World
Watch
Research

Malaysia: Full Country Dossier

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Man in Sarawak region of Malaysia (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

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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 01 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 / Malaysia

Brief country details

Malaysia: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
33,289,000	3,028,000	9.1

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

Map of country

Malaysia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	63	50
WWL 2021	63	46
WWL 2020	62	40

WWL 2019	60	42
WWL 2018	65	23

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Converts from Islam to Christianity experience most pressure and hostility as every ethnic Malay is expected to be Muslim. Whoever deviates from this is not just going against the Constitution, but also against society at large and of course against family and neighborhood. Roman Catholics, Methodists and NGOs are watched by the authorities, but non-traditional Protestant groups are more often targeted for interference as these tend to be more active in testifying about their faith. The tumultuous times in Malaysian politics since 2020 made all Malay parties lean towards a stronger emphasis on Islam and have emboldened Islamist parties like the PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party), which is member of the federal government now as well as leading several states in the federation. PAS members frequently make statements opposing religious and ethnic minorities, including Christians. The PAS may turn out to be the kingmaker for Malay parties in all upcoming elections.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Malaysia has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
2. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

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

- Christian female converts run the risk of being forcibly married to Muslim men (CEDAW Art. 16)
- Christian parents cannot raise their children according to their religious values (CRC Art. 14)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- May 2021: In a doctored Facebook video which went viral, the archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Julian Leow, was accused of following an alleged 25-year-plan to slowly boil away the Muslim majority (UCA News, 4 May 2021).
- April 2021: A Christian MP, Steven Sim, was accused of "Christianizing" when he handed out support for people in his constituency struggling with the economic fallout from the pandemic (Malay Mail, 20 April 2021).
- COVID-19: There were reports that food supplies were not distributed fairly. Already prior to the WWL 2022 reporting period, it was claimed that the distribution of emergency food aid to households "was limited to selected parliamentary constituencies" (Malay Mail, 28 April 2020), indicating that ethnic/religious minorities (including Christians) were being excluded.

Specific examples of positive developments

A Malaysian Christian woman, Jill Ireland, won a 13 year battle in the courts. The court ruled that the confiscation of eight CDs containing the word "Allah" for God went against her right of freedom of religion and hence she should be permitted to use the word "Allah" (World Watch Monitor, 17 March 2021). Although the government immediately appealed against this decision, it is nevertheless a positive development.

External Links - Situation in brief

- 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: May 2021 - https://www.ucanews.com/news/fury-over-nefarious-video-targeting-malaysian-archbishop/92342
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: April 2021: - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/04/20/dap-mp-steven-sim-to-sue-academic-after-christianisation-accusation-against/1968041
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: COVID-19: - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/04/28/pakatan-mps-urge-accountability-in-covid-19-food-basket-aid-amid-claims-of/1860827
- Specific examples of positive developments: against her right - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2021/03/malaysian-woman-wins-13-year-fight-for-right-to-call-god-allah/

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Malaysia

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/malaysia/	18 August 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-15356257	18 August 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-MYS.html	18 August 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/malaysia/	18 August 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	18 August 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	18 August 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Malaysia 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/malaysia/freedom-world/2021	18 August 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/malaysia/freedom-net/2020	18 August 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/malaysia	18 August 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/malaysia	18 August 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#my	18 August 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/malaysia	18 August 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/mys	18 August 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MYS	18 August 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/malaysia/	18 August 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Malaysia%20Chapter%20AR2021.pdf	18 August 2021
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malaysia	18 August 2021

Recent history

The truly ground-breaking election of 9 May 2018, where the previously ruling UMNO party, which had been in charge of the country since independence in 1957, was defeated by the voters who overwhelmingly chose opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan (PH) is now almost a distant memory. Since the PH government collapsed in February 2020 (see below: *Political and legal landscape*) a new Perikatan Nasional (PN) government is now in charge with a very thin majority. Race, ethnicity and religion are again important topics to win over voters and to distract them from the hardships that COVID-19 and a less-than-ideal response to it are bringing (see also below: *Trends*).

After 2020 proved to be a turbulent year for politics in Malaysia, 2021 has been both tumultuous and 'peaceful' in one. The new government of Perikatan Nasional managed to survive until end of August 2021, when a new government led by Ismail Sabri Yaacob was sworn in, which did not have deputy prime ministers (Coconuts, 27 August 2021). The state of emergency (SOE), started in January 2021 because of the COVID-19 crisis meant banning all meetings of the national as well as the state assemblies, so that they were effectively suspended from meeting since December 2020. When the king finally declared that the state of emergency would not be extended (Reuters, 16 June 2021), he twice had to repeat that this also meant a swift recalling of parliament. However, this did not coincide with a testing of majorities, so that in fact, two consecutive governments have been and are ruling Malaysia, which have been spared the testing of majorities so far.

Malaysia's king has a largely ceremonial role, but he has the authority to entrust any politician in parliament whom he thinks is commanding the majority with building the government. He had originally agreed not just to the new government being installed, but also for the SOE to be declared, after the government had urged him to it. However, political pressure grew when it was found that the SOE was not leading to a lowering of COVID infections. After consulting with political leaders from all parties and his fellow sultans (the Council of Rulers), the king stated publicly that he was in favor of ending the SOE when it expired on 1 August 2021 and wished to call back parliament as soon as possible. In fact, the last two governments have not been elected, but their prime ministers were nominated by the king.

This political turmoil came at a time when there was a spike of COVID-19 infections, which started in May 2021 with more than 7000 infections reported daily and climaxed from mid-August to mid-September 2021, where on most days, more than 20,000 cases were reported, despite all strict lockdowns, thus outpacing other countries in the region.

Political and legal landscape

Malay-majority party UMNO hit an all-time low in their popularity polls in 2016, which may have served as an early warning sign but the administration wanted to remain in power, despite Najib Razak being entangled in one of the largest cases of corruption worldwide. After the opposition won in May 2018, Razak was detained and on 28 July 2020, he was convicted in a first court case and found guilty of all charges, a verdict which could have had far reaching political consequences (Reuters, 28 July 2020), had the political tides not shifted again. It has to be noted that this is just the first of many more potential cases against Razak, who has appealed the verdict in the first case. However, proceedings are slow, hampered by the COVID-19 crisis and his vote is needed for keeping a majority in the government.

The hardline Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) was successful in the 2018 elections and managed to regain government control over another federal state (Terengganu), bringing the number of states they rule to three (Terengganu, Kedah and Kelantan). It is also in a coalition government in Johor, Pahang, Perak and Perlis. On the national level, it joined forces with defeated UMNO and focused on the Malay-Muslim fears of losing economic and social benefits. When Prime Minister Mahathir resigned on 24 February 2020, UMNO and PAS seized the opportunity and convinced the king (The Guardian, 3 March 2020) that they commanded a majority in parliament. As a result, the new prime minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, was able to set up a new cabinet (Benar News, 9 March 2020). Three cabinet posts are now occupied by Islamist PAS members. Effectively, what happened is that the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM) split and several politicians changed sides to support the new Perikatan Nasional (PN) government.

In a rare development, the Malaysian head of state, the king, publicly rebuked the prime minister (PM) and insinuated that he had lied to the public (Benar News, 29 July 2021), when the parliament sittings were finally not suspended anymore. Instead of making parliament take a vote of confidence to clarify whether he commands a majority, the PM made the (Deputy) Parliament Speaker suspend the last day of sittings. In the end, he declared the king would agree with his decision when it was plain to see (and officially stated) that he did not. This led to enormous additional pressure on the PM, whose government was struggling to contain the ris-

ing COVID-19 infection levels in the country. On 16 August 2021, he finally resigned, but his successor, Ismail Sabri Yaacob, who was sworn in on 21 August 2021 without a vote in parliament, comes from the UMNO establishment (ABC News, 21 August 2021). He has basically left the government unchanged and his foremost task has been to cope with a rising number of the population testing positive for COVID-19. In general, the view is becoming more widespread - especially among younger people - that distinguishing between Malay and non-Malay is an outdated policy and that the real confrontation in society is between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. While this sentiment is shared by most Christians, it remains to be seen if it changes anything in the limitations and levels of discrimination they are facing (see below: *Trends*).

Malaysian politics is fraught with underlying issues of race and religion. A large-scale demonstration just two days ahead of the international human rights day in December 2018, involving around 55,000 protesters and organized by Malay-Muslim parties PAS and UMNO to protest against the country's planned accession to ICERD (the UN's International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), was an illustration of the challenges the (now defunct) PH government faced (Malay Mail, 8 December 2018). Calls for the special protection of Malay privileges are nothing new and are in fact in line with Malaysia's Constitution (Benar News, 3 December 2018). Consequently, one observer stated that the protests were less about ICERD and more about "shaping perceptions" among Malay Muslims that the PH government was "anti-Islamic" and "anti-Malay" (New Mandala, 8 December 2018). This topic remained central and seemed to be used as a rallying point for all economic and social fears at the expense of ethnic and religious minorities, like Christians.

One other sign of Islamizing is that the ruling PAS in Kelantan State announced it would seek to make the traditional folk ceremony and dance, *Main Puteri*, sharia-compliant (The Diplomat, 19 August 2020). Kelantan amended its Sharia Criminal Code and made, among other things, proselytization and conversion from Islam to another religion punishable by law (The Star MY, 2 November 2021). A PAS member of parliament publicly called the Bible "a distorted book" in August 2020 and refused to retract this statement or apologize (Malay Mail, 3 September 2020). Another PAS member of parliament congratulated the new Taliban leadership in Afghanistan for the "independence" of the country and its "liberation" (Malay Mail, 18 August 2021).

