

World  
Watch  
Research

## Sudan: Full Country Dossier

January 2022



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Woman in Nuba Mountains, Sudan (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 / Sudan

### Brief country details

Sudan: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
44,592,000	1,984,000	4.4

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

### Map of country



Sudan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	79	13
WWL 2021	79	13
WWL 2020	85	7
WWL 2019	87	6
WWL 2018	87	4

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

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Sudan: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, One's own (extended) family, Government officials
Organized corruption and crime	Organized crime cartels or networks, Government officials, Ethnic group leaders
Clan oppression	Ethnic group leaders
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties

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

## Brief description of the persecution situation

Since the downfall of the al-Bashir regime, the situation of Christians has improved in the sense that the government has changed its policy of regarding Christians as agents of the West and hence enemies. However, there are still many issues affecting Christians in the country. First of all, the change of government policy at the national level does not mean that things are also getting better at the level of local authorities. Secondly, the change in government policy is not matched by a change in attitudes in wider society, especially outside Khartoum. Thirdly, the government has not put a robust protection mechanism in place for Christians and other religious minorities when it comes to implementing laws. For example, confiscated churches and land have not been given back. Building or renovating a church still requires official permission which is difficult to secure, according to recent report by a Coptic church in the country.

The ethnic-cultural landscape of the country is also complicated: Arab versus non-Arabs, Muslim versus Christian. The secession of South Sudan in 2011 did not solve these problems. This is particularly true for non-Arabs, as a significant number are Christian and still living in the country. All Christian communities in Sudan are wary of talking about their faith with Sudanese Muslims as this might be construed as being an 'act that encourages apostasy against Islam'. The level of persecution that converts and ethnic Africans face is severe.

So as not to be discovered, converts from Islam to the Christian faith will often refrain from raising their children as Christians because this might attract the attention of the government and community leaders (since children might inadvertently reveal the faith of their parents). This fear even extends to funerals where deceased Christians with a Muslim background are often buried according to Islamic rites in Muslim cemeteries, even though Christian and Muslim cemeteries are separate.

## Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
3. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

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

- Church buildings are attacked and burnt down (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian women and girls are harassed for not covering their head or wearing trousers (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christians can be accused and charged of blasphemy (ICCPR Art. 19)
- Christian children are often harassed due to their parents' faith (CRC Art. 14 and ICCPR Art. 18)

## Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **January 2021:** On 3 January 2021, a church building belonging to the Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC) in Tamboul, Gezira State, was [burned down](#) (CSW, 8 January 2021).
- **February 2021:** On 19 February 2021, a church youth leader protesting about the burning of the SCOC in Tamboul was beaten by masked men believed to be national security personnel (Morning Star News, 22 February 2021).
- **August 2021:** Bibles were [seized](#) at port of entry and custom duties demanded, from which the shipment is exempt (Morning Star News, 17 August 2021).
- **Christian broadcasting:** The Sudan National Broadcasting Corporation's Sunday TV program is being used as a rallying cry for radical Muslims to accuse Christians of corrupting the nation.

## Specific examples of positive developments

- **March 2021:** "Sudan has settled its debts with the World Bank after nearly three decades, moving the heavily indebted African country closer to a much-needed international debt-relief package". This comes after the USA confirmed its "approval of [\\$1.15 billion in loan assistance](#) to Sudan as it hailed reforms that the transitional government has taken in Khartoum in the last two years" (The National News, 27 March 2021).
- **March 2021:** The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and the government [signed an agreement](#) on 28 March 2021 so that a comprehensive peace framework can be negotiated (Al-Jazeera, 28 March 2021).



## External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention 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: burned down - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2021/01/08/press/4938/article.htm>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: seized - <https://morningstarnews.org/2021/08/sudan-detains-bible-shipment-christian-leaders-say/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: \$1.15 billion in loan assistance - <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/the-americas/sudan-settles-world-bank-debt-with-1-15bn-us-loan-1.1191791>
- Specific examples of positive developments: signed an agreement - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/28/sudan-and-main-rebel-group-sign-agreement-to-restart-peace-talks>

## WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Sudan

### Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	<a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/sudan/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/sudan/</a>	23 July 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995</a>	23 July 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	<a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-SDN.html">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-SDN.html</a>	23 July 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sudan/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sudan/</a>	23 July 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	<a href="https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf">https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf</a>	23 July 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	<a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>	23 July 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Sudan is not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores</a>	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-world/2021">https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-world/2021</a>	23 July 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-net/2020">https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-net/2020</a>	23 July 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	<a href="https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/sudan">https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/sudan</a>	23 July 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	<a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/sudan">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/sudan</a>	23 July 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	<a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#sd">https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#sd</a>	23 July 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	<a href="https://rsf.org/en/sudan">https://rsf.org/en/sudan</a>	23 July 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/sdn">https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/sdn</a>	23 July 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI	<a href="http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SDN">http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SDN</a>	23 July 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	<a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sudan/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sudan/</a>	23 July 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Sudan is not included)	USCIRF 2021	<a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/countries">https://www.uscifr.gov/countries</a>	
World Bank country report	World Bank	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/sudan">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/sudan</a>	23 July 2021

## Recent history

Since becoming independent from Great Britain in 1956, Sudan has experienced persistent and recurring violent conflict, primarily driven by struggles between the central government in Khartoum and armed groups from the country's peripheries. Sudan's traditional power structures were dominated by an Islamist regime, headed by President Omar al-Bashir, who came to power in a coup in 1989. Sudan became infamous in the international community for funding radical Islamic groups, committing atrocities and fundamentally undermining freedom of religion.

In 2018, the year began with [demonstrations](#) against the imposition of austerity measures that effectively tripled Sudan's US dollar exchange rate and the increased price of basic commodities (Human Rights Watch - HRW, 29 January 2020). But the government resorted to excessive force to disperse the peaceful demonstrations; that included the use of beatings and the unlawful detention of hundreds of protesters, activists and opposition party members. In December 2018, the USA categorized Sudan as one of 10 "[Countries of Particular Concern](#)" deemed guilty of severe violations of religious freedom (CNN, 11 December 2018). Meanwhile, Sudan's anti-government protests grew as 2018 drew to an end, with security forces [killing](#) the first 9 student protesters (Amnesty International - AI, 21 December 2018) and then a further [37 protesters](#) in demonstrations that rocked the country (AI, 24 December 2018).

In April 2019, the unthinkable happened - one of the longest-serving dictators in Africa, President al-Bashir, was overthrown. He had declared a state of emergency on 22 February 2019 and dissolved government at federal and provincial levels and appointed security chiefs to head all the country's 18 regional states. The ensuing [brutal crackdown](#) intensified the demonstrators' defiance (International Crisis Group - ICG, 26 February 2019). The standoff continued throughout March until finally on 11 April 2019, the army [removed al-Bashir from office](#) (BBC News, 11 April 2019) and assumed provisional power, with Sudan's Prosecutor General later announcing that the former president would be [charged](#) for the killing of protesters (AI, 14 May 2019). However, on 2 June 2019, the security forces [killed scores of protesters](#) who were holding a sit-in in Khartoum to protest against the military council's declaration that it would remain in power for three years (AI, 5 June 2019). Sudan's Transitional Military Council later [admitted](#) to deciding on the action that killed more than 100 protesters (AI, 14 June 2019).

The ex-president and some top members of his cabinet were allegedly moved to a prison and were [charged with corruption](#) (Al-Jazeera, 13 June 2019). However, the protesters demanded civilian rule and the first transitional leader (former defense minister) was [forced to resign](#) after one day (New York Times, 12 April 2019). The protest leaders and the transitional council failed to agree on the course the army was taking, particularly after so many protesters had been killed in the process. Finally, in August 2019 the following [agreements](#) were made (BBC News, 16 August 2019):

- Power-sharing will last for 39 months.
- A sovereign council, cabinet, and legislative body will be formed.
- A general will head the council for the first 21 months, a civilian for the remaining 18 months.
- A prime minister, nominated by the pro-democracy movement, will head the cabinet.
- The ministers of defense and interior will be chosen by the army.

Sudan's first year of a three-year transition to democratic rule following the dramatic removal of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019, was marked by a failing economy, political tensions and continuing popular protests for justice and reforms. However, on 31 August 2020, the government and a coalition of rebel groups made the positive step of signing a [peace deal in Juba](#) that would end the country's internal armed conflicts and provide for cooperation with the ICC in its Darfur investigation (Reuters, 31 August 2020).

