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World Watch Research

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# Tunisia: Persecution Dynamics

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**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Open Doors Sverige  
sweden@od.org | 019-31 05 00 | [www.open-doors.se](http://www.open-doors.se)

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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

| Tunisia: Population (UN estimate for 2024) | Christians | Chr% |
|--|------------|------|
| 12,565,000                                 | 23,300     | 0.2  |

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

| Tunisia: Religious context  | Number of adherents | %    |
|---|---------------------|------|
| Christians  | 23,300              | 0.2  |
| Muslim  | 12,502,000          | 99.5 |
| Hindu   | 0                   | 0.0  |
| Buddhist  | 100                 | 0.0  |
| Ethnic religionist  | 0                   | 0.0  |
| Jewish  | 2,100               | 0.0  |
| Bahai   | 2,600               | 0.0  |
| Atheist   | 3,700               | 0.0  |
| Agnostic  | 30,800              | 0.2  |
| Other   | 220                 | 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

| Tunisia:                 |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Main Persecution engines | Main drivers   |
| Islamic oppression       | One's own (extended) family, Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs |
| Dictatorial paranoia     | Government officials   |

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

### Brief description of the persecution situation

A journalist [who has investigated](#) the situation of Tunisian Christians in depth states: "Tunisian Christians face discrimination and targeting that is often obscure and hidden to the public eye. It affects their day-to-day lives. Because of their Christian identities, many experience job insecurity, abandonment from family, friends and even fiancés; they are victims of verbal, mental and physical abuse." (Hwang P, Underground - The plight of a religious minority living in a Muslim society, April 2016)

Due to the factors mentioned above, most Tunisian converts to Christianity cannot worship openly and choose to hide their faith. The hostility and pressure they face from society at large makes it difficult or even dangerous for them to share their faith with their family members, relatives, neighbors, friends or colleagues. They also have to be careful when gathering for worship and fellowship due to the risks any possible exposure would entail, while being monitored by the Tunisian security services.

In addition to the Tunisian Christians, there are also Sub-Saharan African Christians residing in the country. These Christians cannot openly proselytize, but their main problem is racial abuse, which strongly increased following [inflammatory comments](#) made by President Saied in February 2023 (VOA, 2 March 2023). Following his remarks, many lost their jobs, while others fled the country. Those remaining fear daily abuse.

### Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Tunisia 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)



Tunisia 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

During the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- Several house churches of Tunisian Christians were looted and attacked by community members.
- Several Tunisian Christians were publicly arrested and subsequently questioned about their activities by the police; this happened mainly outside of the capital, Tunis. Although no Christian has been prosecuted, these public arrests have a chilling effect, stigmatizing Tunisian Christians both in front of their families and communities.
- Several Tunisian Christians, mostly young women, were forcefully relocated, isolated and/or pressured to marry against their will. These cases happened in rural areas, outside of the capital, Tunis.
- Numerous other Tunisian Christians have been mentally or physically abused, with several being expelled from their communities and forced to relocate, mostly by family members.

Source: Open Doors Research - no further details can be provided due to security concerns.

## Specific examples of positive developments

- A series of Christmas and Easter TV programs were filmed and broadcast inside the country with some Tunisian Christians displayed openly.
- In January 2022, several leaders from a variety of faith communities, including Christians, signed a "National Pact for Coexistence", with the event receiving wide coverage both in Tunisia and the surrounding region ([BWNS, 22 February 2022](#) / [Attalaki, 1 February 2022](#)). However, the wider impact of this initiative seems limited.

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest officially recognized denomination among the expatriate Christians in Tunisia. The Russian Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the French Protestant and the Anglican church are also officially recognized by the government. All denominations have functioning churches in the capital Tunis and are mainly serving expatriate Christians residing in the country.

Tunisian Christians from a Muslim background are not officially recognized and do not have officially recognized church buildings.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians experience a relative amount of freedom, although public evangelism is not tolerated. Foreign Christians worshipping at the few international churches hardly encounter any problems, although Christians from Sub-Saharan Africa experience significant amounts of racial abuse.

