

# WORLD WATCH LIST 2026

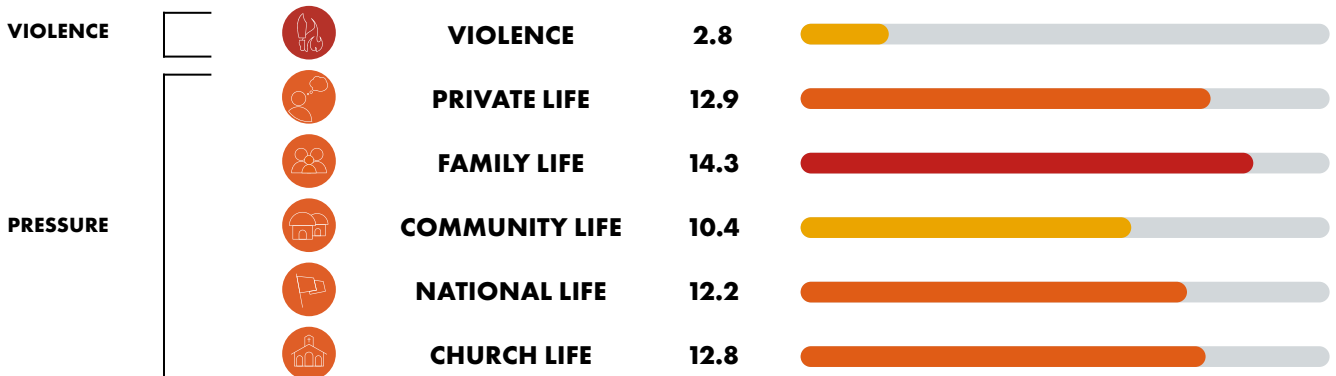
## SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS

### JORDAN

WORLD WATCH LIST NO.  
**49**



#### LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND PRESSURE



Each of the six categories is scored out of a maximum of 16.7 points. The categories added together total 100 points (6 x 16.7 = 100).

### Key findings

Most Christians in Jordan belong to Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches and generally enjoy a relatively high degree of religious freedom, though they face discrimination in employment, government monitoring, and restrictions on public preaching. Christians from a Muslim background risk violence, arrest, or even death if they openly express their faith, while unrecognized churches, especially those that evangelize, may face harassment from authorities. Despite Jordan's reputation for tolerance and interfaith dialogue, radicalized Sunnis, returning jihadists and the country's large Salafi population continue to pose a threat to Christians and other minorities. Additionally, the Gaza conflict has fueled increased Islamic conservatism, support for Hamas, boycotts of international brands, and greater Islamic visibility, leading to more social pressure and some distancing from Christians, even as the government maintains policies promoting religious tolerance.

## Quick facts

### LEADER

King Abdullah II

### POPULATION

11,442,000

### NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

170,000 (Open Doors estimate)

### MAIN RELIGION

Islam

### GOVERNMENT

Authoritarian



## Context

Religious context	Number of adherents	% of adherents in country
Christians	170,000	1.5
Muslims	10,889,000	95.2
Agnostics/Atheists	347,000	3.0
Others	36,000	0.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Source<sup>1</sup>

There are two major political forces at play in Jordan: King Abdullah II with the royal family on the one hand, and the armed forces and secret police on the other. The King has a considerable amount of influence since he appoints governments, approves legislation and has the power to dissolve parliament. While the royal family seems keen on promoting Jordan as a modern, multi-religious country (also underlining the importance of Jordanian Christians in Jordanian society), the secret police remain focused on repressing minority Muslim factions as well as keeping Christians in line. State-recognized Christian communities can live relatively freely if they abstain from proselytization and Christians are well-represented in politics, the army and the economy. However, the state exerts pressure on unrecognized groups and closely monitors their activities, particularly when they engage in evangelism.

Though generally secure, Jordan experienced four Islamist attacks between 2016 and 2019, after which the authorities were accused of using counterterrorism measures to restrict citizens' and

parliament's rights. Jordan hosts large numbers of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria. Several thousand of them are Christians.

According to Middle East Concern's country profile, [Jordan's legal framework](#) is described as follows: "The constitution of Jordan establishes Islam as the State religion. It affirms the principle of non-discrimination, including on the basis of religion, and states that the free exercise of worship and religious rites are to be safeguarded, provided these are consistent with public order and morality. Under applicable Islamic law, Muslims are effectively prohibited from changing their religion and women registered as Muslim are not permitted to marry non-Muslims."

Jordanian Christians increasingly practice self-censorship on social media, to prevent offending the Muslim majority. Online hostility and inciting speech targeting Christians have also risen during the Israel-Hamas conflict, particularly around Christian holidays, partly due to the perceived association between Christianity and the US, which many view as supporting Israel. The September 2024 parliamentary elections, with a turnout of only 36%, brought a historic win for the Islamic Action Front (IAF), reflecting rising Islamic conservatism and Gaza solidarity; however, after an alleged security plot, Jordan banned the Muslim Brotherhood in April 2025, casting uncertainty over the IAF's future amid escalating regional tensions.

