

World
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Myanmar: Country Dossier

December 2019



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Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2019

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Contents

Introduction	3
World Watch List 2020	3
Copyright notice	5
Brief note on sources and definitions	5
WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Myanmar	6
Brief country details	6
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	6
Brief description of persecution situation	7
Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period	7
External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary	7
WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Myanmar	8
Link for general background information	8
Recent history	8
Political and legal landscape	9
Religious landscape	10
Economic landscape	11
Social and cultural landscape	12
Technological landscape	13
Security situation	13
Trends analysis	14
External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding	15
WWL 2020: Church information / Myanmar	19
Christian origins	19
Church spectrum today	19
WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Myanmar	20
Reporting period	20
Position on World Watch List (WWL)	20
Persecution engines	20
Drivers of persecution	22
Geographical hotspots of persecution	25
Christian communities and how they are affected	25
The Persecution pattern	26
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life	27

Violence.....	32
5 Year trends	34
Gender profile of persecution.....	35
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	37
Future outlook for the church.....	37
External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics	39
Additional reports and articles.....	41
WWR in-depth reports	41
World Watch Monitor news articles	41
Recent country developments	41

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).

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Myanmar

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Myanmar		
54,336,000	4,322,000	8.0

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

World Watch List Myanmar	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	73	19
WWL 2019	71	18
WWL 2018	65	24
WWL 2017	62	28
WWL 2016	62	23

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

Myanmar: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Religious nationalism	Non-Christian religious leaders, Government officials , Ethnic group leaders, Violent religious groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Political parties
Dictatorial paranoia	Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Government officials , Ethnic group leaders, Political parties
Communist and post - Communist oppression	Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies, Organized crime cartels or networks
Organized corruption and crime	Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Government officials , Political parties, Organized crime cartels or networks

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

Brief description of persecution situation

In predominantly Christian states like Kachin State, Karen State or in northern Shan State, even well-established historical churches are being attacked. More than 100,000 Christians in the north live in IDP camps and are deprived of access to food and healthcare. Fighting increased in 2018, adding thousands more to the camps; they have not been able to return to their homes yet. In some instances, Buddhist monks have invaded church compounds and built Buddhist shrines inside. Converts are persecuted by their Buddhist, Muslim or tribal families and communities because they have left their former belief and have thereby removed themselves from community life. Communities who aim to stay "Buddhist only" make life for Christian families impossible by not allowing them to use community water resources. Non-traditional church groups experience opposition too, especially when they are located in the rural areas of Myanmar and/or are known for proselytizing. The government tries to act against radical Buddhist monks, but sends mixed signals, since it became even clearer in the WWL 2020 reporting period that radical monks enjoy the support of the army.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- In March 2019, Human Rights Watch published a report about how predominantly Christian Kachin girls and women are trafficked and sold as brides to China ("[Give us a baby, and we'll let you go](#)").
- In January and February 2019, one pastor and one church elder disappeared in Rakhine State, allegedly abducted and then killed by the insurgent Arakan Army. The elder's body was found but the whereabouts of the pastor remain unknown.
- In most schools, all pupils - including non-Buddhists - are required to recite Buddhist teaching or prayers before classes begin.
- Converts are discriminated against in various ways. In one report, a teacher refused to give a Christian student a list of questions provided to others in preparation for tests. In another case, when a family sold a plot of land, the earnings were distributed to all siblings of the family except the convert.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Give us a baby, and we'll let you go - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/21/interview-why-brides-myanmar-are-trafficked-china>

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Myanmar

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>.

Recent history

In 1948 Burma became independent from Britain. From 1962 to 2011 the country was ruled by an oppressive military junta. A gradual process of democratization then began, most notably visible in the elections won by noble peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2015. Her initial term in office comes to an end in 2020, but as long as the Myanmar army (also referred to as the Tatmadaw) retains its current level of power, no major changes can be expected. The army not only has a powerful constitutional position and remains a strong political factor, it is also deeply involved in legal and illicit trade, which mainly affects predominantly Christian areas like Kachin State.

Aung San Suu Kyi has initiated a series of peace conferences, the so-called "Panglong Conferences", but these still do not include all ethnic minority militant groups, especially the most powerful ones, and so there has been no real progress. It seems that things can only change if the army could extract some sort of [benefit](#) from reducing its political influence. So far, the Myanmar army has [extended](#) its unilateral ceasefire several times, but continued to exclude Rakhine State. The peace process stalled in 2019 and fighting increased. The government ordered an [Internet blackout](#) for northern Rakhine State, causing both national and international concern. UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, [warned](#) in June 2019 that such measures may have grave consequences for human rights and humanitarian monitoring. A report published by Amnesty International in May 2019 and entitled "[No one can protect us](#)" has highlighted some of the war crimes committed against religious minorities by the Myanmar army.

The Rohingya refugee crisis continues to be unresolved. It has been decried worldwide and heavily affects neighboring Bangladesh. In November 2018, Bangladesh announced it would [postpone the repatriation program](#) until after December 2018 elections. This did not take place as the Rohingya refugees did not get any security guarantees and fighting in Rakhine State continues. (The fighting this time is not against a "Muslim insurgency", but against the ethnic minority Arakan Army, which is a Buddhist insurgency group and challenged the Tatmadaw by targeting its officers.) Although the original repatriation program was aiming to repatriate 150 Rohingya per day - which is what both sides had initially agreed upon - it would take 13 years for everyone to return who had fled to Bangladesh in 2017. And this does not include those who had fled earlier.

Demonstrations erupted over the erection of statues depicting General Aung San in Mon, Kachin, Chin and Kayah states. This was made worse by the government security forces reacting too heavy-handedly, which has shown ethnic minorities that the whole peace process may well end up being smothered by Bamar (or Burmese) nationalism. Army staff and some ethnic insurgents are involved in drug trafficking and the exploitation of resources like jade and timber.

Unruly nationalist monks continue to fight for a radical Buddhism and for what they see as the much needed protection of the country. Trust-building remains key, but will be impossible as long as the army offensives against the largely Christian Kachin minority and the fighting in Kachin and northern Shan states continue, displacing tens of thousands.

Political and legal landscape

The outcome of the November 2015 elections raised many hopes in the country and abroad that the [longest lasting civil war](#) in the world might finally be brought to an end. But these hopes have been disappointed and ethnic parties started to merge in order to win a stronger margin in the 2020 elections, some announcing they would [not form a coalition](#) with the NLD of Aung San Suu Kyi. The NLD has not reached out to those ethnic parties effectively and the peace process has not made any tangible process. Of course, after the 2020 elections, if the ethnic parties do gain in strength, the question will then arise about which parties they will plan to partner with. The ethnic minorities consist of several dozen groups making up more than 30% of the country's population, many of them being Christian or containing large Christian groups. The government needs to build up trust with them, which is a major challenge after decades of war. Aung San Suu Kyi, despite all her personal achievements and integrity, is basically regarded as a member of the Burmese ("Bamar") nobility who is not seriously interested in the plight of ethnic and religious minorities. As it stands, the fighting in Kachin and northern Shan states continues and even increases and the world does not know what is going on in Rakhine State. The fact that an ethnic Chin Baptist Christian was appointed as vice-president and a Christian leads the Upper House of parliament is more a matter of cosmetics and does not change anything on the ground.

According to the Constitution, the army enjoys a reserved 25% of the available seats in the national Assembly and holds three of the most important ministries, including the Interior Ministry and the Ministry for Border Affairs. In a surprise move, in February 2019, the NLD set up a 45-member-committee charged with evaluating possible [changes to the army-drafted Constitution of 2008](#). The army responded by warning of a [potential "battleground"](#), if changes to the Constitution were to be based purely on party politics. This sent radical Buddhist nationalists into overdrive. Instead of targeting religious minorities, [Ultra-nationalist Buddhist U Wirathu](#) started to speak fiercely against the government, claiming that the military members of parliament should be worshipped like gods, as they are "sacrificing themselves for the country", which emphasizes how strongly he opposes any changes to the country's Constitution. As he continued to attack State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, the authorities probed [legal steps](#) against him and finally issued an arrest warrant.

In November 2019, U Wirathu had still evaded arrest, which might also reflect an attitude of wanting to avoid an open confrontation. Cynics could say that radical Buddhist monks do not need to stir up sentiments against minorities, since the army is doing that for them. It is no wonder that radical monks and the army are increasingly aligning; there is mutual endorsement and backing, as both sides share the over-arching goal of keeping Myanmar's Buddhism pure and free from all perceived threats. This was clearly shown in June 2019 by the donation of 30 million kyat which one of the army generals publicly gave to Ma Ba Tha, leading to an army spokesman stating that the nationalist Ma Ba Tha organization is ["necessary for Myanmar Buddhists"](#).

