

World
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Malaysia: Country Dossier

January 2020



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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 / Malaysia	6
Brief country details	6
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	6
Brief description of persecution situation	6
Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period	6
External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary	7
WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Malaysia	8
Link for general background information	8
Recent history	8
Political and legal landscape	8
Religious landscape	10
Economic landscape	11
Social and cultural landscape	12
Technological landscape	13
Security situation	13
Trends analysis	13
External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding	14
WWL 2020: Church information / Malaysia	17
Christian origins	17
Church spectrum today	17
WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Malaysia	19
Reporting period	19
Position on World Watch List (WWL)	19
Persecution engines	19
Drivers of persecution	20
Geographical hotspots of persecution	22
Christian communities and how they are affected	22
The Persecution pattern	23
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life	24

Violence.....	30
5 Year trends	31
Gender profile of persecution.....	32
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	33
Future outlook for the church.....	34
External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics	35
Additional reports and articles.....	37
WWR in-depth reports	37
World Watch Monitor news articles	37
Recent country developments	37

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 / Malaysia

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Malaysia		
32,454,000	2,951,000	9.1

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

World Watch List Malaysia	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	62	40
WWL 2019	60	42
WWL 2018	65	23
WWL 2017	60	31
WWL 2016	58	30

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

Malaysia: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Ideological pressure groups, Political parties, Government officials

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

Brief description of persecution situation

Converts from Islam to Christianity experience most persecution as every ethnic Malay is expected to be Muslim. Whoever deviates from this is not just going against the Constitution, but also against society at large and of course, against family and neighborhood. Roman Catholics and Methodists are watched by the authorities and NGOs, but non-traditional Protestant groups are more often targeted as these tend to be more active in testifying about their faith.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- On 3 April 2019, Malaysia's human rights commission, [SUHAKAM](#), published its report on the disappearance of Pastor Raymond Koh, who was abducted in broad daylight by unknown assailants on 13 February 2017. The report accused the Special Branch of the police of being involved in the abduction, an allegation which is now being investigated by a Commission of Inquiry.

- When a conversion to Christianity becomes known, the Christian is usually either reported to the Islamic authorities or simply expelled from the community. Christian converts are excluded from the hereditary order and claiming custody continues to be a problem for the non-Muslim spouse. However, there are also cases where converts are accepted by their families and these become Christians too. As for Christians from a Hindu or Buddhist background, the pressure is more from the families since the government is only concerned about Muslims converting.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: SUHAKAM - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_xPspNoDw8Rp8SlukqDUYQmEYx3faNd3/view

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Malaysia

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15356257>.

Recent history

In a truly ground-breaking election on 9 May 2018, the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which had been in charge of the country since independence in 1957, was defeated by the voters who overwhelmingly chose opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan (PH). This happened despite gerrymandering and decisions made by the election authorities benefitting UMNO. During the election campaigning, issues concerning race, ethnicity and religion were used by UMNO to stir up fears among voters that the ethnic minorities (despite being Malaysian citizens) have a hidden agenda and are seeking to Christianize the country. Even slurs made by UMNO against outspoken Christian politicians did not succeed in preventing UMNO from getting voted out. The new government struggles to deliver on its promises and is facing a unified Malay-Muslim opposition, as UMNO and PAS decided to formally join forces. It remains to be seen if this pact holds firm in the long term; it did, however, manage to win [several by-elections](#), dealing the PH government a serious blow.

Political and legal landscape

UMNO hit an all-time low in their popularity polls in 2016, which may have served as an early warning sign but the administration wanted to remain in power, despite (former) Prime Minister Najib Razak being entangled in one of the largest cases of corruption worldwide. After the opposition won in May 2018, Razak was detained and [court proceedings started](#), unearthing even more corruption. The fact that the court has now ordered him to [enter defense](#) in a first of half a dozen cases on 11 November 2019, reportedly shocked Najib Razak.

The new government announced its intention to review the Sedition Law and the National Security Act, which had been used against anyone criticizing the former government and Najib Razak in particular. As a first step, it tried to repeal the "[fake news law](#)" in August 2018. These efforts were blocked by the second chamber of parliament where the PH government lacks a [majority](#). However, in second attempt in October 2019, the government succeeded in [repealing](#) the highly contentious fake news law.

The hard-line Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) was successful in the 2018 elections and managed to regain government control over another federal state. It joined forces with defeated UMNO and focuses on the Malay-Muslim fears of losing economic and social benefits. One challenge for them is that several UMNO members of parliament defected to the ruling PH and the prime minister's PPBM party "Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia" (also known as BERSATU). However, UMNO and PAS party forged an official [political alliance](#) in September 2019 and it remains to be seen how this translates into practice.

A large-scale [demonstration](#) just two days ahead of the international human rights day, involving around 55,000 protesters and organized by Malay-Muslim groups PAS and UMNO to protest against the country's planned accession to ICERD (the UN's International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), is a case in point of the challenges Malaysia faces. Calls for the [special protection of Malay privileges](#) are nothing new and are in fact in line with Malaysia's Constitution. Consequently, one observer stated that the protests were [less about ICERD](#) and more about "shaping perceptions" among Malay Muslims that the Pakatan Harapan coalition government is "anti-Islam" and "anti-Malay". This topic remains central and it remains to be seen how the government will answer the challenge. It seems to be used as a rallying point for all economic and social fears at the expense of ethnic and religious minorities, like Christians.

A challenge for the future could come from a re-organized UMNO, which may well resort to more sectarian rhetoric in the future. A taste of this already emerged when a member of the opposition accused Prime Minister Mohamed Mahathir of being '[in the hands of the Christian DAP](#)'. With the new Minister for Justice and the new Attorney-General all being non-Malay and non-Muslim, this has led to claims that the Muslim cause is lost and Malaysia will now be 'Christianized'. Of course, this is by no means true, but it is likely that the country will hear more such rhetoric. Interestingly, Wan Salim Wan Mohd Noor, the Mufti of Penang State, has said that Islam does not prohibit the appointment of non-Muslims to ministerial or legal posts, a view strongly opposed by more radical Muslims.

Radical Islamic voices are still around and Malaysian society is definitely Islamizing, but the new government has other priorities to deal with first. It is focusing on economic and budget issues and on getting the corruption cases sorted. It is also having to deal with the question concerning Prime Minister Mahathir's succession. He turned 94 in July 2019 and it is not yet known if and when he will step down and make way for Anwar Ibrahim, which is another potentially distracting factor in domestic politics.

Although the government's motto is "One Malaysia", most observers agree that there is no "one Malaysia" in reality. The age-old practice of discriminating against non-Malay ethnic minorities has continued unabated by giving priority to the "*Bumiputra*" - i.e. the Malay population or literally: "People of the soil". With policies continuing to favor *Bumiputra*, all non-Malay citizens face explicit disadvantages in employment and other areas. This is particularly the case in: i) public offices (i.e. state ministries and administration right down to the local level), ii) state bureaucracy, iii) state-owned enterprises (such as large oil companies) and iv) the armed forces.

A functioning political program [promoting unity](#) is very [much needed](#), as all observers agree, but hard to implement. Despite setbacks in the area of human rights, the new government has sent out a clear signal by calling two Christians into high-ranking judicial functions and by appointing an ethnic Chinese Minister of Finance. The country's Chief Justice (CJ), a Christian and non-Malay, retired in 2019 as scheduled and was replaced by the country's first [female CJ](#). One of the challengers of comprehensive reform in Malaysia is the country's [Islamic bureaucracy](#), which has to implement all policies and may decide to delay, boycott or even sabotage any policies seen as being too avantgarde or cutting into the benefits that Malay Muslims enjoy.

It should be noted that Malaysia is a unique parliamentary monarchy: The monarchy is not based on one royal person but is an office which rotates every five years among nine regional sultans. These Islamic rulers hold a powerful position. In principle they are to abide by electoral bodies' decisions, but in fact they can influence all decision-making, since in questions concerning Islam they also have veto power. So far, they have chosen a moderate position in most cases and have opposed demands for more Islamization.

