

World
Watch
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Central African Republic: Country Dossier

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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 / Central African Republic

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Central African Republic		
4,826,000	3,599,000	74.6

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

World Watch List Central African Republic	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	68	25
WWL 2019	70	21
WWL 2018	61	35
WWL 2017	58	34
WWL 2016	59	26

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

Central African Republic: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
Clan and ethnic antagonism	Ethnic group leaders

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

Brief description of persecution situation

The Central African Republic has been embroiled in conflict since 2013 and most of the country is occupied by armed militia groups, responsible for a range of human rights abuses. Christian leaders who have publicly denounced the violence have been threatened and church buildings have been burned and ransacked. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians who have been forced to live in camps and lose their homes and livelihood.

In addition to the insecurity and violence from which all Christians suffer from, converts to Christianity also face the persecution that comes from their immediate family members. The local community will often ostracize Christian converts and might also try to force them to renounce Christianity through violence.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- On 15 November 2018 a militia [attacked](#) the Catholic cathedral in Alindao and a neighboring IDP camp, which was completely destroyed. The militia set the cathedral on fire and two Catholic clerics, Bishop Blaise Mada, and Father Celestin Ngoumbango, were killed along with more than 40 civilians. These kinds of attacks were also happening in the previous [reporting period](#) and is thus a continuation of a pattern.
- As [has been happening](#) for years, young children are kidnapped and forced to fight for rebel groups. Those who refuse are killed.
- Rape, pillage, and the destruction of Christian homes and shops have been commonplace.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: attacked - <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/at-least-42-dead-in-cathedral-attack-in-central-african-republic-37393>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: reporting period - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/02/world/africa/church-attack-central-african-republic.html>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: has been happening - https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/evkkbn/child-soldiers-in-central-african-republics-brutal-war

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Central African Republic

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13150040>.

Recent history

The Central African Republic (CAR) used to be a French colony known as Ubangi-Shari. In 1960, Ubangi-Shari gained independence from France. After a whole series of coups, General François Bozizé seized power in 2003. After several years of intermittent fighting in which the government was challenged by various rebel groups, a militia called Séléka (widely perceived as a coalition of Muslim fighters) took control of the capital Bangui in 2013 and its leader Michel Djotodia became the first Muslim president in CAR's history. Due to intense pressure from the international community, President Djotodia resigned from office and was replaced by Catherine Samba-Panza who served as interim president from 2013-2014 until elections were held.

The Interim Government, after much delay, finally managed to hold an election that was supposed to be a significant milestone in the transition process in the Central African Republic. In the run-off presidential election held in February 2016, Faustin-Archange Touadera won the presidency. Although President Touadera has made peace and reconciliation his priority since taking office, there are still clashes in some parts of the country involving the mainly Muslim Séléka and the self-defense groups, called Anti-Balaka. Although these are frequently referred to as Christians, they are mostly Animist in faith and churches have strongly disassociated themselves from the group. Due to the obvious religious overtones of the conflict, both Christian and Muslim civilians are victims of the violence perpetrated by the Séléka and the Anti-Balaka militants. Both UN peacekeepers and the government have not been able to stop the conflict so far and the country continues to be mired in anarchy.

The Central African Republic has been embroiled in conflict since 2013 when the Seleka coalition seized power from President Francois Bozize, sparking violent instability in the country. After a March 2016 election, there were renewed hopes that peace was returning to the country as there was an initial lull, however, more fighting erupted in late 2016 and early 2017 between armed groups. Currently, ex-Seleka factions and Anti-Balaka militants occupy and control large swathes of territory in the northern and western parts of the country, respectively. The situation is unstable and the various armed militia groups have been responsible for a range of human-rights abuses. CAR borders with other fragile and volatile countries (Sudan, South Sudan, DRC), which makes the conflict even more challenging. Tensions within and between communities, competition over resources (land, financial, political and administrative), the destruction of traditional ties and a lack of trust in the authorities have hindered attempts to resolve the conflict.

On 8 June 2018, the International Criminal Court Appeal Trial Chambers (ICC) acquitted Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, a Congolese national and former vice-president of the Democratic Republic of Congo who was [charged](#) before the ICC with war crimes and crimes against humanity for his involvement in the violent conflict in the Central African Republic. In November and December 2018, two former CAR officers allegedly involved in the coordination and command of the Anti-Balaka armed groups were arrested or otherwise surrendered under an ICC-issued warrant, signaling that nobody is allowed to commit atrocities under international law with impunity. On 17 November 2018, [Alfred Yekatom](#), an alleged former Anti-Balaka commander, was transferred to ICC and appeared before the court six days later. And on 12 December 2018, [Patrice Edouard Ngaissona](#), a former government minister and self-proclaimed coordinator of the Anti-Balaka armed group, was arrested on a warrant issued by the ICC a week earlier.

Throughout 2018, fighting between and attacks by armed groups forced the displacement of tens of thousands of people from their homes: The total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Central African Republic climbed to over 642,800, and the total number of refugees was 574,600, the [highest numbers](#) since 2014.

There have been several government and international interventions to curb the conflict but so far these have failed to produce major improvements. The security situation throughout CAR remains volatile, with continued attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping forces. In February 2019, yet another agreement - the Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation - was signed with more than a dozen rebel groups. This gives hope that there may be an end to the crisis in sight.

