Libya: Country Dossier

January 2019

World Watch List 2019

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016	Total Score WWL 2015
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.9	94	94	92	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	93	89	88	81
3	Somalia	16.3	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.4	8.9	91	91	91	87	90
4	Libya	15.3	15.0	15.1	16.0	16.3	9.6	87	86	78	79	76
5	Pakistan	14.3	14.1	13.9	15.0	13.2	16.7	87	86	88	87	79
6	Sudan	14.7	15.0	14.6	15.6	16.1	10.6	87	87	87	84	80
7	Eritrea	14.7	14.9	15.8	16.0	15.2	9.4	86	86	82	89	79
8	Yemen	16.6	16.3	16.4	16.7	16.7	3.1	86	85	85	78	73
9	Iran	14.0	14.3	14.3	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	83	80
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	14.8	13.2	15.2	83	81	73	68	62
11	Syria	13.6	14.0	13.1	13.8	14.2	13.0	82	76	86	87	83
12	Nigeria	12.3	11.8	13.4	12.9	12.9	16.7	80	77	78	78	78
13	Iraq	13.9	14.4	14.1	14.6	13.6	8.1	79	86	86	90	86
14	Maldives	15.2	15.5	13.5	15.9	16.7	1.1	78	78	76	76	78
15	Saudi Arabia	15.1	13.6	14.0	15.3	16.5	2.4	77	79	76	76	77
16	Egypt	11.7	13.2	10.7	13.2	11.0	15.9	76	70	65	64	61
17	Uzbekistan	15.4	12.9	13.9	12.3	15.9	3.1	74	73	71	70	69
18	Myanmar	11.4	11.8	13.3	12.1	11.8	11.1	71	65	62	62	60
19	Laos	13.0	9.1	14.2	14.7	14.9	4.6	71	67	64	58	58
20	Vietnam	12.7	8.2	12.7	13.5	14.2	9.1	70	69	71	66	68
21	Central Africa Republic	10.2	9.7	11.9	10.6	11.1	16.1	70	61	58	59	67
22	Algeria	13.1	14.2	10.1	11.8	12.7	7.6	70	58	58	56	55
23	Turkmenistan	14.6	10.8	13.8	13.3	15.1	1.3	69	68	67	66	63
24	Mali	11.4	10.1	11.5	9.2	9.9	15.4	68	59	59	55	52
25	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	12.2	13.0	13.3	0.6	67	57	55	-	50
26	Turkey	12.4	11.1	10.7	13.2	10.9	7.2	66	62	57	55	52
27	China	10.4	8.0	10.3	11.8	14.5	10.0	65	57	57	57	57
28	Ethiopia	10.0	10.0	10.3	10.8	10.4	13.5	65	62	64	67	61
29	Tajikistan	13.8	11.9	11.6	12.1	12.9	2.4	65	58	58	58	50
30	Indonesia	10.6	11.1	11.3	10.2	9.3	12.0	65	59	55	55	50
31	Jordan	13.0	13.1	11.8	11.5	12.2	3.0	65	66	63	59	56
32	Nepal	12.4	11.4	10.6	10.9	11.9	7.0	64	64	-	-	-
33	Bhutan	12.9	11.1	12.3	12.4	14.0	0.9	64	62	61	56	56
34	Kazakhstan	13.2	10.8	10.3	12.2	13.5	3.1	63	63	56	55	51
35	Morocco	12.2	13.3	9.6	12.0	14.4	1.5	63	51	49	47	47
36	Brunei	13.4	14.3	10.5	10.3	13.4	0.7	63	64	64	61	58
37	Tunisia	12.1	13.2	10.7	11.2	12.0	3.3	63	62	61	58	55
38	Qatar	13.0	12.6	10.3	11.0	14.1	1.1	62	63	66	65	64
39	Mexico	8.3	7.5	12.2	10.2	9.7	13.5	61	59	57	56	55
40	Kenya	11.7	10.6	10.1	8.3	11.5	8.3	61	62	68	68	63
41	Russian Federation	12.5	8.4	10.7	10.4	12.0	5.7	60	51	46	48	45
42	Malaysia	11.8	14.2	12.1	11.7	8.6	1.5	60	65	60	58	55
43	Kuwait	13.2	12.2	10.1	10.5	12.2	1.5	60	61	57	56	49
44	Oman	12.9	12.5	9.8	9.6	12.8	1.7	59	57	53	53	55
45	United Arab Emirates	12.8	12.0	9.1	10.5	12.2	1.9	58	58	55	55	49
46	Sri Lanka	11.0	8.3	10.5	11.5	10.0	7.0	58	57	55	-	51
47	Colombia	7.9	7.6	11.8	9.4	8.5	12.6	58	56	53	55	55
48	Bangladesh	11.0	9.1	11.6	10.5	7.8	7.8	58	58	63	57	51
49	Palestinian Territories	11.4	12.3	9.0	10.6	11.8	2.4	57	60	64	62	58
50	Azerbaijan	13.2	9.9	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	-	57	50
51	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.4	56	-	56	56	56
52	Kyrgyzstan	12.7	9.9	10.9	9.2	11.9	1.9	56	-	-	-	-
53	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56	57	58	60
54	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	9.3	7.4	10.3	16.1	55	-	-	-	-
55	Bahrain	11.9	12.2	8.6	10.2	10.2	1.5	55	57	54	54	-
56	Cameroon	9.9	7.3	10.0	7.8	7.5	11.3	54	-	-	-	-
57	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.8	4.8	52	-	59	57	56
58	Niger	11.5	9.7	8.1	8.1	10.0	4.8	52	-	-	53	-
59	Cuba	8.8	4.4	9.1	10.5	11.8	3.9	49	-	-	-	-
60	Chad	11.5	8.2	9.0	8.0	8.7	3.0	48	-	-	-	-
61	Burkina Faso	9.0	8.0	8.8	6.6	7.9	7.2	48	-	-	-	-
62	Uganda	11.4	8.0	7.7	6.9	9.6	3.7	47	-	-	-	-
63	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.0	46	-	-	-	-
64	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.5	5.8	8.0	15.0	44	-	-	-	-
65	Mozambique	6.7	4.3	6.0	6.9	6.0	13.3	43	-	-	-	-
66	Gambia	7.7	8.2	8.2	8.3	8.8	1.9	43	-	-	-	-
67	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.7	8.2	5.5	6.4	4.3	43	-	-	-	-
68	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	3.3	43	-	-	-	-
69	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.1	8.7	10.4	6.1	42	-	-	-	-
70	Togo	8.8	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	2.0	42	-	-	-	-
71	Venezuela	3.3	3.8	10.5	9.0	8.8	5.9	41	-	-	-	-
72	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	6.7	41	-	-	-	-
73	Nicaragua	2.3	3.6	6.4	8.9	7.9	11.9	41	-	-	-	-