The new government's motto "Keluarga Malaysia" (Family Malaysia) is not so far away from the old government`s motto "One Malaysia", reflecting that the acting parties and even most of the politicians are the same. It remains to be seen and is to be feared that in practice the motto will rather spell "Keluarga Melayu" (Malay Family) (Murray Hunter Blog, 11 October 2021). The age-old practice of discriminating against non-Malay ethnic minorities continues unabated by giving priority to the *Bumiputra* - i.e. the Malay population or literally: "People of the soil". With policies continuing to favor *Bumiputra*, all non-Malay citizens face explicit disadvantages in employment and other areas. This is particularly the case in: i) public offices (i.e. state ministries and administration right down to the local level), ii) state bureaucracy, iii) state-owned enterprises (such as large oil companies) and iv) the armed forces. But even with these affirmative action policies, many Malay people also struggled to make ends meet as the crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown. Calling for the protection of the Malay majority is often just a simple call for power and a means of self-enrichment; Najib Razak is just one example of this, even if the most blatant.

It should be noted that Malaysia is a unique parliamentary monarchy: The monarchy is not based on one royal person but is an office which rotates every five years among nine regional sultans. These Islamic rulers hold a powerful position. In principle they are to abide by electoral bodies' decisions, but in fact they can influence all decision-making, since in questions concerning Islam they also have veto power. So far, they have chosen a moderate position in most cases and have opposed demands for more Islamization. In an illustration of the king's (limited) power, he initially denied the government their wish to declare a national state of emergency, but agreed to it eventually in January 2021. The fact that the monarch now asked for the re-opening of the parliament and saw it necessary to repeat his statement three times (after government officials tried to shift the re-opening into the distant future) has been called unprecedented by observers (Benar News, 29 June 2021). But it shows the king's power and influence.

It will be interesting to see how the government deals with the surprising High Court ruling that a Christian is allowed to use the term "Allah" for God (Malay Mail, 24 March 2021). The fact that the government immediately announced they would appeal the decision not only suggests that the question is far from being solved, but also shows that such an issue could possibly be used as a rallying cry to shore up support from Muslims and Malay people (ASEAN Today, 25 March 2021).

The Malaysian legal landscape has long been restrictive towards women and girls. Whilst it ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995, it maintained a reservation to Article 16 (Suhakam, 2016, p.3), which provides for the elimination of discrimination against women as they enter or exit a marriage. Christians from a Muslim background are particularly vulnerable, as the legal rights of Muslim women and girls are undermined by provisions that make exceptions for Sharia law, which restricts their rights in relation to marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody. According to a recent USCIRF report (Nov 2021), Malay-Muslims are particularly vulnerable

According to OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019, family law matters are governed by a combination of civil law, Islamic laws and customary laws. Under Islamic law, Muslim women need the authority of their male guardian (wali) to marry and whereas a husband can divorce his wife by talaq, she must file for divorce through the courts. Whilst there is legislation prohibiting domestic violence (the Domestic Violence Act, 1994), it fails to comprehensively define all forms of domestic violence. The Penal Code criminalizes rape, although marital rape is not considered a criminal offence. There is no publicly available data on child marriage rates, making it difficult to establish the scale of this issue in Malaysia.

Religious landscape

Malaysia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	3,028,000	9.1
Muslim	18,739,000	56.3
Hindu	2,098,000	6.3

Buddhist	1,783,000	5.4
Ethno-religionist	1,104,000	3.3
Jewish	100	0.0
Bahai	76,000	0.2
Atheist	39,300	0.1
Agnostic	131,000	0.4
Other	6,290,400	18.9
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)

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

One point of contention for religious minorities is the question of claiming custody in divorce cases in religiously mixed marriages. In order to claim custody successfully, the partner most likely to lose custody (almost always the husband) can quickly convert to Islam and file an application with the Sharia courts, which then grant custody to the Muslim spouse. In theory the civil courts are above Sharia courts, but in practice divorce cases are frequently not decided by the civil courts but by Sharia courts (if one parent converts to Islam) since the police prefer the easier implementation of a Sharia decision. The previous government promised to find a solution to this problem but failed to deliver. Court cases on the question of custody are continuing. As the US State Department states on page 1 of IRFR 2020: "The relationship between sharia and civil law remains unresolved in the legal system."

The Islamization of society is increasing, although that does not necessarily mean that this is being directly transferred into the political arena as well. The elections in 2018 showed that voters were more interested in economic improvement and were disgusted with the levels of corruption within UMNO circles. However, the developments afterwards showed that the fear of Malay Muslims to lose privileges continues to be an excellent platform to rally people and run politics on. In everyday life, however, there are more restrictions being introduced which affect non-Muslims too. At the same time, there are frequent warnings from Muslim-Malay organizations and politicians against a supposed agenda of Christianization. An e-book with the title "Exposing the Christian Agenda" was published in Malaysia in the WWL 2022 reporting period (UCA News, 4 May 2021) and as it was originally published in paper format back in 2014, one may suspect that the time seemed opportune to shore up sentiments against the minority. The text simply repeats the old accusations that Christians have a hidden missionary agenda. According to this book, which was published under the auspices of the Selangor Islamic Religious Council, Christians should never be befriended because they are "enemies of Islam who always have malicious intentions and are the bearers of lies". The Christian church is portrayed as a highly cunning and organized movement. At the same time as this ebook was published, the archbishop of Kuala Lumpur and a Christian politician were accused of "Christianization".

While there is a federal department tasked with promoting religious harmony and protecting the rights of religious minorities, a comparison of the different budgets is telling. As the US State Department states on page 15 of IRFR 2020: "Many faith-based organizations, however, continued to state they believed that no entity had the power and influence of those that regulated Islamic affairs, and they cited the large footprint and budget for JAKIM compared to the more limited funding for the Department of National Unity and Integration. That department's annual budget was approximately 275 million ringgit ($68.41 million), while 1.4 billion ringgit ($348.3 million) was marked for the development of Islam under JAKIM alone." The department's budget increased despite the health crisis.

Economic landscape

According to UNDP's full 2020 report (page 343 onwards):

- ***Gross National Income:*** 27,534 USD (2017 USD PPP)
- ***Rate of multidimensional poverty:*** No data are available, except for an estimated 0.4% of people living below the national poverty line. This led to heated discussion in the WWL 2022 reporting period (see below: *Social and cultural landscape*)
- ***Remittances:*** 0.45% of the total GDP

According to the World Bank:

- Malaysia is classified as an upper middle-income economy and was on its way to transform to become a high income economy in 2024 prior to the COVID-19 crisis.
- ***GDP per capita (PPP, constant 2017 international USD):*** 26,435
- **GDP per capita growth rate:** -6.8% (2020).
- ***Poverty gap at 5.50 USD a day (2011 PPP):*** 0.6% (2015)

The seemingly never-ending corruption scandal surrounding the 1MDB development fund (initiated by news portal Sarawak Report and a July 2015 article in the Washington Post) took on a very personal dimension. It is not just that around 700 million USD had been transferred to the prime minister's private account on behalf of the 1MDB state fund accused of corruption (Reuters, 3 July 2015), Najib Razak also managed to effectively end all domestic investigations. Nevertheless, international investigations in Switzerland and other countries continued and the now defunct PH government decided to take up the case again and within a few weeks brought a case together against Najib Razak and his wife. Valuables worth approximately 273 million USD were found at various properties belonging to Razak, when they were searched for evidence in June 2018 (OCCRP, 28 June 2018). Najib Razak was found guilty of all seven charges in the so called SRC trial, on 28 July 2020. This court case was widely seen as a (high level) litmus test of how seriously Malaysia is fighting corruption.

The political fallout from this court case remains to be seen, as Razak is still a linchpin figure in the UMNO, which is back in power again. However, the PN government coalition may lose its thin majority, if Razak does indeed go to prison (to join many other members and leaders of UMNO already behind bars). Progress has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the court system considerably. A harbinger of things to come could be a court ruling that ordered the government to return the property seized in June 2018, as the govern-

ment could not prove it was purchased with illegal money (Benar News, 8 November 2021). Although the government will appeal against this verdict, it may show where other charges will be heading.