The political and economic difficulties were compounded by the crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis deepened when the army made the decision to oust the civilian transitional council in a [coup](#) in October 2021 (CBS News, 25 October 2021). Civilian leaders were arrested and protesters took to the streets. Pressure from the international community forced the coup leaders to announce the reinstatement of the prime minister; however, there were no meaningful steps taken by the coup leaders to solve the post-coup crisis. Popular protests have continued into December 2021.

## Political and legal landscape

As explained above in *Recent History*, in April 2019, one of the longest-serving dictators in Africa, Omar al-Bashir, was overthrown by the pressure of a popular movement demanding more democracy. There had been signs of discontent for some time among the general population due to the rise in prices of oil, bread and other goods. Even though the ousting of the president can be seen as a triumph for the pro-democracy movement, it is also a cause for concern since former ruling Islamists are still very influential in the country and another civil war could easily be ignited. The army's Transitional Council and the leaders of the pro-democracy movement signed an agreement to pave the way for democracy in the next 3-4 years, but the armed forces staged a coup against the civilian leaders in October 2021. This coup did not happen out of nowhere. The October coup took place exactly before the army was supposed to transfer the role of leading the transition (head of the transitional council) to the civilian partners in November 2021 as agreed in the power sharing deal. The generals knew that they would face scrutiny of what they did in the decades of Bashir rule if the transition was to be carried out successfully and election is held on time. Hence, they acted to stop the process which would have placed them under civilian and elected government control. Almost all generals who overthrew the civilian partners in the transitional arrangement previously worked under Bashir and many of them allegedly participated in atrocities that were committed during the fighting in Darfur and South Kordofan.

Sudanese politics has always been controversial and the country has never been at ease with the international community nor with its own people. This was particularly the case for the indigenous Africans in the country which led to the independence of South Sudan. The secession of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 (after a referendum in January 2011) was the culmination of a painful and decades-long history of internal conflict between the powerful Muslim Arabs in the north and the Christian and Ethno-religious indigenous African population of the south.

Despite South Sudan's independence, armed conflict over dwindling resources and political power (typical aspects of Sudan's post-independence situation) has persisted. While the root causes of the conflict remain constant (e.g. political marginalization, land dispossession and unimplemented promises), ethnic dynamics in the various regions of Sudan and South Sudan have kept changing. For example, in Abyei, a province that is being claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan, the Misserya Arabs (the government of Sudan's main local supporters) have grown increasingly frustrated with Khartoum, while the Ngok Dinka tribe (which enjoys support from the government of South Sudan) has become vocal and strong. Although Sudan's political system is based on a decentralized system of governance and multi-party politics, real power had always been wielded by President al-Bashir and his ruling Islamist National Congress Party

(NCP). The independence of South Sudan, which signaled the end of the Government of National Unity and the withdrawal of the South's representatives from parliament, further reinforced the dominance of President al-Bashir's political party. It also signaled the start of another civil war: SPLA-North versus the government of Sudan.

This war resulted from the fact that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA - signed in January 2005) failed to solve the problem of the marginalization of Sudan's peripheral regions, in particular, the so-called 'three areas', consisting of Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Located strategically along Sudan's volatile North-South border and possessing considerable natural resources (including oil), finding solutions to the contested issues in these three areas has long been deemed critical for the stability of the two countries. Dominated by two main tribes, Abyei in particular was influential in the domestic politics of both Sudan and South Sudan. The Ngok Dinka tribe, a subset of South Sudan's largest ethnic group, have traditionally lived in Abyei, and have strong representation in the leadership of both the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). During the civil war years, the Dinka - which has a largely African Christian population - was heavily displaced. At the same time, the Misserya, a largely Arab Muslim nomadic tribe which migrates through the region to graze their cattle, form an important constituency of the NCP and fought against the Ngok Dinka during the civil war. This problem is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. It could also be a serious challenge for the transitional government.

The intended reforms by the civilian transitional council could have opened up political and civil space in the country, also leading to more freedom for Christians. But these hopes have since been dashed by the October 2021 coup.

The legal landscape facing women and girls is additionally restrictive, in particular making marriage a place of enacting violent repression of female converts. Sudan is one of just six UN states not to have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Sudan recognizes multiple forms of family law, connected to a person's religious community. To provide judgement on family matters, there are three types of religious court in operation: Sharia courts, Christian/civil courts and traditional courts. There is no legislation that prohibits domestic violence, marital rape or child marriage and Article 40 of the 1991 Muslim Personal Law provides that once a child is 10 years old, they may be married with parental or guardian consent ([OECD, 2019](#)). Child marriage is widespread and according to Girls Not Brides (accessed 23 July 2021), [34% of girls](#) are married before the age of 18. Whilst a man has the right to divorce his wife by *talaq*, a woman must file for divorce through the courts. A 2016 UNHRC report cites a culture of impunity for perpetrators of domestic violence and a silencing of victims ([UNHRC, 18 April 2016](#)). While there are no reliable statistics on the prevalence of rape, it is understood to be widespread.

Before the October 2021 coup, women had been calling for greater participation in parliament under the transitional government, wanting more than just assuming 'soft' positions in which they would have nominal power ([CMI Sudan brief 2020](#)). Military service is compulsory for men between the age of 18 and 33, who must serve 1-2 years ([World Population Review 2021](#)).

## Religious landscape

Sudan: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	1,984,000	4.4
Muslim	40,989,000	91.9
Hindu	850	0.0
Buddhist	940	0.0
Ethno-religionist	1,137,000	2.5
Jewish	50	0.0
Bahai	2,700	0.0
Atheist	66,700	0.1
Agnostic	410,000	0.9
Other	1,900	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

The religious composition of Sudan is a controversial issue. World Christian Database (WCD 2021) estimates the Christian population at 4.4% and the Muslim majority at 91.9%. According to the government, around 97% of the population is Muslim, which would make the Christian presence less than 3%. Various advocacy groups contest these low figures (and those of WCD), claiming that non-Muslims in the country make up 15-20%. Coptic Orthodox, Roman Catholic and various Protestant denominations are present in the country. These groups are found mainly in Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gedaref, El-Obeid, El-Fashe and many parts of the Nuba Mountains.

Almost all Muslims are Sunni but significant distinctions exist, particularly among the Sufi orders. In addition, there are small Muslim minorities, including Shia and the Republican Brothers, based predominantly in Khartoum. There is also a growing (yet still small) percentage of Salafists. The main traditional Salafist group, *Jama'at Ansar al-Sunna al-Mohammediya*, advocates peaceful means for achieving its objectives. However, the newer radical groups tend to be more militant and confrontational and staged attacks on Sufi, Shia and Christian targets in 2011 and 2012.

For over a decade (1999-2018), Sudan had been designated by the US Secretary of State as a "Country of Particular Concern" for its serious and systematic violations of religious freedom. Religious freedom, although guaranteed by the 2005 Interim Constitution, was not upheld in practice. Moreover, Sudan's criminal law based on Islamic law (allowing punishments such as amputations and floggings for crimes and acts of 'indecent' and 'immorality') had been applied indiscriminately especially against indigenous African Christians. In 2020, the transitional gov-

ernment vowed to abolish all laws that violated fundamental human rights - including the apostasy law (see below).

Christian converts have come under particular pressure, such as the case of [a female convert from Islam](#) who was sentenced to death in 2014 for marrying a Christian man (BBC News, 15 May 2014). In July 2020 however (following the fall of al-Bashir) it was announced that Sudan would scrap the [apostasy law](#), which prohibited anyone converting from Islam to a different religion, adding further that women would no longer require a permit from a male relative to travel (Human Rights Watch, 16 July 2020). In September 2020, it was later [announced](#) that Sudan's transitional government had agreed to separate religion from the state, ending 30 years of Islamic rule in the nation (Bloomberg, 4 September 2020).