Finally, in a long awaited ruling, the Federal Court decided that the conversion of children under 18 years of age of needs the [consent of both parents](#). The previous government, however, decided to set up a [special department](#) called the "Syariah and Harmonisation of Law division" to address issues pertaining to Islam and Sharia (syariah) law that arise at federal and international levels. How the new government will deal with this highly political issue may give a first indication of the direction it will be going as concerns minorities. For the time being, it has postponed any decision on this highly contentious issue.

Religious landscape

The Malaysian Constitution defines "Malay" as a follower of Islam. Every citizen of Malay ethnicity is, therefore, understood to be a Muslim.

One point of contention for religious minorities is the question of claiming custody in divorce cases in religiously mixed marriages. In order to claim custody successfully, the partner most likely to lose custody (almost always the husband) can quickly convert to Islam and file an application with the Sharia courts, which then grant custody to the Muslim spouse. In theory the civil courts are above Sharia courts, but in practice divorce cases are frequently not decided by the civil courts but by Sharia courts (if one parent converts to Islam) since the police prefer the easier implementation of a Sharia decision. The previous government promised to find a solution to this problem but failed to deliver. Court cases on the question of custody are continuing. As the US State Department's IRF report for 2018 states on page 1: "The relationship between sharia and civil law remains unresolved in the legal system. In January the country's highest court unanimously overturned a 2015 Court of Appeal decision and ruled minors could only convert to Islam with the consent of both parents. The court held it had jurisdiction over the administrative decisions of sharia authorities and such jurisdiction could not be abrogated by a constitutional amendment by parliament."

The Islamization of society is increasing, although that does not necessarily mean that this is being directly transferred into the political arena as well. The elections in 2018 showed that voters were more interested in economic improvement and were disgusted with the levels of corruption within UMNO circles. In everyday life, however, there are more restrictions being introduced which affect non-Muslims too. For example, during Ramadan food outlets serve neither Muslims nor non-Muslims alike. At the same time, there are frequent warnings from Muslim-Malay organizations and politicians against a supposed agenda of [Christianization](#).

While there is a federal department tasked with promoting religious harmony and protecting the rights of religious minorities, a comparison of the different budgets is telling. As the US State Department states on page 14 of its IRF report for 2018: "The Department of National Unity and Integration's annual budget was approximately 275 million ringgit (\$66.59 million), while 1 billion ringgit (\$242.13 million) was marked for the development of Islam, including 811 million ringgit (\$196.37 million) for JAKIM."

Religious Context: Malaysia	Numbers	%
Christians	2,951,000	9.1
Muslim	18,265,000	56.3
Hindu	2,041,000	6.3
Buddhist	1,733,000	5.3
Ethnoreligionist	1,095,000	3.4
Jewish	100	0.0
Bahai	74,600	0.2
Atheist	37,200	0.1
Agnostic	123,000	0.4
Other	6,134,500	18.9

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

Economic landscape

In July 2015, the Washington Post ran an article claiming that around 700 million USD had been [transferred](#) to the prime minister's private account on behalf of the 1MDB state fund accused of corruption. Although at first he managed to effectively end domestic investigations by [sacking](#) his deputy and the country's attorney-general, international investigations in Switzerland and other countries continued. The new government decided to take up the case again and within a few weeks brought a case together against Najib Razak and his wife. Goods and cash worth approximately [273 million USD](#) were found at various properties belonging to Razak, when they were searched for evidence in June 2018. The new opposition and UMNO leader is also facing corruption charges and, while the investigations continue, surprising details are being unearthed.

In terms of economy, Malaysia is a fast growing and modernizing state. It is one of the economically and politically most stable countries in South East Asia, although the new government faces several challenges. The cost of living for many people, including the middle class, had become very high, so the Goods and Service Tax was abolished, tearing a hole into the country's budget. Large infrastructure projects have been put on hold or even cancelled, making relations with neighboring Singapore or big lender China more difficult. Prime Minister Mahathir has been able to successfully re-negotiate terms of a large rail-link project with China, to Malaysia's benefit.

Malaysia has vast resources – including oil. Significant oil and gas reserves have been found in the waters around East Malaysia, especially Sarawak, and it remains to be seen how the sharing of revenue will be achieved fairly. Sarawak is the only state with a Christian majority. Another commodity Sarawak and Sabah States are exporting is timber, a business riddled with corruption, environmental devastation and harm to indigenous people. After Indonesia, Malaysia is the world's next largest palm oil exporter and has been strongly challenged by European efforts to reduce and [potentially ban](#) the commodity's use. Malaysia aims at achieving "high-income status" by 2020, as classified by the World Bank, and if it continues to grow economically at a constant pace this is very possible.

Social and cultural landscape

Although the state is secular per definition, Islam has a strong influence on everyday life. Malaysia's legal system and its political institutions are strongly influenced by Islam and this influence is growing, much to the disadvantage of the large non-Muslim minority. The nobility is Muslim and called to be protectors of Islam. Nevertheless, it has had a moderating influence against radical voices and has defended the country's multi-ethnicity and religiosity.

All children in state-run nursery and primary schools are required to attend Islamic education. In state schools, only Muslim pupils (including Christians with a Muslim background) are required to attend Islamic classes. At the university level, there is a compulsory subject for all students called "Islamic and Asian Civilization" which is felt by many to be a government instrument for furthering Islamization.

Slightly more than half of the population is ethnically Malay, roughly one quarter is of Chinese origin, 11% are indigenous and around 7% have an Indian background. In 1969, the country lived through serious ethnic clashes against the Chinese minority, which are still vividly remembered. Most ethnic Malays are Muslim and together with the indigenous people (who often lack education and live in East Malaysia) they enjoy a strong "affirmative action policy" by the government which gives ethnic Malay advantages in decisions concerning quotas, grants, loans and tax benefits.

There is a growing middle-class and poverty has been reduced, standing now at one of the lowest levels of all South East Asian countries; the UNDP gives a figure of 1.1%. There was a [recent dispute](#) with the UN Special Rapporteur over poverty in the nation, who claimed that the poverty level was closer to 16-20% rather than 0.4% as claimed by the government. This serves as a reminder how easily such numbers can be politicized and that they anyway very much depend on the definition of poverty. The chances for increasing prosperity look promising, despite all challenges. However, it should be noted that poverty is more concentrated in the indigenous regions of East Malaysia than on the Peninsula. It is therefore not surprising that Malaysia has the [second-highest GINI coefficient](#) (measuring the inequality of income) after Papua New Guinea, according to the World Bank.

Technological landscape

According to the UNDP, the Internet Penetration Rate of Malaysia is 78.8%, again reflecting the gap between urban and rural areas in general and West and East Malaysia in particular. The mobile subscription number stands at 140.8, reflecting a worldwide trend of increasing mobile connectivity, even in remote areas. According to government statistics, quoted by Freedom House, the Internet Penetration Rate in 2017 stood at almost 90% - with the rate in Sabah and Sarawak standing at 43.3% and 51.8% respectively. In general, 70% of all Internet users in Malaysia are living in urban areas. Freedom House in its "Freedom on the Net 2019" report rates the country as "[partly free](#)" and saw a slight improvement compared to their preceding reporting period.

Security situation

The grenade attack on a café in the State of Selangor in June 2016 has been the only successful attack by violent Islamic militants in the country so far. It showed the very real danger of the Islamic State group (IS) making inroads into Malaysia. Already in 2016 the country announced that it would take up joint patrols with Indonesia and the Philippines to counter the threat of Islamic militancy in the tri-border island region. The capture of the city of Marawi/Philippines by radical Islamic militants in May 2017, and the fact that Islamic militants were able to hold it for five months, shows the very real danger as well as the urgent need for cooperation in this region. As the whole region consists of islands and law enforcement often lacks local knowledge, it is hard to monitor the triangle between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Weak monitoring from either country has the potential to endanger all three countries.

