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World Watch Research

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# Tajikistan: Persecution Dynamics

December 2024



**Open Doors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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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 and on the Open Doors Analytical website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom).

## Reporting period

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

## Brief country details

Tajikistan: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
10,332,000	62,600	0.6

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Tajikistan: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	62,600	0.6
Muslim	10,103,000	97.8
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	4,800	0.0
Ethnic religionist	7,500	0.1
Jewish	300	0.0
Bahai	4,600	0.0
Atheist	27,000	0.3
Agnostic	120,000	1.2
Other	2,200	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

## Map of country



## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Tajikistan:	
Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Islamic oppression	Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Government officials, Ethnic group leaders
Clan oppression	Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Government officials, Ethnic group leaders

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

### Brief description of the persecution situation

The government puts heavy pressure on all 'deviating' groups by tightening existing laws and by enforcing them strictly. Indigenous Christians with a Muslim background bear the brunt of rights violations both at the hands of the state and from family, friends and community. Russian Orthodox churches experience the least problems from the government as they do not usually attempt to make contact with the Tajik population. The youth law in particular has left Christians (and other religious minorities) in legal limbo as it is not clear what is still allowed.

### Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Tajikistan 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 \(CRC\)](#)

Tajikistan 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 and violence by their families and communities (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian children are not allowed to participate in church activities (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Ownership of religious literature is severely restricted beyond international permitted limitations (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)



- Christian female converts are forced to marry non-Christian men and pressured to renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)

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

- State officials closely monitor all activities of non-Orthodox Christians.
- Church leaders are called for interrogation regularly and placed under pressure to become informers.
- At least 20 converts were beaten by Muslim family members and their local community. For further examples, see below in the Violence section.

## Specific examples of positive developments

Most Christians belong to ethnic minorities - Russian and Ukrainian. The number of Christians decreased sharply in the 1990's due to the wave of Russian and Ukrainian emigration from Tajikistan in the early independence period.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

The largest official church denominations in Tajikistan are the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** These are not involuntarily isolated groups and so have not been counted as a separate category in WWL analysis.

**Historical Christian communities:** These groups, the largest of which is the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), are not involved in evangelism among Tajiks. They can function without much interference since the Tajik regime does not consider them a threat. What is more, the Tajik government has no interest in provoking Russia by attacking the ROC.

**Converts to Christianity:** Christian converts with a Muslim background bear the brunt of persecution in Tajikistan. Apart from limited restrictions from the state, they are also under strong pressure from family, friends and community. For them, the latter is by far the more powerful. Conversion is seen as ethnic, national and religious betrayal and brings shame upon the family.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** After converts, this category of Christians is the second most persecuted group (mainly due to missionary activity). Over the years, Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal groups have suffered from many raids, threats, arrests and fines by the authorities.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Rights violations targeting Christian communities and carried out by government officials can occur all over the country. Pressure from family, friends and community on converts is stronger outside the urban areas.

## Position on the World Watch List

Tajikistan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	68	39
WWL 2024	66	46
WWL 2023	66	44
WWL 2022	65	45
WWL 2021	66	33

The score for Tajikistan in WWL 2025 was 2 points higher than in WWL 2024: 68 points. Pressure went up in all spheres of life, and the violence score increased from 0.6 of a point in WWL 2024 to 1.9 points in WWL 2025. Pressure was highest in the *Private and Church spheres of life*. The two main Persecution engines in Tajikistan (*Dictatorial paranoia* and *Islamic oppression*, the latter blended with *Clan oppression*) are active in all spheres of life, but *Islamic oppression* (blended with *Clan oppression*) dominates in the *Private and Family spheres of life*, while *Dictatorial paranoia* dominates in the *National and Church spheres of life*. Both engines 'meet' in the *Community sphere of life*. The government imposes many restrictions on church activities.

## Persecution engines

Tajikistan: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	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	Very strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

**Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong)**

No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed. Pressure from the authorities has increased since 2015 and gained further momentum with the introduction of the Law on Religion in January 2018, causing a rise in the number of raids on meetings and of Christians being interrogated. It is very common that members of Protestant churches are regarded as followers of an alien sect with only one goal, namely to spy on and destroy the current political system. Thus they are regarded as dangerous, requiring control and, if necessary, eradication. Another area of crackdown involves religious education, no matter which religion is concerned.

