

World  
Watch  
Research

# Ethiopia: Full Country Dossier

January 2022



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

January 2022

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[research@od.org](mailto:research@od.org)

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Teenage girl in Ethiopia (c) Open Doors International

# Introduction

## World Watch List 2022

| Rank | Country      | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 | Total Score WWL 2020 | Total Score WWL 2019 | Total Score WWL 2018 |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1    | Afghanistan  | 16.7         | 16.7        | 16.7           | 16.7          | 16.7        | 15.0     | 98                   | 94                   | 93                   | 94                   | 93                   |
| 2    | North Korea  | 16.7         | 16.7        | 16.7           | 16.7          | 16.7        | 13.1     | 96                   | 94                   | 94                   | 94                   | 94                   |
| 3    | Somalia      | 16.5         | 16.7        | 16.6           | 16.6          | 16.6        | 8.5      | 91                   | 92                   | 92                   | 91                   | 91                   |
| 4    | Libya        | 15.6         | 15.5        | 15.9           | 16.2          | 16.3        | 11.5     | 91                   | 92                   | 90                   | 87                   | 86                   |
| 5    | Yemen        | 16.7         | 16.6        | 16.5           | 16.7          | 16.7        | 5.2      | 88                   | 87                   | 85                   | 86                   | 85                   |
| 6    | Eritrea      | 14.6         | 14.9        | 15.5           | 15.9          | 15.6        | 11.1     | 88                   | 88                   | 87                   | 86                   | 86                   |
| 7    | Nigeria      | 13.8         | 13.8        | 14.3           | 14.5          | 14.4        | 16.7     | 87                   | 85                   | 80                   | 80                   | 77                   |
| 8    | Pakistan     | 13.6         | 14.0        | 15.1           | 14.9          | 13.1        | 16.7     | 87                   | 88                   | 88                   | 87                   | 86                   |
| 9    | Iran         | 14.5         | 14.6        | 13.6           | 15.8          | 16.5        | 10.4     | 85                   | 86                   | 85                   | 85                   | 85                   |
| 10   | India        | 12.7         | 12.7        | 12.9           | 14.7          | 13.3        | 15.6     | 82                   | 83                   | 83                   | 83                   | 81                   |
| 11   | Saudi Arabia | 15.1         | 15.1        | 15.0           | 15.9          | 16.7        | 3.1      | 81                   | 78                   | 79                   | 77                   | 79                   |
| 12   | Myanmar      | 12.4         | 11.5        | 13.8           | 13.4          | 13.1        | 14.8     | 79                   | 74                   | 73                   | 71                   | 65                   |
| 13   | Sudan        | 13.4         | 13.4        | 14.3           | 13.6          | 15.7        | 8.5      | 79                   | 79                   | 85                   | 87                   | 87                   |
| 14   | Iraq         | 14.0         | 14.6        | 14.0           | 14.8          | 13.9        | 6.9      | 78                   | 82                   | 76                   | 79                   | 86                   |
| 15   | Syria        | 12.9         | 13.8        | 13.5           | 14.3          | 13.9        | 9.3      | 78                   | 81                   | 82                   | 82                   | 76                   |
| 16   | Maldives     | 15.4         | 15.3        | 13.7           | 15.8          | 16.5        | 0.4      | 77                   | 77                   | 78                   | 78                   | 78                   |
| 17   | China        | 12.6         | 9.8         | 12.2           | 14.4          | 15.5        | 11.1     | 76                   | 74                   | 70                   | 65                   | 57                   |
| 18   | Qatar        | 14.2         | 14.1        | 11.1           | 13.0          | 14.3        | 7.2      | 74                   | 67                   | 66                   | 62                   | 63                   |
| 19   | Vietnam      | 11.3         | 9.7         | 12.7           | 14.1          | 14.5        | 8.7      | 71                   | 72                   | 72                   | 70                   | 69                   |
| 20   | Egypt        | 12.7         | 13.2        | 11.5           | 12.7          | 10.8        | 10.0     | 71                   | 75                   | 76                   | 76                   | 70                   |
| 21   | Uzbekistan   | 14.9         | 12.7        | 14.1           | 11.8          | 15.6        | 1.7      | 71                   | 71                   | 73                   | 74                   | 73                   |
| 22   | Algeria      | 14.0         | 14.0        | 11.1           | 13.4          | 14.1        | 4.1      | 71                   | 70                   | 73                   | 70                   | 58                   |
| 23   | Mauritania   | 14.3         | 13.9        | 13.1           | 14.0          | 14.1        | 0.9      | 70                   | 71                   | 68                   | 67                   | 57                   |
| 24   | Mali         | 9.4          | 8.2         | 13.9           | 10.3          | 12.8        | 15.0     | 70                   | 67                   | 66                   | 68                   | 59                   |
| 25   | Turkmenistan | 14.5         | 11.3        | 13.6           | 13.3          | 15.7        | 0.6      | 69                   | 70                   | 70                   | 69                   | 68                   |
| 26   | Laos         | 12.0         | 10.3        | 13.2           | 13.3          | 14.1        | 5.9      | 69                   | 71                   | 72                   | 71                   | 67                   |
| 27   | Morocco      | 13.1         | 13.8        | 10.8           | 12.8          | 14.2        | 3.9      | 69                   | 67                   | 66                   | 63                   | 51                   |
| 28   | Indonesia    | 11.3         | 11.5        | 11.5           | 11.0          | 9.6         | 13.5     | 68                   | 63                   | 60                   | 65                   | 59                   |
| 29   | Bangladesh   | 11.8         | 10.7        | 12.9           | 11.3          | 10.2        | 11.3     | 68                   | 67                   | 63                   | 58                   | 58                   |
| 30   | Colombia     | 11.5         | 8.8         | 13.1           | 11.0          | 9.9         | 13.3     | 68                   | 67                   | 62                   | 58                   | 56                   |
| 31   | CAR          | 9.0          | 8.6         | 13.6           | 9.6           | 11.4        | 15.6     | 68                   | 66                   | 68                   | 70                   | 61                   |
| 32   | Burkina Faso | 9.4          | 9.7         | 12.0           | 9.6           | 12.1        | 14.8     | 68                   | 67                   | 66                   | 48                   | -                    |
| 33   | Niger        | 9.4          | 9.5         | 13.9           | 7.2           | 12.8        | 14.8     | 68                   | 62                   | 60                   | 52                   | 45                   |
| 34   | Bhutan       | 13.4         | 12.4        | 11.7           | 13.7          | 13.8        | 1.7      | 67                   | 64                   | 61                   | 64                   | 62                   |
| 35   | Tunisia      | 11.9         | 12.7        | 10.6           | 11.3          | 13.4        | 6.5      | 66                   | 67                   | 64                   | 63                   | 62                   |
| 36   | Oman         | 13.8         | 14.0        | 10.3           | 13.2          | 13.4        | 1.5      | 66                   | 63                   | 62                   | 59                   | 57                   |
| 37   | Cuba         | 12.3         | 8.1         | 12.6           | 13.2          | 14.0        | 5.9      | 66                   | 62                   | 52                   | 49                   | 49                   |
| 38   | Ethiopia     | 9.9          | 10.3        | 13.1           | 10.3          | 12.3        | 9.8      | 66                   | 65                   | 63                   | 65                   | 62                   |
| 39   | Jordan       | 12.9         | 14.0        | 11.0           | 12.3          | 12.5        | 3.0      | 66                   | 64                   | 64                   | 65                   | 66                   |
| 40   | DRC          | 8.0          | 7.9         | 12.6           | 9.7           | 12.0        | 15.6     | 66                   | 64                   | 56                   | 55                   | 33                   |
| 41   | Mozambique   | 9.3          | 8.5         | 11.3           | 7.9           | 12.5        | 15.6     | 65                   | 63                   | 43                   | 43                   | -                    |
| 42   | Turkey       | 12.6         | 11.5        | 11.4           | 13.2          | 11.6        | 4.6      | 65                   | 69                   | 63                   | 66                   | 62                   |
| 43   | Mexico       | 10.3         | 8.3         | 12.5           | 10.8          | 10.3        | 12.6     | 65                   | 64                   | 60                   | 61                   | 59                   |
| 44   | Cameroon     | 8.8          | 7.6         | 12.6           | 7.2           | 13.1        | 15.4     | 65                   | 64                   | 60                   | 54                   | 38                   |
| 45   | Tajikistan   | 13.8         | 12.3        | 12.0           | 12.6          | 13.2        | 0.7      | 65                   | 66                   | 65                   | 65                   | 65                   |
| 46   | Brunei       | 14.8         | 14.5        | 10.3           | 11.0          | 13.2        | 0.6      | 64                   | 64                   | 63                   | 63                   | 64                   |
| 47   | Kazakhstan   | 13.4         | 11.6        | 11.1           | 12.6          | 13.5        | 1.7      | 64                   | 64                   | 64                   | 63                   | 63                   |
| 48   | Nepal        | 12.4         | 9.8         | 9.9            | 13.6          | 12.7        | 5.2      | 64                   | 66                   | 64                   | 64                   | 64                   |
| 49   | Kuwait       | 13.5         | 13.7        | 9.8            | 12.3          | 13.1        | 1.1      | 64                   | 63                   | 62                   | 60                   | 61                   |
| 50   | Malaysia     | 12.5         | 14.3        | 11.5           | 11.6          | 10.2        | 3.3      | 63                   | 63                   | 62                   | 60                   | 65                   |

