Sudan:

Persecution Dynamics

December 2024

Contents

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	71	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

Sudan: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
49,358,000	2,028,000	4.1

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

Sudan: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	2,028,000	4.1
Muslim	45,501,000	92.2
Hindu	1,000	0.0
Buddhist	1,100	0.0
Ethnic religionist	1,299,000	2.6
Jewish	61	0.0
Bahai	3,100	0.0
Atheist	75,000	0.2
Agnostic	448,000	0.9
Other	2,400	0.0
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.		

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

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

It was believed that the downfall of the al-Bashir regime in April 2019 would lead to an improvement of the situation of Christians. Initially, that seemed very likely; the intended reforms by the civilian Transitional Council could have opened up political and civil space in the country, leading to more freedom for Christians. But these hopes were dashed by the October 2021 coup. As before, all Christian communities in Sudan have to remain wary of talking about their faith with Sudanese Muslims as this might be construed as being an 'act that encourages apostasy against Islam'.

The ethnic-cultural landscape of the country is also complicated: Arab versus non-Arab, Muslim versus Christian. The secession of South Sudan in 2011 did not solve these problems. This is particularly true for non-Arabs, as a significant number are Christian and still living in the country. The level of hostility that converts and ethnic Africans face is severe. So as not to be discovered, converts from Islam to the Christian faith will often refrain from raising their children as Christians because this might attract the attention of the government and community leaders (since children might inadvertently reveal the faith of their parents). This fear even extends to funerals where deceased Christians with a Muslim background are often buried according to Islamic rites in Muslim cemeteries, even though Christian and Muslim cemeteries are separate.

Since 15 April 2023 a war erupted between the army (led by Sudan's de facto ruler, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF, led by Burhan's deputy-turned-rival Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as "Hemedti") (Al-Jazeera, 16 April 2023). This conflict has led to massive displacement in the country. Foreign citizens were evacuated hastily, but many national civilians have been caught up in the fighting. Unlike many conflicts in the past, this time war is being waged in the heart of Sudan-Khartoum. Since the majority of Christians reside in Khartoum, it is possible that they will be forced to take sides in the conflict. In the lawless situation of civil war, violent actors have taken advantage of the chaos and targeted Christians.

Persecution in the country is very complex. As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2023 Sudan): "The government's commitments to protecting religious freedom contained in the 2019 constitutional declaration, the JPA [the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement], and the FPA [the December 2022 Framework Political Agreement] remained unimplemented. Both the SAF [Sudanese Armed Forces] and the RSF [Rapid Response Forces] attacked religious places, including mosques, churches, and religious communities, through targeted assaults and reports of indiscriminate shelling."

Since the war began, it has been reported that over 150 churches have been damaged (USCIRF, 19 April 2024).

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

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

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- January 2024: Rapid Support Forces (RSF) set an Evangelical church in Wad Madani on fire. It was the largest religious structure in Gezira State, and one of the oldest (built in 1939). (Source: USCIRF, 19 April 2024)
- December 2023: RSF attacked a Coptic Christian monastery in Wad Madani, and converted it to a military base. Five priests and five seminarians also went missing after RSF troops captured the property. (Source: USCIRF, 19 April 2024)
- Christians are frequently asked to renounce their faith by militants.
- Many Christians have been killed by militants.

Christian communities and how they are affected

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

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriates are being forced to close their churches. These are groups mainly from Western countries and South Sudan. Their churches have been denied registration

and many have faced demolition. Some expatriate Christians face arrest and detention without due process of law.

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

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

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

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Generally speaking, Christians are found throughout the country. However, they live primarily in major cities, such as Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gedaref, El Obeid, and El Fasher. Christians also are concentrated in some parts of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State (Source: US State Department IRFR 2023 Sudan.

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

Position on the World Watch List

Sudan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	90	5
WWL 2024	87	8
WWL 2023	83	10
WWL 2022	79	13
WWL 2021	79	13

Sudan scored 90 points on the World Watch List 2025, reflecting a 3-point increase from WWL 2024, after already rising by four points the previous year. This increase is primarily due to escalating violence and intense pressure against Christians. In contrast, WWL 2021 and 2022 recorded a score of 79 points, a decline influenced by governmental changes in 2019 that initially raised hopes for democratic reforms. However, these aspirations were shattered in 2021 when the military staged a coup, renewing pressure on the Christian community. Since the coup, Christians in Sudan have faced rising fear, intimidation, and continued deprivation of their rights. Church closures and legal actions against church leaders signal a potential return to the Islamic rule reminiscent of President al-Bashir's era. An alarming development occurred in August 2022 with the establishment of a community police force, similar to al-Bashir's morality police, which placed further restrictions on Christians, particularly in Khartoum.

In April 2023, another wave of violence erupted between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), leading to targeted attacks on Christians and the seizure of their places of worship, making church attendance increasingly difficult and dangerous. During the WWL 2025 reporting period, attacks and pressure against Christians, along with assaults on their churches and properties, have intensified, marking a period of heightened persecution and suffering for the Christian community in Sudan.

Persecution engines

Sudan: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Strong
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	Strong

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

This persecution engine is rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood ideology advocated by the founder of the (up until April 2019) ruling party, Hassan al-Turabi, who helped Omar al-Bashir consolidate power during a bloodless coup in 1989. From then on, the Sudanese government worked towards forming an Islamic state at the expense of other religious groups in the country and has been accused of supporting radical Islamic militants for the past three decades. The USA first labeled Sudan as a state

sponsor of terrorism in August 1993 for knowingly harboring local and international terrorists and for allowing the country to be used as a transit point for terrorists and weapons. Osama Bin Laden was there before he moved to Afghanistan, for example. Historically, Islam - including its radical tendencies such as the 19th century Mahdist movement (African History, The History of Sudanese nationalism, accessed 7 January 2023) - is firmly rooted in Sudanese society. Even though the overwhelming majority of the population in the country is Sunni Muslim, the government of Sudan under al-Bashir also had strong ties with Shia Iran. Sharia law is the foundation of Sudan's legal system and Sudan's elite has aimed at enforcing an Islamic regime in the country. Under al-Bashir, apostasy was criminalized and punishable by the death penalty. Blasphemy laws were used countrywide to prosecute Christians. Although this is now changing, Islamic law is still very much in place (World Watch Monitor - WWM, 18 August 2020). This engine also has a nationalist element. There are also violent Islamic militants still active that were part of the former Sudanese president's J*anjaweed* militia. These militias are very active in rural areas.

Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong)

From 1989 to 2019, Sudan was under Omar al-Bashir's authoritarian regime, characterized by paranoia and the systematic targeting of groups perceived as threats to its vision of an Islamic state. Christians, often portrayed as agents of Western influence, faced relentless persecution, particularly in the Nuba Mountains, where policies of "genocide by attrition" were enacted. Aerial bombings, denial of humanitarian aid, and forced displacements decimated Christian communities, while churches were destroyed and public expressions of faith suppressed. The regime's use of radical Islamic ideology as a tool to consolidate power turned Christians into scapegoats for Sudan's socio-economic woes, fostering widespread violence and discrimination. The removal of al-Bashir in 2019 briefly raised hopes for reform, but the transitional government's efforts to address religious freedoms proved superficial. While some repressive laws were repealed, Christians continued to face bureaucratic obstacles, societal discrimination, and isolation, especially in the Nuba Mountains.

The enduring influence of Islamist factions within the armed forces and political elite hindered meaningful progress, leaving Christian communities marginalized and vulnerable. The fragile government's inability to enforce substantial reforms perpetuated the systemic persecution of Christians. The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that erupted in April 2023 further exacerbated the crisis. Christian communities, already weakened by decades of persecution, were caught in the crossfire as both factions targeted civilian populations. Churches were destroyed, Christian leaders were harassed, and access to humanitarian aid was blocked, mirroring the genocidal tactics of the al-Bashir era. The resurgence of radical ideologies within both warring factions intensified religious discrimination, leaving Christians at heightened risk of violence and displacement. The country has continued to be rated 'not free'. In Freedom House's Freedom in the World Index 2023, the country scored very low (10/100).

Organized corruption and crime (Strong)

Following the ousting of Omar al-Bashir in 2019, organized corruption and crime have continued to thrive (see: Global Organized Crime Index 2023 Sudan), undermining any semblance of freedom in Sudan and fueling systemic persecution, particularly of Christians. During al-Bashir's regime, tribal militias and armed groups were mobilized to suppress dissent and target non-Arab citizens, with

Christians among the primary victims. This legacy persisted post-al-Bashir, as these networks of organized crime adapted to the shifting political landscape, leveraging the chaos and instability to entrench their power further. The continuation of organized corruption has severely curtailed freedoms, including freedom of expression and religion. Christian communities remain especially vulnerable, with churches facing intimidation, closures, and outright destruction. Christian leaders are often harassed or arrested under false pretenses, and their congregations are frequently subjected to surveillance and threats.

The prevalence of these crimes is bolstered by a culture of impunity, as the lack of accountability within Sudan's fractured governance structure enables perpetrators to act without fear of consequences. Security forces and militias linked to both the military and political elites operate with near-total immunity, ensuring that violations against religious minorities and dissenters go unpunished. This environment of unchecked corruption has eroded any attempts to foster democratic freedoms or human rights protections. The absence of accountability allows the systemic persecution of Christians and other minorities to flourish, while freedom of expression is stifled through arrests, violence, and censorship. Organized crime and state-aligned corruption continue to thrive, creating a vicious cycle of oppression, lawlessness and marginalization that leaves Sudanese Christians and other vulnerable groups with little recourse for justice or protection.

Clan oppression (Strong), blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Strong)

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

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- ***Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):*** Imams in mosques and madrassas preach anti-Christian sentiment. This comes mainly from radical Muslim clerics wanting to see Sudan become an Islamic state. There is also a Shia influence through Iran.

- ***Paramilitary groups (very strong)***: Paramilitary groups in Sudan have emerged as a significant threat to Christians and the overall functioning of the state, with their actions often rooted in a blend of religious animosity and Islamic fundamentalism. Groups such as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have systematically targeted Christians through violent means, leveraging their ideological stance to justify acts of persecution and terror. Christians face murder, brutal assaults,

and abductions, which are frequently carried out to eliminate or suppress Christian presence in the region. Churches, which serve as vital centers for community and worship, are often destroyed or desecrated. These attacks are not merely acts of violence but deliberate attempts to erase Christian identity and culture. Islamic fundamentalism plays a critical role in fueling this hostility, as extremist ideologies promote the marginalization and persecution of non-Muslim religious groups, particularly Christians. Christian women are disproportionately targeted, suffering heinous acts such as sexual violence, including rape, used as tools of war and oppression. These acts aim to instill fear and humiliation, not just among the victims but within their communities as well. Such atrocities weaken the social fabric of Christian communities, leaving them more vulnerable amid the ongoing conflict. Christian families are frequently forced to abandon their homes, leading to mass displacement and contributing to Sudan's worsening humanitarian crisis.

- *Ordinary citizens (Very strong):* Followers of Wahhabism and advocates of Sharia law (as the basis for regulating all aspects of life in Sudan) are closing the spaces available for the Christian life. Islam is deeply embedded in Sudanese society and everyone is encouraged to follow the government policy of one religion, one culture and one language. This quickly leads to the persecution of Christians.

- *Violent religious groups (Very strong):* Militias organized by the government are responsible for killing Christians and for the destruction of property of Christians all over the country. The operation of Islamic militants in Sudan is multifaceted, with one key aspect being their involvement in criminal networks. These armed militants operate in conjunction with individuals engaged in organized crime and corruption, using these connections to finance their operations. Christians are often unable to speak out against these groups. In fact, these militants utilize the resources acquired through criminal network activity to persecute Christians.

- *Organized crime networks (Strong):* Although officially illegal, many groups operating like gangsters towards Christians are state-sanctioned.

- *Extended family (Strong):* Both at the individual and family level, citizens have been involved in persecuting Christians in the country. A country expert states: "Family members fear that conversion to Christianity of a family member could lead to the whole family being barred from attending community activities for no fault of their own. Thus they will do whatever it takes to pressure converts into renouncing their faith."

