



Turkey – #37

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 57 / Position: 37

WWL 2016: Points: 55 / Position: 45

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Turkey are *Islamic Oppression* and to a lesser extent *Dictatorial Paranoia*.

3. Context:

On 15 July 2016 the situation in the country changed dramatically when a coup against President Erdogan failed. The government's reaction was so fierce that the country has now become a dictatorship, affecting all aspects of society.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

All World Watch List (WWL) categories of Christianity exist in Turkey and are experiencing various levels of persecution. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians exist in the bigger cities and most are not registered/recognised unless meeting in historic church buildings. They can function quietly except when they attract Turkish citizens or Muslim refugees. Historical Christian communities are all considered “foreign”, are monitored regularly and subjected to certain controls by the government. Communities of converts to Christianity – here from a Muslim background (BMBs) – are considered traitors to the Turkish identity and bear the brunt of persecution coming from family, friends, local community, and local authorities. Non-traditional Protestant churches are mostly small groups. Many of them meet in homes, which can lead to opposition from neighbours.

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

- Overall, the pressure on Christians decreased very slightly in the WWL 2017 reporting period but remains at a high level. This is due to a reduction of pressure in the *church* sphere.
- The pressure is strongest in the *private* and *national* spheres, followed by the *community* and *family* spheres. This is atypical. It is the result of *Islamic Oppression* as the main persecution engine, with very strong nationalistic elements. This Turkish nationalism also gives rise to *Dictatorial Paranoia* as a secondary persecution engine.
- The number of violent incidents reported went up in the WWL 2017 reporting period causing the score for violence to rise from a high to a very high level.
- The overall persecution situation in Turkey reflects the rather unique state of affairs in which growing Turkish nationalism is combined with an increasing Islamisation of Turkish society.

6. Future outlook:

After the failed coup of July 2016 developments in Turkey changed dramatically. The government took on more dictatorial powers and nationalism and Islamisation soared. The fight against the militant Kurdish minority intensified and Turkey took a much more assertive stance in the



international scene, becoming militarily active in neighbouring Syria and Iraq (primarily targeting Kurdish forces). As a result of the new strict government policies, the level of intolerance rose against all those not siding with Erdogan, the tiny Christian minority will be facing growing pressure, which is increasingly translating into violent incidents. This trend is likely to continue.

7. Prayer Points:

- Turkey is gradually enforcing Islamic influence, and discrimination against Christians, and other religious minorities, is increasing. Pray for God to enable those experiencing persecution to place all hope and trust in him.
- Pray for converts from a Muslim background to minister graciously and wisely to their families. They often experience heavy pressure from family, friends, and their community to return to Islam.
- Pray for those who are labelled and treated as traitors after embracing the Christian faith. While conversion is not prohibited by Turkish law, there are heavy social and familial implications.

8. Role of Open Doors

Open Doors is raising prayer for believers in difficult situations and prayer in general for Turkey.