| Rank | Country                 | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 | Total Score WWL 2020 | Total Score WWL 2019 | Total Score WWL 2018 |
|------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 51   | Kenya                   | 11.7         | 9.2         | 11.4           | 8.0           | 11.5        | 11.1     | 63                   | 62                   | 61                   | 61                   | 62                   |
| 52   | Sri Lanka               | 12.9         | 9.9         | 11.4           | 11.3          | 9.4         | 7.8      | 63                   | 62                   | 65                   | 58                   | 57                   |
| 53   | Comoros                 | 12.7         | 11.1        | 11.2           | 12.4          | 14.2        | 0.9      | 63                   | 62                   | 57                   | 56                   | 56                   |
| 54   | UAE                     | 13.4         | 13.6        | 10.1           | 11.8          | 12.2        | 1.3      | 62                   | 62                   | 60                   | 58                   | 58                   |
| 55   | Tanzania                | 9.3          | 10.8        | 10.3           | 8.6           | 8.7         | 13.7     | 61                   | 58                   | 55                   | 52                   | 53                   |
| 56   | Azerbaijan              | 13.1         | 9.9         | 9.3            | 11.0          | 13.4        | 3.3      | 60                   | 56                   | 57                   | 57                   | 57                   |
| 57   | Palestinian Territories | 13.0         | 13.4        | 9.8            | 10.2          | 12.0        | 0.9      | 59                   | 58                   | 60                   | 57                   | 60                   |
| 58   | Djibouti                | 12.3         | 12.3        | 11.1           | 10.0          | 12.2        | 0.7      | 59                   | 56                   | 56                   | 56                   | 56                   |
| 59   | Kyrgyzstan              | 12.9         | 10.1        | 11.1           | 10.4          | 12.0        | 1.5      | 58                   | 58                   | 57                   | 56                   | 54                   |
| 60   | Bahrain                 | 12.5         | 13.2        | 9.1            | 11.1          | 10.2        | 0.9      | 57                   | 56                   | 55                   | 55                   | 57                   |
| 61   | Nicaragua               | 9.1          | 5.6         | 11.1           | 11.8          | 11.3        | 7.6      | 56                   | 51                   | 41                   | 41                   | -                    |
| 62   | Russian Federation      | 12.3         | 8.0         | 10.2           | 10.6          | 12.3        | 2.2      | 56                   | 57                   | 60                   | 60                   | 51                   |
| 63   | Chad                    | 11.5         | 8.2         | 10.2           | 9.6           | 10.3        | 5.6      | 55                   | 53                   | 56                   | 48                   | 40                   |
| 64   | Burundi                 | 7.6          | 7.8         | 9.7            | 9.2           | 9.6         | 8.1      | 52                   | 48                   | 48                   | 43                   | -                    |
| 65   | Venezuela               | 5.6          | 4.5         | 11.2           | 9.4           | 11.1        | 9.6      | 51                   | 39                   | 42                   | 41                   | 34                   |
| 66   | Angola                  | 6.8          | 6.7         | 8.1            | 10.1          | 11.4        | 7.8      | 51                   | 46                   | 43                   | 42                   | -                    |
| 67   | Rwanda                  | 8.1          | 5.5         | 6.7            | 10.3          | 10.1        | 9.3      | 50                   | 42                   | 42                   | 41                   | -                    |
| 68   | Honduras                | 7.2          | 5.1         | 10.5           | 7.7           | 9.2         | 8.7      | 48                   | 46                   | 39                   | 38                   | -                    |
| 69   | Uganda                  | 8.1          | 4.6         | 7.4            | 6.7           | 9.1         | 11.7     | 48                   | 47                   | 48                   | 47                   | 46                   |
| 70   | El Salvador             | 7.7          | 4.6         | 10.7           | 5.7           | 9.1         | 7.2      | 45                   | 42                   | 38                   | 30                   | -                    |
| 71   | Togo                    | 9.2          | 6.7         | 9.3            | 7.1           | 9.8         | 2.4      | 44                   | 43                   | 41                   | 42                   | -                    |
| 72   | Gambia                  | 8.3          | 8.2         | 8.7            | 8.3           | 8.8         | 1.7      | 44                   | 43                   | 43                   | 43                   | -                    |
| 73   | Guinea                  | 10.3         | 7.5         | 8.3            | 7.0           | 8.1         | 2.0      | 43                   | 47                   | 45                   | 46                   | -                    |
| 74   | South Sudan             | 5.7          | 0.9         | 7.0            | 6.3           | 7.8         | 15.0     | 43                   | 43                   | 44                   | 44                   | -                    |
| 75   | Ivory Coast             | 9.8          | 8.6         | 8.2            | 5.5           | 7.9         | 2.0      | 42                   | 42                   | 42                   | 43                   | -                    |
| 76   | Israel                  | 9.8          | 8.4         | 5.6            | 6.6           | 6.6         | 4.3      | 41                   | 40                   | 38                   | 39                   | 40                   |

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## Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

## Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

## External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

# WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Ethiopia

## Brief country details

| Ethiopia: Population (UN estimate for 2021) | Christians | Chr% |
|---|------------|------|
| 115,403,000                                 | 69,234,000 | 60.0 |

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

## Map of country



| Ethiopia: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|----------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2022                   | 66     | 38       |
| WWL 2021                   | 65     | 36       |
| WWL 2020                   | 63     | 39       |
| WWL 2019                   | 65     | 28       |
| WWL 2018                   | 62     | 29       |

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

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

| Ethiopia: Main Persecution engines     | Main drivers   |
|--|--|
| Christian denominational protectionism | Religious leaders of other churches, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family |
| Islamic oppression                     | Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family     |
| Dictatorial paranoia                   | Government officials   |
| Clan oppression                        | Ethnic group leaders   |

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

## Brief description of the persecution situation

In Ethiopia, all categories of Christian communities face violations of religious freedom, although some denominations are more affected than others. Non-traditional Christians face the most severe violations both from the government and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). Converts to Christianity from a Muslim background (particularly in eastern and south-eastern parts of the country) and cross-denominational converts from an Orthodox background face harsh mistreatment from their families and communities. In some areas, Christians are denied access to community resources and/or are ostracized from society. For example, In some places - such as Somali State and some parts of Oromia - Islamic mobs attack churches. The political violence has also left Christians increasingly vulnerable to rises in pressure and violence.

## Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Ethiopia 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 Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
4. [Convention against Torture](#) (CAT)

## 5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

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

- Christian converts are ostracized and denied their right to freedom of religion or belief (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christians are denied their right to freedom of expression (ICCPR Art. 19)
- Christian peaceful religious gatherings are restricted, in violation of the right to peaceful assembly (ICCPR Art. 21)
- Christian women are forcibly married and forced to recant their beliefs (ICCPR Art. 23.3; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)
- Christian women are denied their equality of rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution (ICCPR Art. 23.4 and CEDAW Art.16)

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

- Over 20 churches and church buildings have been attacked, damaged or looted.
- The conflict in the different parts of the country impacted in Christians as they are exposed to organized attacks and robberies.
- Dozens of Christian homes were attacked or burned down.
- Over 100 Christians were forced to leave their houses due to persecution.

## Specific examples of positive developments

There was a fear that the June and September 2021 elections would lead to a deterioration in security. Fortunately, the elections were not followed by violence.

## External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>



# WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Ethiopia

## Links for general background information

| Name   | Quote Reference                     | Link  | Last accessed on |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Amnesty International country report                                       | AI 2021                             | <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| BBC News country profile   | BBC country profile                 | <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349398">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349398</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020                                      | BTI 2020                            | <a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-ETH.html">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-ETH.html</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| CIA World Factbook   | CIA Factbook                        | <a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020                           | EIU 2020                            | <a href="https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf">https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf</a>                                     | 28 July 2021     |
| FFP's Fragile States Index 2021  | FSI 2021                            | <a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Ethiopia is not included)            | Freedom House/Democracy 2021        | <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores</a>   |                  |
| Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index                                  | Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021   | <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2021">https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2021</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report                             | Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020 | <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-net/2020">https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-net/2020</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Garda World country report   | Garda World                         | <a href="https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/ethiopia">https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/ethiopia</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Human Rights Watch World Report 2021                                       | HRW 2021                            | <a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/ethiopia">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/ethiopia</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Internet World Stats 2021  | IWS June 2021                       | <a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#et">https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#et</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index                                       | World Press Freedom 2020            | <a href="https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia">https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index             | CPI 2020                            | <a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/eth">https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/eth</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators                                 | HDI 2020                            | <a href="http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH">http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH</a>   | 28 July 2021     |
| US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports | IRFR 2020                           | <a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ethiopia/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ethiopia/</a> | 28 July 2021     |
| USCIRF 2021 country reports (Ethiopia is not included)                     | USCIRF 2021                         | <a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/countries">https://www.uscifr.gov/countries</a>   |                  |
| World Bank country report  | World Bank                          | <a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia</a>   | 28 July 2021     |

## Recent history

For many centuries Ethiopia was part of the Aksumite Empire, which included present-day Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia but this came to an end around 940 AD. Thereafter different dynasties ruled the country. In 1974 the army deposed the last king of the Solomonic dynasty and took control of the state. The military junta led by Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam followed Socialist ideology. After the ousting of the army by rebel forces in 1991, the current ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) - rebranded as Prosperity Party after its dissolution, came to power and a constitution was finally drafted and adopted in 1995. The Eritrean–Ethiopian War took place from May 1998 to June 2000. In June 2018, the new Ethiopian prime minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed, signed a peace treaty with Eritrea formally ending that war. Both countries removed some of their armed forces from the front.

Before that, however, developments in Ethiopia had been changing thick and fast. In 2015, the then ruling party claimed to have won 100% of the contested parliamentary seats, a claim that sent a shock among human rights groups and those who work on issues of democracy and rule of law. Although the country is said to have been developing at a very good rate in terms of economic development, in November 2015 the country faced a series of violent protests. Human rights groups reported that hundreds of people had been killed by security forces and thousands put in jail. The demonstrations started peacefully in the Oromia region and expanded to the Amhara region with demands for the respect of political, civil, social, and economic rights. In response, the government imposed martial law in October 2016.

The top leadership, beleaguered by more than two years of relentless protests and political unrest, held a closed-door meeting and came out announcing in January 2018 that it acknowledged its failures and the resulting public grievances, would [release political prisoners](#) and would close the infamous torture center Maekelawi (Human Rights Watch - HRW, 3 January 2018). After releasing political prisoners in early February 2018, including prominent opposition

figures and journalists, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn [tendered resignation](#) unexpectedly, saying he would continue in office in a caretaker role until the ruling coalition EPRDF elected a new leader and the country's parliament appointed that person as prime minister (CNN, 15 February 2018). After intensive behind-the-scene deliberations, Dr Abiy Ahmed was elected as chairman of the ruling party and eventually became prime minister. Since he assumed office in April 2018, he has introduced a series of reforms including the release of thousands of political prisoners and proposing the privatization of some of the companies owned by the state. Other very important diplomatic and economic reforms were also introduced.

However, during the period between the resignation of the former prime minister and swearing-in of the new prime minister, the country saw a new state of emergency declared, and its army [kill civilians](#) in a southern town, causing many to flee across the border to Kenya (Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, 12 March 2018). Then, on 10 April 2018, the US House of Representatives passed a non-binding [resolution](#) on Ethiopia, calling on the Ethiopian government led by the new prime minister to demonstrate a commitment to human rights, democracy, and rule of law and indicating future cooperation to be tied to it (HRW, 10 April 2018). In May and early June 2018, the Liyu police unit of the Somali regional state carried out [new rounds of killings](#) and the burning of houses in a neighboring regional state (Amnesty International - AI, 11 June 2018). In late June 2018, a deadly bomb blast considered an [assassination attempt](#) on the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed hit a huge rally in Addis Ababa's Meskel square which had been called in support of the prime minister (CNN, 24 June 2018).

