



Pakistan – #4

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 88 / Position: 4

WWL 2016: Points: 87 / Position: 6

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Pakistan are *Islamic Oppression* (main) and to a lesser extent *Organised Corruption and Crime*.

3. Context:

The army continues to follow a policy of distinguishing between “good” and “bad” Islamic militants. While it fights the latter, it courts the former (e.g. *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, now *Jamaat-ud-Dawah*, and the *Haqqani* network) and uses these groups as a means of active intervention in neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan and India. The army does act against insurgents adhering to Islamic State (IS), however, whose presence is reportedly growing in Pakistan. But the Taliban are still alive and able to carry out attacks, as was shown in the Easter 2016 bombing in Lahore, which they explicitly claimed was aimed at Christians. Sunday gatherings for worship are still possible for Christians, but all other meetings are strongly discouraged.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

Of the four WWL categories of Christianity, only three exist in the country, all of which are experiencing persecution. Historical Christian communities are still able to function but have to put up with a stronger control and monitoring. Communities of converts to Christianity from a Muslim background (BMBs) suffer the brunt of persecution from both radical Islamic groups and families and neighbours. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are under closer scrutiny and suffer frequent attacks, especially when they are active in outreach amongst Muslims.

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

- The overall pressure on Christians remains at an extreme level and even increased slightly in the World Watch List (WWL) 2017 reporting period. Pressure deriving from the persecution engine *Islamic Oppression* is present in every sphere.
- Pressure is extreme in all spheres of life but the *church sphere*. While pressure in the *private, family* and *community* spheres is typical for Islamic countries, the pressure in the *national sphere* points to an increasingly restrictive government.
- The violence score is the maximum possible for the second consecutive year. Christians have suffered from numerous killings, attacks on churches, abduction of women, rape, forced marriages and evictions from homes and displacements in-country and abroad. Other religious minorities like Shiites and Ahmadis have suffered from such attacks as well.

6. Future outlook:

The army and government are still trying to distinguish between “good” and “bad” Islamic militant groups, and it is the religious minorities – including Christians – who will continue to pay the price



for this approach. The highly unjust and arbitrary blasphemy laws continue to haunt the country and its religious minorities. All hopes for changes to this law have so far been premature. It is unlikely that 2017 will be any better, *Islamic Oppression* will continue to haunt religious minorities including Christians.

7. Prayer Points:

- Pakistan is an Islamic Republic and the more recent process of Islamisation goes back as far as the 1980s. The country suffers from a plethora of radical Islamic groups. Please pray for the Pakistani government to pass laws that will protect the Christians in the country.
- Pray for Pakistani converts from a Muslim background who suffer the brunt of persecution in Pakistan. Radical Islamist groups see them as apostates and their family, friends, and neighbours see their conversion as shaming the community.
- An estimated 700 girls and women are abducted each year, are often raped and are then forcefully married to Muslim men in the community. This usually results in forced conversions. Please pray protection over Christian women and girls in Pakistan.

8. Role of Open Doors

In cooperation with local churches and other partnering ministries, Open Doors is supporting the church in Pakistan through the following activities:

- Literacy training.
- Vocational projects.
- Emergency aid to victims of violent persecution.
- Women's ministry.
- Bible literacy.
- Pastor's training.
- Counselling and trauma therapy.
- Prayer support.