**Historical Christian communities:** This category does not exist in Tunisia as defined by WWL Methodology.

**Converts to Christianity:** Converts with a Muslim background face various forms of persecution, e.g. from their family members. However, they (and others) are more or less free to seek and receive information about the Christian faith, particularly content posted online.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This category does not exist in Tunisia as defined by WWL Methodology.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Converts from Islam to Christianity have most to fear from their own family members and society. This is especially true in the south of the country, where the Islamic population is more conservative. Urban areas, and especially the capital Tunis itself, offer possibilities for converts to escape family pressure and live their faith in the anonymity of the big city.

Violent Islamic militants are active in the border areas to the south, in particular. They are likely to target any Christian, whether foreign or national, if the opportunity arises.

## Position on the World Watch List

| Tunisia: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2025                  | 70     | 34       |
| WWL 2024                  | 69     | 33       |
| WWL 2023                  | 67     | 36       |
| WWL 2022                  | 66     | 35       |
| WWL 2021                  | 67     | 26       |

The rise of 1 point in WWL 2025 was caused by an increase in reported violence from 6.9 points to 8.1. Among other things, there were more incidents involving house churches and arrests than in the WWL 2024 reporting period. With the political opposition paralyzed in the October 2024 elections, President Kais Saied consolidated his de facto one-man rule. The 2022 Constitution is ambiguous regarding the Freedom of Religion and Belief. It is feared that the current high levels of government monitoring of Tunisian Christians will increase in the future.

## Persecution engines

| Tunisia: 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           | Very weak          |
| Christian denominational protectionism  | CDP          | Not at all         |
| Communist and post-Communist oppression | CPCO         | Not at all         |
| Secular intolerance                     | SI           | Not at all         |
| Dictatorial paranoia                    | DPA          | Medium             |
| Organized corruption and crime          | OCC          | Not at all         |

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

### Islamic oppression (Strong)

This persecution engine operates at different levels: At the family level, converts from Islam to Christianity are often opposed by family members in their decision to convert. There are cases of converts being locked up in their houses by their own families. At the social level, Islamic militants spread fear throughout the country. At the political level, Islamist political parties have lost influence after President Saied's takeover, but their ideas are still present. In addition, the president himself is known to be religiously conservative, although he currently seems more focused on increasing his grip on power than promoting a specific religious agenda.

### Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

Since his power grab in July 2021 and re-election in 2024, President Saied has shown no interest in sharing power with other state institutions. The new 2022 Constitution has weakened the role of the parliament significantly, while almost giving absolute powers to the president. The rights guaranteed under the Freedom of Religion and Belief will now directly be determined by the president. Saied is known to be socially conservative and seems to be becoming increasingly authoritarian, so it is likely he at least wants to monitor and control the Christian community. Because of his one-man rule, pressure on the political level is increasingly expected from his side rather than the Islamist parties.

## Drivers of persecution

| Tunisia:<br>Drivers of Persecution                         | IO     | RN | ERH | CO        | CDP | CPCO | SI | DPA    | OCC |
|--|--------|----|-----|-----------|-----|------|----|--------|-----|
|  | STRONG |    |     | VERY WEAK |     |      |    | MEDIUM |     |
| Government officials                                       | Medium |    |     |           |     |      |    | Medium |     |
| Ethnic group leaders                                       |        |    |     | Very weak |     |      |    |        |     |
| Non-Christian religious leaders                            | Medium |    |     |           |     |      |    |        |     |
| Violent religious groups                                   | Medium |    |     |           |     |      |    |        |     |
| Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs | Medium |    |     |           |     |      |    |        |     |
| One's own (extended) family                                | Strong |    |     | Very weak |     |      |    |        |     |
| Political parties  | 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. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology.