In terms of the economy, Malaysia has been known as one of the "Asian Tigers" and was a fast growing and modernizing state. It still is one of the economically and politically most stable countries in Southeast Asia, but the COVID-19 crisis stopped much of the progress and brought major challenges. The large 6.8% fall in GDP in 2020 testifies to this. Even before the arrival of COVID-19, the cost of living for many people, including the middle class, had become very high, consequently the new PN government has tried to focus its efforts on addressing the well-being of the poorest 40% of the population (the "Bottom 40"). These efforts have had mixed results: As the World Bank says in its country overview: "Income inequality in Malaysia remains high relative to other East Asian countries but is gradually declining. While income growth for the bottom 40 has outpaced the top 60 over much of the last decade, the absolute gap across income groups has increased, contributing to widespread perceptions of the poor being left behind." It should be noted that many of the poorest households are ethnic tribes (*Bumiputra*), living in East Malaysia.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought the nation's goal of achieving "high-income status", as classified by the World Bank, to a temporary halt and it seems increasingly unlikely that this status will be achievable by 2024, as originally hoped. It should be noted that Malaysia produces and exports some of the most important products for dealing with COVID-19. According to a June 2020 World Bank update, called Malaysia Economic Monitor (June 2020), Malaysia meets about 57% of the global demand for sterile medical gloves and about 53% of the demand for non-sterile gloves for examination. Although this only makes up 1.3% of the total pre-crisis exports (and therefore will not be enough to counter the downturn), it is an important reminder that Malaysia's products are sought after. But even this does not come without challenges and forced labor is such a major problem in the industry that the US State Department downgraded Malaysia to the lowest level in its Trafficking in Persons report, leading to immediate reviews and pledges for improvement (Channel News Asia, 5 July 2021). A year later, the Malaysia Economic Monitor (June 2021) showed that 64% of all companies, particularly small and medium enterprises, were hard hit by the country's (Enhanced) Movement Control Orders.

Malaysia has vast resources which include rubber and oil. Significant oil and gas reserves have been found in the waters around East Malaysia, especially Sarawak, and it remains to be seen how the revenue will be shared out. The new PN government may also use this as a political pawn. As a first step, Malaysia's state oil company Petronas agreed to give a larger revenue share to Sarawak State (Nasdaq, 6 December 2020). Sarawak is the only state with a Christian majority population. Another commodity Sarawak and Sabah States are exporting is timber, a business riddled with corruption, environmental devastation and harm to indigenous people. After Indonesia, Malaysia is the world's second largest exporter of palm oil and has been significantly challenged by European efforts to reduce and potentially ban the commodity's use because of environmental issues. This dispute is due to be reviewed by the World Trade Organization (The Diplomat, 8 June 2021).

Malaysia has a 'political economy', as one observer termed it after the new PN government took over (New Mandala, 6 March 2020). Such an economy promotes the Malay majority and, in the face of economic crisis, strongly felt by the Malay middle class as well, this policy will become even more pronounced. Religion has its place in economic thinking as well as can be seen by the use of Islamic banking as an ethno-political tool (Hideki Kitamura, Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, Volume 40, Issue 2, August 2021, pp. 245-265). This is bad news for Malaysia's ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, as it means that all the reform efforts to include minorities made by the former PH government will now be brushed aside.

Women are, in general, more economically vulnerable than men. Whilst Malaysia has achieved gender parity in regard to education access, men remain the primary breadwinners; 55.7% of women are in the labor force, compared to 77.1% of men (UNDP's HDI 2020). Many women and girls regularly lose their inheritance rights, too. Under Sharia rules of inheritance, daughters inherit half that of a son (OECD, 2019).

Social and cultural landscape

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

- ***Main ethnic groups:*** Bumiputera 62% (Malays and indigenous peoples, including Orang Asli, Dayak, Anak Negeri), Chinese 20.6%, Indian 6.2%, other 0.9%, non-citizens 10.3% (2017 est.)
- ***Main languages:*** Bahasa Malaysia (official), English, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Foochow), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Panjabi, Thai
- ***Urbanization rate:*** 77.2%
- ***Literacy rate:*** 94.9% (of all adults age 15 and higher)
- ***Mean years of schooling:*** 10.4 years
- ***Health and education indicators:*** Malaysia has 15.4 physicians and 19 hospital beds per 10,000 people, the pupil teacher ratio in elementary school is 12:1. The rate of child malnutrition and stunting (% under the age of 5) is 20.7%, a rate surprising for such a high developed country.

According to World Bank:

- ***Population age:*** 23.5% of the population are 14 years old or younger, 7.2% are 65 or above
- ***Education:*** 99.49% of primary students complete their education
- ***Unemployment:*** The unemployment rate is 4.6%; the rate of vulnerable employment is 23.8% (modeled ILO estimate)
- I***DPs/Refugees:*** According to the UN's IOM, drawing on numbers from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Malaysia is a target country for working migrants, drawing almost 2 million registered and an estimated 1.4 to three million unregistered migrants to the country, mainly from South and Southeast Asia, but also from the Middle East and Africa. Additionally, there are more than 178,000 refugees registered with the UNHCR, more than 80% from Myanmar.

According to the UN Global Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020):

- ***HDI score and ranking:*** With a score of 0.810, Malaysia ranks 62nd of 189 countries, in the range of "Very high human development". The country's progress has been impressive, but has slowed down in recent years and has stagnated at a high level.
- ***Life expectancy:*** The life expectancy is 76.2 years.
- ***Median age:*** 30.3
- ***GINI coefficient:*** 41.0
- ***Gender inequality:*** With a score of 0.253, Malaysia ranks 59th of 162 countries in the Gender Inequality Index
- ***Unemployment:*** The unemployment rate is 3.3%, the vulnerable employment rate is 21.8%, youth (between 15 and 24) not in employment or school are 12.1%
- ***Poverty:*** The statistics surrounding the issue of poverty in Malaysia are a matter of debate. There was a dispute in August 2019 when the UN Special Rapporteur stated that the poverty level was closer to 16-20% rather than 0.4% as claimed by the government (Benar News, 23 August 2019). Almost a year after that, the (outgoing) Special Rapporteur re-emphasized his criticism by stating that, according to revised government figures, a family of four would still need to survive on 8 USD a day, which is virtually impossible, especially in the cities (Benar News, 6 July 2020). This serves as a reminder how much statistics depend upon definitions and can be easily politicized. In reaction to this, the PN government adapted its criteria (and thus raised the poverty rate from 0.4% to 5.6%) shortly afterwards (Malay Mail, 11 July 2020). For 2020, and under the influence of the COVID-19 crisis, the government announced that the rate increased to 8.4% (Free Malaysia Today, 17 June 2021). If anything, COVID-19 increased the level of poverty. It should also be noted that poverty is more concentrated in the indigenous regions of East Malaysia than on the Peninsula, although the economic downtown is strongly felt there as well. It is therefore not surprising that Malaysia has the third-highest GINI coefficient (measuring the inequality of income) after the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, according to World Bank data. There is also a surprisingly high rate of malnourished and stunted children. By far the majority of them are ethnic *Bumiputera* living in East Malaysia. The World Bank overview concludes: "Malaysia will need to advance further in education, health and nutrition, and social protection outcomes. Key priority areas include enhancing the quality of schooling to improve learning outcomes, rethinking nutritional interventions to reduce childhood stunting, and providing adequate social welfare protection for household investments in human capital formation."

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

In maybe one of the best illustrations of what the COVID-19 crisis and lockdowns have done to many people, a social media movement started in June 2021, called "Raising the White Flag" (Channel News Asia, 4 July 2021). It proposed that people in need should put a white flag in a visible place where they live and called upon others to help those people. Subsequently, hundreds and thousands of flags were raised and countless stories of lost jobs, depleted savings and shortcomings of official help emerged. While this movement has been criticized by government politicians as being politicized and bad practice, it seems to have been initiated by civil society and has nothing to do with political parties or the opposition. In terms of COVID-19, Malaysia was one of the hardest hit countries in Southeast Asia (CNBC, 9 August 2021), despite its strict countermeasures.

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

All Malay children in state-run pre-schools are required to attend Islamic education. In state schools, only Muslim pupils are required to attend Islamic classes. But even for "neutral" subjects this is true. For example, the History lessons in Year 11 (Secondary school form 4) are mainly about Islamic history, which takes up 80% of the syllabus. At the university level, there is a compulsory subject for all students called "Islamic and Asian Civilization" which is felt by many to be a government instrument for furthering Islamization.

Within Malaysia's patriarchal society, men and women are expected to assume traditional gender roles. Under civil and Sharia laws, a husband is legally bound to maintain his wife and lead the household. Women on the other hand are expected to assume responsibility for child-raising and domestic duties (OECD, 2019). Temporarily altering traditional duties, only men were initially allowed to do the shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, as the 'head of the household' (BBC News, 26 March 2020). Also making headlines, Malaysia's government came under criticism for circulating posters asking for women to help in the crisis by 'not nagging their husbands' (NPR, 1 April 2020). These examples exemplify the lower status of women in Malaysian society. Most concerningly, the COVID-19 measures have also been linked to an increase in domestic violence levels (Center for Global Development, 12 April 2021).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- ***Internet usage:*** 89.0% penetration - survey date: June 2021
  According to Statista, there is a small gender gap in relation to Internet access. As of August 2020, 45.7% of users were female compared to 54.3% male users.
- ***Facebook usage:*** 86.9% penetration – survey date: June 2021

According to World Bank:

- ***Mobile phone subscriptions:*** 139.6

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020:

- "The overall state of internet freedom remained steady in Malaysia over the coverage period, although the accession to power of a new ruling coalition in March 2020 threatens recent gains. In December 2019 the Alliance of Hope (PH) government, a reformist coalition elected in 2018, abolished the Anti-Fake News Act. However, criminal prosecutions and investigations for social media posts and other forms of online expression continued to pose threats to internet freedom; in 2020, such cases frequently related to sharing unverified news about the novel coronavirus".
- "In February 2020, the PH government was ousted and replaced by a new ruling coalition, the National Alliance (PN), which included parties from the Barisan Nasional (BN) regime that had ruled Malaysia from independence in 1957 until 2018. These political veterans had maintained power by appealing to ethnic nationalism and suppressing criticism through restrictive speech laws and politicized prosecutions of opposition leaders and activists. The rise of the PN produced uncertainty about whether prior patterns of repression will come into play once again."
- Malaysia is rated as "partly free" and saw a slight improvement compared to the preceding reporting period. According to government statistics, quoted by Freedom House in its 2019 report, the Internet Penetration Rate in 2017 stood at almost 90% - with the rate in Sabah and Sarawak standing at only 43.3% and 51.8% respectively. In general, 70% of all Internet users in Malaysia are living in urban areas.

