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World Watch Research

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# Bangladesh: Persecution Dynamics

December 2024



**Open Doors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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## World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	98	96	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.7	11.1	94	93	92	91	92
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	89	89	88	87
4	Libya	16.0	16.2	15.9	16.2	16.4	10.6	91	91	88	91	92
5	Sudan	14.1	14.2	15.5	14.9	15.3	16.1	90	87	83	79	79
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.9	12.2	89	89	89	88	88
7	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.6	14.9	14.5	16.7	88	88	88	87	85
8	Pakistan	13.6	13.9	15.0	15.0	12.9	16.7	87	87	86	87	88
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.9	16.5	10.9	86	86	86	85	86
10	Afghanistan	15.6	15.9	15.9	16.4	16.7	5.0	85	84	84	98	94
11	India	12.2	12.9	13.3	14.9	13.9	16.5	84	83	82	82	83
12	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.8	16.6	3.3	81	81	80	81	78
13	Myanmar	12.6	11.1	13.5	14.1	12.9	16.5	81	79	80	79	74
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	13.0	15.2	15.6	80	79	76	70	67
15	China	13.2	10.1	12.8	14.6	16.1	11.1	78	78	77	76	74
16	Maldives	15.6	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.7	78	78	77	77	77
17	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.8	13.9	6.1	78	79	76	78	82
18	Syria	13.5	14.4	13.9	14.4	14.3	7.0	78	81	80	78	81
19	Algeria	14.7	14.3	11.5	14.7	16.0	6.3	77	79	73	71	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	14.0	15.6	76	75	71	68	67
21	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.6	12.9	14.3	8.3	74	71	69	69	67
22	Laos	11.8	10.7	13.5	14.1	13.9	9.8	74	75	68	69	71
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	2.8	74	72	72	70	71
24	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.7	11.3	10.4	16.1	74	71	69	68	67
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.5	12.4	15.5	4.4	73	71	71	71	71
26	Cuba	13.2	8.5	13.9	13.3	15.1	9.1	73	73	70	66	62
27	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	14.0	15.6	72	70	70	68	66
28	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	14.6	15.7	72	70	70	68	62

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
29	Turkmenistan	14.3	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.3	1.5	71	70	70	69	70
30	Nicaragua	12.4	7.6	13.7	13.3	14.1	9.6	71	70	65	56	51
31	Mexico	11.7	9.0	12.5	11.8	11.0	14.6	71	68	67	65	64
32	Oman	14.5	14.1	10.9	13.8	14.1	3.0	70	69	65	66	63
33	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	15.6	70	69	66	66	65
34	Tunisia	12.4	13.2	10.1	12.6	13.8	8.1	70	69	67	66	67
35	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	10.8	14.5	16.1	70	67	67	66	64
36	Bhutan	13.2	13.2	12.3	14.1	14.2	2.2	69	68	66	67	64
37	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.9	68	68	68	65	63
38	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.6	12.2	12.8	14.2	4.3	68	65	65	64	64
39	Tajikistan	14.1	12.7	12.7	13.2	13.7	1.9	68	66	66	65	66
40	Egypt	12.7	13.7	12.1	12.4	10.9	6.3	68	68	68	71	75
41	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.7	67	67	68	74	67
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	2.6	67	66	66	63	62
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.4	13.1	16.1	67	66	65	65	64
44	Vietnam	10.8	9.5	12.2	14.1	14.1	5.9	67	68	70	71	72
45	Turkey	13.0	11.7	11.7	13.2	11.5	5.4	67	64	66	65	69
46	Colombia	11.0	7.9	12.7	11.5	10.5	12.6	66	68	71	68	67
47	Kyrgyzstan	13.5	10.3	11.7	11.4	12.4	6.9	66	59	59	58	58
48	Brunei	14.8	14.8	10.8	10.8	14.0	0.6	66	66	65	64	64
49	Chad	11.0	8.2	10.2	9.9	10.3	15.9	65	61	58	55	53
50	Jordan	12.9	14.3	10.4	12.2	12.8	2.4	65	65	65	66	64

## World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
51	Malaysia	12.8	13.7	11.7	12.4	11.2	3.0	65	64	66	63	63
52	Azerbaijan	13.3	10.2	9.6	12.2	13.7	5.6	65	60	59	60	56
53	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.9	64	63	64	63	62
54	Nepal	12.2	10.6	9.5	12.6	12.3	5.9	63	62	61	64	66
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.4	63	62	63	61	58
56	Russian Federation	12.7	7.9	10.7	13.1	14.1	4.4	63	58	57	56	57
57	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.1	1.7	61	61	60	59	56
58	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	61	64	64	63
59	Indonesia	10.9	11.9	10.9	11.6	10.2	5.7	61	66	68	68	63
60	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.6	61	61	62	62	62
61	Sri Lanka	12.7	8.7	11.5	11.5	8.5	7.6	60	60	57	63	62
62	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	10.3	10.7	12.1	0.2	60	60	60	59	58
63	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	14.6	59	57	55	52	48
64	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	12.1	9.4	58	58	57	50	42
65	Honduras	7.9	4.7	11.7	7.3	9.9	13.1	55	55	53	48	46
66	Togo	9.2	6.7	10.4	7.1	11.5	9.3	54	52	49	44	43
67	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	0.6	54	55	55	57	56
68	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	8.9	54	52	48	43	47
69	Ukraine	6.8	5.0	7.8	12.5	13.5	7.2	53	44	37	37	34
70	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	8.3	53	52	52	51	46
71	Venezuela	6.3	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	9.6	52	53	56	51	39
72	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	16.1	52	52	51	48	47
73	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	9.6	51	44	44	42	42
74	Lebanon	11.5	10.1	7.0	6.2	6.7	7.2	49	48	40	35	34
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	4.4	48	47	44	44	43
76	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	8.1	15.6	47	46	46	43	43

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
77	Belarus	9.9	3.7	5.0	10.8	14.1	3.1	47	46	43	33	30
78	Philippines	9.2	6.6	6.6	6.1	5.7	8.5	43	40	32	34	26

## Copyright, sources and definitions

World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- [Background country information](#) (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January).

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and 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 end of each document under the heading “External links”. These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

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 can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

## Reporting period

The WWL 2025 reporting period was 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024.

## Brief country details

In the table below, the number of Christians shown is an Open Doors (OD) estimate.

Bangladesh: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
174,701,000	950,000	0.5

Bangladesh: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	950,000	0.5
Muslim	155,361,219	88.9
Hindu	16,198,663	9.3
Buddhist	1,253,212	0.7
Ethnic religionist	748,724	0.4
Jewish	210	0.0
Bahai	12,812	0.0
Atheist	15,615	0.0
Agnostic	126,122	0.1
Other	34,423	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024 (*Adapted according to OD-estimate*)

## Map of country





## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

### Brief description of the persecution situation

Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world where converts to Christian faith originate from four different backgrounds, namely from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and ethnic/tribal background. All, however, face restrictions, discrimination and attacks. They often gather in small house churches or secret groups due to fear of attack. Churches which are active in sharing the faith, particularly those working among the Muslim majority, face the most persecution, but even historical church communities like the Roman Catholic Church are increasingly experiencing attacks and death-threats. Tribal Christians, like the Santal or the Bawm, face an increasing double vulnerability (belonging to both an ethnic and religious minority) and struggle with land-grabbing issues and are caught up in the army's anti-insurgency activities. The WWL 2025 reporting period included the overthrow of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024 and associated unrest and further violence against the predominantly Christian Bawm ethnic group, resulting in multiple killings and many fleeing the country. The outlook for the country is uncertain, in light of the long-term trend of radical Islamic groups gaining greater influence in society and politics.

## Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

- Christian converts are ostracized and faced with opposition by their families, and threatened with divorce and loss of child custody (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian children are harassed because of their parents' faith (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians face restrictions in employment in the public sector and experience discrimination in the private sector (ICCPR Arts. 25 and 26, and ICESCR Art. 6)
- Christians face harassment and violence if they talk about their faith or engage in proselytization (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)

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

- **April to June 2024:** At least 12 ethnic Bawm Christians were [killed](#) in the ousted government's effort to quell the unrest and bring protests under control (UCA News, 2 September 2024).
- **15 April 2024:** A pastor's shop in the southeastern part of the country was destroyed and looted (Open Doors research).
- **7 January 2024:** After 81 days of imprisonment in a local jail, in the northern part of Bangladesh, a Muslim convert has been released. He has not been the only one detained for his faith. For security reasons, no further details can be provided.
- There were several reports about physical attacks and assaults on Christians in the WWL 2025 reporting period, especially on converts.

## Specific examples of positive developments

There has been a number of promising steps taken by the interim government, led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus. On 22 August 2024 the High Court [overturned the verdicts](#) of a cyber tribunal that had jailed the leaders of the prominent human rights group, Odhikar (Civics Monitor, 2024). Yunus has also [condemned violence against religious minorities](#) and assured them that they will not be discriminated against (The Hindu, 26 August 2024), however it is not clear if he will have the authority to turn the tide of increasing vulnerability of Christians.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** This group includes embassy personnel, foreign workers in the important textile sector and other businesses and NGOs. They face being under observation and threatened by Islamic militants. This community also includes the Rohingya from Myanmar.

**Historical Christian communities:** This group includes the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Bangladesh (Anglican) and Seventh Day Adventists, among others. They are frequently threatened and have suffered recent attacks.

**Converts to Christianity:** This category includes converts from a variety of backgrounds: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Tribal. They are facing the strongest persecution, not least from their own families and communities, and often gather in groups secretly. As one country researcher put it: "They are outcasts from society."

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This group includes Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal congregations. The Assemblies of God, for instance, mainly gather for worship in house churches. They are frequently threatened and at times violently attacked. When such churches are active in outreach, they are regarded as 'troublemakers' and face fierce opposition.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

- Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts area in the south-east is home to many ethnic minorities and is a hotspot for rights violations against Christians. In particular between April and June 2024 there were multiple killings of members of the predominantly Christian Bawm tribe (see above: *Specific examples of violent incidents*).
- In recent years a hotspot developed when Bangladesh became host to about one million refugees from neighboring Myanmar. Most of them are located in Cox's Bazar district, at the south-eastern tip of Bangladesh. Repatriation efforts are slow, and the longer the refugees have to stay in camps, the higher the risk is that some will be prone to Islamic radicalization, affecting Bangladesh as well. The camps have also become a place where a tiny minority of Rohingya converts lives. They face increasing pressure but have no means of escape.
- The 2024 political unrest focused on the capital, Dhaka, and has led to greater vulnerability of Christian institutions there.
- There have also been increasing challenges for Christians in the north of the country.

## Position on the World Watch List

Bangladesh: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	74	24
WWL 2024	71	26
WWL 2023	69	30
WWL 2022	68	29
WWL 2021	67	31

The pressure on Christians has been slowly increasing, particularly in the *National sphere of life* as a result of increasing intolerance of Christians stemming from radical Islamic groups. Violence against Christians has also been increasing significantly in the last few years. The public protests against the Prime Minister in August 2024 and associated breakdown of order resulted in the closure of Christian institutions (particularly schools).

## Persecution engines

Bangladesh: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Medium
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Medium

*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.*

**Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong),  
blended with Islamic oppression (Strong)**

Bangladesh's political climate had grown increasingly authoritarian under Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, with [international observers condemning](#) the January 2024 elections for widespread irregularities, including ballot stuffing and suppression of opposition voices (Reuters, 8 January 2024). Opposition parties were heavily suppressed, exemplified by the house arrest of BNP leader [Khaleda Zia](#) and the silencing of dissent through legal harassment and media restrictions (Time, 2 November 2023). However, the resignation of Sheikh Hasina's government in August 2024 following mass protests has ushered in a period of uncertainty. With Islamist factions and conservative groups filling the power vacuum, concerns about governance and minority rights have deepened.

Radical Islamic groups, including *Hefazat-e-Islam* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, have expanded their influence during this volatile period. Recent calls for [blasphemy laws](#) with harsh penalties (UCA News, 16 March 2024), combined with grassroots proselytizing campaigns targeting minorities, reflect their growing reach. Islamist networks tied to global jihadist movements, including [al-Qaeda](#), continue to inspire fear, particularly in rural areas where converts to Christianity face severe restrictions. Meanwhile, the rise of Rohingya insurgent activity along the Myanmar border, including ARSA's involvement in [violent crimes](#), has exacerbated tensions (The Eurasian Times, 1 December 2024).

Religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, remain vulnerable amid these dynamics. Reports of mob violence, forced conversions, and vandalism of places of worship are widespread, often fueled by radical Islamist propaganda. Tensions surrounding the [Israel-Palestine conflict](#) have further inflamed societal divisions (Somoy News, 10 May 2024), with Islamist groups calling for boycotts of Israeli goods and even demanding military action against Israel. Bangladesh's vocal [support for Palestinian statehood](#) and condemnation of Israel's actions in Gaza (Israeli Time, 15 January 2024) have fueled Islamist rhetoric, creating additional pressure on minorities and raising concerns over the government's ability to maintain religious harmony.

**Religious nationalism - Buddhist and Hindu (Medium),  
blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Medium) and Clan oppression (Weak)**

In Bangladesh, Buddhists and Hindus significantly outnumber Christians, though the 2022 census noted a continued decline in the Hindu population. Buddhists, primarily from indigenous groups like the Chakma, Tripura and Marma, are concentrated in regions such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), while Hindus are dispersed nationwide. These communities intertwine religious and cultural identities, leading to a blend of *Religious nationalism*, *Ethno-religious hostility*, and *Clan oppression*. The increasing number of Chakma converting to Christianity has intensified pressures on converts, who face resistance from family and community leaders. Similarly, in Hindu-majority areas, Christian converts are urged by family and community to return to their previous faith.

Buddhist and Hindu leaders often perceive Christianity as a threat to their communities' traditional values and employ social and cultural pressure to suppress conversions. *Clan oppression* remains a persistent issue for ethnic minority Christians, with families and local leaders enforcing long-standing norms to restrict individual freedoms. While persecution is not typically violent, incidents like the killing of eight Bawm tribal Christians in April 2023, and at least [12 more Bawms](#) since April 2024, serve as stark reminders of how quickly tensions can escalate in these areas (UCA News 2 September 2024).

## Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Churches and homes of Christians, especially from the ethnic minorities, have been attacked and destroyed by elements connected to the land-grabbing mafia.

## Drivers of persecution

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

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

## Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia, blended with Islamic oppression

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Muslim leaders in Bangladesh are often drivers of persecution targeting Christians, especially when Christian communities are seen as evangelistic or openly welcoming converts, as this is often perceived as threatening the Muslim majority. They preach and warn against Christians, causing negative attitudes and at times, mob threats, against Christians.
- **Normal citizens (Very strong):** A rising number of incidents involving mob violence against Christians has been reported. Ordinary citizens perceive conversion to Christianity as something which is socially undesirable, and which places an individual outside society. Therefore, citizens ostracize converts, something which happens in particular in rural areas. Members of ethnic minorities, many of them Christian, are watched with suspicion as well.
- **Extended family (Very strong):** For families, it is often hard to accept that their relatives - frequently children - have left Islam to follow the Christian faith. In their eyes, this publicly dishonors the family within society and therefore, in many cases, families cut all ties with converts. In some cases, converts suffer physical attacks from their families, are put under house arrest or expelled.
- **Government officials (Strong):** Government officials are drivers of *Islamic oppression* often combined with *Dictatorial paranoia*, since they aim to stay in power. Whereas discrimination against Christians can be found at all levels of government, concrete action is usually taken by officials at the local level. Especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, government officials act harshly against Christians and treat them unfairly, for example when land issues are concerned and ethnic minorities get caught up in the army's counter-insurgency campaign. In May 2024, Prime Minister Hasina made allegations of a Christian plot to "carve out" an independent Christian state from Bangladesh and Myanmar, and added to the perception that Christians supported Israel over the conflict with Gaza. Bangladesh's Christians are increasingly vulnerable to being scapegoated.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** Radical Islamic groups, specifically *Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh* (JMB), *Jamaat-e-Islami*, *Hefazat-e-Islami* and *Ahle Sunnat*, may claim to be non-violent but are implicated in attacks on the Christian minority, singling out converts. Their influence in national politics is growing, and the *Jamaat-e-Islami* party, previously banned under anti-terrorism laws during the August unrest, had its ban lifted by the caretaker government, allowing it to re-enter the political arena (Reuters, 28 August 2024).
- **Political parties (Medium):** In an effort to consolidate and if possible increase power, political parties have wooed radical Islamic groups by putting pressure on Christians as well as by stressing the special status of Islam. Local political leaders are often involved in land issues, which affect the Christian minority. Some political parties are cooperating with radical Islamic groups, e.g. with *Jamaat-e-Islami*. Political parties are often not primary drivers of persecution but are used by Islamic groups - especially at the local level - as a vehicle for gaining wider influence.

### **Drivers of Religious nationalism (Buddhist and Hindu), blended with Ethno-religious hostility and Clan oppression**

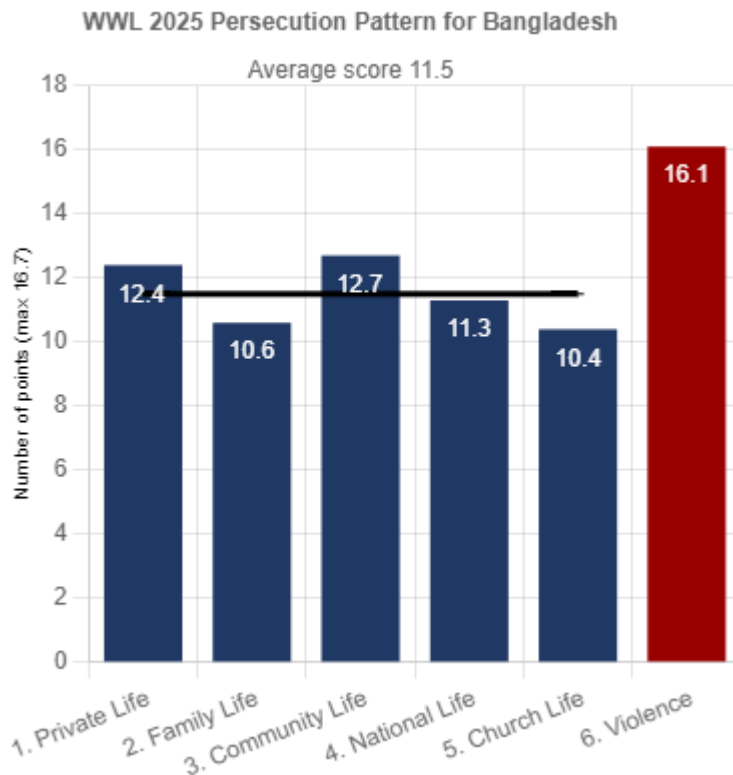
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Buddhist and Hindu religious leaders are driving persecution against converts. These religions are in a minority position in Bangladesh and perceive themselves as having to face up to a growing radical interpretation of Islam. For this reason, people converting to Christianity is felt to be a further weakening of their ranks. Thus they call for converts to be placed under considerable pressure to give up their new Christian faith. Buddhist monks and Hindu priests are therefore at the forefront as persecution drivers.
- **Extended family (Very strong):** What has been stated above for religious leaders is even more strongly the case for a convert's own family. Here, conversion is often identified with shaming the reputation and dignity of the family in the local rural society. Therefore, the Buddhist or Hindu family will put a lot of pressure on converts to bring them back to their original faith and may even expel them from the village if this does not succeed.
- **Normal citizens (Very strong):** In the closely-knit minority societies in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, it is not just the family putting pressure on converts. The very act of conversion is seen as putting oneself outside society and the village and as weakening the whole religious group. Encouraged by religious leaders, neighbors and friends put pressure on converts to recant.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, violent religious groups like *Jana Sanghati Samity* (JSS) exist. They frequently threaten pastors and church leaders who are active in the area. Occasionally, clashes happen and these can turn very violent.
- **Revolutionaries/para-military groups (Medium):** Groups like ARSA are fighting for the rights of the Rohingya minority, they are very active in the refugee camps and will target Christians when they are perceived as getting in their way.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** Often, ethnic group leaders put pressure on those who have alienated themselves from the local community to come back and rejoin the minority's fight for survival. For this, however, they need to share identity, of which religion is an important part.
- **Political parties (Medium):** Ethnic group leaders are often political leaders as well, so they will also employ (local) politics to put pressure on the Christians. They can play a role in land issues as well.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Apart from what was already stated under *Islamic oppression*, local government officials make Christian's lives difficult by getting actively involved in land issues or by staying passive when it comes to investigating attacks against Christians, thereby discouraging the minority.

### **Drivers of Organized corruption and crime**

- **Organized crime (Weak):** Land-grabbing mafia are usually led by local strongmen with good connections to local and sometimes even national politicians. They are known to attack churches and homes of Christians, especially from the ethnic minorities.



## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Bangladesh shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Bangladesh increased marginally, particularly in ‘national life’ as a result of the increasing intolerance of religious minorities from radical Islamic groups that continue to grow in influence. Converts to Christianity remain under most pressure, including on converts among the Rohingya refugees who have fled Myanmar.
- The Violence score increased again, jumping from 14.1 to 16.1 points, largely due to closures of schools as a result of the public protests against the Prime Minister in August 2024 and the associated breakdown of order. The ongoing counter-insurgency in the Chittagong Hills Tract area has continued to impact ethnic Bawm Christians, with 12 having been killed since April 2024.

## 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 2025 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://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.*

### Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

**Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.75 points)**

Bangladesh is one of the few secular Muslim-majority nations and therefore conversion is permitted by law. Article 41(1)(a) protects the citizen’s fundamental right freely to profess, practice, and

propagate religion of Bangladesh Constitution. The law provides that the convert goes to a lawyer presenting a written signed document, which states he or she has changed religion for personal reasons, under no pressure and of their own free will. In practice, for any Christian, Buddhist or Hindu who wishes to become a Muslim, this procedure is a formality. In contrast, for a Muslim to become a Christian, it is normal to encounter pressure from the lawyer, who sometimes refuses (illegally) to register the conversion. The legal barrier, however, is not the main one. As Islam is the state religion and the religion of the vast majority, Muslims who convert to Christianity face strong societal and family pressure. There are instances where local law enforcement agencies have sided with converts, providing them protection during violent confrontations, however the norm is that converts face significant risks, including violence and social ostracism.

***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)***

Converts have to be very cautious and often prefer to keep their conversion a secret from their family. Those who choose to speak of their conversion are regularly harassed or bullied. The notorious "Digital Security Act" was replaced by the Cyber Security Act in September 2023, but in many ways is a continuation of very close monitoring of citizen's digital activity. So sharing one's Christian faith online through social media can also result in threats and harassment.

***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)***

Given the pressure on converts as well as on those who actively invite others to follow the Christian faith, most prefer to stay as invisible as possible, often avoid contacting with anyone outside their own group. Sharing one's faith outside of the immediate family can provoke accusations of attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity.

***Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.25 points)***

Especially for new converts, it has been very risky to meet with other Christians, even more so when they come from a different village or the city. Most of the converts prefer to stay secret believers out of fear of the reaction from their family and community. If any Christians meet with them, community people start to ask questions and monitor their activities. This is not only true for converts from a Muslim background, but also applies to those from a Buddhist or Hindu background.

## **Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere**

***Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 points)***

The public education system blends secular and religious education, mandating that students learn about their respective religions—Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Christianity—through standardized textbooks. While Article 41(2) of the Constitution stipulates that no student should be compelled to participate in religious instruction contrary to their beliefs, the reality is more complex. Due to a shortage qualified religious education teachers, teachers of the dominant faith, Islam, are tasked with teaching religious studies to students of other faiths, leading to inadequate and biased instruction.

***Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.50 points)***

Children of converts are often scolded by teachers and even by the headmasters, who put pressure on children and parents alike to return to Islam. Many children therefore try to avoid school as it is hard to stand the pressure. Sometimes, children are threatened, but often they are promised material and other benefits for them and their family if they return to Islam. Seeing their teachers as a role model, fellow pupils frequently mock Christian schoolchildren, which can reach the point where the latter refuse to go to school or leave the house at all. For many classes, there is an opportunity of receiving scholarships for good students and help with financing fees for poor students and for girl students. However, in many cases Christian children have been excluded from these opportunities. There are two main reasons for this: One is that the authorities often think Christians are receiving money from foreign contacts and secondly, it seems they deliberately want to make life difficult for Christian children and especially Christian converts.

One incident from the WWL 2025 reporting period illustrates the challenges faced by Christian children: A four-year-old boy, whose family converted from Islam, was sent home early from school, which claimed that there was no space for him on the class bench. The underlying reason, however, was clear: The teacher feared that other Muslim children would not want to sit next to a Christian boy.

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

For churches belonging to the historical Christian communities, it is usually no problem to conduct baptisms as long as they are carried out within the church compounds and do not attract too much attention. However, some church leaders refuse to baptize converts from a Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim background in local churches for fear of reprisals, since baptisms are seen as the ultimate sign of breaking with their old belief and relationships. Converts are usually sent to other cities or areas to be baptized. In one case reported in the WWL 2025 reporting period, Muslim converts in one village had been baptized, after which neighbors began accusing the new Christian converts of having burned the Quran. The converts ultimately had to flee their home and village and find refuge in the city.

***Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (2.75 points)***

Christian converts are vulnerable to losing their inheritance rights (including 'converts' from one Christian denomination to another). Since converts from Islam are considered apostates, some families and communities will exclude them from inheritance (though usually through informal means rather than through the courts). While Hindu law itself does not explicitly address conversion, many Hindu families follow customary practices that may disinherit a person who leaves the faith, considering it a break from the family or community's religious identity. Likewise, through extralegal means some Christian communities in Bangladesh will see a joining of another Christian denominations as a betrayal of family traditions. Unlike Muslims or Hindus, Christians in Bangladesh do not have a specific codified personal law governing inheritance. Instead, they often fall under the Succession Act of 1925, which applies to non-Muslims. The Succession Act allows for equal distribution of property among heirs regardless of gender, which theoretically should protect Christians from discrimination based on conversion. However, in practice, customary laws, social norms, and family decisions often prevail over

statutory law. This can lead to situations where converts are denied their rightful inheritance because families may follow traditional or customary practices that exclude or penalize them.

### ***Block 2 - Additional information***

Differences in laws for religious groups can also create additional challenges for Christians. For example in the case of marriage, while Muslims have specific laws guiding marriage, Christians often have to navigate civil laws that may not fully protect their rights or customs. This legal ambiguity can complicate the process of planning and celebrating weddings, especially when it involves interfaith dynamics or disputes over property and rights.

### **Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere**

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

Christians have often faced the problems listed in this question. The pressure to conform to the majority is increasing, not just in questions of dress code. Although the courts have ruled that people cannot be forced to wear skull caps, veils or other religious clothing in workplaces, schools and colleges, many still follow traditional dress codes and put pressure on Christians to do the same. Catholic schools have been [reporting increasing pressure](#) for girls to wear the *hijab* and boys to wear a *taqiyah*, the Muslim skull cap (Aleteia, 14 November 2024). Similar reports are obtained from Hindu-majority communities.

***Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points)***

Due to government policy, Christian schools have to choose students with the best grades for enrolment, even though their policy advocates for a quota for disadvantaged students from a minority background. Christians from a variety of backgrounds are facing disadvantages in their education. Few Christians get the chance to attend BA or MA degree courses at a college or university. There are cases where authorities do not accept a Christian's stated religion and force graduating students to take the exam as belonging to a religion they do not adhere to.

As a result of the unrest in August 2024, The Catholic Church in Bangladesh indefinitely shut down all its education institutions in the Dhaka area. Student groups were demanding the sacking or suspension of teachers, who they say supported ousted Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina, and some were demanding to see the school financial accounts. Another source shared how "students are forced to read books from other religions, while Christian books are not available in schools. There are constant attempts to harm Christians through various false accusations".

***Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)***

Article 28 (1) of the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh declares: "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth" and Article 29 ensures the equality of opportunity in public employment, but minorities and especially Christians have faced many problems in this respect. Due to their low social status, it is already more difficult for Christians to find

work than Muslims. Often, when they finally manage to be invited to a job interview, they discover that the questions are less about their skills and more about their faith. This is particularly experienced by converts. If Christians do gain employment, it is normal that they will not be promoted or given benefits coming with the job. Others are discriminated against in the workplace. In one case reported in the 2025 reporting period, a man, married with a son and daughter, had had a good reputation in his area, but began to be abused because of converting to Christianity. He was refused work and micro-credit, creating financial suffering for his family.

***Block 3.11: Christians have been hindered in the operation of their businesses for faith-related reasons (e.g. access to loans, subsidies, government contracts, client boycotts). (3.25 points)***

Christian businesses have been vulnerable to client boycotts and this appears to be increasing in the WWL 2025 reporting period, illustrated by two examples: i) One man combined his work as a local evangelist with running a computer repair shop in his village. During the recent political unrest, the local Islamic leaders forbade him from opening his shop, declaring that, as a Christian, he cannot continue his business there. ii) A couple, who had converted from Islam, were threatened by the local community that if they refused to return to Islam, they would be evicted from their home and cut off from the community. Their work was selling dried fish and after this incident, many of the customers stopped buying; they have now been forced to live with the husband's uncle.

***Block 3 - Additional information***

In general, people are very curious to know about Christians and to learn about their lifestyle and activities, as they are a minority. That is one reason why Christian activities are monitored, especially by the local community. When Historical church communities organize programs inside or outside the church, neighbors will always be watching. This has a downside, however. Christians, especially converts, have also been monitored by local leaders, vigilante groups and violent groups. In cases of (suspected) conversion, Christians have been interrogated by the police and/or vigilante groups and threatened. Converts often face a whole group of people interrogating them about their faith and trying to bring them back to their former religion. There is the widely perceived misunderstanding that people simply convert to the Christian faith for money. Local police are mainly interested in keeping the peace and will therefore give in to the demands of the Muslim majority. For instance, the police will often say: “Why did you convert from Islam to Christianity? Why are you converting other people to Christianity? We will not accept your complaint.”

**Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere**

***Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (3.75 points)***

While Christians have had fairly good access to justice in the past, a case from May 2024 is raising concerns about the ability of Christians to receive equal treatment. A well known young philanthropist, Milton Samadder, was accused of using his 'Child and Old Age Care' Foundation to traffic in organs harvested directly from patients. Whatever the merits of the case, there are concerns that the allegations are linked to property issues near the facility and after his arrest, an Islamic foundation was given permission to take over Child and Old Age Care Foundation.

***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)***

Non-Muslim religious bodies are not required to register with the government; however, all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including religious ones are required to register with the government's NGO Affairs Bureau if they receive foreign financial assistance for social development projects. In November 2017, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina instructed the authorities to monitor NGO activities in Bangladesh. The NGO Affairs Bureau regularly monitors foreign-funded NGO activities. The Foreign Donations (Voluntarily Donations) Regulation Bill has effectively closed many Christian NGOs, especially smaller ones. It has also made operations for the remaining NGOs more complicated. NGOs that predominantly work on civil and political rights issues have faced constant obstacles from the authorities, including being barred from accessing funds, harassment and surveillance.

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

Christians are frequently slandered, especially in rural areas and in WWL 2025 reporting period this has been exacerbated by the way the war between Hamas and Israel has been interpreted in local communities. Most consider this war to be one between Muslims and Jews/Christians and local Christians are accused of being opposed to the Palestinians. In the northern part of Bangladesh, it has been reported that some Muslim groups visited Christian houses, particularly those of converts from Islam, and threatened to take revenge. One pastor recounted an incident a few weeks after the beginning of the conflict: "At around 11 am local time a group of Muslim people visited me and asked me why I have converted to Christianity and what I have got after conversion. They invited me to renounce my faith in the Lord but, I refused to discuss the matter. Then they openly announced their plans to take revenge for what was happening in Palestine, using the slogan 'Blood for blood, life for life'".

***Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (3.25 points)***

In Bangladesh, Christians not only have to deal with the authorities refusing to recognize conversions, but also with officials willfully inserting wrong information into the government database. This is especially true for converts, but also for other categories of Christian communities. The government has a digital site for storing personal population data collected during the National Identity Card census, but for many Christians the religious information appearing there is not correct and most are unaware of that. As a result, Christians who are not members of one of the traditional denominations are often excluded from the statistics. One of the reasons for this is that the names and surnames of converts indicate their Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim origins, since they do not change their names after conversion. So, instead of asking or checking the papers, officers put information as per their understanding, often even when there is official proof of the conversion. The government provides the Smart NID card free of charge to all adult citizens of Bangladesh. But because of these mistakes, changing the information is very difficult for Christians and only possible after a long and expensive process.

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

### ***Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.75 points)***

Many pastors and church leaders refuse to baptize converted Muslims for fear of reprisals. Converts are advised to travel to a different part of the country to get baptized. But even then, as converts they cannot be openly integrated into church activities. Once their status becomes known, they and the church involved would face accusations of proselytization, leading to threats and attacks. In another instance, a church was destroyed because the local community leaders, who are militant Hindus, disapprove of conversions. In another church, many children come from Hindu backgrounds, but Hindu community leaders told them not to attend Sunday school or participate in Christian programs, even while they continue to benefit from some of the social work done by the church.

### ***Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)***

Over the last few years, home-grown Islamic militant groups have been appearing all over the country and targeting the Christian minority, particularly church leaders as they are most visible within the church communities and carry the blame for 'misguiding' people and converting them. A country expert summed it up aptly: "Pastors and other Christian leaders, and their family members, have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons, as people think that they are the ones who convert and influence people to come to Christianity. That's why people target them and their families to create fear."

### ***Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.50 points)***

Christians have reported that they are being monitored especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and in areas where they are suspected of carrying out evangelism among Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. In these areas, the vigilante groups and authorities apparently receive the names and details of all participants and key leaders of churches through informers. Online church meetings come with additional risks as the government has increased its monitoring of all online activities as a means of fighting against religious extremism. In February 2024, an adult literacy teacher was conducting classes in a church when six Islamic leaders, 5 of them wearing *Panjabi* (Islamic Traditional Dress) and one in regular dress, came into that class and told the teacher to stop the class. They took all the books from the students and informed the teacher that they were going to check on the content.

### ***Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (3.50 points)***

Monitoring is not usually carried out directly by the state (although it would have the means by applying the ICTA and CSA - Information and Communications Technology Act and Cyber Security Act), but by local radical Islamic groups, religious leaders or members of society in general, who may also take the law into their own hands by interrogating and punishing Christians. Since Christians are constantly suspected of carrying out missionary work, the monitoring is widespread, whereas its intensity depends on how active the churches are. Radical Islamic groups (and sometimes neighbors too) often refer to a speech by former Prime Minister Hasina, when she said that whoever hurts religious sentiments will be punishable by law; thus, Christian preachers and teachers, in addition to converts, are monitored and threatened.