Political and legal landscape

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion under conditions set by law and equal protection under the law regardless of religion - and this is generally respected in practice.

Most analysts agree that family bloodlines, local ethnic politics, and rebel militancy have been key in shaping politics in CAR. Several tribes have been waging war against each other aggravated by the political and economic situation and social issues. Northern tribes are dominantly Islamic; before the coup by Bozizé in 2003 they fought each other for power but joined forces under the umbrella of Séléka prior to staging the 2013 coup. Across the country, relations have been tense among the various tribes, and conflicts between them have led to considerable loss of life over the years. The reformed [Constitution of 2015](#), has designated powers between the different branches of the government:

- “The president, elected every six years, is the head of state, while the prime minister is the head of government. The president is elected by popular vote.
- The prime minister is appointed by the president. The council of ministers is appointed by the president.
- The supreme court upholds the constitution through decision making. The supreme court is made up of judges appointed by the president. They serve for 7-year non-renewable terms.

- The national assembly has the power to nominate the prime minister and pass laws. The national assembly is elected for five-year terms by using the two-round system.”

Religious landscape

Religious Context: Central African Republic	Numbers	%
Christians	3,599,000	74.6
Muslim	644,000	13.3
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	534,000	11.1
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	12,300	0.3
Atheist	660	0.0
Agnostic	35,600	0.7
Other	0	0.0

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

CAR is a predominantly Christian country; relations between Muslims and Christians had been good in previous years, but tension had been growing under the surface. In particular converts from Islam to Christianity have always faced persecution. Christians living in Muslim-dominated areas in northern, eastern and western regions have reported persecution in the form of discrimination and other forms of social pressure. Many Christians (and Muslims) also believe in traditional African religions and intermix their faith with several traditional practices including sorcery and witchcraft.

According to WCD estimates for 2019, Christians constitute 74.6% of the population and Muslims 13.3%. Islam has shown significant growth in the last decade - rising from 5% to well over 13% - and has been strengthened by groups settling from Chad and Sudan. Dissatisfaction at the perceived marginalization of northern Muslims was one of the root causes for the coup in March 2013 that gave rise to a deadly conflict along religious and ethnic lines. Local Christians are very concerned about the Islamic inroads being established in the country and church leaders have repeatedly pointed out that the rebellion that led to the coup had a religious agenda.

Normal church life is very difficult as meetings of Christians are always under the threat of attack; ex-Séléka groups attack churches that are found in the Muslim-dominated areas of the country and especially target churches that are more involved in openly integrating converts from the Muslim community. Anti-Balaka rebel groups also attack churches and any Christians who oppose their activities. Both rebel groups have involvement in criminal activities. Christians are also frequently harassed in the big cities - especially in Bangui close to the PK5 quarter - and in north-eastern areas.

Economic landscape

Despite great natural wealth, mutinies and the numerous coups have plunged the country into adverse poverty. As a result of decades of political instability, a landlocked geographical position and the prevalence of subsistence agriculture, CAR is one of the world's least developed countries. In the 2018 [Human Development Index](#) Report, the UN Development Program (UNDP) placed CAR in the 'low human development' category, ranking it 188th out of 188 countries included in the study, with a score of 0.367.

Social and cultural landscape

In addition to being one of the lowest-ranking countries in the Human Development Index, the Central African Republic also has one of the shortest life expectancies in the world with an average of 52.9 years. This is partly due to the instability of the past decade which has led to deterioration in the socio-economic situation in the country.

There were numerous Muslim slave-traders operating in the country during the 19th century coming from the northern part of the country and from Chad, which led to a growth in Islam in the northern regions. CAR's multi-religious society did not experience substantial tension until instability increased in the country in 2013 after militant groups mobilized along religious lines. The main grievance expressed by the majority Muslim Séléka militants is the longstanding neglect and marginalization of the predominantly Muslim regions in the north.

Technological landscape

The recurring conflict in the country and its neighbors has created obstacles in the establishment of technological infrastructure. Hence, in communications, financial services, agricultural methods and transportation, the use of modern technology is not significant. [Internet users](#) are also small in number (256,432 Internet users in Dec/2018, equivalent to 5.3% of the population). CAR had 96,000 Facebook subscribers in Dec/2017, which means a 2.0% penetration rate.

A large-scale project was planned for the Central African Republic at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century. UNESCO [reported](#) that "the country was included in the list of beneficiary countries for the first phase of the Spanish funded project on capacity-building in science, technology and innovation (STI) Policy in Africa during which UNESCO provided technical assistance and consultancy services to develop the national policy for STI. Throughout 2008 and 2009, missions, consultations, and interviews were held with most of the STI stakeholders in the country and a first draft of the National STI Policy framework document was produced and submitted to the Central African Government for comments and discussion." This initiative has been interrupted by the conflict that ensued in 2013.

Security situation

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, fighting between various armed factions has been very common. [Human Rights Watch](#) summarized the events of 2018 as follows: "Armed groups continued to commit serious human rights abuses, expanding their control to an estimated 70 percent of the country, while the central government, led by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, controlled the capital, Bangui, and surrounding areas to the west."

