World
Watch
Research

Central African Republic (CAR):
Full Country Dossier

January 2022

Contents

Man in Mustafa Quarter, Bangui, CAR (c) Open Doors International

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

Copyright note

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).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading "External links". In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the "Keys to Understanding" chapter under the heading "Links for general background information". Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- 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).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

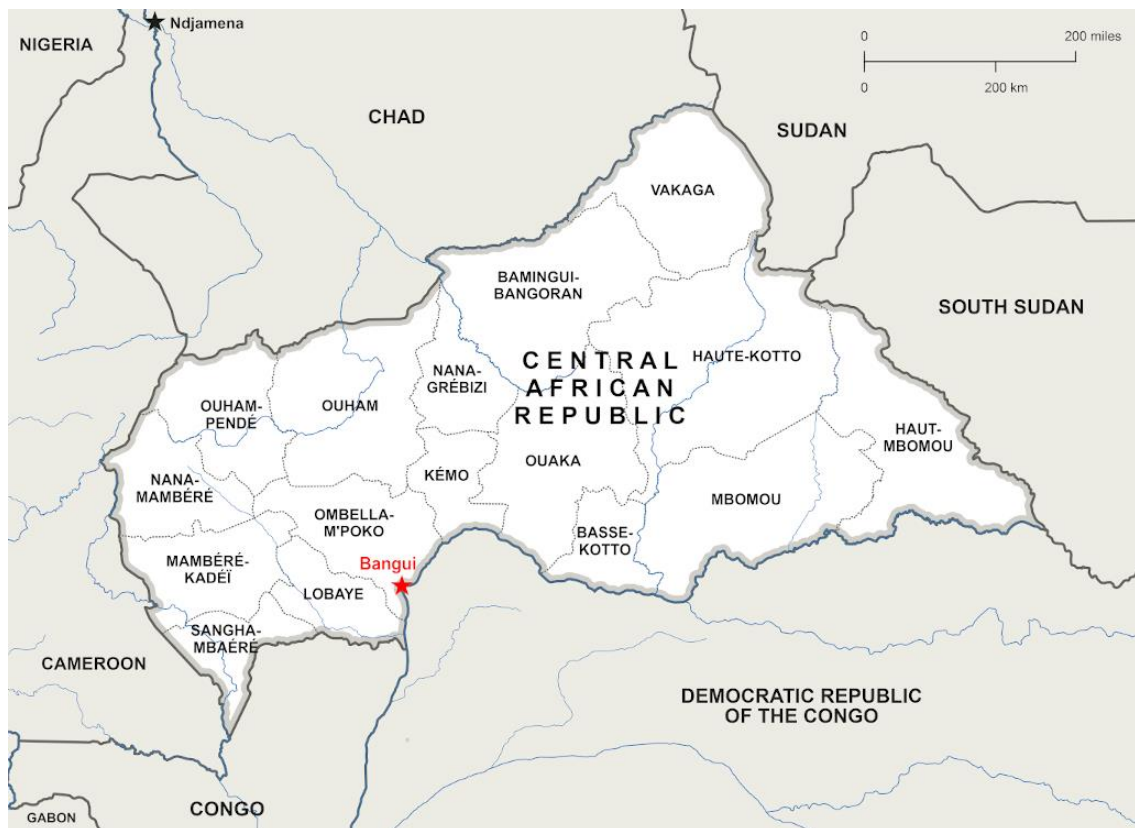- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / CAR

Brief country details

Central African Republic: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
5,023,000	3,780,000	75.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Map of country

Central African Republic: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	68	31
WWL 2021	66	35
WWL 2020	68	25
WWL 2019	70	21
WWL 2018	61	35

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Central African Republic: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks, Non-Christian religious leaders, Ethnic group leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family
Organized corruption and crime	Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies, Organized crime cartels or networks

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been embroiled in conflict since 2013 and most of the country is occupied by armed militia groups, responsible for a range of human rights abuses. Christian leaders who have publicly denounced the violence have been threatened and church buildings have been burned and ransacked. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians who have been forced to live in camps and lose their homes and livelihood. In addition to the insecurity and violence from which all categories of Christian community suffer from, converts to Christianity also face the persecution that comes from their immediate family members. The local community will often ostracize Christian converts and might also try to force them to renounce Christianity through violence.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

CAR has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in 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)

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

- Christian converts in Muslim-majority areas experience pressure and violence from their family and community to renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christians and their activities are monitored by rebel groups (ICCPR Art. 17)
- Christian female converts run the risk of being abducted and forcibly married to Muslim men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Many Christians have fled the country fearing violence by jihadist groups.
- Churches have been used as places of refuge for those people who are fleeing attacks (France 24, 14 January 2021). This in turn is making the church a target.
- 8 June 2021: An armed group attacked a church convoy of 300 Christians heading back to Bangui after a conference, setting fire to seven vehicles. The armed group, allegedly elements of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic, also stole property from the Christians but killed no one (Evangelical Focus, 14 June 2021).

Specific examples of positive developments

Presidential and legislative elections were conducted in December 2020 and March 2021 despite waves of violence. This has been seen as a positive momentum that has to be maintained by the UN Peacekeepers.

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Churches have been used as places of refuge - https://observers.france24.com/en/africa/20210118-central-african-republic-bouar-rebel-attacks-church
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 8 June 2021 - https://evangelicalfocus.com/world/12033/convoy-of-central-africa-regional-evangelical-leader-attacked-by-armed-militia

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / CAR

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/central-african-republic/	26 July 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13150040	26 July 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-CAF.html	26 July 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic/	26 July 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	26 July 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	26 July 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (CAR is not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/central-african-republic/freedom-world/2021	26 July 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report (CAR is not included)	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/central-african-republic	26 July 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/central-african-republic	26 July 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#cf	26 July 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/central-african-republic	26 July 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/caf	26 July 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CAF	26 July 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/central-african-republic/	26 July 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (CAR is not included)	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic	26 July 2021

Recent history

The Central African Republic (CAR) used to be a French colony known as Ubangi-Shari, which gained independence in 1960. Since then, the country has been mired in cycles of violence. These cycles have been driven by overlapping tensions between armed groups, religious and ethnic groups, and herders and farmers. As a result, CAR has endured repeated outbreaks of conflict, population displacement, alarming food insecurity, and limited access to basic services and economic opportunities.

