World
Watch
Research

Egypt: Country Dossier

January 2020

OpenDoors
Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Contents

Introduction

World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55

36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54
60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

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Brief note on sources and definitions

This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). 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". The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: "Any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians".

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the World Watch List Documentation page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Revised: 6 January 2020

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Egypt

Brief country details

The estimated number of Christians in the table below is an Open Doors (OD) estimate.

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Egypt		
101,169,000	16,250,000	OD estimate

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List Egypt	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	76	16
WWL 2019	76	16
WWL 2018	70	17
WWL 2017	65	21
WWL 2016	64	22

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Egypt: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Clan and ethnic antagonism	Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Ethnic group leaders
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Islamic oppression	One's own (extended) family, Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Government officials , Violent religious groups

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of persecution situation

Christians in Egypt report that persecution comes mostly at community level. Incidents vary from Christian women being harassed while walking in a street to a mob of angry Muslims forcing a whole community of Christians to move out, leaving their houses and belongings to be confiscated. These sort of incidents take place mostly in Upper Egypt, where Salafist movements are active in the rural communities. The Islamic Salafi party continues to exist and operate legally. Their influence is considerable in rural societies where there is a high percentage of illiteracy and poverty.

Al-Azhar University, one of the most influential Islamic universities in the world, has a prominent place within Egyptian society and even the Constitution. The university's Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayyeb has clearly stated that there is no place in Islam for Muslims to convert to Christianity.

The presidential institution keeps speaking positively about Egypt's Christian community. However, the lack of serious law enforcement and the unwillingness of local authorities to protect Christians leave them vulnerable to all kinds of attacks, especially in Upper Egypt. In addition, due to dictatorial nature of the regime, neither church leaders nor other Christians can speak up against these practices.

Furthermore, in clear contrast to how mosques and Islamic organizations are dealt with, churches and Christian NGOs are restricted in building new churches or running social services. Christians of all backgrounds face difficulties in finding (new) places for communal worship. The difficulties come both from state restrictions as well as from communal hostility and mob violence.

Christians with a Muslim background have great difficulties in living out their faith since they face enormous pressure from their families to return to Islam. The State also makes it impossible for them to get any official recognition of their conversion.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- On 2 November 2018, Islamic militants opened fire on buses carrying Christian pilgrims in Minya Province, killing 7 and wounding at least 19. A further 16 Christians were killed because of their faith or under suspicious circumstances in the course of the WWL 2020 reporting period, most of them in Upper Egypt.
- In June 2019, Coptic Christians were attacked by a mob, after one of them had written an allegedly 'blasphemous' Facebook post. The police arrested some of the Coptic men and imprisoned the one responsible for the Facebook post.
- Although the government continues with the legalization of churches under the Church Construction Law (2016), thousands of churches are still waiting to be formally recognized. Requests for official recognition are sometimes answered with mob violence and the closure of the church by the security services.
- At least five church buildings went up in flames, with Christians wondering whether this happened by coincidence.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Summary

- Brief description of persecution situation: clearly stated - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/06/al-azhar-to-leave-islam-is-treason/
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: opened fire - https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/03/egypt-attack-gunmen-kill-coptic-christians-bus-ambush
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: were attacked by a mob - https://www.persecution.org/2019/06/11/facebook-post-sparks-mob-attack-egypt/
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: continues - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/egypt-legalises-156-churches-with-many-more-still-waiting/
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: mob violence - http://en.wataninet.com/coptic-affairs-coptic-affairs/sectarian/minya-manshiyet-zaafarana-copts-attacked-church-closed/27459/

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: whether this happened by coincidence - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2019/11/egypt-series-of-fires-in-their-churches-not-a-coincidence-say-copts/

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: whether this happened by coincidence - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2019/11/egypt-series-of-fires-in-their-churches-not-a-coincidence-say-copts/

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Egypt

Introduction

Links for general background information

- BBC country profile: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13313370.
- Britannica country profile: https://www.britannica.com/place/Egypt.

Recent history

After serving as president for three decades (from 1981 to 2011), Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down during the uprisings of the Arab Spring. The demonstrators put forward demands for more political freedom and expressed the discontent of the population with the country's social and economic situation. In June 2012, after a brief transition, Mohamed Morsi, a politician who used to be senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood, won the presidential election (gaining 52% of the votes). Once in power, he assumed dictatorial executive powers that alienated many Egyptians. Popular demonstrations were organized by a group called the *Tamarrod* which enjoyed the support of the police, the army, businessmen and also prominent Islamic and Christian Coptic religious figures. Ultimately, the army intervened and ousted President Morsi alleging that he had failed to respond satisfactorily to the demands of the Egyptian people. The army adopted its own transition road map which culminated in the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of new parliamentary and presidential elections.

At the end of the process, Field-Marshal Abdul Fattah al-Sisi emerged as the new Egyptian strong man. Al-Sisi was the minister of defense during Morsi's rule and he was the principal figure behind the ousting of Morsi. He was hailed by some as a hero who saved Egypt from the clutches of the Muslim Brotherhood, while others contend that his rule is a sure sign of Egypt's return to the old days of autocracy backed by the army. Once the new constitution was adopted, al-Sisi ran for president as a civilian and - given the personality cult that has been built around him prior to the election - it was not surprising that he won the election with an overwhelming majority. Since al-Sisi's ascent to power there has been a large scale crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. In March 2018, al-Sisi was re-elected with 97% of the votes. This huge win is a clear indication of how effectively all opposition has been ousted during his first term.

President al-Sisi's popularity is decreasing and hopes are currently low that he will be able to secure the basic needs for Egyptians in the low income bracket. In February 2019, parliament members voted (later passed by a referendum) on extending the presidency term to allow President al-Sisi to stay in office for another 12 years after finishing his current term. New amendments also boost the power of the army, already the dominant force in Egyptian politics. The political situation is generating some tension in the country as even some of al-Sisi's supporters are quite frustrated by the army's strong influence concerning the country's political decisions and economy.

Political and legal landscape

Egypt is a republic with president al-Sisi sworn into power in 2014. Overall the situation has stabilized under al-Sisi, but human rights have been under pressure as Human Rights Watch notes: "The government has arrested scores of al-Sisi's critics, including potential presidential candidates, ahead of the 2018 presidential elections that was held in an unfair and unfree environment. Police and the National Security Agency have systematically used torture and enforced disappearances. The government has sent thousands of civilians to military courts, undermined the judiciary's independence, and executed dozens of people following flawed trials."