Apart from the wide gap between East and West Malaysia, which is also an issue in many other aspects of economic and social life, the urban-rural gap has to be kept in mind, too. Especially in the east, there are remote areas with vast stretches of land and little infrastructure, but even in West Malaysia remote areas can also be found. As many Christians are living in East Malaysia, particularly in the state of Sarawak, their access to the Internet can be more limited or it may simply not be available at all. As an illustration, the story of an 18 year-old high school student in Sabah went viral: She climbed a tree to have better internet connection for taking an exam in 2020 (Soya Cincau, 25 July 2020).

Malaysiakini, one of the largest online news providers in Malaysia, has been fined for contempt of court over readers' comments (Malay Mail, 19 February 2021). The fine was paid by supporters via crowdfunding in less than a day. The anti-fake news act was accompanied by a state-run fact checking website; research has shown that this website has not been used to spread propaganda, as had been feared (Schuldt, "Official Truths in a war on fake news: government fact-checking in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, Volume 40, Issue 2, August 2021, pp. 340-371).

Security situation

The grenade attack on a café in the State of Selangor in June 2016 has been the only successful attack by violent Islamic militants in the country so far. It showed the very real danger of the Islamic State group (IS) making inroads into Malaysia. Already in 2016, the country announced that it would take up joint patrols with Indonesia and the Philippines to counter the threat of Islamic militancy in the tri-border island region. The capture of the city of Marawi/Philippines by

radical Islamic militants in May 2017, and the fact that Islamic militants were able to hold it for five months, shows the very real danger as well as the urgent need for cooperation in this region. As the whole region consists of islands and law enforcement often lacks local knowledge, it is hard to monitor the triangle between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines and reportedly, IS stepped up recruiting there (Benar News, 23 September 2020). Weak monitoring from any one country has the potential to endanger all three countries. What may be complicating the situation is that the Philippines and Malaysia have taken their dispute over Sabah in East Malaysia (on the island of Borneo) to the United Nations now, even though the row may have been initiated for domestic political reasons in the first place (Benar News, 3 September 2020).

After the successful attack against the cathedral in Makassar in March 2021 in Indonesia, IS called Malaysian and Indonesian supporters to carry out further attacks (Malay Mail, 31 March 2021). Given the close monitoring by security services, executing such plans is, however, far from easy. As already stated in the WWL 2021 Full Country Dossier, by far the most concrete threat comes from the Abu Sayyaf group, which has its main base in the Philippines, but continues to kidnap ship crews in the waters between the three countries and off the coast of Sabah. In May 2021, the Malaysian police killed five members of Abu Sayyaf in a raid in Sabah (Reuters, 18 May 2021). Although Christians do not have a history of being specifically targeted, this could happen, given the ideology IS is aggressively promoting.

Trends analysis

1) The political turmoil continues to disenfranchise voters

According to a report by East Asia Forum, a survey carried out in recent years showed that 84.3% of Malaysians feel that the relationship between the government and people is similar to that between a parent and a child. It is therefore by no means certain that Malay citizens want to vote for a growing openness instead of paternalism. However, a more recent survey has shown that 51% of respondents were undecided about who to vote for in a future federal election (East Asia Forum, 3 June 2021), which reflects feelings of insecurity and disenfranchisement. At the same time, the desire to be protected and safe is still strong. Since the Malay middle class has been particularly affected by the COVID crisis and the political situation, for the first time, the feeling may be not "Malay against minorities" or "Islam against other religions", but more the "haves against the have nots". One observer even said that the middle class in Malaysia had collapsed, despite its privileged position in the New Economic Policy (The Diplomat, 1 August 2021).

It will be important to see if this feeling leads to a change in voting patterns. Fears of losing against minorities have again be stirred up by the aforementioned publication of the e-book and the slandering of Archbishop Leow. The fact that parliament did not meet for business for more than seven months and was thus neither able to control nor influence the government's policies (in what was arguably one of the most challenging periods Malaysia ever faced), illustrates the state the country's politics are in. If the voting calendar is anything to go by, next national elections are to be held in 2023, meaning that 2022 will be a year of preparation and campaigning. It remains to be seen if the feeling of disenfranchisement and of polarization between "the haves" and "the have nots" will be stronger than the fear of losing a privileged

position compared to the ethnic and religious minorities. It is very possible that the 2023 elections will have an 'us against them' focus and appeal to the Malay middle class's fear of losing its privileged position.

While 2018 will always be remembered as the year when the electorate discovered its power in Malaysia and voted against corruption and for a fresh start, the jury is still out on how the COVID period will be remembered. It is very probable that Malaysia will go back to its old ruling patterns, not only in terms of kleptocracy and horse-trading (where government leaders use their authority to embezzle public funds for self-gain), but also in terms of ignoring and neglecting the plight of ethnic and religious minorities. And with a spike of COVID-19 numbers since May 2021, the way back to economic and social recovery will be a long one, and even longer for the many Christians living in East Malaysia.

2) The sentencing of a former prime minister has the potential to serve as a wake-up call

The sentencing of Najib Razak in July 2020 to twelve years in prison on seven counts, among them corruption, may have the potential to be a game-changer (Malay Mail, 28 July 2020). The sentence was upheld in the Court of Appeal, where the judge called the whole issue a "national embarrassment" (Reuters, 8 December 2021). As the son of Malaysia's second prime minister, Razak is a member of the political elite in the country, which has been largely untouchable. Just a week before the initial sentencing, on 22 July 2020, another court ruled that he had to pay 400 million USD in outstanding taxes, showing that the days of being untouchable may have passed (SCMP, 22 July 2020). On the other hand, it is an open question if the appeal court will uphold the sentence and if there will be political interference. For the time being, Najib Razak remains a free man, cheered on by his supporters, who call him "Bossku" ("my boss"), and is even allowed to travel again. This case has the potential to serve as a wake-up call to Malaysians to do things differently. But it also has the potential to bring back the old ways of UMNO rule, should Razak be able to evade justice. It should be kept in mind that the government's majority is very small, so that Najib Razak's vote is crucial. Consequently, there is pressure from a strong UMNO fraction within the PN government to stop the court proceedings and clear convictions.

The new UMNO-led government has agreed with the opposition on a number of reform measures in an historic pact. In return, UMNO promised that parliament would not be dissolved before August 2022 (Benar News 13 September 2021). While the reform measures (among them a ban of the frequent practice of so-called political party-hopping) is commendable, it remains to be seen if they really will be implemented. Further, any support for the new 'Keluarga Malaysia' ('Family Malaysia') policy comes at a price, too. Despite the term sounding religiously inclusive, just a few days before, a deputy minister announced that the federal government had drafted four new laws to strengthen Sharia law in Malaysia, among them a law to control the growth of non-Muslim religions (Malay Mail, 9 September 2021).

From the perspective of the ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, this is a critical time. The window of opportunity for real changes for the benefit of all may still be open, but it is closing fast and the first chance has already been squandered. It is very possible that those who think Malaysia will struggle to see human rights and the rule of law strengthened now that UMNO has returned to power, will be proved correct (USCIRF Country Update Malaysia, Novem-

ber 2021). It should also not be forgotten that Islamic conservative PAS rules in several states and has never really been weakened.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: new government - https://coconuts.co/kl/news/malaysia-ismail-sabri-yaakob-cabinet-lineup-health-no-dpm/
- Recent history: declared - https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysias-king-calls-parliament-resume-earliest-2021-06-16/
- Political and legal landscape: found guilty - https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-malaysia-politics-najib/malaysias-najib-convicted-on-all-charges-in-first-1mdb-graft-case-idUKKCN24T03N
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WWL 2022: Church information / Malaysia

Christian origins

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

Church spectrum today

Malaysia: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	4,600	0.2
Catholic	1,518,000	50.1
Protestant	1,194,000	39.4
Independent	240,000	7.9
Unaffiliated	92,000	3.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-20,900	-0.7
Total	**3,027,700**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	640,000	21.1
Renewalist movement	652,000	21.5

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.*

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

The geographical distribution is important as well. Most *Bumiputra* Christians reside in the states of Sabah and Sarawak; the latter still has a Christian majority. These states make up East Malaysia and are situated on the island of Borneo (which is shared with Brunei and Indonesia). To complicate the situation, many *Bumiputra* are migrating to West Malaysia for educational or economic reasons where it is especially hard for them to stay true to their Christian faith.

Converts from a Muslim-Malay background complete the picture of the Malaysian Church. These Christians face a high level of persecution as they have not only left their Islamic faith; their conversion is seen as acting against their very ethnicity and nation as well.