General François Bozizé seized power in a 2003 coup backed by neighboring Chad. The following years saw intermittent fighting between the government and various rebel groups. In 2013, a militia called Séléka (widely perceived as a coalition of Muslim fighters) took control of the capital Bangui and their leader Michel Djotodia became the first Muslim president in CAR's history. However, that same year President Djotodia resigned due to intense pressure from the international community and was replaced by Catherine Samba-Panza, who served as interim president from 2013-2014 until elections were held.

After much delay, in February 2016 the Interim Government managed to hold the election that was supposed to be a significant milestone in the country's history. Faustin-Archange Touadéra won the election and was sworn in as a president. He immediately made peace and reconciliation his priority, but clashes continued in some parts of the country involving the mainly Muslim Séléka and the self-defense groups, called Anti-Balaka. Although these latter

groups are frequently referred to as Christians, they are mostly Animists in faith and churches have strongly disassociated themselves from them. Due to the obvious religious overtones of the conflict, both Christian and Muslim civilians are victims of the violence perpetrated by the Séléka and Anti-Balaka militants.

Attempts by both UN peacekeepers and government forces failed to stop the conflict, which has continued with attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping forces. In February 2019, yet another agreement - the Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation - was signed with more than a dozen rebel groups. This gives hope that after all there might be light at the end of the tunnel.

According to the UN Security Council Report of 31 January 2020:

• Since the signing of the Political Peace Agreement on 6 February 2019, "there has been a notable decrease, compared to the previous year, in military confrontations between armed groups, CAR security forces, and MINUSCA and in human rights violations linked to the conflict. However, the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, which was presented to the committee on 2 December 2019, determined that the implementation of the peace agreement 'remained limited'."

The 27 December 2020 elections were held amid violence as rebels belonging to the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) sought to disrupt the process across the country by burning ballot boxes and intimidating voters. In roughly a dozen towns, including Bozizé's stronghold of Bossangoa, residents were unable to vote at all. Several opposition presidential candidates called for the results to be annulled, claiming widespread fraud. Despite this, the head of the National Elections Authority declared that incumbent President Touadéra had won re-election, gaining an absolute majority of 53.9% of the vote in the first round. The wave of violence that preceded the elections continued, having worsened since the beginning of 2021. The post-election period has seen a surge in attacks by armed groups seeking to overthrow President Touadéra. In light of the rising violence, on 21 January 2021, a state of emergency was announced after CPC forces attempted to blockade the country's capital, Bangui.

Political and legal landscape

The 2016 Constitution provides for freedom of religion under conditions set by law and equal protection under the law regardless of religion - and this is generally respected in practice.

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

Political parties are legally able to form and operate (Freedom House, Global Freedom 2019). However, party members conducting political activities are at risk of intimidation and violence in areas controlled by irregular armed groups. According to the Freedom House report:

- "Several opposition parties exist in the parliament. However, politicians are at risk of intimidation, harassment, or violence in areas controlled by armed groups, and opposition parties are limited in their ability to garner support in those areas. Citizens are also vulnerable to pressure and intimidation from nonstate armed groups. voters outside the capital are largely unable to participate in political processes for security reasons. enduring insecurity and an accompanying lack of access to political processes precludes many minority groups from achieving political representation."

According to the UN Security Council Report of 31 January 2020:

- "The return of former presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia to the CAR on 15 December 2019 and 10 January, respectively, has raised concerns about their possible destabilizing effect on the already fragile political climate".

Despite the danger of instability, elections went ahead as described above in *Recent History*.

Under CAR's family code, men and women have equal rights in relation to marriage, divorce and child guardianship. According to traditional law however, in cases of divorce women are expected to leave the home and leave their children under the guardianship of the father; practices vary by territory and according to the religious affiliations of communities (OECD, 2019).

CAR has the second highest prevalence of child marriage globally, with 68% of girls marrying before 18 and 29% before the age of 15. The figure is also high for boys, at 28% (Girls not Brides, 2021). Driving factors include poverty, lack of education and opportunities and insecurity. Whilst the minimum age of marriage is 18 years under the Family Code 1998, individuals can marry under this age with parental consent. This loophole could be exploited for the purpose of religious persecution, particularly for female converts to Christianity.

Rape and domestic violence are outlawed, although gaps remain in legislation, for example in failing to recognize economic violence as a form of domestic violence (OECD, 2019). One of the characteristics of countries in crisis is that men play a significant role both in initiating and participating in conflicts. The natural flow from this is that any negotiation or settlement puts men at a better position in terms of political power. Even though it is difficult to know the role of religion in the final analysis of political power-sharing, it can be assumed that women are not on equal terms with men.

Religious landscape

Central African Republic: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	3,780,000	75.3
Muslim	664,000	13.2
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0

Ethno-religionist	527,000	10.5
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	12,900	0.3
Atheist	700	0.0
Agnostic	37,900	0.8
Other	0	0.0
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

CAR is a predominantly Christian country; although relations between Muslims and Christians appeared good on the surface in previous years, tension had been growing under the surface. In particular, converts from Islam to Christianity have always faced persecution. Male converts most commonly experience physical violence, whereas female converts risk being forcibly married to a Muslim. Christians living in Muslim-dominated areas in northern, eastern and western regions have reported discrimination and other forms of social pressure. Many Christians (and Muslims) intermix their faith with several ethno-religious practices including sorcery and witchcraft.

