



Ethiopia – #22

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 64 / Position: 22

WWL 2016: Points: 67 / Position: 18

2. Persecution engines:

The five persecution engines operating in Ethiopia are: *Islamic Oppression* (main), *Denominational Protectionism* (main), *Ethnic Antagonism*, *Dictatorial Paranoia* and *Secular Intolerance*.

3. Context:

The country has a long history with both Christianity and Islam, and over time, both religions have been engaged in attempts to expand their sphere of influence. Secondly, Ethiopia has many ethnic groups. Some of these ethnic groups are not necessarily favourable to Christianity, and in some places, like Afar and the Somali regions, ethnicity and Islam are interconnected. Thirdly, the ruling party has blocked all the channels for freedom of expression and assembly. The regime is also closely monitoring religious institutions in a bid to curb dissent. A fourth point is the ongoing difficulty which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) experiences in trying to reconcile itself with the growing number of a) both traditional and non-traditional Protestants in Ethiopia and b) reform-oriented groups within the church itself. Ultra-Conservative groups within the EOC use inflammatory rhetoric against Protestants/Evangelicals in their news outlets, calling them “newcomers”, “false prophets”, “*menafikan*” (deniers of Virgin Mary and the saints). Also, it is important to note that the country has seen massive protests and violence in 2015 and 2016. As a result, it has been under a state of emergency since the beginning of October 2016, which were still in place at the time of publication.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

Of the four World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity, Historical Christian communities, communities of converts to Christianity, and communities of non-traditional Protestant Christian communities all face persecution of varying degrees.

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

- Overall, the pressure on Christians is at a very high level but did decrease greatly in comparison to WWL 2016.
- Pressure is strongest in the *national* and *church* spheres of life (both having very high level scores). *Dictatorial Paranoia* is mainly responsible for this.
- *Denominational Protectionism* and *Islamic Oppression* are the main contributors to the challenges that Christians are facing in the *private*, *family* and *community* spheres of life (all having high level scores).
- The score for violence is much higher and increased in comparison to WWL 2016.



- The overall persecution situation in Ethiopia is fired by a combination of all five engines in the country, but is mainly due to the effects of *Islamic Oppression* and *Denominational Protectionism*.

6. Future outlook:

The country was placed under a state of emergency in October 2016. The stability of the country mainly depends on how civilians respond when it is lifted. Regardless of this, the persecution of Christians (Protestants in particular) is likely to continue, especially at the hands of radical Muslims and denominational protectionists.

7. Prayer Points:

- The government has limited the areas religious institutions can engage in. Pray for greater freedom for the Church and that the Church will be able to build positive relationships with the government.
- Pray for unity within the Church. Sadly, there are many divisions between denominations.
- Persecution is common in the family and community spheres of life. In many cases, Christians are denied community resources and are discriminated against when looking for work. Pray that the Lord would provide for persecuted Christians in Ethiopia.

8. Role of Open Doors

Through local partners and churches, Open Doors has been active in Ethiopia since the late 1980s. Our work is focused around equipping Christians for the work of ministry – whether by leading a local persecuted congregation, sharing the Gospel with unbelievers, or helping new believers grow in the knowledge of Christ:

- Preparing believers for persecution and offering relief in certain cases.
- Livelihood support.
- Cross cultural evangelism training and support.
- Management training for church leaders.
- Theological and discipleship training.