**Islamic oppression (Strong), blended with Clan oppression (Strong)**

If indigenous citizens (who are Muslim) convert to Christianity, they are likely to experience pressure and occasionally physical violence from their families, friends and local community to force them to return to their former faith. Some converts are locked up by their families for long periods, beaten and may eventually be expelled from their communities. Local imams preach against them, so adding pressure. As a result, converts will do their best to hide their faith – they become so-called secret believers.

**Drivers of persecution**

Tajikistan: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	-	STRONG	-	-	-	VERY STRONG	-
Government officials	Medium	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	Very strong	-
Ethnic group leaders	Medium	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	Medium	-

Tajikistan: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	-	STRONG	-	-	-	VERY STRONG	-
One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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 Dictatorial paranoia

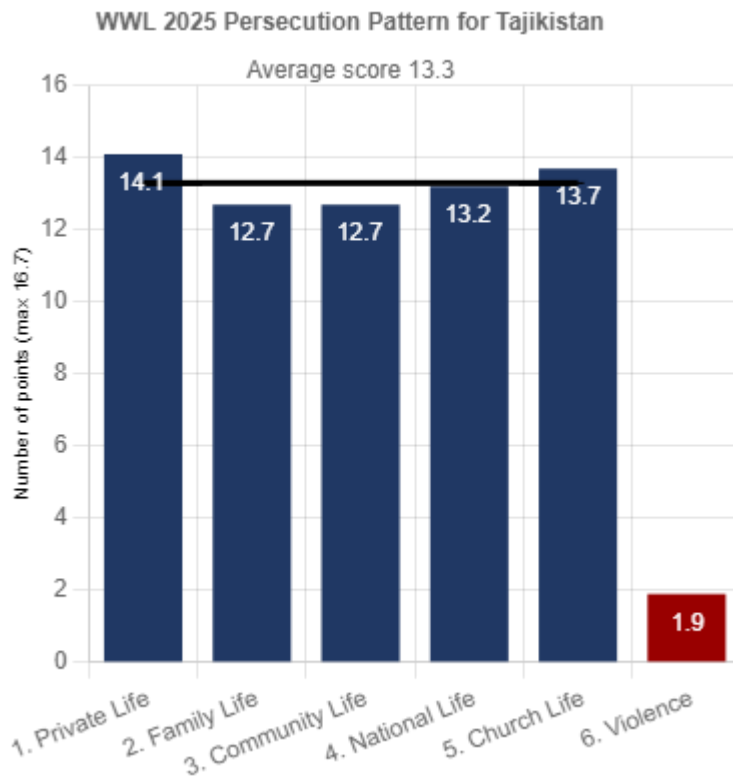
- **Government officials (Very strong):** Police raid homes and churches and confiscate Christian books, DVDs and computers. This is followed by detention, interrogation and fines for Christians. Church leaders are called for interrogation regularly and placed under pressure to become informers. This pressure is strongest on Tajik church leaders.
- **Political parties (Strong):** Few political parties are allowed in Tajikistan. The ruling party which controls the government led by President Rahmon by definition participates in persecution insofar as much of the persecution is government-sanctioned.
- **Citizens (Medium):** Normal citizens are members of the Muslim majority; they also report Christian activities to the authorities.

#### Drivers of Islamic oppression (blended with Clan oppression)

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Muslim clerics may resort to physical violence to make converts to Christianity recant their new faith. This especially affects converts who are put under pressure by the local imams to return to Islam. At times, the pressure on the convert's family can be even stronger than on the actual convert.
- **Extended Family (Strong):** Muslim family members, especially in rural areas, will exert intense pressure on converts to Christianity, often involving threats, beatings, house arrest and ostracism.
- **Citizens (Strong):** In the case of conversion, persecution by the local community and its religious leaders will be severe. Normal citizens at the community level exert pressure on converts with the aim of making them return to Islam.

- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Medium):** Tajik ethnic leaders see conversion to Christianity as an assault against Tajik identity and react with hostility.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Staff working at local authorities have connections to the Muslim community. This produces problems for converts and Christians from non-traditional churches.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Tajikistan shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (13.3 points), up from 13.0 points in WWL 2024. Pressure went up slightly in all *spheres of life*.
- Pressure is highest and at an extreme level in the *Private sphere of life* (14.0 points), followed by the *Church sphere of life* (13.7 points). Pressure on Christians in Tajikistan comes from *Islamic oppression* (blended with *Clan oppression*) in the *Private sphere of life*, and from *Dictatorial paranoia* in the *Church sphere of life*.
- The score for violence is low, increasing from 0.6 points in WWL 2024 to 1.9 points in WWL 2025, but it is believed that many violent incidents targeting Christians in Tajikistan go unreported.

## 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://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).*

## Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

***Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 points)***

Conversion is viewed as betrayal of the family and culture, as well as of Islam. When people convert, they place themselves outside the community. Family, friends and community will try to make the converts recant their faith. This can lead to physical violence. Officially, there is no hindrance to conversion - Tajikistan is a secular country. But the government prefers that conversions do not take place as they can lead to tension among the population.

***Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (3.50 points)***

This is very risky for converts from Islam: The level of hostility can be quite severe if they are found simply worshiping on their own. There have been reports of families beating converts in an attempt to force a renunciation of faith. Although the state tries to regulate religious activities as much as possible, it does not have influence at this private level.

***Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.50 points)***

Converts are strongly suppressed from practicing their religion by their family so they would definitely be afraid to discuss it with them. It can also affect Russian Protestants as they are traditionally viewed as belonging to a sect.

***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)***

Converts will avoid sharing their new faith with members of their communities. It can be risky for Christians from non-traditional churches when they discuss their faith with Muslim people. Sharing one's faith with other people will be interpreted as an act of encouraging religious hatred and then state agents will come into action.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

***Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serve as foster parents. ((3.75 points)***

In Tajikistan, Christianity is still seen as a foreign import which should not be trusted, particularly in terms of parenting. State hinders fostering by Christian families based on the law to protect youth from religious activity.

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

The Muslim environment (family, friends, community) will pressurize children of converts in particular to receive Islamic teaching - sometimes even against the wishes of their parents. "History of Religions" is a subject at high school which all children are required to attend and is taught from a Sunni Muslim perspective.

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

Family members will oppose converts raising their children according to Christian faith and values. They will try to take custody of the children in order to raise them according to Islamic principles. The law is very restrictive regarding the religious education of children. It allows parents to bring up children according to their religious beliefs but at the same time the parents should not allow their children (up to the age of 18) to participate in the activities of religious organizations (e.g. churches and mosques).

***Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure by others to divorce. (3.50 points)***

The family would definitely try to bring their member of the family away from a convert, fearing that he/she might leave Islam as well.

**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.). (3.50 points)***

Converts are harassed and threatened by family, friends and community (including the local imam). Local state officials harass, threaten and obstruct Christians belonging to unregistered church groups.

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

Known converts will be monitored by members of their family and community. Local state officials closely monitor all activities of non-Orthodox Christians. This is one of the strongest forms of persecution in the country as the state closely monitors (including phone-tapping) non-Orthodox Christians. Converts are of course also monitored by the family and surrounding community.

***Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc. (3.50 points)***

The community will not allow converts or other Christians to take part in community councils, local authorities etc. This is caused by the Muslim environment, not by the state.

***Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.50 points)***

Pressure on converts from their community to recant their new faith is usually very strong. Several tactics will be applied - threats, beatings, house arrest, forced marriages and ostracism. Christians from non-traditional churches are also under pressure from the community as they are viewed as belonging to a dangerous sect. Where this occurs, it is caused by the Muslim environment, not by the state.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

***Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (4.00 points)***

It is impossible to establish such organizations or parties in Tajikistan, since this is banned in the Tajik Constitution. Muslims would anyway quickly regard Christian organizations as an attempt to convert people to Christianity. They would block this with all available means.