According to WCD estimates for 2021, Christians constitute 75.3% of the population and Muslims 13.2%. Islam has shown significant growth in the last decade - rising from 5% to over 13% - and has been strengthened by groups settling from Chad and Sudan. Dissatisfaction at the perceived marginalization of northern Muslims was one of the root causes for the coup in March 2013 that gave rise to a deadly conflict along religious and ethnic lines. The Christian community is very concerned about the Islamic inroads being established in the country and church leaders have repeatedly pointed out that the rebellion that led to the coup had a religious agenda.

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

Economic landscape

According to World Bank:

- Economic activity slowed in 2020 but remained positive at about 0.8%, more than 2 percentage points below its 2019 level. This slowdown is primarily due to COVID-19 and the related restriction measures that affected trade between the Central African Republic and the rest of the world, and is disrupting input and food supply chains. However, the sound

performance of the agricultural sector helped reduce the downturn in economic activity in 2020.

- Post-electoral disputes and the related waves of insecurity are expected to slow the economy in 2021, owing, among other things, to the blockade of the Bangui-Douala corridor, which adversely affected economic activity and tax revenues.
- The main challenges remain the restoration of lasting peace and security and the implementation of an ambitious reform agenda to foster a sustainable economic recovery; more inclusive economic growth; sound and prudent management of public finances; economic diversification; the creation of better jobs; improved human capital; the promotion and improvement of the business environment; and strengthened farming capacity.

According to the 2021 Economic Freedom Index:

- CAR scored 48.8 points, ranking as the 166th freest country in the 2021 index. Its overall score decreased by 1.9 points (compared to 2020), primarily because of a decline in property rights. The Central African Republic is ranked 44th among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages.

CAR performs poorly on Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index, which is mainly due to poor rates of financial inclusion for women (Georgetown, 2019/20, p.34).The labor force participation rate stands at 64.4% of women, compared to 79.8% of men (UNDP's HDI 2020). Many women and girls are therefore economically dependent on their families, which can make them vulnerable if they convert to Christianity.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the UNDP's full 2020 report (page 343 onwards) and CIA Factbook:

- *Main ethnic groups:* Baya 28.8%, Banda 22.9%, Mandjia 9.9%, Sara 7.9%, Mboum 6%, M'Baka 7.9%, Arab-Fulani (Peul) 6%, Mbum 6%, Ngbanki 5.5%, Zande-Nzakara 3%, other Central African Republic ethnic groups 2%, non-Central African Republic ethnic groups 1%.
- *Main languages:* French (official), Sangho (Lingua franca and national language), tribal languages.
- *Population growth rate:* 1.79% (2021 est.)
- *Urban population:* 42.6% of the total population (2021)
- *Rate of urbanization:* 3.32% annual rate of change (2020-2025 est.)
- *Median age:* 17.6 years
- *Expected years of schooling:* 7.6 years (6.2 years for girls, compared to 8.9 years for boys)
- *Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):* 37.4%
- *Employment to population ratio (15 years and older):* 69.3%
- *Unemployment:* 3.7% of total labor force
- *Youth unemployment (15-24 years):* 5.7%

According to World Bank:

- **Poverty:** Poverty levels remain high and projections suggest that roughly 71% of the population was living below the international poverty line ($1.90 per day, in terms of PPP) in 2020.

According to [UNHCR data](#) as of 30 June 2021:

- An estimated 716,678 people remain internally displaced while 700,542 Central African refugees are sheltering in neighboring countries (particularly in Cameroon, DRC and Chad).
- "The dire crisis in the Central African Republic continues to trigger massive forced displacement, increasing pressure on resources and living conditions in host communities and countries. Intense militia activity and inter-community violence hampers humanitarian access and exposes civilians to serious protection risks. According to OCHA, CAR remains the country with the highest humanitarian needs per capita, with 50 per cent of the population having to rely on humanitarian assistance to survive, while 25 per cent is displaced either internally or in a neighboring country."

According to the UNDP's HDI 2020:

- **Human Development Index**: CAR is one of the poorest countries in the world and one of the 10 poorest in Africa ranking 188th out of 189, with an index value of 0.397.
- **Average life expectancy at birth:** 53.3 years
- **Gender inequality:** CAR has also one of the lowest education and gender equality indicators of the world. The gender development index (GDI) is 0.801 and gender inequality index (GII) is 0.680. The youth unemployment rate (female to male ratio) is 0.90.

CAR is heavily shaped by patriarchal norms; men are widely held as the head of the household, whereas women are expected to lead in the domestic sphere. According to a [2016 Tearfund report](#), marital rape and domestic violence are not just common place, but are widely accepted. The study revealed that both men and women believed that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten or disciplined (e.g. by refusing sex to their husband, or being deemed confrontational). Many chose not to report incidents of abuse due to stigma and out of fear of losing their children. According to a [UNDP report published on 15 July 2020,](#) gender-based violence (GBV) surged when COVID-19 restrictions were introduced; despite a national strategy aimed at reducing GBV, statistics pre-COVID were already of concern.

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 11.3% of the population – survey date: June 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 2.6% of the population – survey date: June 2021

According to World Bank:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 33.6 per 100 people

Statistics on Internet usage and mobile phone ownership by gender are lacking.

The recurring conflict in CAR and in neighboring countries has created obstacles in the establishment of technological infrastructure. Hence, in communications, financial services, agriculture and transportation sectors, the use of modern technology is not advanced.

A large-scale project was planned for the Central African Republic at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century. A UNESCO report (accessed 20 August 2020) states:

- "The country was included in the list of beneficiary countries for the first phase of the Spanish funded project on capacity-building in science, technology and innovation (STI) Policy in Africa during which UNESCO provided technical assistance and consultancy services to develop the national policy for STI. Throughout 2008 and 2009, missions, consultations, and interviews were held with most of the STI stakeholders in the country and a first draft of the National STI Policy framework document was produced and submitted to the Central African Government for comments and discussion."