### Drivers of Islamic oppression

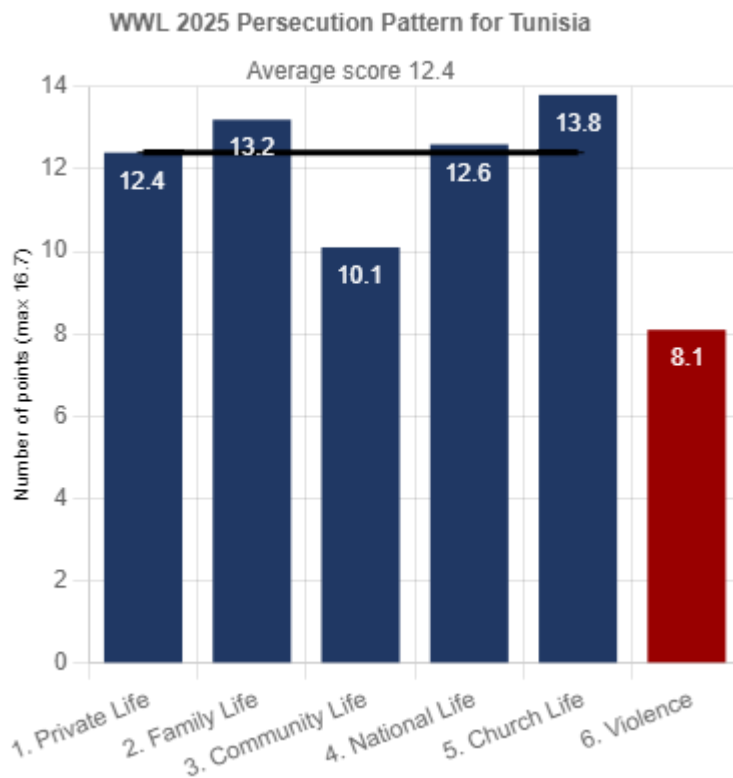
- **Extended family (Strong):** The main driver of persecution for Christian Tunisians who have converted from Islam is their own (extended) family. They will put pressure on the convert to recant his or her new faith, or even abuse the convert. Spouses will be put under pressure to divorce the convert and any children can be taken away. As the regional expert, Katia Boissevain, observed: "When a conversion is announced, or discovered, families feel they have been cheated and abandoned .... Stepping aside and choosing the Christian religion is not only a break with the social body, but also a break with the social rhythm (which is defined by Islamic traditions). Becoming Christian is interpreted by the others as a choice formulated against everything for which they have been raised" (in: *Algeria and Tunisia, Christianity in North Africa and West Asia, Edinburgh Companion to Global Christianity, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, p.47*).
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Despite the country's reputation for being the most celebrated success story of the Arab Spring uprisings, radical Islamic teaching is widespread.
- **Ordinary citizens (Medium):** The local neighborhood is also a source of persecution for converts. This is particularly the case outside the major urban centers. Neighbors will often, for instance, exclude converts from social gatherings and are likely to cause converts to lose their jobs.

- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** The threat of activities by militant Islamic groups affects all categories of Christian communities in the country. Radical groups remain a significant threat, with thousands of Tunisians having joined radical Islamic groups (including the Islamic State group) in past years.
- **Government officials (Medium):** The government and state apparatus can also be regarded as drivers of persecution since they deny registration and official recognition to congregations of Christians with a Muslim background.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** Family heads and other important members of the family put pressure on converts from Islam to Christianity to recant their faith.

### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** Given the president's authoritarian style, it is likely that the intelligence agencies will increasingly seek to control and monitor both churches and Christians alike.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Tunisia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (12.4 points), remaining the same as in WWL 2024.
- The level of pressure is highest in *Church* and *Family life*. This reflects the difficulties faced by converts from Islam to Christianity, both within their own families, as well as in the public sphere, e.g. if they want to be baptized or register churches.

- The score for violence targeting Christians increased considerably from 6.9 points in WWL 2024 to 8.1 points in WWL 2025. According to reports, a greater number of (house) churches were attacked and forced to close by local community members and more Christians were forced to leave the country.

## 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. (3.25 points)***

Although conversion to Christianity is not prohibited by law, converts from Islam experience pressure from their families when their conversion is known at the private level. There are notable differences between rural areas and the country’s capital, Tunis, where the situation is comparatively less hostile.

***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.). (3.00 points)***

The fact that many Tunisian Christians feel it is safer to use a pseudonym when posting Christian messages on social media is an indication of the pressure they are facing.

***Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.00 points)***

Wearing and displaying a cross can lead to a variety of reactions. On top of the pressure from family, including the risk of discovery of their new faith in case of converts, there is also a (limited) risk of societal and governmental (i.e., police) harassment. Several incidents have been reported in recent years. There is no apparent risk for expatriate Christians, however.

***Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.00 points)***

Most converts (especially young people) face some sort of opposition or rejection because of changing their faith. Especially for young converts, it is risky to be seen reading the Bible and difficult to find a place for prayer by themselves, let alone speaking about their faith with family members.

### ***Block 1 - Additional information***

Especially young and recent converts from Islam to Christianity experience high levels of mostly family pressure, with (young) women generally facing higher risks than men. It is often difficult for them to pray and worship privately at home, while many prefer to read their Bibles online rather than owning a physical copy. At the same time, due to social stigma, it is often difficult for them to connect and share their faith with other Christians. Risks and pressures generally become less over time as converts find ways to rebuild relationships and receive support from other Christians, although for some, relief

only arrives after they have been ostracized by their families. It is likely that a significant number of converts keep their faith a secret.

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

***Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (4.00 points)***

Only Muslims can adopt a child in Tunisia, with even expatriate Christians only being able to adopt in exceptional cases. No case of a successful adoption by expatriate Christians was reported during the WWL 2025 reporting period.

***Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (3.50 points)***

Christian marriages often take place with Islamic rites, although exemptions are sometimes made by certain registrars. According to the law, a Tunisian Christian woman can marry a (foreign) Christian man. In practice, this is often still blocked. Registering a Christian name for a child of Tunisian Christian parents is often hindered or refused.

***Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (3.50 points)***

Funerals often take place on the same day as a person's death and a burial is considered a core family issue. Hence, even when a Tunisian Christian is known to have converted to Christianity, they are buried with Islamic rites. In addition, there is no Christian cemetery for Tunisian Christians. In the recent past, known Tunisian converts have been refused a place at a cemetery.

***Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (3.25 points)***

Due to their conversion, several converts have lost custody of their children. More often, converts accept certain levels of pressure in order to avoid a custody conflict over the children, which they are most likely to lose.

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

It is difficult for Tunisian Christians to establish Christian family life in a clearly Islamic society. Baptism is the clearest sign of one's conversion to Christianity and hence a sensitive issue in Tunisian society. Public baptisms are sometimes carried out in the capital Tunis and other urban areas, but would be hindered in most parts of the country. If not the immediate family, at least the wider family is Islamic, making it hard to raise a child in a Christian way, especially since Islamic religious education is mandatory in the schools. Although the curriculum is described as moderate and respectful to Christianity, children are taught that Christians are in error. Although the threat of divorce or disinheritance occurs more often than actually takes place, Tunisian converts are regularly confronted with such issues in the family context.

### Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

Monitoring happens frequently and Tunisian Christians are aware that their online messages and calls are being intercepted. Although some Tunisian Christians consider the extensive police monitoring as a protection against attacks by Islamic radicals, it usually feels as a form of control, especially when used to specifically hinder certain activities, like organizing conferences.

***Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)***

Police officers regularly question Tunisian Christians about their activities and even a simple request for a new passport can lead to detailed interrogation regarding personal activities.

***Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.00 points)***

Converts receive threats from their families or the society around them when their conversion is known. Especially in rural parts of the country young female converts may be forced to marry a Muslim. There are also cases known of converts being expelled from their university, or who are not able to go to school because they have been turned out of their homes. Sometimes customers are told not to buy from shops run by a Christian. Hence, community pressure to recant their new faith is high for Tunisian converts.

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

Employment has been a major struggle for most Tunisian Christians. As converts, they either lose their jobs or cannot get hired because they lose all social connections (since family and friends will no longer help them find employment). Many Tunisian Christians therefore seek employment with foreign institutions to avoid such discrimination.

#### ***Block 3 - Additional information***

Levels of community pressure vary, with pressure generally being higher in the rural south of the country than in the urban areas, including the capital Tunis. Harassment can be avoided, but when Tunisian Christians are, for example, publicly active on social media, harassment is unavoidable. Especially during times of Islamic religious celebrations, like the month of Ramadan, pressure is felt most keenly.

### Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

***Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (3.75 points)***

The protection of the Freedom of Religion and Belief has not improved in the 2022 Constitution. Although general terms still leave room for interpretation, the change from "Islam is the state religion" to "Tunisia is part of the Islamic Umma, and it is incumbent on the state alone to work to achieve the



purposes of Islam (Maqasid Al-Shari'ah) in preserving the soul, honor, property, religion, and freedom" does not bode well. In addition, Article 2 of the previous constitution, noting that Tunisia is a secular state, has been dropped. Similarly, whereas the previous constitution included the protection of conscience and belief, the current one only protects "the freedom to practice religious rites" (Article 28).

***Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.50 points)***

Christians try to avoid drawing unwanted attention, especially from radical Islamic elements within society. Hence, only recognized (foreign) churches publicly display Christian symbols.

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

Blasphemy remains illegal and Christians have to speak carefully in public, especially when it comes to criticizing Islam and proselytizing, which also applies to the expatriate Christian community. Nonetheless, there is generally more freedom of expression than in neighboring countries.

***Block 4.10: Media reporting has been incorrect or biased against Christians. (3.25 points)***

Media (newspapers and TV shows) have been spreading incorrect information about Christians and drawing a false picture of the Christian community. Christians are accused of converting for financial gain due to rich foreign Christians promising vulnerable Tunisians wealth and the possibility to migrate to a Western country. Christians are also accused of influencing under-age youth to become interested in Christian faith.

***Block 4 - Additional information***

When dealing with the authorities, Christians are usually at a disadvantage. Underlining their vulnerable position is the fact that Christian converts are not likely to be treated equally in court, especially in cases involving family law. They are also vulnerable to abuse, as their families can in some cases act against them with impunity, especially in rural areas.

**Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere**

***Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points)***

Tunisian converts cannot register their churches and no new church has been granted official registration since Tunisia's independence in 1956. This stands in stark contrast to the law that regulates mosques. Registered churches are allowed to operate but face practical difficulties, particularly relating to their property-upkeep, hiring staff and obtaining permission to publish and distribute Christian texts in Arabic.

***Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.75 points)***

Building new church buildings is almost impossible in Tunisia, both for the expatriate as well as for the Tunisian Christian (convert) community. Until now, Tunisian Christians make use of rented properties

or house-churches, fearing that a visible church building would lead to increased social hostility.

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

Public outside activities, even if performed by expatriate churches like the Roman Catholic Church, are discouraged by the government and generally no permission will be given, under the pretext of keeping public order. Processions that once took place publicly, are now celebrated in a less visible way, e.g. in the courtyard of a church.

**Block 5.13: Churches have been hindered in importing Christian materials from abroad. (3.75 points)**

With the exception of limited amounts of foreign-language, Christian material for the expatriate churches, it is not allowed to bring Christian materials (in Arabic) into the country. If found, these materials, including Bibles, will be confiscated.

**Block 5 - Additional information**

Church life is severely hindered in Tunisia, especially for Tunisian (convert) Christians. Although conversion from Islam is not prohibited, in practice representatives of the government often act differently.

## 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.

| Tunisia: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire  | WWL<br>2025 | WWL<br>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? | 7           | 6           |
| 6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?   | 17          | 7           |
| 6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?   | 1           | 0           |
| 6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?   | 6           | 4           |
| 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?   | 3           | 2           |
| 6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?   | 47          | 44          |
| 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?                               | 4           | 5           |
| 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?   | 2           | 1           |
| 6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?  | 21          | 25          |
| 6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?   | 9           | 1           |

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Christians attacked:** Several Christians experienced incidents involving (physical) abuse, forced marriage, rape and sexual harassment.
- **Christians arrested:** Several Christians, both Tunisian and expatriate, were briefly detained and interrogated about Christian activities. During interrogation, Christians are often accused of proselytization and of having links with foreign organizations.
- **Christian buildings attacked:** Several (house) churches became the target of violence from community members.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** Several Tunisian Christians were attacked inside their houses, often by family members.
- **Christians forced to leave:** Several Christians were forced to relocate inside the country because of family pressure. Several expatriate Christians were forced to leave or were not allowed to enter the country.