***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. (3.75 points)***

The Constitution protects religious freedom; however, other laws and policies restrict religious freedom. The Religion Law of 2009/2011 (with its amendments of January 2018) requires compulsory registration of all religious organizations. Any church activities by non-registered groups are illegal. At the same time, it is very difficult to get state registration. There is a ban on unlicensed religious education and there is also a requirement for censorship of any religious materials. The law on parents' responsibilities prohibits young people up to 18 years of age from participating in the activities of religious organizations.

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

Christians cannot express their own views or opinions in public. It is most risky for converts from Islam, but is also risky for Christians from non-traditional church groups. It can result in persecution from the state or Muslim community.

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

All media are state-controlled. They tend to paint a negative picture of any religious group apart from the ROC and official Sunni Islam. Hate speech is practiced widely, with known converts from Islam being subjected to verbal abuse daily from the surrounding Muslim community. Protestant Christians also often become subject to hate speech either as 'sectarians' or as people who try to steal people from Islam (in case of active evangelism).

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

***Block 5.13: Churches have been hindered in importing Christian materials from abroad. (4.00 points)***

The government must approve the importation, sale and distribution of religious materials by registered religious groups, which is in effect a ban on religious materials for unregistered religious groups. Permission for importing materials is rarely given, even for registered groups. Muslims will oppose any Christian materials they come across (especially when it is in their own language) as they suspect they are being used for evangelistic purposes.

***Block 5.6: Work among youth in particular has been restricted. (3.75 points)***

The August 2011 laws prohibit any church youth work. The law is consistently enforced by state officials who carry out church raids. Church raids have been defended by citing this law and the need to protect children. Since about 50% of Tajik Christians are classified as youth, the impact of the law and its



enforcement have major consequences. Muslims oppose Christian activities aimed at youth and will deliberately block events and summer camps and report all they discover to the police.

***Block 5.12: Churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in printing Christian materials or owning printing presses. (3.75 points)***

The government must approve the production and distribution of religious materials by registered religious groups, and effectively bans unregistered Christian groups from printing materials. The Muslim community will oppose the production and public distribution of any Christian materials (especially when it is in their own language) as they will automatically assume they will be used for evangelistic purposes.

***Block 5.18: Churches have been hindered in establishing, managing, maintaining and conducting schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, social or cultural organizations, institutions and associations. (3.75 points)***

The government does not allow Christians to establish such institutions or associations at all. Muslims would immediately connect these kinds of activities with evangelism and block them.

## 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.*

Tajikistan: 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)?	0	0
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?	1	0
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	5	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	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	20	45
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?	0	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	2	0

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Churches attacked:** One house church was attacked twice by Muslim teenagers. Windows were smashed at both Christmas and Easter.
- **Christians arrested:** At least 5 Christians were detained and subjected to interrogation.

- **Christians attacked:** At least 20 converts were abused and beaten by their families and local community.
- **Christians forced to leave their country:** At the end of 2023, two Christian families left the country because of harassment from their wider Muslim family.

## 5 Year trends

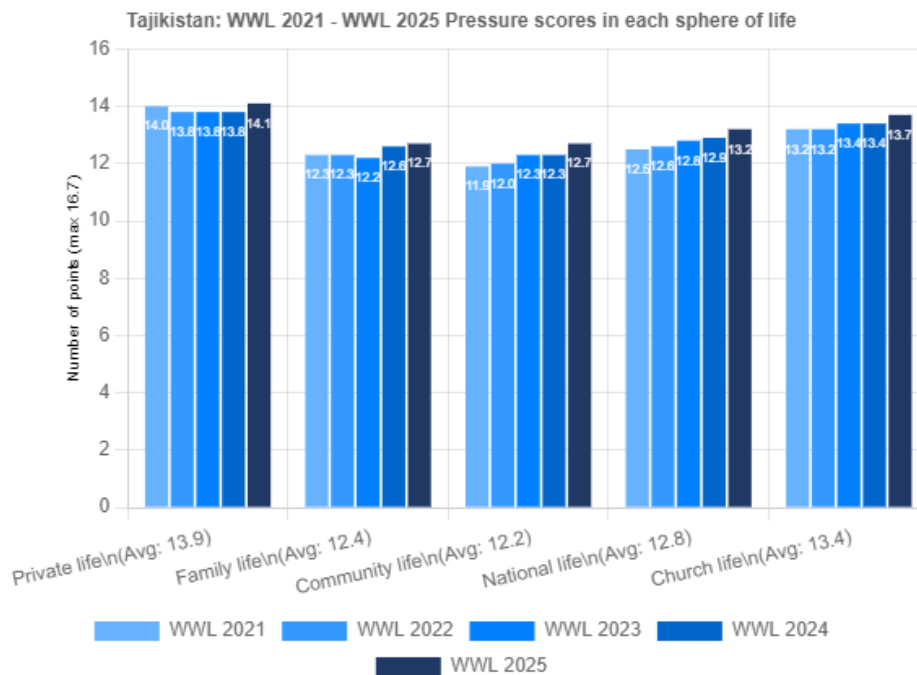
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Tajikistan: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	13.3
2024	13.0
2023	12.9
2022	12.8
2021	12.8