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Malaysia

Reporting period

01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Malaysia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	63	50
WWL 2021	63	46
WWL 2020	62	40
WWL 2019	60	42
WWL 2018	65	23

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

The score in WWL 2022 remained almost the same, with an increase of only 0.2 points. The violence score increased by 0.9 points and remained at a "fairly high" level. The scoring across all spheres of life remained on a comparable level to WWL 2021, with the exception of the *Community sphere*, where pressure dropped by 1.4 points. This was mainly due to additional information on taxation being obtained and related questions re-evaluated.

Persecution engines

Malaysia: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Not at all
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong

Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

Islamic oppression (Strong), blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

For a long time, Malaysia carried the image of probably being the world's best role model for a liberal and tolerant Islamic country. However, this image has been fading over the last years. One example of this can be seen in the government's continued attempt to introduce Sharia penal law *(hudud)* in the State of Kelantan and legal amendments came into force on 1 November 2021. The conservative Muslim PAS party in power in Kelantan immediately called for Sharia penal law after the elections in May 2018 and also took over power in Terengganu. After the change of federal government, PAS joined the ruling coalition and runs three ministries (but not the one for religious affairs).

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

The ban on using the standard vocabulary "Allah" for God in Bahasa Malay, implemented against a Catholic newspaper, which was sanctioned by the High Court in January 2015, is being followed by more court cases, e.g. in the state of Sabah. This case is highly sensitive and political; as a result - as of November 2021 - a court decision is still pending (Ecumenical News, 16 June 2020).

Politics and society are driven by one particular ethnic impulse, namely the preservation and superiority of the Malay ethnic group. While the Persecution engine *Ethno-religious hostility* is clearly blended with and dominated by religious motives, as every Malay has to be a Muslim, it has to be mentioned since it clearly plays out in the missionary *dawah* movement which has been offering poverty-stricken native communities in East Malaysia lucrative incentives and benefits if they convert to Islam.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

Although *Dictatorial paranoia* is certainly only a subsidiary Persecution engine in Malaysia, it is relevant for understanding the country's situation. After a two year hiatus (having been voted out of office), UMNO is back in government. UMNO had been part of a coalition of parties comprised of a Muslim party in alliance with smaller Chinese and Indian parties and for years had never had to face opposition parties. In an attempt to stay in power, UMNO chose to re-emphasize its policy of preferential treatment for Malay people (instead of following a policy of equality) and increasingly played religious and racial cards. Now that UMNO and PAS are back in the federal government, *Dictatorial paranoia* has seen a revival, as both parties, UMNO and PAS, are advocating for Malay Muslim dominance and preferential treatment.

Drivers of persecution

Malaysia: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG		MEDIUM					STRONG	
Government officials	Strong		Strong					Medium	
Ethnic group leaders	Strong		Medium					Weak	
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong		Medium					-	
Ideological pressure groups	Medium		Medium					Weak	
One's own (extended) family	Strong		Strong					-	
Political parties	Strong		Strong					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 (Strong), blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

- ***Non-Christian religious and ethnic group leaders (Strong):*** Various Muslim NGOs see themselves as "champions of Islam" and have enjoyed government support. At times they stir up racial disharmony and religious discrimination with their statements and actions. They keep reminding citizens that being a Malay means being a Muslim and sometimes warn against alleged Christian mission and conversion efforts. At the same time, leaders of ethnic minority groups can compromise their rights for the sake of getting material benefits and ethnic majority group leaders will emphasize and strengthen its group`s domination as much as possible.
- ***Extended family (Strong):*** For converts, family members continue to be the strongest drivers of persecution, as leaving their original faith is seen as a disgrace, putting them outside the ethnic and religious community. Social pressure on the family to bring the convert back into the fold is also high. This can also mean handing the converts over to the authorities for ideological treatment.
- ***Government officials (Strong):*** The Constitution prohibits Malays from converting to other religions and limits the propagation of non-Muslim religions. Government officials hence strive to maintain and increase Islamic standards, to the detriment of non-Muslim minorities. The new government announced to keep up the preferential treatment of the Malay and *Bumiputera* population and faces an uphill battle to help the economy recover after the COVID-19 pandemic. This will serve as another incentive to benefit Malays first.
- ***Political parties (Strong):*** Political parties like UMNO and PAS are back in power and one of the main points on their agenda is to uphold and protect Islam and the dominance of the ethnic Malay group. It was PAS, for example, who proposed the introduction of Hudud Law in Kelantan. UMNO and PAS are sowing discord and hatred towards Christians and are using religion to rally support from the Malays, and as the government depends on them for keeping its majority, it will not speak out against this (and anyway shares the Malay Muslim supremacist sentiment).

- ***Ideological pressure groups (Medium):*** Most pressure groups focus on preserving the ethnic dominance of the Malay people. But Islamic groups like ISMA are very active in calling for the protection of Islam as well. One example of this is that of a Chinese ethnic educational group which had opposed the mandatory teaching of the (Arabic) Jawi script and was immediately blamed for being 'Islamophobic' (Malay Mail, 28 December 2019).

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- ***Government officials (Medium):*** The Islamist party PAS holds a majority in three states in Malaysia and is back in the federal government after more than four decades. Additionally, civil servants in the administration do not change their thinking quickly. This is especially true for the administration of religious affairs.
- ***Political parties (Strong):*** What has been stated above for drivers of *Islamic oppression* is applicable here as well.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

There are no hotspots of persecution for Christians in Malaysia. However, the Islamic missionary work among Christians (*dawah*) - especially among the *Bumiputra* - focuses on communities in East Malaysia, but is not limited to that region as a report from the Western Malaysian state of Pahang shows (Cilisos, 10 May 2021). State-supported plans for conversion to Islam have been published. Helped by the number of migrating Muslims, the religious affiliation in Sabah State already ceased to be Christian-majority several years ago, and Sarawak is now only a Christian majority state on paper.

Christian communities and how they are affected

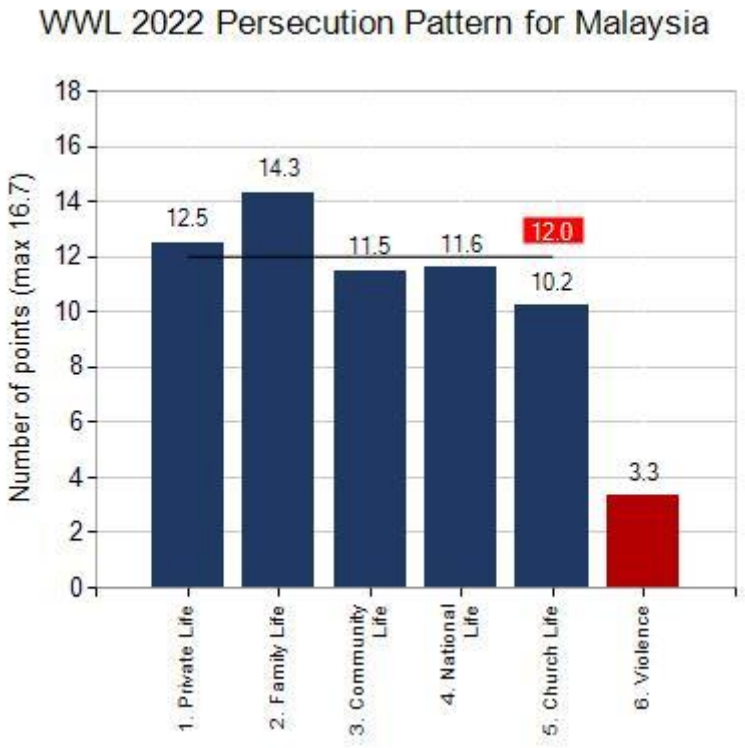
Communities of expatriate Christians: There are many nationalities who have their own Christian fellowships and are self-supporting (e.g. Korean and Japanese churches). They struggle to obtain legal status at times, but are basically free to live their faith as long as they stay within their walls. Nepalese and Vietnamese Christians in most cases join the Historical Christian communities. Hence, communities of expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated and are not considered for the purposes of the WWL.

Historical Christian communities: Examples are churches belonging to Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans and the Protestant Church in Sabah. These are all less affected by persecution than Non-traditional Christian communities or converts, but they do suffer from discrimination.

Converts to Christianity: By law, In Malaysia, apostasy is punishable by death. Malaysia is one out of only 11 countries in the world to have apostasy technically punishable by death, although this has not been implemented. Depending on where they are in the country, Christian converts from a Muslim background are able to meet. But all are facing opposition to varying degrees, namely from family, friends, neighbors and the authorities.

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

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Malaysia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Malaysia remained at almost the same level (12.0 points in WWL 2022 compared to 12.2 points in WWL 2021).
- Pressure is extremely high and strongest in the *Family sphere of life.* Next highest pressure occurs in the *Private and National spheres of life*. The pressure in the *Family, Community* and *Private spheres* points to problems faced by converts from Islam and other religions, driven as well by the country's Islamization policy. Pressure resulting from the persecution engine *Islamic oppression* is present in all spheres. Conservative Islamic groups and parties have increased in strength and influence in Malaysia.
- The score for violence against Christians was 3.3 points, higher than in WWL 2021 (2.4 points). Apart from the abduction of certain Christians in recent years, persecution has rarely been violent in Malaysia. Pastor Joshua Hilmy and his wife Ruth have been missing for more than two years now, after they disappeared from their home in the state of Selangor; the investigation is ongoing (Benar News, 14 April 2017). Pastor Raymond Koh was abducted while driving on a busy road in Petaling Jaya and is missing since February 2017. His whereabouts are still unknown and according to the findings of the country's human rights commission, the Special Branch of the police was involved in the abduction.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 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. (3.50 points)

By law, Malay Muslims are not allowed to convert from Islam in any state except Sarawak, but even here, the process is long and tedious. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) wants the penalty for apostasy to be death at the federal law level, but so far those efforts have not succeeded. A court ruled that apostasy cases can only be heard by Sharia courts, not civil courts, adding to the almost impossible situation converts find themselves in. Publicly renouncing Islam is very dangerous and comes at a high cost (Vice News, 1 April 2021).