This initiative was interrupted by the conflict that erupted in 2013.

Security situation

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2020):

- With at least 70% of the territory under the control of various militant groups, both the government and UN peacekeepers have very little control in most parts of the country. On 6 February 2019, the Political Peace Agreement was signed in Bangui by the CAR government and 14 armed groups. A new government was formed with several members of opposition groups holding key senior positions.

According to HRW 2021:

- The "2019 peace deal between the government and 14 armed groups collapsed as a rebel coalition, created in December 2020, launched attacks against major towns outside of the capital, Bangui. The coalition, called the Coalition of Patriots for Change (Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, CPC), created havoc in the run-up to elections in December, preventing hundreds of thousands of people from voting."
- "Fighting escalated in the northeast as former Seleka groups continued to fracture along ethnic lines, particularly among the Rounga, Kara, and Gula groups. Fighting between factions of the Popular Front for the Rebirth of the Central African Republic (FPRC) in the towns of Bria in January 2020 and Ndele in April 2020 killed scores of civilians. Fighting between the FPRC and the Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ) in Birao in January, February, and March 2020 killed dozens of fighters, but also civilians. The United Nations reported that women and children were used as human shields by FPRC fighters in Ndele to prevent UN peacekeepers deploying in the town."

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

- The country could descend into a full-blown civil war.
- Neighboring countries would be likely to get involved in arming or training groups, based on their national interests.

- Christians are likely to continue suffering at the hands of Ex-Séléka and other militants.

Within this context of fragility and insecurity, women and girls (especially IDPs) are especially vulnerable to incidences of sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Despite these threats, women are reportedly left out of the peace building process, causing deep frustration among female leaders (UN, Africa Renewal, accessed 26 July 2021). Men and boys are vulnerable to forced recruitment into militias, as well as to abductions and killings.

Trends analysis

1) The relationship between Muslims and Christians has become polarized

The conflict in the last few years has fundamentally changed the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country. Unless the reconciliation process and the attempt to end the cycle of impunity in CAR succeeds, there is a grave risk that the polarization among Muslims and Christians will continue and exacerbate the religious conflict. Despite the elections in 2015 and 2016 (which many hoped would bring a fresh chance of reconciliation), Ex-Séléka militants seem unwilling to lay down their arms and there is still a serious risk of a relapse into violent conflict with religious overtones. Church leaders of the main denominations have condemned the violence perpetrated by Anti-Balaka forces. Although President Touadera (elected in 2016 and re-elected in December 2020) attempted to make peace and reconciliation his priority, the country entered a state of emergency in January 2021 due to rebel violence.

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

As the instability continues in the country, the situation is becoming increasingly complex with several criminal splinter-groups emerging from the Séléka and Anti-Balaka militant groups - and in some places even joining forces. These groups both attack Christians, although for different reasons. This has put tremendous pressure on the Christian community in all areas of life. Killings and the destruction of property and churches have become common and there is nothing to change this if the status quo remains as it is. In February 2019, the government and 14 armed groups signed a peace treaty (AP News, 2 February 2019) but this collapsed in the run-up to the December 2020 elections and the fighting has not stopped. A July 2020 UN report stated that the influx of foreign fighters resulted in a "series of clashes" and was "fed by arrivals of foreign fighters and weaponry, mainly from the Sudan." (The Defense Post, 16 July 2020).

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: UN Security Council Report - https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-02/central-african-republic-5.php
- Political and legal landscape: 2016 Constitution - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Central_African_Republic_2016.pdf?lang=en
- Political and legal landscape: Political parties - https://freedomhouse.org/country/central-african-republic/freedom-world/2019
- Political and legal landscape: UN Security Council Report   - https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-02/central-african-republic-5.php
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CF.pdf

- Political and legal landscape: Girls not Brides, 2021 - https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/central-african-republic
- Political and legal landscape: Family Code 1998 - https://data.unicef.org/crvs/central-african-republic/
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CF.pdf
- Economic landscape: 2021 Economic Freedom Index: - https://www.heritage.org/index/country/centralafricanrepublic
- Economic landscape: Georgetown, 2019/20, p.34 - https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf
- Social and cultural landscape: the UNDP's full 2020 report - http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CAF
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR data - https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/car
- Social and cultural landscape: 2016 Tearfund report - https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/reports/gender-norms-violence-and-masculinity.pdf
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP report published on 15 July 2020, - https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/car-violence-against-women-surging-amid-covid-19-pandemic-study
- Technological landscape: UNESCO report - http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/science-technology/sti-systems-and-governance/sti-policy-development/africa/central-african-republic/
- Security situation: HRW 2020 - https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/central-african-republic
- Security situation: Human Rights Watch, 2019 - https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/21/central-african-republic-wars-most-forgotten-victims
- Security situation: UN, Africa Renewal - https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/women-seek-greater-role-rebuilding-central-african-republic
- Trends analysis: signed a peace treaty - https://apnews.com/article/a250380046554b6cb0bbf6feb1510786
- Trends analysis: July 2020 UN report - https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/07/16/foreign-fighters-central-african-republic/

WWL 2022: Church information / CAR

Christian origins

Like most African countries, CAR society was dominated by several traditional African religions practiced by different tribes. Most traditional religions in the area were dependent upon the animist tradition with practices differing from one tribe to another. The animist African tradition was more dominant in the southern and central parts of the country. Muslim traders in the northern part of the country introduced Islam to the region. Christianity became dominant in CAR after French colonists took power in the 1880s and became the religion of choice for many - possibly also due to its close association with powerful and respected colonial officials. While Roman Catholic missionaries came as early as the second half of the 19th century, Protestant missionaries (for instance, sent by US Baptists) did not start operating in the country until 1921. (Source: World Atlas, 12 April 2018)