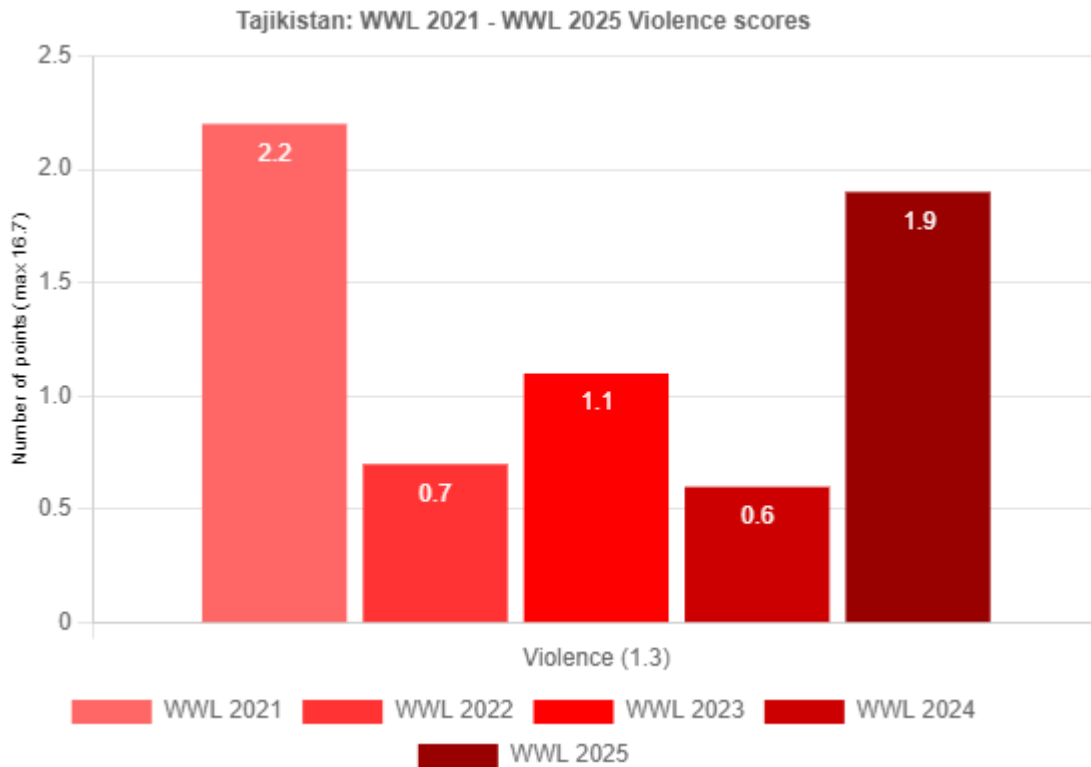
As can be seen from the table above, the average pressure on Christians in Tajikistan has increased slowly since WWL 2021 and now reached the very high level of 13.3 points. This is caused by constant pressure from both the state and the Islamic environment.

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



Over the past five WWL reporting periods, the scores in *Community, National* and *Church spheres of life* have increased, but not dramatically. This indicates that the situation for Christians in Tajikistan is more or less stable at a very high level of pressure. *Private* and *Church spheres of life* have consistently scored highest, typical for the two main Persecution engines in operation. Pressure in the *Private sphere* has consistently been just inside the category 'extreme'.

