



Bangladesh – #26

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 63 / Position: 26

WWL 2016: Points: 57 / Position: 35

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Bangladesh are *Islamic Oppression*, mixed with *Religious Nationalism* and *Ethnic Antagonism*.

3. Context:

Violence of Islamic groups, home-grown and at least inspired by international extremist groups like the Islamic State (IS), grabbed international headlines and led to a strongly increased level of fear by all citizens of Bangladesh. Minorities like Christians are naturally more affected by this as they are not only exposed to a growing number of attacks, but also to more conservatism in society, something especially converts are facing.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

All World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity exist in Bangladesh and are experiencing persecution. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians are least affected. Historical Christian communities and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities came under increased persecution in the WWL 2017 reporting period. However, the main persecution is experienced by communities of converts to Christianity, where the converts come from a Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist background. They often gather in hidden groups and house churches out of fear of attack.

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

- The overall pressure on Christians is at a high level and increased considerably in comparison to the WWL 2016 reporting period. Responsible for this rise is the growing influence of militant Islamic groups, at least partly inspired by international groups like Islamic State.
- Pressure is at a very high level and strongest in the *community* and *private* spheres. Pressure is next highest in the *family* sphere. This is typical for a situation where converts bear the brunt of persecution.
- Pressure resulting from the persecution engines *Islamic Oppression* and *Religious Nationalism* is present in the spheres mentioned and was felt more in the reporting period. This pressure is particularly being exerted by the social environment like family, neighbours, and the local community.
- The rise in pressure is accompanied by a very noticeable rise in violence against Christians, which reached an extreme level. This was most evident in the case of four Christians killed for their faith in the WWL 2017 reporting period.

6. Future outlook:

The country's leadership announced that it intends to fight strongly against all radical groups. However, it came as a shock to find out that young, well-off, middle class citizens were behind the



Dhaka café attack on 1 July 2016. The continuing political struggle between the (more secular) Awami League and the (more Muslim) Bangladesh National Party does not bode well for the country's future. That the latter has a Christian in its leadership team may be seen as a ray of hope in a country shaken by increasing violence.

7. Prayer Points:

- Pray for the Bangladeshi government. The ruling coalition, the Awami League (AL), is entering their fourth year of their leading term. Please uphold the AL in your prayers so they will govern the country with wisdom. Pray also for the opposition party so they will collaborate with the government to build a peaceful nation instead of inciting violence like in previous years.
- Pray for Christians who have left their communities as a result of pressure to renounce their faith. Pray that the Lord would provide for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.
- Pray that Christians who are mentally and physically abused would be granted a steadfast faith.

8. Role of Open Doors

The role of Open Doors' ministry in Bangladesh is based upon the following pillars:

- Equipping and training Christian believers, with special emphasis on emerging leadership and BMBs.
- Providing Bibles (including Study Bibles for graduates) and other Christian literature.
- Providing assistance through literacy and socioeconomic development.
- Providing advocacy and immediate relief to victims of persecution.
- Preparing believers how to deal with persecution and how to react through *Standing Strong Through the Storm* seminars.