Libya – Country Dossier
January 2019

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Contents

Introduction

This country report is a collation of documents based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) including statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations, and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). Further news and analysis is supplied by World Watch Monitor and WWR staff.

World Watch List Libya	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2019	87	4
WWL 2018	86	7
WWL 2017	78	11
WWL 2016	79	10
WWL 2015	76	13

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country was among the fifty highest scoring countries (Top 50) in the WWL 2015-2019 reporting periods.

Please note: The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading "External links".

WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Libya

Link for general background information
BBC country profile: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13754897

Recent country history
Colonel Gaddafi's regime was overthrown in 2011 by popular protests and NATO support. The civil war caused the death of at least 30,000 Libyans according to estimates by National Transitional Council of Libya (NTC). The NTC took over government in February 2011 and on 7 July 2012 Libyans voted in their first parliamentary elections since the end of Gaddafi's rule. The new assembly was given the task of drafting a new Libyan constitution to be approved in a general referendum.

Although these developments were considered to be notable democratic advances, due to escalating conflicts between the various forces that fought against Gaddafi, the country has since descended into a state of civil war. Broadly speaking the war pits a coalition of armed tribal and nationalist groups based in the east of the country against radical Islamic groups and an amalgam of tribal and regional militants based in the western part of the country.The major antagonists in the ongoing civil war are:

- On one side of the civil war there are the forces in the east who launched a military campaign called "Operation Dignity" (which is also serving as a popular designation for the eastern based forces) and are led by General Khalifa Haftar. This military campaign is sanctioned by the House of Representatives which was elected in 2014. Although the House of Representatives did enjoy the recognition of the UN and most of the international community at that time, it was pushed out of the capital by rival factions and forced to take refuge in eastern Libya in the city of Tobruk. Operation Dignity gets substantial material and diplomatic support from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates which all consider the rising forces of militant Islam in Libya as a threat to the stability of the region.
- The other side of the civil war is made up of the coalition of forces that largely consist of a variety of Islamic militant groups operating under the name "Libyan Dawn". Many of these militants walked out of the transitional and legal democratic process due to frustration with their poor performance in the parliamentary elections of June 2014. They have set up their own rival parliament (from the remnants of the General National Congress of Libya which had taken over power from the NTC for the years 2012-2014) and their own rival government in Tripoli. The Libyan Dawn forces enjoy the support of Qatar and Turkey. Elements of this coalition have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State group (IS) and have perpetrated the most despicable attacks against foreign Christians in Libya through beheadings.
- A third government that has appeared on the scene since 2016 is the so-called Government of National Accord (GNA). At the beginning of 2016 the UN facilitated a negotiation process that lead to the formation of this new unity government. It took this new government a few months to even arrive in Tripoli and take control of the capital city. The GNA has yet to secure the approval of the parliament that is based in Tobruk, but it has had considerable success in its military campaign against IS. Forces loyal to the GNA retook the town of Sirte in 2016, which had been the stronghold of IS militants in Libya. The GNA has the formal backing of the UN.

President Emmanuel Macron of France managed to bring the main antagonists to come together for a Summit in Paris in May 2018. The Summit has been hailed as a success since the parties to the civil war verbally agreed to commit to a peace deal that should have culminated in an election in December

2018. However, from the very beginning the deal seemed to be tenuous as not all militant groups were involved. In November 2018, the UN special envoy declared that a special forum will be held early 2019 in order to have presidential and parliamentary elections in the spring of 2019. He accused the parties involved of deliberately postponing the vote to serve their own interests, after a sudden increase in violence in September 2018.

The religious landscape

Under Gaddafi's rule, the government security service was effective in preventing the emergence of armed Islamic militias, but with the current state of civil war, even the most extreme version of militant Islam in the form of IS found a foothold in the country. The situation is dire for Christians in Libya, many of whom are illegal immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa trying to make their way to Europe. Although in military terms IS forces seem to be defeated in Libya and have lost their stronghold in Sirte, remnants of the group still pose a threat to Christians. Furthermore, there are several other radical Islamic groups that are active, especially in the western part of the country.