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.50 points)

Since Muslims who convert to Christianity are considered apostates, it is very risky for them to reveal their faith in any form, as they will be punished or can be sent to an Islamic 'purification center' where they are pressured into returning to Islam. Some converts are known to disappear from one day to the next with no-one knowing their whereabouts. If converts are still living with their parents and siblings or the wider family (which is often the case), it is impossible for them to wear or display any Christian symbols. There is even a guideline from the Fatwa Department, according to which Christmas trees and other decorations that have come to symbolize Christmas celebrations around the world should not be used if a Muslim plans to attend a Christmas event. It also forbids Muslims from attending Christmas functions that have religious songs or the use of the cross, or "speech or gestures in the form of a praise to the non-Muslim religion". However, it is not clear what consequences it would have to ignore such rulings.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.25 points)

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, there have been several cases of investigations into how far social media posts have insulted Islam. Conversion can be easily seen as insulting or going against Islam, too. But there are other repercussions if a convert reveals his/her faith in a blog or on Facebook as well: The family is usually the first to act by cutting all family ties. Sometimes religious officials take the convert away for relocation and re-education. Therefore converts exert a high level of self-restriction and if they dare to share about their new faith, they use another account with a different name in social media.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.25 points)

As no Malay is allowed to leave Islam, every discussion about faith is fraught with the risk of being perceived as proselytizing. It is also possible that Christians - or atheists - are accused of "insulting Islam" because of such a topic. Even the mere social support given to Muslim mothers in need seeking aid from churches during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to investigations (Malay Mail, 30 April 2021). Displaying the love of Christ can easily be perceived as proselytizing. For converts, discussions about faith come naturally with a much higher risk, as they can lead to one's conversion being discovered.

Block 1 - further information:

Christians from a Muslim background cannot attend any public church activities (except in East Malaysia, although even there it is not without risk - a rule of thumb is: The more rural the village, the higher the risk). If they do, they risk being caught by the authorities and the church attended will face serious consequences for welcoming them. Therefore, converts gather secretly in homes for all their Christian activities, away from the prying eyes of government, community and the registered churches. The pandemic pushed all meetings online, but even attending online meetings is not without certain risks. Converts have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian materials have to be hidden carefully and can only be used with much caution as devout Muslim families will not tolerate it.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.75 points)

According to current law, children born to couples where one parent is a Muslim (either by birth or conversion) are automatically registered as Muslims. Since converts cannot change their religion to Christianity, their children will be registered as Muslims.

The problem surrounding registering children is an ongoing problem for *Bumiputras* (Malays and indigenous people). As for the law concerning the unilateral conversion of children, the Federal Court has now ruled that it is unlawful, and therefore both parents' consent are needed for the conversion of children. The official practice is that the religion of the child is registered in the Birth Certificate, MyKID (identity card below 12 years old), and MyKAD (identity card 12 years old and above). However, there are cases of malpractice where the registrar has put the child's religion as Islam - especially for Orang Asli (indigenous population). Natives in Sabah and Sarawak have the affixes 'bin' (son of) or 'binti' (daughter of) in their names even though they are not Muslims, which leads officers to believe they are Muslims and put Islam as their religion in the MyKads (Identity Card). The National Human Rights Commission SUHAKAM has officially complained about this practice of 'forced conversion' in Sarawak (MalayMail, 21 January 2021), but so far their complaints have been ignored. This has also been one of the problems the *Bumiputra* Christians have been facing. However, some of them do not bother to 'fight' over it as the process is long and arduous with very few successful results. With a growing number being converted to Islam, either willfully or through deceit, the parents' children will automatically follow the 'new' religious identity, which is Islam. As the 'religion' is not shown in the physical identity card but in the digital information accessed only via card reader, it is easy

for the government to register children of indigenous people groups and native/tribal groups under Islam without the parents knowing it or checking it.

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (3.75 points)

As the registration department also issues death certificates, burials are a problem for converts and - according to what has been said under 2.1 - also for many Christians from the indigenous people. If records show that the person who died is registered as Muslim, the authorities will inform the Islamic religious authority. If the burial rites are not celebrated according to Islam, this Islamic authority has the right to take the body away from the non-Muslim family so that they can perform Islamic rites for the deceased.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.75 points)

It is very common for state high schools to teach compulsory subjects such as 'Tamadun Islam' (Islamic civilization), 'Sejarah Islam' (History of Islam) and 'Sastera Melayu' (Malay literature). For example, the history lessons in Year 11 (Secondary school form 4) are mainly about Islamic history and take up 80% of the syllabus. Non-Muslim children must take these subjects since attendance is compulsory. The content of these lessons led one educator to call for teaching an undistorted version of history (Free Malaysia Today, 14 April 2021). It is also common for children of the indigenous tribes in Malaysia (Orang Asli) to be pressured into attending religious/Arabic classes. The status of "vernacular schools" (independent schools serving mainly the Chinese minority) has been a point of conflict in the WWL 2022 reporting period and it remains to be seen what the new government decides. Up until the new government took over in August 2021, it had been argued that independent schools belong within the country's education system (Free Malaysia Today, 10 May 2021).

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.75 points)

Children of converts have to attend Islamic education in schools and there are reports that Christian children are put under pressure to convert to Islam in an effort to bolster *dawah*. Sometimes, parents who have converted to Christianity have to take their children out of school as they may unintentionally talk about their parents' faith. Children of Christians are frequently harassed and discriminated against because of their parents' faith. Derogatory comments by peers are common and even teachers have shamed Christian students for what is often a mix of religious and ethnic reasons. One country expert shared: "Everyone has to attend Islamic seminars and take exams for Islamic studies. If you fail the Islamic exams, that's something which is frowned upon. You have to wear a headscarf to school, you have to go for prayers - it's all mandatory especially in government schools."

Block 2 - further information:

Malaysia seems to be the only country in the world where religious conversion changes ethnicity as well. There are reported cases where children of converted natives suddenly 'professed' to be Muslim Malays when their real ethnicity was Iban. When asked why they answered that way,

they said: "Because our (Muslim) teachers told us so!" Some Christians from indigenous tribes, especially in Sabah, are converted to Islam by trickery. To accept financial help from the government, some of them handed in their identity card and signed a form not knowing that this was a declaration to convert to Islam. When they got their card back, they realized that their religion has been changed to Islam. When they tried to reverse this, they were told by the Federal Registration Department that their religious status can only be changed if approval is given by the Sharia courts, which is impossible to obtain.

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

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.75 points)

This pressure is acute for the indigenous people in East Malaysia, but also affects the Orang Asli in West Malaysia (Cilisos, 10 May 2021). The state-driven and financed Muslim missionary activity (*dawah*) often uses the economic and social difficulties experienced by Christian and animist natives to entice them to convert to Islam with financial benefits. Such and even stronger pressure is exerted against Christian converts from a Muslim background, as they face stints in re-education camps. Converts from other religious backgrounds can face physical abuse, depending on the family.

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.75 points)

What one country expert called the "racial micro-aggression in the Malaysian School System" has continued and is inextricably linked with religious motives. For non-Malay students, access to several universities is limited. Public universities are still adopting the quota system whereby *Bumiputra* students (Malays and indigenous people) have a higher quota while non-Bumiputra students have less access to courses at state universities. This applies to state universities' intake and government scholarships. A news article in February 2018 stated that, in a forum discussion, only one student from UiTM (a government university reserved for *Bumiputras*) publicly supported the idea of opening the universities to non-Bumiputras. He expressed the opinion that non-Bumiputras also had a right to education, but was met with angry and racist remarks from his classmates. The head of the class even said: "Do you think that if UiTM opens its doors for the non-Bumiputras, you would be here? If the Indians and Chinese get into UiTM, you guys will never be able to finish your studies" (Free Malaysia Today, 15 February 2018). In order to qualify for higher education and scholarships, Christians - as non-Malay in general - need to overcome far higher hurdles than Muslims due to the "affirmative action policy" in favor of Malays.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

There has always been discrimination against non-Malays and preference for Malays in public employment, but the PH government had raised hopes of possible change by calling some Christians into higher positions of state by merit, despite fierce opposition from the Islamic-Malay parties and organizations. This led to accusations that the Muslim cause is lost and Malaysia will now be "Christianized" and has been immediately rolled back with the PN government coming to power. As for private businesses (for example owned by Chinese Christians, but also in general to all non-Malay business owners), to get government contracts it is required by law that the owners must have *Bumiputra* partners. To get round this, some companies are known to have '*Bumiputra* partners' on paper only. On the other hand, there are private businesses with a "Muslim only" hiring policy: In the WWL 2022 reporting period, a 'Muslim only' dental clinic made it to the news (Free Malaysia Today, 4 November 2020).

