



Turkmenistan – #19

WWL 2017 / Summary

Reporting period: 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016

1. Ranking: WWL 2017: Points: 67 / Position: 19

WWL 2016: Points: 66 / Position: 19

2. Main persecution engines:

The persecution engines affecting Christians in Turkmenistan are *Dictatorial Paranoia* (which has emerged from *Communist and post-Communist Oppression*) and to a lesser extent *Islamic Oppression*.

3. Context:

Turkmenistan is one of the most restrictive places in the world with no freedom of information or the press. It is made extremely difficult for foreigners to access the country. Additionally, there is a high level of monitoring of each and every group in society (including Christians) as well as a highly restricted access to foreign media and resources. Consequently, it is also difficult to get information out of the country.

4. Types of Christianity affected:

There are no communities of expatriate or migrant Christians in Turkmenistan. All other WWL categories of Christianity exist and are experiencing persecution. Historical Christian communities may experience Sunday services being monitored and the printing or importing of Christian materials is restricted. Communities of converts to Christianity – here from a Muslim background (BMBs) – bear the brunt of the persecution both at the hands of the state and from family, friends and community. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are active in evangelism and suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines, especially when the churches have not been registered.

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

- Overall, the pressure on Christians is at a very high level and increased very slightly in comparison to the World Watch List (WWL) 2016 reporting period.
- The pressure is extreme in the *private* and *church* spheres and very high in the *community* and *national* spheres. This is typical for a situation in which *Dictatorial Paranoia* is the main persecution engine.
- Pressure resulting from the persecution engine *Islamic Oppression* is evident mostly in the *private, family* and *community* spheres and is exerted particularly on BMBs by the social environment.
- The level of violence remained very low, although there was an increase compared to the WWL 2016 reporting period.
- The overall persecution situation in Turkmenistan is mainly caused by a repressive government seeking to increase its control over all areas of life.

6. Future outlook:



After Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan is the most repressive Central Asian state for religious minorities. Given the increased nationalism and the “spiritual guidance” the new president is supposed to be giving the country like his predecessor Niyazov with his Rukhnama teachings, the pressure on Christians will most likely remain unchanged at a very high level but with very low levels of violence. The pressure from the social environment (mostly on BMBs) will remain stable.

7. Prayer Points:

- Turkmenistan is considered to be one of the most restrictive countries in the world. After Uzbekistan, it is the most repressive Central Asian state for religious minorities. Pray for increased freedoms in the country.
- Pray for Believers from a Muslim Background who are fiercely pressured to return to Islam. Converts bear the brunt of persecution in Turkmenistan. Pray for protection and endurance.
- Pray for security forces who are monitoring Christians to encounter the Gospel. Pray that their hearts would be softened and that they would become advocates and protectors of Christians in Turkmenistan.

8. Role of Open Doors

Open Doors provides immediate aid to Central Asian believers when they are placed in prison, excluded from families and communities, and deprived of livelihood and employment because of their faith in Christ. We also strengthen the persecuted Church in Central Asia through:

- Literature distribution.
- Prayer support.
- Biblical training.
- Presence ministry.
- Income-generating projects.
- Relief ministry.