June 2018 was also a month during which significant positive events were registered under the leadership of the new prime minister. The state of emergency imposed in February was lifted two months earlier than its official date of expiry; the country's state-controlled telecoms and state-owned airline businesses were made open to private and international investors for the first time; parliament lifted proscription on three opposition groups and their members exiled abroad; the government also publicly admitted security forces relied on [torture](#) and it committed to legal reforms of repressive laws (HRW, World Report 2019). The government announced it was fully accepting the Algiers agreement and the decision of the boundary commission to end hostilities with Eritrea and in July 2018 the [historic peace deal](#) with Eritrea was signed (HRW, 18 July 2018). In October 2018, there was a cabinet reshuffle and the appointment of the [first female head of state](#) in the country's history (Al-Jazeera, 25 October 2018). In the same month, history was made as women held 50% of cabinet positions.

In 2019, however, the country saw a rise in communal violence which resulted in the displacement of [millions](#) of people (HRW, World Report 2019). In addition, there was allegedly an attempted coup at the regional level which led to the killing of the president of the Amhara regional state and top leadership. The army's chief of staff was also killed. Some activists accused the government of imprisoning hundreds of people using the coup attempt as a pretext. But the government claimed that the arrested individuals were engaged in criminal activities that warranted their arrest. In 2020, the country saw more protests and violence - and also further human rights violations by security forces were [reported](#) (AI, 29 May 2020). In some places, Christians were targeted and attacked as well.

In November 2020, the federal government ordered its troops to conduct an operation in the northern part of the country after the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) attacked the Ethiopian National Defense Forces without any provocation or warning. The conflict in the Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa in recent years. Massive human rights violations including rape, extra judicial killings and displacements were reported. Churches were attacked, priests were killed. However, it is important that this is seen in the correct context:

- First, this is a conflict between the federal government and the regional government after the Tigray regional state attacked the federal army.
- Secondly, there is an element of ethnic conflict: In Western Tigray in particular, it is very contested who owns a given piece of land.
- Thirdly, it is true that church and church leaders have been targeted, but that happened within the wider context, not because of their Christian faith. It is important to underline that thousands of civilians were killed. These factors mean that the situation is not one where Christians have been specifically targeted for their faith.

## Political and legal landscape

The [1995 Constitution](#) established a federal form of government based on ethnicity. The ideology was supported by the TPLF and other ethnic-based political parties. The TPLF was the main body ruling with the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). During the armed struggle in the 1970s and 80s, they articulated a very specific role for ethnicity in Ethiopia, which they established after coming to power. Hence, ethnicity served as the primary identity marker, not religion. However, for certain ethnic groups, religion still plays an important role in their identity. For example, the Amhara and Tigray historically have close ties with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the ethnic Somalis are Muslims. Nonetheless, it is important to note that political mobilization still takes place primarily along ethnic lines. While religious-based conflicts still do erupt, insecurity in Ethiopia mainly involves ethnic-based armed groups. These groups are motivated primarily through feeling marginalized by the Tigray-dominated society, rather than on the basis of religion.

Now that the TPLF has lost control of the federal government (after the series of protests starting in 2015 forced the prime minister to resign) many Ethiopians strongly believe that the new prime minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed, is the man who can solve the problems the country has been facing. However, according to [International Crisis Group](#) reporting on 15 April 2020, “the prime minister has struggled to maintain order as a divided and discredited ruling coalition increasingly lost its grip on the systems it had used for decades to maintain control over a diverse and sometimes restive population. Rival regional, ethnic, and political factions clashed over ideology, power, and resources, killing thousands of people, and displacing more than three million.” To revitalize the transition, in late 2019 the prime minister and his allies created a new ruling party called the Prosperity Party. The TPLF refused to join. Tensions continue to escalate between the different ethnic groups.

The International Crisis Group article also explains how the government has come under fire from opposition parties for failing to create conditions for fair elections, which it had promised would be in place before polls took place on the constitutionally prescribed schedule. They com-

plained that the government is resorting to tactics belonging to past authoritarian days, including the arrest and harassment of activists, and denial of permission for meetings and rallies. They also accuse the new Prosperity Party of using government resources for its own advantage.

After five years of political turmoil, the country was scheduled to hold elections in August 2020. However, due to the public health risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the electoral board [suspended](#) preparations for the elections on 31 March 2020 (Reuters, 1 April 2020). Consequently, on 10 April 2020, parliament approved a five-month state of emergency, giving the authorities sweeping powers to battle the disease. The 2021 Ethiopian general election to elect officials to the House of Peoples' Representatives was finally held on 21 June. The ruling part won the election with what can be called a landslide victory.

The ongoing hostilities and insecurity continue to adversely affect internally displaced persons (IDPs) and hinder humanitarian efforts, according to the [UN](#) (UN News, 4 August 2021). The conflict has had a devastating impact on Tigray and Amhara regions in terms of food security.

By law, men and women have equal rights to enter marriage and must freely consent to the union (Family Code, Articles 6 and 12). Child marriage rates are on the decline, but nevertheless remain high in Ethiopia, with 40% of girls and 5% of boys marrying before the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides, 2021](#)). The legal age for marriage (18) is rarely enforced and early marriages are particularly common in the case of religious or customary marriages. Child marriage is commonly cited as the main reason women file for divorce. Regarding custody, children under five years commonly live under the custody of the mother, and those over five are placed with their father ([OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019](#)). Domestic violence is criminalized (under Article 564 of the Criminal Code) but is rarely reported to the police due to a lack of trust in the authorities, and the widespread societal belief that it is a private matter ([Semahegn and Mengistie, August 2015](#)).

## Religious landscape

| Ethiopia: Religious context | Number of adherents | %    |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------|
| Christians                  | 69,234,000          | 60.0 |
| Muslim                      | 39,766,000          | 34.5 |
| Hindu                       | 7,800               | 0.0  |
| Buddhist                    | 1,800               | 0.0  |
| Ethno-religionist           | 6,256,000           | 5.4  |
| Jewish                      | 16,600              | 0.0  |
| Bahai                       | 26,400              | 0.0  |

|   |        |     |
|---|--------|-----|
| Atheist   | 12,600 | 0.0 |
| Agnostic  | 82,700 | 0.1 |
| Other   | 0      | 0.0 |
| <i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i> |        |     |

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

Historically, Ethiopia has always had deep Christian roots. The main Christian groups in Ethiopia are the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the various Protestant denominations. The latter entered the country from the 19th century onwards. According to Islamic tradition, Islam has a long history in Ethiopia dating back to the *hijrah* (flight of Muslims to Axum in northern Ethiopia in 615 AD). However, the Roman Catholic Church (introduced in the 16th century) shaped the identity of Ethiopia to a large extent. In fact, Ethiopia presents itself as a bulwark of Christianity surrounded by Islamic neighbors. Within the context of the “global war against terror”, this narrative is often employed by Ethiopians.

This does not change the fact that Ethiopia has a very substantial Muslim minority. Sufism has a long tradition, and the more conservative Salafist streams have been present since the 1930s, expanding from the 1960s onwards. These conservative streams were originally concentrated along Ethiopia’s eastern fringes, but have been growing in influence among the Ethiopian population in all areas and causing deep concern for the present government. The Muslim community, especially the leadership, has become very assertive. There have been claims that the marginalization policy that left the Muslim community devoid of any political or economic impact in the country under previous regimes is continuing under the current administration. The government, however, refutes such allegations. The current prime minister has released all Muslim leaders who were arrested when the previous prime minister was in office. He also mediated between the two factions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and as a result, the former Patriarch who was in exile has now returned to Ethiopia.

Past and present governments have attempted to mobilize support by controlling religious groups and influencing religious life in the country. For example, after coming to power in 1991, the EPRDF party replaced the patriarch of the Orthodox Church - a position that is typically held for life. This implies that the role of the government in religion is stronger than the influence of religious groups on the government. Moreover, the interference of the Ethiopian government often generates resentment among the population since religious institutions are perceived as being co-opted. In addition, a formal political organization on a religious basis is technically outlawed in Ethiopia. Within this context, Protestant churches are considered to be largely (apolitical) agents of Western ideology and interests. Various informal, politically organized religious groups do exist, especially within Ethiopia’s diaspora, but the dominant narrative within Ethiopia’s political system remains tied to ethnicity. Against this backdrop Muslim groups have become more active, which has led to the development of specific religious-based publications, such as *YeMuslimoch Guday* (Muslim Affairs) and *Sewtul Islam*.

The apolitical character of the Protestant movement, including converts from Islam and some members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), has brought these Christians into increasing conflict with the Ethiopian government and the two main religious bodies in the country. Experts believe that the current political dynamics might improve relations between Orthodox and Protestant Christians. There are still others who believe that the main problem that emanates from the EOC is from ultra-conservative groups not from the leadership. It is unlikely that the change in the leadership of the Ethiopian government will alter the view of these ultra-conservative groups. Indeed, ultra-conservative groups in the ranks of the EOC are becoming very vocal in many ways. In fact, it has been observed that the ultra-conservative movement in the EOC has always been pushing for a tougher stance against any reformist in the EOC and the general Protestant movement in the country.

## Economic landscape

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

- Ethiopia's economy "grew at 6.1 percent in FY20, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic took place largely in the final quarter of the fiscal year. Crop production improved, while growth in services and manufacturing eased to single digits. While external demand remains depressed due to COVID-19, it is showing some signs of recovery".
- "Growth is expected to decelerate further in FY21, to about 2 percent, impacted by reduced income reported by firms and households and a slowdown in crop production. Continued import compression and favorable terms of trade are expected to contain the current account deficit in FY21. The fiscal deficit is expected to reach about 3 percent of GDP in FY21, slightly above FY20 outturn. Inflation would remain elevated in FY21, while trending down in the medium term as a tighter macroeconomic stance is implemented once the pandemic abates. As key macroeconomic and structural reforms are fully implemented by 2022, foreign direct investment, exports, and economic growth are expected to strengthen in the medium term."
- "Remittances, which dropped by 10 percent in FY20, rebounded during the first half of FY21 (19.1 percent). Meanwhile, net foreign direct investment remains depressed, dropping by 1.7 percent during the same period."
- "The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods are expected to be severe. Household incomes, as shown by the high-frequency phone surveys, are impacted through a reduction in aggregate demand that affects low-income households disproportionately. Results from the phone survey of firms show that Covid-19 and related containment measures have substantially impacted firms' operations".