## 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.

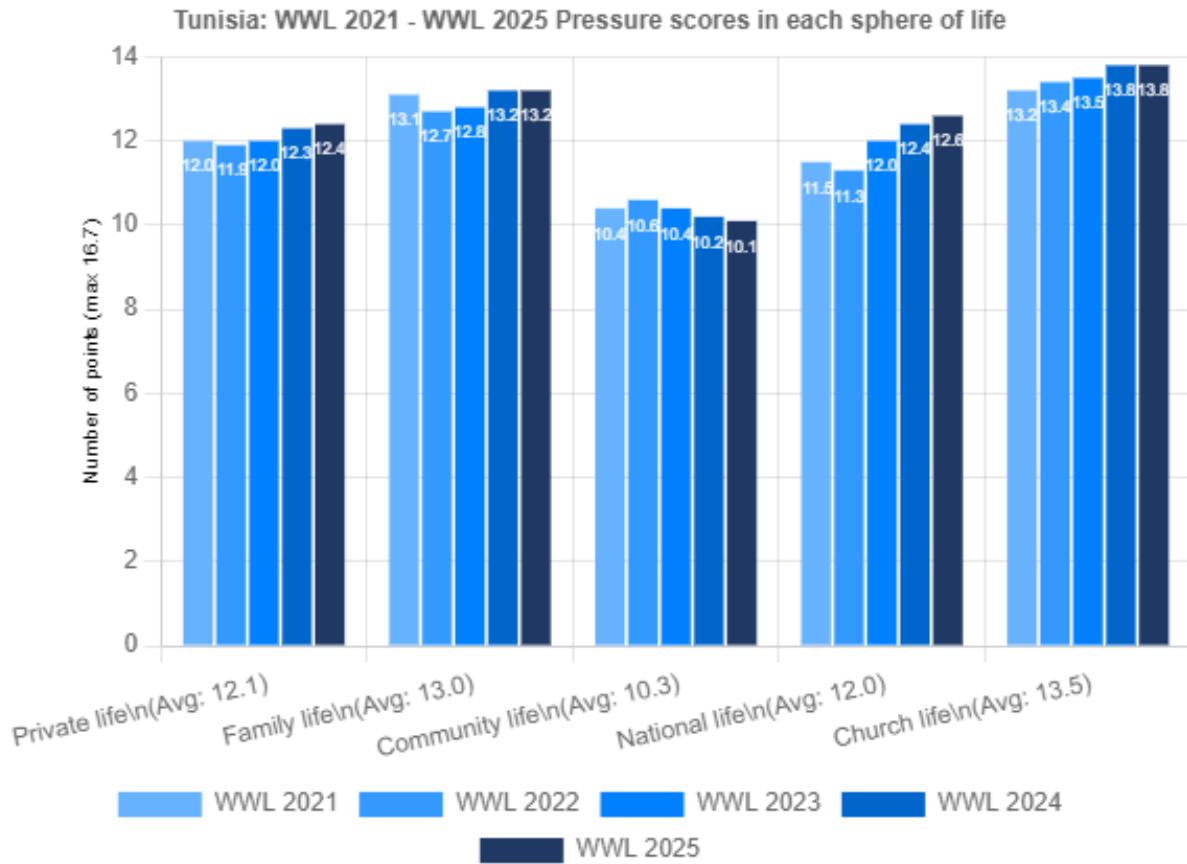
5 Year trends: Average pressure

| Tunisia: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
|------------------------------|---|
| 2025                         | 12.4                                    |
| 2024                         | 12.4                                    |
| 2023                         | 12.1                                    |
| 2022                         | 12.0                                    |
| 2021                         | 12.0                                    |

The average pressure on Christians has moderately increased over the last five years. Pressure has remained at a very high level and reflects the fact that after the Tunisian Revolution of 2011 the situation for Christians has not improved. The latest increases in pressure are mainly caused by Tunisia's return to autocracy.

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

As can be seen in the chart below, the levels of pressure in *Private, Family and Community spheres of life* have fluctuated slightly over the last five WWL reporting periods. The *National and Church spheres of life* are different in that they show a trend of increasing pressure, in line with the political situation becoming more tense.