**5 Year trends: Violence against Christians**



As in many other former Soviet republics, the number of reported violent incidents in Tajikistan tends to be relatively low. Over the past five WWL reporting periods, the score has varied, but never gone beyond 2.2 points. In WWL 2025, the score was 1.9 points.

**Gender-specific religious persecution / Female**

<p><b>Tajikistan</b></p> <p><b>Female Pressure Points</b></p> <p><b>Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abduction</li> <li>Forced divorce</li> <li>Forced marriage</li> <li>Incarceration by family (house arrest)</li> <li>Violence - physical</li> <li>Violence - verbal</li> </ul>

Although in Tajikistan the law generally gives equal rights to men and women, traditional culture puts women in an inferior position compared to men and requires them to be obedient and subservient to male family members. Domestic violence is widespread, and perpetrators operate in a culture of impunity, with domestic abuse seen as a 'family matter'. There is a distinct lack of mental health support in the country, and domestic violence is one of the main causes of suicide among Tajik women ([HRW 2023 country chapter Tajikistan](#)).

As Tajikistan is a predominately Muslim nation, female converts from Islam are particularly vulnerable to intolerance, discriminating pressure and violent persecution. Since Islamic teaching in the country compels women to submit in all ways to the men in the family, in practice, women do not have the independence or freedom to choose their own religion. If their conversion is discovered, female converts run the risk of being locked up, beaten, rejected, sexually assaulted, or forced to marry a Muslim. In particular, women and girls who had a premarital arrangement before their conversion will be forced to marry. A country expert explained that “in Tajik culture women must obey their parents in who they should marry”. This remains an ongoing risk for converts. If a woman was already married before becoming a Christian, she will likely experience beatings from her husband and be forcibly divorced. A country expert explains that “physical beatings and rape can happen but women will not share such information even with closest family as it is considered shameful and they will not find support”. In short, female converts are put under immense pressure to recant their new faith.

A country expert gives an example from one city in Tajikistan, where a female Christian’s husband “simply forbids her and her son to attend the church and locks them up”. This temporary house arrest ensures that she and her son do not have access to Christian teaching and activities.

The state authorities in Tajikistan prohibit the use of religious clothes or symbols, including those worn by female Christians. Among some Baptists and Pentecostal groups, married women traditionally cover their heads with a headscarf. This headscarf is different from the one used by Muslim women, but there is concern that it could possibly become a future cause for arrest.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Tajikistan	<b>Male Pressure Points</b> <b>Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024</b>
	Denied inheritance or possessions Economic harassment via work/job/business Economic harassment via fines Imprisonment by government Military/militia conscription/service against conscience Travel bans/restrictions on movement Violence - physical Violence - psychological Violence - verbal

As in other parts of Central Asia, men in Tajikistan normally hold leadership roles within the family and within the churches. As such, there is more pressure on men from the police. From time to time, police officers disrupt meetings and interrogate the Christians attending. The local authorities often impose fines on Christians because of their faith and for legal reasons such as gathering without a permit, possessing and printing religious material without a permit, or perceived proselytization. Rights violations by the state include searches, detention, interrogation, confiscation, fines and imprisonment. Church leaders can also be fined if people younger than 18 are found at a Sunday service, as children are banned from participating in church services.

When detained by the police, Christian men suffer verbal and physical abuse, threats, beatings, and pressure to become informants. If a man is a church leader, his treatment by the authorities will affect his church and cause levels of fear to rise; active convert leaders will face the highest levels of pressure. There are reports from church leaders that pressure from authorities has significantly increased over the last few years, and are “under constant watch”.

At the hands of the local community, Christian men can lose their jobs and suffer beatings, threats, verbal and physical abuse, discrimination, ostracization and pressure aimed at their family members. There can be a lot of restrictions placed on businesses owned by Christian men. Men are the main providers and if they lose employment it affects the whole family. Within the context of mandatory military service, too, Christian men have been exposed to various forms of physical and mental persecution.