Since al-Sisi's rise to power, many of the Muslim Brotherhood's senior leaders and members have been detained, prosecuted and sentenced to death or life imprisonment. In June 2019, former Muslim Brotherhood President Morsi died during his trial, some reports have linked his death to poor prison conditions. The government continues to ban most forms of independent organization and peaceful assembly and has cracked down on various dissident and opposition groups.

One cannot help but feel a sense of déjà vu when noting that another military strongman is once again cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood. President al-Sisi's regime wants to project itself as a guarantor of stability, order and security for Christians. The administration seems determined to tackle the increasing Islamization of the state that accelerated under the leadership of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, there is a risk that segments of the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters, who feel aggrieved by their loss of power and the persecution they are facing, might become more radicalized and join underground militant Islamic groups in great numbers. Such developments could lead to a further polarization of society in Egypt and could pose a serious risk to the nation's stability and the security of Christian Egyptians in the long run.

The current support of a large number of the churches and Christians for President al-Sisi's regime, might also be used against them. Followers of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups probably view church buildings and Christians as easy targets to show that the Egyptian government is not able to protect its supporters.

Religious landscape

Islam is the most dominant religion in Egypt. About 85% of the Egyptian population is Muslim and virtually all Egyptian Muslims are Sunni Muslims. Although Christianity has deep roots in Egypt going back centuries before the advent of Islam in North Africa, Christians are often marginalized and treated as second class citizens in modern Egypt.

Humanist International writes in its Freedom of Thought Report: :"Egyptian State ID cards include a section on religion and only members of the three "divine religions" can be recognized. [...] Muslim-born individuals who leave Islam are not allowed to change the religion field on their identity card. Since the Arab spring, the ID card issue has become a major campaigns issue for the Coptic Christian minority as sectarian tensions have increased."

In the table below, the OD estimate for the number of Christians has not been taken into consideration. The figures and calculated percentages follow WCD estimates.

Religious Context: Egypt	Numbers	%
Christians	16,250,000	OD estimate
Muslim	91,202,000	90.1
Hindu	1,500	0.0
Buddhist	890	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	0	0.0
Jewish	100	0.0
Bahai	2,200	0.0
Atheist	89,500	0.1
Agnostic	549,000	0.5
Other	1,900	0.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

Economic landscape

The World Bank puts the Egyptian economy in the lower income category. FSI shows that there is almost no improvement in the economic indicators. Around 32.5% of the population lives under the poverty line of $2 a day, a 4.7% increase compared to 2015, as new research has found. Structural problems of illiteracy and unemployment continue to be devastating. Egypt is one of nine countries with the highest illiteracy rates in the world, with adult illiteracy at about 26%, according to BTI.

President al-Sisi's administration has embarked upon an ambitious plan to revitalize the Egyptian economy and create much needed economic growth and jobs. However, many Egyptians are still suffering the effects the 2016 devaluation of the Egyptian pound in a move to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) affected still echoes in many Egyptian wallets. Unemployment has slightly decreased in the previous years (World Bank), but local Christians report that increased taxes and higher gas, electricity and water supply prices led to rises in the prices of food, transportation and houseware. Price increases have put more pressure on the social structure of society, with the middle class strugling to make ends meet, while the high poverty rate especially affects many Christians living in rural areas.

The increased economic pressure on already marginalized families fuels migration. Discrimination against Christian in the job market remains evident, especially in governmental institutions. Children in villages leave school on an early age to help earn family income.

In addtion, poverty is used to manipulate poor people for religious and political purposes. Unemployed Muslim youth can be led by radical Islamic groups to initiate attacks on churches and individual Christians. Secondly, there are indications that radical Islamic groups target poor Christians to convert them to Islam. Especially women and girls are vulnerable, as they become easy targets for forced marriages.

Social and cultural landscape

Egypt seeks to be a social and cultural centre of Islam and continues to be influential through its Islamic Al-Azhar University and its media production houses.

Culturally, Egypt is conservative and despite its large urban centres (Cairo, Alexandria) is dominated by tribal attitudes. The population is not as ethnically diverse as other countries in North Africa and the Middle East and has a strong national identity.

Especially with the rise of more radical interpretations of Islam, the pressure on Christians has been increasing over the past few decades. President al-Sisi called upon scholars at Al-Azhar University (considered to be the oldest and the most prestigious center of advanced Islamic studies among Sunni Muslims) to fight radicalism and introduce reforms in Islamic teaching. However, in rural and impoverished areas in particular, radical imams and less tolerant brands of Islam are growing in prominence. The government is making efforts to reverse this trend, but has not been very successful so far.

Christians in Egypt report that, although Muslims and Christians have much contact in everyday life, it cannot be called a peaceful co-existence. Although all speak the same language, there is nevertheless considerable division caused by their contrasting belief systems. Radical Muslims in rural areas, where many Christians live, promote attitudes of rejection towards Christians, which is a fertile ground for aggression, especially targeting women and children. Christian women, in rural areas in particular, find themselves targeted by radical Islamic groups and as a result kidnapping for either conversion, ransom or forced marriage is not uncommon.

HDI shows that life expectancy is low at 71.7 years of age and expected years of education is also low. Poverty, a low level of health awareness and education, high rates of illiteracy and widespread domestic violence are common for many Egyptians, including Christians. Power dynamics are at play at all levels of society: Muslims oppress Christians, men oppress women, and some church leaders may use their authority to oppress the most vulnerable Christians of other denominations.

Technological landscape

HDI shows that Egypt has relatively low Internet penetration with only 41.2 % of the population having access to the Internet.

Under al-Sisi, media censorship in Egypt has increased at a drastic pace. RSF reports that freedom of the press is clearly deteriorating: "The press freedom situation has become more and more alarming under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who engineered a second term as president in early 2018.

Egypt is now one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists. Some spend years in detention without being charged or tried. Others have been sentenced to long jail terms or even life imprisonment in iniquitous mass trials." CPJ reports that at least 25 journalists are currently imprisoned in Egypt.

In 2018, the president ratified the Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law, which ostensibly aims to combat "extremism" and "terrorism". However, these laws allow Egyptian authorities to arbitrarily block websites that are considered a threat to national security or to the national economy. Individuals who visit these websites can face steep fines and penalties. According to the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), the regime has blocked access to almost 500 websites, most of them belonging to media organisations.