**5 Year trends: Violence against Christians**



Tunisia's violence level is characterized by a significant number of incidents taking place in families and communities each year, but no killings or large scale attacks. In all the last five WWL reporting periods, the violence scores have been in the "very high" category.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

| Tunisia | Female Pressure Points<br>Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024  |
|---------|--|
|         | Abduction<br>Denied custody of children<br>Denied inheritance or possessions<br>Forced divorce<br>Forced marriage<br>Forced out of home – expulsion<br>Incarceration by family (house arrest)<br>Violence – physical<br>Violence – psychological<br>Violence – sexual<br>Violence – Verbal |

Christian women and girls in Tunisia are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and domestic violence. On Georgetown's '[Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/2024](#)', Tunisia ranked 117th out of 170 countries.

[Reports](#) highlight the societal discriminatory norms and lack of employment opportunities that women face (World Bank Blogs, 23 December 2020). The culture is not generally respectful of women in practice, nor does it recognize women as leaders. Young women suffer from poor integration into economic life, a slowing down of recruitment in the public sector, and a significant disadvantage in terms of access to credit, land ownership and financial products. Further, the free movement of women and girls is also restricted. Tunisia had historically upheld policies that encouraged women's rights to political participation, such as a 2011 law that mandated gender parity among political participation. In 2022 however, President Kais Saied ushered in a new constitution that eliminated these policies as part of his broader undemocratic tendencies. Suppressing and silencing women's voices would seem to be a political tactic to weaken democratic governance (Georgetown, Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/2024). This gap in gender equality and the rollback of women's rights is also exploited as a means of religious persecution.

Converts from Islam face the greatest breadth of persecution if their faith is discovered. Women are more at risk in the traditional family context (since men have more freedom to express their own opinion). They may be physically beaten, expelled from their home, put under house arrest, threatened with death and/or rape. If already married, she will likely be divorced, have her children taken away and have her financial support withdrawn. Some Christian women have been separated from their children for prolonged periods due to disputes related to their new Christian faith. Single female converts on the other hand may be forced into a marriage with a Muslim man,

especially when they get above a certain age, or are threatened with the possibility of no marriage prospects. A country expert stated: “In general, I would say that Christians are threatened with a refusal for marriage ... Christians have difficulty in finding a husband who is Christian and usually end up marrying the first man to show up”. This is particularly common in rural areas. It is worth noting however, that Tunisia has committed to eliminating child, early and forced marriage by 2030 ([Girls not Brides Tunisia](#), accessed 10 December 2024).

The main source of persecution for women in Tunisia comes from the dominating male in the family: For a single female that would be the father, the brother or any other family member who follows in rank after that (uncle etc.); for a married woman that would be her husband or even fiancé. Female converts, especially in rural areas, have little chance of accessing either Christian community or Christian materials. For example, a girl may be kept in her room for months and targeted with physical violence for a perceived conversion to Christianity.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

| Tunisia | Male Pressure Points<br>Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024  |
|---------|--|
|         | Discrimination/harassment via education<br>Economic harassment via business/job/work access<br>Forced out of home – expulsion<br>Violence – physical<br>Violence – psychological |

New converts to Christianity – both male and female – are by far the most vulnerable group of Christians in Tunisia. Convert Christian men face intimidation, beatings and death threats. They bring shame upon their families by leaving Islam and can therefore be ostracized. Pressured by their families, Muslim wives may leave a Christian convert, and he may be denied inheritance or even access to his possessions. However, the severity of backlash following conversion depends on his social position and his political standing within his community. While Christian men may have been expelled from their homes when the family first learnt about their conversion, many have found that their families will quietly accept the conversion at a later point in time. Others however have been forced to permanently relocate, particularly away from rural areas.

Male converts also face loss of jobs and promotion and physical violence. When a man is persecuted, his family becomes vulnerable and lacks protection.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

### Attacks on the Jewish community

The Jewish community was shaken by an attack in May 2023 on the ancient El Ghriba synagogue on the Mediterranean island of Djerba, the oldest synagogue on the African continent, during the annual pilgrimage, in which two Jewish pilgrims lost their lives. In October 2023, another attack took place following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, in which the tomb of 16th-century Rabbi Yosef Ma'aravi in southern Tunisia was heavily vandalized by a mob ([Le Monde, 24 October 2023](#)).

