

Press Statement – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Persecution against Christians significantly increased in 2015



Peter van Dalen MEP hosted the launch of Open Doors' 2016 World Watch List in the European Parliament, Strasbourg, on Wednesday. This report quantifies the severity of persecution against Christians in the world. For the 14th year in a row, North Korea is ranked first; Eritrea made a notable jump from 9th to 3rd, and India worsened its score by 6 points since 2014.

"I am glad there is so much interest in this event – persecution is increasing rapidly, and as legislators, we must make it a priority" said Peter van Dalen MEP, Co-Chair of the Intergroup on freedom of religion or belief. He continued: *"The EU is the largest trade block in the*

world. We should use this as a lever to insist that the persecution stops."

Furthermore, concerning ISIS in Iraq and Syria he added: *"The UN Security Council must task the International Criminal Court with the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. It is absurd that in the 21st century Islamist extremists are allowed to establish medieval caliphates. We cannot tolerate this. We must take political, legal and, if necessary, military action."*

Here are some further facts detailed in the 2016 WWL report, presented by Open Doors' Advocacy Officer Esther Kattenberg at the event:

- Excluding North Korea, Syria and Iraq (for whom accurate numbers are difficult to achieve), over 7,100 Christians have been killed this year for reasons relating to their faith. This is up from 3,000 in 2014 – a significant rise.
- 2,400 churches have been attacked.
- Before the war in Syria, there were 400,000 Christians in Aleppo, today there are only 6,000.
- Islamist extremism is identified as a cause of Christian persecution in 38 out of the top 50 countries.

The Intergroup will be referring to this report for our future actions related to the direct persecution of Christian minorities in the world.