and Kachin States reported that while applications to local authorities for property registration, construction, and renovation were not formally denied, the applications encountered delays spanning several years or were lost altogether. These included continued reports that local government officials delayed permits to restore crosses previously destroyed, or to renovate and build Christian churches in Chin State. Local authorities in Chin State also continued to delay applications from Christian groups and churches to buy land in the name of their religious organizations. Religious groups said individual members circumvented this requirement by purchasing land on behalf of the group, a practice the government tolerated."

Land-grabbing is another problem Christians are facing. This is why many Christians use business establishments as places of worship on Sundays or opt to gather in house-churches. Churches are monitored - especially in Buddhist-dominated areas - and church leaders and pastors are targeted

frequently by radical Buddhists as this is a way to paralyze the church. One pastor shared that he constantly feels as if everybody is waiting for him to make a mistake. All religious publications are censored and reviewed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Some churches have started to print their own materials, but owning printing presses is made very difficult, publishing in minority languages remains out of the question and strict censorship rules apply. Importing Christian materials is very difficult and even impossible in minority languages. Most churches are not allowed to invite foreign workers for religious purposes. Churches in ethnic minority areas face even more difficulties, as they are often regarded as being places for anti-government meetings and communication points for ethnic minority groups. In areas of civil war, like Kachin and Shan State, church buildings are frequently targeted for attack as people use them for refuge from the fighting. In the Wa territory, Christian leaders were only released after they had signed a document promising that they would limit their Christian activities strictly to house meetings. Church buildings have been attacked and all Christian materials confiscated.

Violence:

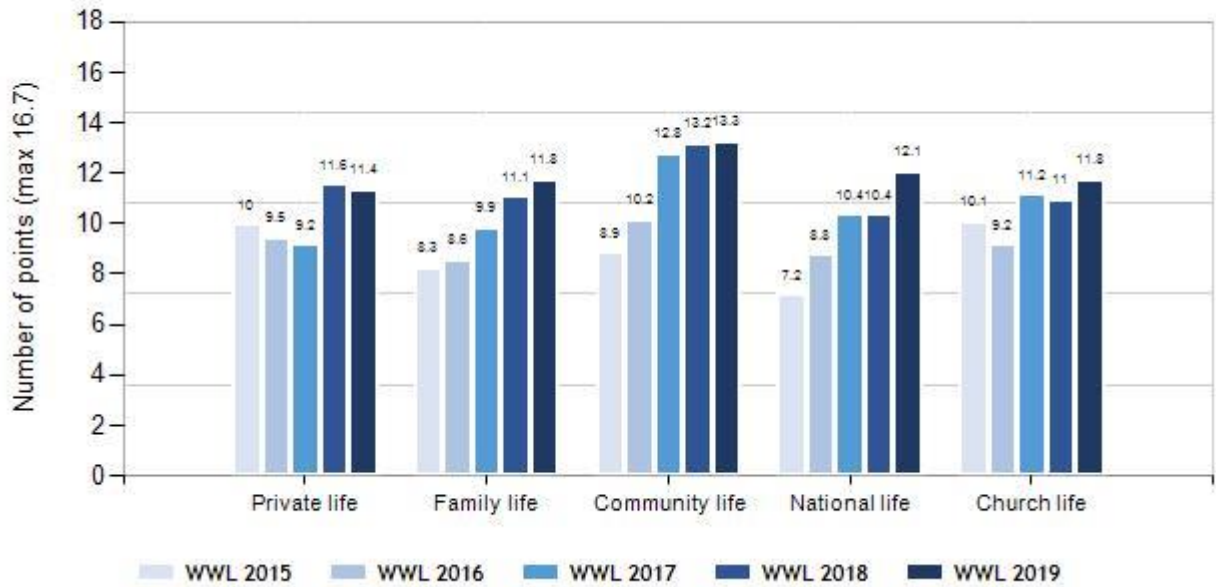
Violence against Christians is at a very high level in Myanmar. The United Wa State Army closed at least 62 churches and detained around a hundred Christian leaders and Bible school students in September 2018 in an apparent effort to curb Christianity. According to a report from July 2018, the Burmese Army destroyed [more than 60 churches](#) in 18 months. Among them were Catholic and Protestant churches and schools as well.