The political landscape

Libya is still in a state of anarchy. The long running civil war in Libya between several militant groups allied with at least three rival governments means that the country offers a safe haven for Islamic militant groups that are working to destabilize the whole region. The continued state of anarchy makes it probable that Christians will continue to be persecuted in Libya and it also provides a base of operations for militant groups to attack Christians in neighboring countries. Four of the major parties involved in the conflict, - Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj (head of the UN-backed unity government based in Tripoli), Khalifa Haftar (a military strongman commanding the Libyan National Army which dominates the country's east), Aguila Saleh Issa (the parliament speaker based in the eastern city of Tobruk, who opposes the UN-backed administration) and Khalid al-Mishri (head of the High Council of State, Libya's highest consultative body formed from the 2012 parliament) have agreed on a roadmap that should have led to a resolution of the conflict and national elections in December 2018. After violent unrest in September 2018, the elections have been postponed to Spring 2019, although no official date has been set yet. While there is a great deal of apprehension and uncertainty about the extent to which this deal will be effectively implemented, it can still be considered as an encouraging step towards future peace and stability.

The socio-economic landscape

According to the 2018 Statistical Update of the UNDP Human Development Index, Libya is ranked 108 out of 188 countries (compared to rank 102 a year ago). (The Human Development Index - HDI - is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income per capita indicators. A country scores higher HDI when the life expectancy at birth is longer, the education period is longer, and the income per capita is higher. It is used to distinguish whether the country is a developed, a developing or an underdeveloped country.) Although Libya used to be one of the African countries that performed relatively well in this assessment of the UNDP, since the Arab Spring its overall performance in the ranking has steadily declined as a result of - among other things - a decline in the accessibility and quality of health care and education. The ongoing civil war has resulted in the disruption of oil exports and the provision of social services that were state-subsidized before the conflict erupted. Huge amounts of money are being spent on armaments by the various sides in the conflict and the violence has caused widespread destruction which will take years to rebuild. The reigning anarchy has also made life easy for human traffickers, with Libya being one of the main routes for thousands of migrants making their way across the Mediterranean to Europe.

Concluding remarks

During the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, President Gadaffi was ousted without a clear idea of how the future should be shaped. Since then, Libya has become a classic failed state and ended up in a nightmarish scenario in which a patchwork of militant groups control different parts of the country and vie for supremacy. The situation has not shown any sign of improvement for many years. The prospect of peace that has come about as a result of the agreement brokered by the French president seems to offer a chance for peace and stability, although the challenges to the implementation of the deal are substantial.

External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Libya

1. Recent country history: estimates
   https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/26/libya-war-saving-lives-catastrophic-failure

2. Recent country history: election in December 2018
   https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/libya-rival-leaders-agree-hold-elections-december-180529082326218.html

3. Recent country history: declared
   https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/libya-election-place-early-2019-envoy-181109073902372.html

4. Recent country history: increase in violence
   https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-45414753

5. The political landscape: conflict
   https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44289516?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/ce1qrvlel1mt/libya&link_location=live-reporting-story

6. The political landscape: have agreed on a roadmap
   https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/libya-rival-leaders-agree-hold-elections-december-180529082326218.html

7. The socio-economic landscape: UNDP Human Development Index
   http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBY

WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

Pop 2018	Christians	Chr%
6,471,000	37,900	0.6

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

How did Christians get there?

Christianity has existed in Libya since the earliest days of the Church in the 1st century AD. With the emergence of Islam the Church was almost obliterated between the 7th and 12th centuries. Between the 12th and 17th centuries the activities of Christians were very limited.

The Roman Catholic Church was reintroduced in the 15th century, but was not active in mission work. Other denominations arrived later towards the end of the 19th century. At the outbreak of WWII all non-Catholic missionaries were expelled from the country and were not able to return until 1946. The indigenous Church, made up of converts from Islam to Christianity, is particularly vulnerable to persecution and numbers are low.

What church networks exist today?

Church networks: Libya	Christians	%
Orthodox	22,100	58.3
Catholic	10,400	27.4
Protestant	1,600	4.2
Independent	1,100	2.9
Unaffiliated	2,700	7.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	**37,900**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	1,700	4.5
Renewalist movement	2,700	7.1

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. Roman Catholics: All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. Protestants: Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. Independents: Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). Unaffiliated Christians: Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. Doubly-affiliated Christians: Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. Evangelical movement: Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. Renewalist movement: Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

According to WCD data, most Christians in Libya are Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics. The small Christian communities consist almost exclusively of Sub-Saharan migrants and miniscule numbers of American and European expatriate workers. There is also a small group of Asians (mainly Indians). Between one and two hundred Anglicans, mostly from Sub-Saharan Africa, attend weekly Sunday services in Tripoli. An estimated 80 Orthodox Christians, including members of the Greek,

Romanian, Bulgarian, and Russian communities, attend weekly Friday services in Tripoli. Hundreds of African migrant Protestants and hundreds of Catholics also attend services in Tripoli. However, given the unstable situation, it is impossible to give accurate estimates of numbers.

Religious context

Religious Context: Libya	Numbers	%
Christians	37,900	0.6
Muslim	6,400,000	98.9
Hindu	5,800	0.1
Buddhist	18,300	0.3
Ethnoreligionist	490	0.0
Jewish	130	0.0
Bahai	680	0.0
Atheist	280	0.0
Agnostic	3,200	0.0
Other	4,300	0.1

OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

According to WCD estimates, 98.9% of Libyans are Muslim, virtually all belonging to Sunni Islam. The dominance of Islam is given explicit constitutional recognition while the ancient roots of Christianity in Libya have been almost completely erased. In the civil war following the overthrow of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, militant Islamic groups are still fighting to gain the upper hand.