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)

Converts always have to be cautious in their activities - especially concerning the people they visit or receive into their homes. They are watched by neighbors and can be easily reported to the village authorities who will question them. Churches, like other religious entities, are being monitored by the Special Branch of the police. However, due to the pandemic and the related lockdown and control of movement, physical monitoring lessened or even stopped because meetings and services were carried out on online platforms. Those can be monitored as well and less noticeably. Aside from the state authorities and local Muslim communities, Malay Islamic rights groups (e.g. Perkasa and ISMA) are known to monitor Christian activities.

Block 3 - further information:

In remote areas in Sabah and Sarawak, Malay communities have access to water and electricity, but some native communities known to be Christian are denied such access. Although in general, indigenous and Orang Asli communities are deliberately neglected (for example, they have less access to infrastructure), being a Christian among such communities makes them even more prone to discrimination. There have been reports on discrimination on access to healthcare related to COVID-19, but it was not immediately clear if this was for faith-related reasons. Converts face strong pressure from family, friends and neighbors to recant their Christian faith. Christians in Malaysia are often harassed and threatened for faith-related reasons. The discrimination often takes places because of dress codes. In states like Kelantan, ruled by the PAS, there have been raids focusing on the proper Islamic dress for women. This is putting pressure on Christians as well.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (4.00 points)

Officials refuse to recognize an individual's right to convert, especially when it is stated in the documents that they are Muslim, be they Malay or non-Malay. Muslims desiring to renounce Islam have to go through a long and painful legal process, and are often charged with apostasy. It is virtually impossible for ethnic Malays to legally convert to Christian faith, since even the Constitution stands against it. A citizen's religious status is stated in the identification card (Malay Mail, 28 January 2020) and it is an uphill battle to have it removed should someone wish to leave Islam. As a result, many Bumiputra are wrongly categorized as Muslims on their ID cards. The authorities provide financial aid to those who want to convert to Islam.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Religion is part of every sphere of life in Malaysia. Discrimination against Christians (and all non-Malay and non-Muslims) takes place at all levels of society, including local administration and government. The authorities give special treatment to Malays and, for example, non-Malay owned companies are required to have at least one Malay as board member. There have been reports of COVID-19 emergency aid not being distributed equally (Malay Mail, 28 April 2020). As is often the case in Malaysia, this may have happened for a whole host of religious, ethnic or political reasons. An example that Orang Asli can also be threatened with administrative troubles when not cooperating on getting vaccinated was also reported in this reporting period (Malaysiakini, 27 May 2021).

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (3.50 points)

As a field expert explained: "Religious freedom is enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution; Article 11 provides the right to profess and to practice religion for every person, and (subject to applicable laws restricting the propagation of other religions to Muslims) to propagate it." The Constitution defines ethnic Malays as Muslims. That is why Malays do not have the religious liberty to leave Islam and embrace another religion. As already stated above, the Federal Court ruled that jurisdiction on the validity of a conversion lies with the Sharia courts, not the civil courts, leaving converts effectively without legal representation for the time-being. The Constitution also prohibits adherents of other religions from propagating their religion among Malay Muslims. Yet it allows Muslims to propagate Islam all over the country. Furthermore, Sharia law is in place in conjunction with civil law, and the proposed *hudud*-bill which plans to allow Islamic corporal punishment in the state of Kelantan entered into force on 1 November 2021.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.50 points)

On websites run by Malay Islamic rights groups and in government-owned media, Christians are frequently slandered, for example by spreading rumors that Christians and Jews want to take

over Malaysia. The example of the Catholic Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur has already been given above. A member of Parliament, Steven Sim, was accused of helping a Muslim for publicity and maybe even for conversion (Malay Mail, 20 April 2021). In a positive development, police began to investigate a Muslim woman who after the "Allah" court decision pledged online "to destroy Christians" (UCA News, 17 March 2021). There have been other examples in the reporting period.

Block 4 - further information:

The country's harsh sedition laws have drawn much condemnation from international observers. Although the law bans any action, speech or publication that brings contempt against the government or Malaysia's nine royal sultans and prohibits people from inciting hatred between different races and religions, it is used one-sidedly, as could be seen in the cases quoted above. Those who instigate hatred and stoke racial and religious sentiments against Christians are rarely charged for sedition. Questioning the special position of the ethnic Malay majority and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak falls under sedition as well. Those who have spoken out against the government have mostly had to face sedition charges too. Indigenous people face aggressive, deliberate attempts to convert them to Islam, especially those who migrate to West Malaysia as it is easy to take advantage of their social uprooting and their economic vulnerability. In the long term, the Christian population may shrink because of this, especially in East Malaysia. In a limitation of businesses, halal certified bakeries are not allowed to display products with Christmas greetings, although they are allowed to produce them (Malay Mail, 24 December 2020).

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (4.00 points)

Most churches - even the large and well-established ones - are very cautious when it comes to welcoming converts as it is very risky for them to integrate Muslim background Christians. As a result, converts usually meet in secret groups, separate from other Christians, because churches will otherwise run into trouble with the authorities. At times, churches have even turned away converts and sometimes even reported them to the authorities, as they did not want to get into trouble. The risk of converts being caught going to church is much higher in West Malaysia.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.50 points)

Article 11(3) of the Constitution states: "Every religious group has the right to: manage its own religious affairs; establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes; and acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with the law." However, a country expert states: "Generally, it is difficult for a newly established church to register or obtain legal status for operating as a church. Churches often register as societies or clubs to make it easier (or even possible) to open a bank account, as well as to acquire and manage assets." This comes with the duty to report to the authorities.

Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Pastors and church leaders have been natural targets for hostility from religious or ethnic groups, especially when they or their church have been perceived as engaging in acts of evangelism, and even more so, when this happens among Muslims. The abduction of Pastor Raymond Koh in broad daylight in February 2017 sent shockwaves through the Christian community and leadership which are still felt today. It is particularly unnerving that his whereabouts almost five years after the incident are still unknown, the perpetrators have not been found (let alone punished), and that findings point to the involvement of the Special Branch of the police.

Block 5.16: Churches, Christian organizations, institutions or groups have been prevented from using mass media to present their faith (e.g. via local or national radio, TV, Internet, social media, cell phones). (3.50 points)

Malaysia has a Christian radio station but, apart from that, churches refrain from using mass media for a variety of reasons, including the risk of being accused of unethical conversion. Also, access to such programs is not possible on a nationwide scale

Block 5 - further information:

All printing of Christian materials requires permission from the government. Restrictions are imposed on importing Bahasa Malaysia materials and the Bible and Christian Malay books from Indonesia are banned. In 2015, the government issued a SOP (standard operating procedure) according to which all imported Christian publications (including the Malay Bible) are to be controlled by the Quranic Division of the Home Ministry (Malaysiakini, 17 June 2015). Despite objections from church leaders, the government went ahead with its implementation. Moreover, the use of the word "Allah" for God is practically banned for Christians, after the High Court banned the Christian usage in a Catholic newspaper (notwithstanding the fact that this term has been used for hundreds of years in Bibles and other Christian publications and is used in the Bahasa Indonesia Bible without any problem). A proposal made during the Jill Ireland case in November 2017 requested that the country's (Islamic) language institute issue a new Bible translation without the word "Allah" (Malay Mail, 20 November 2017). It also revealed the Islamic authorities mindset when they proposed getting the state authorities to do the translation of the Bible - instead of Christians. The High Court made headlines by issuing a detailed decision on the Ireland case in March 2021, explaining why Christians are allowed to use the word "Allah" (Malay Mail, 24 March 2021). Not surprisingly, the government and several State Islamic authorities declared they would appeal the decision.

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, a deputy minister announced that the federal government had drafted four new laws to strengthen Sharia law in Malaysia, among them a law to control the development of non-Muslim religions (Malay Mail, 9 September 2021). Although the Law Minister said that no such proposal had been submitted in the final draft, churches and members of other religious minorities were alarmed and claimed that such a law would contradict the constitutional provisions of Malaysia (UCA News, 13 September 2021). Even though the draft

was not accepted this time, it is a sign that religious minorities in Malaysia are facing ever more organized opposition and limitations."

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.*

Malaysia: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
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?	1	1
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	2
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?	1	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	3	3
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	100 *	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	1
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?	1	0
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?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	6	10
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	8

For the WWL 2022 reporting period - for security reasons only few details can be provided:

- ***Christians attacked/arrested:*** At least one Christian was arrested and many have been verbally abused, e.g in schools.
- ***Churches attacked:*** There has been at least one attack against a church building.

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

Malaysia: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	12.0
2021	12.2
2020	12.2
2019	11.7
2018	12.3

The score for average pressure on Christians has remained very high, within the range 11.7 and 12.3 points for the last five reporting periods; despite a decrease in WWL 2022, it is still higher than it was in WWL 2019. The political turmoil and the changes of government did not yet result in immediate changes of the situation for Christians and other religious minorities.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

Pressure has always been highest (at an extreme level) in the *Family sphere of life*. The level of pressure in *Church life* has always been the lowest compared to the rest of the spheres of life; over the last five WWL reporting periods, it initially decreased (reflecting more an increasing boldness in church activity than any changes occurring due to government or society), but bounced back with a continued rise from WWL 2020 onwards. The level of pressure in *Community life* is currently the lowest in all five reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

The spike in violence in WWL 2018 was due to the (still unsolved) abduction of three Christians; the violence score in WWL 2022 rose compared to WWL 2021 due an increased number of reports on detention and other violence.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Targeted Seduction; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

In a November 2021 USCIRF publication on religious freedom in Malaysia, it was observed that Malaysia has witnessed unprecedented political instability in recent years, with the sudden collapse of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition in February 2020, and then the collapse of the succeeding Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition in August 2021. "During this time," the report summary notes, "Malaysian authorities from various political parties in several states and the federal government continued to pursue policies to further restrict religious freedom." Rights have long been restricted for Muslim women and girls who are governed by Sharia law, which restrict their rights in relation to marriage, divorce and child guardianship.