Trends analysis

1) The new government faces high expectations

According to a survey, 84.3% of Malaysians feel that the relationship between the government and people is similar to that between a parent and a child. It is therefore by no means certain that Malay citizens are wanting a growing openness instead of paternalism. This desire to be protected and safe was well reflected in the election of former long-term Prime Minister Mohamed Mahathir (also known as Dr M), who became the oldest elected head of government worldwide, at the age of 93. It is far from certain at this point in time, whether he will be willing and able to stop the one-sidedness of Malaysian politics and avoid using ethnicities and religion as trump cards in the political game (which stirs up insecurity and gains voters).

If his first tenure is anything to go by, Christians and others cannot expect any such changes. The good thing is that the government will be busy focusing on the economy and budget issues. If, however, the government fails to deliver on their promises and fails to bring voters relief from the rising costs of living, it is quite possible that the opposition (UMNO and Islamist PAS) will win back power, despite all previous corruption scandals.

The new government faces challenges on multiple fronts and its biggest task is to fulfil economic expectations despite a restricted budget. As the new government has called into its ranks more non-Muslims (including Christians) than ever before, they could be used as scapegoats if times get tough. UMNO and PAS, now both in opposition, are already decrying everything they perceive as a threat to Islam or the predominant position of Malays. Finally, it remains to be seen if, when and how smoothly the transition of power from Dr M to Anwar Ibrahim will take place and in which direction the new government will be steered.

2018 will always be remembered as the year when the electorate discovered its power in Malaysia. However, there are at least two reasons why little is likely to change for the Christian minority with the new government in power: First, although Mahathir refers to the radical PAS politicians (who strived to introduce Sharia law in Kelantan State) as 'Taliban' and opposes them, he himself was responsible in the past for introducing the "affirmative action policy" for Malays and will not change it. Secondly, he has announced he wants to limit Chinese economic influence, which is likely to affect the Christian population as well.

2) Due to the prime minister's age, power has to be transferred soon

Country observers do not just see problems in the opposition ranks. All current positive signs and developments in the ruling coalition need to be viewed with a critical eye too. Malaysia does indeed have a historic chance to re-build the country and make it a truly inclusive society to the benefit of all citizens, no matter what ethnic or religious minorities or majorities they belong to. However, the probable new prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, who made a re-appearance on the political stage by winning by-elections in a landslide vote in October 2018 (after leaving prison only in Spring 2018), is a politician with many facets. This has led observers to ask "[Is he for real?](#)". When he was previously an important minister, Ibrahim encouraged actions against all kinds of minorities and always backed the "affirmative action policy". Thus the wave of optimism and hopes for change in the wake of the May 2018 election results may turn out to be premature. If the current prime minister has any doubt about his successor-in-waiting, the transition may not be as smooth as expected. It should also not be forgotten that Islamic conservative PAS rules in several states and has not really been weakened. Christians and other minorities thus seem set to face a volatile future.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15356257>. - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15356257>
- Recent history: several by-elections - <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/malaysias-semenyih-by-election-what-next-for-race-based-politics/#.XSVAEEI7nIV>

- Political and legal landscape: court proceedings started - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/04/03/historic-najib-trial-starts-now-high-court-judge-rules/1739360>
- Political and legal landscape: enter defense - <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/malaysian-ex-pm-najib-ordered-to-enter-defense-in-1mdb-case/>
- Political and legal landscape: "fake news law" - <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2018/08/malaysia-repeals-controversial-short-lived-fake-news-law/#BYjYQ1rJ3K1IjVf.97>
- Political and legal landscape: majority - <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2019/04/477778/pm-malaysia-will-repeal-anti-fake-news-act>
- Political and legal landscape: repealing - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/malaysia-1mdb-10092019175549.html>
- Political and legal landscape: political alliance - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-politics-islam/in-push-for-race-and-religion-malaysian-opposition-formalizes-pact-idUSKBN1VZ07W>
- Political and legal landscape: demonstration - <https://www.malaymail.com/s/1701436/unexpected-winners-and-losers-of-anti-icerd-rally>
- Political and legal landscape: special protection of Malay privileges - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/malaysia-race-12032018172219.html>
- Political and legal landscape: less about ICERD - <https://www.newmandala.org/himpunan-812-and-a-new-rivalry-in-malay-politics/>
- Political and legal landscape: in the hands of the Christian DAP' - <https://www.malaymail.com/s/1651529/claiming-christian-dap-in-control-of-dr-m-umno-man-plans-parliament-protest>
- Political and legal landscape: promoting unity - <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/new-malaysia-four-key-challenges-near-term>
- Political and legal landscape: much needed - <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/rising-challenges-ahead-for-malaysias-new-government/>
- Political and legal landscape: female CJ - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysia-appoints-woman-as-countrys-top-judge/85106>
- Political and legal landscape: Islamic bureaucracy - <https://www.newmandala.org/a-clamour-for-islamic-reform-in-malaysia-but-in-which-direction-under-a-divine-bureaucracy/>
- Political and legal landscape: consent of both parents - https://apnews.com/e092a86857ed4cde8981ac8de183b5ee?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=7c8450d18d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-7c8450d18d-399904105

- Political and legal landscape: special department - <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysias-agc-sets-up-unit-to-address-syariah-law-issues>
- Religious landscape: Christianization - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysias-church-leaders-warn-of-rising-religious-tensions/86136>
- Economic landscape: transferred - <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/03/us-malaysia-1mdb-idUSKCN0PD07S20150703?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>
- Economic landscape: sacking - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/asia/malaysian-pm-axes-deputy-attorney-general-amid-fund-scandal.html>
- Economic landscape: 273 million USD - <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2018/06/malaysian-police-seize-273-million-in-goods-from-former-pm-najibs-properties/#6Ovaq1FsmeEYE3DH.97>
- Economic landscape: potentially ban - <https://www.aseantoday.com/2018/03/the-eus-war-on-palm-oil/>
- Social and cultural landscape: recent dispute - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/Malaysia-poverty-08232019174656.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: second-highest GINI coefficient - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=Z4>
- Technological landscape: "partly free" - <https://www.freedomthenet.org/country/malaysia/freedom-on-the-net/2019>
- Trends analysis: "Is he for real?" - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/anwar-ibrahim-is-he-for-real/83670>

WWL 2020: Church information / Malaysia

Christian origins

Nestorians and Persian traders introduced Christianity to the Malacca islands in the 7th century but Christianity only began to spread with the arrival of Portuguese Catholic missionaries in 1511. The British took over Malacca in 1795 and the London Missionary Society was based there from 1815 onwards. Churches were established mainly to serve British expatriates. By silent agreement between the British authorities and the ruling sultan, missionary work among Muslims was not allowed. Hence, mission work concentrated on animistic tribes. Due to a change in policy by the government, most missionaries had to leave the country by the late 1970s, but the Church continued to grow - especially in East Malaysia.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Malaysia	Christians	%
Orthodox	4,500	0.2
Catholic	1,484,000	50.3
Protestant	1,141,000	38.7
Independent	232,000	7.9
Unaffiliated	90,100	3.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-440	0.0
Total	2,951,160	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	618,000	20.9
Renewalist movement	632,000	21.4

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 / Malaysia

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 62 points, Malaysia ranked 40 in WWL 2020.

In WWL 2019, the country scored 60 points, ranking 42. WWL 2019's drop of 5 points compared to WWL 2018 reflected the surprising result of the political elections in 2018. Scores dropped most significantly in the pressure experienced in the *National* and *Church spheres of life*, but also for violence. Especially minorities, like Christians, Hindus and Buddhists put hope into the new government, however, the government had to backpaddle on many of its initiatives and retained the affirmative action policy towards Muslim Malay.

These partly disappointed hopes are reflected in the increase of two points in the WWL 2020. Christians and other minorities are especially disappointed and still feel insecure ever since three Christian workers (and a Muslim social activist) went missing without any trace in November 2016 and February 2017, despite all government investigations. Additionally, laws are changed quicker than mindsets, so any real change for Christians in society will only be seen slowly, if at all. The already existing rift between East and West Malaysia has been deepened, especially in the case of Sarawak State, which still holds a relative Christian majority.