Religious landscape

Myanmar is predominantly Buddhist and Buddhists played a role in rising against the military regime in 2007. Before that, radical Buddhist groups had not been very political, but when the movement “969” emerged (later called “Ma Ba Tha”), this quickly changed. This group has a nationalist agenda and calls fellow religionists to defend the country against any perceived threats. In August 2015, shortly before the first free and fair elections, Ma Ba Tha managed to introduce the “Laws for the Protection of Race and Religion”. Those are first and foremost targeted against the Muslim minority, especially the Rohingya of Rakhine State, living in the borderlands with Bangladesh. The Ma Ba Tha was banned, but re-emerged under a different name, and was banned in 2018 again. However, it is very much alive and some local chapters do not just simply ignore the ban, they also still use its old name.

The Muslim minority does not have citizenship and most of them have left the country due to ongoing persecution. A deadly attack against a border post in October 2016, leaving nine guards dead and claimed by a radical Islamic group, led the authorities to become even more active against Muslims, pushing an estimated 700,000 across the border into refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Radical Buddhism has been targeting Muslims more than Christians, but reports say that Buddhist monks continue to convert children of Christian minorities to Buddhism by luring them into temples. Stronger persecution comes from the army, however, where even killings of Christians are reported. Until now, persecution by monks and radical Buddhist groups has not increased - which could have happened when the delayed publication of the 2014 government census revealed a surprisingly strong increase in the number of Christians. According to the census, the number of Christians rose from 4.6% in 1973 to 6.2% in 2014, and even then there were large numbers of Christians in the war-torn regions of predominantly Christian Kachin State which were not counted. However, now that most Muslims are out of the country or sufficiently intimidated, radical Buddhists may start targeting other minorities more intensively.

The Myanmar army had issued a court case against the President of the Kachin Baptist Convention, Dr. Hkalam Samson, as in a meeting with US President Trump he had spoken about the lack of freedom of religion in Myanmar. The court summons was withdrawn in September 2019; Dr. Samson met with the Tatmadaw leader and reminded everyone in an interview that [real peace always means sacrifice](#). As long as all conflict parties profit from the fighting, solutions involving sacrifice will be hard to come by. In a rather pessimistic comment, another analyst said that under the growing Chinese influence in Myanmar, the [peace process will go nowhere](#).

The continued fighting with the Arakan Army in Rakhine State is a reminder that the country's nationalism is not purely motivated by religious reasons, but has strong ethnic overtones as well. The fighters of the Arakan Army are Buddhists but oppose what they see as the Bamar ("Burmese") dominance.

Religious Context: Myanmar	Numbers	%
Christians	4,322,000	8.0
Muslim	1,963,000	3.6
Hindu	873,000	1.6
Buddhist	41,291,000	76.0
Ethnoreligionist	4,626,000	8.5
Jewish	30	0.0
Bahai	85,400	0.2
Atheist	19,400	0.0
Agnostic	247,000	0.5
Other	909,600	1.7

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.

According to WCD 2019 estimates, Christians make up 8% of the population, Buddhists 76% and Muslims 3.6%. The 2014 government census (published in August 2016) puts Christians at 6.2%. Christians in Myanmar consider this figure far too low, as counting was not carried out in war-torn, Christian-majority Kachin State. Most Christians belong to the ethnic minorities and not to the Burmese (“Bamar”) majority. According to the contested government census, Buddhists make up 87.9% and Muslims 4.3% (around one million Rohingya had not been counted and it is estimated that less than 200,000 are still living in Rakhine State).

The adoption of the so called "Laws on the Protection of Race and Religion" in [August 2015](#) was celebrated by nationalist Buddhist groups like Ma Ba Tha countrywide. Whereas these laws are aimed chiefly at the Muslim minority in Rakhine State, Christians are affected by these laws as well: Conversions have to follow an administrative process including notification to different authorities. Any mixed marriages require in practice a conversion to Buddhism, thus protecting Buddhist women from Muslim men.

Economic landscape

Myanmar is potentially a rich country as it holds vast natural resources, for example in oil and gas, but even more in timber, gold and jade, which is all worth billions of dollars. It also has a huge potential in exporting renewable energy in providing water power to neighboring countries. However, the country faces many environmental problems and the government angered their big neighbor China by stopping the building of a large dam in Kachin State, which China really wants to see built. The increasing role of China could be seen very clearly in [thinly veiled threats](#) uttered by the Chinese ambassador on a visit to predominantly Christian Kachin State in January 2019. This trend is visible for several years now and has increased greatly ever since the West put Myanmar under pressure in response to the Rohingya crisis. A high-point has now been reached as can be seen by China’s public interpretations of meetings with politicians and civil society in Myanmar. Catholic and Protestant (Baptist) leaders [contradicted](#) an official statement from the Chinese embassy that only outsiders would oppose the Chinese-built Myitsone dam in Kachin State. In response, China threatened to halt all further investment in Myanmar.

The military authorities still dominate some industrial sectors such as energy production. The timber industry is also managed by the army through private partnerships and illicit channels. Timber is mostly located in ethnic territories and as the logging has not been carried out in a sustainable way, supplies are decreasing. But it is still an important source of income for both the army and ethnic insurgents. Jade is another commodity the army exploits which is a multi-billion dollar business, as it is in high demand especially in China. If Christian settlements are in the way, since they belong to the ethnic minorities, the inhabitants will simply be chased away without anyone caring.

Another illicit and allegedly growing source of income is poppy cultivation and drug export. Myanmar is the second-largest producer of opium after Afghanistan and the army (as well as ethnic insurgency armies) are involved in this business. Its northern region is part of the famous so-called "Golden Triangle". Underlining how difficult it is to draw the frontlines, in June 2019 the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) disputed a UN report (published in [2018](#)) which stated that [opium cultivation](#) had been reduced; the KIO insists that the opium business is thriving under the auspices of government-allied militia. There are reports providing circumstantial evidence that the army is deliberately driving ethnic minorities like the Kachin into drug addiction, especially the youth, in order to prevent them joining the ethnic militant groups, which many tend to do due to a lack of any meaningful future perspectives. Opium is not the only drug produced in Myanmar, reports also highlight that [Shan State](#) is turning into a hub for methamphetamine.

Social and cultural landscape

Myanmar's patchwork of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups have already been described above, as well as the challenges of continued fighting and a politics of "Burmanization", strongly backed by the Myanmar army and only half-heartedly opposed by the government. Apart from these questions, which will continue to be homework for the next government after the 2020 elections, the country faces many other challenges, as can be seen in the [UNDP's country report](#) for 2018.

The UNDP points out that the unemployment rate is very low, which is true for the youth as well. However, half of the workforce is employed in agriculture, making lifting people out of poverty a challenge. The working poor rate stands at 41.9%, according to UNDP. At the same time, the education of the people is not high and the literacy rate stands at 75.6%. Whereas the school enrolment rate is high, many students in the ethnic minority areas are facing difficulties in attending school or it is even made impossible, when they are living in one of the IDP camps.

Improving the life of people will remain difficult as long as the peace process makes no tangible progress. First, there may be [sanctions](#) imposed due to the Rohingya crisis (in addition to those brought against specific military leaders); and secondly, economic development driven by China comes with a price-tag as well, as the saga around the [Myitsone dam](#) already shows.

Technological landscape

The UNDP reports that the Internet penetration rate stands at 25.1%, the mobile subscription number at 95.7 per 100 people. According to Freedom House's 2019 Freedom on the Net report, the Internet penetration rate was over 40% of the population in 2019, however, the speed and quality is very different in rural areas compared to major cities. According to the same report, the number of mobile connections is around 56 million in 2019, however, those connections were held by around 50% of the population, where many people tend to have multiple SIM cards.

As Freedom House reported, "Since 2017, subscribers must provide their name, citizenship ID, birth date, address, nationality, and gender to register for a SIM card; noncitizens must provide their passports." Freedom House qualified the country again as ["Not free"](#) and did not see improvements.