## Economic landscape

According to [World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook 2021](#):

- **GDP:** GDP growth declined from -2.5 in 2019 to -3.6 percent in 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and severe flooding that disrupted economic activity. Despite some efforts to rein in excessive public expenditures, particularly on fuel subsidies, the economic downturn, COVID-19 crisis, and increasingly overvalued exchange rate had a very negative fiscal impact in 2020. "Sudan has conducted major reforms, including exchange rate adjustment and fuel subsidy reduction, that put the country on a potential path toward recovery and restoration of access to external financing in 2021. In this context, the decline in GDP of the past three years is projected to stabilize in 2021, leading into a period of positive economic growth. The 2021 budget envisions a reduction in the fiscal deficit to around 2 percent of GDP, thus allowing for a significant slowdown in the monetary expansion that has been fueling inflation. Sudan aims to accomplish arrears clearance with IFIs in 2021 and obtain access to over US\$ 2 billion in external support from development partners."
- **Poverty:** Poverty projections based on GDP growth suggests that poverty rates may have increased consistently in recent years, to reach in 2020 an estimated 17.7 percent at \$1.90/day PPP and 52.6 percent at \$3.20/day PPP. "The Poverty outlook remains negative. Poverty rates are projected to increase to 19.5 percent by 2022 at \$1.90/day PPP, and 54.8 percent at \$3.20/day PPP. The continued rise in inflation, shortage of fuel and other basic commodities and COVID -19 are expected to continue adversely affecting living conditions. Results from the Bank's ongoing high frequency survey on COVID-19, suggest that about one -third of respondents had stopped working in September 2020 mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and that over 20 percent of households were unable to buy bread and cereals as well as milk and milk products as price increases were felt by most households".
- **Inflation:** The monetization of the large fiscal deficit drove inflation into triple digits. Living conditions continued to deteriorate. A combination of key reforms, stabilization efforts, and external support give hope for 2021.

South Sudan's secession caused a watershed in Sudan's economic history. Sudan lost about 80% of its agricultural and water resources, in addition to the loss of about 75% of oil reserves and about 90% of total exports and about 50% of government revenues. Following the loss of oil and population, economic growth contracted by 4.4% in 2012. Even as it concluded an agreement



with South Sudan to cover the export of oil from South Sudan, as well as US\$3.03bn of “transitional assistance” to be paid by South Sudan, Omar al-Bashir announced a series of deep budget cuts in June 2012 to control a ballooning fiscal deficit. Moreover, the World Bank projected that Sudan would fall back into the low-income country category, with 47% of Sudan’s population living below the poverty line. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also pushed for austerity measures. As described above, in 2018 the country saw a series of demonstrations protesting about the poor [economic situation](#) (Sudan Tribune, 5 January 2018), which finally led to the overthrow of the president in 2019. According to one observer writing in the Mail & Guardian on 11 May 2018, the collapse started with “a [major devaluation](#) of the Sudanese pound in an effort to make the official rate for the pound drop to that of the black market. With the International Monetary Fund pushing for austerity and the rate of inflation hovering around 70%, the camel’s back was finally broken.”

Before the October 2021 coup, the Transitional Council had shown willing to negotiate with South Sudan to ease this economic crisis and obtain payment for letting South Sudanese petroleum use its pipelines. The [comprehensive US sanctions](#) which were lifted in October 2017 also had a tremendous impact on the economy (CIA Factbook). The country is also attempting to develop non-oil revenues, such as gold mining and agriculture while carrying out austerity measures to reduce expenditures.

According to the [2021 Economic Freedom Index](#):

- Sudan has an economic freedom score of 39.1 and ranks at #175. The score has decreased by 5.9 points, primarily because of a decline in monetary freedom. Sudan is ranked last among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is well below the regional and world averages.

Women are economically vulnerable within Sudan. This is in part due to [low education rates](#) for girls; as of 2016, illiteracy rates for women stood at 50% compared to 30% for men (UNICEF, Sudan/Education, accessed 23 July 2021). According to Islamic law, sons and daughters do not have equal [inheritance rights](#) in Sudan (OECD, 2019). Under the 1991 Muslim Personal Law Act (Articles 356, 357, 359, and 373), a woman inherits half of the property of her brother(s). Under customary law, widows are commonly expected to marry a male relative within her deceased husband’s family.

## Social and cultural landscape

According to the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI 2020) and CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Unspecified Sudanese Arab (approximately 70%), Fur, Beja, Nuba, Fallata
- **Main languages:** Arabic (official), English (official), Nubian, Ta Bedawie, Fur
- **Median age:** 19.7 years
- **Urban population:** 34.9%
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 65.3 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 7.9 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 and older):** 60.7%

- **Employment to population ratio (15 and older):** 40.4%
- **Unemployment, total of labor force:** 16.5%
- **Unemployment, youth (age 15-24):** 31.4%
- **Human Development Index:** Sudan ranks 170 out of 189 countries, with a human development value of 0.510.
- **Gender development index (GDI):** 0.860 (The GDI measures the differences in life expectancy, years of education and GNI per capita per gender).
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.545

According to [UNHCR's Global Focus / Sudan](#), (accessed 23 July 2021)

- **Refugees/IDPs:** “In addition to the over 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers residing in Sudan in 2019, a further 1.9 million people were estimated to be internally displaced. The large majority of refugees (some 815,000) were from South Sudan, with large populations of Eritreans (121,000) and Syrians (94,000) residing in south and central Darfur and Khartoum states respectively. Refugees and asylum-seekers from Ethiopia, the CAR, Chad and Yemen also constituted considerable populations of concern.”

In general, Sudan has a rich history and culture and belonged to the Nuba Kingdom. This is the country where the art of building pyramids may have first started.

Sudan has a patriarchal society in which men and women are expected to assume traditional gender roles. The pervading societal belief that women belong in the home and should undertake domestic responsibilities has prevented many girls from accessing school. A lack of education serves to fuel the widespread practice of early or forced marriage, as girls feel ill-equipped to search for an alternative route. Women play a leading role in raising children, representing the family at societal events and helping with agricultural duties. The persecution of women and girls therefore has a significant negative impact on her wider family and community.

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 29.2% of the population – survey date: December 2020
- **Facebook usage:** 2.9% of the population – survey date: December 2020

According to World Bank:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 77.1 per 100 people  
[68.1%](#) of women use a mobile phone, according to Georgetown, Women, Peace and Security Index 2019/20.

According to [BuddeComm research](#) (updated 25 April 2020):

- Mobile market penetration is far higher than the Internet. The country has a relatively well-equipped telecommunications infrastructure by regional standards, including a national fiber optic backbone and international fibre connections. In common with a few countries



in Africa, including neighboring Ethiopia, Sudan is developing space technologies in a bid to support economic growth and improve the capabilities of its military and agricultural sectors. Sudan's Chinese built-satellite was launched (from China) in November 2019.

According to the CIA Factbook:

- Compared to other countries in the region, Sudan has a well-equipped cellular communications system which covers most of the major cities: “The Sudanese government directly controls TV and radio, requiring that both media reflect government policies; TV has a permanent military censor; a private radio station is in operation (2019)”.

The majority of Christians in the country reside in cities, which generally have better infrastructure and technology than rural areas.

## Security situation

Under ex-President al-Bashir, there was a coordinated effort by the government to mobilize and militarize tribal militias (including but not limited to Arab militias) known as *Janjaweed*. The aim was to use these groups to work towards creating an Islamic state at the expense of other religious groups in the country. Several reports by different human right groups have accused these militias of committing gross violations of human rights against non-Arab citizens of Sudan.

In late January 2018, the joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping mission to Darfur agreed with the Sudanese government to open a temporary base in [Darfur's Jebel Marra](#), as mandated by the June 2017 UN Security Council resolution, in the wake of sectarian violence and a suspected chemical attack that caused horrific suffering to civilians (AI, 1 February 2018). Reports of abuse by government forces and affiliated militias continued to surface, including attacks that damaged or destroyed at least 45 villages in Jebel Marra between July 2018 and February 2019. Meanwhile, possible plans to [close the joint mission](#) has unnerved civilians who rely on the base for protection (AI, 11 June 2019). The rebel groups signed a peace agreement with the government in October 2020, but in 2021, it was reported that the [war was far from over](#) (The New Humanitarian, 21 April 2021).

[In March 2020](#), the Security Council decided on the exit of the UN/AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur, UNAMID (Security Council Report, 28 February 2020), which completed its mandate on 31 December 2020. A UN political mission continued to support the transition in Sudan.