According to the Human Rights Watch report, fighting between Revolution Justice (RJ) and the National Movement for the Liberation of the Central African Republic and indiscriminate attacks killed scores of civilians in the Ouham-Pendé province between December 2017 and February 2018; the violence also caused the displacement of up to 60,000 people around the town of Paoua in the province during the same period. Fresh sectarian violence that [targeted places of worship](#) erupted on May Day 2018 in the capital Bangui, killing at least 20 civilians including a priest and injuring more than 90. Then in November 2018, as many as 100 civilians at an IDP camp were [massacred](#) as attackers stormed the camp without facing opposition from MINUSCA peacekeepers charged with protecting the residents.

CAR has been afflicted with chronic instability as a result of various rebel groups opposing the central government. Most of these rebels take up arms as a result of alleged sectarian exclusion and marginalization. The instability of CAR and the weakness of its successive governments (as well as their lack of legitimacy) has meant that the former colonial power, France, still plays a decisive role in CAR. There have been many direct military interventions by France in support of governments of the day and at times to protect its own nationals and foreigners living in CAR. While the rebels and those who lead military coups often allege that they are motivated by a desire to root out corruption or ethnic or religious discrimination, very often it seems that they are motivated by the material rewards of political power and the opportunities for patronage and corruption it offers. The recurrent patterns of conflict have turned CAR into an archetypal failed state.

The Séléka militia (which has split into several factions) has been one of the main actors in the civil war that has engulfed CAR and is made up of fighters from the predominantly Muslim northern part of the country. The factions that have since emerged have a similar composition and most of their fighters are Muslims. Offshoots of Séléka are militant groups like the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity, the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Kodro, Union of Republican Forces, and the Alliance for the Rebirth and Rebuilding.

The Anti-Balaka militia began as local self-protection units and vigilante groups (later becoming a major actor in the civil war). At first, Anti-Balaka had sometimes been labelled by Western media as a 'Christian militia'. This was not the case as the majority were always Animists. Despite this, some Christians did join their ranks at first due to disappointment at the inaction of UN forces and the impunity enjoyed by Séléka at that time. However, most of Anti-Balaka have now effectively turned into criminal gangs. The criminal activities of these gangs result in the persecution of Christians in Bangui since they often target religious leaders (in addition to the violent and horrific attacks they commit against Muslims).

With at least 70% of the territory under the control of various militant groups, both the government and UN peacekeepers have very little control in most parts of the [country](#). International Crisis Group (ICG) is still listing CAR as a crisis watch country. In July 2019, [ICG](#) reported: "Violence between armed groups continued in capital Bangui and provinces, while efforts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate rebel fighters advanced slightly in the west. "

If the parties to the conflict continue to refuse to commit to a ceasefire and disarmament:

- The country might descend further into full-blown civil war.
- Neighboring countries would be likely to get involved in arming or training groups, based on their national interests.
- Christians are likely to continue suffering at the hands of ex-Séléka and other militants.

Trends analysis

1) The relationship between Muslims and Christians has become polarized

The conflict in the last few years has fundamentally changed the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country. Unless the reconciliation process and the attempt to end the cycle of impunity in CAR succeeds, there is a grave risk that the polarization among Muslims and Christians will continue and exacerbate the religious conflict. Despite the elections in 2015 and 2016 (which many hoped would bring a fresh chance of reconciliation), ex-Séléka militants seem unwilling to lay down their arms and there is still a serious risk of a relapse into violent conflict with religious overtones. Church leaders of the main denominations have condemned the violence perpetrated by Anti-Balaka forces. Although President Touadera (elected in 2016) has made peace and reconciliation his priority since taking office, various militant groups are active and the UN has issued a report regarding the growing risk of a deadly [civil war and genocide](#).

2) The emergence of criminal splinter-groups has made life for Christians insecure

As the instability continues in the country, the situation is becoming increasingly complex with several criminal splinter-groups emerging from the Séléka and Anti-Balaka militant groups - and in some places even [joining forces](#). These groups both attack Christians, although for different reasons. This has put tremendous pressure on the Christian community in all areas of life. Killings and the destruction of property and churches have become common and there is nothing to change this if the status quo remains as it is.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13150040>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13150040>
- Recent history: charged - <http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/car-acquittal-of-bemba-a-blow-to-victims/%20>
- Recent history: Alfred Yekatom - <http://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1419>
- Recent history: Patrice Edouard Ngaïssona - <http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/car-anti-balaka-coordinators-icc-arrest-deals-major-blow-against-impunity-for-atrocities/>

- Recent history: highest numbers - <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/central-african-republic>
- Political and legal landscape: Constitution of 2015 - <https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/central-african-republic/government>
- Economic landscape: Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CAF>
- Technological landscape: Internet users - <https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ml>
- Technological landscape: reported - <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/science-technology/sti-systems-and-governance/sti-policy-development/africa/central-african-republic/>
- Security situation: Human Rights Watch - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/central-african-republic>
- Security situation: targeted places of worship - <http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/05/central-african-republic-those-responsible-for-renewed-bloodshed-must-be-brought-to-justice/>
- Security situation: massacred - <http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/car-up-to-100-civilians-shot-and-burnt-alive-as-un-peacekeepers-leave-posts-in-alindao/>
- Security situation: country - https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/rebels-in-the-central-african-republic-are-filling-the-void-of-an-absent-government/2018/03/25/3e11d960-2328-11e8-946c-9420060cb7bd_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.96ae61125241
- Security situation: ICG - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/july-2019#central-african-republic>
- Trends analysis: civil war and genocide - <http://theanalytical.org/central-african-republic-reports-warn-of-rising-levels-of-violence/>
- Trends analysis: joining forces - <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/clashes-in-car-leave-at-least-2-dead-10-injured-20171031>