Church spectrum today

Central African Republic: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	1,864,000	49.3
Protestant	858,000	22.7
Independent	869,000	23.0
Unaffiliated	715,000	18.9
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-527,000	-13.9
Total	**3,779,000**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	1,481,000	39.2
Renewalist movement	950,000	25.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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:** *Christians 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.*

The Roman Catholic Church is by far the largest Christian denomination.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: World Atlas, 12 April 2018 - https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-religious-beliefs-of-the-central-african-republic.html

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / CAR

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Central African Republic: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	68	31
WWL 2021	66	35
WWL 2020	68	25
WWL 2019	70	21
WWL 2018	61	35

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

The increase by two points in WWL 2022 is a result of the conflict in the country deepening and affecting Christians in all aspects of their lives. Many groups are forming alliances with other armed groups. Some groups have foreign fighters who are fighting in the country to establish a Sharia state. Others are motivated by greed and power and have no mercy toward anyone opposing them. There are more than 15 factions fighting against the government and against each other. In the middle of this, Christians are extremely affected. These factors have also made the tracking of persecution more complex. The score for violence remained at an extreme level (15.6 points) which has impacted pressure in all *spheres of life*.

Persecution engines

Central African Republic: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Medium
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all

| Dictatorial paranoia | DPA | Not at all |
| Organized corruption and crime | OCC | Very strong |

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

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

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong)

This engine is particularly evident where Anti-Balaka militants attack churches and Christians. Although Anti-Balaka began as a collection of vigilante groups, they have morphed into becoming criminal gangs. Particularly in Bangui, they have often targeted Christians and church leaders, especially those who do not subscribe to their ideals or those who oppose their violent activities. While the group claims to protect Christians, it has become evident over the years that this is untrue since they attack Muslims and Christians alike.

Clan oppression (Medium)

There are two dimensions to this Persecution engine in CAR: i) Animism/ATR (religious and/or cultural) and ii) tribal fighting.

According to a country researcher:

- "Both are prevalent in CAR, while ethnic and religious motives often go together."
- "There is pressure to participate in cultural religious practices, such as rites of passage, rituals and customs at milestones like birth, marriage and death, but also for protection (Anti-Balaka are known for this)."
- "Some ethnic minority groups are specifically targeted, for instance, Ba'aka pygmies, who are forcibly recruited for labor. Anti-Balaka forces are mainly Animists, and they attack Muslims, but often also Christians. Sometimes they force Christians into their ranks."

Drivers of persecution

CAR: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		-		VERY WEAK				VERY STRONG
Ethnic group leaders	Medium		Medium						
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong								
Religious leaders of other churches					Very weak				
Violent religious groups	Very strong								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium								
One's own (extended) family	Medium								
Organized crime cartels or networks	Very strong								Very strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies									Very strong

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- ***Violent religious groups (Very strong):*** Muslim militant and paramilitary groups (that could be considered Ex-Séléka groups) are significant drivers of persecution. Two of them are the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central African Republic (FPRC), and the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC). Although many of these groups can be categorized as violent religious groups, it is also possible to view them as political parties and paramilitary organizations. These rebel groups have inflicted multiple attacks on Christian churches and private Christian property.
- ***Organized crime cartels (Very strong):*** Some factions of the militant groups mentioned above act as organized criminal gangs and often engage in looting and frequently target churches and church-affiliated entities.
- ***Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):*** Islamic leaders occupy all the market places, control trade and impose a huge tax on Christian businessmen and often loot the shops of Christians to reduce them to poverty. Furthermore, at a national level, figures like Michel Djotodia who was the president of the country, Noureddine Adam who was the second in command to Michel Djotodia and Ali Darassa, a Fulani ethnic Muslim leader of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) and Ex-Séléka leader, have led the persecution of Christians.

- *Ethnic leaders (Medium)*: In the predominantly Muslim parts of the country tribal or ethnic elders also play a role in this process since they reinforce the pressure against converts to Christianity.
- *Family members (Medium), Citizens (Medium):* In the northern part of the country and areas that border Sudan, Muslim family members and communities will persecute known converts to Christianity.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

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

Drivers of Clan oppression

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

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

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

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Since expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated in CAR, this category is not included for WWL analysis and scoring.
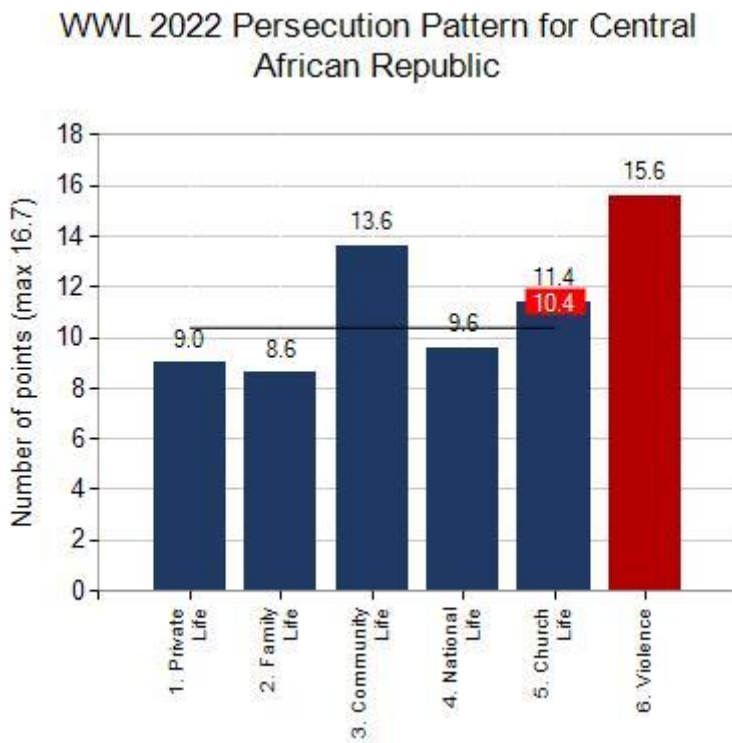
Historical Christian communities: This category is comprised of Roman Catholic and older Protestant churches. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the country with the widest network of churches, clinics and schools. When the Séléka militants were in the ascendancy, cars, computers and other valuable items were looted from church-buildings and other church properties. The Catholic Church and its leadership in CAR, alongside other religious

leaders, have been a strong voice calling for peace and reconciliation and have also provided places of refuge for civilians, both Muslim and Christian, fleeing attack. As a result, Catholic churches have often been targeted for attack.