In late 2020 and 2021, thousands of refugees from Ethiopia crossed the border to escape the conflict between Ethiopian government and Tigray forces. What exacerbates the matter is that Sudan also has a border dispute with Ethiopia concerning Fashaga which it decided to [retake by force](#), disregarding the land-use agreement the two countries signed in 2007 (ICG, 24 June 2021). At the moment, Ethiopia is distracted by the crisis in Tigray, but it is likely that the issue could flare up in the near future putting the countries at risk of engaging in military confrontation.

## Trends analysis

### 1) Despite reforms, Islamic oppression is likely to remain a dominant issue

In 2019, Sudan entered a new era; for the first time in three decades, the nation is being ruled without al-Bashir at the helm. However, there are still many challenges ahead. The Islamic countries in the Middle East want to exert their pressure using aid and loans as negotiation tools. However, Sudan has also been trying to conform to the Western nations by showing that it should no longer be associated with terrorism and egregious human rights violations. The country has already proposed changes to laws that were repressive. However, the economy is still suffering and inflation also remains a serious problem. The October 2021 coup is likely to cause a halt to any planned additional reforms.

### 2) Peace treaties have been signed but many issues will take years to resolve

Sudan is one of the most complex countries in Africa. After a civil war that lasted more than two decades, South Sudan decided to go its own way and become an independent nation in 2011. That did not end the problems, however. There are still major issues to be dealt with in Darfur, the Blue Nile and Kordofan areas. The transitional council showed its commitment by adopting the 2019 Draft Constitutional Declaration. It was followed by agreements by different rebel groups in October 2019 and January 2020. It seemed the discussions were moving smoothly, despite outstanding issues such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), economic issues, accountability and social justice. These issues could take years and they need extreme care as the conflicts in the southern part of the country and Darfur continue to flare up despite the agreements. It remains to be seen how the military leaders of the October 2021 coup will deal with these matters.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: demonstrations - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/29/sudan-stop-abuse-peaceful-demonstrators>
- Recent history: Countries of Particular Concern - <https://www.edition.cnn.com/2018/12/11/politics/pompeo-religious-freedom-designations/index.html>
- Recent history: killing - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/sudan-shooting-of-protestors-must-be-immediately-investigated/>
- Recent history: 37 protesters - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/sudan-protesters-dead-in-government-crackdown-on-protests/>
- Recent history: brutal crackdown - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/bashir-moves-sudan-dangerous-new-ground>
- Recent history: removed al-Bashir from office - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-47891470>
- Recent history: charged - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/05/sudan-omar-al-bashir-must-face-justice-for-recent-and-past-crimes>
- Recent history: killed scores of protesters - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-soaring-violence-calls-for-urgent-international-response/>
- Recent history: admitted - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-urgent-un-and-au-investigation-needed-after-military-admits-deadly-decision-on-protestor-crackdown/>
- Recent history: charged with corruption - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/sudan-toppled-president-omar-al-bashir-charged-corruption-190613173532177.html>
- Recent history: forced to resign - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/12/world/africa/sudan-al-bashir-extradition.html>
- Recent history: agreements - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48511226>

- Recent history: peace deal in Juba - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-darfur-idUSKBN25R14Y>
- Recent history: coup - <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sudan-coup-2021-military-civilian-leaders-detained/>
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/SD.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: 34% of girls - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/sudan/>
- Political and legal landscape: UNHRC, 18 April 2016 - <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1607916.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: CMI Sudan brief 2020 - <https://www.cmi.no/publications/7267-patriarchy-politics-and-womens-activism-in-post-revolution-sudan>
- Political and legal landscape: World Population Review 2021 - <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/countries-with-mandatory-military-service/>
- Religious landscape description: a female convert from Islam - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-27424064>
- Religious landscape description: apostasy law - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/16/sudans-law-reforms-positive-first-step>
- Religious landscape description: announced - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-04/sudan-ends-30-years-of-islamic-law-by-separating-religion-state>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook 2021 - <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/375291492188168999/mpo-sdn.pdf>
- Economic landscape: economic situation - <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article64425>
- Economic landscape: major devaluation - <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-05-07-how-sudans-economic-crisis-had-a-role-in-protests-that-toppled-al-bashir/>
- Economic landscape: comprehensive US sanctions - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html>
- Economic landscape: 2021 Economic Freedom Index - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/sudan?version=1431>
- Economic landscape: low education rates - <https://www.unicef.org/sudan/education>
- Economic landscape: inheritance rights - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/SD.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR's Global Focus / Sudan - <https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2535?y=2019#year>
- Technological landscape: 68.1% - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Sudan-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- Security situation: Darfur's Jebel Marra - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/02/sudan-au-un-peacekeepers-must-be-given-access-to-protect-civilians-in-jebel-marra/>
- Security situation: close the joint mission - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-fresh-evidence-of-government-sponsored-crimes-in-darfur-shows-drawdown-of-peacekeepers-premature-and-reckless/>
- Security situation: war was far from over - <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/4/21/inside-darfurs-rebel-held-mountains>
- Security situation: In March 2020 - <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-03/sudan-darfur-9.php>
- Security situation: retake by force - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/containing-volatile-sudan-ethiopia-border-dispute#:~:text=In%20mid-December%2020%2C%20with,Ethiopia's%20second-largest%20ethnic%20group%2C>

## WWL 2022: Church information / Sudan

### Christian origins

Christianity has a long history in Sudan. The [discovery](#) of one of the oldest cathedrals in the world is a testament to this (Ancient History Encyclopedia, accessed 17 August 2020): "The Cathedral of Faras, a city in ancient Nubia and once the capital of the Kingdom of Faras (aka Nobatia), was built and rebuilt from the 8th to 11th century CE. Its interior was decorated with hundreds of frescoes which are amongst the finest examples of early Christian art seen anywhere."

Christianity had been very influential in Sudan from the 4th century onwards and for nearly a millennium the majority of the population was Christian. Christians suffered when invading Arabs brought Islam - especially in the northern part of the country - and gradually Islamized the region by the 15th century. However, the Greek Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox churches survived. Following the defeat of the self-proclaimed Islamic Mahdi and his supporters by the British in 1898, many Christian groups entered the country. Roman Catholics, Anglicans (via the Church Missionary Society) and American Presbyterians also came from their base in Egypt. The Anglican Sudan United Mission, the Africa Inland Mission, and the Sudan Interior Mission all followed. Several African-initiated churches have also become established. Many missionaries went to South Sudan from Khartoum.

As indicated above, the role of Christianity started diminishing with the arrival of Islam, especially after the rise of the Mahdist movement of the 19th century. The situation worsened after the independence of Sudan in the second half of the 20th century, as powerful Islamists took over political power. When al-Bashir assumed office by coup in the 1980s, he proclaimed that Sharia law would be the source of all laws in the country. As a result, the Christian influence further decreased.

### Church spectrum today

Sudan: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	102,000	5.1
Catholic	1,104,000	55.6
Protestant	822,000	41.4
Independent	21,200	1.1
Unaffiliated	34,200	1.7
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-100,000	-5.0
<b>Total</b> <i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>	<b>1,983,400</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Evangelical movement	426,000	21.5
Renewalist movement	146,000	7.4

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.

In general, Christians are found throughout the country. However, they live primarily in major cities, such as Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gedaref, El Obeid, and El Fasher. Christians are also concentrated in some parts of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State.

According to the US State Department ([IRFR 2019 report](#)):

- "Relatively small but long-established groups of Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Christians are in Khartoum, El Obeid in North Kordofan, River Nile and Gezira States, and eastern parts of the country. Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox communities largely made up of refugees and migrants are in Khartoum and the eastern part of the country. Other larger Christian groups include the Catholic Church, Episcopal Anglican Church, Sudan Church of Christ, Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and Presbyterian Church of the Sudan. Smaller Christian groups include the Africa Inland Church, Armenian Apostolic Church, Sudan Interior Church, Sudan Pentecostal Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church."

