



Bahrain – #48

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 54 / Position: 48

WWL 2016: Points: 54 / Position: 48

2. Persecution engines:

The persecution engines operating in Bahrain are *Islamic Oppression* (main) and *Dictatorial Paranoia*.

3. Context:

The rulers of this Gulf State have managed to consolidate their powers through repressive means. This mainly Shia-Islamic country is relatively tolerant in general because of its international position in banking and trade. A considerable number of expatriate/migrant Christians (mainly from South Asia) work and live in Bahrain and are relatively free to practice their faith in private places of worship, but proselytising Muslims is illegal. The constitutional provision regarding religious freedom is full of contradictions. On the one hand, it provides for religious freedom, and on the other hand, it states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals. In the WWL 2017 period, the king donated land for the construction of a second Coptic church.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians and communities of converts to Christianity (here from a Muslim background – BMBs) that are affected by persecution. BMBs bear the brunt as they face pressure from their own family members and community.

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

- The overall pressure on Christians has remained at a very high level, increasing very slightly compared to WWL 2016.
- Christians face most pressure in the *private*, *family* and *national* spheres of life, which all have very high level scores. This reflects the situation for BMBs who face persecution from family, community leaders and government officials.
- The score for violence is zero as was the case in WWL 2016.
- The overall persecution situation in Bahrain is fuelled by *Islamic Oppression*, *Dictatorial Paranoia* and (to some extent) *Ethnic Antagonism* and is driven mainly by Muslim religious leaders, family members, community leaders and government officials. These drivers work in tandem which makes life for Christians very challenging.

6. Future outlook:

Bahrain is very prone to changes in regional politics as both Iran and Saudi Arabia want to influence the politics of the country. For now, the royal family from the minority Sunni group seems to have consolidated its power with the help of Saudi Arabia. That means the likelihood of protest or violence to materialise in the next year or so is less. On the other hand, the impact of Wahhabism



from Saudi Arabia will keep pushing the already conservative society to the extreme. Thus, it is likely that radical Islam (and hence *Islamic Oppression*) will increase in the country, which will mean that pressure on Christians will continue.

7. Prayer Points:

- Pray that Believers from Muslim Backgrounds would grow in their knowledge of Christ and would become secure in their faith. Pray for those who have been shunned from their families and communities upon their conversion.
- The constitutional provision for religious freedom in Bahrain is very contradictory. On the one hand, it provides for religious freedom, but on the other hand it puts a restrictive condition stating that the practice of religions outside of Islam should not violate established customs, public policy, or public morals. Pray that true religious freedom would increase in Bahrain.
- Pray that Bahraini Christians would have the courage, wisdom, and boldness to reach out to their Muslim neighbours, schoolmates, and family members.

8. Role of Open Doors