The Internet blackout imposed on the northern part of Rakhine State, apparently protecting army operations, shows that communication is controlled by the authorities and blockages can be activated anytime. Lawsuits and arrests against activists and journalists have led to an intimidating environment and self-censorship. Even when cases get a very high profile, this does not change the authorities' course. Two Reuters journalists [lost their final appeal](#) and were to remain imprisoned for a long time after already spending more than 500 days in prison. They were among the 6,520 Myanmar prisoners released in a presidential [New Year amnesty](#) on 7 May 2019. Both journalists had uncovered war-crimes against the Rohingya minority in Rakhine State and had been awarded the highly renowned Pulitzer Prize for their investigative reporting. Despite such international attention, Myanmar's rulers did not even attempt to stage a fair trial.

Security situation

The "Patriotic Association of Myanmar", better known under its acronym "Ma Ba Tha", was founded in January 2014 with the goal of defending Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar against alleged threats. First and foremost this meant against the Muslim minority, especially the Rohingya, but Christians have been put under pressure by Ma Ba Tha monks too. Ma Ba Tha was banned in May 2017, re-emerged under a different name, and was banned again in 2018. It is still active and has currently switched its focus to fight against the government; it enjoys the support of at least part of the army.

As already stated above, Myanmar is enduring the longest civil war in the world with several ethnic insurgent armies fighting for independence (or more autonomy). Besides the "Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army" (Muslim) and the "Arakan Army" (Buddhist), the "Kachin Independence Army" (Christian) should also be mentioned, the latter together with the "United Wa State Army" (USWA) being the largest and best-equipped groups in Myanmar. The UWSA enjoys a de facto autonomy and is notorious for its involvement in the drug trade. From September 2018 onwards, it has acted against the Christian minority in its territory in Shan State, bordering China, whose Communist government allegedly supports it.

The most active insurgent group at the moment is, however, the Arakan Army, which on 15 August 2019 - operating in combination with two other groups in the so-called "Brotherhood Alliance" - attacked a military training academy, other Myanmar army targets and economically important roads and bridges connecting Shan State to China. Whether these attacks will serve as a wake-up call to revive the dormant [peace talks](#), remains to be seen, but is doubtful.

The Myanmar army's political role cannot be underestimated and it is far from certain that efforts to limit its influence by altering the Constitution will succeed. For the time being, the security situation in certain regions of Myanmar remain dire and it cannot be excluded that more crimes against humanity will be committed in the future.

Trends analysis

1) The situation of the Rohingya continues to dominate the headlines

International interest has been completely focused on the situation of the Rohingya, especially the refugees in neighboring Bangladesh. The country has been branded very negatively in international headlines, especially after the UN Human Rights chief spoke in September 2017 of a ["textbook example of ethnic cleansing"](#) concerning the Rohingya. According to Myanmar's National Security Adviser, his country is [willing to take back](#) all 700,000 Rohingya refugees, provided they return voluntarily. This however, is unlikely if there are no security guarantees. The situation of the Rohingya, often dubbed the "most persecuted minority in the world", could serve as a rallying cry for radical Muslims across the region and add to an already increasing radicalism, given that hundreds were killed and an estimated 770,000 displaced. No Rohingya refugees were repatriated in the WWL 2020 reporting period and Myanmar does not look willing to create the necessary conditions for a return, especially now that campaigning for the 2020 elections has started.

It is high time that the international community widens its view beyond the devastating situation of the Rohingya and finds ways to talk to the government and to other political actors exercising influence in the capital city, Naypyidaw. The fact that the government seems to be retreating more and more into the arms of China, does not bode well for Myanmar's Christian minority as it does not seem particularly worried about issues such as human rights. An even brighter and more embarrassing light could shine on the Rohingya plight, after the State of Gambia in West Africa filed a [genocide case](#) against Myanmar before the International Criminal Court. Although it is unlikely that any such charges will result in changes on the ground, Myanmar will be called out once again. Aung San Suu Kyi decided to stand as agent for her country in the proceedings in The Hague, which commenced on 10 December 2019. As a first result, a wave of nationalist fervor swept Myanmar.

2) The situation of non-Rohingya ethnic and religious minorities (including Christians) continues to be ignored

The number of positive headlines for Myanmar in the WWL 2020 reporting period has been close to zero. Although other crises in the world dominate international headlines, the Muslim Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are a clear witness of what is happening. Meanwhile, the intense and even increasing fighting in predominantly Christian areas like Kachin and northern Shan states is being overlooked, simply because these areas are harder to access.

Christians are being killed, detained and forced to flee to live with tens of thousands others in IDP camps in dire circumstances. In May 2019, a commentator named [four possible future scenarios](#) – secession, confederation, federalism and decentralization. For nationalists and the army, all of these scenarios are anathema. However, given that the 2020 elections are not far off, a positive narrative needs to be found for dealing with nationalist [hatred](#) and for overcoming the stalemate in the peace talks. This is important for Myanmar as a country, but also for the Rohingya and the large Christian minorities in Myanmar like the Kachin, Karen and Chin alike, even though the NLD [does not face any real danger](#) of losing its clear majority in the 2020 elections.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>. - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>
- Recent history: benefit - https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/myanmar-s-new-government-finding-its-feet?utm_source=Sign+Up+to+Crisis+Group
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- Recent history: No one can protect us - <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1604172019ENGLISH.PDF>
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 - Technological landscape: "Not free" - <https://www.freedomthenet.org/country/myanmar/freedom-on-the-net/2019>
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WWL 2020: Church information / Myanmar

Christian origins

Catholic missionaries first entered Burma in 1554. Not until 1613, however, was there a permanent presence with churches in Ava, Sirian, and about three hundred Roman Catholic believers in Rangoon. But growth was so disrupted by the wars between Burma and Siam in the next two centuries that a total membership of five thousand in 1800 had fallen to about three thousand in 1832. As British control widened in the first half of the nineteenth century, Protestant growth, chiefly Baptist, made great advances. In 1813, the famous American missionary, Adoniram Judson, arrived in the country to serve there for nearly 40 years. He translated the Bible into Burmese in 1834. (Source: Moffett S.H., *Burma / 1813-1850 in: A History of Christianity in Asia*, Vol. 2, 2005, pp. 330-331.)

In 1966, the Burmese government expelled all foreign missionaries, but by then the Church had become self-supporting. As many Christians belong to the ethnic minorities such as Kachin, Chin, Shan and Karen, Christianity is viewed by many with some suspicion. This suspicion could increase now that the latest figures on religious affiliation (the 2014 census) have been published, which showed a strong growth in the number of Christians.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Myanmar	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	658,000	15.2
Protestant	2,668,000	61.7
Independent	672,000	15.5
Unaffiliated	323,000	7.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	4,321,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	1,568,000	36.3
Renewalist movement	1,134,000	26.2

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 / Myanmar

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 73 points, Myanmar ranked 19 in WWL 2020.

This was a rise of 2 points compared to 71 points in WWL 2019 (in which it ranked higher at 18). The pressure on Christians has slowly increased and converts (from a Buddhist, Muslim or tribal background) continue to face strong pressure especially from their family and community; the situation in Wa State has deteriorated markedly and many churches were closed (despite the fact that Myanmar authorities have no influence in this part of the country). It also affected the *Church sphere of life* with a continued rise in score.

It should be kept in mind how difficult it is to obtain reports from war-torn Christian minority areas. This is acknowledged by other international organizations and shown in the detention and sentencing of reporters.

Persecution engines

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

Religious nationalism (Very strong):

Buddhism is embedded in the nation's culture and there are Buddhist communities which would like to remain purely Buddhist. This is commonly emphasized by radical Buddhists and tolerated - and to some extent supported - by the national government. The majority of Myanmar's population (an estimated 60%) is of Burmese ethnicity, also called *Bamar*. Being *Bamar* is equated with being Buddhist. Everyone deviating from this heritage is labelled as being outside the community and therefore potentially dangerous. Pressure on Christians comes from two sides: One side is society, which includes the radical Buddhist movement *Ma Ba Tha*. The fact that this movement was officially banned in 2017 and again in 2018 did not have real consequences. In July 2018, the Ministry for Religious Affairs announced that it would [take over regulating radical Buddhist groups](#) from the Buddhist leadership (the "Sangha"). It is however doubtful how effective this announcement and control will be. The other factor causing pressure is the government which is attempting to establish a peace agreement with a plethora of ethnic groups, many of them Christian. The implementation of the "Laws for the Protection of Race and Religion" is a sign of the continued influence of radical Buddhist groups.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

Myanmar has a long history of being ruled by the army and while the 2015 elected government cannot be called paranoid, Myanmar is one of the very few cases where it is the army holding almost dictatorial powers. According to the country's Constitution, written by the Myanmar army in 2008, one quarter of parliament's seats are reserved for military staff. Moreover, the army holds the most important government offices, including the Ministry of defense and the Ministries of interior and border affairs. Despite all hopes for democracy, the army has intensified its fight against insurgent groups as well as ethnic minorities (which include Christians). The fact that the war has continued despite all Peace Conference meetings - and even intensified in 2018 - shows where the true power lies.

