

Christian Deaths Double in 2014 World Watch List

Nearly twice as many Christians died for their faith in the past year than in 2012, according to Open Doors International's 2014 World Watch List.

Open Doors International, a charity that supports Christians under pressure for their faith, said 2,123 Christians were reported to have been killed during the 12 months ending Oct. 31. That compares to 1,201 during the previous 12 months. During the most recent period, more Christians were killed in Syria alone than were killed globally in the previous year.

The World Watch List, which annually monitors the media worldwide for all reported incidents, emphasizes that this is the "very, very minimum" count—only those who have been documented as killed.

Estimates of the total number killed range from around 7,000 or 8,000, according to the International Institute for Religious Freedom's Thomas Schirrmacher, to the lofty 100,000 estimate of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.

Beyond those killed, the World Watch List recommends that three more categories of Christians should be considered: Christians whose death is never reported; Christians killed due to increased vulnerability, such as those in conflict areas; and Christians who die due to long-term discrimination.

Taking these into account, as well as those whose deaths are reported by the media, the World Watch List suggests Schirrmacher's estimation is roughly accurate, although the figure may be higher still.

"Christians aren't always directly killed, but are so much squeezed with regulations and vulnerabilities that they just

perish—not at once, but in the course of years. If we would include them in the counting, it would be an enormous number of people. However, the precise number of Christians who die due to these factors is very difficult to quantify,” according to the World Watch List.

Not surprisingly, Syria heads the list of the countries in which the most Christians were killed for their faith (1,213), followed by Nigeria (612), Pakistan (88) and Egypt (83).

Of the top 10, six are in Africa—with Kenya (20), Angola (16), Niger (15) and the Central African Republic (nine) joining Nigeria and Egypt on the list.

The World Watch List states that the number of Christians killed in the Central African Republic is especially likely to have been under-reported because “most analysts still failed to recognize the religious dimension of the conflict.” The list says the same is true of North Korea, where “it is extremely difficult to get public information.”

Beyond the number of Christians killed, the World Watch List focuses upon other instances of violence, including: physical aggression; threats; the destruction of churches or other Christian buildings; attempts to destroy churches or Christian buildings; the closure of churches or Christian buildings; house expulsion or destruction; kidnap for ransom or intimidation; sexual assault; arrests; and displacement.

Considering only the sum of violent incidents recorded, Egypt (167) tops the list, followed by India (125) and Nigeria (118).