



Central African Republic – #34

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 58 / Position: 34

WWL 2016: Points: 59 / Position: 26

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in the Central African Republic (CAR) are *Islamic Oppression* and to a lesser extent *Ethnic Antagonism*.

3. Context:

The recent civil war in Central African Republic (CAR) has claimed thousands of lives, displaced hundreds of thousands, and caused severe destruction of property. Although the Séléka have now been driven out of many parts of the country, numerous challenges remain. In Bangui, a growing group of Islamic militants continue to keep a stronghold in the so-called PK5 enclave where they instil a reign of terror. In the northeast, which is mainly populated by Muslims, Christians have been forced to flee from their villages and denied access to farming fields. Large groups of Christians live in extremely poor conditions in refugee camps. An election was held in the country in the past year and there has been some improvement in the security situation.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

CAR is home to three of the World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity: Historical Christian communities, communities of converts to Christianity from a Muslim background (MBBs) and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities. All are affected by persecution to a similar extent.

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

- Overall, the pressure on Christians in CAR is at a high level and increased in comparison to WWL 2016. This is mainly because the reverberations of the sectarian conflict pervade all aspects of life in Muslim dominated areas of the country.
- Pressure is spread out fairly evenly over all the *spheres of life* but is strongest in the *church* sphere.
- Violence against Christians is at a very high level but shows a decrease compared to WWL 2016 when it was at an extreme level. In the WWL 2017 reporting period, former Séléka continued to be responsible for violent incidents against Christians in the north-eastern provinces of the country and in some areas of Bangui.
- The overall persecution situation in CAR is one of a country that has yet to fully emerge from a civil war, which was fought partly along religious lines. The effects of this conflict are still being felt in many parts of the country.

6. Future outlook:

The recent conflict in CAR has fundamentally changed the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country. Unless the reconciliation process and the attempt to end the cycle of impunity in CAR succeed, there is grave risk that the polarisation and conflict among Muslims and



Christians in CAR will continue and exacerbate religious conflict. Despite the recent elections (which many hoped would bring a fresh chance of reconciliation), the Séléka militia seem unwilling to lay down their arms and there is still a serious risk of a relapse in to violent sectarian conflict.

7. Prayer Points:

- Pray for those who continue to target Christians, particularly in the northeast of CAR. Pray for their eyes to be opened to the truth of Jesus.
- Pray for persecuted believers to know God's faithfulness and peace in the midst of earthly chaos. Pray for provision for those who give up all worldly possessions and rights to know Jesus.
- Pray for wisdom for pastors as they minister to members in the face of great difficulties. Pray that the Lord will comfort them so they will be able to comfort others.

8. Role of Open Doors

We have been working to not only highlight the plight of the Church in the country, but also assisting the Church to provide emotional and physical relief to Christians targeted in violence. Open Doors support to the Church includes:

- Persecution preparedness training.
- Cross-cultural evangelism training.
- Reconciliation training.
- Relief assistance to church leaders affected by violent persecution.
- Medical aid to Christian victims of violent persecution.
- Help in business ventures.
- Financial support to persecuted/marginalised believers.
- Training in economic rehabilitation.
- Reconstruction of churches destroyed in violence.