Persecution engines

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

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

Islamic oppression (Strong):

Malaysia carries the image of probably being the world's best role model for a liberal and tolerant Islamic country. However, this image has been fading over the last years. One example of this can be seen in the government's continued effort to introduce Sharia penal law (*hudud*) in the State of Kelantan. Once more, the conservative Muslim PAS party in power in the state of Kelantan immediately called for Sharia penal law after the elections in May 2018.

According to the Constitution, Sharia law is not on an equal footing with civil law, but in practice this regulation is not in force anymore. This can especially be seen in cases of divorce and custody: Civil courts frequently decide in favor of the child’s non-Muslim mother, which is why fathers sometimes decide to convert to Islam. The claim for custody can then be brought before Sharia courts, who will grant custody to the Muslim father. The police prefer to implement the latter’s decisions as this causes less trouble for them.

The ban on using the standard vocabulary "Allah" for God in Bahasa Malay, implemented against a Catholic newspaper, which was sanctioned by the High Court in January 2015, is being followed by more court cases, e.g. in the state of Sabah. This case is still pending as the [question of access](#) to government documents has to be decided first.

[Slurs](#) for religious reasons are still common. In the 2018 election campaign a Christian politician was accused of having a "purely missionary agenda". Another sign that society is becoming increasingly Islamic and sensitive can be seen by how many shops decided [not to show pictures of dogs](#) in decorations celebrating the Chinese New Year. According to the Chinese calendar, in February 2018 the Year of the Dog started.

Dictatorial paranoia (Weak):

While *Dictatorial paranoia* is certainly only a subsidiary Persecution engine in Malaysia, it is still relevant for understanding the country’s situation. This was definitely true as long as the Barisan Nasional coalition governed the country prior to elections in 2018. This coalition was comprised of a Muslim party in alliance with smaller Chinese and Indian parties and for years had never had to face opposition parties. So the UMNO re-emphasized its policy of preferential treatment for Malay people (instead of following a policy of equality) and increasingly played religious and racial cards in an attempt to stay in power. However, this Persecution engine may well continue as Prime Minister Mahathir was originally responsible for developing the whole idea of preferential treatment. If his current policies do not give the results voters want to see quickly enough, *Dictatorial paranoia* may have a revival, especially after UMNO and PAS, both parties advocating for Malay Muslim dominance and preferential treatment, announced their cooperation. Therefore, this engine is still mentioned.

Drivers of persecution

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

Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- **Non-Christian religious and ethnic group leaders (Strong):** Various Muslim NGOs see themselves as “champions of Islam” and had the support of the former government. At times they stir up racial disharmony and religious discrimination with their statements and actions. They keep reminding citizens that being a Malay means being a Muslim and sometimes warn against alleged Christian mission and conversion efforts.
- **Extended family (Strong):** For converts, family members continue to be the strongest drivers of persecution, as leaving their original faith is seen as a disgrace, putting them outside the ethnic and religious community. Social pressure on the family to bring the convert back into the fold is also high.
- **Government officials (Medium):** The Constitution prohibits Malays from converting to other religions and limits the propagation of non-Muslim religions. Government officials hence strive to maintain and increase Islamic standards, to the detriment of non-Muslim minorities. The new government has not brought any change in terms of more equality for religious and ethnic minorities yet.
- **Political parties (Medium):** Political parties like UMNO and PAS uphold and protect Islam. It was PAS, for example, who proposed the introduction of Hudud Law in Kelantan. Those parties are sowing discord and hatred against Christians. UMNO and PAS are using religion to rally support from the Malays, even more so now from the opposition benches. It remains to be seen what their joining forces against the ruling Pakatan Harapan government will mean for Christians and other religious minorities. It could be that this category (Political parties) become stronger drivers of persecution in the future.
- **Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** Most pressure groups focus on preserving the ethnic dominance of the Malay people. But in the WWL 2020 reporting period, an Islamic group named ISMA was very active in calling in the protection of Islam as well. Two examples: i) It called for action against a stamp series issued by the Malaysian Post, featuring houses of worship, among them a historic church building in Penang; ii) It has been warning against an agenda of Christianization being undertaken by the Christian minority (see "National sphere").

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Government officials (Medium):** The Islamist Party PAS holds a majority in two states in Malaysia and although the federal administration serves a new government now, this does not mean that the officials change their thinking quickly. This is especially true for the administration of religious affairs.

- **Political parties (Medium):** What has been stated above for drivers of *Islamic oppression* is applicable here as well.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

There are no hotspots of persecution for Christians in Malaysia. However, the Islamic missionary work among Christians ("dawah") - especially among the Bumiputra - focuses on East Malaysia. Helped by the number of migrating Muslims, the religious affiliation in Sabah State already ceased to be Christian-majority several years ago.

Christian communities and how they are affected

To better understand Christianity in Malaysia, an additional explanation is required at this point. For Malaysia, it can be helpful to make distinctions according to geographical distribution and origin. The majority of Christians come from a *Bumiputra* background, which literally translated reads "sons of the soil", meaning that they belong to the country and come from the indigenous tribal population. From the government's perspective, they qualify for "affirmative action" benefits such as subsidized housing, scholarships etc., but in practice this only applies as long as the *Bumiputra* are not Christians. If they become Christians, their privileges are quickly withdrawn. *Non-Bumiputra* Christians come mainly from the Chinese and Indian ethnic minorities and are divided up into a plethora of different Christian denominations, ranging in size from small house-churches to mega-churches.

Finally, the geographical distribution is important as well. Most *Bumiputra* Christians are living in the states of Sabah and Sarawak; the latter still has a Christian majority. These states make up East Malaysia and are situated on the island of Borneo (which is shared with Brunei and Indonesia). To complicate the situation, many *Bumiputra* are migrating to West Malaysia for educational or economic reasons where it is especially hard for them to stay true to their Christian faith. Converts from a Muslim-Malay background complete the picture of the Malaysian church. These Christians face a high level of persecution as they not only leave their faith, but this decision is seen as acting against their very ethnicity and nation as well.

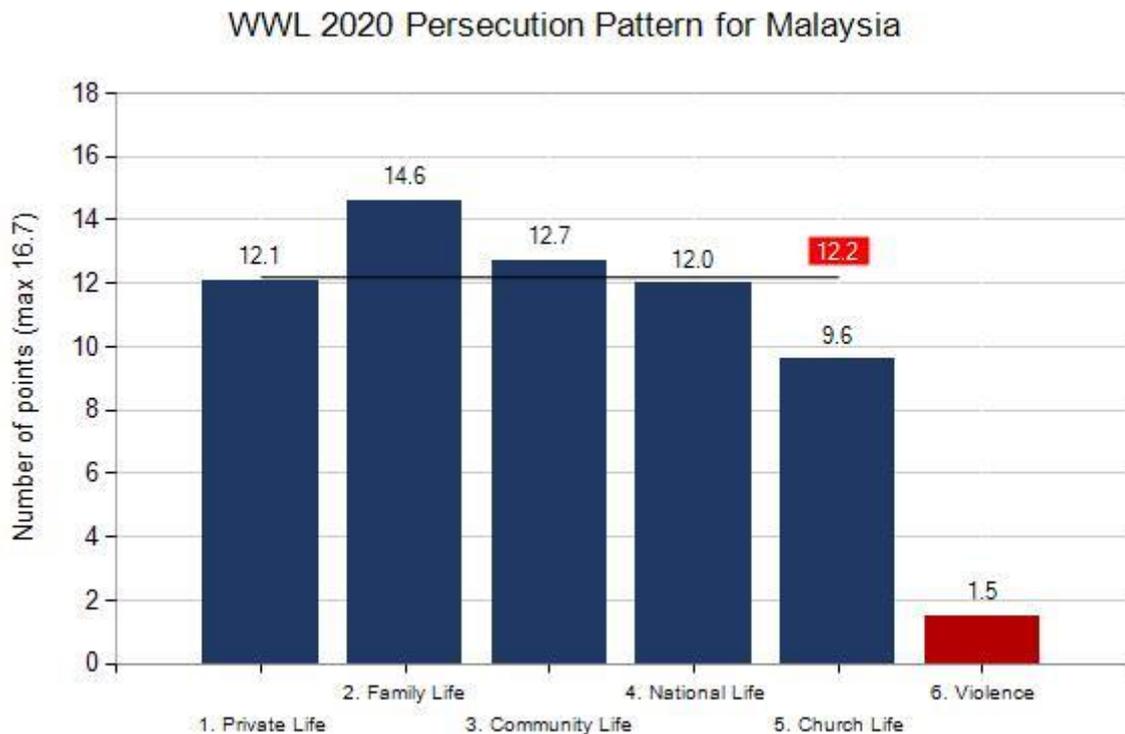
Communities of expatriate Christians: There are many nationalities who have their own Christian fellowships and are self-supporting. They struggle to obtain legal status at times, but are basically free to live their faith as long as they stay within their walls. Nepali and Vietnamese Christians in most cases join the Historical Christian communities.