Notes on the current situation

Christians in Libya face serious challenges in the following areas:

- The high level of brutality against Christians carried out by Islamic militants.
- The complete breakdown of law and order, making Christians particularly vulnerable.
- Even the internationally recognized government does not have policies properly protecting Christians.
- Converting to Christiianity is very dangerous (and almost impossible).

WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

With a score of 87 points, Libya ranked 4th in WWL 2019, rising one point compared to WWL 2018.

What type of persecution dominates?

Islamic oppression: Following Gaddafi's downfall, a variety of radical Islamic groups gained influence and control over society. There is no room for Christians in their mindset and both Christian Sub-Saharan migrants as well as converts to Christianity are at risk. Unfortunately, society in general is also not supportive of Christians.

Ethnic antagonism: Libya's society is conservative and tribal. Migrants from Sub-Saharan countries are fiercely discriminated against. Converting from Islam to Christianity is not only seen as betrayal of Islam, but also of the family and tribe.

Organized corruption and crime: Some of the Islamic militant groups work with or act as organized criminal groups by engaging in human trafficking and other criminal activities. It has been reported that Christian migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa are especially badly treated.

Who is driving persecution?

Islamic militant groups (including criminal activities related to them) and society in general are the main drivers of Christian persecution in Libya. Libya is a country in which Christians are a very small minority, mostly made up of foreigners in search of work or a means of reaching Europe by crossing the Mediterranean. Christian migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries face not only intolerance from the general population but also racial prejudice. Islamic militant groups that have proliferated since the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011 are an additional source of danger for Christians in Libya. Societal pressure and persecution from immediate and extended family members are also challenges that converts with a Muslim background face in the country. The state of anarchy and civil war has also made the situation worse for Christians by creating an environment of impunity in which organized criminal groups engage in human trafficking and Islamic militants can attack Christians without any fear of suffering consequences.

What it results in

Libyan Christians with a Muslim background face very violent and intense pressure from their family and the wider community to renounce their faith. Foreigners from other parts of the continent are also targeted by various Islamic militant groups and organized criminal groups. These groups kidnap Christians and there have also been instances in which Christians have been killed in a very brutal and shocking manner. Even when they do not face such a fate, Christians from Sub-Saharan Africa are harassed and subjected to threats from radical Muslims. Christians who publicly express their faith and try to share the Gospel with others also face the risk of arrest and violence. The absence of a single central government to impose law and order in the county has made the situation for Christians precarious. The level of violence against Christians in Libya is very high and Christians are subjected to very violent, inhumane and degrading treatment.

Violence

There is a very high level of violence against Christians in Libya, caused by the current anarchy, radical Islamic groups and tribal society. There are unverified reports claiming that around 200 Christians from a migrant Sub-Saharan background have been killed by Islamic human traffickers. It is not possible to list the exact number for the WWL 2019 reporting period. Other Christians, including converts, have been detained and saw their churches attacked. Especially Christian migrants have been the victim of abduction and rape.

The following table is based on reported cases. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures.

Libya	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	10	30	4	2	1
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	10	1080	6	3	0

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period

- Christian migrants held in detention centers in Libya (mostly from Sub-Saharan African countries) have reportedly been raped and beaten. Although the ill-treatment and violence is not limited to Christian refugees, Christians are singled out for much worse discriminatory and violent treatment.
- Libya made the headlines in November 2017 when CNN showed video evidence of an auction of Sub-Saharan Africans. Although the report was followed by an international outcry, nothing seems to have changed.
- Given the security issues surrounding a Muslim's conversion to the Christian faith, most reports about converts in Libya cannot be published.

WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 87 points, Libya ranked 4th in WWL 2019, rising one point compared to WWL 2018. There have been no significant changes in the persecution situation overall. In WWL 2018, Libya rose 8 points to a score of 86 which was directly attributable to the increase in violence against Christians, particularly in relation to transient migrants who are generally treated very badly and among whom Christians are singled out for even worse treatment. The continuing state of anarchy has contributed to the overall vulnerability of Christians in the country.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Libya	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethnic antagonism	EA	Strong
Denominational protectionism	DPR	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Not at all
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Medium

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology (long version).

Islamic oppression (Very strong):

This engine manifests itself in different ways. Libya has a deeply Islamic culture causing converts from Islam to Christianity to face immense pressure from their family members and community. Following Gaddafi's downfall, various radical Islamic groups have gained more influence and control over society.

Ethnic antagonism (Strong):

Libya's society is conservative and tribal. Migrants from Sub-Saharan countries are fiercely discriminated against. Converting from Islam to Christianity is not only seen as betrayal of Islam, but also of the family and tribe.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium):

The fact that corruption is so rife also contributes to perpetuating the lack of rule of law and impunity in the country. This engine is blended with *Islamic oppression* since some of the Islamic militant groups work with or act as organized criminal groups by engaging in human trafficking and other criminal activities.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Libya	IO	RN	EA	DPR	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	STRONG	-	-	-	-	MEDIUM
Government officials	Strong	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	Strong
Ethnic group leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Very strong
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology (long version).

