

House of Commons Debate Pack 23

CDP-0017 (2024)

On Thursday 25 January 2024, Fiona Bruce MP will lead a general debate in Westminster Hall on “**Religious persecution and the World Watch List 2024**”.

Fiona Bruce MP was appointed as the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2020. The topic for debate was chosen by the Backbench Business Committee.

The World Watch List 2024

The World Watch List is an annual report published by **Open Doors**, an NGO which supports Christians worldwide, and lists the fifty countries in which Christians face the “most extreme persecution”. A parliamentary launch for the latest report, which covers 2023, was held on 17 January 2024

Religious persecution and the World Watch List (WWL) 2024

The report also assesses incidents of violence and acts affecting private, family, community, national and church life, and ranks each country based on the number and nature of reported incidents.

Open Doors estimates the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons worldwide was 5,621 in 2023, 5,898 in 2022, and 4,761 in 2021.

Religious persecution and the World Watch List (WWL) 2024

The WWL report for 2023 said that:

- Around 365 million Christians are subject to “high levels of persecution and discrimination”. This compared to 340 million in 2021.
- 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide, including 1 in 5 in Africa and 1 in 7 in Asia. This compared to 1 in 8 worldwide in 2021.

Religious persecution and the World Watch List (WWL) 2024

- 4,998 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons. 90% of those killed were in Nigeria, where attacks on Christians have become more common since 2020 as part of a wider rise in political violence against civilians. [The country with the next highest number of deaths is Democratic Republic of Congo, with 261].

Religious persecution and the World Watch List (WWL) 2024

- North Korea, Somalia, Libya, Eritrea, and Yemen had the highest rates of reported persecution against Christians. North Korea has been consistently ranked as having one of the highest rates of persecution since the WWL was first conducted in 1983. The number of countries ranked as conducting “extreme” or “very high” persecution has risen from 23 in 2015 to 55 in 2023

Religious persecution and the World Watch List (WWL) 2024

- 14,766 Churches and Christian properties were attacked. That's seven times the number recorded in 2022. Two-thirds of these were in China (around 10,000), where intrusive surveillance and suffocating restrictions are forcing many Christians further underground.