WWL 2020: Church information / Central African Republic

Christian origins

Like most African countries, CAR society was dominated by several traditional African religions practiced by different tribes. Most traditional religions in the area were dependent upon the animist tradition and although religious practices are generally similar, they differ from one tribe to another. The animist African tradition was more dominant in the southern and central parts of the country. Muslim traders in the northern part of the country introduced Islam to [the region](#). Christianity became dominant in CAR after French colonists took power in the 1880s and became the religion of choice for many - possibly also due to its close association with powerful and respected colonial officials. While Roman Catholic missionaries came as early as the second half of the 19th century, Protestant missionaries (for instance, sent by US Baptists) did not start operating in the country until 1921. Roman [Catholics](#) are by far the largest Christian group.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Central African Republic	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	1,748,000	48.6
Protestant	832,000	23.1
Independent	830,000	23.1
Unaffiliated	749,000	20.8
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-561,000	-15.6
Total	3,598,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	1,422,000	39.5
Renewalist movement	910,000	25.3

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.

External Links - WWL 2020: Church information

- Christian origins: the region. - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-religious-beliefs-of-the-central-african-republic.html>
- Christian origins: Catholics - http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/central-african-republic/#/?affiliations_religion_id=11&affiliations_year=2010®ion_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2016

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Central African Republic

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 68 points, Central African Republic ranks 25 on WWL 2020.

The country scored 70 points and ranked 21 in WWL 2019. The reduction in two points is more or less a result of the fact that the conflict in the country is taking many turns. In some circumstances, those who were persecuting Christians have also started fighting each other. There are also more than 15 other factions that fight with the government and with each other. These complex circumstances have also made the tracking of persecution more difficult. The score for violence remained at an extreme level which has impacted pressure in all *spheres of life*.

Persecution engines

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

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong):

Besides the violence against Christians perpetrated particularly by the offshoots of the Séléka militia, *Islamic oppression* is also evident in the persecution of Christians by society in general in predominantly Muslim parts of the country.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong):

This engine is particularly evident where Anti-Balaka militants attack churches and Christians. Although Anti-Balaka began as a collection of vigilante groups, they have morphed into becoming criminal gangs.

Particularly in Bangui, they have often targeted the Christians and church leaders, especially those who do not subscribe to their ideals or those who oppose their violent activities. While the group claims to protect Christians, it has become evident over the years that this is untrue as they attack Muslims and Christians alike.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Medium):

There are two dimensions to this Persecution engine in CAR: i) Animism/ATR (religious and/or cultural) and ii) tribal fighting. According to a country researcher: “Both are prevalent in CAR, while ethnic and religious motives often go together.” Also: “There is pressure to participate in cultural religious practices, such as rites of passage, rituals and customs at milestones like birth, marriage and death, but also for protection (Anti-Balaka are known for this).” Further: “Some ethnic minority groups are specifically targeted, for instance Ba'aka pygmies, who are forcibly recruited for labor. Anti-Balaka forces are mainly Animists, and they attack Muslims, but often also Christians. Sometimes they force Christians into their ranks.”

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Muslim militant and paramilitary groups (that could be considered ex-Séléka groups) are significant drivers of persecution. Two of them are the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central African Republic (FPRC), and the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC). Although many of these groups can be categorized as violent religious groups, it is also possible to view them as political parties and paramilitary organizations. These rebel groups have inflicted multiple attacks on Christian churches and private Christian property.
- **Organized crime cartels (Very strong):** Some factions of the militant groups mentioned above act as organized criminal gangs and often engage in looting and frequently target churches and church-affiliated entities.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Islamic leaders occupy all the market places, control trade and impose a huge tax on Christian businessmen and often loot the shops of Christians to reduce them to poverty. Furthermore, at a national level, figures like Michel Djotodia who was the president of the country, Nouredine Adam who was the second in command to Michel Djotodia and Ali Darassa, a Fulani ethnic Muslim leader of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) and Ex-Séléka leader, have led the persecution of Christians.
- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In the predominantly Muslim parts of the country tribal or ethnic elders also play a role in this process since they reinforce the pressure against converts to Christianity.
- **Family members (Medium):** In the northern part of the country and areas that border Sudan, Muslim family members will persecute converts to Christianity.
- **Citizens (Medium):** In the northern part of the country and areas that border Sudan, Muslim communities will persecute known converts.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Organized crime cartels (Very strong):** Some factions of the militant groups mentioned above act as organized criminal gangs and often engage in looting and frequently target churches and church-affiliated entities. In addition to militants that used to belong to the Séléka, Anti-Balaka fighters also engage in such acts. The state of lawlessness and the inability of the state to impose law and order means that Christians and the wider community have little protection from the criminal acts of these groups.
- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** The violent religious groups are also running criminal chains and syndicates to finance their operations.
- **Paramilitary groups (medium):** In the context of the conflict in CAR, paramilitary groups like Anti-Balaka are also persecuting Christians.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- **Ethnic group leaders (medium):** The main drivers of *Clan and ethnic antagonism* are ethnic leaders and some community leaders and their members. According to a country researcher: “Ethnic antagonism in the form of tribal pressure is [present in the country] especially since Muslim leaders are from certain tribes, who target Christians for persecution, for instance, Peulh/Fulani and leaders of other movements and tribes.” Within the context of this Persecution engine, there is also an overlap between ethnic leaders and non-Christian religious leaders. Some Islamic leaders are also seen as ethnic leaders and can create an environment of hate and violence.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Persecution is most severe in the northern and eastern parts of the country which is dominated by the Muslim population and where Séléka splinter-groups are operating. There are also particular difficulties for Christians in the eastern part of the country that borders Sudan.