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

- **The Bahai community:** Adherents of Bahai reported difficulties in practicing their belief as they are not officially recognized and cannot have their own place of worship. Although they have had some constructive dialogues with government officials in the recent past, the report notes: "The Baha'i community's continuing efforts to register as an association remained unresolved. A government prosecutor's 2021 appeal of a 2020 court ruling in favor of allowing Baha'is to form an association remained pending as year's end." (p.12). In addition, "As of year's end, the Baha'i community had not received a reply from the Minister of Local Affairs regarding a 2020 petition to establish a Baha'i cemetery." (p.13).
- **The Jewish community:** Prior to the May 2023 attack mentioned above, no such difficulties were reported by the Jewish community: "Jewish groups said they continued to worship freely, and the government continued to provide security for synagogues and partially subsidized restoration and maintenance costs. Government employees maintained Jewish cemeteries in Tunis and Djerba but did not maintain them in Sousse and El-Kef. ... In accordance with government permits, the Jewish community operated private religious schools, and Jewish children were allowed to split their academic day between public schools and private religious schools or attend either type of school full-time" (p.15). However, some police harassment was reported: "According to Jewish groups, police intermittently harassed Jews and discriminated against them in the south by enforcing stop-and-frisk measures." (p. 15).
- **Atheists:** "Some atheists from Muslim families reported receiving family and societal pressure to return to Islam or conceal their atheism, including, for instance, by fasting during Ramadan and abstaining from criticizing Islam" (p.18). Although Tunisia is one of the most liberal societies in the wider region, the Freedom of Thought Report lists several recent incidents regarding allegedly blasphemous posts, including the sentencing of Emna Chargui to 6 months in prison for "sharing a Facebook post that imitated the rhyme and format of some verses of the Quran to urge people to follow COVID-19 hygiene rules" ([Humanist International, 28 October 2020](#)).
- **Shiite Muslims:** Shiites are generally discriminated against and public figures have spoken out against Shia Islam in the past ([Al-Monitor, 16 September 2012](#), [IranWire, 11 March 2022](#)). According to the 2021 report, in February 2021, "the municipality of Dar Chaaban in Nabeul told Shia residents of a house to vacate the premises because the land permit authorized the property for habitation, not for religious services by members of the Shia community. The municipality demolished the building." (p.10).
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## Trends Summary

### 1) End of the road for Tunisian democracy

Tunisia is a country that is more advanced than most northern African countries in terms of civil liberties and democratic governance. However, President Saied's seizure of power in July 2021, followed by constitutional reforms giving him almost absolute powers in 2022 and the arrest of opposition leaders, brought the young democracy on the brink of dictatorship. The Tunisian democracy was in a fragile state due to high unemployment rates and difficulties in implementing economic reforms necessary for economic growth. The call for a strong leader came in that sense as no surprise. However, it is possible that many will regret their choice in the long-term as Saied has now turned into an authoritarian leader, imprisoning the main opposition leader and virtually blocking all opposition candidates from running during the latest presidential elections in October 2024, which he won.

### 2) Ongoing tension between Islamist and liberal ideals

Given his powers under the 2022 Constitution, the president plays a crucial role in shaping Tunisia's political culture. Within Tunisian society, there is a battle going on between (hardline) Islamists and moderate liberals. The last two rounds of parliamentary elections did not give a clear win for either side. For Tunisians in general and Tunisian Christians in particular, the president has caused some confusion as to where he stands in the question of religion: On the one hand he removed Islam from being an official state religion from the Constitution, but on the other hand added that Tunisia belongs to the Islamic Ummah and that the government must work "to achieve the goals of pure Islam" ([Reuters, 1 July 2022](#)). What the president's chosen direction will mean for the Freedom of Religion and Belief for Tunisia's Christians remains to be seen, but the fact that state pressure has not decreased since July 2021 is a hint of what may lie ahead.

### 3) Society at large remains conservative

Regardless of the president's decisions, it is likely that Tunisia's Islamic society will remain mostly conservative and there is no indication that a majority of the population want to improve matters concerning Freedom of Religion and Belief. Hence it is not likely that the situation for Christians in the country will improve in coming years.

## 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/>
- Brief description of the persecution situation: who has investigated - <http://underground.priscillahwang.com/>
- Brief description of the persecution situation: inflammatory comments - <https://www.voanews.com/a/racist-attacks-criticism-of-tunisia-s-president-mount-after-controversial-remarks/6987138.html>

- 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>
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