



Vietnam – #17

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 71 / Position: 17

WWL 2016: Points: 66 / Position: 20

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Vietnam are *Communist and post-Communist Oppression and Ethnic Antagonism*.

3. Context:

Communism is more than just cosmetic in Vietnam as was shown in January 2016, when the new leadership was announced, countering all hopes for a more reformist approach. The Catholic Church is by far the largest Christian community in the country, but the government sees it as being tied to a foreign power, the Vatican, and as a remnant from French colonial days. On 18 November 2016 the government adopted a new Law on Belief and Religion, a revised version of its Law No. 92, which limits freedom of religion considerably.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

All World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity exist and are affected by persecution. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians are regularly monitored by the authorities. Historical Christian communities have experienced arrests and land-grabbing by the authorities. Communities of converts to Christianity from a Buddhist or ethnic-animist background face the strongest persecution, which comes not only from the authorities, but also from families, friends and neighbours. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities tend to gather in house-churches and (like converts) their members are often from ethnic minorities like the Montagnards and face discrimination at various levels of society.

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

- The overall pressure on Christians is very high and rose considerably in the WWL 2017 reporting period. This was mainly caused by the authorities reverting to Communist rhetoric and the new draft law limiting religious groups by especially controlling their meetings.
- Pressure is strongest in the *national* and *church* spheres, which is typical for Communist countries. Pressure is also very high in the *private* sphere reflecting the problems Christian converts from other religions are facing.
- Pressure from *Communist and post-Communist Oppression and Ethnic Antagonism* is present in the abovementioned spheres as well as in the *community* sphere. The pressure here occurs because many Christians belong to ethnic minorities.
- Finally, the increasing pressure is reflected in a rise in violence against Christians, which remains at a very high level. Three Christians were killed for their faith in the reporting period.

6. Future outlook:



The Communist Party installed a technocrat rather than a reformer as its new leader. The growing tensions with China may lead to a phase of insecurity and re-orientation and to restricting any views seen as deviating, including Christian ones. Despite having been granted a voice in the drafting process of the law on religion, Christians and other religious minorities cannot expect any relief from it, on the contrary, it will cause difficulties for them in the future.

7. Prayer Points:

- Pray for proper discipleship of the many ethnic minorities coming to faith in rural areas.
- Pray for family members pressuring their relatives to return to traditional faiths and rituals. Pray that they would see Christ through their Christian relatives.
- As the Christian minority grows, the government works hard to monitor churches and curb the growth of Christianity. Pray for a loosening of restrictions and increased freedom.

8. Role of Open Doors

The role of Open Doors is based upon the following pillars:

- Biblical training to respond to the continuing need for trained workers of the growing number of churches.
- Equipping and training Christian believers, with special emphasis on children, youth and women.
- Providing Bibles (Children and tribal Bibles) and other Christian literature to help Christians understand God's Word in their own tongue.
- Providing assistance through literacy and socioeconomic development.
- Providing advocacy and immediate relief to tribal believers.