## External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: discovery - [https://www.ancient.eu/Faras\\_Cathedral/](https://www.ancient.eu/Faras_Cathedral/)
- Church spectrum today - additional information: IRFR 2019 report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sudan/>

# WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Sudan

## Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

## Position on the World Watch List

Sudan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	79	13
WWL 2021	79	13
WWL 2020	85	7
WWL 2019	87	6
WWL 2018	87	4

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

Sudan scored 79 points, the same as in WWL 2021. Sudan had dropped six points in WWL 2021 due to the change in policy and legal framework by the transitional government. However, in WWL 2022, even though the violence dropped by 0.5 point, the overall score remains the same. As a result of the scrapping of the apostasy law and other laws restricting freedom of religion in the months prior to the WWL 2022 reporting period, there were no arrests due to apostasy or other related provisions. Sudan was also removed both from the US list of countries sponsoring terrorism and from the list of 'Countries of Particular Concern' (CPC). Nevertheless, the reasons why the country still scores 79 points are plain to see: The average pressure on Christians and churches is still at an extreme level; the churches which had been forced to close have not been re-opened and Christians are still deprived of their rights in many ways; indeed, the government has continued to take legal action against certain church leaders. The changes that happened at the national level did not reach the local level and there are still militias like *Janjaweed* (who were part of the al-Bashir regime) roaming the countryside.

## Persecution engines

Sudan: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Strong
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	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Strong

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

### Islamic oppression (Very strong)

This persecution engine is rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood ideology advocated by the founder of the (up until April 2019) ruling party, Hassan al-Turabi, who helped Omar al-Bashir consolidate power during a bloodless coup in 1989. From then on, the Sudanese government worked towards forming an Islamic state at the expense of other religious groups in the country and has been accused of supporting radical Islamic militants for the past three decades. The USA first labeled Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism on 12 August 1993 for knowingly harboring local and international terrorists and for allowing the country to be used as a transit point for terrorists and weapons. Osama Bin Laden was there before he moved to Afghanistan, for example. Historically, Islam - including its radical tendencies such as the [19th century Mahdist movement](#) (African History, The History of Sudanese nationalism, accessed 30 November 2020)

- is firmly rooted in Sudanese society.

Even though the overwhelming majority of the population in the country is Sunni Muslim, the government of Sudan under al-Bashir also had strong ties with Shia Iran. Sharia law is the foundation of Sudan's legal system and Sudan's elite has aimed at enforcing an Islamic regime in the country. Under al-Bashir, apostasy was criminalized and punishable by the death penalty. Blasphemy laws were used countrywide to prosecute Christians. Although this is now changing, [Islamic law is still very in place](#) (World Watch Monitor/WWM, 18 August 2020). This engine also has a nationalist element. There are also violent Islamic militants still active that were part of the former Sudanese president's *Janjaweed* militia. These militias are very active in rural areas.

### **Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)**

Up until April 2019, Sudan was run by an authoritarian regime ever since al-Bashir came to power through a coup in 1989. The influence of the government in private and public life was enormous. The Darfur crisis continued unabated, the conflict with Sudan's People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) showed no sign of reaching a permanent solution even though [ceasefire agreements](#) were reached (WWM, 14 November 2017). Some argue that the agreements were made due to the pressure of sanctions from the US government and that the Sudanese government complied in the hope that the sanctions would be lifted. Whenever ex-President al-Bashir's government faced socio-economic and political challenges, support among the population at large was revived by using inflammatory language against the West. This, in turn, had an adverse effect on Sudanese Christians, as the government regarded Christians as the agents of Western countries.

There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia* since those leading the regime under al-Bashir were mainly people adhering to radical Islamic ideology; indeed, the National Congress Party (NCP) served as a means to strengthen the Islamic agenda. This implies that the role of the government in the persecution of Christians was not only driven by totalitarian tendencies but also by Islamist sympathies as well. In the past three decades, the willingness of the ex-president to opportunistically discard beliefs and promises in exchange for hanging on to power became increasingly evident. Almost all of his decisions – whether related to supporting armed militias groups or cracking down on all forms of dissent – were motivated mainly, if not solely, by the desire to stay in power at all costs. He was able to do this despite the International Criminal Court (ICC) indicting him of [war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide](#) for what happened in Sudan under his leadership and issued a warrant for his arrest in 2009 (ICC, 4 March 2009).

The country was rated 'not free' in Freedom House's [2019 Freedom in the World report](#) (with a low score of 7/100). However, this is likely to change since al-Bashir has been ousted from power. In the context of the initial transitional period, early indications were that the prime minister was seeking to improve the situation in the country. However, the October 2021 coup (outside the WWL 2022 reporting period) may cause the influence of *Dictatorial paranoia* to increase again in the future.

### Organized corruption and crime (Strong)

The government of Sudan under ex-President al-Bashir employed all means available to stay in power, including the mobilization of tribal militias (See above: *Security situation*). There have been allegations of gross violations of human rights against the non-Arab citizens and Christians are among the minorities who are victims of this sort of organized crime.

### Clan oppression (Strong)

The Sudanese population consists of about 19 different ethnic groups and almost 600 subgroups. Most of the inhabitants of the southern parts of the country are of ethnic African origin, and Arabs live predominantly in the northern parts of the country. Due to the deeply religious nature of the Sudanese people, most of the population are adherents to religious faith, mainly to Christianity or Islam, however, indigenous religions still persist. For many years, the Arabs from the North have tried to spread not only Islam but also a specific cultural and ethnic identity associated with Arabism. This led to decades of civil war and was ultimately responsible for the independence of South Sudan. However, even today, this is happening all over the country. What makes them a special target is that the majority of those Africans happen to be Christians.

## Drivers of persecution

Sudan: Drivers of Persecution									
	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	-	STRONG	-	-	-	MEDIUM	STRONG
Government officials	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	Medium
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	Medium
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



Sudan: Drivers of Persecution									
	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	-	STRONG	-	-	-	MEDIUM	STRONG
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

### Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Imams in mosques and madrassas preach anti-Christian sentiment. This comes mainly from radical Muslim clerics wanting to see Sudan become an Islamic state. There is also a Shia influence through Iran.
- **Ordinary citizens (Very strong):** Followers of Wahhabism and advocates of Sharia law (as the basis for regulating all aspects of life in Sudan) are closing the spaces available for the Christian life. Islam is deeply embedded in Sudanese society and everyone is encouraged to follow the government policy of one religion, one culture and one language. This quickly leads to the persecution of Christians.
- **Government officials (Medium):** State security forces have still been harassing and intimidating Christians.
- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Militias organized by the government are responsible for killing Christians and for the destruction of property of Christians all over the country.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Both at the individual and family level, citizens have been involved in persecuting Christians in the country. A country expert states: "Family members fear that conversion to Christianity of a family member could lead to the whole family being barred from attending community activities for no fault of their own. Thus they will do whatever it takes to pressure converts into renouncing their faith."

### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** Despite the change in the leadership at the top level, government officials are still a significant driver of persecution and have continued to impede Christians' rights - for example, where Christians have tried to reclaim their church buildings. Government officials are also forcing Christians to go to school on Sundays. Ten years ago an arrest warrant was issued against al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court for crimes that include many against the Christian minority. While al-Bashir was charged in his position as head of state, there were numerous officials at various levels of government involved.

- **Political parties (Medium):** The long-ruling National Congress Party (which was founded in 1996 and was led by Omar al-Bashir until he was deposed in April 2019) is Islamist and has also pushed for (and participated in) the persecution of Christians.

#### Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Organized crime networks (Strong):** Although officially illegal, many groups operating like gangsters towards Christians are state-sanctioned.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Sudan is one of the most corrupt countries in Africa. Politicians and corruption networks have been conspiring against Christians and undermining the rule of law. They work hand in hand so that Christians lose their churches and other property before courts of law.
- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** Ethnic leaders also work against Christians within the existing networks of nepotism and corruption.

#### Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** Some ethnic leaders have received government backing, especially where their ethnic groups see ethnicity and Islam as one and the same. Thus if they see one of their members converting to Christianity, they will persecute them. These government-supported groups with Arab ethnic background also seek to exert pressure on non-Arabs, especially on ethnic African Christians. Most of the inhabitants of the southern parts of the country are of ethnic African origin and Christian (or Ethno-religionist) and Arabs live predominantly in the North. For many years, Arabs from the North have tried to spread not only Islam as a religion but also the Arab cultural and ethnic identity. This played a major part in the decades-long civil war that resulted in the loss of millions of lives, bodily injury and displacement of millions of others from their homes.

### Areas where Christians face most difficulties

- Pressure and violence targeting Christians has always been more intense outside the capital city.
- In addition to the simple harassments and threats that Christians face in their daily lives, it is very important to distinguish what is going on in Darfur, the Nuba Mountain and Blue Nile regions of the country from what is taking place in other parts of the country. In these areas named above there are armed conflicts affecting Christians more than others.