- *Government officials (Medium):* State security forces have still been harassing and intimidating Christians.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- *Government officials (Very strong):* Despite the change in the leadership at the top level, government officials are still a significant driver of persecution and have continued to impede Christians' rights - for example, where Christians have tried to reclaim their church buildings. Government officials are also forcing Christians to go to school on Sundays. In 2009 an arrest warrant was issued against al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court for crimes that include many against the Christian minority. While al-Bashir was charged in his position as head of state, there were numerous officials at various levels of government involved.

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

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- *Violent religious groups (strong):* Various militant groups, such as the Janjaweed, have re-emerged in various forms, maintaining their radical Islamic ideology. These groups operate within organized crime and corruption networks. They use these networks to buy weapons, collect information and engage in trafficking people, goods, and other materials. They view Christianity as a threat to their ideology and operations.
- *Paramilitary groups (very strong):* Paramilitary groups in Sudan have emerged as a significant threat to Christians and the overall functioning of the state. These groups, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), have been systematically targeting Christians through violent means, often motivated by religious animosity. (See above: Drivers of Islamic oppression/Paramilitary groups.) Even in areas less directly affected by the broader conflict, Christians are singled out for their faith, facing discrimination, harassment and extortion. These actions are part of a broader campaign by certain paramilitary factions to marginalize religious minorities and reshape Sudan's cultural and religious landscape.
- *Organized crime networks (Strong):* Although officially illegal, many groups operating like gangsters towards Christians are state-sanctioned.
- *Government officials (Strong):* Sudan is one of the most corrupt countries in Africa. Politicians and corruption networks have been conspiring against Christians and undermining the rule of law. They work hand in hand so that Christians lose their churches and other property before courts of law.

Drivers of Clan oppression / Ethno-religious hostility (blended)

- *Ethnic leaders (Strong):* Some ethnic leaders have received government backing, especially where their ethnic groups see ethnicity and Islam as one and the same. Thus if they see one of their members converting to Christianity, they will persecute them. These government-supported groups with Arab ethnic background also seek to exert pressure on non-Arabs, especially on ethnic African Christians. Most of the inhabitants of the southern parts of the country are of ethnic African origin and Christian (or Ethno-religionist) and Arabs live predominantly in the North. For many years, Arabs from the North have tried to spread not only Islam as a religion but also the Arab cultural and ethnic identity. This played a major part in the decades-long civil war that resulted in the loss of millions of lives, bodily injury and displacement of millions of others from their homes. Norms in the community also play a role in persecution (see next driver below).
- *Extended family (Medium) and ordinary citizens (Medium):* Extended family and members of a given community are expected to follow certain norms as defined by the clan/tradition in the society. These norms/traditions often stand in contradiction to Christian values. In this context, Christian converts face pressure to assimilate their behavior, dress code, and other communal practices. If they deviate from those practices, they are likely to face hostile pressure and violence.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2025 Persecution Pattern for Sudan

Average score 14.8
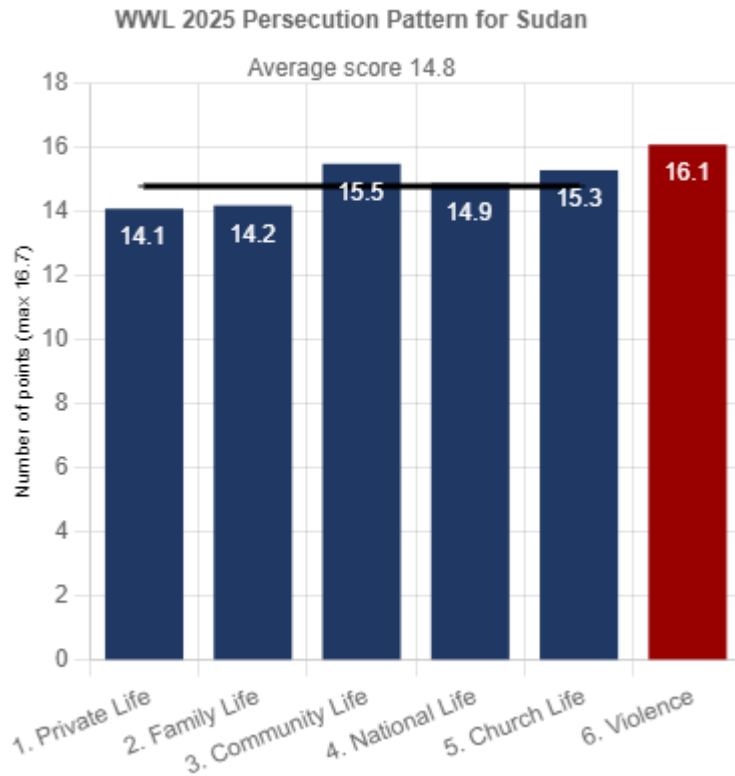
The WWL 2025 Persecution Pattern for Sudan shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Sudan is at an extreme level of 14.8 points, very slightly up from 14.7 points in WWL 2024.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Community sphere* (15.5 points) followed by the *Church sphere* (15.3) and the *National sphere* (14.9), indicating that Christians do not enjoy equality, either in the communities where they live or in the country as a whole.
- The score for violence rose significantly to 16.1 points, up from 13.3 points in WWL 2024. The violence against churches and Christians during the WWL 2025 reporting period was immense, driven by targeted attacks and widespread hostility.

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 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (4.00 points)

Christians in Sudan refrain from discussing their faith, even with extended family or trusted acquaintances, due to the fear of information being relayed to local mobs or jihadist groups. This risk is particularly acute for converts, who face the greatest danger of exposure. The inability to worship in private homes further limits their opportunities to safely express their beliefs. With the ongoing conflict between RSF forces and the Sudanese army and the resurgence of extremist groups, the environment for Christians has become increasingly hostile, forcing them to remain silent about their faith to avoid severe repercussions.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.50 points)

Christians face grave risks when expressing their faith through written forms, such as on social media or other communication platforms. Public declarations of faith can lead to targeting by extremist groups or hostile individuals, resulting in direct attacks or harassment. Families of those who openly share their beliefs may also become victims, facing threats and violence. These dangers are particularly acute for converts, who are already under close scrutiny. With the escalating conflict between the RSF and Sudanese army and the resurgence of jihadist elements, the risk of persecution has grown, forcing many Christians to suppress their faith to protect themselves and their loved ones.