<sup>1</sup> Other refers to all the rest to make up 100%: Gina A. Zurlo, ed., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025 – adapted to incorporate OD-estimate

## How the situation varies by region

Christian experiences in Jordan are mostly the same across the country, though social pressure is usually stronger in rural areas. The south is also known for being more conservative and more strongly influenced by Islamic traditions.

## Who is affected?

### COMMUNITIES OF EXPATRIATE CHRISTIANS

This category is not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.

### HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities are the largest categories of Christians. Overall, they enjoy a relatively high level of religious freedom but can experience discrimination, for example, in employment.

### CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY

Christians from a Muslim background face the most severe persecution, including family and community pressure, violence, and official harassment. Children, registered as Muslims, must outwardly practice Islam, including attending Islamic classes, and are especially vulnerable.

### NON-TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Evangelical, Baptist, and Pentecostal Christians, especially those involved in outreach, face significant opposition, including surveillance by intelligence services, government pressure, and employment discrimination. Most non-traditional Christian communities are not recognized as churches but as societies. Attempts to obtain equivalent status as other church denominations have consistently been resisted.



## Main sources of persecution and discrimination

### ISLAMIC OPPRESSION

Converts from Islam to Christianity face the highest levels of pressure and even violence from family and community, including religious and ethnic leaders. All Christians can be subject to government monitoring and are at risk of Jordanians being radicalized by Islamic State (IS) ideology. The government imposes Islamic values and laws on society, although it still promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence with other religions.

### CLAN OPPRESSION

This especially affects Christians with a Muslim background. Jordan's society is largely tribal, especially outside the major cities, and is embedded in Jordanian nationalism. Following the 1967 Arab-Israel war, Jordan experienced a massive influx of Palestinians, Jordan became divided into pure Jordanian "East Bankers" and Palestinian/Jordanian "West Bankers". East Bankers have a social, political, and economic advantage.

### DICTATORIAL PARANOIA

Jordan is considered a hybrid system, blending elements of democracy with authoritarian rule, where the King and intelligence services hold central power. The King publicly supports Christian communities and a moderate, pro-Western stance, but must balance this with rising Islamist influences, especially during economic or regional crises.

### CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONAL PROTECTIONISM

Tension exists between established traditional churches and newer churches, including the charismatic and evangelical movements, who welcome both converts from Islam and members from traditional churches. Historical church leaders, especially Greek Orthodox, have used political influence - especially through the Council of Church Leaders - to block the official recognition of newer denominations, which they often perceive as engaging in "sheep stealing" and being overly influenced by the West.



## How are men and women differently affected?

### WOMEN

Female converts from Islam are the most vulnerable to persecution, with the family typically being the greatest source of pressure. Women risk house arrest, isolation, beatings, sexual harassment, forced marriage and, in extreme cases, may be killed to retain the family “honor.” Female converts cannot officially marry registered Christian men, and face their movements being restricted by the state and by families, for instance to prevent her from leaving the country. Personal status laws facilitate house arrest and forced marriages, while apostasy laws enable annulled marriages and loss of child custody.

#### **Female typical pressure points:**

- Denied access to social community/networks
- Denied custody of children
- Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse
- Enforced religious dress code
- Forced marriage
- Forced out of home – expulsion
- Travel bans/restrictions on movement
- Violence – sexual

### MEN

In Jordan’s predominantly Islamic society, Christian men and boys encounter significant challenges. While some Christians hold senior positions in the workplace, government and military, discrimination persists, particularly against those from a Muslim background. They face limited job progression and financial extortion, causing financial strain for the whole family. Marriage laws make legal marriage impossible between a non-convert Christian man and a Christian woman with a Muslim background. There are further difficulties in an honor-shame culture, where families can attack, reject and expel men from their homes due to their choice of religion. The state pressures men through intelligence services interviews, especially suspected converts and church leaders active in evangelism.

#### **Male typical pressure points:**

- Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse
- Economic harassment via business/job/work access
- Forced out of home – expulsion
- Imprisonment by government
- Violence – physical
- Violence – psychological



## WWL 5 year trend

WWL Year	Position on Open Doors World Watch List	Persecution rounded score out of 100
2026	49	65
2025	50	65
2024	48	65
2023	49	65
2022	39	66

The overall score remained stable at 65 points. Average pressure remained at the very high level of 12,5 points, whereas the violence score rose from 2,4 points to 2,8. There was one killing and several Christian converts were reportedly forced to leave their homes or relocate within Jordan due to threats and pressure from their immediate families and communities, who view their conversion as a source of shame for the family and tribe. There were fewer reports of Christians detained. Most Christians in Jordan belong to Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches, who may at times experience discrimination in employment and restrictions against public preaching. However, an open testimony of faith by a Christian with Muslim background can lead to beatings, arrest and killing. Christians active in evangelism and/or helping converts can face threats and obstruction in daily life too.