Christian communities and how they are affected

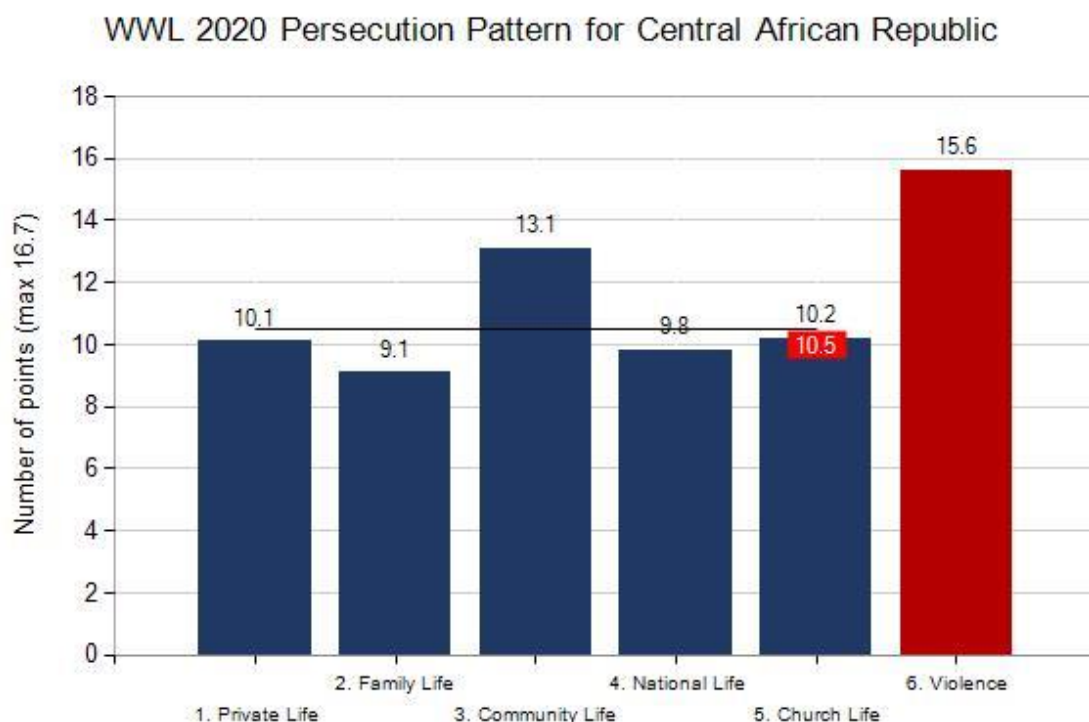
Communities of expatriate Christians: Since expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated in CAR, this category is not included for WWL analysis and scoring.

Historical Christian communities: This category is comprised of Roman Catholic and older Protestant churches. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the country with the widest network of churches, clinics and schools. When the Séléka militants were in the ascendancy, cars, computers and other valuable items were looted from church-buildings and other church properties. The Catholic Church and its leadership in CAR, alongside other religious leaders, have been a strong voice calling for peace and reconciliation and have also provided places of refuge for civilians, both Muslim and Christian, fleeing attack. As a result, Catholic churches have often been targeted for attack.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background experience opposition and pressure from family members to renounce Christianity if their conversion becomes known. They also have very limited opportunities to have fellowship with other Christians and worship collectively. Most Christians of Muslim background do not worship in public due to the fear of attacks by Muslim agitators. This is especially the case in the northern Muslim-dominated areas of the country.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Christians belonging to Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations (as well as those belonging to historical Christian communities) have been subject to attacks by ex-Séléka militants. Recently, the number of people joining these Christian congregations has increased dramatically.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for CAR shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in CAR is borderline high/very high with a score of 10.5 points, a reduction from 10.7 points in WWL 2019.
- Except in the *Family* and *National spheres of life*, pressure throughout is above 10.0 points and scored highest by far in the *Community sphere* with 13.1 points.
- The score for violence remains at an extreme level with 15.6 points, although 0.5 lower than WWL 2019.

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:

Because CAR is a Christian majority country, Catholics and all types of Protestants enjoy relative freedom in the *Private sphere* especially in Christian-majority parts of the country.

- **Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1:1 / Score 2.75):** Converts from Islam experience interference from their family members if their conversion becomes known. This group of Christians is the most persecuted of all. The backlash from Muslim families is harsh and family members are likely to cut off all financial help. There are many families where the wife is a Christian and the husband is not. The husband commonly prevents wife and children from attending church activities.
- **It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1:8 / Score 2.75):** The country is divided along faith lines. If a Christian host talks about Christian faith to a Muslim guest, he/she may get into trouble.
- **It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials (Block 1:3 / Score 2.75):** In the northern part of the country (which is dominated by the Muslim population and where Séléka splinter-groups are operating), converts are likely to risk their life by owning Christian materials. When ex-Séléka fighters come into a house and find someone reading a Bible, they have been known to kill them immediately.
- **It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet (Block 1:6 / Score 2.75):** Converts and non-convert Christians in areas controlled by Séléka forces face this problem. A country researcher states: "[Converts] ... will do nothing to be seen as Christians, even listening to Christian radio channels. In families, family members act as spies, sometimes children spy on their parents to tell if they have converted, so it becomes risky for them to be seen accessing Christian media."