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

- Ethiopia has an overall score of 51.7 points and a world rank of 151. It is ranked 35th among 47 Sub-Saharan countries.

According to a USAID ([Factsheet: Ethiopia - Tigray Crisis](#), 3 June 2021):

- "Humanitarian partners have finalized the Northern Ethiopia Response Plan requesting \$853 million in funding to meet the multi-sector needs of 5.2 million people affected by the

Tigray crisis, according to the UN. Most urgently, the Food Security Cluster – the coordinating body for humanitarian food assistance activities, comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders – intend to reach all 5.2 million people in need with six rounds of food distributions through December. The new funding request follows the April 28 Inter-Agency Standing Committee activation of a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up for northern Ethiopia and the UN's May 6 announcement of a \$40 million allocation to the Tigray response."

Within this context women are typically financially dependent on men due to gender gaps in relation to access to education and employment ([USAID, 2 December 2020](#)). Making it additionally challenging for women to attain financial independence, customary and religious practices deny women their due inheritance, despite equal rights being enshrined in law ([OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019](#)).

## Social and cultural landscape

According to the UNDP's Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020) and the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Oromo 34.9%, Amhara (Amara) 27.9%, Tigray (Tigrinya) 7.3%, Sidama 4.1%, Welaita 3%, Gurage 2.8 %, Somali (Somalie) 2.7%, Hadiya 2.2%, Afar (Affar) 6%, other 12.6% (2016 est.)
- **Main languages:** Oromo (official working language in the state of Oromiya) 33.8%, Amharic (official language) 29.3%, Somali (official working language of the state of Sumale) 6.2%, Tigrigna (Tigrinya) (official working language of the state of Tigray) 5.9%, Sidamo 4%, Wolaytta 2.2.%, Gurage 2%, Afar (official working language of the state of Afar) 1.7%, Hadiyya 1.7%, Gamo 1.5%, Gedeo 1.3%, Opuuo 1.2%, Kafa 1.1%. other 8.1%, English (major foreign language taught in schools), Arabic (2007 est.)
- **Urban population:** 22.2% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.4% annual rate of change (2020-2025)
- **Median age:** 19.8 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 8.8 years (Female 8.3, Male 9.3) This gender gap widens at the tertiary level.
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** 51.8% (2017)
- **Employment to population ratio (15 years and older):** 77.9%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labor force):** 2.1%
- **Labor force participation rate:** Female 73.4%, male 85.8%

According to [UNHCR Fact Sheet May 2021](#) (Reliefweb, 14 June 2021):

- **Refugees:** "Ethiopia is the third largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, sheltering 806,541 registered refugees and asylum-seekers as of 31 May 2021. The overwhelming majority originate from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan."

According to IOM ([UN Migration Press Release](#), 23 April 2021):

- **IDPs:** "Over 1 million people are displaced across 178 accessible locations in Ethiopia's Tigray region and neighboring Afar and Amhara". However: "Many areas in Northwestern,

Central, Eastern and Southern zones in Tigray region remain out of reach to humanitarian partners due to continuing insecurity."

- "The assessment, conducted from 02 March to 23 March [2021], revealed that there are some 1,000,052 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Tigray region, another 45,343 in Afar region and 18,781 in Amhara region. The data suggests that IDPs are fleeing to towns and cities to seek humanitarian assistance and gain access to essential services.
- "The highest concentration of IDPs is in Shire, where 445,309 IDPs are residing in overcrowded collective shelters, including schools, within the host community and in open spaces. A majority of them are from Western and Northwestern Tigray. Other urban areas with high displacement concentrations included Adwa (129,524 IDPs), Mekelle (126,267), Adigrat (100,168) and Axum (60,115)."

According to the UNDP's Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020):

- **Human Development index:** Ethiopia ranked 173 out of 189 countries in the world with a value of 0.485
- **Average life expectancy at birth:** 66.6 years
- **Gender development index (GDI):** 0.837
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.517. This score is a composite measure reflecting inequality in relation to reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market. Providing an indication of how it performs, Ethiopia ranks 125th out of 177 countries.

In general, Ethiopia is a country with more than 80 different ethnic groups each with its own language, culture, custom and tradition. Despite its lauded economic growth, Ethiopia still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. According to [UNESCO](#) (accessed 11 June 2021), population aged 14 years and younger represents 40% of the total population. The average fertility rate is 4.2.

In Ethiopia's patriarchal context, a woman's worth is commonly measured in terms of her role as a wife and mother ([Wright A: Global Majority E-Journal, Vol.11, No.1, June 2020, pp.47–60](#)). Despite legal protections aimed at providing gender inequality, social and cultural norms that place women as subordinate remain prevalent. According to [UN Women \(2021\)](#), 20% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in the last 12 months. Many choose to remain in abusive marriages due to the stigma and shame attached to divorce, as well as the fear of losing property or child custody ([OECD, social Institutions and Gender Index 2019](#)). Improving access to justice for victims was highlighted as a key recommendation by a [2019 CEDAW committee report](#) (pp.3-4).

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 17.9% of the total population – survey date: June 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 6.3% of the total population – survey date: June 2021

According to World Bank:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 37.2 (per 100 people)



According to a [2017 World Bank report](#), men are twice as likely as women to have access to a mobile phone and the internet. An article in the [British Medical Journal](#) (March 2020) further indicated a gender gap of 25% in mobile phone ownership. In light of this, it is more challenging for female Christians to access Christian resources and digital community. Indicating that this gender gap is closing, [Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2019/20](#) highlighted Ethiopia as one of the top ten countries that reported recent gains in women's cell-phone use (p.35).

Ethiopia has poor technological infrastructure caused by communal violence, civil war repression and other man-made or natural disasters. However, the government has been investing in infrastructure in many forms (buildings, roads, technology institutes etc.) to make the lives of Ethiopia's more than 115 million people easier as well as to match the growing economy. However, its communication technology is still lagging far behind. The country has only one telecommunication provider owned by the government. This company provides cell-phone, Internet and landline services.

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020:

Between June 2019 and May 2020 Ethiopia had a low score of 29 points (despite Internet access being made more affordable) due to the following factors listed:

- Multiple shutdowns were imposed by the government
- The government blocked social media platforms
- Penalties were enforced for online speech deemed problematic by new laws
- An opposition-affiliated journalist faced charges for online posts about COVID-19

The country has embarked on building the largest dam in Africa (Renaissance Dam) on the Blue Nile. The country also launched its first satellite into space on 20 December 2019 with the help of China.

## Security situation

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2021), Ethiopia's security situation deteriorated due to growing unrest and political tension. There were reports of extra-judicial killings, mass arrests and detentions, and counterinsurgency operations carried out in several places, mostly in the Oromia and Amhara regions. A typical situation happened in the aftermath of the [assassination](#) of prominent singer Hachalu Hundessa at the beginning of July 2020, which triggered one of the deadliest periods of unrest (BBC News, 2 July 2020). Over 170 people were killed, some by security forces, others in attacks by civilian assailants who also looted and burned properties. Furthermore, there was deadly communal violence in Gonder (Amhara region) that targeted the Kimant minority, in Benishangul Gumuz and other parts of the country. Additionally, the ongoing conflict in the Tigray, Amhara, Oromia regions prompted the UN and other countries to express their concerns urging de-escalation and dialogue.

In June 2021, the US government's Overseas Security Advisory Council [issued](#) warnings of potential pre- and post-election related violence, demonstrations and intercommunal tension in such places as Somali Regional State, Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), the East Hararge region and the Guji zone of Oromia State, Benishangul Gumuz

and the western part of Oromia State and the border areas with Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea. The country remains unstable and there have been ethnic-based conflicts in many places. These conflicts sometimes also have religious dimensions.

A [UN Press Statement](#) published on 21 January 2021 highlighted the high rate of sexual violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. There have reportedly been many several instances of rape, including individuals being forced to rape their own family members under threat of violence. Abductions and sexual assault has reportedly been utilized as a weapon of war ([Foreign Policy, 27 April 2021](#)).

## Trends analysis

### 1) The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is losing its exclusive position

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in Africa and was one of the first countries to adopt Christianity as its state religion. In the past few decades, various Christian denominations have emerged, causing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to lose its exclusive position as the sole Christian denomination in the country (and hence also its privileges in relations with government and society). The current administration under the leadership of Dr Abiy Ahmed looks set to help defuse some problems that Protestant Christians face, especially at the hands of the EOC.

### 2) Ethiopia continues to face serious communal violence

The pace at which the country has undertaken political reform has attracted global attention. However, that reform has been met by other challenges which have resulted in killings and the destruction of property. Communal violence has caused the displacement of millions. Government security forces have been involved in gross violations of human rights. It will always be difficult to navigate the complex realities of the country - the political actors have very divergent views and there are also neighboring countries that might interfere. These varying political views have already shown the tension they can create in the violence of October/November 2019 and June/July 2020, following the assassination of an Oromo activist and singer (see above: *Security situation*).