## Examples of violence in the reporting period

- **Christians sexually harassed:** Women who do not dress as a Muslim, (i.e., who do not wear a hijab) risk harassment. It is estimated that at least 10 Christian women were sexually harassed for this reason. As a result, many Christian women choose not to use public transport or taxis, especially at night.
- **Christians physically or mentally abused:** Several converts and Christians who are active in aiding and discipling converts have been physically or mentally abused, usually by the families of the converts.



WWL Year	Christians sexually harassed	Christians killed	Churches or Christian buildings attacked or closed	Christians physically or mentally abused
2026	10*	1	0	10*
2025	10*	0	1	10*

*This table includes only a few categories of faith-based violence during the reporting period – for full results see the violence section of the country's corresponding WWL Persecution Dynamics. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10\*, 100\* or 1000\*) is given which in reality could be significantly higher. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000\*, 100,000\* and 1,000,000\*.*



### PRIVATE LIFE

Leaving Islam is not criminalized but prohibited; converts risk referral to Sharia courts, losing legal status and contracts, including marriage. They face monitoring, harassment, exclusion from public sector employment, and social ostracism. Women are particularly vulnerable to house arrest and forced marriages to restore “family honor.” Publicly sharing Christian faith with Muslims can be seen as evangelizing which is forbidden and a threat to national security.

### FAMILY LIFE

Children of converts from Islam, or of a Christian mother and Muslim father, are automatically registered as Muslim, with no possibility of change. They must attend Islamic classes in school. In cases of divorce, those who have left Islam lose custody of any children according to Islamic law.

### COMMUNITY LIFE

Monitoring (including phone calls and social media usage) is especially intense for known converts from Islam or individuals engaged in evangelism. There are cases where Christians have lost jobs or been denied work because they converted. Promotion in the government and the armed forces often favors Muslims, even though nine parliament seats are reserved for Christians and Christians are sometimes

appointed as ministers. Because most Jordanian women wear the hijab, Christian women stand out more in public and are sometimes seen as dressing “inappropriately,” which can lead to harassment.

### NATIONAL LIFE

The Constitution of Jordan designates Islam as the state religion and Sharia as the main legislative source, making apostasy and non-Islamic evangelism illegal, violating Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is no legal mechanism to change official religious affiliation from Islam, while insulting Islam is also considered a criminal offense. Freedom of speech is restricted by cyber-crime laws and government arrests, causing many Christians to refrain from criticizing Islam, the monarchy, or engaging in evangelism.

### CHURCH LIFE

Church activities are subject to routine monitoring, officially justified as protection of churches. However, this monitoring could be used against churches if provocative messages or activities were detected, or if Muslims were observed to be attending the service. The sale of Bibles and the distribution of Christian materials is only permitted in designated places, such as within recognized churches and adjacent church bookstores, but not in ordinary markets or bookshops.



## International obligations & rights violated

**Jordan has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights under the following international treaties:**

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ([ICCPR](#))
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([ICESCR](#))
3. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ([CAT](#))
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#))
5. Convention on the Rights of the Child ([CRC](#))

**Jordan is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:**

- Christian converts are ostracized and faced with opposition by their families and threatened with loss of child custody in the case of divorce (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Children of Christian converts are automatically registered as Muslim (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians are falsely accused and detained because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 19)
- If arrested, Christians experience beatings and pressure to renounce their faith (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 10)
- Christian women and girls are sexually abused because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 7)

## Situation of other religious minorities

In Jordan, non-Sunni groups such as Shia (mainly Iraqi and Syrian refugees), Baha'i, and Druze lack official recognition, limiting their ability to worship and organize publicly; many resort to private gatherings or Sunni mosques. Non-Muslim, non-Christian migrant workers, such as Hindus and Buddhists, are similarly unrecognized and face constraints on religious expression. Converts from Islam, including to atheism, often experience serious family and social pressure, though not necessarily state persecution.





## Open Doors in Jordan

In cooperation with local partners and churches, Open Doors is supporting the Church in Jordan through the following activities:

- Training
- Relief and rehabilitation
- Research
- Raising prayer support for Christians in Jordan





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## ABOUT THIS DOSSIER

- The content of this Country Dossier is based on detailed analysis carried out by World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. This dossier may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2026 Open Doors International.
- All 50 Country Dossiers – along with the latest update of WWL Methodology – can be accessed [here](#).
- The WWL 2026 reporting period was 01 October 2024 - 30 September 2025.

*Most photos in this dossier are for illustrative purposes.*