In light of this, female converts from Islam to Christianity are vulnerable to a wide spectrum of pressure, the most prevalent being the threat of sexual violence and/or forced marriage to a Muslim. Since the minimum legal age for marriage in the Islamic family laws (16 for females) can be lowered with the consent of a Sharia judge, it is possible for girls to be married as teenagers (Girls Not Brides). This can make girls who convert to Christianity much more vulnerable. Such cases are rarely reported, however, as they are seen as shameful for the family (in the sense that it is deemed shameful for marriage to be necessitated to pressure a convert daughter into rejecting her new-found faith).

Peer pressure within schools has reportedly increased for girls, particularly in relation to dress code. While schools in Malaysia have been prohibited from compelling students to wear the *tudong* (a traditional headscarf) for nearly three decades, social pressure leads to them wearing it anyway (Free Malaysia Today, 9 February 2021).

The COVID-19 crisis has reportedly caused an increase in domestic violence, which is likely to have impacted Christian female converts (Free Malayisa Today, 4 May, 2021). On rare occasions, Christian women are also vulnerable to being detained and interrogated by the authorities about Christian networks and leaders, although this remains a greater source of pressure for men.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	-
Security	-
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Following a period of political instability, the PN government is a point of concern for Christians in Malaysia. While the PH government had pledged to sign the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, ultra-conservative Muslim groups strongly oppose this as they fear it will encourage apostasy and proselytism of Muslims. Men and boys are often the target of these ultra-conservative Muslim groups. The per-

secution typically impacting Christian men also comes in the form of bullying by vigilante groups and monitoring by the religious authorities.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020, pages 12-13):

"Federal and state governments continued to forbid religious assembly and worship for groups considered to be 'deviant' Islamic groups, including Shia, Ahmadiyya, and al-Arqam. While Ahmadi Muslims in the country reported generally being able to maintain a worship center, government religious authorities did not allow them to hold Friday prayers, as these could only be performed in an officially registered mosque. In January, the Selangor State Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) said there were 15 Shia religious centers, which JAIS considered to be a significant increase. The chairperson of JAIS said the agency would intensify efforts to monitor Shia Muslims and raid Shia religious gatherings and would also provide information on the alleged dangers of Shia Islam to schools and mosques throughout the state. In response, the NGO Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) said JAIS was promoting 'an intolerant religion [Islam] in this modern age'. In August 2019, the Court of Appeal petitioned the High Court to determine whether 39 Ahmaddiya Muslims were to be considered Muslim following an appeal by JAIS against a 2018 High Court decision stating that the sharia court had no jurisdiction over the Ahmadi community, since JAIS had refused to recognize them as adherents of Islam. The petitioners challenged their 2014 sharia offenses charged by JAIS on the basis that Islamic authorities in Selangor State did not recognize Ahmadiyya as Muslims and that the petitioners were therefore outside JAIS jurisdiction. The High Court ruled in August, 'The Ahmaddiya were, as with all other persons, entitled to freedom of religion, subject to the Federal Constitution.' The court also said the country's dual legal system and the issuance of identity cards stating their holders' religion as Islam compounded the ambiguity of their religious status as Muslims. The three-member bench chaired by Justice Badariah Sahamid further stated, 'It is timely that all states, along with the federal government, work out a unified regime to determine the religious status of the Ahmadiyya so that they are not put at risk of sharia investigations and prosecution.'"

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

Although both governments in the WWL 2022 reporting period struggled more with the fall-out of the pandemic and with keeping enough seats to stay in power, ethno-religious motives colored their policy and ethnic and religious minorities continued to be marginalized. Significant elements within UMNO are openly wooing conservative Muslims and cooperate with conservative Muslim PAS, trying to exploit the already big ethnic and religious divide, which the country is suffering from. This has proved to be a time-tested policy in Malaysia.

A shift towards more rigid and political Islamic practice is taking place with an influx of radical Islamic scholars returning from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Many of these Malay scholars have

joined the government as members of the Department of Islamic Advancement of Malaysia to preach in mosques and spread their radicalized views on Islam. Islamization of native Christians from Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) is happening at a fast rate. Sarawak still enjoys a greater degree of religious freedom compared to West Malaysia and is the only place where Islam is not the state religion. But once the population demography tilts towards Islam, more Islamic laws will undoubtedly be set in place. There are reports from remote areas where uneducated indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak are "drugged" or people are made drunk and forced to sign documents, after which they turn out to have become Muslims. If this practice will change in the future remains to be seen.

The calls for increased autonomy by the states of Sabah and Sarawak (termed 'state nationalism' in an article in The Diplomat, published on 25 May 2021) affect the two states with the largest Christian population in the country. As these states are seen as the kingmakers, it is very likely that not just state and ethnic, but also religious motives will play a prominent role in the next elections, whenever they will finally be held. Consequently, the situation in Malaysia will remain volatile, as drivers of the main persecution engine *Islamic oppression* have become more active than before, leading to ongoing challenges and threats for the Christian minority.

Dictatorial paranoia

Given that UMNO is back in power and has ruled the country almost continually since independence, it will do everything to make the two years of PH rule appear to have been an anomaly. As the government reportedly has a razor-thin majority, *Dictatorial paranoia* may climb to new heights, especially as elections are approaching. As shown throughout this country dossier, Christians have always been a scapegoat to blame for the country's woes and Malay Muslim majority fears. This is even more the case in an economic situation made very much difficult and unpredictable not just by political volatility, but also by the deterioration caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: highly sensitive - https://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/ban-on-churches-in-malaysia-using-allah-for-god-arises-again/60738.htm
- Drivers of persecution description: Jawi script - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/12/28/muslim-students-group-gamis-accuses-dong-zong-of-islamophobia/1822884
- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: report - https://cilisos.my/are-malaysias-orang-asli-being-pressured-to-convert-to-islam-we-investigate/
- The Persecution pattern description: missing - http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/missing-persons-04142017152813.html
- Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 points): Publicly renouncing - https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkd7gk/the-dangers-of-renouncing-islam-in-malaysia
- Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.25 points): social support - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/04/30/claims-of-single-muslim-mothers-seeking-aid-from-church-will-be-investigate/1970739
- Block 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.75 points): forced conversion' -

https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/01/21/suhakam-reports-forced-conversion-of-sarawakian-native-children-over-mykad/1942696

- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.75 points): undistorted version - https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/04/14/tell-the-true-story-in-history-textbooks-says-educationist/
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.75 points): vernacular schools - https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/05/10/in-court-papers-govt-says-vernacular-schools-part-of-education-system/
- Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.75 points): Orang Asli - https://cilisos.my/are-malaysias-orang-asli-being-pressured-to-convert-to-islam-we-investigate/
- Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.75 points): stated that - https://stg.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2018/02/15/when-a-uitm-student-stood-up-for-the-non-bumis/
- Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points): Muslim only - https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/11/04/dental-clinic-defends-muslims-only-hiring-policy/
- Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (4.00 points): religious status - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/01/28/why-islam-is-on-malaysian-muslims-identity-cards/1831992
- Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points): not being distributed equally - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/04/28/pakatan-mps-urge-accountability-in-covid-19-food-basket-aid-amid-claims-of/1860827
- Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points): threatened - https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/576406
- Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.50 points): accused - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/04/20/dap-mp-steven-sim-to-sue-academic-after-christianisation-accusation-against/1968041
- Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.50 points): destroy Christians - https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysian-police-investigate-anti-christian-threats/91779
- Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere: display products - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/12/24/no-halal-cert-with-xmas-wording-minister-clarifies-messages-fine-as-long-as/1934761
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: all imported Christian publications - https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/302177
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: new Bible translation - http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/citing-sacred-patrimony-churches-reject-unauthorised-dbp-translation-of-bib
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: allowed to use - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/03/24/explainer-high-courts-96-page-judgment-on-why-malaysias-1986-allah-ban-was/1960449
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: control - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/09/09/deputy-ministers-claim-of-bill-to-control-non-muslim-faith-concerning-says/2004186
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: alarmed - https://www.ucanews.com/news/churches-oppose-anti-minorities-bill-in-malaysia/94116

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: November 2021 USCIRF publication - https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-releases-new-report-religious-freedom-conditions-malaysia
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls Not Brides - https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/malaysia
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Free Malaysia Today, 9 February 2021 - https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/02/09/peer-pressure-makes-tudungs-the-norm-in-schools/
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: increase - https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/05/04/900-domestic-violence-cases-reported-in-first-4-months-of-2021/?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=0KX6.riZv_DqV9aVNE4goU4XB5R31mzN.K08wwBOlLc-1638795039-0-gaNycGzNDv0
- Future outlook: state nationalism - https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/james-chin-on-ma63-and-the-return-of-state-nationalism-in-malaysia/

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=Malaysia
- https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Malaysia