### 3) Islamist influence from abroad is increasing

Many Middle Eastern countries are seeking to invest in Ethiopia: Some are financing the construction of big shopping malls and villages; some are sponsoring the renovation of historical buildings in the country; some are serving as an alternative diplomatic and aid support to the country. What is also happening in the country (and the region as a whole) is that Islamic militants are trying to achieve greater influence - at the very least by releasing propaganda videos. As reported by VOA News on 19 August 2019, the Islamic State group (IS) has even vowed to [open a branch in Ethiopia](#). In the context of the fragile nature of Ethiopia and the volatile nature of the region, the Islamist challenge is likely to grow in magnitude in the future. The ongoing conflicts in the country may well give jihadists the environment they need to expand - especially from their bases in Somalia. Ethiopia's serious security situation can only give such jihadists the opportunity they need to get a foothold in the country.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: release political prisoners - <http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/03/ethiopia-free-political-prisoners-close-prison>
- Recent history: tendered resignation - <https://edition-m.cnn.com/2018/02/15/africa/ethiopian-prime-minister-resigns-intl/index.html>
- Recent history: kill civilians - <https://ahrethio.org/2018/03/12/ethiopia-killings-arrests-under-new-state-of-emergency/>
- Recent history: resolution - <http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/10/us-house-resolution-ethiopia-passes>
- Recent history: new rounds of killings - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/ethiopia-abusive-police-unit-must-be-stopped/>
- Recent history: assassination attempt - <https://edition-m.cnn.com/2018/06/24/africa/ethiopia-blast-ahmed/index.html>
- Recent history: torture - <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>
- Recent history: historic peace deal - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/18/eritrea-ethiopia-peace-deal-offers-hope-reform>
- Recent history: first female head of state - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/sahle-work-zewde-named-ethiopia-woman-president-181025084046138.html>
- Recent history: millions - <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>
- Recent history: reported - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/2358/2020/en/>
- Political and legal landscape: 1995 Constitution - <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5a84.html>
- Political and legal landscape: International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/managing-politics-ethiopias-covid-19-crisis>
- Political and legal landscape: suspended - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-election-idUSKBN21I2QU>
- Political and legal landscape: UN - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097082>
- Political and legal landscape: Girls Not Brides, 2021 - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/ethiopia/>
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/ET.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: Semahegn and Mengistie, August 2015 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4553009/>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: 2021 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/ethiopia?version=28>
- Economic landscape: Factsheet: Ethiopia - Tigray Crisis - [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/06.03.2021\\_-\\_USG\\_Tigray\\_Crisis\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_8.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/06.03.2021_-_USG_Tigray_Crisis_Fact_Sheet_8.pdf)
- Economic landscape: USAID, 2 December 2020 - <https://www.usaid.gov/ethiopia/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>
- Economic landscape: OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/ET.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR Fact Sheet May 2021 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/unhcr-ethiopia-fact-sheet-may-2021>
- Social and cultural landscape: UN Migration Press Release - <https://www.iom.int/news/over-1-million-people-displaced-due-conflict-northern-ethiopia-iom-dtm>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNESCO - <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/et>
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## WWL 2022: Church information / Ethiopia

### Christian origins

Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations in Africa to accept Christianity. Christianity entered the country in the [fourth century](#) - during the Axumite period - when the royal family became Christians - and the Christian faith gradually came to dominate the land (Smithsonian Magazine, 10 December 2019). Following the acceptance of Christianity by the ruling elite, the Ethiopian church created a strong relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. As a result, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church received its Patriarch from Alexandria, Egypt, right up until 1959. Orthodox Christianity remained the state religion until 1974. (*Source: Melton J.G. & Baumann M., eds., Religions of the world, 2010, p.1004.*)

The second form of Christianity to enter Ethiopia was the Roman Catholic Church. This was the result of the relationship between Ethiopia and the Portuguese during the 16th century. The Portuguese tried to change the Ethiopian state religion to Catholic. This attempt caused bloodshed as the peasants reacted angrily. As a result, Catholic missionaries were expelled from the country and were not allowed to return until the 19th century. Ethiopia followed a 'closed door policy' for 150 years from 1632 onwards. Today a community of several hundred thousand Roman Catholics exists in Ethiopia and is led by the Archbishop of Addis Ababa.

The third type of Christianity to enter Ethiopia was Protestant. It managed to enter the country "through the efforts of a spectrum of Lutheran missionaries, beginning in 1866 with some from the Swedish Lutheran Mission". In the second decade of the 20th century, Swedish missionaries representing the Independent True Friends of the Bible arrived in the country. These united with the Swedish Lutheran Mission to coordinate work. Missionaries from different parts of the world

continued to arrive: “German missionaries from the Hermannsburg Mission arrived in 1927. Missionaries from Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and the United States arrived through the 1940s and 1950s. Much of the Lutheran work was brought together in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. American Presbyterians arrived in 1920 and began work among the [Oromo] people. When the Italians arrived, the Presbyterian missionaries were expelled, and before leaving they organized their mission as the Bethel Evangelical Church. In the mid-1970s, it merged into the Mekane Jesus Church.” (Source: *Religions of the world*, p.1006.)

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church tried to restrict the influence of the missionaries among the populace. However, attempts to remain the sole Christian Church in the country were also rendered futile by the arrival of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). SIM launched its [expansive work](#) in Ethiopia in 1927 under the direction of Dr Thomas A. Lambie (Dictionary of African Christian biography, accessed 24 August 2020).

The expulsion of Italy and the conclusion of World War II brought more Christian groups into the country. The Baptist General Conference of America entered the country in 1950 with its first organized mission in Ambo - West of Addis Ababa. (Source: *Brackney W.H., Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, p.201.) “Pentecostalism came into the country in the post-war years, and two large indigenous churches have resulted, the Full Gospel Believers Church and Gods All Times Association. Both of these churches have been encouraged by assistance and personnel from Scandinavian Pentecostal bodies.” (Source: *Religions of the world*, p.1006.)

## Church spectrum today

| Ethiopia: Church networks  | Christians        | %            |
|--|-------------------|--------------|
| Orthodox   | 46,740,000        | 67.5         |
| Catholic   | 963,000           | 1.4          |
| Protestant   | 19,291,000        | 27.9         |
| Independent  | 2,700,000         | 3.9          |
| Unaffiliated   | 214,000           | 0.3          |
| Doubly-affiliated Christians   | -675,000          | -1.0         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>69,233,000</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i> |                   |              |
| Evangelical movement   | 22,086,000        | 31.9         |
| Renewalist movement  | 14,479,000        | 20.9         |

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

**Orthodox:** Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to

evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

Religion in Ethiopia is complex due to historical claims, competitiveness and accusations of heresy. According to the US State Department ([IRFR 2019](#)): "[S]ome Protestants and Orthodox Christians accused one another of heresy and of actively working to convert adherents from one faith to the other, increasing tension between the two groups."

In terms of geographical location, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is dominant in Amhara, Tigray and Central Oromia, while Protestant Christians dominate in Western Oromia and SNNP.

## External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: fourth century - <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/church-unearthed-ethiopia-rewrites-history-christianity-africa-180973740/>
- Christian origins: expansive work - <https://dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/lambie-thomas3/>
- Church spectrum today - additional information: IRFR 2019 - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ethiopia/>

# WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Ethiopia

## Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

## Position on the World Watch List

| Ethiopia: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|----------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2022                   | 66     | 38       |
| WWL 2021                   | 65     | 36       |
| WWL 2020                   | 63     | 39       |
| WWL 2019                   | 65     | 28       |
| WWL 2018                   | 62     | 29       |

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

The 1-point increase in score in WWL 2022 was due mainly to an increase in the pressure in general, particularly in the *Community and Church spheres of life*. The violence score decreased, but this was offset by the rise in pressure. The political violence that has become rampant in the country has now become a full-blown civil war that has put the country as a whole at risk. This situation has also made persecution tracking extremely difficult as it is almost impossible to know which aspect of a given situation (for example, a killing) is ethnic-based or faith-based. The current war has a mostly ethnic dimension.

## Persecution engines

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

*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 poses a real threat to Christians, especially in areas dominated by Muslim communities. One country researcher reports that radical Islam "continues to be a problem in Ethiopia. As Islamic countries have been competing to get the upper hand in Africa, they continue to pour in considerable funds that is used in spreading Islam through the establishment of schools of religious learning as well as direct aid to the needy attaching conversion to Islam as a condition." With the rise of radicalism in the region and beyond, radical (or political) Islam is growing at the local, regional and national levels. In the process, various types of Christianity have become increasingly vulnerable to pressure in almost all spheres of life. Particularly in rural areas where they are in the majority, Muslims harass Christians and often deny them access to communal resources.

Furthermore, Christians are victims of violence. Converts from Islam to Christianity will be ostracized and often denied family rights such as inheritance rights and child custody. It is also important to note that the growth in radical Islam in neighboring Somalia and Sudan is spilling over into Ethiopia. A country expert stated: "The [Persecution] engine's presence varies from one geographical area to another mainly depending on the number of Muslims in a particular region. The north-eastern part of the country [made up] of mainly Afar region, the eastern regions including Somali, Dire Dawa and Harar and certain parts of the Oromia region are mostly dominated by Muslims. Because of conflicts that resulted because of actions of [radical] Islamic groups in certain parts of the country, Christians were targeted, sustained bodily injury and were forced to flee from their homes, among other injustices suffered. In the past few years, there is a growing trend in the spread of [radical] Islamic views in the country."

### **Christian denominational protectionism (Strong)**

One country researcher reports: "The EOC considers itself as the only 'true' Christian denomination. It is particularly opposed to Evangelical Christians, This Persecution engine is mainly driven by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) viewing them as followers of a Western religion that poses a threat to Ethiopian nationalism and culture that has long been preserved by the EOC. It is common to hear sermons and songs that strongly criticize Evangelical Christians. Priests and other teachers in the EOC openly condemn socializing with Evangelicals sometimes going as far as to ban their members from speaking to 'the heathens'. There is also growing antagonism on the part of some Evangelical churches against the EOC going into a series of hateful to-and-fro between the two sides."

The EOC has been seriously violating the rights of Christians who leave their ranks to join (mostly) Protestant churches, or who join the renewal movements within the EOC. Violations manifest themselves in various ways. For example, EOC members will sometimes attack them physically. The EOC members also use their connections in government to curtail the development of non-Orthodox churches. They also lobby the government to bring in laws that restrict the expansion of Protestant Christianity. For example, the law that governs the registration of churches exempts the Orthodox Church from this requirement. EOC also uses its powerful media to demonize Protestants and those who are supporters of the renewal movement. A country expert adds: "Again this comes from followers of the majority Christian denomination in the country, the Orthodox Christian Church. However, it is worth noting that not all followers of the Orthodox church are of this opinion. The victims of these violations are mainly followers of Christian denominations who are relatively new to the country and are mainly Protestant. These violations are prevalent mostly in the northern and central parts of the country where the Orthodox church has the majority of the population as its followers. It is also relevant to mention here that violations against those who belong to the so-called new forms of Christianity get extremer as one goes out of the city towards the rural areas of the country."

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

In former years, the Ethiopian government had become more authoritarian and restricted rights for civil society and religious institutions. The previous Ethiopian government had shown itself to be suspicious about religion in general and Christians in particular.

- First, religious groups seem able to organize and assemble people very efficiently and effectively. This causes concern about their perceived ability to organize activities that hypothetically could bring about a regime change.
- Secondly, the previous government was suspicious that Protestants (especially non-traditional church groups) could be foreign agents seeking to bring about a regime change, although there is no evidence to support this notion.

However, even though there are undeniable changes at the federal level, in terms of personnel and attitude as well as change in laws and regulations, the bureaucratic system that was built over a century remains formidable to Protestants. This is particularly true at the regional level where persecution in the hands of officials remains higher.