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

Ordinary people who subscribe to intolerant and radical interpretations of Islam contribute to the persecution of Christians especially in the *Private, Family* and *Community spheres of life*. The persecution of Christians by such people is exacerbated by a plethora of Islamic militant groups that control a considerable part of Libyan territory. Such groups are responsible for the most violent forms of persecution and act with absolute impunity due to the absence of a single government to impose any semblance of law and order in the country. Behind these drivers of persecution the teaching and influence of radical Wahhabi imams is present and hence these teachers can also be considered as drivers of persecution.

Drivers of Ethnic antagonism:

Violence against Christian Sub-Saharan migrants is mostly perpetrated by radical Islamic groups, but also government officials and others are involved. Converts face most danger from their own family members who regard conversion to Christianity as betrayal, bringing dishonor to family and clan.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

Criminal groups engaged in human trafficking and kidnapping for ransom are the most notable drivers of persecution when it comes to *Organized corruption and crime*. These groups engage in all sorts of predatory behavior against immigrants who are trying to make their way through Libya to Europe. In addition to being held hostage for ransom, many are sold into slavery and many women are subjected to sexual assault and rape.

Context

Libya has become a classic failed state and, more than half a decade since the Arab Spring uprisings, its dreams of becoming an open and democratic country have been replaced with a nightmarish scenario in which a patchwork of militant groups control different parts of the country and vie for supremacy. Recent peace deals facilitated first by Italy and later by France are signs of hope, but until now the implementation of such deals has not materialized.

The ongoing civil war between several militant groups allied with three rival governments means that the country remains a safe haven for radical Islamic groups that are working to destabilize the whole region. It has also resulted in the disruption of oil exports and the provision of social services that were state-subsidized before the conflict erupted. Huge amounts of money are being spent on armaments by the various sides in the conflict and the violence has caused widespread destruction which will take years to rebuild.

Migrants intercepted in their attemp to reach Europe are held in 24 detention centers across Libya run by the Department to Combat Irregular Migration (DCIM) which nominally falls under the control of Libya's Ministry of Interior, but in practice many are run by members of armed groups under whom violence, virtual slavery and sexual abuse is rife. Refugees in these centers are without protection, given the lack of any national asylum law or system in Libya. In the strongly Islamized context of Libya, Christian migrants are particularly vulnerable.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Christian migrant workers (most of them coming from Sub-Saharan Africa and some from Egypt) are allowed to have their own churches, but Libyans are not allowed to attend. Under the despotic rule of Muammar Gaddafi, the situation for Christians in Libya was already extremely harsh. Expatriate or migrant Christians enjoy some freedom, but indigenous non-Arab Africans face double persecution - based on race and religion.

Historical Christian communities: This category does not exist in Libya as defined by WWL methodology.

Converts to Christianity: The very small group of Libyan nationals who are Christians keep their faith secret. Libyans are forbidden to attend worship in official churches. The number of Libyan Christians from a Muslim background is very low, but with the appearance of Christian programs on satellite TV and Christian websites in Arabic, the interest in the Christian faith has been increasing. As in most Muslim countries, converting from Islam brings massive social pressure and converts are always at risk from their families. Most Libyan Christians are afraid to meet with other believers, as any kind of religious gathering (other than Islamic) is forbidden for Libyans.

Non-traditional Christian communities: This category does not exist in Libya as defined by WWL methodology.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence

WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern for Libya
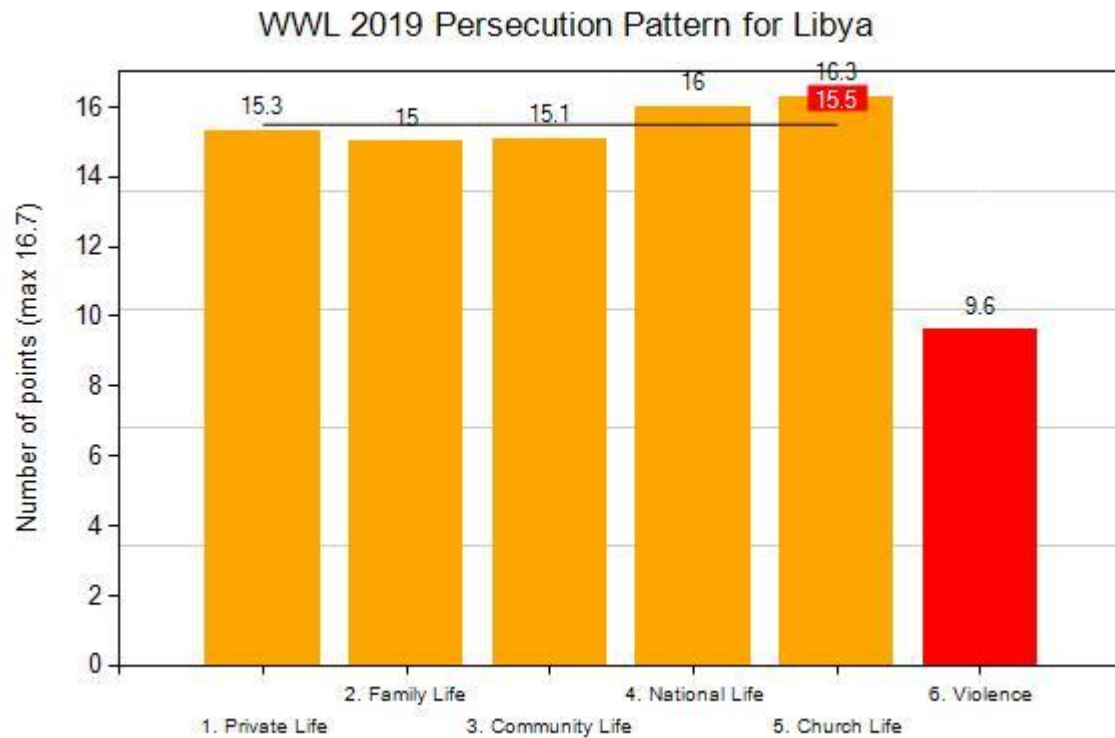
The WWL 2019 Persecution pattern for Libya shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at an extremely high level (15.5), rising from 15.2 in WWL 2018. The reason for this increase is the anarchy that continues to exist due to the lack of a central government. Radical Islamic groups, but also personnel of the (in)official governments, can harm Christians (both Sub-Saharan migrants and converts) with impunity.
- Although all *spheres of life* show extreme levels of pressure, pressure is highest in *Church* and *National life.* This also reflects the lack of a central government. Where anarchy and Islamic radicalism rule together, there is no freedom of speech, no equal treatment of Christians, no recognition of the church, nor can churches be built.
- The score for violence is very high, but went down from 10.4 in WWL 2018 to 9.6 in WWL 2019. The reason for this drop is a lack of reliable sources for information from within the country. There were less reports of Christians being forced to flee their homes, although in reality it is likely that the number of cases has not changed compared to the WWL 2018 reporting period.