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

5 Year trends

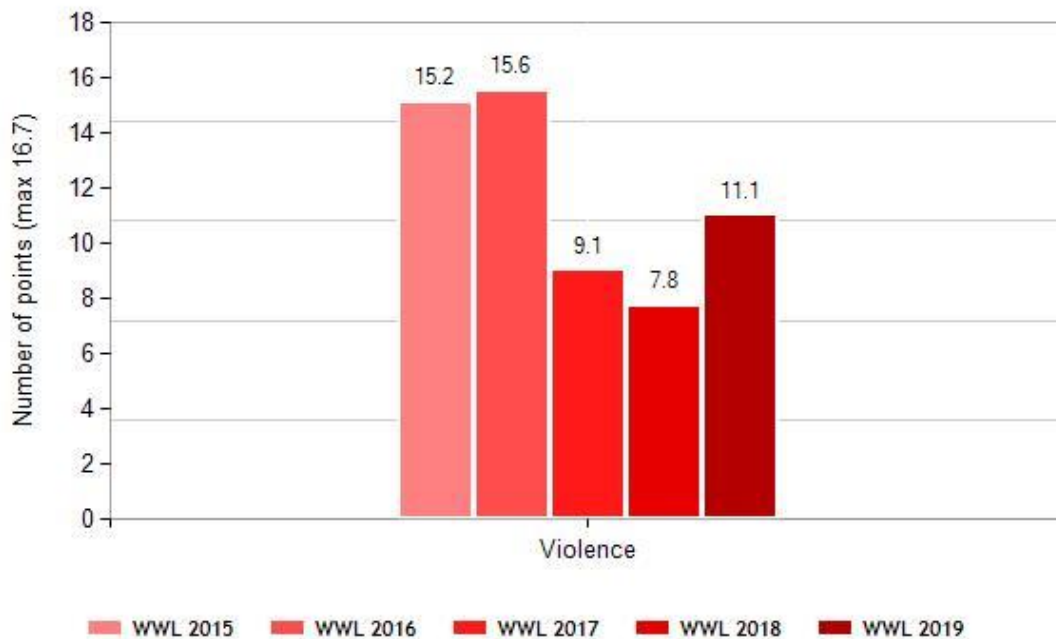
The volatility of Myanmar and how it affects Christians can be seen clearly in the persecution profile over the last five years. Chart 1 shows that the pressure in *Community life* has increased and levelled off at a very high level in the WWL 2017-WWL 2019 reporting periods. The level of pressure for *Family life* increased every year, showing that it is getting more difficult for converts to live their new-found Christian faith. The strong emphasis on Buddhism and the nationalism connected with it made the scores for *National* and *Church life* steadily increase. The most recent spike in 2019 for those spheres was influenced by the developments in Northern Shan State and by the UWSA. The average level of pressure on Christians increased steadily over the last five years from 8.9 in WWL 2015 to the very high level of 12.1, as can be seen in chart 2. The violence level increased as well, again influenced by the actions of the UWSA. It should, however, be kept in mind that it is very difficult to get detailed information from the war-torn region of predominantly Christian Kachin State, so the real level of violence and pressure may be even higher. This is the reason why the level of violence in recent years shows lower scores than in WWL 2015 and WWL 2016: The Tatmadaw has been very successful in keeping these regions isolated.

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



WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Myanmar	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2019	12.1
2018	11.4
2017	10.7
2016	9.2
2015	8.9

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



Gender specific persecution

In general, persecution in Myanmar does not discriminate according to gender. However, unconfirmed reports indicate that government agents like policemen or higher ranking army members are being rewarded when they marry a Christian woman. The reward consists either of money or of a promotion in rank. Christian women often accept these marriages as they perceive it as a way out from a life of dire poverty and insecurity. Due to the patriarchal culture of Myanmar, women are expected to follow the religion of their husbands. So if a Christian woman marries a non-Christian man she would be pressured into follow her husband's religion. The aim of this policy is to weaken insurgencies - some of which are led by Christian minorities.

Christian converts can as well be forced into becoming Buddhist monks or nuns. The government does not have a provision for Christian divorces, since the Church does not recognize divorces. Christians cannot claim for anything during a divorce case, but this affects men and women alike. As men are usually the breadwinners, once they are persecuted and lose their livelihood, whole families are affected economically. Finally, the anti-conversion law gives a Buddhist woman in an interfaith marriage more rights and privileges. It is possible for a Christian man to not be able to claim for anything in a divorce case since there is no law to protect his rights in a divorce.