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

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

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Central African Republic

The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for CAR shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in CAR is high with a score of 10.4 points, an increase from 10.0 points in WWL 2021.
- The *Community sphere* scored highest with 13.6 points, followed by the *Church sphere* which scored 11.4 points (an increase from 9.9 points in WWL 2021).
- The score for violence remains at an extreme level with 15.6 points, the same as in WWL 2021.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2022 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. 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 of 0-4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.75 points)

in addition to the general hostile environment for Christians due to the ongoing conflict in the country, there is another layer of pressure on converts. Converts from Islam experience interference from their family members if their conversion becomes known. This category of Christians is the most persecuted of all. The backlash from Muslim families is harsh and family members are likely to cut off all financial help. There are many families where the wife is a Christian and the husband is not. The husband commonly prevents wife and children from attending church activities.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.75 points)

In the northern part of the country (which is dominated by the Muslim population and where Séléka splinter-groups are operating), converts are likely to risk their life by owning Christian materials. When Ex-Séléka fighters come into a house and find someone reading a Bible, they have been known to kill them immediately.

Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (2.75 points)

Converts and non-convert Christians in areas controlled by Séléka forces face this problem. A country expert explained how converts face high risks: They "will do nothing to be seen as Christians, even listening to Christian radio channels. In families, family members act as spies, sometimes children spy on their parents to tell if they have converted, so it becomes risky for them to be seen accessing Christian media."

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.50 points)

The conflict in CAR has divided the country more or less along faith lines. If a Christian host talks about Christian faith to a Muslim guest, he/she may get into trouble. It is even becoming dangerous (in some places) for Christians to host Muslim guests as the situation is becoming so unpredictable.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

As the situation in the country is far from safe, it is very difficult for Christians (converts in particular) in the north-eastern provinces to register births, weddings or deaths, especially as this would attract unwanted attention.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.00 points)

This issue goes with other factors like safety and security. Culturally, in some places Christians would like to have guests at baptisms and have Muslims experience Christian preaching. However, in a country where groups are targeting each other based on religion, it is difficult to openly baptize new Christians.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.75 points)

In areas controlled by rebel groups, where children's parents have been killed or have been forced to flee, any children left behind remain at the mercy of the attackers. Some have been brutally killed. Also, due to disunity between some churches, children are known to have been harassed because of the denominational faith of their parents.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.50 points)

This happens often after a spouse has converted to Christianity. Extended families and the local community who find out about the conversion will then often put pressure on the non-convert to divorce the Christian. In addition, converts almost automatically lose family inheritance rights.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.75 points)

This is one of the most serious issues in the country. The conflict has gone to village level and Christians in their communities are often targeted and threatened. The country is dominated by warring factions and the government has lost effective control over many areas. Christians are often targeted directly or indirectly (for instance, considered to be supporters of Anti-Balaka). In Muslim dominated areas, Christians are often discriminated against, especially where Sharia law is more or less officially implemented.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.50 points)

Monitoring at village/community level has become one of the defining characteristics of the ongoing conflict in the country. Monitoring by some rebel groups and their supporters has been common. In some instances, vigilante groups act as informers for jihadists.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.50 points)

In the context of the ongoing conflict, Christians suffer from attack and abduction. Young girls have often been abducted. Christians from a Muslim background suffer most in such attacks. At times these abducted men and women are indoctrinated and forced to fight.

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.50 points)

Muslim community members usually do not want to share community resources (such as healthcare) with converts to Christianity, especially in the remote northern part of the country. The conflict has forced some converts to live in IDP camps and others to flee to neighboring countries such as Cameroon or even DRC.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.4: Christians have been hindered in travelling for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Some of the areas in the country are literally owned by armed groups; in these places, no one is safe. In areas controlled by Ex-Seleka militants, all transportation facilities are under Muslim control thus making movement for Christians difficult. When violence flares up, pastors are particularly vulnerable when travelling between churches to carry out their work.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Allegiance in the country is divided along religious lines. Christians face this problem mostly in areas where the Muslim community forms the majority or where Ex-Seleka militants are in control. It is particularly difficult where Christians are considered to be supporters of Anti-Balaka. There is where the 'us versus them'-mentality kicks in.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.25 points)

No peace negotiations or Truth and Reconciliation initiatives are currently helping the country return to stability. The elections that were held in 2020 and 2021, even though described as a positive development, are not bringing true freedom and stability: For instance, Christians in the Muslim-dominated northern part of the country do not have the right or the possibility to express their views. If they do that, they will be seen as being supporters of Anti-Balaka forces and will probably then be killed by Ex-Seleka militants.

Block 4.7: Christians have been hindered in running their own businesses without interference for faith-related reasons (e.g. personnel policy, client admission policy). (3.00 points)

Looting, destruction and and other forms of property-related crimes are committed against Christian business owners. There is no longer effective control by the government and in several regions rebel groups wield power. These groups frequently discriminate against Christians and sometimes attack them, forcing them to flee home and country.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.50 points)

CAR has become synonymous with violence and weak government. In such an environment, conducting religious activities outside a church is very risky as they can attract unnecessary attention. Especially in areas with a Muslim majority and that are controlled by rebel groups, churches keep a low profile. Even in areas where there is no direct crisis, sometimes churches are hindered from carrying out such activities, for instance in regions where there are many Muslims or animists.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.25 points)

Although there is no official surveillance from government security officers, civilians are being watched by various rebel groups to discover their possible sympathy for or links to other groups. Many attacks have been reported, with church services disrupted and church buildings set on fire.