## Clan oppression (Medium)

For the past quarter of a century, ethnic politics has dominated all areas of public life in the country. This political discourse has led to the search for "roots and identity" which has caused some individuals and groups to become hostile to Christianity. Until 1974, the EOC represented the state religion. The country was under Communist rule from 1974 to 1991, when it was overthrown (after 17 years of civil war) by a coalition of various rebel groups formed from different ethnic groups. The ethnic groups were promised respect and acknowledgment of their culture and identity during the 1991 Ethiopian Transitional Charter - a charter that was set up after the fall of the Communist regime in 1991. This was initially seen as being a politically sound move, but the government stirred up resentment towards Christianity among some ethnic groups. In regions like Afar and Somali, Islam is interconnected with ethnicity. Other tribes also demand that Christians participate in tribal clashes and they retaliate if Christians fail to do so.

A country researcher adds: "Although the majority of the population practices either of the two major religions (Christianity and Islam), in some parts of the country, traditional religions are still practiced. Individuals living in those communities are expected to comply with all the religious and cultural rites of the community, failure of which would likely result in banishment. But even among Christians and Muslims occult practices are quite widespread; practices such as dedicating a new-born child to the local magician are commonplace."

## Drivers of persecution

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

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Muslim religious leaders have engaged in inciting violence against Christians through their sermons and tacit approval of Christian discrimination.
- **Extended family (Strong):** The families of converts do not accept the idea of a family member leaving Islam and joining Christianity. They, therefore, shun converts and harass and disown them.
- **Ordinary citizens (Strong):** In some parts of the country where Muslims are dominant, ordinary citizens oppose Christianity and evangelization. They especially oppose conversion.

### Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

- **Leaders of other churches (Strong):** The main drivers are priests and ultra-conservative groups within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (who also influence family and ordinary citizens). Regarding the role of EOC leaders and members, one researcher states: "There is a clear religious demographic change in the country mainly due to the rapid expansion of new forms of Christianity, especially the Protestant Church. Such rapid expansion is not welcomed by the leaders and followers of the Orthodox Church. Resentment against the new forms of Christianity manifests itself at various levels by acts of both EOC leaders and followers. Things are getting better in the capital city and in other major cities and areas like the southern and southwestern part of the country where the new forms of Christianity are getting strong."
- **Ordinary citizens (Strong):** Ordinary citizens have also been perpetrating violations against other church groups, especially the Protestant church. A country expert summarized: "Despite a claim of peaceful co-existence among different religions in the country, the facts on the ground show a different story. For a number of reasons including but not limited to teachings by religious leaders and lack of exposure to religious diversity, it is very common for private citizens to engage in acts of violence against Christians. Attacks by teenagers on Protestant churches, refusing to lease buildings for use as a church, abusing Christians who tried to preach the gospel in public places (both verbal and physical abuse) and many other violations are perpetrated by individuals and mobs."
- **Family (Strong):** In the context of conversion or changing denomination from Orthodox to Protestant, families are known to put family members under house-arrest, shun them, disown them and exclude them from inheritance.

### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** The degree of complicity in violations of religious freedom varies from region to region; mid-level and lower-level officials have especially been actively opposing the so-called new forms of Christianity. Officials at the local level have more control over the day-to-day activities and thereby perpetrate most violations including (but not limited to) the refusal to grant permits for meetings and worship.

## Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** The drivers here are community leaders. This engine is active in some remote regions, and in some areas it is blended with *Islamic oppression*. Thus, these two Persecution engines share drivers. For example, in Afar and Somali regions, religion (i.e. being Muslim) is a part of belonging to the community. A country expert stated: "This is the case mostly in relatively remote parts of the country where ethnic group leaders will have a huge influence. In some areas wherein the majority of the population is Muslim, there are cases where the leaders of ethnic groups actively advocate hostility towards Christians in the area. This resulted in the death, injury, and displacement of Christians in such areas. The tension among different ethnic groups in various parts of the country is having - and will continue to have - an adverse impact on the lives of Christians who could be subjected to attacks just because of their ethnic and religious background."
- **Extended family (Medium):** The families of converts do not accept the idea of a family member leaving the family religion and joining Christianity. Converts are likely to be harassed and disowned.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The geographical distribution of violations against Christians in Ethiopia depends upon which Persecution engines are dominant. For example, the hotspot of violations due to *Christian denominational protectionism* is in the Amhara region, Tigray and some parts of Oromia. Hotspots for *Islamic oppression* are in some parts of eastern and western Oromia, Afar and the Somali region. Gurage, Silte and Alaba are also some of the areas where violations are most severe.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

Three of the four Christian communities in the country face violations of their basic rights but the sources and level of severity of violations vary.

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

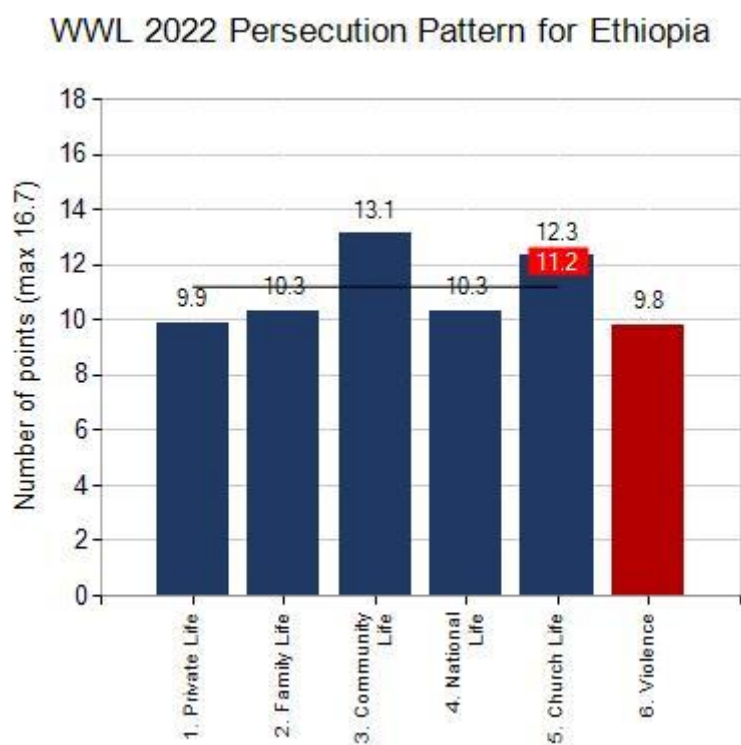
**Historical Christian communities:** The EOC is a typical example of this category and has a massive presence in the country. It is one of the factors contributing to the complexity of the dynamics of religious freedom violations in Ethiopia; as well as being victim of violations itself, the EOC also plays a pivotal role as a perpetrator of violations. Historical Christian communities face violations mostly from the government and Islamic radicalism. Also in areas where tribalism is dominant, there is pressure on the EOC. Orthodox Christians are mostly concentrated in northern and central Ethiopia. Also, those Christians living in Muslim-dominated regional states (Harrari, Somalia, Afar), as well as local communities (e.g. among the Silte), face difficulties in living out their Christian faith.

**Converts:** This category includes i) Christians with a Muslim background, ii) cross-denominational converts – i.e. from one Christian denomination to another, and iii) converts from ethnic traditional beliefs to Christianity. Converts in the country face violations via different

Persecution engines. In Muslim-dominated areas, converts from Islam face pressure and violence mainly from family, extended family, community leaders, and non-Christian religious leaders. In areas dominated by the EOC, the engine behind the violations is mainly driven by EOC followers. Converts also face violations from the government in all parts of the country. In areas with a prevalence of *Clan oppression*, converts may face violations from adherents of ethnic traditional belief systems and Muslims seeking to force their participation in various religious activities.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This category includes Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations which have a large presence in the country. It also attracts serious violations mainly from the government, EOC and Islamic groups. It is growing very fast compared to other types of Christianity. A country researcher states: "Many parts of southern Ethiopia, as well as parts of Oromia, are dominated by Evangelicals/Protestants. As the majority in these communities, they do not face [serious] violations. But Protestants who live in parts dominated by Muslims and Orthodox Christians face various forms of rights violations." This category of Christianity is seen as a threat by many as it keeps growing in number and influence. As a result, they face pressure and violence from many sides.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Ethiopia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Ethiopia is at a high level of 11.2, an increase by over a point from WWL 2021 which was at 10.0 points
- Except for the *Private sphere of life*, there is no sphere of life where the pressure on Christians scores less than 10; which shows that - despite Ethiopia being a Christian majority country - Ethiopian Christians face a high level of violations of freedom of religion.

- The score for violence decreased from 14.4 in WWL 2021 to 9.8 in WWL 2022. This reduction is mainly due to the complexity of the ongoing war in the country. Political violence is tearing the country apart and has ethnic undertones.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).*

## Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

### **Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)**

In the Ethiopian context, one has to understand the dynamics of denomination as well as *Islamic oppression* and to some extent *Clan oppression*. Converts are at the forefront of pressure starting at home. Family members and communities often see conversion as a betrayal of the faith or forefathers. The traditional and family-ordinated nature of the country plays an important role to understand why conversion is highly discouraged. When it comes to followers of the oldest religions in the nation, as a result of thousands of years of practice, religion and culture are very intermingled. In some cases, it is very difficult to distinguish which is which. As a result, whenever an individual renounces his religion and converts to another he/she will face immense pressure starting from his immediate family. Conversion is treated as renouncing your identity and your connection to your ancestors. Family members also want to protect their reputation within the community and do not want to be referred to as a family of a convert.

The above only describes the common reaction from family members. Things become more ugly for converts outside their extended family when they face the backlash from followers of the religion they renounce. There are many factors that determine the seriousness of rights violations against converts: The first factor is whether it is an urban or rural area. In the few (relatively) big cities, converting to another type of Christianity will result in less serious consequences (perhaps only opposition from some family members). But in the rural areas where the social bonds are still strong, conversion is likely to cause outrage and will be followed by outright hostility. The situation also varies from one region to the other. For example, in much of northern Ethiopia (which is the heartland of the EOC) if someone converts from Orthodox Christianity to Protestantism, it often results in that person being forced to live a secluded life cut off from social interaction or being forced to leave the community altogether. Whereas in some areas of southern Ethiopia and parts of Oromia where Protestantism is the norm, converts will not face such violations for their conversion.

### **Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.75 points)**

For people who have left Islam or the EOC or to some extent the traditional belief system, the possession of Christian materials is particularly risky as they often live with their families or within their community. In some instances, if such materials are discovered they are likely to be

attacked and people would refuse to rent them a house. A country expert adds: "There is no legal restriction on Christians from privately owning Christian materials. However, we have incidents wherein Christians were attacked for owning 'versions' of the Bible contrary to the teaching of the majority Christian church and for being found with copies of gospel songs."