### Christian communities and how they are affected

In Sudan, all Christian communities face some form of persecution. However, the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians who are ethnic Africans or converts with a Muslim background are particularly high. Many of them have been arrested and charged with crimes like espionage; many churches have been demolished; many Christians have been attacked indiscriminately in areas such as the Nuba Mountains region where government forces and rebel groups are in conflict. Many churches are under pressure to close down.

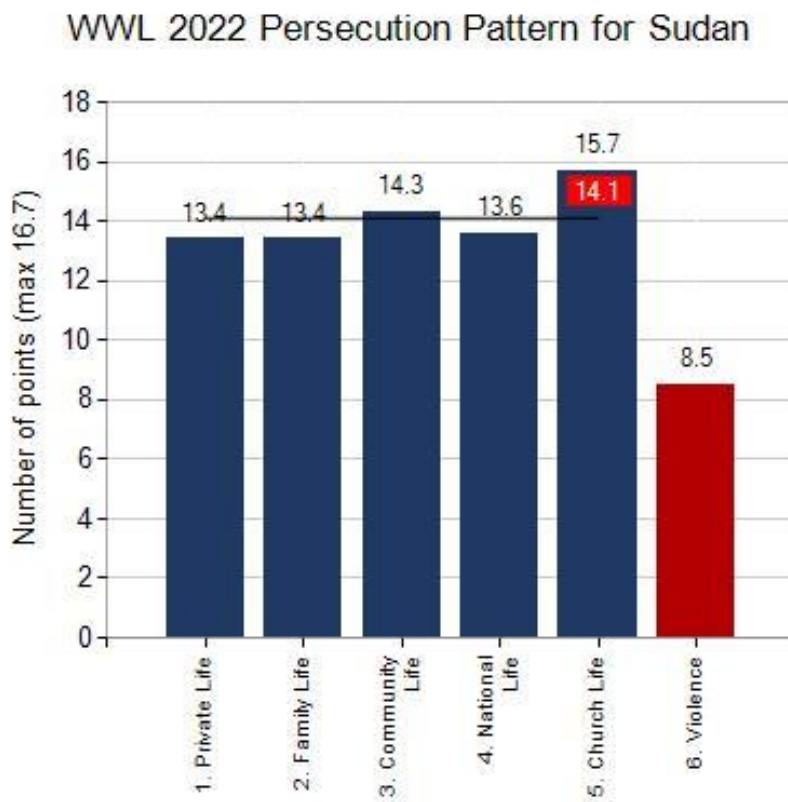
**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriates are being forced to close their churches. These are groups mainly from Western countries and South Sudan. Their churches have been denied registration and many have faced demolition. Some expatriate Christians face arrest and detention without due process of law.

**Historical Christian communities:** Christians belonging to historical churches such as the Coptic Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches face persecution resulting from both *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*. In the past two decades, a program of church demolition was implemented. Under al-Bashir's government many churches including those belonging to the Historical Christian communities were targeted. Under the new transitional administration, things improved, but what has been lost has not been returned. Attempts to get property back have not been successful so far.

**Converts to Christianity:** This group, which consists mainly of Christians with a Muslim background, experiences the most intense pressure. Not only do converts feel the pressure of persecution in the *National* and *Church spheres of the life*, but also in severe form from family and neighbors in their *Community, Family and Private life*.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** Sudanese Christians who belong to Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations also face persecution in the form of *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*. This group is also facing the prospect of having most of its churches in the country closed down.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Sudan shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Sudan is at the extreme level of 14.1 points, very slightly higher than in WWL 2021.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Church sphere*, which reflects the fact that churches in the country face enormous challenges. This is followed by followed by the *Community sphere*, an indication that Christians do not enjoy equality in the communities where they live.
- The score for violence was 8.5 points, a fall from 9.1 points in WWL 2021.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 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 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.50 points)**

In the context of hostility toward Christians, the country remains a risky place to openly demonstrate Christian faith. If Christians mention details about their faith in written form, it is likely that they will be traced and attacked. That is why Christians often prefer to meet and pray privately, not publicly. This affects all categories of Christianity in the country; but converts are affected most.

**Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 points)**

Debates and discussion about religion are taboo, especially if questions are about Islam and Christianity. As a result, Christians tend to avoid talking about their faith to guests or other members of the local community for safety reasons: It could be seen as evangelizing and lead to arrest or mob attack.

**Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.50 points)**

Although not a policy of the government, a gathering of Christians is seen as a serious threat to the community by locals and community leaders. Meeting with other Christians (especially for converts) always carries the danger of abduction or arrest by government security agents. This is one of the issues that all Christian communities in the country face. There is this constant surveillance and follow-up by the community and the police. Even though things improved under the transitional council, there are still problems.

**Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.25 points)**

Although the government proposed repealing the apostasy law (and other laws that restrict human rights), it is clear that there are still fears for the safety of converts, especially in rural areas. Converts cannot talk about their conversion in public. They can be ostracized, discriminated against and expelled. Local communities still think in general that anyone leaving Islam should be punished by death.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

**Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)**

Religion takes center stage in Sudanese society and confers rights and privileges on individuals. In this context, Christian social ceremonies have been difficult; for instance, in the case of Christians marrying. If a marriage is between a Muslim and a Christian, the Christian is expected to convert to Islam. While the law (to a certain extent) allows that non-Muslims will not be subjected to the application of Islamic law, in practice a Christian wedding will not take place as smoothly as a wedding between Muslims.

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

Christian children are often harassed in school or playgrounds due to their parent's faith. As a result of this, Christians (especially converts) often hesitate or avoid talking about their faith to their children. The way they dress and/or the displaying any symbols that indicate their Christians faith, is all widely regarded as a sign of inferiority among Islamic groups in the country and can cause acts of discrimination, intolerance and persecution.

**Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.50 points)**

There are limitations on Christians providing social services. As a result, Christians have to use other social services that are designed for the Muslim population either by the community or the government. Converts often refrain from raising their children as Christians because the children might inadvertently reveal the faith of their parents to others. Linking this to the school system, a country expert noted: "It is very tough to raise children according to Christian belief and faith. The school system, the welfare system and society in general complicate many things. In public schools located in majority Muslim areas of the country, the government requires instruction in Islam. In state schools in areas where Muslims are not a majority, students have a choice of studying Islam or Christianity. However, Christian courses are not offered in the majority of state schools. The reason given by the government for not offering Christian courses is a shortage of teachers or Christian students. Regardless of the reason, in practice, this means that many Christian students attend Islamic courses."

**Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (3.00 points)**

This has to be seen in the context of Sudan being a majority Muslim nation and very conservative. Such exclusion is to make sure that the next generation remains Muslim majority and is all too common as an initial reaction when one parent converts to Christianity. Hence, in the case of separation of a Christian convert and non-Christian parent, the family of Muslim faith will take the child into their custody by force.

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

At community level, Christians have been struggling to live out their Christian faith. In the past, community leaders and morality police used to work hand in hand to suppress Christians in the community, especially in Khartoum. After the departure of President al-Bashir and changes in the political system, especially the repeal of Public Order Law in December 2019, the role of such police decreased. However, that does not mean that Christians in society (especially women) are now free – they are still required to adhere to strict dress code by community leaders. Sharing community resources, dress code and other requirements are unreasonably placed on the shoulders of Christians. Even after the change that followed the removal of al-Bashir all the values that were established by the previous regime are still in place.

**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.). (3.75 points)**

The international community is focusing on the change that followed al-Bashir. However, at the local level there are no real changes that can back up what the national government pledged to deliver. In fact, the militias that were part of the al-Bashir regime have actually gone back to the village level, making the lives of Christians very difficult.

**Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.75 points)**

The general attitude in society is that Sudanese citizens should be Muslim. The government uses all available opportunities to downgrade and punish Christians by restricting them from using community resources.

**Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.75 points)**

All Christian communities in the country struggle to access their share of community resources. In the cities, this means Christians incur extra costs to get what they need for daily life. Outside the urban areas, daily life is extremely difficult if community resources are unavailable for Christians.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

### **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)**

In late 2020, the government took a giant leap toward changing some of the most repressive laws. For example, repealing the apostasy law and other policies and regulations that restrict freedom of religion/human rights. However, at the practical level, such changes are not evident in community life.