Although the Anti-Cyber laws regulate and restrict the press and all other media channels and is restricting freedom of speech, Christians in Egypt report that modern technology is widely used in Egypt. Social media (especially Facebook) is used to mobilize public opinion. However, all multimedia is monitored by the government and criticism of the government or Islam is not tolerated. Most churches are not yet using modern technology in youth-work or for evangelistic purposes.

Security situation

The security situation in Egypt is currently stable, although there has been an increase of violent Islamic militancy in the northeast of the Sinai region, near the border with Gaza. The Egyptian security forces conduct operations against these militant groups on a regular basis. However, it is very difficult to control the entire area and the security forces cannot prevent militant groups from attacking undermanned checkpoints, tourists (buses) and Coptic Christians in northern Sinai.

Although these violent Islamic groups do present a security threat, for the most part the violence remains limited to northern Sinai. Nevertheless, the threat of bomb attack remains, especially for minority groups, including Christians. It is likely that this situation will continue in the short term..

There is also the threat of large scale protests becoming violent. Demonstrations occurred on 20 September 2019 in protest against government policies but they were quickly contained by arresting the demonstrators. Fear increased after the security services started checking the mobile phones of ordinary pedestrians who had shared messages about the protest.

Trends analysis

1. Egypt continues to be susceptible to the influence of radical Islam

Egypt is an extremely important country in the region due to its strategic location, its territorial and population size and because of its historical and diplomatic influence. The church in Egypt is also of critical importance since the Christian presence in Egypt is the largest surviving Christian population in the region.

Throughout the 20th century and beyond, it seems that competing visions of the Egyptian state have been vying for dominance in the country. One vision (advanced by the army and political establishment) puts more emphasize on nationalism as opposed to religion, while on the other hand Islamists (including the Muslim Brotherhood) want to make religion the foundation and central element of Egyptian identity.

Both visions have offered Egyptian Christians little by way of rights and security and as the competition between these two camps unfolds, Egyptian Christians are often caught in the political crossfire and forced to make difficult choices. The high level of illiteracy, economic stagnation and demographic pressure also means that - regardless of the political dispensation in the country - Egyptian society continues to be susceptible to the influence of the most radical and intolerant versions of Islam that are particularly appealing to the youth and the poor.

2. Christians continue to experience vulnerability and insecurity

Despite the state of emergency declared by the government to tackle the violent attacks that have targeted Christians, the sense of vulnerability and insecurity that has become pervasive among Christians in Egypt is likely to persist in the foreseeable future. The extent to which such attacks will continue or increase will determine the trajectory of the persecution dynamics in Egypt. The non-violent forms of persecution that are prevalent in various spheres of life are likely to continue without much change for the better.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13313370. - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13313370
- Link for general background information: https://www.britannica.com/place/Egypt. - https://www.britannica.com/place/Egypt
- Recent history: support - https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/marching-in-circles-egypt-s-dangerous-second-transition.pdf
- Recent history: intervened - http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/egypts-morsi-defiant-under-pressure-as-deadline-looms/2013/07/03/28fda81c-e39d-11e2-80eb-3145e2994a55_story.html
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WWL 2020: Church information / Egypt

Christian origins

The Coptic (= Egyptian) Orthodox Church prides itself in the tradition which names the apostle Mark as founder of Christianity in Egypt. In Alexandria, a vibrant church developed with its own 'school' of theology in the 2nd century. This was home to the Church Father, Athanasius of Alexandria (+ 373 AD), who was one of the foremost theologians of the worldwide church, especially for his defence of the view of God as a Trinity. Initially, the church was mainly a Greek phenomenon in the cities, but the original Egyptian population was soon won over for the new faith as well. Egypt became the cradle of monasticism; the Monastery of St Anthony became an important model for monasticism throughout Europe.

Persecution under Roman occupation was often severe in Egypt. This is why the Coptic calendar begins with 284 AD as its first year: In that year Diocletian became Emperor of Rome. His reign was marked by the torture and mass executions of Christians, especially in Egypt. After Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, the Coptic Christians were soon in trouble with the Empire since their theology was branded as heretical at the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). Arab armies then conquered Egypt (639-646 AD) and this led to more periods of severe persecution under Islam. The Church became focused on survival, instead of playing a public role in society. In the 10th century, the Coptic Christians had decreased in number, making up about half of the population.

The British colonial role in Egypt (1882-1952) gave much freedom to Christians. After the Revolution of 1952 this freedom has been steadily eroded and there have been short periods in which Christians have been persecuted, but this has always been a local phenomenon and not driven by the state.

Currently, the vast majority of Christians in Egypt (well over 90%) belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic Church entered Egypt in the 17th century through the missionary activity of the Capuchins and Jesuits. In 1847 the Anglicans began working in the country, followed by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1854. Many other independent church groups and missionaries have followed since, adding to the rich variety of Egyptian church life.

Church spectrum today

The OD-estimate of 16,250,000 Christians is different to the WCD estimate. The calculated percentages in the table below follow WCD estimates and give at least an idea of the percentage split within the Christian community.

Church networks: Egypt	Christians	%
Orthodox	8,732,000	93.7
Catholic	194,000	2.1
Protestant	540,000	5.8
Independent	136,000	1.5
Unaffiliated	8,900	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-288,000	-3.1
Total	--------------	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	439,000	4.7
Renewalist movement	667,000	7.2

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

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.

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Egypt

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 76 points, Egypt ranked 16 in WWL 2020.

Egypt remained at the same score and rank as in WWL 2019. Although only one major Islamist attack happened against Christians, the level of violence against Christians remains extremely high, with at least 23 Christians being killed, among other reported incidents.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Egypt	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Strong
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Very weak

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.

Islamic oppression (Strong):

In Egypt, *Islamic oppression* operates in different ways. Islamic culture sustains a view in Egyptian society whereby Christians are regarded as second-class citizens. This view causes the discrimination of Christians in the political realm and their dealing with the state. It also creates an environment in which the state is reluctant to respect and enforce the fundamental rights of Christians. In the family sphere, converts to Christianity face great pressure to renounce their faith. Christians also face pressure from *Islamic oppression* in their daily lives in their local neighborhood or at work. There have also been several violent attacks perpetrated by militant Islamic groups targeting Christians. Nonetheless, the activity of such militant groups is largely concentrated in northeastern Sinai.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

The tradition of authoritarian rule is perhaps the only permanent feature in Egypt's political system, which experienced three regime changes in just three years (2011-2014). All of Egypt's rulers have had an authoritarian government style.