Na Ta La schools convert Christian children which is an effective way of stopping Christianity from spreading to the next generation. Boys are raised to be monks; when they start at the *Na Ta La* schools, their heads are shaven, they are given monks clothes and they also go round the local community begging for food. Kachin men and boys are in danger of being suspected insurgents or at least supporters of them. Usually it is solely the army who decides what to do with such suspects.

Persecution of other religious minorities

The persecution of the Muslim Rohingya minority has been referred to in this country dossier several times. As of December 2018, it does not seem very probable that Myanmar is going to take them willingly back from Bangladesh, where they fled to save their lives. Driven by the army and religious leaders - and widely backed by many citizens - this policy fits the country's increasing *Religious nationalism*. Non-Rohingya Muslims in other parts of the country are also facing severe persecution and discrimination. Apart from that, no other religious groups are known to be persecuted.

Future outlook

The political outlook: The international focus on Myanmar has been completely focused on the situation of the Rohingya, especially the refugees in neighboring Bangladesh. The country has been branded very negatively in international headlines, especially after the UN Human Rights chief spoke in September 2017 of a ["textbook example of ethnic cleansing"](#) concerning the Rohingya. According to Myanmar's National Security Adviser, his country is [willing to take back](#) all 700,000 Rohingya refugees, provided they return voluntarily. This however, is unlikely if there are no security guarantees. The situation of the Rohingya, often dubbed the "most persecuted minority of the world", could serve as a rallying cry for radical Muslims across the region and add to an already increasing radicalism, given that hundreds were killed and an estimated 770,000 displaced. Until now, international radical Islamic groups did not capitalize on the situation. This may change, as Bangladesh announced in November 2018 to [postpone the repatriation program](#) until after the elections, so that it will start only in 2019. But even if the program would run at repatriating 150 Rohingya per day - which was what both sides had initially agreed upon - it would take 13 years for everyone to return who had fled to Bangladesh in 2017. And this does not include those who had fled earlier.

The outlook for Christians - viewed through the lens of:

- **Religious nationalism:** Hidden in the shadow of the Rohingya situation is the plight of Christian minorities, against which the army is increasing its attacks, [displacing](#) thousands. In the WWL 2019 reporting period at least 7,000 IDPs were added to the already more than 100,000 IDPs displaced from conflict in previous months and years. Meanwhile, the government continues with its divide-and-rule strategy. Thein Swe, Union Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, said the government was unable to release the findings of the census 2014 due to [ongoing disputes](#) over who belonged to which ethnic group: "Taking the case of the Kachin, he said there could be between six and 12 sub-ethnicities depending on who you listen to. Others dispute claims the Chin have 53 sub-ethnic groups." The fact that the army has restricted progress by [rejecting talks](#) concerning ethnic rights in the wake of the Panglong Conference in July 2018 does not come as a surprise as it does not have a genuine interest in peace, reconciliation and a federal Myanmar, however structured. Radical Buddhist groups like Ma Ba Tha are being watched carefully by fellow Buddhist groups and politicians, but their influence and rhetoric against non-Buddhist minorities is unbroken. According to a [report](#) by The Irrawaddy on 23 July 2018, the reaction to its latest ban was that the foundation is sending forms to its sub-chapters across the country asking them if the association should continue with its campaign "to protect the race and religion" as well as to see if the members agree to follow the ban as the association was formed based on "consensus rule". Their radical stance is possibly best reflected by a report which [quoted Ashin Wirathu](#), one of the most outspoken and radical Buddhist monks, as saying: "I am only warning people about Muslims. Consider it like if you had a dog that would bark at strangers coming to your house – it is to warn you. I am like that dog. I bark." *Religious nationalism* will continue unabated and could even increase against Christians seeing as most Muslims have been driven out of the country.
- **Dictatorial paranoia and Organized corruption and crime:** The army's role is likely to further increase both in politics and in fighting against insurgents. Another incentive for the army to retain its strong position is that it is deeply involved in both legal and illicit trade, which mainly affects predominantly Christian areas like Kachin State. Violence has increased despite all progress in democratization and the non-inclusive ceasefire agreements. There are many problems complicating peaceful solutions: For instance, army staff and some ethnic insurgents are involved in drug trafficking and the exploitation of resources like [Jade](#) and timber. Trust-building will be impossible as long as the army offensives continue to target the largely Christian Kachin minority and the fighting in Karen State persists. The reconciliation process is very slow and a stalemate is feared, especially as government (and military) resources are currently focused on the Rohingya minority and the ARSA. The signs are [not very promising](#) for the vision of a democratic and federal state developing. It has to be kept in mind that Aung San Suu Kyi [does not have full power](#) and, in practice, the army is completely autonomous.
- **Communist and post-Communist oppression:** As 2018 draws to a close, it is difficult to estimate if this engine will continue to play a dominant role in the self-governed Wa State. However, the damage is done, dozens of churches and Bible schools have been closed, Christian leaders and students have been detained or expelled. It seems safe to say that Wa State - at least in religious terms - will never look the same as before.

