



## Myanmar – #28

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### WWL 2017 / Summary

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

**1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 62 / Position: 28**

WWL 2016: Points: 62 / Position: 23

**2. Main persecution engines:**

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Myanmar are mainly *Religious Nationalism* and to a lesser extent *Dictatorial Paranoia* and *Islamic Oppression*

**3. Context:**

On 8 November 2015 Myanmar saw a landslide victory for the opposition party “National League for Democracy” (NLD) under Aung San Suu Kyi. In a surprise move, the NLD appointed an ethnic Chin Baptist Christian as vice-president and a Christian will lead the Upper House of parliament. At the end of August 2016, the 21st Century Panglong Conference was held but the main question of how to build trust between the Burmese army, the ethnic minorities, and the insurgents remained unsolved.

**4. Types of Christianity affected:**

All World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity exist in Myanmar, but as expatriate or migrant Christians attend local churches, they are not counted as a category on their own. Members of historical Christian communities, but especially communities of converts to Christianity from Islam or Buddhism and members of the non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are affected by persecution.

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

- The overall pressure on Christians in Myanmar is at a high level, rising extremely in comparison to WWL 2016. The higher score is due to the implementation of the Laws on the Protection of Race and Religion and also to the fact that more reports on the situation of converts were obtained in the WWL 2017 reporting period.
- The pressure is highest in the *community* and *church* spheres (very high level), followed by the *national* sphere (high level). This pattern is not typical for any persecution engine, but reflects the fact that the Christian minority is strongly affected by the ongoing war in several states of the country.
- Finally, the score for violence dropped over 6 points in the WWL 2017 reporting period. Due to increased fighting, especially in Kachin and Shan States, it became much more difficult to obtain reports on Christians killed in these war-torn areas and on churches attacked.

**6. Future outlook:**

Myanmar has continued to receive positive international headlines. The first real elections in 25 years were largely free and fair, giving hope for further improvements. Although radical Buddhist nationalists of Ma Ba Tha were recently reprimanded, the government sided with Ma Ba Tha and claimed that the Muslim Rohingya minority should not be called Rohingya, but “Bengali”,



implicating that they do not belong to the citizenship of Myanmar, despite having lived in the country for several generations. That does not bode well for Christian ethnic minorities and the persecution engine *Religious Nationalism* will continue to affect them.

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

- Pray for persecuted Christian minorities, that they would lovingly minister to persecuted Rohingya Muslims. Pray that many hearts would be opened to the truth of Christ.
- Christian converts from Islam or Buddhism face strong pressure from their family, friends, and neighbours to recant their faith. With recently introduced laws, conversion is made very complicated, though it is not outright forbidden. Pray that they would have courage and endurance in the face of persecution. Pray for increased religious freedom.

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

In cooperation with local partners and churches, Open Doors strengthens persecuted believers in Myanmar through the following efforts:

- Literature distribution.
- Discipleship programmes.
- Pastoral and leadership training.
- Livelihood support.