In 2011, Mubarak's long dictatorship was ended through massive social protests, which eventually led to the controversial election of the Muslim Brotherhood. The government led by Mohamed Morsi did not behave democratically and was ousted by a national uprising supported by the army in 2013.

Currently, Egypt is ruled by a civilian government led by former army chief Abdul Fatah al-Sisi, after a presidential election in May 2014 and reelection in March 2018. This government seems to regard basic human rights and democratic pluralism as a low priority in view of the huge current economic, political, social and security challenges. In this context, therefore, religious freedom for Christians is not fully guaranteed.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Strong):

Although only few commentators see an ethnic distinction between (Christian) Copts and (Islamic) Arabs, Christians and Muslims act as two distinct groups in Egyptian society. As in many other Arab countries, tribal thinking strongly influences group thinking and this can easily lead to verbal and physical violence being aimed against those outside the group. In Upper Egypt for instance, many cases of mob violence happen when Christians try to implement the official recognition of a church building. There is a mixture of *Islamic oppression* and *Clan and ethnic antagonism* in such cases which necessitates that the Christian minority has to operate carefully.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Egypt	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	STRONG	WEAK	-	-	STRONG	VERY WEAK
Government officials	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	-
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Very strong	-	Strong	Weak	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak
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.

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- ***One's own (extended) family (Very strong):*** Family members of converts regard their conversion from Islam to Christianity as betrayal of Islam, while Islam is seen as the all-encompassing pillar of society; something you cannot breakaway from. Those strongly held Islamic convictions are a significant reason for family members to target relations who convert to Christianity.
- ***Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):*** Radical Islamic preachers who propagate hatred play a crucial role in sustaining a climate of intolerance and in fueling hostility against Christians.
- ***Violent religious groups (Medium):*** Militant Islamic groups (such as the Islamic State group) are responsible for many of the most violent and gruesome acts of violent persecution targeting Christians.
- ***Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs (Strong):*** Ordinary people whose views are shaped by intolerant and radical imams are significant drivers of persecution and contribute the lion's share of the pressure that Christians face in their daily lives in their local neighborhoods and at work. Societal hostility and prejudice against Christians are more pronounced in the poorer and rural parts of the country.
- ***Government officials (Medium):*** Government officials also act as drivers of persecution through their failure to vindicate the rights of Christians (e.g. protecting Christians from mob attacks) and also through discriminatory acts which violate the fundamental rights of Christians (e.g. their refusal to acknowledge conversion from Islam to Christianity).

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- ***Government officials (Strong):*** Government officials, including judicial officers, local administrative officials as well those belonging to various branches of the security apparatus in Egypt are the principal drivers here. The administration of President al-Sisi is attempting to shore up its support with the majority of the population and hold on to power. Thus, despite its promises to the contrary, the government has actually maintained existing restrictions on the freedom of religion of Egyptian Christians. Church leaders in Egypt are also constantly monitored and under surveillance by the state. In addition, the freedom of speech has been extremely restricted for all Egyptians by the al-Sisi government. Hence, Christians cannot speak out against injustices and persecution.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- ***One's own (extended) family (Strong):*** In a context of tribal thinking based around Islamic faith, family members often regard conversion from Islam to Christianity as betrayal of the family and a shame to the family honor, which needs to be corrected.
- ***Ethnic group leaders (Medium):*** The tendency to see conversion from Islam as a betrayal of both Islam and family, is strengthened by radical and intolerant imams and other group leaders when they call upon local Muslims to protect their faith (group) against the other group, the Christians.

- ***Citizens (people from broader society), including mobs (Strong):*** Wider society functions as a watchdog to make sure that the honor and power of the tribe is protected. This is especially the case in rural areas. Even allegations that another group, the Christians, are being given more space in society (e.g. by having their church legitimized) can ignite mob attacks.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Upper Egypt, the southern part of the country, is known to be more conservative and radical than the north. Most incidents and mob attacks take place in this region, with the Minya Governate being most notorious and having the highest number of attacks on Christians, especially those in economically disadvantaged, rural areas.

Radical Islamic groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood have nationwide support, but violent Islamic militants are only openly active in the northeastern area of the Sinai peninsula. The most recent major incident dates from January 2019, when a police officer was killed defusing a bomb planted near a church in Cairo.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians:

Expatriate Christians in Egypt are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.

Historical Christian communities:

The largest church in this category is the Coptic Orthodox Church. There are also established Protestant denominations throughout the country. The large Coptic minority, while facing important difficulties (including discrimination in education, health and government legislation that hinders essential aspects of church life), has been tolerated by the state and by the Muslim majority in the country because of its historical presence and its significant size of several million. In recent years, this has changed, however, causing historical Christian communities to be targeted both by their surrounding neighborhoods and by radical Islamic groups.

Converts to Christianity:

There is a small but growing number of Christian converts who bear the brunt of persecution, most often at the hands of family members. The latter punish converts for abandoning the Islamic faith, often by means of beatings or house expulsion.

Non-traditional Christian communities:

There are several Evangelical and Pentecostal groups in the country, some of them being 2nd, 3rd or even further generations of converts from a Muslim background. Others come from an Orthodox background. They face pressure from both the Islamic society and to a lesser extent from the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Egypt
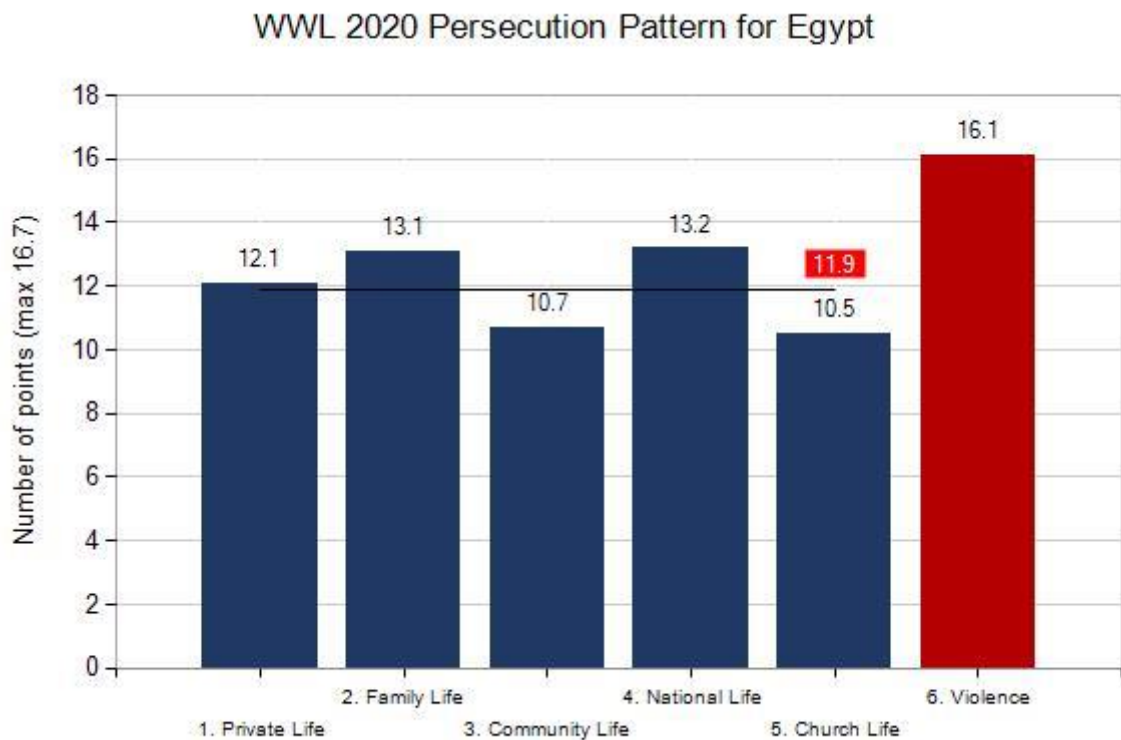
The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Egypt shows:

• The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (11.9 points), staying at a similar level to WWL 2019 (12.0).

• All *spheres of life* show very high levels of pressure, which is highest in the *Family* and *National spheres of life.* The very high score of 13.1 points for *Family life* reflects in particular the difficulties converts from Islam to Christianity face concerning Christian weddings, baptisms and funerals. The very high score for *National life* reflects the levels of discrimination Christians face - especially those with a Muslim background - when engaging with the authorities. The danger of being accused of blasphemy, followed by mob violence, is always present, while the police and other authorities will often side with the accusers and attackers in order to retain public order.

• The score for violence is at an extreme level, rising from 15.9 points in WWL 2019 to 16.1 in WWL 2020.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale 0 – 4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

- *Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1.1 / Score: 3.50 points)***:** Conversion from Islam to Christianity ('apostasy') is not officially forbidden by law. However, a key ruling by the Cairo Administrative Court in 2008 stated that the freedom to practice one's religion is subject to certain limitations, and affirmed that conversion from Islam to another faith is a violation of the principles of Islam and therefore not allowed. In addition, conversion is punished via the blasphemy laws. Societal hostility to converts is very high and mere rumors of conversion can lead to mob violence, especially in rural areas. Conversion is seen as a huge shame for the honor of the family and family members will often cast out converts, try to get them to recant their faith or even kill them.

- *It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc. (Block 1.4 / Score: 3.25 points):* In the recent past, several converts from a Muslim background who openly declared their Christian faith on social media have been arrested. Most converts refrain from publishing anything indicating their new faith, mainly out of fear of repercussions from family or society. On another note, the blasphemy law is widely used to target those who are criticizing Islam. Several Christians have been arrested or have been the victim of mob violence after allegedly insulting Islam on social media. Nonetheless, many Christians share large amounts of Bible verses, Christian images and other Christian content on social media.

- *It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score: 3.25 points)***:** The use of Christian symbols, for example in cars, has decreased due to the fear of violent acts against Christians. Most, if not all, Coptic Christians wear a tattooed cross on their wrist or arm, which is used for recognition, i.e. to enter a church. However, it also makes them easily recognizable for attackers. Converts from Islam to Christianity have to be careful in particular, as wearing Christian symbols could lead to discovery of their new faith or lead to uneasy questions from family members or society.

- *It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members, extended family or others (Block 1.8 / 3 points):* Accusations of blasphemy are easily made, so most Christians refrain from discussing their faith with people they do not know or trust. Discussing their faith can easily be interpreted as an attempt to proselytize, which is heavily opposed by society. However, converts face the highest risk since discussing Christian faith can lead to discovery of their conversion.

Converts face severe limitations within their homes. Any act of private worship as a Christian convert is risky and there is a lot of pressure on them to take part in the daily Islamic prayer or in the Ramadan fast and other Islamic obligations. Unlike Christians with a Muslim background, non-convert Christians face little or no pressure in this sphere.

Family sphere:

- *Have babies and children of Christians automatically been registered under the state or majority religion? (Block 2.1 / Score: 3.5 points):* It is very difficult, if not impossible, for converts from Islam to Christianity to change the religious registration on their ID cards. The registered religion of the father is automatically applied to the child.

Hence, the child is registered as Muslim. If both parents are converts, their wedding is invalid under Egyptian law and the children are considered to be illegitimate.

- ***Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education(Block 2.8 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Children of converts from Islam to Christianity have to attend Islamic religious classes, as their conversion is not recognized. However, other Christian children also face difficulties, as the Egyptian curriculum is heavily influenced by Islamic teaching. Christians have their own Christian religion classes, but they still have to learn verses of Islamic literature and parts of the Quran at school. Some of the educational material contains anti-Christian teachings. Children of privileged Christians can avoid this by attending private Christian-run schools, but this is only financially possible for some parents.

- ***Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce (Block 2.11 / Score: 3.25 points):*** This is an issue that mainly concerns converts from a Muslim background. The pressure from family members and society to divorce a convert is high, also due to the legal implications.If the spouse does not agree to divorce, the convert will anyway lose all inheritance and guardianship rights according to Sharia law.