Historical Christian communities: Examples are the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist or Lutheran churches and the Protestant Church in Sabah. These are less affected by persecution than Non-traditional Christian communities or converts, but they do suffer from discrimination.

Converts to Christianity: Christian converts from a Muslim background suffer most persecution, namely from family, friends, neighbors and the authorities.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Examples are Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal congregations, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, Sabah Injil Borneo and others. They often face monitoring, discrimination, intimidation and harassment.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Malaysia shows:

- Overall, the pressure on Christians in Malaysia increased in all *spheres of life*, causing the average pressure to rise from 11.7 in WWL 2019 to 12.2 in WWL 2020.
- Pressure is extreme and strongest in the *Family sphere of life*, and is at a very high level in the *Community, Private and National spheres of life*. The pressure in the *Family, Community and Private spheres* points to problems faced by converts from Islam and other religions, driven as well by the country's Islamization policy. Pressure resulting from the persecution engine *Islamic oppression* is present in all spheres. Conservative Islamic groups and parties continue to be strong in Malaysia.
- The score for violence against Christians remained at the same level as in WWL 2019 (1.5 points). Apart from the abduction of certain Christians in recent years, persecution has rarely been violent in Malaysia. Pastor Joshua Hilmy and his wife Ruth have been [missing](#) for more than two years now, after they disappeared from their home in the state of Selangor. Pastor Raymond Koh was abducted while driving on a busy road in Petaling Jaya and is missing since February 2017. His whereabouts are still unknown and according to the findings of the country's human rights commission, the Special Branch of the police was involved in the abduction.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Private sphere:

- **Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable (Block 1.1 / Score: 3.5 points):** By law, Malay Muslims are not allowed to convert from Islam in any state except Sarawak. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) wants the penalty for apostasy to be death, but so far was not successful in its efforts. There has been a court case on apostasy in Sarawak in February 2018, which left Christians and converts disappointed. The court ruled that apostasy cases cannot be heard in the civil courts, but only in the Sharia courts.
- **It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (Block 1.4 / Score: 3.5 points):** There are repercussions if a convert reveals his/her faith in a blog or on Facebook. The family is usually the first to act by cutting all family ties. Sometimes religious officials take the convert away to rehabilitate them.
- **It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score 3.5 points):** Since Muslims who convert to Christianity are considered apostates, it is very risky for them to reveal their faith, as they will be punished or can be sent to an Islamic purification center where they are pressured into returning to Islam. Converts have been known to disappear from one day to the next with no-one knowing their whereabouts. There is even a guideline from the Fatwa Department, according to which Christmas trees and other decorations that have come to symbolize Christmas celebrations around the world should not be used if a Muslim plans to attend a Christmas event. It also forbids Muslims from attending Christmas functions that have religious songs or the use of the cross, or "speech or gestures in the form of a praise to the non-Muslim religion". However, it is not clear which consequences it would have to ignore this.
- **It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (Block 1.8 / Score: 3.5 points):** As no Malay is allowed to convert from Islam, discussions about faith are always fraught with the risk of being seen as proselytizing. It is also possible that Christians - or even atheists - are accused of "insulting Islam" because of such a topic. For converts, discussions about faith come naturally at a much higher risk, as they can lead to one's conversion being discovered.

Malay converts cannot attend any public church activities. If they do so, they risk being caught by the authorities and the church attended will face serious consequences for welcoming them. Therefore, converts gather secretly in homes for all their Christian activities, away from the prying eyes of government, community and the registered churches. Consequently, they have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian materials have to be hidden carefully and can only be used with much caution as devout Muslim families will not tolerate it.

Family sphere:

- ***Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2.8 / Score: 4 points):*** It is very common for state high schools to teach compulsory subjects such as 'Tamadun Islam' or Islam Civilization, 'Sejarah Islam' or History of Islam, 'Sastera Melayu' or Malay Literature. Non-Muslims children must take these subjects as they are compulsory. It is also common for children of the indigenous tribes in Malaysia (Orang Asli) to be pressured into attending religious/Arabic classes. Plans to make [Malay-Arabic calligraphy courses](#) called "khat" - and thus the writing of Koran verses - mandatory in all schools created unrest in minority communities. After an outcry, it was made optional.
- ***Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites (Block 2.5 / Score: 3.75 points):*** As the registration department also issues death certificates, burials are a problem for converts. If records show that the person who died is registered as Muslim, the authorities will inform the Islamic religious authority. If the burial rites are not celebrated according to Islam, this Islamic authority has the right to take the body away from the non-Muslim family so that they can perform Islamic rites for the deceased.
- ***Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2.9 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Children of converts have to attend Islamic education in schools and there are reports that Christian children are put under pressure to convert to Islam. Sometimes, parents who have converted to Christianity have to take their children out of school as they may unintentionally talk about their parents' faith. Children of Christians are frequently harassed and discriminated against because of their parents' faith.
- ***Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases (Block 2.12 / Score: 3.75 points):*** According to law, children born to couples with one Muslim parent (either by birth or conversion), are automatically registered as Muslims. There have been many cases like this in Sabah for indigenous Christians. As *Bumiputras*, most of them have the word 'bin' or 'binti' in their names which leads the officers to believe they are Muslims and put 'Islam' as their religion in the MyKads (Identity card). This has been one of the main problems *Bumiputra* Christians have been facing but some of them do not attempt to 'fight' over it as the process is long and arduous and there have been very few successful results. Every Malaysian has an identity card and one's religion is recorded on this card by the Federal Registration Department. Once a citizen is registered as a Muslim, this can only be changed after long court proceedings - [with no high likelihood of success](#). In a landmark ruling in January 2018, the Federal Court declared that the [consent of both parents](#) was needed to convert a minor's faith, thus the unilateral child conversion is no longer allowed (Indira Gandhi case). This decision was reiterated in October 2018 in a [further case](#), adding pressure on the new government to close existing legal loopholes despite pressure by radical Islamic groups and parties. However, there are efforts at regional level to [supersede this court decision](#), e.g. in the State of Selangor.

Malaysia seems to be the only country in the world where religious conversion changes ethnicity as well. There are reported cases where children of converted natives suddenly 'professed' to be Muslim Malays when their real ethnicity was Iban. When asked why, they answered, "Because our (Muslim) teachers told us so!" Some Christians from indigenous tribes, especially in Sabah, are converted to Islam by trickery. To accept financial help from the government, some of them handed in their identity card and signed a form not knowing that this was a declaration to convert to Islam. When they got their card back, they realized that their religion has been changed to Islam. When they tried to reverse this, they were told by the Federal Registration Department that their religious status can only be changed if approval is given by the Sharia courts, which is impossible to obtain.