Private sphere:

Converts with a Muslim background experience rejection by family members in this conservative society. Because of the oppression caused by the intolerance of relatives, society and radical Islamic groups, Libyan Christians hardly dare to inform others about their faith. Many of them are forced to consider fleeing their homeland. Secondly, Sub-Saharan migrant Christians have to cover their Christian identity and should not show any Christian symbol as they will probably be discriminated against and (sexually) abused by their human traffickers as well as government officials. There have evenbeen reports of Sub-Saharan Christians being killed upon discovery of their Christian identity.

Family sphere:

Converts are outlawed in Libya. They have to live in secrecy, they cannot officially marry in a Christian way and their children will be automatically registered as Muslim. Other Christians also face limitations here. The country adheres to traditional Islamic law which states that a non-Muslim man must convert to marry a Muslim woman (even if she is a convert). Almost all expatriate Christians have left the country and the main group of Christians constist of Sub-Saharan migrants and some Egyptian Copts. Their children, if they go to school, have most likely to follow Islamic instruction and are vulnerable to harassment.

Community sphere:

Christians in contemporary Libya face such a high degree of insecurity that their continued existence in Libya has become questionable. Commenting on this matter, one country expert has even gone to the extent of asserting: "We have lost the Christian presence in Libya" due to the "daily pressures of religious tensions" as well as violence against Christianity. Unless Christians conceal their religious beliefs, taking part in communal life is dangerous in contemporary Libya since they face a high risk of violence. Especially in regions ruled by Islamic groups (but also nationwide in all likelihood), converts in particular have to adhere to Islamic customs like fasting during Ramadan and dress codes.

National sphere:

During Gaddafi's reign the main source of persecution was the government and its secret services. Now, radical Islamic movements (such as groups loyal to the Islamic State group) are responsible for most of the pressure and violence against Christians, in a country with an impotent central government and where rule of law is absent. To some extent, criminal gangs are also responsible for pressure on Christians. Traveling wihtin the country is dangerous, as abduction is a real risk. This and a general hostile attitude towards Christians means that (international) churches and (Christian) NGO's are very limited in how they can help Christians and others in the country.

Church sphere:

Normal church life is hardly possible for all Christians. Migrants can, depending on the region, gather in churches, but are also faced with serious security risks. To bring in Christian literature and Bibles in Arabic remains strictly forbidden and the proselytizing of Muslims and missionary activity is officially prohibited in the country. This is another factor that suppresses the growth of the indigenous Church.

Violence:

The level of violence against Christians in Libya is very high. Due to the political instability and absence of law and order in the country, Christians are subjected to very violent, inhumane and degrading treatment. Although published well before the WWL 2019 reporting period, a 2016 report by Amnesty International gives a clear indication of what Christians are still going through today: A 26-year-old from Eritrea who was held in a detention center in al-Zawiya, is quoted as saying: "They hate Christians. If you're a Christian, all I can say is God help you if they find out…If they see a cross or a [religious] tattoo they beat you a lot more." Another former detainee (from Nigeria) said that guards in the detention center in Misratah would separate the men according to religion and flog those who were Christians. A 22-year-old man from Eritrea who was beaten in detention after his boat was intercepted, stated: "They beat me, took my money and threw away my Bible and the cross I had on my neck…First

they check whether one has money in the pockets, then they take an electrical cable and they whip you."

For a summary of the statistics on violence, please see the Short and Simple Persecution Profile section above.

5 Year trends

The levels of pressure in all *spheres of life* (chart 1) have been rising over the last five reporting periods due to the ongoing lawlessness in most parts of the country. Thousands of Christian Sub-Saharan migrants have ended up in Libya (or have been returned to Libya now that most European countries are trying to stop their migration to Europe) and their situation worsens as more and more migrants find themselves stuck in the country without money. Most have spent what they had to pay traffickers for their transfer to Europe and are now very vulnerable to (sexual) abuse and underpaid labor. In the second diagram below, it can be seen that the average pressure on Christians has steadily risen over the last five years. This is not only the result of recording the situation of Sub-Saharan migrant Christians; it has also been caused by the fact that almost all other expatriate Christians have left the country. The better treatment enjoyed by non-migrant (often Western) Christians is no longer offsetting the score for pressure anymore. The number of violent incidents recorded each year have caused the scores for violence (chart 3) to remain more or less stable at a very high level over the last five reporting periods (except for WWL 2017 during which less killings were reported). Due to the insecurity in the country and the lack of reliable sources, it is very probable that a lot of incidents go unreported. This keeps the score for violence lower than it in reality should be.