## **Block 5 - Additional information**

In general, churches are able to function in Bangladesh, but restrictions are increasing, and it is reported that training has become more difficult, as it is often disrupted. Villagers are suspicious of Christians, and where there has been training for Christian leaders, they will ask for details about who is attending and what the training involves. Openly offering and distributing Bibles has been hindered and faces strong opposition. While work among youth has not been forbidden, the conversion of minors is punishable and generally seen as unethical. Already as far back as in April 2014, a research paper published by the University of Chittagong called Christian NGOs "neo-missionary". This mindset has become more entrenched over time. Bangladeshi authorities have withheld the visa extensions of four foreign missionaries including a nun. According to church sources, this was due to negative intelligence reports. The Ministry of Religion clarified that it will approve visa applications only if there is a positive report from the various intelligence agencies of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

## **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 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. 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.

Bangladesh: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	13	10
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	14	6
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	151	10 *
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?	2	2
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	1	10 *
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 *	4
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	701	1000 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	64	100 *
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?	10 *	10 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	1000 *
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	1000 *

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** Since April 2024, at least 12 ethnic Bawm Christians were killed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. For details, see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period.*

- **Christians attacked:** Christians, especially converts from all backgrounds, face attacks from members of their surrounding community, often organized by radical religious groups.
- **Christians arrested:** There were reports of at least 10 Christians who were detained or arrested and imprisoned. However, details cannot be published for security reasons.
- **Churches attacked:** As part of the political unrest in August 2024, there was an increase in the number of churches or Christian institutions that were attacked, mainly by members of local communities.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** Christian homes have been attacked in a variety of places, many by community members, some by land-grabbers. Reports came in from all over Bangladesh and from converts of all backgrounds. No details can be given for security reasons.
- **Christians abducted:** We have one confirmed case of a Christian covert from Buddhism being abducted and beaten by a group of youths, though there are likely others. For security reasons, no details can be given.

## 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.

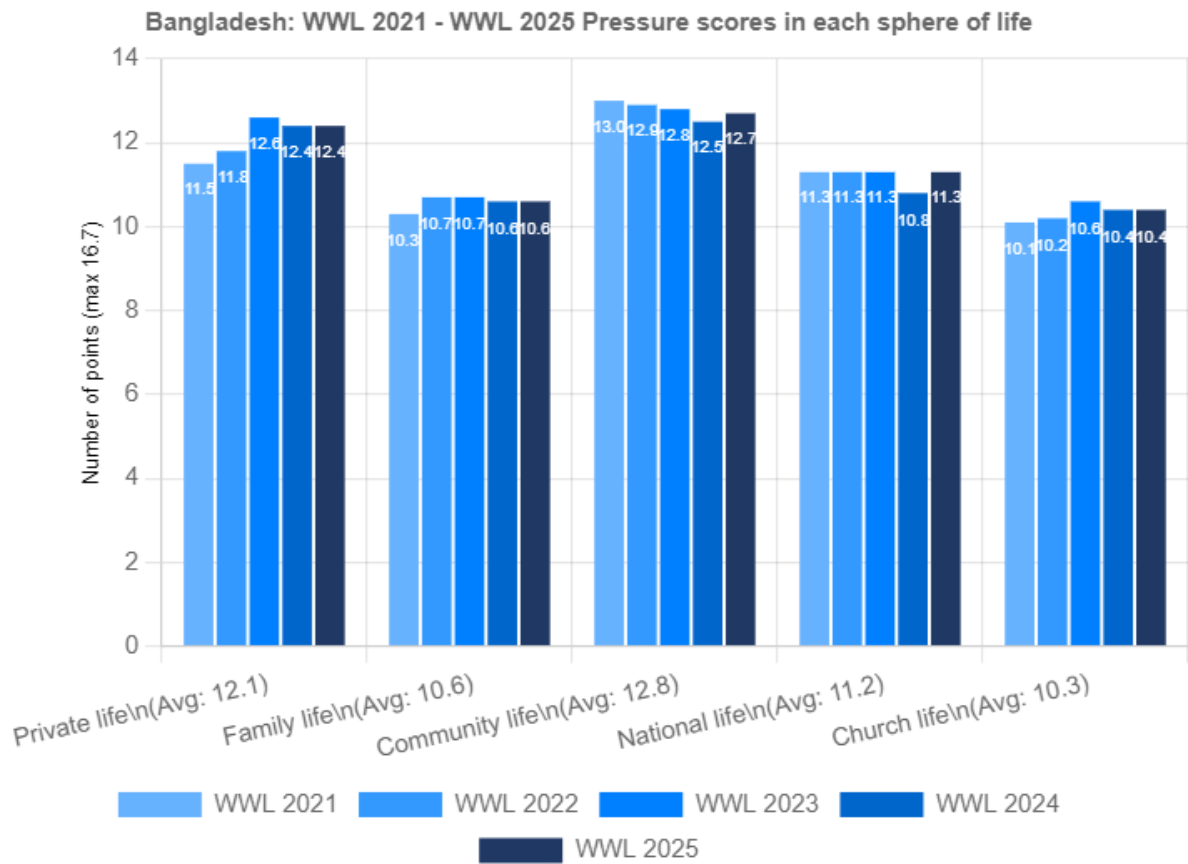
### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Bangladesh: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	11.5
2024	11.3
2023	11.6
2022	11.3
2021	11.2

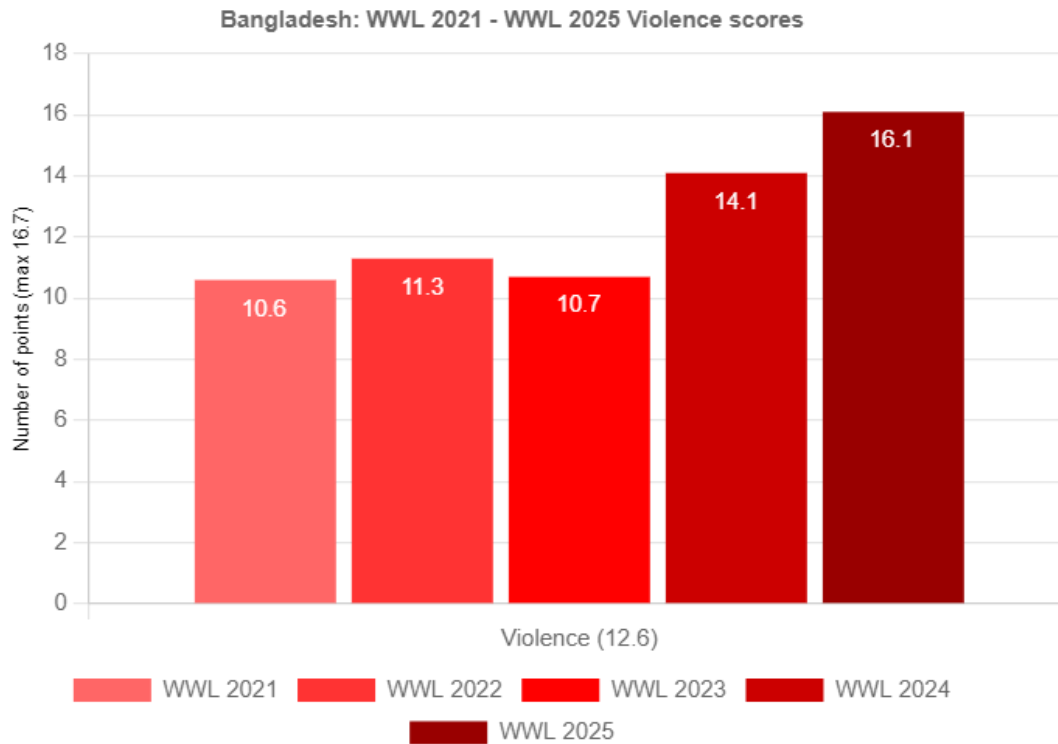
Over the most recent five WWL reporting periods, the average pressure on Christians has fluctuated within the range 11.2 - 11.6 points.