Christians with a Muslim background can also be forced to divorce (if married) and lose their inheritance rights, once discovered. Organizing a baptism, Christian wedding or funeral can become difficult or even impossible. Converts can be kept isolated by their families, or expelled from the family home, or even sent to Islamic purification (i.e. re-education) camps, although this rarely happens.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (Block 3.12 / Score: 4 points):** One part of Malaysia's "affirmative action policy" is that ethnic Malays get a 10% price reduction when they buy property while others need to pay the full price. This can be regarded as an indirect *jizya* tax, as far as Chinese and Indian Christians are considered, as they do not qualify for such benefits. Muslims are also exempt from certain taxes because they pay the *zakat* and a reduced income tax, while others pay the full income tax.
- **Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3.10 / Score: 3.75 points):** There has always been discrimination against non-Malays and preference for Malays in public employment, but the new government has raised hopes of possible change by calling some Christians into higher positions of state by merit, despite fierce opposition from the Islamic-Malay parties and organizations. Examples for this approach were the call of non-Malay and non-Muslims to serve as minister for justice, attorney-general and chief justice. This has led to accusations that the Muslim cause is lost and Malaysia will now be "Christianized". As for private businesses (for example owned by Chinese Christians), to get government contracts it is required by law that the owners must have *Bumiputra* partners. To get round this, some companies are known to have 'Bumiputra partners' on paper only.
- **Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (Block 3.1 / Score: 3.5 points):** Christians in Malaysia are often harassed and threatened for faith-related reasons. The discrimination often takes places because of dress codes. In states like Kelantan, ruled by the PAS, there have been raids focusing on the proper Islamic dress for women. This is putting pressure on Christians as well.

- **Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (Block 3.9 / Score: 3.5 points):** For non-Malay students, access to several universities is limited. In a news article in February 2018, only one student from UiTM (a government university reserved for *Bumiputras*) openly supported the idea of opening the universities to non-*Bumiputras* during a forum. He expressed the opinion that non-*Bumiputras* also had a right to education, but was met with angry and racist remarks from his classmates. The head of the class even said: "Do you think that if UiTM opens its doors for the non-*Bumiputras*, you would be here? If the Indians and Chinese get into UiTM, you guys will never be able to finish your studies". For qualifying for higher education and scholarships, Christians need to overcome far higher hurdles than Muslims due to the "affirmative action policy" in favor of Malays.

Christians are monitored by state authorities as well as by local Muslim communities and Malay Islamic rights groups (e.g. Perkasa and ISMA). In remote areas in Sabah and Sarawak, Malay communities have access to water and electricity, but some known Christian native communities are denied such access. Converts face strong pressure from family, friends and neighbors to recant their Christian faith.

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: 3.75 points):** The Constitution defines ethnic Malays as Muslims. That is why Malays do not have the religious liberty to leave Islam and embrace another religion. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, the Federal Court ruled that jurisdiction on the validity of a conversion lies with the Sharia and not the civil courts, leaving converts effectively without legal representation for the time-being. The Constitution also prohibits adherents of other religions from propagating their religion among Malay Muslims. Yet it allows Muslims to propagate Islam all over the country. Furthermore, Sharia law is in place in conjunction with civil law, and the proposed *hudud*-bill which plans to allow Islamic corporal punishment in the state of Kelantan is still pending in parliament at the time of writing.
- **Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons (Block 4.5 / Score: 3.75 points):** Religion is part of every sphere of life in Malaysia. Discrimination against Christians (and all non-Malay and non-Muslims) takes place at all levels of society, including local administration and government. The authorities give special treatment to Malays and, for example, non-Malay owned companies are required to have at least one Malay as board member.
- **Christians have been subject to smear campaigns or hate speech (Block 4.11 / Score: 3.5 points):** On websites run by Malay Islamic rights groups and in government-owned media, Christians are frequently slandered, for example by spreading rumors that Christians and Jews want to take over Malaysia. "Christian missionaries" are accused of stirring up social unrest and prominent Christian politician Hannah Yeoh has been publicly accused of crusading for Christianity in the 2018 election campaign. She was elected nevertheless and serves now as a deputy minister.

Former Federal Territories Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor urged churches not to speak untruths in their sermons. He has also claimed that Christians practice a "caste" system, where the clergy is regarded as sacred. A member of the opposition even claimed that Prime Minister Mohamed Mahathir is '[in the hands of the Christian DAP](#)'. Islamic NGO ISMA similarly [claimed](#) at a convention in August 2019 that Christian evangelistic activities threaten the Umma, the Muslim majority, and that the "Christian Federation of Malaysia" - a Christian umbrella organization - has an agenda to place as many Christians in leadership roles as possible.

- **Officials at any level have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identity cards, etc. (Block 4.2 / Score: 3.5 points):** Officials refuse to recognize an individual's right to convert, especially for Muslims, be they Malay or non-Malay. Muslims desiring to renounce Islam have to go through a long and painful legal process, and are often charged with apostasy. The authorities provide financial aid to those who want to convert to Islam. It is virtually impossible for ethnic Malays to legally convert to Christian faith, since even the Constitution stands against it. A citizen's religious status is stated in the identification card and it is an uphill battle to have it removed should someone wish to leave Islam. As a result, many *Bumiputra* are wrongly categorized as Muslims in their ID cards.

The country's harsh sedition laws have drawn much condemnation from international observers. Although the law bans any action, speech or publication that brings contempt against the government or Malaysia's nine royal sultans and prohibits people from inciting hatred between different races and religions, it is used one-sidedly. Those who instigate hatred and stoke racial and religious sentiments against Christians are never charged for sedition. Questioning the special position of the ethnic Malay majority and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak falls under sedition as well. Those who have spoken out against the government have mostly had to face sedition charges too. The new government tried to lift the sedition laws, but was stopped by the opposition which still holds a majority in the second chamber of parliament. It is, however, likely that the new government will not implement the law strictly. Indigenous people face aggressive, deliberate attempts to convert them to Islam, especially those who migrate to West Malaysia as it is easy to take advantage of their social uprooting and their economic vulnerability. In the long term, the Christian population may shrink because of this, especially in East Malaysia.

Church sphere:

- **Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts (Block 5.7 / Score: 4 points):** Most churches - even the large and well-established ones - are very cautious when it comes to welcoming converts. It is very risky for churches to integrate Malay converts and they meet in secret, separately from other Christian groups. For security reasons, churches cannot openly integrate Malay converts as they will run into trouble with the authorities. At times, churches have even turned away converts and sometimes even reported them to the authorities, as they did not want to get into trouble. The risk of converts being caught going to church is much higher in West Malaysia.

- **Pastors or other Christian leaders, or their family members, have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons (Block 5.11 / Score: 3.5 points):** Pastors and church leaders have been natural targets for hostility from religion-based or ethnic groups, especially when they or their church have been perceived as engaging in acts of evangelism. The abduction of Pastor Raymond Koh in broad daylight in February 2017 sent shockwaves through the Christian community and leadership which are still felt today. It is particularly unnerving that his whereabouts are still unknown, the perpetrators have not been found (let alone punished), and that findings point to the involvement of the Special Branch of the police.
- **Churches, Christian organizations, institutions or groups have been prevented from using mass media to present their faith (Block 5.16 / Score: 3.5 points):** Malaysia has a Christian radio station but, apart from that, churches refrain from using mass media for a variety of reasons, including the risk of being accused of unethical conversion.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 3.25 points):** Churches are free to organize camps and other outside activities. However, evangelistic and interfaith meetings needing the use of public properties like stadiums and halls require a permit to be obtained from the authorities. Meetings like these are monitored but there have been no incidences of deliberate hindrance. However, this is definitely not the case for converts who must do everything away from prying eyes.

Most non-traditional Christian communities are not registered as churches but operate as organizations or community centers, buying shop or factory premises to operate from. Whilst most churches are monitored, they do not face restrictions regarding their meetings. As the US State Department's IRF report for 2018 stated on page 13: "In December, Minister for Housing and Local Government Zuraida Kamaruddin said the government was preparing to register all existing houses of worship and their location. According to The Straits Times, the minister said houses of worship located on land not belonging to them would have to move. The ministry was drafting regulations to make it compulsory for all proposed houses of worship to acquire government approval before building."