Known converts will be harassed and interrogated harshly by non-Christian members of their family and community. At the hands of his own Muslim family, a Christian convert may face beatings, humiliation and loss of inheritance. For young men who are students and still needing financial support, such financial dependency can be the means parents use to prevent and discourage conversion.

Due to strict laws about religious education, the state restricts the training of church leaders. As church leaders are predominately male, this primarily affects men, particularly those belonging to non-Orthodox church groups.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Tajikistan has a record of violating freedom of religion or belief and related human rights such as the freedom of expression and association. There is no focus on any specific religious group - Muslims, Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Bahais etc. all suffer under a high level of state surveillance and oppression.

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

- “Since 2007, the government has banned Jehovah's Witnesses for carrying out religious activities contrary to the country's laws, such as refusing obligatory military service. A 2021 decision of the Supreme Court declared Jehovah's Witnesses an extremist organization and upheld the 2007 ban on its activities throughout the country.”

- “The law prohibits individuals from joining or participating in what it considers to be extremist organizations. The government maintains a list of "extremist organizations" that it says employ terrorist tactics in an effort to advance Islamist political goals, including the National Alliance of Tajikistan, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), Hizb ut-Tahrir, al-Qa'ida, ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban, Jamaat Tabligh, Islamic Group (Islamic Community of Pakistan), East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Islamic Party of Turkestan (former Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Tojikistoni Ozod, Sozmoni Tablighot, Jamaat Ansarullah, the political opposition movement Group 24, the GBAO-focused independent news site Pamir Daily News, and the Salafist movement broadly.”
- “The law restricts Islamic prayer to four locations: mosques, cemeteries, homes, and shrines. It regulates the registration, size, and location of mosques, limiting the number of mosques that may be registered within a given population area.”

According to [USCIRF 2024 Tajikistan Chapter](#):

- “In line with the "extremism law," the government maintained a list of arbitrarily defined "extremist" organizations, which included peaceful religious and political organizations. The government banned Jehovah's Witnesses in 2007, and in August the Supreme Court rejected an appeal to reverse that ban. Officials also harassed Jehovah's Witnesses for their religious activities.”  
“Authorities reportedly closed down or destroyed the mosques of communities that did not provide enough enlisted men for the military. In Isfara city, authorities closed a mosque during Ramadan to coerce military conscriptions. In October, authorities destroyed a mosque in Vahdat city, reportedly because not enough men volunteered for the military.”

## Trends Summary

There have been no major changes in Tajikistan since the publication of WWL 2024.

### **1) Tajikistan continues to depend on Russia, both economically and militarily**

Tajikistan is a country that has almost no natural resources to keep its economy going. Many workers travel abroad to feed their families – especially the younger generation. Most of them live and work in Russia as migrant workers. For Russia, Tajikistan is of particular interest because it is located in a very strategic position bordering China and Afghanistan.

### **2) Tajikistan’s government is increasingly taking on a dictatorial character**

Authoritarianism is evident in the governments of most Central Asian countries. Since 2015, President Rahmon's regime has been expanding its control over the country. All political opposition - most importantly from the Islamic Renaissance Party - has been dismantled. This means that political changes are unlikely to occur in Tajikistan. The president has more or less succeeded in establishing a dynasty.

### **3) Christians continue to live under a considerable level of surveillance**

In general, Christians experience the same problems as all other people in the country and are not especially targeted economically or socially. The only exception to this is the pressure from family, local

imams and villagers on Christians with a Muslim background. However, there have been no changes in government policy regarding freedom of religion since the introduction of the Law on Religion in January 2018. This means that raids on meetings, the arrest and interrogation of Christians, fines and confiscation of religious materials continue to occur. Due to the very high level of stability of the two strongest Persecution engines in Tajikistan (*Dictatorial paranoia* and *Islamic oppression*), this pressure will likely continue unabated.

## Further useful reports

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/>.

These are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom):

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Tajikistan>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>.

## External Links

- 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>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW 2023 country chapter Tajikistan - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/tajikistan>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Tajikistan - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/tajikistan/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: USCIRF 2024 Tajikistan Chapter - <https://www.uscirf.gov/annual-reports?country=69>