The Myanmar army will do everything to stay in control, calling upon Buddhist nationalism or ethnic heritage, if needed. The state continues to run so-called "Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools" (or *Na Ta La* - schools), which are attractive for minority people as they are run without school fees. These schools are used to influence young people and to introduce them to Buddhism. The army has continued with its practice of weakening ethnic insurgencies by encouraging ethnic youth to become drug-addicted, a practice that is affecting Christian Kachin as well. One of Asia's two largest opium-producing areas covers large parts of that region, especially Kachin State (together with parts of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand). Parts of the country are largely run by the Myanmar army. As many commodities like jade, timber and various ores can be found in predominantly Christian territories like Shan State or among the Chin and Kachin, these Christians face heavy pressure from the army (and not only out of economic interest). This takes the form of being harassed, attacked and being used as porters. Companies are often run by military staff or high-ranking politicians, and nepotism is rife. There is no desire to share the country's wealth with its people.

Communist and post-Communist oppression (Medium):

In the WWL 2019 reporting period and continued in this reporting period, the largest insurgency group, the Communist United Wa State Army became violently active against Christians. Hundreds of churches remain closed, several Christians are still abducted or were expelled. Allegedly backed by China, they targeted Christian groups perceived as "missionaries" - mostly Baptist groups like the Lahu Baptist Convention or the Kachin Baptist Convention. This Communist crackdown resembles the one Chinese authorities are currently instigating against Christianity in China. Since the Myanmarese authorities do not have control in the de facto semi-autonomous Wa region with its 450,000 inhabitants, the persecution engine here is not Religious nationalism.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium):

In some of the states where most Christians live, like Kachin or Shan states, some of Myanmar's most precious goods are to be found - such as jade and timber. According to a [UN report](#) published in August 2019, this and other businesses the army is involved in, yields enormous sums - an income which is sometimes shared with ethnic insurgency groups in exchange for ceasefires or other agreements (see Paragraph 99 of the UN report). Additionally, this region is part of the famous "Golden Triangle", one of the largest opium-producing hubs worldwide. Allegedly, government officials, the Myanmar army and insurgent armies benefit from the drug producing and trafficking at different levels and stages. Anyone who opposes this or is simply in the way of traders, exploiters and traffickers is in serious danger. This is true for the Christians in these regions as well.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Myanmar	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY WEAK	VERY STRONG	WEAK	WEAK	MEDIUM	-	STRONG	MEDIUM
Government officials	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	Strong	Medium
Ethnic group leaders	Very weak	Strong	Weak	Very weak	-	-	Medium	Weak
Non-Christian religious leaders	Weak	Very strong	Very weak	-	-	-	Very strong	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	Strong	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Weak	Strong	Weak	-	-	-	-	Weak
One's own (extended) family	Medium	Strong	Weak	Very weak	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	Medium	Weak	-	-	-	Medium	Medium
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	Medium	-	-	-	Strong	-	-	Strong
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	Medium	-	-	Medium
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	Medium	-	-	-

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 Religious nationalism:

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Buddhist monk leaders stir up the local population to persecute Christians in predominantly Buddhist communities. The radical Buddhist movement behind the Ma Ba Tha groups continues to “protect” Buddhism as the country’s national religion. This is intertwined with the protection of the ethnic "Burmese race" as well. The two bans on Ma Ba Tha activities have not changed anything as they have always found other ways to continue their influence.
- **Government officials (Strong):** Local government officials, especially from rural areas, are often biased towards Buddhist leaders, so minorities like Christians, who in many cases happen to be a religious and an ethnic minority, are disadvantaged and have no way of seeking justice. Last not least, the Myanmar army continues to fight against the Christian insurgents and minorities as well.
- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** Especially among the ethnic minorities, each conversion to another faith is seen as weakening the group and threatening the struggle many ethnic groups find themselves in. Leaders will therefore put strong pressure against conversion and on converts.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Groups such as the already mentioned Ma Ba Tha do not only call to protect and preserve the Buddhist dominance, they also instigate violence. Whereas the main target has been the Muslim minority, Christians were affected by their call to take action as well. Insurgents sometimes also become drivers of persecution if they feel Christian churches are not supporting them strongly enough or when pastors are found advising young people not to join in the fighting.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Strong Buddhist, Muslim and Ethnic-animist families actively persecute family members who convert to Christianity, as conversion is seen as betrayal.

- **Normal citizens (Strong):** If someone in a village comes to the Christian faith, this is seen as a disturbance of the harmony and is strongly opposed. Communities will put pressure on converts to give up their Christian faith.
- **Political parties (Medium):** All non-minority political parties stand for Buddhist supremacy in one way or another. The opposition USDP is closely connected to the Myanmar army and enacted the 2015 Law on the Protection of Race and Religion.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** The army is the main force behind this persecution engine. Especially in the WWL 2020 reporting period, it enjoyed public, strong support from Buddhist religious leaders, who are demanding "protection" for the Constitution and country.
- **Government officials (Strong):** The Myanmar army will continue to defend its privileged position according to the Constitution which it drafted in 2008 before passing on (partial) power to a civilian government. Despite the international outcry over the atrocities perpetrated against the Rohingya minority, Aung San Suu Kyi and the government she is leading are clinging to power and have shown signs of *Dictatorial paranoia* in simply ignoring all criticism.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Groups such as Ma Ba Tha are at the forefront of supporting the constitutional status of the army and the predominance of the Burmese. They want this equilibrium retained at all costs.
- **Political parties (Medium):** What was said above for *Religious nationalism*, applies here as well.
- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** Where they are in power, leaders of ethnic minority groups and insurgencies tend to do everything to stay in power. Whoever is seen as a threat to this power will be fought against, even if it is a fellow Christian.

Drivers of Communist and post-Communist oppression:

- **Revolutionary and para-revolutionary groups (Strong):** Revolutionary and paramilitary groups became very visible drivers of persecution in September 2018, when the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest insurgency group (estimated to have around 40,000 fighters) closed dozens of churches and detained almost a hundred Christians in a crackdown against "new churches".
- **Multilateral organizations and embassies (Medium):** Shan State borders with China, who is allegedly backing the UWSA. The crackdown in 2018 was apparently inspired by Chinese efforts to curb Christianity.
- **Organized Crime and cartels (Medium):** Reportedly, the UWSA is heavily involved in drug trafficking as well, so the 2018 crackdown may have had mixed motives.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Revolutionary and para-revolutionary groups (Strong):** Most of Myanmar's landbound resources can be found in states which have a mainly Christian population or where Christians are a strong minority. The Myanmar army colludes with local strongmen, politicians and insurgents to take control of this wealth at the expense of the local population. Fighting continues and if Christians and minorities are in the way, they are simply driven away. If they dare to speak out against the prevailing injustice (or try to give young people a hope for the future), they may be actively targeted, particularly by those benefitting from the illicit drug trade.
- **Government officials (Medium):** As indicated above, certain branches of the army are involved in various forms of illicit trade; this is sometimes carried out by proxies such as the Border Guard Forces. If Christian settlements are in the way or they speak up against drugs and illegal trade, they are driven away to become IDPs.
- **Organized crime and cartels (Medium):** Illegal trade is often organized by well connected local strongmen, who can become drivers of persecution, too, if they see their profit threatened.
- **Political parties (Medium):** Some political leaders are likewise involved in illegal trade, especially those at the local level.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Myanmar is arguably the nation suffering from the longest civil conflict in the world. When it comes to the persecution of Christians, Kachin State in the north of the country has to be named. Fighting there continues, more than 100,000 people - mostly Christian - are living in IDP camps, most of them for years, and humanitarian access to them is blocked. Fighting continues as well in neighboring Shan State, which has a large minority of Christians, especially in the north. Shan State also jumped to prominence in 2018, when in the Wa region, the insurgent UWSA started to act against Christians. Although the conflict with the Karen and Karenni is not in the focus of international attention, it is still smouldering and many have become IDPs or refugees in Thailand. A not-so-different story could be told about the Chin, who are predominantly Christian as well, only that their choice of refuge is India.