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Libya (Spheres of life)
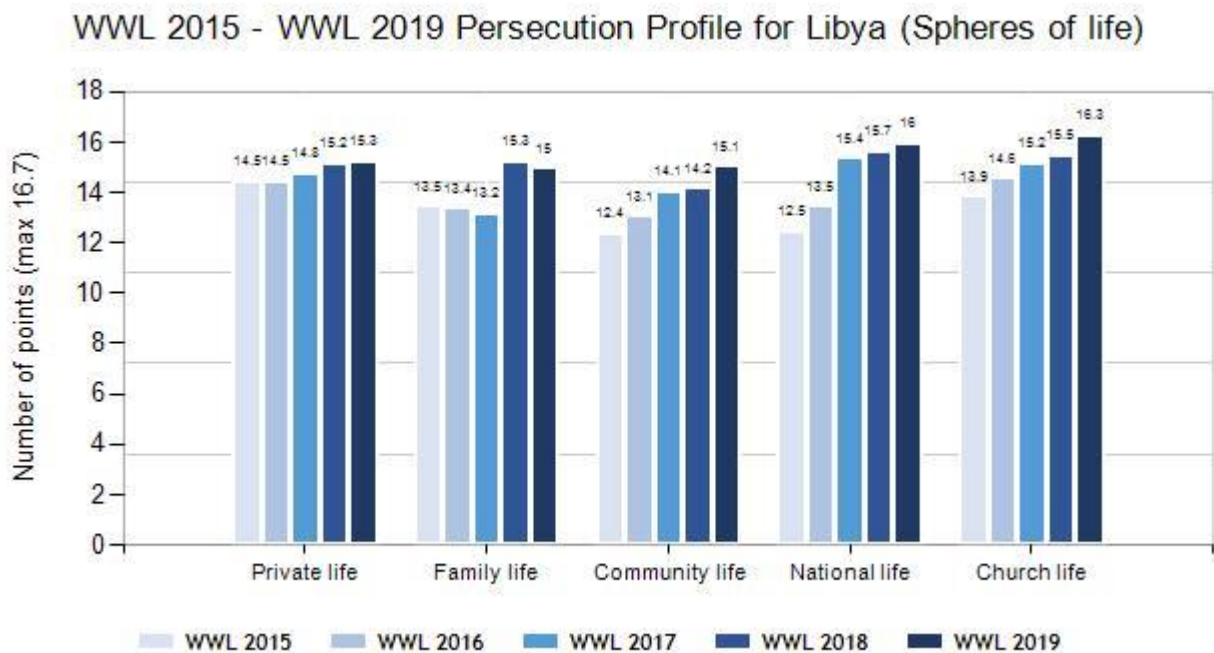
WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Libya	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2019	15.5
2018	15.2
2017	14.6
2016	13.8
2015	13.4

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Libya (Violence)
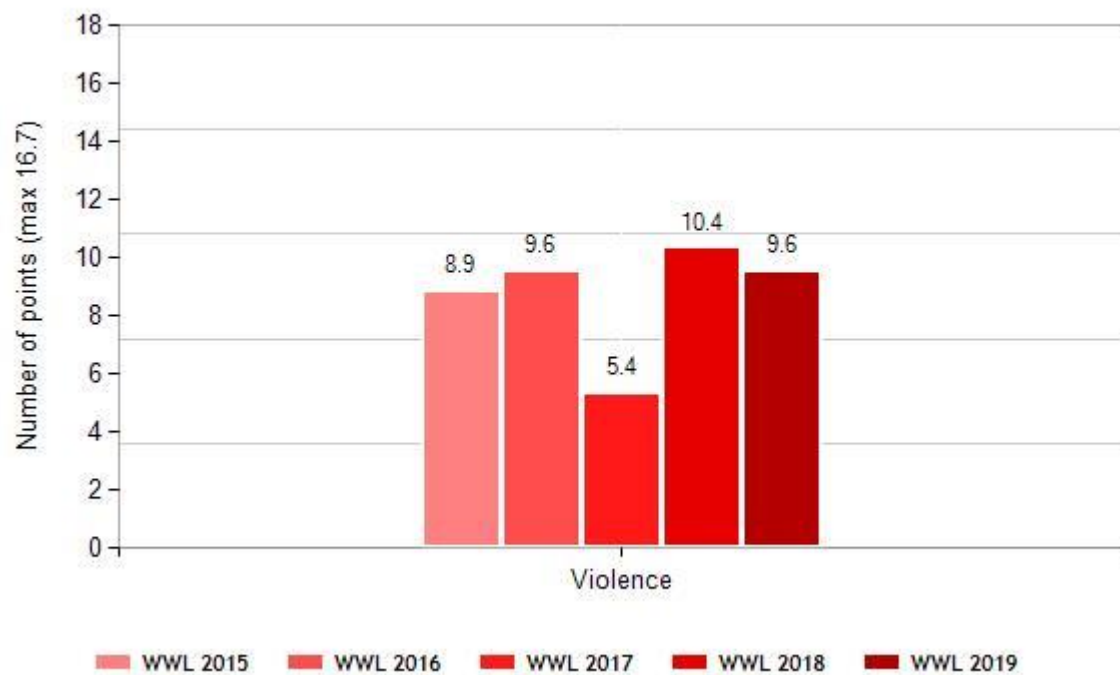
Gender specific persecution

Female: Women have a lower position within Libyan family life than men; this is caused by tribal norms corresponding to Islamic sharia law. Women and girls are supposed to uphold high norms regarding their sexuality and will bring shame upon the family if they fail to do so. They are therefore prone to (sexual) violence, especially when they make choices not expected from them, such as conversion to Christiantiy. It has been reported that rape is sometimes used as a form of punishment. It is difficult for female converts to escape such dangerous situations, as it is unusual for women to travel or live alone.