All printing of Christian materials requires permission from the government. Restrictions are imposed on importing Bahasa Malaysia materials and the Bible and Christian Malay books from Indonesia are banned. In 2015, the government issued a SOP (standard operating procedure) according to which [all imported Christian publications](#) (including the Malay Bible) are to be controlled by the Quranic Division of the Home Ministry. Despite objections from church leaders, the government went ahead with its implementation. Moreover, the use of the word "Allah" for God is practically banned for Christians, after the High Court banned the Christian usage of the term "Allah" for God, implemented against a Catholic newspaper (notwithstanding the fact that this term has been used for hundreds of years in Bibles and other Christian publications and is used in the Bahasa Indonesia Bible without any problem). A proposal made during the Jill Ireland case in November 2017 requested that the country's (Islamic) language institute issue a [new Bible translation](#) without the word "Allah". It also revealed the Islamic authorities mindset when they proposed getting the state authorities to do the translation of the Bible - instead of Christians. Another "Allah" case, brought by the Sabah church, is still pending before the courts and saw its [sixth deferral](#) in August 2019.

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.

Malaysia	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	0	3	14	0	0
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	3	0	2	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	6	2	3	0

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

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

- **Christians attacked:** Pastor Raymond Koh and Pastor Joshua Hilmy and his wife Ruth are still missing after their abduction in February 2017 and November 2016 respectively. Given the length of time since they were last seen, the chances that they are still alive are slim.
- **Christians arrested:** Besides some Malaysian Christians being detained, five Nigerian nationals and [four Finnish nationals](#) were arrested for distributing Christian material containing the word "Allah" (which is illegal according to Malaysian law) to Malay people.

5 Year trends

The five year trend for Malaysia shows an unstable situation.

Chart 1:

The score for average pressure on Christians has remained within the range 11.7 and 12.3 points for the last four reporting periods, considerably higher than it was in WWL 2016. Despite the new government, changes in the situation for Christians and other religious minorities in Malaysia are slow and have not yet focused on the most important topics.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Malaysia	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	12.2
2019	11.7
2018	12.3
2017	11.7
2016	11.1

Chart 2:

The level of pressure in *Church life* decreased in the first four reporting periods (reflecting an increasing boldness in church activity more than any changes occurring due to government or society), but bounced back with a rise in the WWL 2020 reporting period. The levels of pressure in all spheres (except *Private* and *Church life*) are at a higher level in WWL 2020 than in WWL 2016.

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

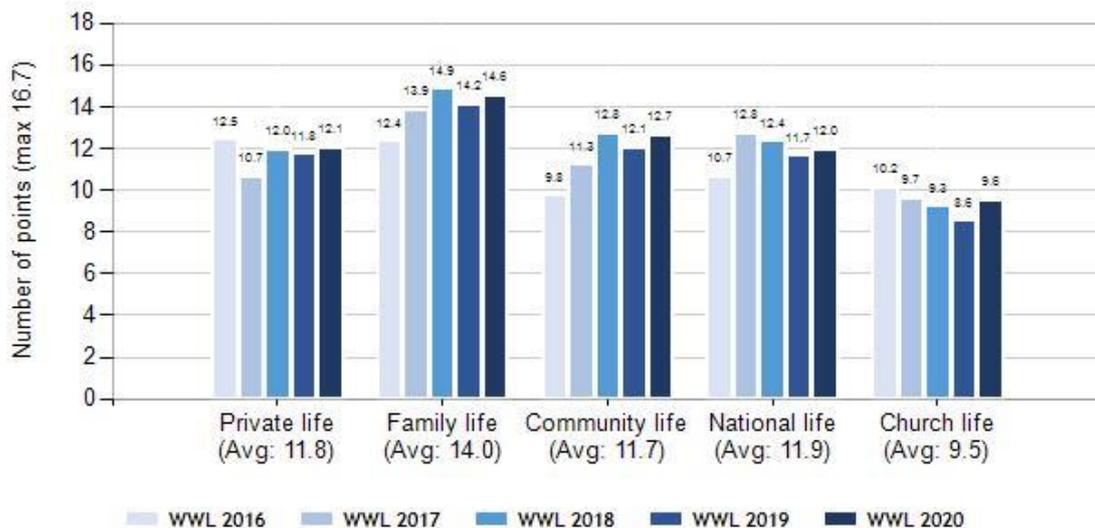
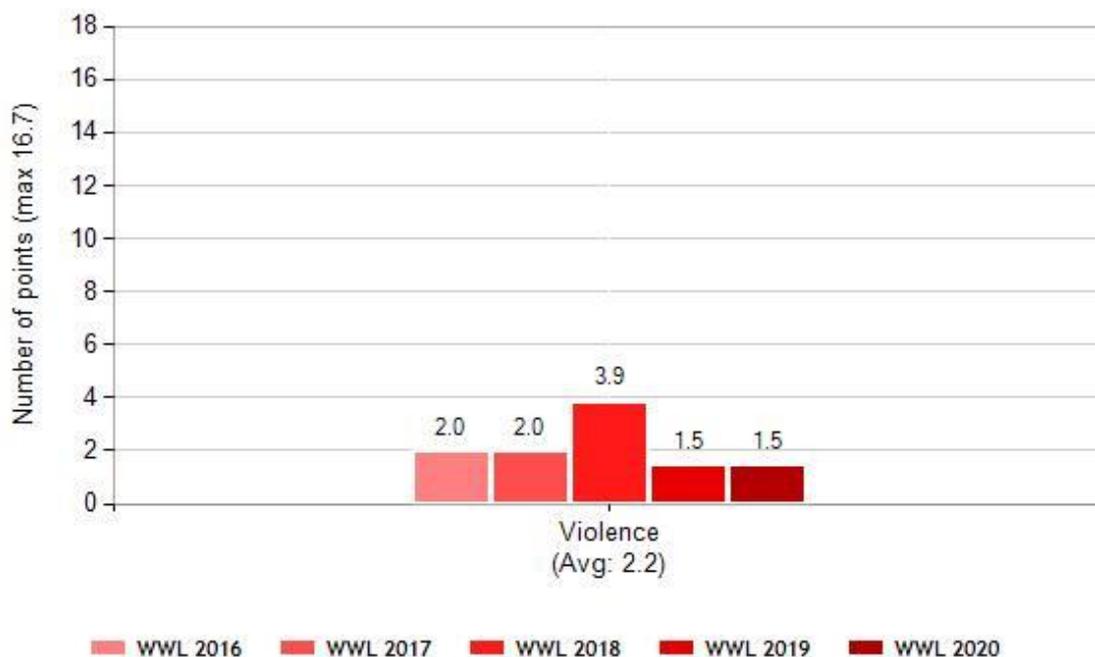


Chart 3:

After a spike in violence in WWL 2018, due to the (still unsolved) abduction of three Christians, the violence score returned back to its "normal" lower level.

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



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Enforced dress code***
- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Violence – psychological***
- ***Violence – sexual***

In Malaysia, the legal rights of women and girls are undermined by provisions that make exceptions for Sharia law. Civil society organizations stated in a February 2018 [CEDAW](#) report that "Muslim women now enjoy far less rights in marriage, divorce, guardianship of their children and inheritance than their non-Muslim counterparts." The report also stated: "Other areas of gross discrimination against women under the Islamic Family Laws include divorce, polygamy and child marriage."

These laws open avenues of vulnerability for females converting from Islam to Christianity, the most prevalent being the threat of rape and/or forced marriage to a Muslim. Since the minimum legal age for marriage in the Islamic family laws (16 for female) can be lowered with the consent of a Sharia judge, it is possible for girls to be married. This law can make girls who convert to Christianity much more vulnerable. The federal government tried to act against child marriages, but encountered the embittered resistance of conservative Muslim federal states. In some cases, young Christian women are abducted, never to be heard of again.

This is an effective tactic because once Christian women are registered as Muslims, there is no mechanism for reversing this, even in the event of divorce. Additionally, all children born as a result of the so-called “marriage” are also legally considered Muslim.