Family sphere:

- **Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons: (Block 2:3 / Score 3.00):** As the situation in the country is far from safe, it is very difficult for Christians (converts in particular) in the north-eastern provinces to register births, weddings or deaths, especially as this would attract unwanted attention.
- **Christian baptisms have been hindered: (Block 2:4 / Score 2.75):** In a country where groups are targeting each other based on religion, it is also difficult to openly baptize new Christians.
- **Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce (Block 2:11 / Score 2.75):** This happens often after a spouse has converted to Christianity. Extended families and the local community will then often put pressure on the non-convert to divorce. In addition, converts almost automatically lose family inheritance rights.
- **Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2:9 / Score 2.75):** In areas controlled by rebel groups, where children's parents have been killed or have been forced to flee, any children left behind remain at the mercy of the attackers. Some have been brutally killed. Also, due to disunity between some churches, children are known to have been harassed because of the denominational faith of their parents.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.)(Block 3:1 / Score 3.75):** CAR is dominated by warring factions and the government has lost effective control over many areas. Christians are often targeted directly or indirectly (i.e. considered as siding with Anti-Balaka). In Muslim dominated areas, Christians are often discriminated against, especially where Sharia law is more or less officially implemented.
- **Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.) (Block 3:2 / Score 3.5):** Monitoring by some rebel groups and their supporters has been common.
- **Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage (Block 3:3 / Score 3.5):** In the context of the ongoing conflict, Christians suffer from attack and abduction. For instance, in villages which the former Séléka have attacked, young girls have often been abducted. Christians from a Muslim background suffer most in such attacks.
- **Christians have been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water) (Block 3:4 / Score 3.25):** Muslim community members usually do not want to share community resources (such as healthcare) with converts to Christianity, especially in the remote northern part of the country.

National sphere:

- **Christians have been hindered in traveling for faith-related reasons (Block 4:4 / Score 3.25):** In areas controlled by Ex-Seleka militants, all transportation facilities are under Muslim control thus making movement for Christians difficult. When violence flares up, pastors are particularly vulnerable when travelling between churches to carry out their work.
- **Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons (Block 4:5 / Score 3.25):** Allegiance in the country is divided along religious lines. Christians face this problem mostly in areas where the Muslim community forms the majority or where Ex-Seleka militants are in control. It is particularly difficult where Christians are considered supporters of Anti-Balaka.
- **Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4:8 / Score 3.25):** No peace negotiations or truth and reconciliation initiatives are currently helping the country return to stability. Christians in the Muslim-dominated northern part of the country do not have the right or the possibility to express their views. If they do that, they will be seen as being supporters of Anti-Balaka forces and will probably then be killed by Ex-Seleka militants.

- **Christians have been hindered in running their own businesses without interference for faith-related reasons (e.g. personnel policy, client admission policy)(Block 4:7 / Score 3.00):** There is no longer effective control by the government and in several regions rebel groups wield power. These groups frequently discriminate against Christians and sometimes attack them, forcing them to flee home and country.

Church sphere:

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5:1 / Score 3.00):** . Although there is no official surveillance from government security officers, civilians are being watched by various rebel groups to discover their possible sympathy for or links to other groups. Many attacks have been reported, with church services being interrupted and churches burned.
- **Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier (Block 5:3 / Score 3.00):** The situation in the country is volatile and where churches have been severely damaged and need to be rebuilt or renovated, the Christian communities face difficulties, particularly where Muslim rebels are in 'authority'.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5:5 / Score 3.00):** Conducting religious activities outside the church is very risky as they can attract unnecessary attention. A country researcher states: "Especially in areas with a Muslim majority and that are controlled by rebel groups, churches tend to keep a lower profile. Even in areas where there is no direct crisis, sometimes churches are hindered, for instance in regions where there are many Muslims or animists."
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities inside their place of worship (Block 5:4 / Score 3.00):** Freedom of religion, movement, or expression and even the right to life is frequently being fundamentally challenged. When it comes to the hindering of church events inside church compounds, a country researcher stated: "Indirectly it happens in rebel-controlled areas because of the fear and insecurity of what may happen if the activity happens to be disrupted. There, prayer nights are forbidden, in places like Ndele; they say it makes noise. During the heat of the crisis, the Seleka occupied even churches and thus, activities could not take place there."

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.