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

As can be seen in the blue chart below, the pressure on Christians has been relatively stable over the last few years, but in WWL 2025 increased marginally in the *Community* and *National spheres*. There are underlying forms of pressure shaping how Christians are perceived by their Muslim neighbors: For instance, there is in particular the increasing influence of radical Islamic ideology and there are also more immediate factors, such as the political instability and the conflict between Hamas and Israel.



### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



As can be seen in the red chart above, the level of violence was more or less stable in the period WWL 2021- WWL 2023. The considerable increases in the two most recent WWL reporting periods primarily relate to the killing of ethnic Bawm Christians as part of the army's anti-insurgency campaign in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Bangladesh	Female Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
	Abduction Forced marriage Violence – sexual

Bangladesh is a class-based and patriarchal society. Despite the country being led by female politicians for many years, Bangladesh is still a country where it is dangerous and difficult to be a woman. It has one of the highest child marriage rates in the world, with 51% of girls being married before they turn 18 ([Girls Not Brides](#), accessed 20 December 2024). Although the overall child marriage rate in Bangladesh has declined and altered in structure in recent decades, the rate of child marriage continues to be one of the highest in the world. In addition, women in Bangladesh continue to have little protection or access to justice in cases of domestic violence, child marriage and femicide ([HRW 2023 country chapter Bangladesh](#)).

In this context, women and girls – particularly converts – are most vulnerable to rights violations from their nuclear family, extended family, friends, neighbors and local community. Persecution of Christian women is complex, often hidden behind marriages and family life, and justified by social norms. Conversion to Christianity is viewed as a betrayal and as such, Christian women and girls can face harassment from their community, especially if they do not conform to expected modes of dress.

Because women and girls are mostly dependent on males, sexual assault, rape, forced divorce and forced marriage are common forms of religious persecution. In addition, they experience specific forms of physical violence aimed at degrading and shaming them. “Both men and women experience violence,” a country expert clarified “but the distinguishing feature is that men most commonly are subjected to visible acts, often in public, of religious persecution, whereas women more commonly experience invisible persecution which often involve shame and sexuality”. Women are not only abused physically, but also mentally, and converts especially can be targeted through house arrest, described by an expert as “a captive life” where they are isolated from other family members, their churches and communities.

“Sexual abuse may be the most common way to persecute Christian women and girls. It assumes that a woman's sexual purity is equivalent to her worth,” a country expert shares, continuing: “Women are considered by the persecutors as ideal targets to destabilize the Christian community and stifle the next generation of Christians without reprisals. The threat of shame prevents much of the injustice done to Christian women from being disclosed or brought to the attention of the police”. Reporting can further enrage the community, is illustrated by a case in recent months in which a girl on her way to school was raped by two Muslim youths. Her father called the police, but when they arrived the

villagers attempted to attack the police van to prevent the arrest. The police did file a case against the rapists and those who attacked the van, but the situation has been aggravated and the family has been effectively cut off from the rest of the community, causing them to live in fear.

Victims of rape struggle to move on from the trauma, particularly if they become pregnant by their abuser. Furthermore, [refugee camps](#) continue to be places of heightened vulnerability for women and girls, and are particularly precarious for Rohingya Christians who have fled violence in Myanmar (UN Women, 2 January 2022). A country expert describes how in the camps “Christian women and girls are often abducted, beaten and ‘forced to convert to Islam’ and marry Muslim men” and there is increasing evidence of a wider problem with [violence against and online harassment of women](#) in the area where the refugee camps are located (The Daily Star, 14 September 2024).

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Bangladesh	Male Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
Denied inheritance or possessions False charges Imprisonment by government Violence – physical Violence – psychological	

One result of the male-oriented culture in Bangladesh is that men generally become Christians first, followed by their families later. Likewise, as leaders within their families, men and boys often face persecution first. A country expert explains: “Men most commonly are subjected to visible acts, often in public, of religious persecution”, often by authorities, but even by the community. They are commonly beaten for “betraying their culture and religion”, tortured and threatened. Pressure from community members and local Muslim leaders has also caused men and their families to flee from their homes.

Christian men have been targeted by the authorities; sometimes they are also accused of bribing people into becoming Christians and become entangled in drug dealing by so-called “friends” for the purposes of attracting the attention of the police. Church leaders in particular can be at risk of arrest, although imprisonment is still rare. As men are the main providers, if they lose their job because of their faith – or are imprisoned – it will affect their whole family.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department [IRFR 2023 Bangladesh](#):

- The NGO ASK, which monitors incidents across the country, stated there were 22 incidents of violence against religious minorities from January to December. Two people were killed (including one Ahmadi) and 81 injured (62 Ahmadi and 19 Hindus) in the incidents. There were attacks on 103 Ahmadi homes, 33 Ahmadi business, one Ahmadi mosque, one Ahmadi health clinic, and six Hindu temples, five Hindu homes, one Hindu business, and 43 Hindu statues. The NGO did not publish specific details about each incident. From January-December 2022, ASK reported 12 cases

of violence against religious minorities, which injured five Hindus and damaged one Hindu home, eight Hindu businesses, four Hindu temples and 11 statues. ASK reported no Ahmadi casualties in 2022. Human rights NGOs and some religious leaders continued to report harassment and social isolation of, and physical violence against, converts to Christianity from Islam and Hinduism.

- Leaders of religious minority communities continued to say the government frequently used laws such as the Digital Security Act (DSA) to target members of religious minority groups, particularly Hindus, for “hurting the religious sentiments” of Muslim populations. In almost all cases, courts took harsher measures against members of religious minorities for posting allegedly derogatory content on Facebook than against the perpetrators of retaliatory violence. Several cases followed this pattern during the year.
- Muslim leaders said the government continued to influence the appointment and removal of imams and provide guidance on the content of sermons to imams throughout the country. In September, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) announced a hunger strike to demand implementation of past election pledges to implement a law allowing citizens (mostly Hindu) to recover property seized by the government following independence, form a national minority commission, enact a special law for the safety of religious minority communities, and reinstate the government employment quota system for members of religious minorities.

According to one [report](#), in the period 2013 - October 2021, 3710 cases of violence against the Hindu minority were recorded (UCA News, 20 October 2021). Hindus are the second largest religious group in the country behind Sunni Muslims. Hindus are subject to discrimination and violence, and some women and girls have been converted by force.