Block 5.4: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities inside their place of worship. (3.25 points)

Freedom of religion, movement, or expression and even the right to life is frequently being fundamentally challenged in CAR. When it comes to the hindering of church events inside church compounds, it was noted by a country expert: "Indirectly it happens in rebel-controlled areas because of the fear and insecurity of what may happen if the activity happens to be disrupted. The past experiences have also traumatized Christians and they often avoid church gatherings due to fear of attack.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.00 points)

At the moment, building or renovating church property is actually seen as a luxury since Christians are struggling to keep what they have. The situation in the country is volatile and where churches have been severely damaged and need to be rebuilt or renovated, the Christian communities face difficulties, particularly where Muslim rebels are acting as the local 'authority'.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. *Possible reasons for this may be:*

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. For further discussion *(with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at:* https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: *In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. 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 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

5. The symbol "x" in the table: *This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.*

Central African Republic: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	29	35
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	56
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	10 *	100*
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	100*
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10 *	100*
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	1000*
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	71	412
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100*
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	100*	1000
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100*

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.
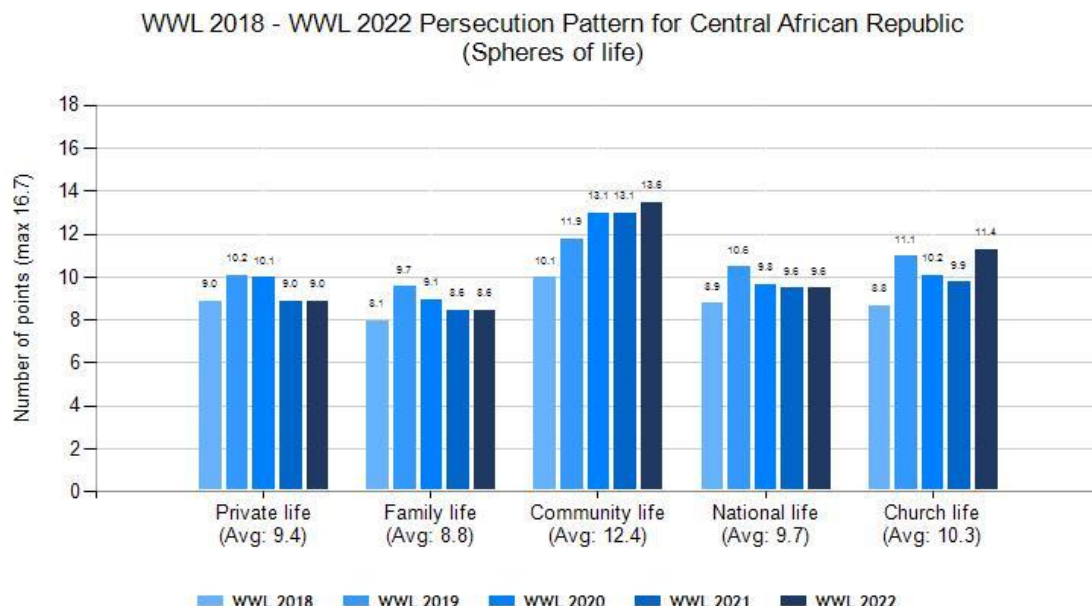
5 Year trends: Average pressure

In the table below it can be seen that the average pressure on Christians has fluctuated over the years, but has never dropped below 9.0 points. In the last four reporting periods the average pressure score has been between 10.0 and 10.7 points.

Central African Republic: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	10.4
2021	10.0
2020	10.5
2019	10.7
2018	9.0

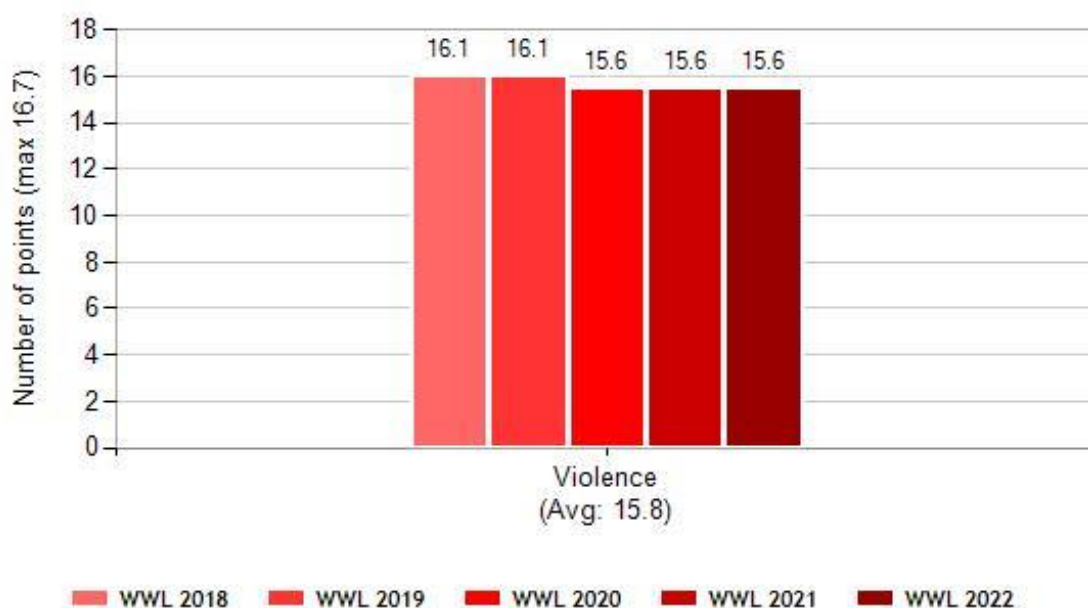## 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

The chart below shows that the pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has most often been high or very high. Pressure has been highest (and has increased most strongly) in the *Community sphere of life.* The lowest scores have occurred in the *Family sphere.*

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Central African Republic (Spheres of life)

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

Over the five year period, the level of violence against Christians has been stable at an extreme level, as the average score of 15.8 points in the chart below shows. The highest score was recorded in WWL 2018 and WWL 2019 with 16.1 points.