Conclusion: It is high time that the international community widens its view beyond the devastating situation of the Rohingya and finds ways to talk to the government and to other political actors exercising influence in Naypyidaw. The fact that the government seems to be retreating more and more into the arms of China, does not bode well for Myanmar's Christian minority, especially when

reports are taken seriously that China's Communist Party would seem to be behind the Communist crackdown on Christians in Myanmar's Wa State.

External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

- Context: powerless
<https://thediplomat.com/2018/05/myanmars-fighting-season-in-kachin/>
- Context: August 2017
https://intranet.globalpoint.info/wwu/Lists/developments/AllItems.aspx?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=863009606d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_08_25&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-863009606d-399904105
- Context: has been banned
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/nationalist-buddhist-group-banned-again-in-myanmar/82894>
- Context: will continue
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/nationalists-rally-yangon-denounce-new-ban-ma-ba-tha.html>
- Context: sign the ceasefire
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/armed-groups-sign-ceasefire-pact-amid-fighting-in-north-myanmar/81512>
- Context: clashes
<http://www.aseantoday.com/2017/08/aung-san-su-kyi-still-a-noble-democracy-champion/>
- Context: refused access
<http://us10.campaign-archive2.com/>
- Context: huge profits
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/features/ex-ministers-armed-groups-operate-farms-kachins-conflict-areas.html>
- Context: merging
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/myanmar-ethnic-parties-merge-for-2020-power-push/81992>
- Context: does not have its own interests”
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-not-special-interests-supporting-myanmars-peace-process-official.html>
- Context: three of its citizens in May 2018
<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/three-chinese-nationals-killed-in-muse-attacks-in-myanmar-local-official-says-05152018161534.html>
- Context: opening
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/govt-approves-sites-3-new-economic-zones-along-china-border.html>

- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: crimes against humanity
<http://www.fortifyrights.org/publication-20180830.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: more than 60 churches
<https://www.christianpost.com/news/myanmar-bombs-60-churches-in-18-months-replaces-some-with-buddhist-pagodas-225673/>
- Future outlook: "textbook example of ethnic cleansing"
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57490>
- Future outlook: willing to take back
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-security-myanmar/myanmar-says-willing-to-take-back-all-rohingya-refugees-idUSKCN1IY0AS?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>
- Future outlook: postpone the repatriation program
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/rohingya-repatriation-to-myanmar-delayed-to-next-year/83905>
- Future outlook: displacing
<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/kachin-fighting-04272018160936.html>
- Future outlook: ongoing disputes
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/ethnic-groups-blast-myanmar-for-gaps-in-2014-census/81663>
- Future outlook: rejecting talks
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/tatmadaw-objects-discussion-ethnic-rights-peace-conference.html>
- Future outlook: report
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/buddhist-nationalists-warn-latest-ban-cause-public-discontent.html>
- Future outlook: quoted Ashin Wirathu
<https://theconversation.com/militant-buddhism-is-on-the-march-in-south-east-asia-where-did-it-come-from-86632>
- Future outlook: Jade
<https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/myanmars-jade-fueled-war/>
- Future outlook: not very promising
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/official-peace-talks-unfc-cancelled-amid-stalemate-fears.html>
- Future outlook: does not have full power
<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co17183-after-shaming-aung-san-su-kyi-then-what/>

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).