



## Mali – #32

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# WWL 2017 / Summary

**Reporting period:** 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

**1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 59 / Position: 32**

WWL 2016: Points: 55/ Position: 44

**2. Main persecution engine:**

The persecution engine affecting Christians in Mali is *Islamic Oppression*.

**3. Context:**

Since the Islamist takeover of northern Mali in mid-2012 and the subsequent French-led effort to restore Malian authority to the entire country in early 2013, the situation of civil liberties and political rights is yet to return to pre-2012 levels in both the north and south of the country. The Tuareg rebels belonging to the Azawad Movements Coalition and the government of Mali have signed a peace deal in 2015. The peace deal provides for decentralisation, the establishment of a regional security force and for greater socio-economic investment in the northern part of the country. However, the continued attacks by Islamic militants in the country is undermining the prospect of peace in the country.

**4. Types of Christianity affected:**

Mali is home to three of the four World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity: Historical Christian communities, communities of converts to Christianity from a Muslim background (BMBs) and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities (such as Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations). Even though most Christians live in the south of the country, they feel threatened by the Islamic militants.

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

- Overall, the pressure on Christians in Mali is at a very high level and increased extremely compared to WWL 2016.
- Pressure is strongest in the *church, community and family* spheres (all at very high levels). This indicates the difficulties BMBs and their churches face from the society at large and also from Islamic militant groups (especially in parts of the country that are not controlled by the state).
- The activity and presence of Islamic militant groups is radicalising the society at large and also fuelling persecution in the *private* sphere.
- The violence score is high but is much lower than the very high level recorded in the WWL 2016 reporting period.
- The overall persecution pattern in Mali suggests that that even with a decline in violence the prevalence and intensity of pressure in most other *spheres of life* is on the rise. This indicates that despite the success in dislodging Islamic militants from the territories they had controlled, they leave behind a more radicalised society that is even less hospitable to Christians than it was before.

**6. Future outlook:**



The main trend Mali faces is the rising influence of militant Islam and Wahhabism in the country. It will take a long time to build up a Christian presence again in the north of Mali. Islamic militants continue to be active in Mali, notwithstanding the peace deal that was signed in 2015, and will remain a threat in the years to come. The peace deal is very fragile and the government and UN peacekeepers are still unable to establish the authority of the government in some parts of the country.

#### **7. Prayer Points:**

- The persecution situation in Mali is shaped by Islamic extremism. Violence has increased substantially as a result of terrorist attacks. Pray for peace over this country.
- Pray for Christians who have been displaced from their homes in northern Mali by Islamic militants. Pray that this hardship will not deter them from loving their neighbours.
- Pray for believers from a Muslim background who find it difficult to live out their faith because their family and community environments are hostile.

#### **8. Role of Open Doors**

In partnership with the local Church, Open Doors is serving the vulnerable Church in Mali by providing Bibles, giving training to help pastors and believers in the various aspects of Christian life and ministry and by supporting persecuted Christians socioeconomically. Through partnerships, Open Doors offers the following support to strengthen and encourage the body of Christ:

- Persecution awareness and caring for new believers.
- Discipleship and other religions.
- Servant leadership.
- Economic empowerment.