### **Block 4.7: Christians have been hindered in running their own businesses without interference for faith-related reasons (e.g. personnel policy, client admission policy). (3.50 points)**

There are many methods and tools that those who persecute Christians use to target Christians when it comes to their business. It has been reported that - compared to Muslim business-owners - it is very difficult for non-Muslims to get a license for starting up a business. Most Christian business-owners are discriminated against by customers because of their religion. In the majority of cases, while dealing with the government, it is very difficult for Christian business-owners to win government-sponsored bids because of the discriminatory attitude of the officials in charge of the offices responsible for these bids. With the initiative of the (pre-October 2021 coup) government to make Sudan a secular state, this situation looked set to improve.

### **Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.50 points)**

Freedom of expression in the country is restricted. These restrictions emanates from two angles: First, it comes from the government, and secondly from local and community leaders. The Church is hindered from expressing its faith, practices and opinions in public because the authorities fear they are giving Christians the chance to influence others to become Christians. The censorship affects everyone; for Christians, the risks of speaking out are higher as the state is likely to give impunity (in whole or part) to anyone reacting against those whose comments could be understood as a criticism of the government or local officials. Here also, in the pre-October 2021 coup situation, there was hope that this was going to change as announced by the transitional government.

### **Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.50 points)**

There was hope that the new transition council would usher in new reforms that could be implemented immediately. However, hinderances occur where organizations are perceived to be critical of state institutions or are overt about the evangelistic effect of their work; many international NGOs are barred from the country if known to be Christian. There are still some Christian organizations operating in the country despite the challenges. The country has numerous political parties but none have a Christian agenda.



## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

### **Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points)**

This issue has been there from neighboring to the state security apparatus who monitor church activities. While Christians in the capital city and other major cities are subject to monitoring and obstruction mainly from government sources, churches in the remote parts of the country, especially in areas affected by the civil war, are subject to more obstruction and monitoring from both government and non-government groups.

### **Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (4.00 points)**

When al-Bashir was removed from power, it was hoped that all the churches that were forced to close down would be allowed to re-open again. However, Christians have found it difficult to build new churches, the major obstacle being the government offices responsible for issuing the required permit. Even if a permit is issued, Christians then face challenges from local Islamic leaders and radical Muslims on a daily basis.

### **Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)**

This is another area where churches face particular pressure. Whatever activities churches want to carry out, they are required by the local authorities to only operate inside churches. Undertaking any church-related activities outside churches without express permission from local authorities will result in the arrest of individuals taking part. It has to be noted that even with the change in the government, the society is very conservative that does not want to see non-Muslim gatherings in the country.

### **Block 5.9: Christians have experienced interference when choosing their own religious leaders. (3.75 points)**

This issue was prevalent under al-Bashir. The problems that started under that regime are still what many churches are continuing to deal with. People in the government believe that the church leaders that are not controlled by the Sudanese government conspire with foreigners, expose state actions and so forth. Thus, it is not uncommon to see the state's attempts to control the election process.

## 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.

Sudan: Violence Block question		WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	1
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?	10 *	9
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	1	0
6.4	How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0

6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	2
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10*
6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10 *	10*
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100 *	100*
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?	10 *	525
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	3
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10*	0
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	10

## 5 Year trends

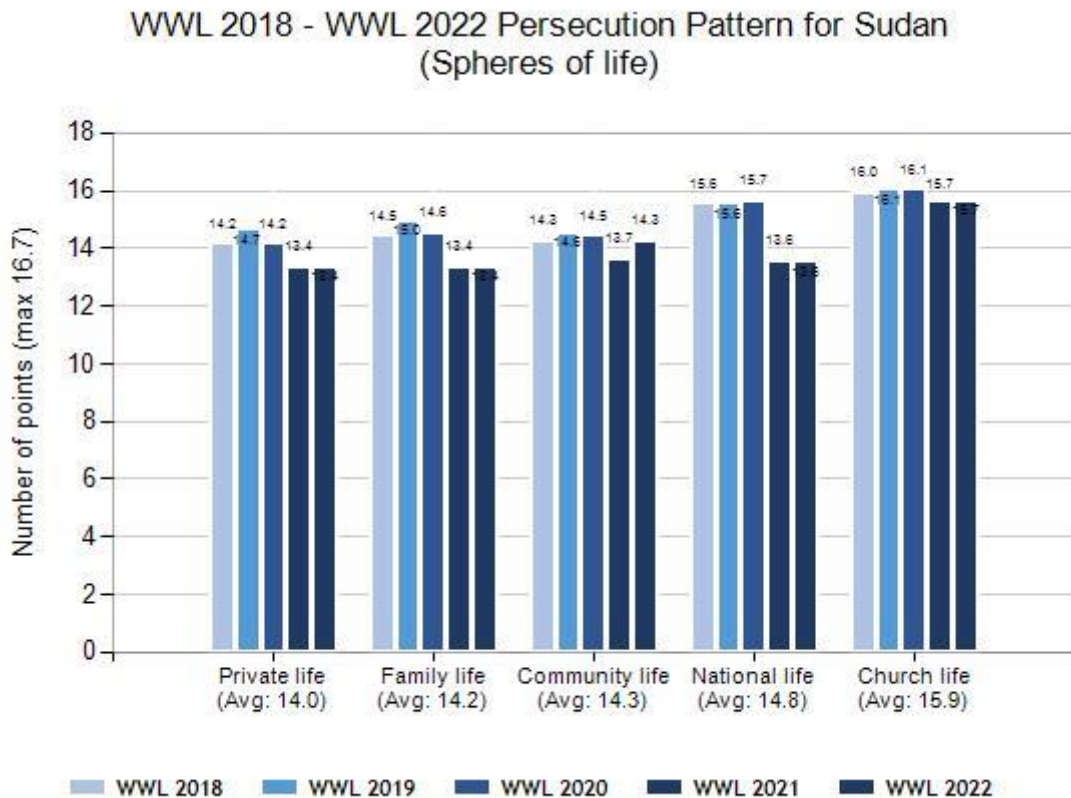
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

The table below shows that the average pressure on Christians has been at an extreme level over all 5 WWL reporting periods. Whereas WWL 2018-WWL 2020 show a stable point range of 14.9-15.2, after WWL 2020 a decrease becomes evident, coinciding with the ousting of President al-Bashir.

Sudan: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	14.1
2021	14.0
2020	15.0
2019	15.2
2018	14.9

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

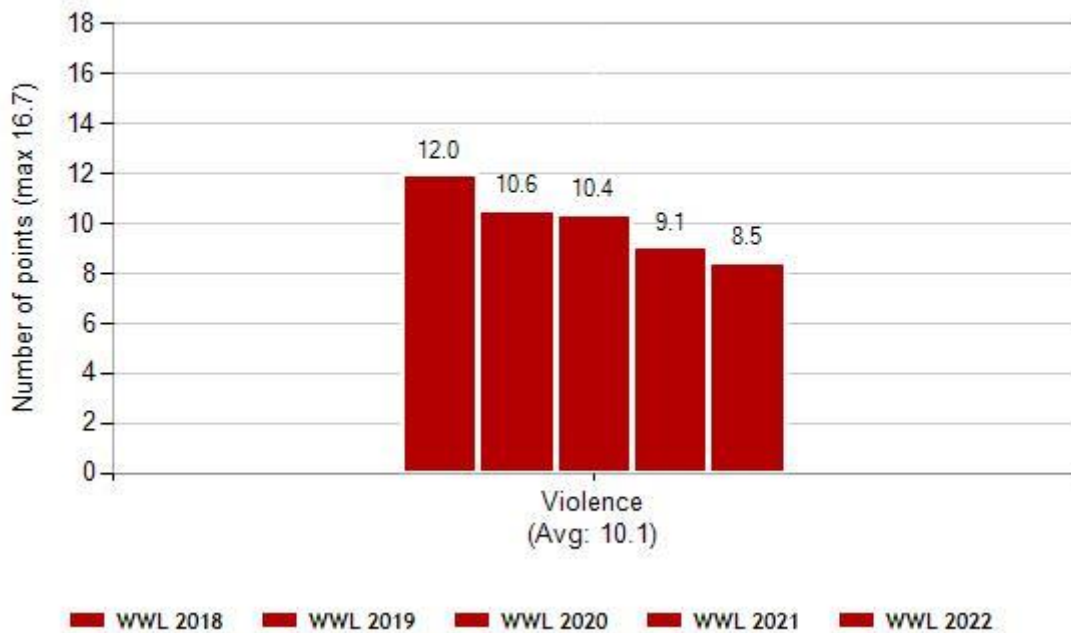


The chart above shows the pressure on Christians in the various *spheres of life* over the last five reporting periods. It can clearly be seen that the average pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been at extreme levels. The *Church* and *National spheres* scored highest (15.9 and 14.8 points respectively), an indication that church worship and activities are particularly being targeted, with the government playing a key role (but with the role of the national government slightly decreasing since WWL 2021).