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

Displaying Christian symbols, such as crosses or other religious imagery, is extremely perilous for Christians in Sudan. The ongoing civil war between the RSF and the Sudanese army has created a power vacuum, enabling armed groups and jihadist elements to operate more freely. In this environment, public displays of Christian faith can attract hostility, including physical attacks, vandalism and harassment. Christian symbols are often seen as provocative in a predominantly Muslim society, especially in regions where extremist ideologies are gaining traction. For converts, the risks are even greater, as displaying Christian symbols can expose their faith and invite severe persecution from both extremist groups and their own communities. The unstable security situation amplifies these dangers, forcing many Christians to hide their faith in fear of retribution.

Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points)

Christians in Sudan face substantial challenges in accessing Christian radio, TV programs, or online religious materials. Strict monitoring and censorship of media content, combined with societal hostility toward Christianity, create a hostile environment for believers seeking spiritual resources. Converts face heightened risks, as accessing such content may expose their faith and invite severe repercussions, including social ostracism and violence. These restrictions force many Christians to exercise extreme caution when engaging with Christian media.

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)

Christian couples in Sudan face significant barriers when attempting to adopt or serve as foster parents, primarily due to their religious beliefs. These challenges are rooted in broader restrictions on family life, particularly for converts. The authoritarian control, clan-based pressures, and the influence of Islamic practices in the country complicate the adoption and fostering process for Christian families. These restrictions not only hinder Christian couples from adopting or fostering children but also reinforce the larger issue of religious intolerance that Christians face daily, undermining their ability to freely practice their faith and contribute to society.

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

In Sudan, Christians face significant challenges when attempting to celebrate their faith through public expressions such as singing hymns or gathering for worship, particularly within their communities. These activities, central to Christian life, can lead to severe repercussions, including violent attacks. The public nature of wedding celebrations makes them highly vulnerable to scrutiny by both local authorities and extremist groups, who view such displays of faith as provocative or illegal. In some areas where the influence of jihadist ideologies on the rise, even peaceful gatherings for worship or celebration can become targets for violence. This atmosphere of fear and repression forces many Christians to engage in their religious practices discreetly, avoiding communal worship or other public displays of faith that could expose them to retaliation from armed groups or hostile community members. The risks associated with celebrating Christianity openly in Sudan create a climate of fear, severely limiting the ability of Christians to freely express and practice their faith.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points)

 Christian parents in Sudan face significant challenges in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. The combination of authoritarian control, clan pressures, Islamic influence, and organized crime creates a complex and often hostile environment for Christian families. These parents must carefully navigate the societal and legal constraints that restrict their ability to practice their faith openly. The need to protect their children within a society that may not support their beliefs forces Christian parents to make difficult decisions about how to integrate their faith into their daily lives while ensuring the safety and well-being of their children.

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

Christians in Sudan face significant challenges in registering vital events such as births, weddings, and deaths, particularly for converts from Islam. The state system often defaults to the dominant religion, making it difficult for Christian families to have their events officially recognized. Converts face additional scrutiny, as their change of faith is frequently rejected by local authorities, leading to delays or outright refusals in documentation. This systemic discrimination complicates access to basic legal rights and services, further marginalizing Christian communities.

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.). (4.00 points)

Christians are frequently monitored by local vigilantes, including youth groups and mobs, who keep a close watch on their daily activities. These groups observe where Christians gather, how they dress, and where they meet, often using this information to report any perceived deviations from societal norms. The monitoring extends to scrutinizing personal behavior, such as the wearing of religious attire or participation in Christian gatherings, which may attract the attention of these community watchdogs. This constant surveillance creates an atmosphere of fear, where Christians are hesitant to openly express their faith or engage in religious activities, knowing they will face harassment or persecution.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (4.00 points)

Abduction is a serious and growing threat to Christians, particularly during the ongoing conflict in Sudan, where extremist groups and Islamic fundamentalists have targeted Christians, especially converts. As the country faces instability, abductions are often used as a tactic to force Christians to renounce their faith or, more disturbingly, to coerce converts into marrying non-Christians, sometimes much older individuals. This not only violates their personal autonomy but also causes profound psychological trauma. Forced marriages disrupt the victim's sense of identity, leaving them emotionally scarred with lasting feelings of powerlessness, anxiety and depression. The trauma of being abducted and coerced into marriage deeply impacts their mental health.

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (4.00 points)

Christians in Sudan face significant barriers in accessing education at various levels, particularly due to their faith. These challenges are exacerbated by the curriculum in some schools, which may include content biased toward the dominant religion, leaving little space for Christian perspectives. Additionally, Christians from low-income families often struggle to access educational opportunities due to systemic discrimination. Many Christian students face obstacles in enrolling in certain schools, and their families often lack the financial means to overcome these barriers. This unequal access to education severely limits the opportunities available to Christian students, hindering their ability to achieve academic success and socio-economic mobility.

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

In Sudan, Christians face a deeply entrenched network of bias and systemic challenges woven into the fabric of society. Persecution takes many forms, ranging from harassment and threats to more subtle obstacles rooted in faith-based prejudices. These challenges are particularly severe for those who resist conforming to dominant Islamic practices such as dress codes, beard regulations, and other societal identity markers. In communal spaces designed to foster unity and shared resources, Christians, particularly converts, are often excluded, treated as outsiders, and denied access to

essential resources, public dialogues, and decision-making processes. The authoritarian control, clan-based oppression, and rising influence of armed jihadist groups—exacerbated by the ongoing conflict between the RSF and government forces—further isolate Christians and undermine their ability to live freely and express their beliefs. The security vacuum created by the civil war only deepens this crisis, allowing extremist forces to exploit the situation, further diminishing religious freedom for Christians.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

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

The legal framework in Sudan significantly limits religious freedom, contradicting the principles of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While there was hope that the regime change in 2019 would lead to meaningful reforms, the subsequent government announcements of changes were not sustained, and the problems that existed before 2019 have returned. The legal and cultural systems in place continue to favor Islam as the state religion, severely restricting the free practice and expression of faith for non-Muslim communities. These legal limitations are evident in various areas, including education, where curricula are heavily influenced by Islamic teachings, and in public policies that prioritize Islamic observances. Additionally, fundamental rights such as freedom of dress, the right of Christian parents to raise their children according to their faith, the ability to engage in collective worship, and the right to own places of worship are all restricted. Similarly, the right to adopt, especially in cases of conversion, is not upheld. These infringements on basic religious freedoms starkly contrast with the protections guaranteed under Article 18, further illustrating the challenges faced by religious minorities in Sudan.