Beside female converts, (Christian) Sub-Saharan migrant women are very vulnerable to (sexual) abuse, especially when they are seperated from their male companions, for example in migrant detention centers. These traumatic experiences are very disruptive for their (later) family life.

Women are also often forced to observe the dress codes dictated by their regional Islamic government or ruling group.

Male:

In general, men face higher risks of physical abuse. Forced labor and slavery are widespread for Christian Sub-Saharan men. They are often young and travel without their family, which make them vulnerable for abduction, while they are at the same physically fit for doing heavy (agricultural) labor. Others are abducted or arrested and are only freed if a ransom is paid. If the men have a family (in their home country), those families will be (financially) at risk as they are expecting their husbands and fathers to protect them and take (financial) care of them.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Especially Ibadi and Sufi Muslims in Libya who do not belong to the Sunni or Shia Islamic traditions face persecution in the form of violent attacks by groups like IS and other militant Sunni groups, as well as general discrimination from society. For example, the US State Deparment mentions in the [Libya 2017 International Religious Freedom Report](#) that two historic Sufi mosques in Tripoli were attacked and severely damaged by unknown assailants on 20 October and 28 November 2017 respectively.

Future outlook

The political outlook: A key moment was the summit in Paris in May 2018 in which the French president managed to bring the main antagonists in the civil war to come together and agree to a peace deal that should have culminated in an [election in December 2018](#). However, from the vey beginning the deal seemed to be tenuous as not all militant groups were part of it. In November 2018, the UN special envoy [declared](#) that a special forum will be held early 2019 in order to have presidential and parliamentary elections in the spring of 2019. It is likely that the elections will be postponed even further, as elections will mean that most of the parties that now control parts of Libya, will have to hand over control to a central government. Many of those groups are profitting from the current situation and have no real interest in elections. If elections are held in 2019, it is likely that not all parties will accept the outcome and therefore it is likely that the civil war will continue.

The outlook for Christians - through the lens of:

- *Islamic oppression:* It is not likely that pressure caused by *Islamic oppression* will decrease soon. Although elections are to be held in 2019, it is unlikely that radical Islamic and other groups will hand over control to a new central government anytime soon. Their influence and (arbitrary) implementation of Sharia law will remain a dangerous threat to Christians under their control. Even if radical Islamic groups are driven out of the country, society in general will remain conservative and require the government to uphold Sharia law.

- *Ethnic antagonism:* Ethnic antagonism and Islamic oppression are intertwined, as tribalism is persistent and prevalent, keeping the country conservative. In war-time situations, people tend to cling to their religion and customs and are not open to new ideas, let alone a new religion. Converting from Islam to Christianity will therefore continue to be seen as betrayal of religion, family and tribe. Secondly, the treatment of Sub-Saharan migrant Christians is not likely to improve, as they are regarded as both religiously and racially different. Therefore, ethnic antagonism will remain an important engine for the overall pressure on Christians.

- *Organized corruption and crime:* As long as there is not a central government with effective authority across the country, the current lawlessness will continue. Radical Islamic groups (and also government officials) will continue to earn money by ways of human trafficking, abduction and extortion. Christians will remain vulnerable as they are especially targeted.

Conclusion: Any hope for an improvement in the situation for Christians in Libya is contingent upon an improvement in the political and security condition within the country. It is to be hoped that the Government of National Accord will be able to assert more authority and restore law and order in the country. If this was to happen (even though it would not necessarily guarantee freedom of religion for Christians in Libya), such a state of affairs could mean that Christians would become less vulnerable from the most egregious forms of persecution. However, in the long run, the nature of the permanent political and constitutional order that would emerge from the current peace and transition process will be the most decisive factor for the freedom of religion of Christians in Libya.

External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

1. Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: Christianity
    http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/04/20/expert-we-have-lost-the-christian-presence-in-libya/

2. Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence: report
    https://www.amnesty.nl/actueel/eu-risks-fuelling-horrific-abuse-of-refugees-and-migrants-in-libya

3. Persecution of other religious minorities: Libya 2017 International Religious Freedom Report
    https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281240.pdf

4. Future outlook: election in December 2018
    https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/libya-rival-leaders-agree-hold-elections-december-180529082326218.html

5. Future outlook: declared
    https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/libya-election-place-early-2019-envoy-181109073902372.html

Additional Reports and Articles

WWR in-depth reports
A selection of in-depth reports is available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/ (password: freedom).

Open Doors article(s) from the region
A selection of articles is available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/ (password freedom).

At the time of publication there were no items specifically for Libya.

World Watch Monitor news articles
Up-to-date articles are available at: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/libya

Recent country developments
Up-to-date articles are available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Libya (password: freedom).