A small number of converts are thought to have fled or gone into hiding in order to avoid this kind of religiously motivated family retribution.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***
- ***Violence – verbal***

Despite the abolishment of the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA) in 2012, anyone who is suspected of violating internal security runs the risk of being interrogated, regardless of race or religion. This risk is high for Christians due to the latent fear that Christians are on a mission to “Christianize Malaysia”, a claim repeated by interested circles time and time again. This risk of interrogation affects men more than women, as women are not usually seen as leaders in Malaysian society. The persecution typically impacting Christian men comes in the form of bullying at the hands of vigilante justice or monitoring by religious authorities.

Persecution of other religious minorities

The Muslim minority of Shiites is severely persecuted in Malaysia, as was illustrated by the [abduction](#) of one of their activists in April 2017. The [denunciation](#) of Shiites by the religious authorities of the State of Selangor in September 2019 shows that they continue to be seen as a threat.

Hindus, adherents of traditional Chinese religions and Buddhists are also affected by the government’s preferential treatment of ethnic Malays. The Hindu minority saw an attack against one of its temples. The US State Department’s IRF report for 2018 summed up the attack (on page 16) as follows: "On November 26, violence broke out near Sri Maha Mariamman Hindu temple in Subang Jaya, Selangor, after as many as 200 masked individuals, who temple devotees said were hired by a real estate developer claiming ownership of the land, entered the temple and attempted to forcibly remove devotees. According to The Straits Times, at least a dozen individuals were injured and 20 vehicles torched. A fireman later died from injuries sustained while responding to the incident. In total 83 individuals were arrested. As video of the event went viral online, speculation of a riot between the two groups emerged, but police and government officials later characterized the matter as a local land dispute and initiated legal action against those responsible." The fireman's death stirred up radical Muslim concern and led to conspiracy theories and an increasingly challenging environment for minorities.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** The ongoing saga of trying to introduce Sharia law in Kelantan State shows that the route UMNO was taking has failed. UMNO was wooing conservative Muslims, bridging the gap to conservative Muslim PAS, and trying to exploit the already big ethnic and religious gap the country is suffering from. Elections in 2018 saw UMNO voted out of power and PAS only making moderate gains. Nevertheless, the [defeat](#) of UMNO does not mean that conservative Islamic parties are out of the picture for good. The field of tension the new government moves in is well illustrated by the following: At the 73rd UN General Assembly in October 2018, the Prime minister made a commitment to “ratify all remaining core UN instruments related to the protection of human rights”. This is the first time that a 'promise' has been made regarding Malaysia's commitment to ratify international human rights conventions and would include, among others, the Convention on Civil and Political Rights. However, conservative Muslim politicians reminded the government of the Federal Constitution's Article 153 which gives preference to one ethnic group (namely the Malay and the *Bumiputra*), adding this could run contrary to Article 2 of the UN convention calling for full and equal rights and freedom.

In a first setback, the government announced on 23 November 2018 that it will [not ratify](#) the International Convention on the Eradication of Racial Discrimination, stating: “The government will continue to defend the Federal Constitution that contains the social contract that has been agreed upon by representatives from all races during the formation of this country.”

A shift towards more rigid and political Islamic practice is taking place with an influx of radical Islamic scholars returning from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Many of these Malay scholars have joined the government as members of the Department of Islamic Advancement of Malaysia to preach in mosques and spread Islam. Islamization of native Christians from Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) is happening at a fast rate. Sarawak still enjoys a greater degree of religious freedom compared to West Malaysia (it is the only place where Islam is not the state religion). But once the population demography tilts towards Islam, more Islamic laws will undoubtedly be set in place. There are reports from remote areas where uneducated indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak are “drugged” or people are made drunk and forced to sign documents, after which they turn out to have become Muslims. If this practice is going to change anytime soon remains to be seen.

A report from [Kelantan](#) in Peninsula Malaysia showed that the indigenous Orang Asli are neither happy with the state-sponsored Islamization (which officially changes their religious affiliation) nor with Christian missionary efforts. The Malaysian Islamic State group (IS) leader in Syria [was killed](#) by a drone attack in April 2017, which is slowing down recruiting efforts by IS. The militant group staged a first attack in Malaysia in June 2016 by detonating a grenade in Selangor, injuring eight. However, there are dozens and maybe hundreds of other suspects with links to IS.

The fact that in neighboring Philippines IS-related groups succeeded in capturing the city of Marawi in May 2017 sent shockwaves through the region and put all security services on high alert. One of the leaders of the insurgency, who was killed in the fighting, was a Malaysian citizen. Malaysia started joint sea-patrols with Indonesia and the Philippines to counter Islamic militant activity in the Sulu Sea, but the threat is growing and more needs to be done. Consequently, the situation in Malaysia will remain volatile, as its main persecution engine *Islamic oppression* remains active, leading to ongoing challenges and threats for the Christian minority.

- ***Dictatorial paranoia:*** Although a partly brand-new coalition of parties took over government in May 2018, there are a lot of old faces around as well. Both Dr M and Anwar Ibrahim have track records with traits which fit well into the definition of *Dictatorial paranoia*. The first signs the government is sending are positive and therefore it can be hoped that the history of clinging to power at all costs is over. However, this will only be seen in the long term. Minorities will watch the new government's announcements and policies closely, particularly their implementation.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: question of access - <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/court-sets-march-29-for-case-management-on-allah-ban-discovery-application#5jRt8joFLyZRAsWt.97>
- Persecution engines: Slurs - <https://www.malaymail.com/s/1636227/hannah-yeoh-judge-me-based-on-my-work-not-my-faith>
- Persecution engines: not to show pictures of dogs - https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/13/asia/malaysia-religion-year-of-the-dog-intl/index.html?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=18f14166f6-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_02_14&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-18f14166f6-399904105
- The Persecution pattern: missing - <http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/missing-persons-04142017152813.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : Malay-Arabic calligraphy courses - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/08/08/in-khat-storm-analysts-see-no-silver-lining-for-pakatan/1778642>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : with no high likelihood of success - <http://www.bpnews.net/51377/erlc-video-malaysian-liberty-burdened-by-id-cards>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : consent of both parents - https://apnews.com/e092a86857ed4cde8981ac8de183b5ee?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=7c8450d18d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-7c8450d18d-399904105
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : further case - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysian-court-bars-unilateral-child-conversions/83650>

- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : supersede this court decision - <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2019/08/14/selangor-unilateral-conversion-law-may-supersede-indira-ruling-say-lawyers/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : in the hands of the Christian DAP' - <https://www.malaymail.com/s/1651529/claiming-christian-dap-in-control-of-dr-m-umno-man-plans-parliament-protest>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : claimed - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/08/25/in-unity-convention-liberalism-christian-evangelism-again-painted-as-threat/1784002>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : all imported Christian publications - <https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/302177>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : new Bible translation - <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/citing-sacred-patrimony-churches-reject-unauthorised-dbp-translation-of-bib>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : sixth deferral - <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2019/08/05/court-defers-ruling-on-sabah-sarawak-christians-using-allah-in-religious-material/>
- Violence: four Finnish nationals - https://www.apnews.com/8b7a6415c38946238b93e2e02ad03ba4?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=daaab559b7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_11_27_02_51&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-daaab559b7-399904105
- Gender profile of persecution: CEDAW - <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: abduction - <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2017/04/malaysia-5th-activist-mysteriously-disappears-calls-mount-police-action/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: denunciation - https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-islam/islamic-authorities-in-malaysian-state-denounce-shiites-in-sermon-idUSKCN1VR1BK?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=d4d7f6ba3d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_09_06_01_41&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-d4d7f6ba3d-399904105
- Future outlook for the church: defeat - <http://www.newmandala.org/struggle-islamisms-new-malaysia/>
- Future outlook for the church: not ratify - <https://www.malaymail.com/s/1696399/malaysia-decides-not-to-ratify-icerd>
- Future outlook for the church: Kelantan - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysias-indigenous-people-protest-forced-conversions/85604>
- Future outlook for the church: was killed - <http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/terror-recruit-08222017160847.html>

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 Malaysia.

World Watch Monitor news articles

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

Recent country developments

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