



Uzbekistan – #16

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 71 / Position: 16

WWL 2016: Points: 70 / Position: 15

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Uzbekistan are *Dictatorial Paranoia* (which has emerged from *Communist and post-Communist Oppression*) and to a lesser extent *Islamic Oppression*.

3. Context:

Uzbekistan has one of the harshest dictatorships in Central Asia. The regime will do everything possible to stay in power – all forms of opposition and deviations from the norm will be ruthlessly attacked. Christianity is regarded as an alien and destabilising factor. On top of this Believers from a Muslim Background (BMBs) experience additional pressure from their social and cultural environment.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

All four World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity exist in Uzbekistan and are experiencing some form of persecution. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians and Historical Christian communities experience the least problems from the government as they do not usually evangelise actively. Communities of converts to Christianity (in this case, converts from a Muslim background, BMBs) bear the brunt of the persecution both at the hands of the state and from family, friends and community. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines, especially when the churches have not been registered.

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

- The overall pressure on Christians – although very high – went down very slightly in the WWL 2017 reporting period.
- The pressure is extreme in the *private, national, and church* spheres. Pressure in the *family and community* spheres is at a very high level. This is typical for a situation in which *Dictatorial Paranoia* is the main persecution engine.
- Pressure resulting from the persecution engine *Islamic Oppression* is present mostly in the *private, family and community* spheres and is exerted particularly on BMBs by the social environment.
- A significant number of violent incidents were reported, which has caused the score for violence against Christians to rise from a fairly high level to a high level.
- The overall persecution situation in Uzbekistan is mainly caused by a paranoid government seeking to increase its control over all areas of life.

6. Future outlook:



Uzbek President Islam Karimov died on 2 September 2016. He was quickly succeeded by Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev. This means that for Christians little (if anything) will change: state bodies (police, secret services, *mahalla* local authorities) will continue to monitor religious activities by various means (bugging homes, tapping phones, infiltrating groups, etc.) and visit church services. Raids on house church groups, confiscation of religious materials, interrogation and detention of believers will continue. Pressure on and violence against BMBs from family, friends and local community is likely to continue, if not increase.

7. Prayer Points:

- Uzbekistan has one of the harshest dictatorships in Central Asia. They will do anything to remain in power. All forms of opposition and deviations from the norm are attacked. Christianity is one of these. Pray for change and for acceptance of Christianity in Uzbekistan.
- Pray for Baptists, Evangelicals and Pentecostals who are threatened, raided, fined and arrested. No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed.
- Pray for new believers placed under house arrest by their Muslim families to make them recant their faith. Pray that Christian women forced to marry against their will would trust in God's provision.

8. Role of Open Doors

Open Doors provides immediate aid to Central Asian believers when they are placed in prison, excluded from families and communities, and deprived of livelihood and employment because of their faith in Christ. We also strengthen the persecuted Church in Central Asia through:

- Literature distribution.
- Prayer support.
- Biblical training.
- Presence ministry.
- Income-generating projects.
- Relief ministry.