

# WORLD WATCH LIST 2022

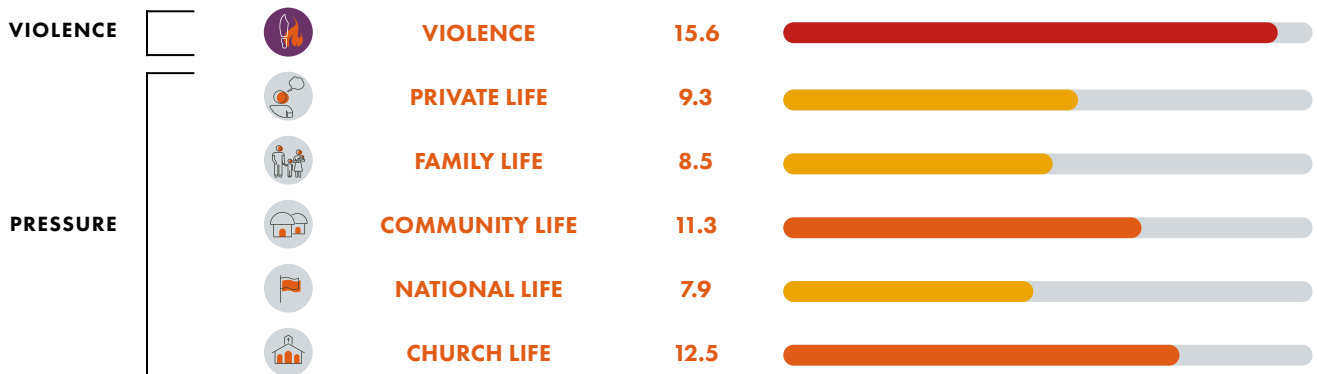
SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS

WORLD WATCH LIST NO.  
**41**

## Mozambique



### LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND PRESSURE



Each of the six categories is scored out of a maximum of 16.7 points. The categories added together total 100 points (6 x 16.7 = 100).<sup>1</sup> Red = extreme level, orange = very high, yellow = high

## Key findings

Persecution of Christians in Mozambique is due to the following: i) Radical Islamic attacks have claimed the lives of many Christians; ii) The presence of drug cartels in some areas is making the lives of Christians, especially church youth workers difficult; iii) The government is restricting freedom of religion.

<sup>1</sup>World Watch Research measures pressure across all spheres of life as well as violence (full methodology [here](#) – password: freedom).

## Quick facts

### LEADER

President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi

### POPULATION

33,230,000

### NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

18,012,000 (54.2%)<sup>2</sup>

### MAIN RELIGION

Christianity

### GOVERNMENT

Presidential Republic

## Context

Main Religions	Number of adherents	Percentage
Christians	18,012,000	54.2
Muslims	5,801,000	17.5
Ethno-religionists	9,217,000	27.7
Agnostics	115,000	0.3

Source<sup>3</sup>

Mozambique became independent from Portugal in 1975. Civil war ended in 1992 with a UN-negotiated peace agreement between the then-sole party, Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), and rebel Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) forces. This was followed by steady [economic](#) and political progress, undermined by the return of tensions and violence between FRELIMO and RENAMO since 2012. [Fighting erupted again](#) in 2019 when FRELIMO remained in power after [disputed election results](#). Meanwhile, violent Islamist militants have been attacking civilians in the north. Christians have been fleeing from their homes to avoid being targeted by jihadists. The Islamist group al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah (ASWJ) has called for the removal of Christian symbols and has attacked houses belonging to Christians in some parts of Cabo Delgado Province. As of July 2021, troops from other countries, particularly from Rwanda, are fighting alongside

the Mozambican army to push back the jihadists. [About half](#) of the population remains below the poverty line and around 45% of the population under the age of 15.

The South Asian immigrant population and the northern provinces are predominantly Muslim, particularly along the coast, while some areas of the northern interior have a stronger concentration of Christian communities. Christians are more numerous in the southern and central regions, but Muslims also live in these areas.

## How the situation varies by region

Rights violations against Christians are most severe in the northern Cabo Delgado Province due to Islamic State (IS) affiliated militants carrying out violent attacks there.

## Who is affected?

### [Communities of expatriate Christians](#)

This category is not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.

### [Historical Christian communities](#)

Historical Christians include the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches. They are frequently targeted by al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah militants.

### [Converts to Christianity](#)

These include converts from Islam or traditional African religions and cross-denominational converts among Christian groups. Persecution is severe if the convert is from a Muslim background living in the Muslim-dominated north; such converts are likely to be targets for attack by radical Muslims.

### [Non-traditional Christian communities](#)

Non-traditional Christian communities include Baptists and Pentecostals. Due to their focus on evangelism, Christians in these churches are regularly threatened and attacked.

<sup>2</sup>Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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# Main sources of persecution and discrimination

## Islamic oppression:

Since 2017 there have been recurrent attacks against Christians by Islamic militants believed to have strong ties to al-Shabaab in Somalia, causing thousands to flee their homes. The capability and areas of influence of these militants continues to increase. Groups are supported financially by working with drug cartels, and through corruption involving some officials in the country.

## Ethno-religious hostility:

In remote areas, adherents to indigenous beliefs see the rise in Christian evangelistic activities as a threat. As a result, clan leaders often complain about such church activities.

## Dictatorial paranoia:

The government of Mozambique is not a true democracy. It is still repressive and puts pressure on some churches to support government policies. The Constitution bans all religious influence in public educational institutions. Some authorities also impose cumbersome registration requirements for religious groups.