Central African Republic	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	924	2110	152	47	200
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	146	121	10	22	4232
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	500	1400	83	157	2500

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:** The killing of Christian in the country is often under-reported. In one attack that was conducted in November 2018, two priests, and over 40 other people were killed. According to a country researcher, "On 21 May 2019, in Ouham-Pendé prefecture, the villages of Koundili, Lemouna and Boyong were visited by the armed group of 3R who carried out targeted attacks against Christians. The attacks left at least 42 people dead." The researcher adds: "In May 2019, 3 Christians were killed in Sibut (Kemo) by the 'Mbororo' Peuhls following an armed conflict between farmers and herders."
- **Christians attacked:** Besides the attacks on villages, incidents of abduction, forced marriage and other ill-treatment have happened in CAR. What has made the situation worse is that militants also take revenge on Christians - revenge for actions carried out by Anti-Balaka. According to a country researcher, many Christians were attacked and died as a result of this. For example: "In Mboumou, 7 Christians died as a result of an act of reprisal after a clash with Anti-Balaka..."
- **Churches attacked:** Numerous churches were attacked, looted and destroyed in CAR. In one of the most devastating attacks, carried out in November 2018, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Alindao was completely destroyed. It has also been observed that many churches being used as refugee camps have been specifically targeted for attack. According to the [Catholic News Agency](#) reporting on 16 November 2018: "Many Catholic churches in the country provide refuge to Muslims and Christians alike fleeing violence, included churches in the Diocese of Bangassou, some 140 miles to the east of Alindao, where several Catholic institutions have taken in displaced Muslims who face violence at the hand of Anti-Balaka."

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence facing Christians in CAR over the last five WWL reporting periods.

Chart 1:

In the table below it can be seen that the average pressure on Christians has oscillated between 8.8 and 10.7 points and now would seem to be levelling off at the high end of that range.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Central African Republic	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	10.5
2019	10.7
2018	9.0
2017	9.6
2016	8.8

Chart 2:

The chart below clearly shows that the pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has most often been high or very high. The increase in pressure has been most dramatic in the *Community sphere of life*. However, since WWL 2019 pressure in all other *spheres* has seen a reduction.

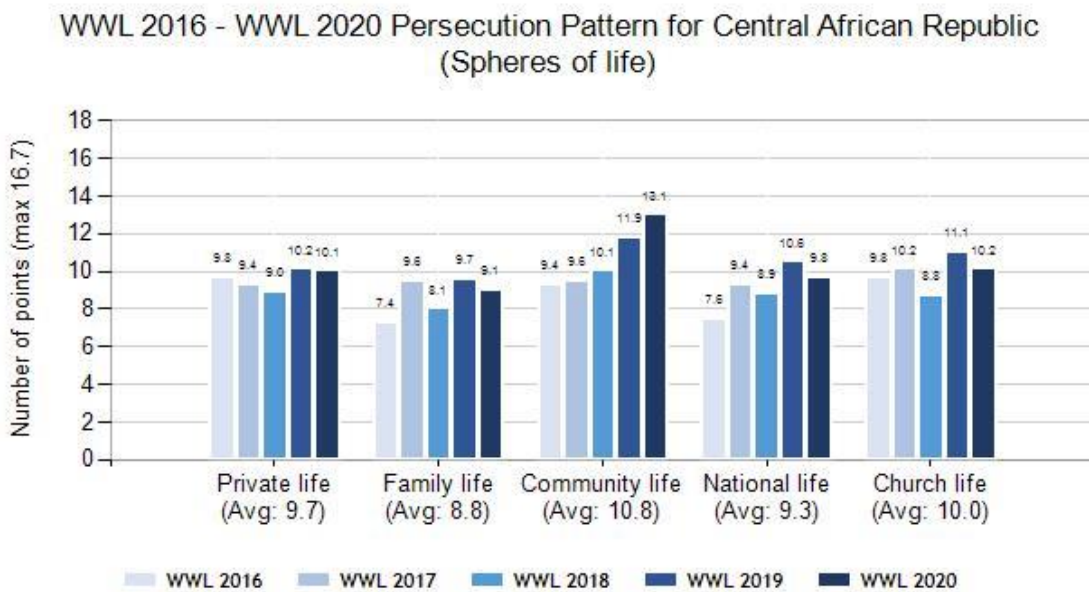
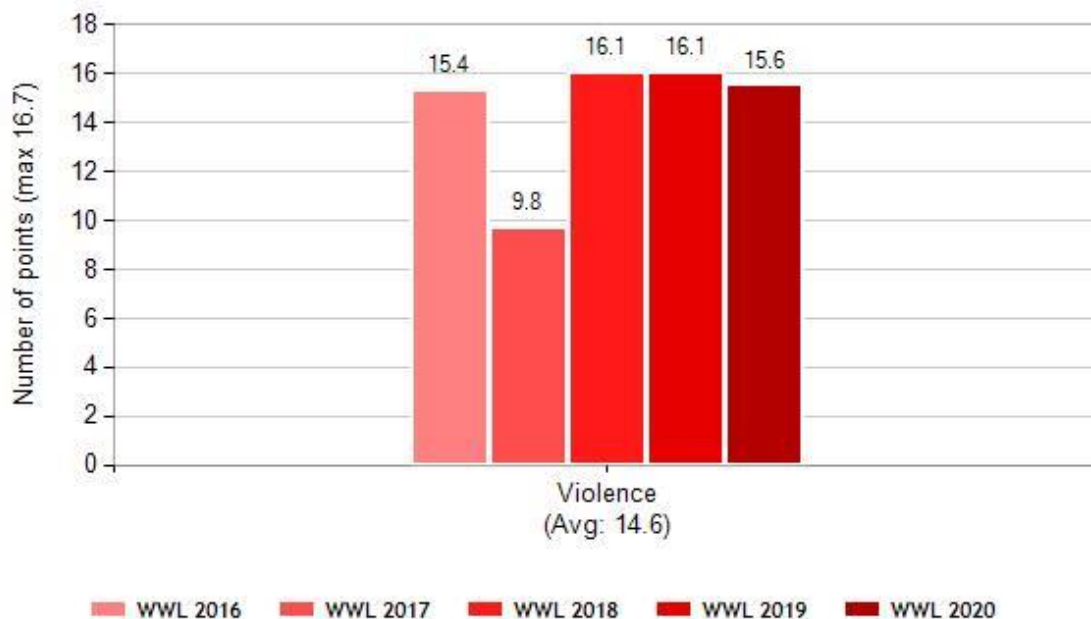