Christian communities and how they are affected

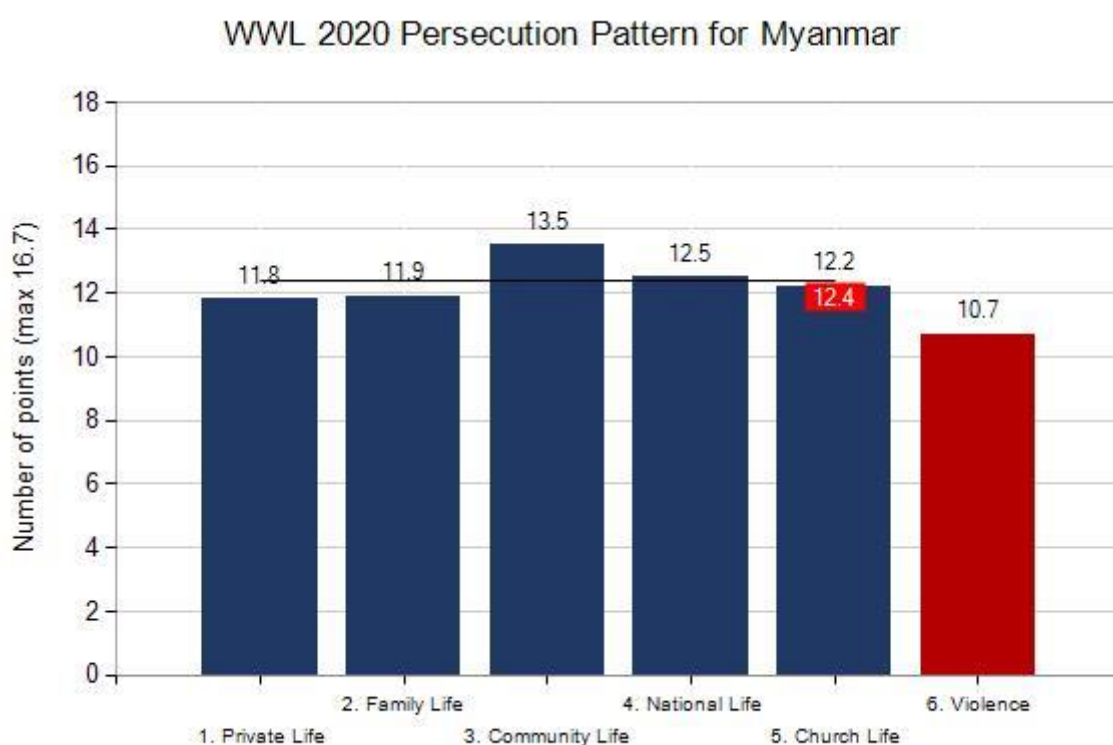
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not scored in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: This category consists of groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, but also traditional churches among the Christian minorities like the Kachin Baptist Church. These Christians are facing everyday pressure and occasional violent attacks, be it from the Myanmar army or from radical Buddhist monks who have even been building temples within church compounds in some areas.

Converts to Christianity: Converts from a Buddhist, Muslim or Ethnic-animist background are facing the strongest persecution both from the authorities and from families, friends and neighbors as well. Leaving Buddhism is not accepted for someone of Bama ethnicity. In all the publicity about Rohingya refugees being forced to flee to Bangladesh, it is less well-known that there is a small number of Christian converts from a Muslim background among the Rohingya who are affected by the sudden upsurge in violence and have had to flee as well, where they have become more visible. These Christians not only face persecution because of their ethnic affiliation, but also because their Muslim families and communities put them under enormous pressure to return to Islam.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Many Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are facing persecution from the community they live in, especially in rural areas. They are not just monitored, but are sometimes also hindered from gathering or holding Sunday school classes.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Myanmar shows:

- The overall pressure on Christians in Myanmar increased further in the WWL 2020 reporting period, with the average rising from 12.1 in WWL 2019 to 12.4 in WWL 2020.
- Converts are particularly affected by very high levels of pressure in the *Community, Family* and *Private spheres of life*. All Christians face very high pressure in the *National and Church spheres*.

This pressure is fuelled i) by an increasing emphasis on Buddhism, excluding all other minorities and ii) by the continuing war against insurgencies, affecting - among others - predominantly Christian Kachin, Shan and Karen states. This war goes widely unnoticed, eclipsed by the widely publicized situation of the Rohingya. The actions against churches in northern Shan State by the Communist United Wa State Army contributed to a continued high level of violence.

- The score for violence against Christians decreased from 11.1 points in WWL 2019 to 10.7 in WWL 2020. However, due to ongoing fighting, especially in Kachin and Shan States, it is very difficult to obtain accurate reports on faith-based attacks against Christians and on churches attacked, even though fighting in Kachin State quieted down a bit.

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:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (Block 1.8 / Score: 3.75 points):*** As soon as it is suspected that the discussion amounts to proselytizing, it is risky. This is true for members of the Christian minorities discussing faith questions with members of the Buddhist majority, but also for converts from a Muslim background. They need to be extra cautious.
- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable (Block 1.1 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Myanmar's current laws make it hard for an individual to convert. The Religious Conversion Law, part of the "Law for Protection of Race and Religion", requires that Myanmar citizens who wish to change their religion must obtain approval from a newly established Registration Board for religious conversion, set up in all townships. The potential convert must also undergo an interview and engage in religious studies for a period not exceeding 90 days from the date of application, but extendable to 180 days at the applicant's request. If after that period the applicant still wishes to convert, the Registration Board will issue a certificate of religious conversion. During this period the application would be posted on a community board and converts are likely to be put under severe pressure by everyone around them to retract their application. Because of this, conversion is usually done in secret without the application process. Converts also face persecution from their family and community and are sometimes disowned and expelled from the family home.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score: 3.25 points):*** Depending on where a Christian is living and - for converts - depending on the family he or she is living with, it can be risky to display Christian images or symbols. Whereas this of course does not apply to the predominantly Christian states like Kachin, in other places, it is dangerous for a convert to be discovered. Therefore, they would rarely have Christian images at home or wear jewelry displaying a cross, for instance.

- ***It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (Block 1.2 / Score: 2.75 points):*** In some Buddhist villages, especially in Rakhine State and the central part of Myanmar, Christians are not allowed to be part of the community. In such places, Christian converts have to be very careful not to be discovered, especially when they are the only ones in the family. On being discovered, they are forced to leave the village. But even in other places, converts prefer to be cautious as conversion to Christianity is seen as bringing shame and any visible act of Christian worship would be met with harsh opposition from families and local communities.

Meeting with other Christians is usually not dangerous, but can pose a special challenge for converts. If they are not expelled from their family, known converts are closely monitored, ostracized and may face house-arrest in order to hinder them from meeting with other Christians. In strong Buddhist villages, pastors are often particular targets.

Family sphere:

- ***Christian children have been pressed to attend anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2.8 / Score: 4 points):*** In most schools, cultural and religious practice dictates that pupils recite some of Buddha's teachings prior to the beginning of the class. Dhama schools are operated by Buddhist monks in order to teach children about Buddhist doctrines and are spreading across the country. Children are required to participate and contribute financially to the Buddhist festivals of water and light. In Na Ta La schools, children are taught Buddhist prayers, their heads are shaven, and they have to beg for food every morning.
- ***Christian baptisms have been hindered (Block 2.4 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Because of the anti-conversion laws, it can be dangerous to conduct baptisms publicly. Hence churches usually carry out baptisms discreetly. For converts from a Buddhist or Muslim background, there is no other choice, it has to be done secretly.
- ***Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2.9 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Christian children are regularly bullied by Buddhist children at school. In village schools it is normal to blame Christian children for anything. Christian schoolchildren also receive fewer opportunities and are unlikely to be chosen for further education or special honors.
- ***Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs (Block 2.7 / Score: 3.25 points):*** Parents face difficulties in raising their children according to Christian values as they face pressure from neighbors in Buddhist majority areas. Parents are constantly told that if they remain Christian their child will have a harder future; by belonging to a religious minority they will be offered fewer opportunities.