- ***Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible (Block 2.2 / Score: 3.25 points):*** Converts from Islam to Christianity face the biggest challenges in this regard. As their conversion is not recognized in any way, neither by government nor society, it is very difficult for them to get married with a Christian ceremony (which is done in secret or in a foreign country). Under Sharia law, a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman. So the children of a Christian man married to a convert woman, will be regarded as born out of wedlock. Converts will have to register their children as Muslim upon birth.

Especially in rural areas, converts from Islam face an enormous amount of pressure from their immediate and extended family to renounce their Christian faith. Within the large Coptic community, pressure in this sphere is much lower, but even the pressure on "cross-denominational converts" can include physical assault and death-threats.

Community sphere:

- ***Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.) (Block 3.1 / 3.50 points):*** Discrimination of and hostility against Christians is pervasive and can be felt in all areas of life. Civil servants at all levels and large segments of society are unwilling to accept Christians as peers with the same rights and guarantees of safety. Although all women in Egypt may experience some forms of (sexual) harassment, Christian women are particularly vulnerable because they do not veil themselves. Levels of pressure and discrimination vary; there is often less pressure in urban areas compared to rural areas.

- ***Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups - this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc. (Block 3.2 / 3.25 points):*** Monitoring occurs at different levels. Local communities and Islamist groups know where the Christians live in their neighborhood or villages. They watch and observe them, making sure the Christians do not disrespect Islamic principles by evangelizing or causing problems in others ways. This tension is less in urban places, but remains a problem in poor neighborhoods and rural areas, especially in Upper Egypt. In recent years, several Christians have been attacked after allegedly insulting Islam or allegedly having a relationship with a Muslim woman. Police presence and government control is less strict in poor and/or rural areas and mob attacks often go unpunished. At the state level, security and intelligence agencies spy on converts and try to force them to supply information on the activities of convert groups.

- ***Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons - e.g. jizya tax, community tax, protection money (Block 3.12 / Score: 3 points):*** The practice of so-called 'customary reconciliation councils' is relevant here. After Christians or churches have been attacked, (local) authorities often force Christians to accept a meeting before such a council instead of requesting the prosecutor to prosecute the attackers. Christians often have to accept the terms imposed by those councils, which in most cases benefit the perpetrators at the cost of the Christian victims. In some cases, the Christians are even forced to sell their houses and leave the village. Despite intentions for peaceful reconciliation, in reality these councils perpetrate a climate of impunity and encourage further attacks.

- ***Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3.10 / Score: 3 points):*** This discrimination occurs at different levels. Christians are not employed within the intelligence agencies, and cannot serve on senior positions within the army or police force. Christians are also underrepresented in senior government positions. Job discrimination in private employment depends on the level of tolerance of the employer, but happens regularly. Such discrimination has led to a high level of entrepreneurial activity among Copts and other Christians, since they cannot rely on the state or even private (non-Christian) employers for employment**.** Finally, although constituting more than 10% of the population, there has not been a single Christian player in Egypt's national team in a decade and Christians are discriminated against and denied opportunities to play in the top professional football clubs in the country.

Egyptian Christians are often victims of social exclusion. Country researchers report that Christians face constant discrimination in areas such as justice, education, basic social services and are generally more vulnerable to poverty.

National sphere:

- ***The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits the freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Sharia law is "the principle source of legislation", according to the Constitution. Hence, converts from Islam to Christianity are not protected by the Constitution, although Article 64 states that "Freedom of belief is absolute". Recognized Christians are free to manage their own personal status laws and religious affairs, but Sharia law also applies in cases between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.

- ***Officials at any level have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identity cards, etc. (Block 4.2 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Although conversion is not forbidden by law, it is heavily opposed in practice. If converts try to officially change their religious registration, it is highly likely that the authorities will put them under surveillance and prosecute them under the blasphemy laws.
- ***Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4.8 / Score: 3.5 points):*** There are two major concerns for Christians when expressing their views in public: First, to be careful not to insult or criticize Islam in any way. Even alleged blasphemy can lead to mob violence or prosecution. Secondly, President al-Sisi's government has developed into a strict dictatorship. Speaking out against the government can lead to arrest, torture and imprisonment.
- ***Those who have caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished (Block 4.14 / Score: 3.5 points):*** This is common in many areas of the country where perpetrators of mobbing and looting go unpunished either through deliberate 'turning a blind eye' or through the use of customary reconciliation councils (see explanation to Block 3.12). In addition, mistreatment of converts by family members is considered to be a family issue. Converts do not receive any protection from the government and can even be killed by their family members with virtual impunity.

Religious freedom is not upheld by the state and the Egyptian legal system is biased against non-Muslims. The legal system treats Christians, especially converts as second class citizens and limits their individual and collective ability to exercise their freedom of religion and live in accordance with their faith.

Church sphere:

- ***Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts (Block 5.7 / Score: 3.75 points):*** There is strong opposition against conversion and proselytizing. Churches rarely accept converts into their meetings, in order to avoid troubles with both the government and society. Accusations of proselytizing are easily made and can lead to attacks on churches, followed by the closure of the church for 'security reasons'.
- ***Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5.1 / Score: 3.5 points):*** It is common practice for the police and intelligence agencies to request a schedule of all events happening in the church. Moreover, they have the authority to cancel any of the events under the rationale of protecting national security. In addition, police in plain clothes sometimes attend church services to monitor what is said during sermons. In addition, many churches face opposition or even violence from society, especially when they are trying to legitimize their church building under the 2016 Church Construction Law.
- ***Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier (Block 5.3 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Despite the legitimization of over a thousand churches under the 2016 Church Construction Law, many churches are still awaiting recognition. In many other villages with a Christian population, Christians do not even have a church. There are still many administrative obstacles (such as security clearances) when Christians want to build a church and opposition from society is in many cases strong.

- ***Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Depending on the part of the country, Christian outside activities (such as activities for children) can be organized in a discreet manner. However, churches often refrain from holding processions in the street out of fear of attack by radical groups or mobs, since such processions might be interpreted as displaying a threat to Islam.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.

Egypt	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	23	1205	24	18	42
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	17	54	17	25	20
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	128	209	1	7	21

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.

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

- ***Christians killed:*** Only one major attacked happened on 2 November 2018, killing 7 Christians. However, the killing of at least 16 other Christians has been reported, mainly in Upper Egypt. In some cases, their Christian faith was the clear reason for the murder. In other cases, it is very plausible that they have been killed because of their faith as Christians are viewed as second-class citizens and murdering a Christian can often be done with impunity, especially in Upper Egypt.