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

Christians in Sudan face significant discrimination due to their faith when engaging with local administrations, government officials and members of the armed forces. This bias is especially evident in interactions with law enforcement and other state institutions, where Christians are often treated as second-class citizens or denied equal access to services. Non-Muslims, particularly converts, are frequently subjected to suspicion, harassment, or outright rejection, creating barriers to essential social and legal processes. For instance, Christians may encounter difficulties in registering births, marriages, or deaths, as local authorities often require adherence to the dominant Islamic norms, which marginalize Christian practices. This discrimination extends to interactions with the armed forces, where Christians may be overlooked for positions or subjected to religiously motivated hostility. The power structures in Sudan—shaped by Islamic law and cultural dominance—further perpetuate the marginalization of Christians, restricting their ability to navigate governmental systems or secure the levels of protection afforded to others. These issues, compounded by the ongoing conflict and security vacuum, have made it increasingly difficult for Christians to seek justice, protection, or even recognition within the official frameworks of Sudanese society.

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Christians face significant barriers to public office and career advancement due to their faith. The country's political and institutional structures are heavily influenced by Islamic principles, leading to systemic discrimination against non-Muslims, especially in government positions. Christians, particularly those who do not adhere to Islamic norms or are converts, are often excluded from public office or denied promotion within the civil service, armed forces and other state-controlled institutions. This religious bias is deeply entrenched in the hiring and promotion processes, where loyalty to the dominant religion is prioritized over merit or qualifications. In many cases, Christians are overlooked for higher positions, particularly in government ministries, law enforcement and military roles, where adherence to Islamic identity is often a prerequisite. This discrimination restricts Christians' ability to participate fully in the governance of their country and limits their access to opportunities for professional growth and advancement. The bias against Christians in public offices is compounded by the broader climate of religious intolerance, where non-Muslims are seen as outsiders and their professional ambitions are hindered by the state's preference for Islamic identity.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.75 points)

For Christians in Sudan, expressing their views or opinions in public can expose them to double vulnerability: In an authoritarian regime where freedom of expression is severely restricted, Christians face not only the usual consequences, such as arrest or church closures, but also heightened persecution due to their religious identity. Public expressions of faith, in particular, are seen as threats to the state's religious and political order. As the situation continues to worsen for Christians, their vulnerability increases, with any form of dissent or open expression often leading to violent repercussions. The growing repression and hostility make it increasingly dangerous for Christians to speak out, as the consequences can range from imprisonment to violent retribution or even death, reflecting the severe risk they face in a society where their faith is viewed as a challenge to the status quo.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

Church activities face constant monitoring, hindrance, and disruption, particularly for Christians who are viewed as a minority or a threat to the state's Islamic identity. Religious gatherings are closely scrutinized by local authorities, community vigilantes or extremist groups, and can be interrupted at any time. Converts to Christianity, in particular, are at high risk, as their participation in church activities is often seen as an act of defiance. Church services, prayer meetings and other communal religious events are regularly disrupted by security forces or local militias, who may even arrest individuals involved. Additionally, churches face the threat of closure or destruction, and their leaders, particularly pastors, are frequently harassed or detained. The country's ongoing conflict between government forces and rebel groups has exacerbated these challenges, creating an environment where church activities are further obstructed by armed groups exploiting the security vacuum. This repression stifles Christians' ability to worship freely and contributes to the climate of fear that surrounds Christian life in Sudan.

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

Obtaining registration or legal status for churches is an arduous and often discouraging process for Christians. Local authorities routinely impose significant bureaucratic hurdles, making it extremely difficult for churches to obtain the necessary licenses or official recognition. Even when churches meet all the required criteria, they frequently face delays or outright rejections, with the government denying the issuance of legal permits to operate. This lack of legal status severely limits the ability of Christian communities to conduct religious activities openly and legally. Without official registration, churches are at constant risk of being shut down, their leaders persecuted, and congregants subjected to legal penalties for holding services. The difficulty in acquiring registration affects not only the ability to worship freely but also undermines the efforts to establish Christian schools, healthcare facilities, and other community services, further isolating Christians from full participation in society. This systemic obstruction of church registration and licensing continues to hinder the growth and security of Christian communities across the country.

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)

Christian communities in Sudan face serious obstacles when attempting to build or renovate church buildings or reclaim religious premises that were taken from them in the past. Legal and bureaucratic barriers often hinder the approval of construction permits or land acquisition, with local authorities and government officials frequently rejecting or delaying requests due to religious or political factors. Additionally, historical Christian places of worship that were seized during previous conflicts or regimes remain out of reach, as efforts to reclaim them are blocked or ignored. These challenges are further compounded by an environment of hostility towards Christian practices, where churches are not only denied legal recognition but are also vulnerable to attack or destruction by militant groups. As a result, Christian communities struggle to maintain or establish spaces for worship, severely restricting their ability to practice their faith openly and freely.

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

Churches in Sudan face major challenges in organizing activities outside of church buildings. These difficulties are compounded by the constant threat of attacks by mobs and vigilantes who target gatherings of Christians. In addition to physical threats, these activities are closely monitored, and legal hurdles often prevent churches from obtaining the necessary licenses and permissions to hold such events. This hostile environment makes it extremely difficult for Christian communities to engage in outreach or conduct religious activities freely, hindering their ability to worship and fellowship in public spaces. The risks of harassment, legal consequences and physical violence severely limit the ability of Christians to practice their faith outside the confines of church buildings.