## Organized corruption and crime:

Mozambique has high levels of organized crime; drugs, arms and illegal wildlife products such as ivory are widely traded at ports. The Islamist group al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah has been involved in illegal trade to fund the group's activities. Cartels threaten and commit violence against churches which are involved in work among youth and criminal gangs.



## How are men and women differently affected?

### **WOMEN**

The most common violations affecting Christian women and girls are sexual harassment, rape and forced marriage, with Mozambique having one of the highest rates of early marriage globally. This is due to the incursion of Islamic militants. Abduction is common across regions where jihadists and their cells exert influence. Girls are used for forced labor, with women abducted for sex and domestic chores. Converts from a Muslim or African traditional religion background are vulnerable to family pressures, such as forced marriage, divorce, denied inheritance and loss of child custody.

- Abduction
- Denied custody of children
- Denied inheritance or possessions
- Discrimination/harassment via education
- Economic harassment via work/job/business
- Forced marriage
- Violence - physical
- Violence - psychological
- Violence - sexual

### **MEN**

Islamic oppression is the most common form of persecution for Christians in Mozambique. An expert shared that 'attacks that target both government and Christian properties have become common in the province where jihadists are active'. It is reported that Christian men and boys have been killed in these attacks, or have lost their farmland and properties, leaving their families economically crippled. Young boys have also been forcibly recruited into militias. In early 2020, more than 50 young boys were reportedly massacred for refusing to join rebel groups.

- Economic harassment via work/job/business
- Violence - death

## WWL 5 year trend

WWL Year	Position on Open Doors World Watch List	Persecution score out of 100
2022	41	64.98
2021	45	63.28
2020	66	43.46
2019	65	43.24
2018	0	0.00

The increase in two points is due to the pressure that has been mounting on Christians, particularly in the northern part of the country where the jihadists operate. In the reporting period of WWL 2022, jihadists have been able to control many towns and cities even though they were eventually forced back by the Rwandan force and forces from the Southern African States. The IS affiliated Islamist group, ASWJ, wants to establish an Islamic caliphate in Mozambique. It has burned down churches and schools, and tens of thousands of people have fled from the northern part of the country. The WWL 2022 reporting period experienced an expansion of the persecution phenomenon.

## Examples of violence in the reporting period

- **On 14 July 2021** members of an Islamist militia attacked civilians in the village of Mekombe, near Palma (Cabo Delgado), and killed four Christians.
- Christian children were beheaded. For example, an 11-year-old Christian was beheaded by Jihadists in **March 2021**.
- Christians, including church leaders, were forced to flee their villages.
- Christian women were abducted.

WWL Year	Christians killed	Churches or Christian buildings attacked or closed	Christians raped and/or sexually assaulted	Christians physically or mentally abused
2022	100	100	100	1000
2021	100	10	10	1000

This table includes only a few categories of faith-based violence during the reporting period - see [here](#) for full results. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given which in reality could be significantly higher.





### Private life

In northern areas under the influence of Islamic militants, Christians (especially converts from a Muslim background) must hide their faith or risk attack or killing.

### Family life

In the north, where jihadist expansion is occurring, raising children as Christians is dangerous, particularly in areas where government forces have been forced to withdraw. Even within the community and at school, Christians are victims of harassment and discrimination. Furthermore, in some areas where Catholics are dominant, children of evangelicals face similar challenges.

### Community life

Christian women and girls are under threat of abduction by Islamist insurgents in the north. Often abductions happen after villages have been raided. In Cabo Delgado, Christians have faced harassment for not meeting Muslim religious standard requirements as perceived by the Islamist insurgents.

### National life

In the north, many churches and Christian symbols have been vandalized. The government will hinder unwelcome church views on issues such as human rights, despite the church having played a significant role in the democratization process in the post-colonial era. The government is seeking stricter form of control over religion through a new bill currently under discussion.

### Church life

Christian preaching is often monitored by the authorities for signs of government criticism and jihadists monitor all church activity in the north. The government has been deliberately slow in issuing church licenses and is discussing a new law to regulate religious affairs. Similar to the law in Rwanda, the government wants officially trained church leaders and seeks to avoid a proliferation of smaller church groups.



## International obligations & rights violated

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

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

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

- In the north, Christians are killed for their faith (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christian women are raped and abducted (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christian children are killed for their faith (CRC Art. 2)
- Christian women are forcibly married (ICCPR Art. 23 and CEDAW Art. 16)
- Converts to Christianity suffer from discrimination and violence in the north (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 26)



## Situation of other religious minorities

Other religious minorities (such as Hindus, Buddhists and Jews) are very few in the country; most are expatriates. There is no specific form of persecution affecting these groups. A significant number of the population still follow traditional African religions. Most adherents live in remote parts of the country and there are no reports of persecution.



### Open Doors in Mozambique

Open Doors started support to the church in Mozambique in 2020. We focus on providing emergency support to Christians affected by increasing jihadist violence in the north through:

- Cross cultural awareness training
- Persecution preparedness training
- Economic empowerment

#### About this brief

- This brief is a summary of the full Country Dossier produced annually by World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2021 Open Doors International.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The full Country Dossier for this country can be accessed [here](#) (password: freedom). The latest update of WWL methodology, as well as the complete WWL 2022 ranking and reports, can be found [here](#) (password: freedom).

*All photos in this dossier are for illustrative purposes.*

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