



Colombia – #50

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 53 / Position: 50

WWL 2016: Points: 55 / Position: 46

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Colombia are *Organised Corruption and Crime*, *Ethnic Antagonism*, and to a lesser extent *Secular Intolerance* and *Denominational Protectionism*. The intensity of the persecution engine *Organised Corruption and Crime* diminished due to the peace negotiations between the government and FARC guerrillas.

3. Context:

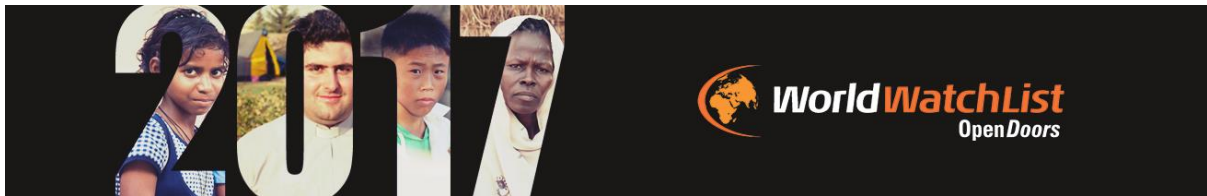
Formally, Colombia is a modern democratic country where the rule of law is established and religious freedom is guaranteed. However, large areas of the country are under the control of criminal organisations, drug cartels, revolutionaries and paramilitary groups. In a context of generalised impunity, all inhabitants of Colombia suffer from the conflict that has lasted for decades and is still not ended, but Christians are particularly vulnerable to such hostilities.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

Of the four World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity, three exist in Colombia: Historical Christian communities, Communities of converts to Christianity from indigenous traditional religions, and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities. All three can become victims of *Organised Corruption and Crime* by criminal groups, though it affects mostly the more outspoken Christians. *Ethnic Antagonism* affects all types of Christianity in indigenous communities and can lead to Christians being evicted from their homes. *Secular Intolerance* affects all types of Christians in the larger cities that are under government control. *Denominational Protectionism* mainly affects non-traditional Protestant groups, particularly where traditional Roman Catholics oppose new Evangelical and Pentecostal communities being established.

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

- Overall, the pressure on Christians rose slightly in the WWL 2017 reporting period and is at a high level.
- The persecution engine *Organised Corruption and Crime* occurs in all spheres of life. However, the reigning culture of fear particularly affects the *community* sphere, which pushes the pressure in this sphere of life far above the others.
- *Ethnic Antagonism* is restricted to indigenous communities. This persecution engine is found mainly in the *family*, *community* and *church* spheres. Sometimes, this engine overlaps with *Organised Corruption and Crime*, particularly when guerrillas conspire with indigenous tribal leaders against Christians.
- *Secular Intolerance* is a concern mainly in the *national* and *church* spheres.
- The violence level remains very high but is less than in the WWL 2016 reporting period.



6. Future outlook:

Violence in Colombia will remain a structural phenomenon, even despite the government peace talks with FARC and ELN. In areas where the government has lost control of public security, drug cartels and illegal armed groups still continue to operate with impunity. This means that criminal gangs will continue to target Christians. The position of indigenous Christians will remain extremely difficult, since human rights cannot be enforced in the indigenous territories. It is also worrying for Christians to see how the persecution engine *Secular Intolerance* is becoming increasingly visible in Colombia. This trend is expected to intensify in 2017.

7. Prayer Points:

- Formally, Colombia is a modern democratic country where religious freedom is guaranteed. However, large areas of the country have been under the control of criminal organisations, drug cartels, revolutionaries, and paramilitary groups. Christians are very vulnerable to hostility. Pray for healing and peace for the country.
- Pray for peace and hope for Christians who are threatened by criminal and guerrilla groups. Pray that they would stand strong in the face of persecution.
- Pray that the Lord would comfort believers whose family members have been murdered for their faith. Pray they would have grace to forgive their persecutors.

8. Role of Open Doors

Open Doors strengthens the persecuted Church in Colombia, offering the following support:

- Development of biblical materials.
- Construction of indigenous Christian schools.
- Education programmes.
- Distribution of training materials.
- Emergency persecution relief aid.