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Russia Named in List of 50 Countries in Which Christians Face Persecution

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Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency

Russia has been ranked among the world's 50 countries in which Christians face the most prosecution for the first time in seven years.

Open Doors, a group that tracks the persecution of Christians around the world, said 245 million Christians face mistreatment this year — 30 million more than last year.

Embed: https://twitter.com/OpenDoors/status/1085632801033080832

Russia placed 41st out of 50 countries with the highest levels of persecutions faced by Christians, according to the group's 2019 World Watch List published Wednesday.

"Though radical Islam is largely to blame for Russia's poor standing in how Christians are treated within its borders, the Russian legislation is unfairly applied to non-Russian Orthodox

Christians as new laws and restrictions are constantly being imposed," it said.

The last time Russia landed on the list was in 2011, according to Open Doors.

Russian Christians face the most pressure in private life – with converts from Islam often facing discrimination from family members – and church life.

While churches of the Russian Orthodox denomination are sponsored by the state, Open Doors said unregistered evangelical churches "may face obstructions in the form of surveillance and interrogation."

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Jehovah's Witnesses faced nationwide raids and arrests after the Russian Supreme Court declared the organization extremist in 2017. A package of anti-terrorist laws introduced in July 2016 have also made the missionary work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known as the Mormons, next to impossible in Russia.

Open Doors said Russia's increasingly strained ties with the West "will particularly affect those Christians who belong to denominations regarded as Western."

Open Doors said Christians face the most prosecution in North Korea, Afghanistan and Somalia, followed by Libya, Pakistan, Sudan and Eritrea.

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