Converts do not necessarily face the threat of losing their inheritance or custody rights, but women converts may well face the threat of divorce (if married). The Kittima Adoption Act of 1941 being enforced restricts the ability to adopt to Buddhists only. All other forms of adoption are not official and legally-binding. Muslim converts are also subjected to the wider Muslim minority's problem of being denied citizenship. Muslim Rohingya - and with them the minority of Christians from a Muslim background - are perceived as being Bengalese and effectively lack any legal status. Most of them are currently residing in refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been put under pressure into taking part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events (Block 3.5 / Score: 3.5 points):** This pressure involves daily prayers, contributing to and participating in Buddhist ceremonies and cleaning Buddhist altars. It is hard to escape this pressure as it is deeply ingrained in the culture and is ubiquitous at school, at workplaces and in the government. If Christians stop giving alms to Buddhist monks, refuse to contribute to the renovation or building of Buddhist temples, or desist from participating in Buddhist festivals, they are likely to experience harassment, be forced to make donations and be threatened with expulsion from the village.
- **Christians have been under pressure from their community to renounce their faith (Block 3.7 / Score: 3.5 points):** Converts are facing the strongest pressure in this respect. Out of fear of persecution, they do not normally announce their conversion. If converts are discovered, pressure usually starts subtly, e.g. villagers will be prevented from giving help. Ultimately, converts can be expelled from the village. But there is even pressure on Christians who are not converts to convert to Buddhism. In an attempt to spread Buddhism, community resources are used to build pagodas in Christian areas and Buddhist monks are sent into Christian villages. Education - run by Buddhist monks - is sometimes offered free of charge to families of religious minorities.
- **Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3.10 / Score: 3.5 points):** Christians have less chance of being hired by firms if there are Buddhist applicants. Christians are also regularly by-passed for promotion. In the parliamentary arena, there has been an improvement as under the current government, one of the vice-presidents is an ethnic Chin Christian and the Speaker of the Lower House is a Christian as well. However, Christians in the government, civil service and army are rarely found and will not usually be promoted beyond a certain level.
- **Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (Block 3.1 / Score: 3.5 points):** Christians, especially those gathering in house-churches, are monitored, pressured into renouncing their faith and are excluded from communal decisions and resources. This pressure is also felt in everyday life when they are refused help in gathering bamboo for repairing houses or denied access to water.

Areas with a high percentage of Christians are deliberately disadvantaged through poor infrastructure and health-care and the government prefers to build Buddhist Na Ta La schools instead of regular state-run schools. In conflict zones, humanitarian aid to Christians is not allowed or is only given in minimal portions and international monitoring (and sometimes even access) is blocked. Children of converts are facing discrimination by teachers and pupils at school, for example not being allowed to prepare for a test like the rest of the class and in extreme cases even expelled from class. Another problem Christians are facing are the local oral laws (“Gamma laws”), declared in several communities and villages by Buddhist monks and officials in order to restrict Christians. Preferential treatment given to businesses/companies owned by Buddhists in terms of contracting loans and government subsidies is common and for Christian and Muslim business owners registering their businesses is made complicated. At times, monks are calling for boycotting shops/establishments owned by Christians and Muslims.

National sphere:

- ***The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score: 4 points):*** Section 361 of the 2008 Constitution reads: "The Union recognizes the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union" while also recognizing the presence of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism in section 362. This "special position of Buddhism" has been abused by Buddhist radicals.

In order to gain additional support from such groups and the *Bamar* majority in August 2015, the previous government adopted four religious conversion bills which aim to protect Buddhism by controlling conversion to other faiths, banning interfaith marriages and polygamy, and introducing birth controls. Buddhist women wishing to marry non-Buddhist men must first receive permission from their parents and local government officials and the non-Buddhist men would first need to convert to the Buddhist faith. Concerning conversion, the law states that anyone seeking to change their faith needs to get permission from the Religious Conversion Registration body, which is comprised of local religion and immigration officials, a local administrator, the women's affairs chairman and a local education officer. Thus, the community knows if a person wants to convert and they are given 3-6 months to try to convince him or her to withdraw their papers.

The law's first target is the Muslim minority, but all other minorities are affected likewise and it discourages both citizens considering conversion and converts from testifying about their new faith. In Myanmar, some tribes have their own additional laws which are used by some communities to drive out Christians from their villages.

- ***Those who caused harm to Christians deliberately have been left unpunished (Block 4.14 / Score: 4 points):*** The army and the Buddhist nationalist movement have been entirely unpunished and operate in a culture of impunity. The clearest example for this is the strict denial of all genocide claims against Rohingya and the Christian minority Kachin (where the situation may amount to [crimes against humanity](#)). It likewise illustrates that Christians can neither expect fair treatment before courts nor an international monitoring of their dire situation.
- ***Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons (Block 4.5/Score: 3.5 points):*** The Myanmar army and pro-military government officials are very influenced by Buddhist nationalist sentiment and would often regard a Christian as a second-class citizen. Christians face harder requirements when applying for government services. They would, for example, be required to file additional documents or their application would be delayed, sometimes indefinitely. Complaints referred to the police by Christians are ignored in most of the cases. Christians also have less access to loans and state benefits than non-Christian business partners or customers.

- **Christians have been barred from public office, or promotion has been hindered for faith-related reasons (Block 4.6 / Score: 3.5 points):** Christians are usually only hired by firms when there are no Buddhists available. If they are hired, they are frequently by-passed for promotion. There are a few Christian politicians, even in quite high positions, as mentioned above; however, this is an exception to the rule and has not helped Christians in their job-applications elsewhere.

Young men conscripted into the Myanmar army or withstanding the pressure to join an ethnic insurgent group face a lot of harassment and ostracism, which can extend to their families, who in turn put pressure on them to act against their conscience and join. Media reporting about Christians is often distorted. Buddhist nationalists and hardliners broadcast a negative picture about Christians as using deception to force people to convert, and also using the converts to enrich themselves. Converts are often labeled traitors for leaving Buddhism.

Church sphere:

- **It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution (Block 5.20 / Score: 4 points):** Dissent, especially any criticism about the situation of the ethnic and religious minorities, is dealt with harshly. Complaining is futile and can lead to charges being made as was seen in the following two cases: i) two church leaders were sent to prison in October 2017 for [helping journalists](#) gather information on the destruction of a church in Kachin State; ii) two Reuters journalists covering [crimes against humanity](#) against Rohingya Muslims received prison sentences in September 2018. Whenever the army is involved, speaking out bears an even greater risk.
- **Christians have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings (Block 5.3 / Score: 3.75 points):** Obtaining permission for building or renovating church buildings is very difficult and is often made impossible. While church buildings exist in various parts of Myanmar, restrictions are in place to make it difficult to obtain permission for building new churches. There are up to eight different levels of permission required to build a church, and applications must pass through various military-run departments and district and township-level administrative offices (often led by former army officers). As a result, permission for land ownership for churches almost never materializes. Applications are left not acted upon by officials entrusted with the task. "Grease money" is sometimes asked of Christians to expedite the process, without any guarantee that a permission will be issued in the end. In Christian majority areas like Kachin, Chin and Naga, the documents necessary are even harder to obtain and an not giving them is seen as a good means to weaken the Christian minorities.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 3.5 points):** Churches need approval from the village head, whenever they want to do something outside their standard place of worship. Since Christians are known to carry out outreach activities even when told not to, whatever they do is watched with suspicion.

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5.1 / Score: 3.5 points):** Local communities and authorities regularly monitor church activities and also intervene and hinder them, if they are seen as too daring. In border areas, churches are monitored by the government and army particularly closely. Buddhist monks connected with Ma Ba Tha also monitor Christian activities.

Land-grabbing is another problem Christians are facing. This is why many Christians use business establishments as places of worship on Sundays or opt to gather in house-churches. Church leaders and pastors are targeted frequently by radical Buddhists since this is seen as being an effective way of paralyzing the Church. One pastor stated recently that he constantly feels as if everybody is waiting for him to make a mistake. All religious publications are censored and reviewed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Some churches have started to print their own materials, but owning printing presses is made very difficult, publishing in minority languages remains out of the question and strict censorship rules apply. Importing Christian materials is very difficult and even impossible in minority languages. Most churches are not allowed to invite foreign workers for religious purposes.

Churches in ethnic minority areas face even more difficulties, as they are often regarded as being places for anti-government meetings and communication points for ethnic minority groups. In areas of civil war, like Kachin and Shan states, church buildings are frequently targeted for attack as people use them for refuge from the fighting. In the Wa territory, Christian leaders were only released after they had signed a document promising that they would limit their Christian activities strictly to house meetings. Church buildings have been attacked there and all Christian materials confiscated.

In Chin, Naga and Kachin states, Christian leaders need to first seek permission from the General Administration Department (GAD) for large worship gatherings. The same applies for conferences and other Christian activities. There have been instances where pastors have received orders from the authorities to seek permission ten days in advance for any kind of religious activity. In other parts of the country, Christians meet discreetly to keep a low profile where the local authorities are known to be influenced by radical Buddhist groups. In Shan State, there have been incidents where pastors were forbidden to gather churches in their homes.