**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.). (2.75 points)**

Revealing one's faith in a written form invites problems and in the modern social media context, it is even worse. Although the increase in the number of Internet users has helped in spreading Christian teaching, online abuse against Christians expressing their religious belief is also increasing.

**Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.50 points)**

Geographical areas and the background of the Christian play a key role. Displaying Christian images (such as a cross) could be seen as an act of defiance by some. Things are unproblematic in areas of majority Christian population. However, things can get dangerous in certain remote regions dominated by Muslim communities. In certain parts of the country, it is very difficult to expect the government to provide protection for minority Christians and therefore showing any Christian religious material could be very dangerous. There are reports of cars being burned, windshields smashed, houses' windows being broken and doors damaged, along with other forms of abuse against Christians, for the mere fact of displaying Christian images.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

**Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (3.00 points)**

In Ethiopia, burial places are owned by religious entities and Ethiopian Orthodox Church owns many cemeteries, most of which are in church compounds. Muslims also own a significant number of burial places. Thus, obtaining places for burial in both Muslim and EOC dominated areas is very difficult for non-EOC Christians. There are instances where followers of what are called 'new forms of Christianity' were denied burial in an EOC cemetery because of belonging to a different Christian group.

**Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.00 points)**

Faith plays a key role in social life: It determines relationships, privileges, benefits and responsibilities. In Muslim dominated areas, children are obliged to attend Islamic schools and children from Christian families are likely to face discrimination. In some areas, Christian children are often singled out and harassed, bullied and sometimes attacked.

**Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)**

When an Orthodox background Christian leaves the EOC and joins a Protestant group (locally called *Pentay*), every social, political and economic aspects of their life fundamentally changes. A particular issue is the singing of secular music at a wedding (since most Evangelicals/Protestants in Ethiopia consider secular music a sin, this may cause trouble with members of the family. In areas where Islamic oppression is a persecution engine, any sort of Christians wedding attracts unnecessary attention and can lead to attacks.

**Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.00 points)**

There is often serious pressure to separate spouses, where there has been a conversion to Christianity. A country researcher comments: "Spouses of converts will be excommunicated by their relatives and community for tolerating the conversion. They will be accused of spoiling family heritage by welcoming 'new religion'. Often women will be kicked out of the house or given to another husband by the decision of group of religious/tribe elders." To avoid this, it is not uncommon for the spouses to leave home and change their residence. Others comply and divorce.

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

This is perhaps one of the *spheres of life* where Christians face particularly serious difficulties because of *Christian denominational protectionism* and *Islamic oppression*. In a very communal society like Ethiopia, religious differences play a pivotal role in many aspects. In EOC majority areas, Protestants (and those who have left the EOC) face serious challenges from their own family, community members and EOC leaders. Harassment is one of the very common challenges many Christians face. In remote parts of the country where Muslims are a majority (including but not limited to Somali, Afar and Oromia regions), it is common for minority Christians to be subjected to acts of discrimination and harassment. The political and communal violence that has rocked the country makes things even worse.

**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.). (3.25 points)**

In some areas, Christians are being monitored by community members, who sometimes even send children to monitor churches and homes of some Christians. This is particularly challenging for Protestants. A country expert states: "Mistrust towards [what they see as new forms of Christianity] is still prevalent. Such mistrust has often led local communities to monitor the activities of churches and their followers. This includes sending undercover monitors to spy on churches' activities especially during prayers and gatherings of Christians. While the means of

monitoring are not sophisticated, Christian communities, especially those considered as newcomers, are still being subjected to monitoring from local community members and local leaders." The ongoing conflict in many parts of the country further exacerbates the situation.

**Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.25 points)**

Ethiopia is a country where bridal abduction and forced marriage are common. This is even more problematic where religion is an added dimension. A country expert reports: "Abduction and forced marriage is a major issue at a national level. Forced marriage of children as young as eleven was common and still takes place in rural parts of the country." This particularly affects converts both from an Orthodox Christian background and a Muslim background.

**Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)**

Participation in communal institutions at times has informal requirements and there are a number of challenges faced by Evangelicals and Pentecostals in areas where the majority is Orthodox. They are not allowed to participate in social events and associations; they have trouble finding schools where their children would be safe from discrimination and bullying; there may be obstructions to daily life such as going to the market etc. Especially during the EOC's major Lent season [a time of fasting in the weeks leading up to Easter] in some areas, it may be nearly impossible to find non-fasting items of food. In extreme cases, non-EOC Christians may be forced to leave the area.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

**Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)**

Discrimination while dealing with the authorities is evident, especially at the local level. In EOC dominated areas, there is evidence of denominational discrimination since non-Orthodox Christians are often pushed aside. In regions where Muslims are the majority, this is also common. As noted by experts this issue is the case mostly at local government level especially in regions with a Muslim majority population. There is a tendency in such regions to favor Muslim residents at the expense of Christians. The ethnic tension engulfing the country in recent times is making things difficult for Christians residing in Muslim dominated parts of the country, such as the Somali region. With the country experiencing widespread violence, it is getting even worse.

**Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.00 points)**

Christian civil society organizations face tough challenges if they want to operate in some areas due to the very restrictive laws which have forced many organizations to close. However, a draft law is now in the pipeline which will eliminate most of the restrictions under the current law. In the WWL 2022 reporting period, communal violence and war have brought the problem to another level and it has become virtually impossible to operate in some areas.



**Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.75 points)**

In addition to the national laws restricting the establishment of broadcasting services for religious purposes, within educational institutions a ban on religious activities (including worshipping in groups) was also implemented. Even though there have been recent improvements through government reforms, expressing one's opinion can still be challenging. A country expert adds: "Things are more difficult when it comes to expressing opinion publicly for converts and followers of minority Christian groups both in Christian and Muslim dominated parts of the country. The abuse against Christians for such public expression of opinion comes from private citizens, other religious groups and law enforcement personnel." In the new political environment, many believe that all Christian denominations (and other faiths) will be encouraged to live together with more tolerance.

**Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (2.75 points)**

This issue is very common in Ethiopia. Even when the country is going through major crises, smear campaigns based on religion continue. A country researcher reports: "This is common practice, especially by religious leaders. There have been teachings and videos circulating of some Muslim preachers who engage in hate-speech against Christians. Among Christians too, it is common to hear priests of the EOC running smear campaigns against Pentecostals/Evangelicals using derogatory terms to refer to them and depicting them as people who feign religion in order to get foreign aid. Some Pentecostal preachers also make statements against the Orthodox, painting them as backward."

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

This is very common in the country, especially in areas dominated by *Islamic oppression* and *Christian denominational protectionism*. Others can hide their faith, but pastors cannot do that due to the nature of their work. Pastors and other religious leaders are regularly being subjected to online and physical abuse at the hands of extremist groups. Things are comparatively better for those from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but ultra-conservative Orthodox groups are known to fuel this issue as well. By targeting pastors' families, they hope that leaders of Evangelical churches will give up their evangelistic work in the communities.

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

In the past, the government was the main actor in monitoring the activities of churches. Since the change in leadership at the federal level, state governments are mainly the ones engaged in such practices. The monitoring and hindrance come from other non-state actors, also including radical Islamic groups, other churches and mobs. In some places, churches have been attacked during worship services and property was destroyed.

### **Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.50 points)**

For some denominations of Pentecostals and Evangelicals, outside activities are restricted. Furthermore, in Muslim-dominated areas converts are most likely to hide their faith and avoid doing activities outside a church for fear of attack. One researcher adds: "In areas where Christians (or Pentecostals) are the minority, the respective leaders will be seen as being primarily responsible for the 'corruption' of societal values and often become victims of severe violations even more than the new converts themselves. Community members would resort to various means to make such leaders leave the area before more damage is done; they often have to live in hiding." Now that the country is experiencing political violence, church activities outside are becoming extremely dangerous to carry out.

### **Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.50 points)**

Speaking out against persecutors is not realistic in countries where there is no legal protection. If the instigator is the government or someone that has a strong connection to the government, it is very risky to speak out against that person. Similarly, in Muslim majority areas, speaking against perpetrators can provoke reprisals and many church leaders refrain from doing this.

## **Violence**

*Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:*

#### **1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:**

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

#### **2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:**

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*

- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

**3. For further discussion** (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor’s article dated 13 November 2013 available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

**4. The use of symbolic numbers:** In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10\*, 100\* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10\* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100\* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000\* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000\*, 100,000\* and 1,000,000\*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

**5. The symbol “x” in the table:** This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.

| Ethiopia: Violence Block question |   | WWL<br>2022 | WWL<br>2021 |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| 6.1                               | How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?   | 1           | 10*         |
| 6.2                               | How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 25          | 100*        |
| 6.3                               | How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?   | 1           | 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)?   | 1           | 0           |
| 6.6                               | How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?   | 10 *        | 10*         |
| 6.7                               | How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?   | 10*         | 0           |
| 6.8                               | How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?   | 215         | 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?                       | 62          | 100*        |
| 6.10                              | How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?                                      | 34          | 100*        |

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| 6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons? | 534 | 255 |
| 6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?                              | 0   | 0   |

## 5 Year trends

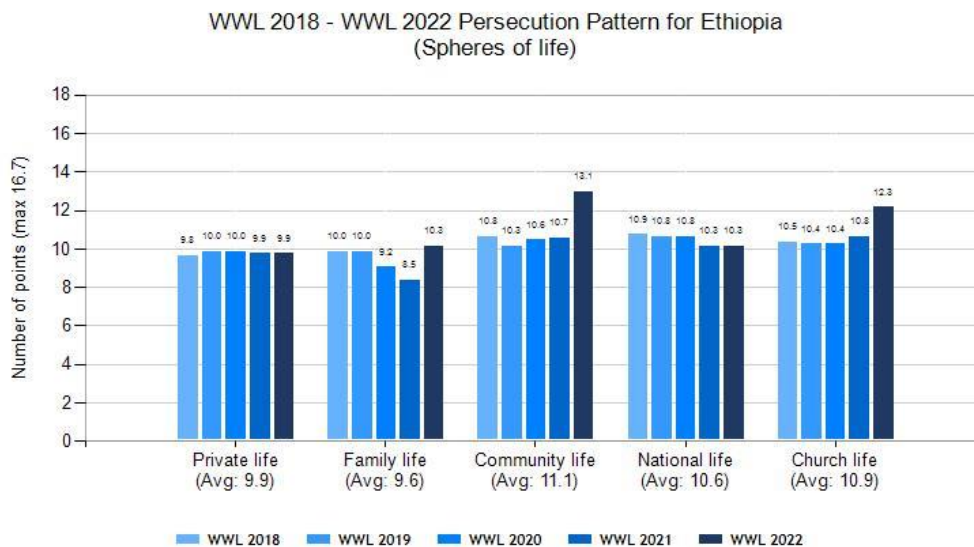
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

| Ethiopia: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
|---|---|
| 2022  | 11.2                                    |
| 2021  | 10.0                                    |
| 2020  | 10.2                                    |
| 2019  | 10.3                                    |
| 2018  | 10.4                                    |

In the table above it can be seen that the average pressure on Christians has consistently been over 10 points or above in each of the last five reporting periods reaching its highest level (11.2 points) in WWL 2022. This increase is due to the insecurity caused by the current levels of political violence.