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.*

| Sudan: 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)?	44	5
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?	182	100 *
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	10 *	10 *
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100 *	10 *
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10 *	10 *
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100 *	100 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	10 *
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?	100 *	10 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	100 *
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	10 *

5 Year trends

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

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Sudan: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	14.8
2024	14.7
2023	14.7
2022	14.1
2021	14.0

The trend since WWL 2021 shows a steady increase in pressure on Christians, with the exception of WWL 2023 and WWL 2024, where the score plateaued at 14.7. The lower average in WWL 2021 and WWL 2022 coincided with the ousting of President al-Bashir, hinting at a potentially positive shift. However, any positive trajectory reversed sharply in October 2021 when the military leaders sidelined the civilian component of the transitional government in a silent coup. The conflict that erupted in April 2023 has further intensified the vulnerability of Christians, leading to increased violence and sustained pressure on the Christian community.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

Sudan: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 Pressure scores in each sphere of life
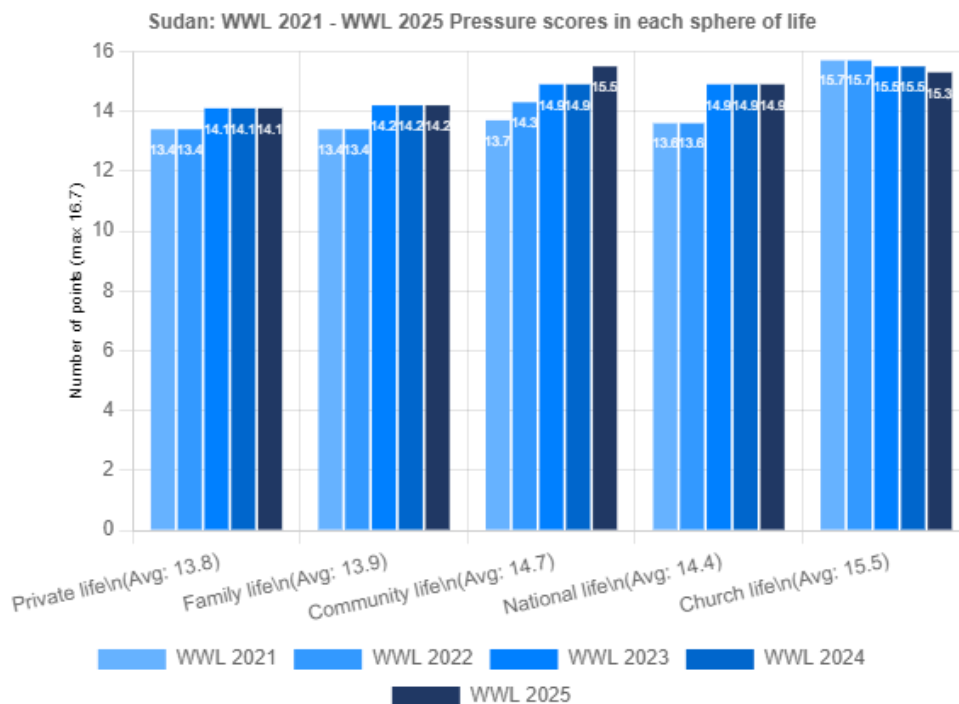
The chart above depicting the levels of pressure on Christians across different spheres of life over the past five reporting periods underscores the consistent and extreme levels of persecution faced by Christians. The *Church sphere*, in particular, recorded the highest five-year average pressure at 15.5 points, highlighting severe challenges to religious practices and activities. Similarly significant are the extremely high average scores in the *National* and *Community spheres*, at 14.4 and 14.7 points respectively, reflecting intensely hostile governmental and societal influences.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

Sudan: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 Violence scores
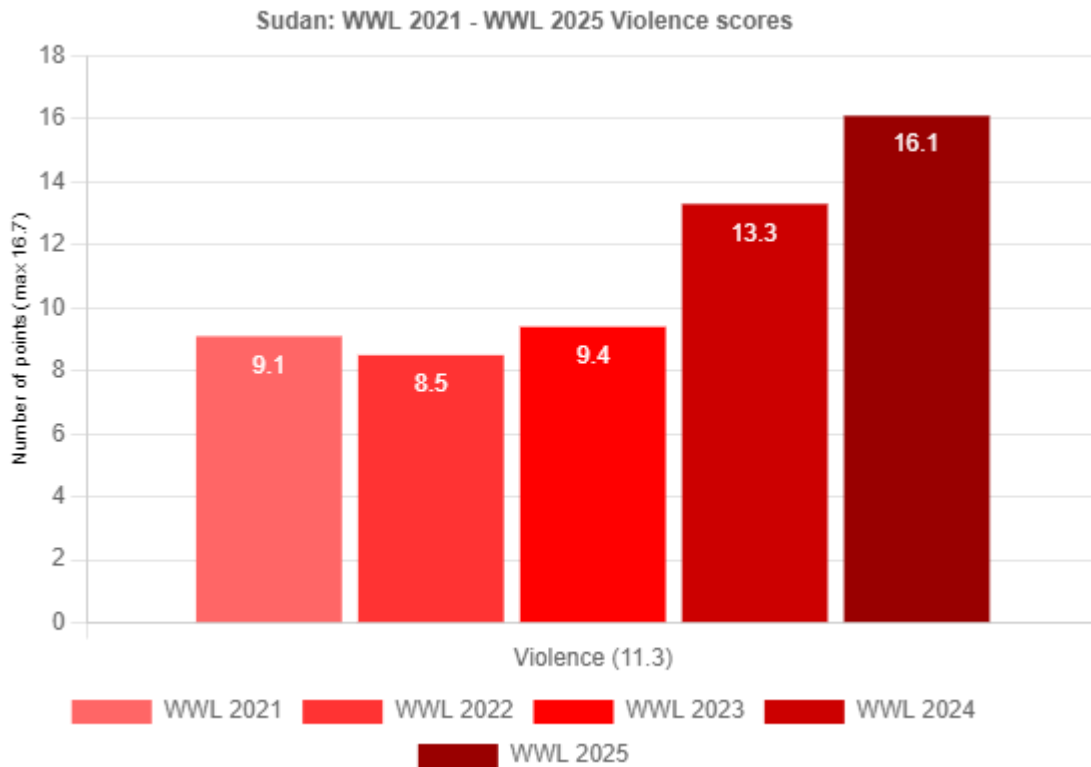
The chart above illustrates the progression of violence scores over the last five reporting periods, with an average score of 11.3 points. Except for WWL 2022, where it slightly dropped, the score for violence has steadily increased, reaching 16.1 in the WWL 2025 reporting period. The increase in violence over the last two years indicates that Christians are being specifically targeted amid the ongoing conflict, with instability providing an opening for others to persecute Christians further. Christians are being killed, their properties seized, churches repurposed as military camps, and some even destroyed. Thousands of Christians have been forced to flee their homes to escape persecution, leaving behind communities and lives disrupted by violence.