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.

Myanmar	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	3	115	11	204	1
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	3	64	154	100	10
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	3	25	19	2	20

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:** Three Christians were killed, a pastor and an elder in Rakhine State, in January and February 2019, respectively. Another Christian was killed in Kachin State in March 2019.
- **Christians attacked:** There have been dozens of Christians attacked for their faith, in many instances converts from a Buddhist or a Muslim background. This can be done by families, but also by ethnic insurgent armies. The Myanmar army is fighting indiscriminately in some predominantly Christian states.
- **Christians arrested:** Again and again, Christians are arrested by the Myanmar army or by ethnic insurgent groups, like the Wa State Army, which abducted more than a hundred people in 2018, several of whom are still unaccounted for.
- **Churches attacked:** Most churches have remained closed after the United Wa State Army (UWSA) shut down more than 200 churches and detained around a hundred Christian leaders and Bible school students in September 2018 in an apparent effort to curb Christianity. Most churches of the Lahu and Kachin Baptists were reportedly given permission to re-open in September 2019. More than 50 church and school buildings remain closed in UWSA-controlled territory in Shan State, including [all Catholic](#) churches and schools.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** In a village, the house of a Christian leader was attacked by a Buddhist mob, when they were holding a gathering. For security reasons, no details can be given.

5 Year trends

The volatility of the situation in Myanmar and how it affects Christians can be clearly seen in the Persecution pattern over the last five WWL reporting periods.

Chart 1:

The chart below shows how the average level of pressure on Christians has increased steadily over the last five reporting periods from 9.2 in WWL 2016 to the very high level of 12.4 points in WWL 2020. The civilian government has not alleviated the situation for religious minorities in Myanmar, including Christians.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Myanmar	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	12.4
2019	12.1
2018	11.4
2017	10.7
2016	9.2

Chart 2:

The chart below shows that the pressure in *Community life* has increased and levelled off at a very high level in the last four reporting periods. The level of pressure for *Family life* increased every year, showing that it is getting more difficult for converts to live their new-found Christian faith. The strong emphasis on Buddhism (and the nationalism connected with it) made the scores for *National* and *Church life* steadily increase. The sharp increase in pressure in WWL 2019 and WWL 2020 for those spheres was influenced by the increased fighting in northern Shan State and by the actions of the UWSA.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Myanmar (Spheres of life)

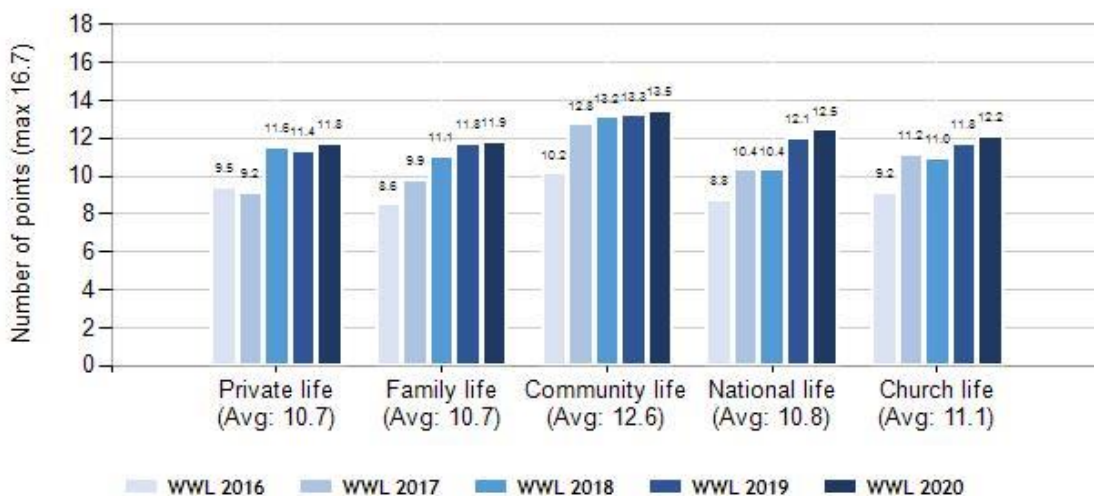
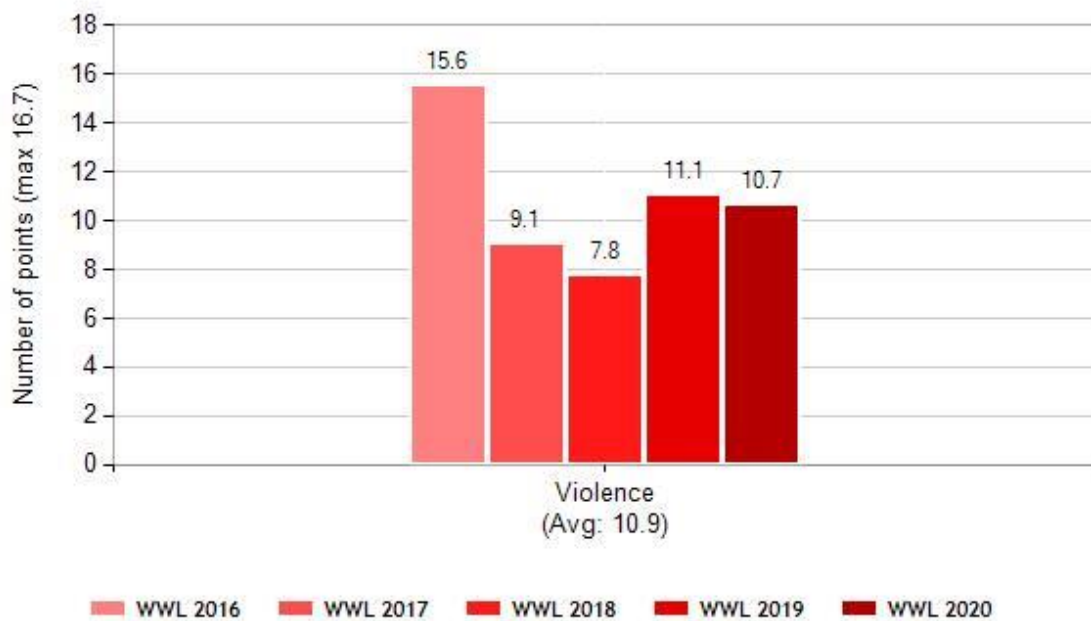


Chart 3:

The violence level has levelled off at the very high point range of 10.7 - 11.1. It should, however, be kept in mind that it is very difficult to get detailed information from the war-torn region of predominantly Christian Kachin State, so the real level of violence and pressure may be even higher. This is the reason why the level of violence in recent years shows lower scores than in WWL 2016: The Myanmar army has been very successful in keeping these regions isolated.

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



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Incarceration by family/house arrest***
- ***Targeted seduction***
- ***Trafficking***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***
- ***Violence – sexual***

Christians feel they are viewed as “[second-class citizens](#)” across Myanmar, without the same legal protection and rights as the Buddhist majority. According to the [Buddhist Women Special Marriage Law](#) introduced in 2015, a non-Buddhist husband must respect his wife’s practice of Buddhism. No such protection applies for Christians, however. Consequently, Christian women married to non-Christian men are pressured into following the husband’s religion. This hinders the growth of the Church in Myanmar.

The law, which was mainly aimed at the Muslim minority, also acts as a hindrance to women converts from a Buddhist background (especially secret converts) as they are still counted as Buddhists and treated as such. Within mixed-religion marriages, if the daughter decides to be a Christian, the non-Christian father often arranges for her to be married to a Buddhist. The mother has no power to prevent this, nor does her daughter. Youth and female converts are also vulnerable to house arrest, as they are seen to be the least powerful within the family context. This restricts their access to social community, including Christian fellowship.

Ashamed by the new-found faith of the convert, disinheritance is an additional means of applying pressure on women to return to Buddhism.

Women, especially when belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, are at the mercy of military personnel, vulnerable to rape and physical assault. Unconfirmed reports indicate that military men are encouraged to marry Christian women and convert them to Buddhism, incentivized by the promise of money or a promotion in rank. Many women are reported to feel resigned to this fate and see entering such marriages as a way to escape dire poverty and insecurity.

