



North Korea – #1

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 92 / Position:1

WWL 2016: Points: 92 / Position: 1

2. Main persecution engines:

The main persecution engine affecting Christians in North Korea is *Communist* and *post-Communist Oppression* blended with *Dictatorial Paranoia*.

3. Context:

North Korea remains at the top of the World Watch List. Hopes that Kim Jong-Un would be more open for reforms have faltered and he is evidently pursuing a policy of unpredictable purges to consolidate his power. Christianity continues to be viewed as Western and “hostile”. Christians try to hide their faith to avoid being arrested and sent to labour camps. Most parents even refrain from introducing their children to the Christian faith out of fear that something could slip their tongue should anyone ask about Christian activities.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

There are only two of the four World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity existing in North Korea: A small percentage of the historical Christian communities (in existence prior to the Korean War) have been able to hide their faith and form an underground church. There are also communities of converts to Christianity from a Communist or a Kim Il-Sung/Kim Jong-II background. Christians from both categories risk arrest, labour camp and death.

5. Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence:

- The overall pressure on Christians remains at virtually the same extreme level as in WWL 2016. Citizens are expected to give praise to the leading Kim family, and to no one else, leaving no room for any deviation.
- All spheres of life show extreme pressure levels, with maximum scores in the *private*, *church*, and *national* spheres of life. While the pressure on the *church* and *national* spheres is typical for Communist countries (which in theory still applies to North Korea), the pressure on the remaining spheres shows that no religion is tolerated in this system of totalitarian *Dictatorial Paranoia*.
- The violence level is scored at a very high level. Reports of violent incidents can rarely be published due to security reasons. More than 20 Christians were killed and more than 100 were arrested in the WWL 2017 reporting period.

6. Future outlook:

The regime seems to isolate itself deliberately (as seen in its series of rocket and nuclear tests), but its biggest challenge is its relationship with China. The nation still depends heavily on China economically and cannot afford to be abandoned by it. China, although increasingly unhappy with the regime’s behaviour, still has reasons to keep North Korea afloat, one reason being a potential



influx of refugees. Even if 2017 may bring some changes, such as improvements in the economy, nothing will improve for Christians, given that they are regarded as enemies of the state.

7. Prayer Points:

- Kim Jong-Un has continued to consolidate his power. No changes or improvements have been seen in the past year. Please pray for Kim Jong-Un, that he would come to know the one true God. Pray for change within the regime and that the power of evil will be broken.
- The situation of Christians is vulnerable and precarious. They face persecution from state authorities and their non-Christian family, friends, and neighbours. Pray for their protection. Pray for Christians who suffer in prisons, labour camps and remote areas. Pray that God will give the North Korean Church strength and endurance.
- North Korea remains at the top of the World Watch List. Pray that the country's rulers will come to know God, for the protection of the North Korean Church, and for healing and restoration to take place in this country.

8. Role of Open Doors

Open Doors' goal has always been to 'strengthen what remains and is about to die' (Rev 3:2). This verse is especially applicable for the situation of the North Korean Church. Without our support, many Christians would starve to death. The scope of work focused on in North Korea includes the following:

- Supplying persecuted believers with emergency relief aid (food, medicines, clothes, etc.).
- Distribution of books and other Christian materials.
- Training through radio broadcasting.
- Providing, shelter, aid, training and training materials to North Korean believers in China (who often travel back to North Korea).