26

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points (WWL 2025)
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Trafficking; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Women have encountered rapid change in Sudan in the past few years. Following Sudan's 2021 military coup, several reforms initiated in 2020 that offered positive changes to women's rights and safety have been undermined or reversed (UN Press Release Sudan, 25 October 2022; DW News, 18 November 2022) The transitional government formed in 2019 was described as an historic chance for a return to civilian rule and democracy, and elections were planned for 2023. However, in October 2021, the military seized full control, overthrowing civilian leaders, and significantly disrupting the reform trajectory leading to exacerbated economic and social instability.

Consequently, Sudan saw an increase in domestic violence, forced marriage, and targeted violence against women, especially during periods of unrest. Female Christians, particularly converts, continue to face intense persecution, including social isolation, loss of inheritance, and legal discrimination. Converts are often subjected to domestic violence and, in extreme cases, physical and psychological abuse, such as forced psychiatric treatment for conversion (UN News, 19 July 2021; Morning Star News, 19 March 2023). Female Christians continue to face tremendous challenges and are at a disadvantage in society simply because of their gender. Continuing gaps in protective legislation remain avenues for religious persecution.

Sexual violence has been weaponized amid Sudan's ongoing conflict between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which began in April 2023. Reports detail widespread rapes by armed groups, including RSF forces (DW, 24 May 2023). The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), a women's rights organization, verified over 70 cases of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, primarily attributed to the RSF reported in July 2023 (SIHA Network, 2023). In El Genaina, RSF and allied Arab militias raped several dozen women and girls in the city and while people fled fighting between April and June. Survivors' access to urgent services, including the clinical management of rape and psychosocial support, were impeded by attacks to healthcare facilities and organizations aiding sexual violence victims, a communication blackout in El Geneina, and weak health infrastructure in Chad, where many survivors sought refuge (HRW 2024 country chapter Sudan).

The testimony of women is not considered equivalent to that of men, and there is significant social stigma attached to those who report rape, thus prohibiting survivors from coming forward. Further adding to the landscape of impunity for perpetrators are reports of policemen raping Christian girls (The Guardian, 16 May 2023). On a broader level, Islamic extremists have reportedly kidnapped Sudanese girls for marriage and/or sexual slavery (UN News, 3 November 2023). They are cases of

women being kidnapped by the RSF for ransom, they are often raped whilst they are held hostage. Many have been taken to Chad or kept as sex slaves (The Guardian, 29 August 2023). Women and girls in Sudan are subject to, and at risk or, horrific gender-based violence, with Christian women and girls facing increased persecution, stigma and risk.

The persecution of women ripples through families and communities, compounding societal trauma. Efforts to address these challenges are hindered by inadequate legal protection, deeply entrenched gender inequality and a deteriorating humanitarian situation.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points (WWL 2025)
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Forced to flee town/country; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan continues to escalate. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) laments that "Sudan is experiencing a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions", with civilians bearing the brunt of the ongoing conflict. As of December 2024, over half of Sudan's 47 million population are facing acute food insecurity. The conflict, which began in April 2023, has displaced more than 13 million people, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition across the nation (AP News, 3 December 2024). In North Darfur's Zamzam camp, housing approximately 500,000 displaced individuals, famine conditions have been officially declared. The camp has suffered from attacks and blockades, severely limiting access to food and medical aid. (Reuters, 3 December 2024). Amid this crisis, Christians face intensified persecution exacerbated by widespread insecurity.

Male Christians, particularly church leaders, are frequent targets of government harassment and false charges such as "terrorism." According to country experts, government forces monitor Christian leaders, especially those attempting to rebuild destroyed churches. Male converts to Christianity face beatings, imprisonment, and social isolation, often being disowned by their families. The absence of men, who are typically family breadwinners and protectors, leaves families financially strained and vulnerable to property looting and sexual violence against women and girls. Hence, Christian men and boys become prime targets for abduction and killing by radical groups like Janjaweed due to the cascading effect their absence creates. As an expert shared, "The abduction of men/boys is designed to make the whole family susceptible to economic crises... forcing the family to flee the area." Threats of abduction, sexual violence, and killings are seen as strategic weapons used by the RSF to force families to evacuate their homes and flee. The situation in Sudan is one of violence, humiliation and fear.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Any religious group apart from Sunni Islam faces tremendous challenges to exercise their faith.

According to the US State Department IRFR 2023 Sudan:

- In prison, observers reported that authorities did not permit Shia prayers, and Shia prisoners were only allowed to participate in prayer services led by Sunni imams. In education, members of minority religious groups continued to voice concerns about the educational system, citing a lack of teachers adequately prepared to teach religious diversity. Additionally, a Muslim woman marrying a non-Muslim man could face charges of adultery.

Trends Summary

The fragile nature of Sudan's political and security environment is posing serious implications for the stability of the country and the broader region, as well as for the freedom and safety of Christians. The ongoing fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces has led to widespread atrocities, including targeted violence against ethnic and religious minorities. Christians in Sudan face severe persecution, with militants often forcing them to renounce their faith under threat of violence or death (OHCHR Press Release, 23 February 2024). The instability has also resulted in mass displacements, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis as millions of people flee their homes, seeking refuge in neighboring countries like Chad, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. This regional spillover threatens to destabilize the Horn of Africa further, complicating international efforts to restore peace and provide humanitarian aid (UN News, 19 April 2024).