All religious minorities are prone to discrimination and violence, this includes Islamic minority groups like Shiite and Ahmadis as well as Hindu and Buddhist minorities. There have been calls - still unheeded - to [declare the Ahmadi minority non-Muslim](#) (UCA News, 18 April 2019). Societal hostility against Ahmadis is far-reaching. In July 2020, radical Muslims [dug up](#) the corpse of a three-day old Ahmadi girl from a cemetery in the eastern city of Brahmanbaria because she was not Sunni (Daily Mail, 11 July 2020).

One country expert explained about the situation for Hindus in more detail:

- "Many Hindus have been unable to recover landholdings lost due to the now-defunct Vested Property Act. Although an Awami League government repealed the Act in 2001, the new government did not take any concrete measures to reverse the property seizures that occurred under the Act. The Vested Property Act was an East Pakistan-era law that allowed the government to expropriate 'enemy' (in practice Hindu) lands. Under the law, the government seized approximately 2.6 million acres of land, affecting almost all Hindus in the country. According to a study conducted by a Dhaka University professor, nearly 200,000 Hindu families lost approximately 40,667 acres of land since 2001, despite the annulment of the Act the same year."

For the Hindu minority, the attacks on a Hindu festival on 15 October 2021 in [Comilla](#), leaving four dead, left them in permanent fear of possible future attacks (Human Rights Watch, 21 October 2021). The [lynching](#) of two Muslims by Hindu villagers, which took place on 18 April 2024 (UCA News, 25 April 2024), highlights how complex the religious situation in the country is. The Hindu mob were enraged that a local Hindu temple had been set on fire.

## Trends Summary

### 1) Conservative Islam is growing in influence as secularism stumbles

The protests and overthrow of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasini in August 2024 are part of a longer-term trend in Bangladeshi politics of the weakening of secular model that marked the nation's founding and a resurgence in conservative Islam and intolerance of minorities (The Diplomat, 2 November 2024). It was Sheikh Hasini's Awami League party that was most closely associated with this project to build a secular identity, but this project was undermined through the weakening of traditional parties and groups promoting human rights and increasing mistrust of government, and Islamist groups have [exploited that political vacuum](#) (The Diplomat, 16 September 2024), particularly *Jamaat-e-Islami* and the hardline pressure group *Hefazat-e-Islam* (International Crisis Group, 14 November 2024). Her opposition to *Jamaat* and more radical Islamic forces including violent extremists was one reason why secular Bangladeshis, and some Christians, supported her. Islamist movements played a significant role in the anti-Hasina protests, and the interim government, led by Mohammad Yunus, while stating his commitment to the protection of religious minorities as equally Bangladeshi, has already made some compromises including the appointment of *Jamaat*-linked lawyers to court positions. What comes after this interim administration is unclear, but what is evident is that the democratic norms are eroding and this creates risks of a return to dictatorial paranoia or growing ethno-religious conflicts.

### 2) Consequences for the Christian minority - increasing levels of persecution, resulting from a mixture of persecution engines and drivers

The persecution of Christians in Bangladesh is at a very high level (very high being defined in WWL methodology when a country scores 61-80 points) and shows a variety of actors and Christians affected, especially converts from various religious backgrounds. The situation is particularly serious for Christian converts from a Muslim background, with Islamicist voices growing in their influence. The Hamas-Israel conflict has strengthened perceptions that Christians are anti-Muslim, and also the accusation from the former prime minister that the Christian minority has plans to [create a Christian state](#) by taking parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar further turned the spotlight on Bangladeshi Christians as 'other' and disloyal. (UCA News, 27 May 2024).

Although since 2016 no major attacks on Christians have taken place, Islamic radical groups and their ideology are growing in influence and the army's anti-insurgency campaign in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area is a reminder that Christians are at risk from a mixture of engines of persecution, in which communal tensions, government 'divide-and-rule' tactics and underlying contests for control of land all combine to make Christians vulnerable.

## Further useful reports

Further background information per country and a selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

## External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: killed - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/anti-insurgency-drive-is-hurting-bangladeshs-bawm-christians/106231>
- Specific examples of positive developments: overturned the verdicts - <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/bangladesh-interim-government-commits-to-human-rights-reforms-as-they-release-activists-protesters-and-investigate-past-crimes/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: condemned violence against religious minorities - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/ahead-of-janmashtami-celebrations-prof-yunus-assures-no-one-will-be-discriminated-in-new-bangladesh-for-religious-identities-political-beliefs/article68566328.ece>
- Persecution engines description: international observers condemning the January 2024 elections - <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-says-bangladesh-elections-were-not-free-fair-2024-01-08/>
- Persecution engines description: Khaleda Zia - <https://time.com/6330463/bangladesh-sheikh-hasina-wazed-profile/>
- Persecution engines description: Hizb ut-Tahrir - <https://tinyurl.com/4286vuek>
- Persecution engines description: blasphemy laws - <https://tinyurl.com/2vpc66wy>
- Persecution engines description: al-Qaeda - <https://tinyurl.com/5y9fpj44>
- Persecution engines description: violent crimes - <https://tinyurl.com/ycy5a6pe>
- Persecution engines description: Israel-Palestine conflict - <https://tinyurl.com/4tnve8a7>
- Persecution engines description: support for Palestinian statehood - <https://tinyurl.com/mr3y2fnp>
- Persecution engines description: 12 more Bawms - [https://www.ucanews.com/news/anti-insurgency-drive-is-hurting-bangladeshs-bawm-christians/106231?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.ucanews.com/news/anti-insurgency-drive-is-hurting-bangladeshs-bawm-christians/106231?utm_source=chatgpt.com)
- Drivers of persecution description: lifted - [https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/bangladesh-revokes-ban-imposed-main-islamic-party-by-ex-pm-hasina-2024-08-28/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/bangladesh-revokes-ban-imposed-main-islamic-party-by-ex-pm-hasina-2024-08-28/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)
- 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): reporting increasing pressure - <https://aleteia.org/2024/11/14/bangladesh-christians-report-violence-and-discrimination>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls Not Brides - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/bangladesh/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW 2023 country chapter Bangladesh - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/bangladesh>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: refugee camps - <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2022/01/rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-join-un-campaign-against-gender-based-violence>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: violence against and online harassment of women - <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/hate-crime/news/several-women-attacked-harassed-coxs-bazar-3702336>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Bangladesh - IRFR 2023 Bangladesh - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bangladesh/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: report - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/religious-fanatics-gain-strength-in-muslim-majority-bangladesh/94609>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: declare the Ahmadi minority non-Muslim - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/cleric-demands-bangladesh-ahmadis-be-declared-non-muslim/85004>



- Persecution of other religious minorities: dug up - <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8513445/Muslim-fanatics-dig-three-day-old-girls-body-cemetery.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Comilla - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/21/bangladesh-deadly-attacks-hindu-festival>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: lynching - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/fear-of-sectarian-violence-after-bangladesh-lynching/104907>
- Trends Summary: exploited that political vacuum - <https://thediplomat.com/2024/09/islamic-parties-gaining-ground-in-bangladesh-amid-post-hasina-political-vacuum/>
- Trends Summary: create a Christian state - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-wary-of-bangladeshi-pms-christian-state-remarks/105217>