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Central African Republic
(Violence)

Number of points (max 16.7)

16.1 16.1 15.6 15.6 15.6

Violence
(Avg: 15.8)

WWL 2018   WWL 2019   WWL 2020   WWL 2021   WWL 2022

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Discrimination/harassment via education
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Forced to flee town/country; Targeted Seduction; Trafficking; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

The many years of violence and instability in CAR has left Christian women and girls particularly vulnerable to rape, displacement, abduction and forced marriage as forms of religious persecution. Some girls who are abducted are subjected to sexual slavery; sexual abuse is a source of shame for women and girls, and they can struggle to move on from the trauma, particularly if they become pregnant. A country expert points out a particularly concerning dynamic: "Christian women and girls are suffering at the hands of UN peacekeeping troops. Most of the time such acts of persecution involve acts of sexual violence, mainly rape, by troops who are assigned to protect the victims they are abusing."

Within the context of high poverty rates, parents are sometimes enticed into giving their Christian girls in marriage in exchange for significant gifts. In other cases, Christian girls who thought they would be free to practice their faith once married to a Muslim discover that they are instead forced to convert. Female students in particular face the risk of abduction and sexual violence while on the way to and from school. This has discouraged parents living in high-risk areas from sending their daughters to school. Girls who are abused and become pregnant are likely to drop out of school.

In CAR, women are generally more dependent on their families than men, so family-driven persecution affects them more. Because CAR is one of the poorest countries in Africa, ranking near the bottom of almost every indicator, financial need can drive Christian women with many children to agree to convert to Islam in order to survive. Converts to Christianity face further pressures from family members. They can be put under house arrest to prevent them from meeting with other Christians or forcibly married to a much older Muslim. There are reports that sometimes a Christian mother is only allowed to attend Christian gatherings on condition that her children are sent to the mosque. Mothers have been separated from their children because of their faith.

Christian women are pressured into following Islamic dress code. Some women have been harassed and intimidated for not covering their heads.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	-
Security	Abduction; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

When Christian families are targeted by radical militias, Christian women in CAR are usually sexually assaulted and left alive, while men are killed for their faith or detained by the militia. Pastors are especially targeted and sometimes false accusations revolving around resources are used as a pretext. Pastors have even been attacked during church services. A country expert explains: "Men face more hostile treatment because they are perceived as leaders who ought to represent the Islamic faith; they are expected to lead their family in religious matters and can consequently be blamed if a family member converts."

Christian men also experience discrimination in the workplace. The Islamic leaders occupy all the market places, control trade and impose large taxes on Christian businessmen or even loot the shops of Christians to keep them in poverty. Boys and men are at times forcibly recruited into rebel militant groups and they are also targeted for torture and assault. Within national military service, too, they can experience discrimination on the grounds of their faith. Forced disappearance, killing, threats and the tactical impoverishment of men is greatly affecting Christian families.

Persecution of other religious minorities

This is a very complex matter. Christianity is the overall majority religion in the country but a minority in some parts of the country. This has created a complex dynamic of persecution.

As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- "As of September [2020], the Special Criminal Court (SCC), established in 2018 in Bangui to investigate serious human rights violations, some of which were related to religious identity, announced that it had received 122 complaints and had opened a preliminary investigation on one case. During the year the Bangui Criminal Court for the first time convicted militia leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The case involved leaders of five predominantly Christian militias who perpetrated an attack against Muslims in Bangassou in 2017 in which dozens of persons were killed. Registering for the December general election process posed challenges for religious minorities, according to international observers. Clashes between armed groups continued to threaten the safety of religious groups."

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

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

There are reports indicating that there are also foreign Islamic fighters in the country supporting the Ex-Seleka groups. As long as Ex-Seleka militia are armed and operating in the country, violent oppression will continue and the chances of peace in CAR are very unlikely. As far as the ordinary Muslim population in the country is concerned (i.e. excluding the jihadist groups), the level of *Islamic oppression* is only a problem where family and community put pressure on converts.

Organized corruption and crime

The levels of corruption and crime in the country go hand in hand with the breakdown in law and order. Thus, through the lens of this Persecution engine, the future depends on how the country can enforce its laws and how it can prosecute criminal networks and co-opted government officials. It is important to note that criminal networks are working hand in hand with various militant groups. The measures imposed to restrict COVID-19 infection have served to benefit organized criminal networks in the country. This engine is operating in coordination

with armed groups and the current state of affairs favors its further development.

Clan oppression

The future development of this Persecution engine depends upon how the country emerges from the current crisis (exacerbated by the post-election violence). If the country manages to bring concrete peace through Truth, Reconciliation and Justice initiatives, then the influence of this Persecution engine will decrease. It is also important to mention that there is - to a certain extent - a link between religion and ethnicity in the country; thus how *Islamic oppression* develops will also shape the future of this engine.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis

The impact of COVID-19 is likely to lead to food shortages in the country. That could, in turn, fuel further conflict which might then be fought along religious lines.

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/
- https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Central African Republic
- https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Central African Republic
- Africa – Mapping Islamic militancy – July 2019

External Links - Further useful reports

- Further useful reports: Africa – Mapping Islamic militancy – July 2019 - https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Africa-Mapping-Islamic-militancy-July-2019-FINAL.pdf