- *Christians attacked:* Many Christians have been attacked and sometimes severely wounded because of their faith. Many girls have been abducted and sexually abused, while several have been forced to marry Muslims. In addition, hundreds have experienced sexual harassment. Reportedly, Christian girls are [targeted in a systematic way](#), with their kidnappers sometimes being paid per victim.
- *Christians arrested:* Several Christians have been arrested. They were in most cases the victims of a mob attack and arrested to satisfy their attackers' demands and to de-escalate the situation. At least one Christian has been imprisoned after being accused of blasphemy.
- *Churches attacked:* Several churches have been closed by the police, often after mobs had attacked the church and/or the church was unlicensed. At least five church buildings have been burned down.
- *Christian homes/shops attacked:* During mob attackes, several houses and shops have been attacked and damaged. In other cases, individual shops and houses have been attacked.

5 Year trends

Chart 1:

The table below shows that the average pressure on Christians in Egypt steadily grew at first and now seems to be levelling off between 11.5 and 12.0 points.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Egypt	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	11.9
2019	12.0
2018	11.5
2017	9.7
2016	9.9

Chart 2:

The chart below shows that the levels of pressure on Christians in the individual *spheres of life have* more or less risen steadily (except in the *Community sphere)* and then levelled off in the last two reporting periods. The sharp increase in pressure from 9.6 to 13.2 in the *National sphere* reflects the fact that the situation for Christians has not improved under the rule of President al-Sisi. Christians are discriminated against in public life and speaking out against such violations can have serious consequences.
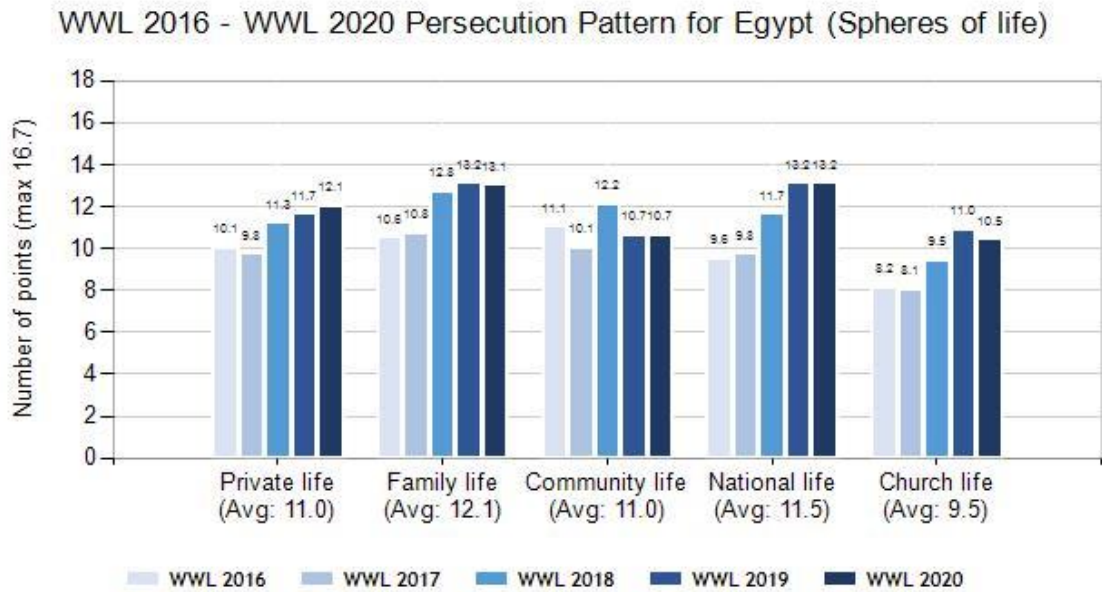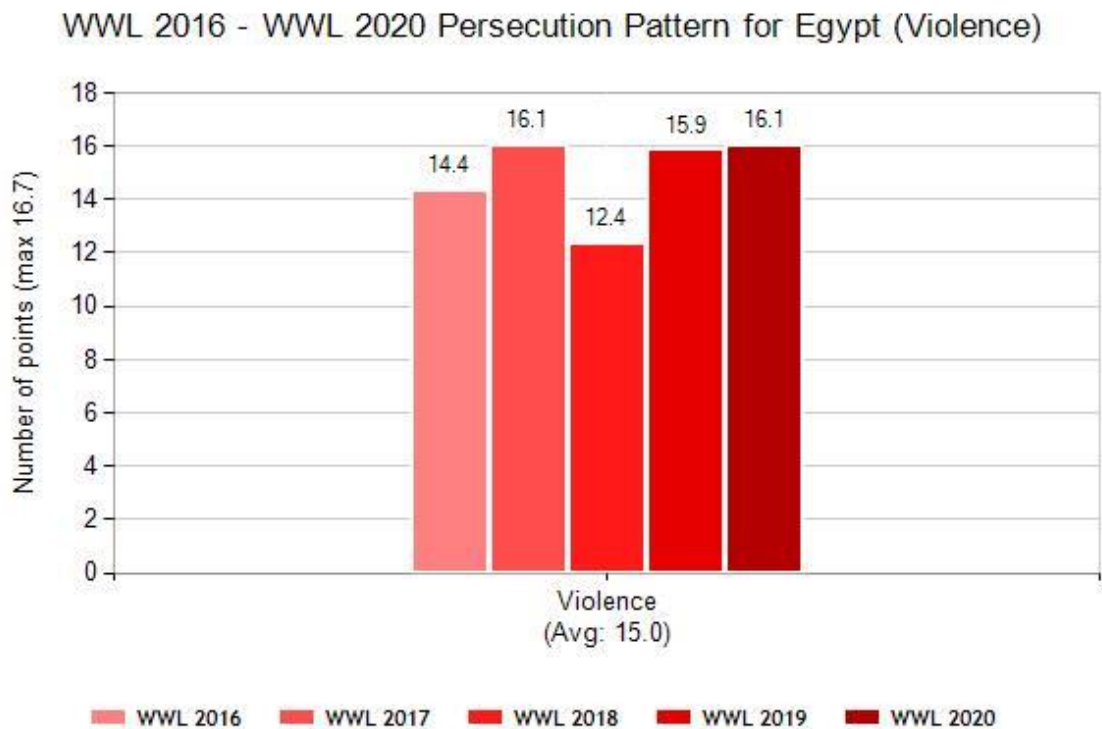
WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Egypt (Spheres of life)

Chart 3:

The table below shows that all the scores for violence have been at an extreme level, with three reporting periods scoring 15.9 points or above.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Egypt (Violence)

Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- *Abduction*
- *Denied custody of children*
- *Economic harassment via work/job/business*
- *Enforced Religious Dress Code*
- *Forced Marriage*
- *Incarceration by family/house arrest*
- *Violence – physical*
- *Violence – psychological*
- *Violence - sexual*
- *Violence - verbal*

Within the Middle East, Egypt has a reputation for having the highest rates of sexual harassment and violence. According to a 2013 UN Women survey, over 99% of women in Egypt have experienced sexual harassment, regardless of what they wear or what their religion is. In such an environment and without societal protection of women, Christian women are particularly vulnerable.