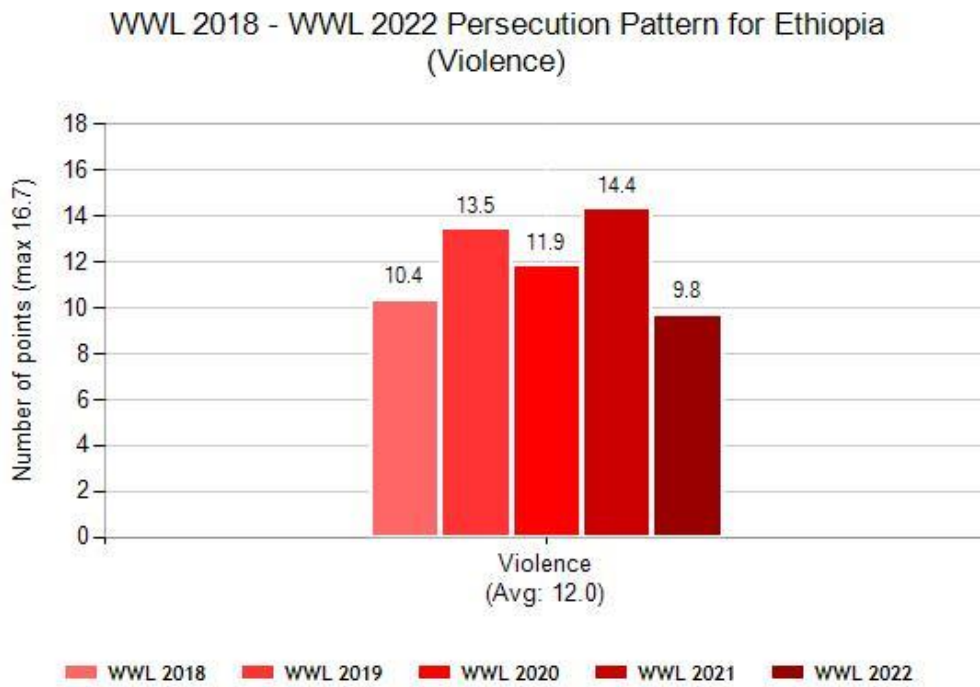
### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows that the average pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been consistently over 9.5 points over the five WWL reporting periods. Sharp increases in pressure in WWL 2022 can be seen in the *Family, Community and Church spheres*.

### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

The chart below shows how violence against Christians consistently scored over 10 points until WWL 2022 when it dropped to 9.8 points. The scores in the period WWL 2019 - 2021 were extremely high.



### Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

| Group               | Female Pressure Points   |
|---------------------|--|
| Economic            | Denied inheritance or possessions; Discrimination/harassment via education                           |
| Political and Legal | Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage; Travel bans/restrictions on movement    |
| Security            | Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – sexual |
| Social and Cultural | Denied access to social community/networks; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal              |
| Technological       | -  |

Despite the long history of Christianity in Ethiopia, many Christian women remain vulnerable to religious persecution. Violations of basic rights against Christian women in Ethiopia often occur in the form of abduction and forced marriage to a non-Christian. This is facilitated by a

general situation in which abduction and forced marriage [remain present](#) at a national level despite having been illegal for years (Plan International, accessed 6 December 2021). [40% of girls](#) are married under the ages of 18 and sources reveal that early and forced marriage particularly occurs in rural parts of the country (Girls not Brides). Experts have explained that the rising violence in the country has increased the prevalence of abduction and forced marriage. Female Christian teens (and converts in particular) can be forced to marry a follower of a different religion after abduction or family arranged marriage. Following her 'marriage', the Christian wife is expected to take on the religion of her new husband.

Rape is also an effective means of punishing a Christian woman or girl due to the severe consequences. A country expert explains: “If a girl is raped, the community isolates her; she will not be able to marry or learn; her family will be embarrassed, and, if a woman is raped, her future will be ruined by the word of the event. The violated girl's marriage would be frowned upon by the community.”

Female converts from Islam face the most severe violations, particularly at the hands of family members. They may be deliberately isolated from other family members and from their church community, put under house arrest in order to protect the family's honor, physically abused and forcibly married to a Muslim.

When a Muslim wife converts to Christianity, divorce is the most likely outcome. Even if her spouse does not seek a divorce, his family will pressure the spouse to divorce and claim custody of the children, to protect the family name and ensure their grandchildren are given an Islamic upbringing. In areas where Christianity is a minority religion, a (de facto) divorce is most likely to take place outside courtrooms; the elders presiding over a tribal court see Christian faith as a dangerous deviation and will likely grant custody to the other spouse in order to prevent the spread of Christianity in the community.

Christians often face difficulties in procuring their inheritance after their decision to convert; it is reported that this affects mainly women. Since [78% of the population](#) live in rural areas, inheritance is viewed as one of the main means to survive (World Bank data). Inheritance rights are in principle handled through official state institutions where religious discrimination is minimal. However, in areas where traditional systems are still dominant, or in the many cases that do not go through the official state process, part of the exclusion for new converts includes disinheritance.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

| Group               | Male Pressure Points   |
|---------------------|--|
| Economic            | Denied inheritance or possessions                                  |
| Political and Legal | Imprisonment by government   |
| Security            | Forced to flee town/country; Violence – death; Violence – physical |

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Social and Cultural | - |
| Technological       | - |

Christian men in Ethiopia are generally more likely to suffer physical attack and displacement than women and girls, although rising violence in the country has challenged this trend by exacerbating attacks and displacement for all. They may also be robbed of their possessions, or even killed. It is deemed more strategic to attack men and boys, as they are usually the providers for their families. A country expert comments: “Persecutors are mostly targeting males to weaken the churches. This year many males have left villages and are displaced in other areas.” Attacking them weakens their whole family. Converts have reportedly been forced to flee their towns and settle elsewhere to avoid attacks and harassment.

The government also plays a role in violating men's religious freedom through imprisonment. Men are particularly at risk of this in Muslim-dominated areas.

In addition, there are numerous instances and allegations of government interference in church elections and appointments. Since the majority of church leaders are men, these violations mainly affect Christian men. The allegations target almost all leaders of major churches in the country, accusing them of being pro-government and of receiving appointments through government influence. New reforms continue to be discussed, however, and there is some hope that in future years this will become less common.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Religious minorities in Ethiopia are affected by the broadcasting legislation, the role of faith in education, and the civil society law. Generally, the civil society law requires an application for registration for any religious group except for Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Muslims and Jews. In addition, the registration law requires a minimum membership of 50 persons for registration as a religious community and a minimum of 15 persons for a ministry or association to be registered and granted permission. This has had serious impact for newer religious minorities: In some areas, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses (where their numbers are less than 50) struggle to have an official place of worship. This is particularly true where majority groups are known to be hostile towards religious minorities. That is why [Pew Forum’s](#) research published in August 2011 categorized Ethiopia among countries with a high social hostilities index score: Ethiopia scored 4.2 and 4.1 for the periods ending mid-2008 and mid-2009, respectively.

## Future outlook

The Ethiopian federal government announced in early November 2020 that it is undertaking a law enforcement operation against the Tigray peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), a party that governs Tigray, one of the federating units. The war, that started as a law enforcement operation, has taken over a year, and if there is no solution in a very short period of time, it can further complicate the lives of Christians and the rest of the population in the country. It can also destabilize the region considering the fact that Ethiopia is an anchor state in the Horn of Africa. It has already been reported that Islamic militants are trying to get a foothold in Ethiopia by using the current state of insecurity.

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

### **Islamic oppression**

The challenge posed by radical elements in the Muslim community is likely to remain a danger for Christians in the future. It is also important to note that there is a great amount of interest in Ethiopia coming from Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Saudi Arabia played an [important role](#) in bringing peace to Ethiopia and Eritrea (DW, 23 September 2018) which ultimately led to the Ethiopian PM winning the Nobel Peace Prize. It has been widely reported that most of the weapons in Ethiopia come from Turkey through illegal trafficking. The current war in the northern part of the country could also embolden potential jihadists who might think that it is a case of 'now or never' for taking action.

### **Christian denominational protectionism**

Ethiopia has seen continuous struggles between the different church denominations and this weakens the possibility of a unified Christian response to the religious freedom violations occurring in the country. In this regard, the EOC has been ruthlessly accusing and oppressing Protestants. According to some EOC hardliners, Protestantism is working to dismantle the EOC. Some ultra-conservative Orthodox Christians are also opposing the new prime minister because he is a Protestant. As it stands, Christian denominational protectionism is becoming a stronger influence as some of the members of the EOC are also politicizing religion in the country.

### **Dictatorial paranoia**

This Persecution engine is weakening fast. The new prime minister has lifted some of the restrictions imposed on civil society and churches. At least at the national level, this engine is less evident as a result. However, at regional levels, things are not going as well as many had hoped. In some regional states, there have been no meaningful reforms. Furthermore, as ethnic conflict is threatening the reform that is ongoing, and the country is in 'save Ethiopia' mode, it is likely that the prime minister will react heavy-handedly if he wins the war. If that happens, it might have a chilling effect on the freedom of religion in general.

### **Clan oppression**

In areas where the majority of the population belongs to one ethnic group (e.g. Somali and Afar) leaving Islam also means leaving the ethnic group, its culture, and values. These groups are politically powerful, so if the government does not devise a mechanism whereby it can enforce



the protection of religious freedom (especially the right to preach, worship and convert), this engine will remain evident as a source for violations in the future.

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: remain present - <https://plan-international.org/case-studies/i-am-free-girl-now-and-studying-hard-become-doctor>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 40% of girls - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/ethiopia>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 78% of the population - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ET><https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.UR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ET>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Pew Forum's - <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/08/RisingRestrictions-web.pdf>
- Future outlook: important role - <https://www.dw.com/en/arab-gulf-states-in-the-horn-of-africa-what-role-do-they-play/a-45602930>

## Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Ethiopia>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Ethiopia>