## 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

The chart below depicts the scores for violence over the last five reporting periods. The scores have been clearly decreasing each year from an extreme level in WWL 2018 to a lower but still very high level of 8.5 points in WWL 2022. Despite the reduction in violence, the average score for the last five reporting periods remains very high with 10.1 points.

### WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Sudan (Violence)



### Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Discrimination/harassment via education
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Forced to flee town/country; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Women have encountered rapid change in Sudan in the past few years. Under the transitional government in 2020, there were positive changes impacting women's rights and safety, including the elimination of the apostasy law, the removal of permits from male relatives for women to travel, and the banning of FGM ([Human Rights Watch](#), 16 July 2020). It was also [announced](#) that Sudan's transitional government had agreed to separate religion from the state, ending 30 years of Islamic rule (Bloomberg, 4 September 2020).

However, in 2021, COVID-19 and the deteriorating economic conditions led to increases in domestic violence, including physical and sexual violence, and an increase in forced marriage ([UN News](#), 19 July 2021). The recent military coup on 25 October 2021 threatens the progress on women's rights, with women also facing targeted violence amid the unrest ([UN News](#), 5 No-

vember 2021). Female Christians continue to face tremendous challenges and are at a disadvantage in society simply because of their gender. Continuing gaps in protective legislation remain avenues for religious persecution.

Christian women and girls, particularly converts, are vulnerable to rape, forced marriage and domestic violence. On a broader level, radical Islamic groups have reportedly been kidnapping Sudanese girls for marriage and/or sexual slavery. Converts may also be isolated within the home to reduce the embarrassment and shame of the conversion on the family, as well as to ensure they cannot meet with other Christians. Converts will also be denied inheritance and if already married, divorced from their husbands. A country expert explains: “The laws on marriage and divorce particularly place women and girls in vulnerable positions since they have fewer rights under custom and sharia law, both of which require them to be submissive to their husbands.”

It is challenging for women and girls to report sexual crimes and domestic violence to the authorities. The testimony of women is not considered equivalent to that of men, and there is significant social stigma attached to rape that deters from coming forward. Additionally, it has been reported that policemen themselves have raped Christian girls, which feeds into a landscape of impunity for perpetrators. Women play a major role in raising their children, representing the family at societal events and helping their husbands with agricultural tasks. The persecution of women and girls therefore has a rippling negative impact on the wider family and community.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	False charges; Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Violent Islamic militancy continues to plague many African nations and has led to an increase in the persecution of Christians. The government of Sudan targets male Christians with a variety of serious false charges, including “terrorism”. Church leaders, who are predominately male, are the most frequent targets and government security forces monitor their activities daily. A country expert summarizes: “In most cases the persecution [by governmental and non-governmental forces] takes place in the form of criminal charges against pastors for things they did not commit.”

Christian men and boys, particularly converts, are vulnerable to beatings, imprisonment, killing, harassment within the workplace and displacement. Converts may be expelled from their homes and shunned by their families. Others feel forced to leave their home due to the pressure of persecution.

Men are usually the head of households and providers of the family. If they are unable to provide for their families due to persecution, the family will experience trouble financially. Preceding, but especially during the recent unrest, men are particularly important for security; in remote parts of the country, absence can lead to family property being looted and wife and daughters being sexually attacked.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religious minorities such as the Jewish community also face serious challenges in Sudan:

- The website Everyday Antisemitism reported on 28 November 2017, that football fans were seen [praising Adolf Hitler](#) and the 'Holocaust'.
- In February 2019, an [Islamic cleric](#) stated in a TV broadcast that "Jews epitomize all trickery" (Jewish News Syndicate, 21 February 2019).

The Bahai community is not recognized in the country and can only operate in secret. Jehovah's Witnesses also face harassment. [Shia Muslims](#) are not allowed to hold worship services (USCIRF, 2019). In a nutshell, any religious group apart from Sunni Islam faces tremendous challenges to exercise their faith.

## Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

### Islamic oppression

Besides the authoritarian government, radical imams and even radical armed groups like the *Janjaweed* militia are targeting Christians. These militias had been funded and trained by the Sudanese government and may continue to be active if those now in power do not find a way to disband these groups. *Islamic oppression* is likely to remain in operation in the coming years because it is so deeply embedded in society.

### Dictatorial paranoia

Known for its poor record in human rights, the government of Sudan has continued violating the rights of Christians in the country. Until December 2019, it had been on the US State Department's list of "Countries of Particular Concern (CPC)" since 1999. Pressure from the international community helped the release of some Christians who were detained because of their faith; however, the government has not changed its general attitude and behavior towards Christians. The looting and destruction of churches, hospitals, and schools are all common, especially in the Nuba Mountains region. It remains to be seen whether *Dictatorial paranoia* will

continue to be as strong in the future now that al-Bashir has been removed from power. Early indications showed that there was a definite desire to reform the country and it is in this context that the USA [removed](#) Sudan from the CPC category, moving it to the Special Watch List in December 2019 (Sudan Tribune, 20 December 2019). The transitional government moved with surprising speed by proposing drastic changes to some of the draconian laws that were used to suppress dissidents and Christians. In this regard, the proposal to scrap the apostasy law can be seen as a significant step in the country.

## Organized corruption and crime

Organized corruption in the country has served to protect the interests of the ruling party and president. The ex-president was behind the creation of the *Janjaweed* militias who became his most trusted force in the country. These militias were behind the killing, rape and displacement of civilians in the Darfur region - including Christian civilians. Although in a post-Bashir situation it is to be expected that these militias will play a less dominant role, they are likely to remain potent enough to persecute Christians.

## Clan oppression

Many social, political and economic issues in the country involve a mixture of factors. In the past, al-Bashir had used ethnicity (Arab) and religion (Islam) to rally his supporters. He successfully presented Christians as villains and Christianity as the source of the problems which Sudanese society needed to combat. Despite his fall from power in April 2019, ethnic groups still possess huge political leverage in the country.

In general:

- Society will remain dominated by conservative Islam.
- The demolition of churches might cease.
- Christians will continue to find it difficult to obtain building permits for new churches as those in power will seek to avoid offending local conservative Muslims.

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: 19th century Mahdist movement - <http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-256>
- Persecution engines description: Islamic law is still very in place - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2020/08/ngos-say-changes-to-sudans-islamic-laws-dont-go-far-enough/>
- Persecution engines description: ceasefire agreements - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/11/ceasefire-holds-but-food-shortage-threatens-sudans-nuba-people/>
- Persecution engines description: war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide - [https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2009\\_01514.PDF](https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2009_01514.PDF)
- Persecution engines description: 2019 Freedom in the World report - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/sudan>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Human Rights Watch - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/16/sudans-law-reforms-positive-first-step>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: announced - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-04/sudan-ends-30-years-of-islamic-law-by-separating-religion-state>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN News - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096132>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN News - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105012>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: praising Adolf Hitler - <http://everydayantisemitism.com/2017/11/28/football-fans-in-sudan-display-banner-of-hitlers-face-with-the-word-holocaust-in-gruesome-first-for-the-country/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Islamic cleric - <https://www.jns.org/sudanese-cleric-the-jews-epitomize-trickery-employ-trickery-against-allah/>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: Shia Muslims - [https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1\\_SUDAN\\_2019.pdf](https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_SUDAN_2019.pdf)
- Future outlook: removed - <https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article68734>

## 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=Sudan>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Sudan>
- [Sudan – Ethnic cleansing – 2016](#)
- [Sudan – Al-Bashir – Can-the-quest-for-international-justice-deter-persecution-of-Christians – 2015](#)

## External Links - Further useful reports

- Further useful reports: Sudan – Ethnic cleansing – 2016 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Sudan-Ethnic-cleansing-WWR.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Sudan – Al-Bashir – Can-the-quest-for-international-justice-deter-persecution-of-Christians – 2015 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Al-Bashir-Can-the-quest-for-international-justice-deter-persecution-of-Christians-2015.pdf>