Chart 3:

Over the five year period, the level of violence against Christians has been stable at an extreme level, except in WWL 2017 when it dropped to 9.8 points. This lower score reflected the initial lull in violence following President Faustin-Archange Touadéra's election in 2016.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Central African Republic (Violence)



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- **Abduction**
- **Denied custody of children**
- **Discrimination/Harassment via education**
- **Economic harassment via fines**
- **Enforced Dress Code**
- **Forced Marriage**
- **Forced out of home/expulsion**
- **Targeted seduction**
- **Violence – sexual**
- **Violence – verbal**

In CAR, Christian women and girls are particularly subject to rape, displacement, abduction and forced marriage as forms of religious persecution. Parents are sometimes enticed into giving their Christian girls in marriage in exchange for significant gifts. In other cases, Christian girls who thought they would be free to practice their faith once married to a Muslim discover that they are instead forced to convert. Students, especially female students, face the risk of abduction and sexual violence while on the way to and from school. This has discouraged parents living in high-risk areas from sending their daughters to school. Girls who are abused and become pregnant are likely to drop out of school.

Additionally, the tactics employed to Islamize the population are now taking more subtle forms than in previous years. In some areas of the country, under the guise of fighting promiscuity or getting births registered, Christians are left with no choice but to be married by an imam or are denied registry of a birth if there is no Christian in the office to do so. In the north of the country, poor Christian families are pressured into allowing their young daughters to be housemaids to a wealthy non-Christian family only to spend months in servitude without pay. There are also reports of long-term strategies for increasing the Islamic population. One such strategy involves impregnating Christian women, abandoning them and then returning when the children with known Muslim fathers are grown in order to reclaim them.

In CAR, women are generally more dependent on their families than men, so family- driven persecution affects them more. Because CAR is one of the poorest countries in Africa, ranking near the bottom of almost [every indicator](#), financial need can drive Christian women with many children to agree to convert to Islam in order to survive. There are reports that sometimes a Christian mother is allowed to stay a church member on condition that her children are sent to the mosque.

Also, in one district of Bangui, Christian women have been fined for not covering their heads according to the dress code.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***False charges***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Military/militia conscription/service against conscience***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – psychological***

When Christian families are targeted by radical militias, Christian women in CAR are usually sexually assaulted and left alive, while men are killed for their faith or detained by the militia. There have been dozens of deaths over the past months in many different towns and villages. Pastors are especially targeted and sometimes false accusations revolving around resources are used as a pretext.

Boys and men are at times forcefully recruited into the rebel militant groups and they are also targeted for torture and assault. Abduction, threats and tactical impoverishment of men is greatly affecting Christian families, along with the associated separation or living in camps.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Muslim civilians in southern parts of the country (where they are a minority) have been targeted and attacked by the predominantly Animist Anti-Balaka groups. These militias have committed atrocities which shocked the conscience of the international community. [The International Criminal Court](#) currently has two war criminals on trial, both of them leaders of Anti-Balaka forces.

In the context of the ongoing conflict, religious minorities are not the main targets. However, adherents of small religious minorities do face challenges in the communities where they live.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** There are reports indicating that there are also foreign Islamic fighters in the country supporting the Ex-Seleka groups. As long as Ex-Seleka militia are armed and operating in the country, violent oppression will continue and the chances of peace in CAR are very unlikely. As far as the ordinary Muslim population in the country is concerned (i.e. excluding the jihadist groups), the level of *Islamic oppression* is only a problem where family and community put pressure on converts.
- **Organized corruption and crime:** The levels of corruption and crime in the country go hand in hand with the breakdown in law and order. Thus, through the lens of this Persecution engine, the future depends on how the country can enforce its laws, how it can prosecute criminal networks and government officials who are also part of these networks. It is important to note that criminal networks are working hand in hand with various militant groups.
- **Clan and ethnic antagonism:** Again, the future development of this Persecution engine depends upon how the country emerges from the current crisis. If the country manages to bring concrete peace through truth and reconciliation and justice initiatives, then the influence of this Persecution engine will decrease. It is also important to mention that there is - to a certain extent - a link between religion and ethnicity in the country; thus how *Islamic oppression* develops will also shape the future of *Clan and ethnic antagonism*.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Violence: Catholic News Agency - <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/at-least-42-dead-in-cathedral-attack-in-central-african-republic-37393>
- Gender profile of persecution: every indicator - <http://https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/overview>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: The International Criminal Court - <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-warcrimes-centralafrica-soccer/central-african-militia-suspects-one-a-soccer-boss-hear-war-crimes-charges-idUKKBN1W40UZ>

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

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

World Watch Monitor news articles

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

Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at:

<http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Central+African+Republic> (password: freedom).