Although harassment, forced marriage or marriage by abduction and sexual assault are common practice affecting all women in Egypt to varying degrees (also depending on the geographical region), there have been reports that Christian women are particularly targeted for marriage by abduction, mainly in rural areas, villages and southern towns. The psychological impact of the consequent fear of abductions on Christians families is high, especially in rural areas: Females can feel in these areas as though they cannot leave the house by themselves, and they need constant company by male relatives to protect them. There are also reports that Christian girls are lured into marriage: these girls are often under-age and come from vulnerable families. Traditional practices do not help in this regard: Early marriage is part of the norm in more rural and traditional societies.

Female converts from Islam to Christianity in particular are impacted by anti-conversion laws, overall personal status laws and traditional customs. Converts will very likely be divorced by their Muslim husbands, leaving them without any financial support. The custody of their children may be taken from them, as well as inheritance rights. They are also at risk from the side of their own family, because women are expected not to shame the family honor. It is especially difficult for women to escape these dangerous situations, since it is not usual for women to travel or live alone.

On the work floor, Christian women can face double discrimination, because they are both Christian and female. The fact that they are known to be Christians can cause them to miss out on promotion and career benefits.

Male Pressure Points:

- *Abduction*
- *Denied inheritance or possessions*
- *Economic harassment via work/job/business*
- *Incarceration by government*
- *Violence – physical*
- *Violence – psychological*

Christians in Egypt often feel they are being treated as second class citizens in a Muslim-majority country. In addition, unemployment is a great pressure on men over all the country, but especially in upper Egypt. Particularly in those rural areas, it is hard for Christian young men to find a job. Sometimes, it is because Muslim shop-owners openly call upon their Muslim customers not to buy from Christians, as some Muslims may believe that it is impure to eat food made by a Christian. Some Christian men are not permitted to participate in government or even soccer teams due to their conspicuously Christian names. The economic situation can also be used against Christian boys as a religious trap: Some Muslims are known to first offer financial help to Christian boys, but when the boy cannot pay back the loan, they tell him that if he converts to Islam the debt will be dropped.

Social media is also becoming a space which can trigger physical violence. For example, a large group of Muslims in Minya Province attacked the house of a Christian man and his brothers because of a message that had been posted on the Facebook page of his son, who lives in another region of Egypt. The message was deemed insulting to Islam. Despite an apology video from the son that claimed that his account was hacked, the police arrested him for blasphemy, together with his brother and three of his uncles.

As main bread winner, any persecution of Christian men (imprisonment, beating, kidnapping for ransom, or even murder) that hinders a man's ability to provide financially, also strongly affects the rest of the family. Further, once a man feels defeated by the attacks on his faith and his disability to defend his Christian beliefs, he can feel broken and lose self-confidence and sense of value. A strong sense of shame comes with this brokenness. Combined with the general economic situation, it can even impact the stability of the family, resulting in higher rates of domestic violence and divorce.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religious groups facing persecution in Egypt include Shia and Sufi Muslims, Bahai, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Shia Muslims are particularly targeted by Sunni militants, making it dangerous for them to worship and practice their faith openly. Mormons, Bahai and Jehovah's Witnesses are denied recognition by the authorities, hence making it difficult for them to have places of worship. The missionary zeal and corresponding activities of such groups are considered illegal and thus adherents face hostility both from state officials and society, including Christian Egyptians.

In its [Freedom of Thought Report,](#) Humanist International writes: "Egyptian State ID cards include a section on religion and only members of the three 'divine religions' can be recognized. Many elderly members of Bahai or other minority communities further lack birth and marriage certificates. In 2009 the situation was slightly but not sufficiently improved, when two Bahais were given permission to use a dash ('-') in the religion section. Muslim-born individuals who leave Islam are not allowed to change the religion field on their identity card."

A clear example of violence against other religious minorities happened November 2017, when Sunni militants attacked a crowded Sufi mosque in the Sinai peninsula, killing over 300. (Source: [New York Times,](#) 24 November 2017)

In addition, atheists are very prone to persecution, especially those active on social media networks.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians - as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** There have been no successful major attacks against Christians since the November 2018 bus attack. Nonetheless, marginalization and legal obstacles will continue to pressure the Church and the Egyptian Christians. Discrimination is likely to continue, especially in Upper Egypt. Converts from Islam to Christianity will continue facing the brunt of persecution from their own families, as well as from society and the government.
- **Clan and ethnic antagonism:** It is unlikely that the majority of society will ever recognize Christians as equal citizens with equal rights. Generally, Egyptians are expected to be Sunni Muslims and any deviation is seen as betrayal. Converts from Islam to Christianity will continue to be very vulnerable.
- **Dictatorial paranoia:** Most Christians are happy that Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi was ousted. However, incumbent President al-Sisi does not seem to have the political will or power to improve the situation and security of the Christian community significantly.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Violence: targeted in a systematic way - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/egypt-ex-kidnapper-admits-get-paid-every-copt-christian-girl-bring/
- Gender profile of persecution: marriage by abduction - https://preventforcedmarriage.org/forced-marriage-overseas-egypt/
- Gender profile of persecution: norm - https://egyptindependent.com/child-marriage-in-egypt-reaches-117000-children-capmas/
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Freedom of Thought Report, - https://fot.humanists.international/countries/africa-northern-africa/egypt/
- Persecution of other religious minorities: New York Times - https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/mosque-attack-egypt.html

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

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

World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/egypt/.

Recent country developments

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