Reports also indicate that Christian women in Kachin State are being [trafficked to China](#) to become ‘brides’, where they are raped with the aim of impregnating them. “Some [130,000 Kachin](#), more than 90 percent of whom are Christian have been displaced within their state” in the latter half of 2018, according to the Wall Street Journal reporting in December 2018. Kachin Christians have been exposed to these atrocities for many years - they are even targeted within IDP camps where the army inflicts further torturous acts. In one case in 2015, two volunteer teachers were raped and killed; their mutilated bodies were found just 100m from a [temporary army camp](#).

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied inheritance/possessions***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Military/militia conscription/service against conscience***
- ***Trafficking***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***

In Myanmar, men are culturally encouraged to find work as the [primary breadwinners](#) within the family unit; if they lose their job or are driven from their village or town because they are Christians, the whole family suffers. Such persecution is real and tangible for male converts.

Especially in the army, male Christians can face such intense persecution that many lose their faith. The army has also been known to impose forced labor on Christians as a means of preventing them from attending Sunday services and accessing Christian community. Men are also targeted for recruitment into militias; those who refuse face beatings and threats.

Some male Christians pay the ultimate price for their faith. While exact statistics are elusive, Christians have been abducted and [killed](#), allegedly also by the Arakan Army.

Na Ta La schools aim to convert Christian children which is an effective way of stopping Christianity from spreading to the next generation. The boys at these schools are raised to become Buddhist monks; when they start at the Na Ta La schools, their heads are shaved, they are given monks clothes and they also go around the local community begging for food.

Church leaders are especially targeted, as this represent a means of inflicting harm on the wider congregation. Similar to families without their husband or father figure, churches without their leaders feel helpless and vulnerable. The authorities will sometimes pressure pastors with the specific intent of closing a church.

Persecution of other religious minorities

The persecution of the Muslim Rohingya minority has been referred to in this country dossier several times. As of December 2019, it does not seem very probable that they will return willingly to Myanmar from Bangladesh, where they fled to save their lives. Driven by the army and religious leaders - and widely backed by many citizens - this policy fits the country's increasing *Religious nationalism*. Non-Rohingya Muslims in other parts of the country are also facing persecution and discrimination. Apart from that, no other religious groups are known to be persecuted. Efforts to bring the situation of the Rohingya before international (criminal) courts, reported elsewhere in this country dossier, will bring the crisis more into the limelight, but are unlikely to change anything on the ground. There is as well the danger that the situation of other religious and ethnic minorities is being overlooked.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Religious nationalism:** Hidden in the shadow of the Rohingya crisis is the plight of Christian minorities, against which the Myanmar army is increasing its attacks, [displacing](#) thousands. There are well over 100,000 IDPs displaced from conflict in previous months and years. Meanwhile, the government continues with its divide-and-rule strategy. Thein Swe, Union Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, said the government was unable to release the findings of the census 2014 due to confusion over who belonged to which ethnic group:

“Taking the case of the Kachin, he said there could be between six and 12 sub-ethnicities depending on who you listen to. Others dispute claims the Chin have 53 sub-ethnic groups.”

The fact that the army has restricted progress by [rejecting talks](#) concerning ethnic rights in the wake of the Panglong Conference held in July 2018 does not come as a surprise as it does not have a genuine interest in peace, reconciliation and a federal Myanmar, however structured. The recent announcement of setting up a [court martial](#) is neither related to the genocide claims nor can it be seen as a conciliatory step, as illustrated by continuing and even increased levels of fighting.

Radical Buddhist groups like Ma Ba Tha are being watched carefully by fellow Buddhist groups and politicians, but their influence and rhetoric against non-Buddhist minorities is unbroken. According to a [report](#) by The Irrawaddy on 23 July 2018, the reaction to its latest ban was that the foundation is sending forms to its sub-chapters across the country asking them if the association should continue with its campaign "to protect the race and religion" as well as to see if the members agree to follow the ban as the association was formed based on "consensus rule".

Their radical stance is possibly best reflected by a report which [quoted Ashin Wirathu](#), one of the most outspoken and radical Buddhist monks, as saying: "I am only warning people about Muslims. Consider it like if you had a dog that would bark at strangers coming to your house – it is to warn you. I am like that dog. I bark." *Religious nationalism* will continue unabated and could even increase against Christians, seeing as most Muslims have been driven out of the country.

- ***Dictatorial paranoia and Organized corruption and crime:*** The army's role is likely to further increase both in politics and in fighting against insurgents. Another incentive for the army to retain its strong position is that it is deeply involved in both legal and illicit trade, which mainly affects predominantly Christian areas like Kachin State. Violence has increased despite all progress in democratization and the non-inclusive ceasefire agreements. There are many problems complicating peaceful solutions: For instance, army staff and some ethnic insurgents are involved in drug trafficking and the exploitation of resources like [jade](#) and timber. Trust-building will be impossible as long as the army offensives continue to target the largely Christian Kachin minority and the fighting in Karen State persists. The reconciliation process is very slow and a stalemate is feared, especially as government (and military) resources are currently focused on the Rohingya minority and combatting the Arakan Army. The signs are [not very promising](#) for the vision of a democratic and federal state developing. It has to be kept in mind that Aung San Suu Kyi [does not have full power](#) and, in practice, the Myanmar army is completely autonomous.
- ***Communist and post-Communist oppression:*** As 2018 drew to a close, it was difficult to estimate if this engine would continue to play a dominant role in the self-governed Wa State. However, the damage is done, dozens of churches and Bible schools have been closed, Christian leaders and students have been detained or expelled. It seems safe to say that Wa State - at least in religious terms - will never look the same as before.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: take over regulating radical Buddhist groups - [https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/religion-ministry-done-leaving-sangha-governma-ba-tha.html?utm_source=The+Irrawaddy&utm_campaign=253fab4cb7-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1465753ec6-253fab4cb7-26435333&ct=t\(RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN\)](https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/religion-ministry-done-leaving-sangha-governma-ba-tha.html?utm_source=The+Irrawaddy&utm_campaign=253fab4cb7-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1465753ec6-253fab4cb7-26435333&ct=t(RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN))
- Persecution engines: UN report - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary.aspx>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : crimes against humanity - <http://www.fortifyrights.org/publication-20180830.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : helping journalists - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/myanmar-kachin-baptists-jailed-helping-photograph-bombed-church/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : crimes against humanity - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/03/myanmar-reuters-journalists-sentenced-to-seven-years-in-prison-rohingya>
- Violence: all Catholic - <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Shan-State:-Wa-rebels-allow-Baptist-churches-to-reopen,-not-Catholic-churches-48851.html>
- Gender profile of persecution: second-class citizens - <http://https://www.wsj.com/articles/myanmar-persecutes-christians-too-1544138518>
- Gender profile of persecution: Buddhist Women Special Marriage Law - http://http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=&p_isn=103620&p_classification=01
- Gender profile of persecution: trafficked to China - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/03/21/give-us-baby-and-well-let-you-go/trafficking-kachin-brides-myanmar-china>
- Gender profile of persecution: 130,000 Kachin - <http://https://www.wsj.com/articles/myanmar-persecutes-christians-too-1544138518>
- Gender profile of persecution: temporary army camp - <http://https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/15/burmese-soldiers-accused-escalating-violence-against-northern/>
- Gender profile of persecution: primary breadwinners - http://https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/myanmar/docs/unct_mm_UNWomen_Report_Gender%20Situation%20Analysis.pdf
- Gender profile of persecution: killed - <http://https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/second-pastor-kidnapped-by-militant-buddhist-forces-in-myanmar>
- Future outlook for the church: displacing - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/kachin-fighting-04272018160936.html>
- Future outlook for the church: rejecting talks - <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/tatmadaw-objects-discussion-ethnic-rights-peace-conference.html>
- Future outlook for the church: court martial - <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/court-martial-not-related-ap-mass-graves->

report-myanmar-military-says.html?utm_source=The+Irrawaddy&utm_campaign=af67022d26-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1465753ec6-af67022d26-26435333&ct=t(RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN)

- Future outlook for the church: report - <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/buddhist-nationalists-warn-latest-ban-cause-public-discontent.html>
- Future outlook for the church: quoted Ashin Wirathu - <https://theconversation.com/militant-buddhism-is-on-the-march-in-south-east-asia-where-did-it-come-from-86632>
- Future outlook for the church: jade - <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/myanmars-jade-fueled-war/>
- Future outlook for the church: not very promising - <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/official-peace-talks-unfc-cancelled-amid-stalemate-fears.html>
- Future outlook for the church: does not have full power - <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co17183-after-shaming-aung-san-su-kyi-then-what/>

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

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

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

World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/myanmar>.

Recent country developments

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