1) Reform hopes dashed

In 2019, it was hoped that Sudan was entering a new era. For the first time in three decades, the nation was being ruled without al-Bashir at the helm. Many reforms were promised. However, the Transitional Council that was established between the army and civilian representatives struggled to press on with the pledged reform. In the end, in October 2021, a coup was conducted which resulted in government rule returning to the army. Significant numbers of protesters demanded the restoration of civilian rule. This resulted in the death (Reuters, 1 July 2022) and arrest (HRW, 28 April 2022) of many protestors. There are indications that the country might even return to Islamic rule. For example, in August 2022, a community police force was established which is seen as being an attempt to bring back the Public Order Police (a.k.a. the Morality Police), which was disbanded after al-Bashir was removed from power (Dabanga, 19 August 2022). The economy is still suffering and inflation also remains a serious problem. The conflict that erupted on 15 April 2023 has further exacerbated the already fragile situation.

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

Sudan is one of the most complex countries in Africa. After a civil war that lasted more than two decades, South Sudan decided to go its own way and become an independent nation in 2011. That did not end the problems, however. There are still major issues to be dealt with in Darfur, the Blue Nile and Kordofan areas. The Transitional Council showed its commitment by adopting the 2019 Draft Constitutional Declaration. It was followed by agreements with different rebel groups in October 2019 and January 2020. It seemed the discussions were progressing well despite outstanding issues such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), economic challenges, accountability and social

justice. Many of these issues could take years to resolve and they need extreme care as the conflicts in the southern part of the country and Darfur continue to flare up despite the agreements signed. It remains to be seen how the military leaders of the October 2021 coup will deal with these matters. Sudan is also in a border-dispute with Ethiopia and there have been clashes. In June 2022, the African Union urged the two nations to refrain from using force (VOA, 29 June 2022). Historically, these two countries had been supporting rebel groups to deliberately weaken each other. The fighting in Khartoum between the Sudanese Army and the RSF is creating an environment where other armed groups can join the fighting or create their own platform to fight.

3) The conflict between the Sudanese Army and the Rapid Support Forces

The conflict between the Sudanese Army and the RSF that erupted in April 2023 has not only plunged the country into turmoil but also underscores the immense challenge of fostering a national consensus for a transition to democracy. It highlights the complexities and near-impossibility of achieving such unity. Former rebel groups, once in opposition to the Sudanese government, now align themselves with the army against the RSF. Despite the conflict's recent outbreak, it reveals a consistent trend, emphasizing the deep divisions within the ruling elite. These divisions persist despite widespread expectations from the Sudanese people and the international community for transformative changes following Omar al-Bashir's ousting.

The war continues to date, with a high toll on civilian lives and infrastructure. There are regular reports of intentional targeting of hospital, schools and other public infrastructure. Ethnic cleansing and genocide have also been reported by the Arab militias against black Sudanese. In the current context of war, there is no chance that religious freedoms for Christians will be attained any time soon.

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/.
- Africa - Recent upsurge in military coups - September 2023

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: Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/16/who-is-hemedti-the-puppeteer-behind-sudans-feared-rsf-fighters
- Brief description of the persecution situation: IRFR 2023 Sudan - https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sudan/
- Brief description of the persecution situation: over 150 churches have been damaged - https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-sounds-alarm-attacks-against-religious-communities-sudan
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: January 2024 - https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-sounds-alarm-attacks-against-religious-communities-sudan
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: December 2023 - https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-sounds-alarm-attacks-against-religious-communities-sudan
- Church spectrum today - additional information: IRFR 2023 Sudan - https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sudan/
- Persecution engines description: 19th century Mahdist movement - http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-256
- Persecution engines description: Islamic law is still very much in place - https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2020/08/ngos-say-changes-to-sudans-islamic-laws-dont-go-far-enough/
- Persecution engines description: Freedom in the World Index 2023 - https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-world/2023
- Persecution engines description: Global Organized Crime Index 2023 Sudan - https://ocindex.net/country/sudan
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN Press Release Sudan, 25 October 2022 - https://sudan.un.org/en/204761-sudan-justice-repression-against-anti-coup-protesters-key-breaking-cycle-violence-and?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: DW News, 18 November 2022 - https://www.dw.com/en/sudans-difficult-path-to-post-coup-democratic-transition/a-63813303?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN News, - https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096132
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Morning Star News - https://morningstarnews.org/2023/03/christian-mother-in-sudan-chained-called-mad-for-her-faith/
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: DW, 24 May 2023 - https://www.dw.com/en/sudan-un-condemns-sexual-violence-amid-weeklong-cease-fire/a-65723621
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: SIHA Network, 2023 - https://sihanet.org/press-statement-decades-of-impunity-are-contributing-to-the-escalation-of-sexual-violence-and-violence-against-women-in-sudans-conflict/
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW 2024 country chapter Sudan - https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/sudan
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: The Guardian, 16 May 2023 - https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/may/16/sudan-reports-of-women-being-raped-in-khartoum-by-armed-men
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- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: AP News, 3 December 2024 - https://apnews.com/article/sudan-war-famine-hunger-chad-24ae9cf30e7d5074e518f58b335e9d9a
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- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Sudan: - https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sudan/
- Trends Summary: OHCHR Press Release, 23 February 2024 - https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/sudan-horrific-violations-and-abuses-fighting-spreads-report
- Trends Summary: UN News, 19 April 2024 - https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148791
- Trends Summary: death - https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/internet-cut-sudans-capital-ahead-pro-democracy-protests-2022-06-30/
- Trends Summary: arrest - https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/28/sudan-hundreds-protesters-detained-mistreated
- Trends Summary: is seen - https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/outrage-in-sudan-as-new-force-reminiscent-of-public-order-police-is-installed

- Trends Summary: to refrain - https://www.voanews.com/a/african-union-urges-restraint-after-ethiopia-sudan-border-clashes-/6638230.html
- Further useful reports: Africa - Recent upsurge in military coups - September 2023 - https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/reports/africa-recent-upsurge-in-military-coups