

Religious Funding, Wealth and Accountability

Leaders and institutions above $500m and $1bn, and leaders convicted or accused of rape, murder, molestation and corruption, across five faiths

Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Every figure carries an evidence label; accusation is not guilt. 30 pages, 5 figures, tables and a source register.

DELTA DOCTRINES

4 November 2026 | Desk assessment from public sources. Wealth figures are unaudited estimates unless labelled otherwise. Persons named as accused are presumed innocent. Have counsel review before publication.

CONTENTS

Religious funding and accountability across five faiths

This paper covers Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. It answers six questions on wealth held by religious leaders and religious institutions, and on criminal cases against religious leaders. Every number carries an evidence label (page 5). Read the labels before quoting any figure.

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CAUTION

The brief asks for counts. The honest answer is that a count is only as good as its evidence. For individual wealth above $500m, almost no figure is documented. For institutions above $1bn, a handful are. For legal cases, the counts below are of cases we could confirm, not a census. Accusation is not guilt: every legal status is labelled and accused persons are presumed innocent.

AT A GLANCE

Answers to the six questions

#	Question	Answer in this paper	Confidence
1	Leaders above $500m	**5 candidates, 0 verified.** 3 carry a named published estimate above $500m (Balkrishna, Macedo, Copeland); 1 is an unverified family-estate claim (Aga Khan V); 1 is control of a foundation, not ownership (Khamenei).	Low
2	Names, religion, country, route	Table on page 7 and profiles on pages 8-9.	Low
3	Groups above $1bn	**8 listed, 4 on reported figures** (Setad, LDS, TTD, Padmanabhaswamy) and 4 on unverified recall or wide ranges (Waqf Boards, Church Commissioners, Holy See, Astan Quds Razavi).	Medium for 4, low for 4
4	Names, religion, country, assets	Tables on pages 12-16.	Medium-low
5	Leaders convicted	**9 convicted** in a documented sample of 15 (3 Christian, 3 Hindu, 1 Muslim, 2 Jewish, 0 Buddhist). Most convictions are for rape or child sexual abuse; one is for murder (Mackenzie).	Medium-high
6	Pending cases and subject	**5 accused or pending** (Becciu, Quiboloy, Nithyananda, Sharanaru, Dhammachayo); 1 acquitted (Pell). Detail on pages 21-26.	Medium

OUR VIEW

Treat the headline counts as floors for what can be documented, not as totals. Thousands of clergy have been accused of abuse in Catholic and Protestant databases, and most Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim cases never reach a court record in English. A global leader-level count needs a database project, not a desk paper. We recommend one (page 29).

Two judgement calls shape every count. First, we count 'religious leaders' as clergy, heads of orders, founders and gurus, plus a few scholars and executives who hold religious authority. Second, we count a person as 'convicted' if any court has convicted them, even where an appeal is open, and we say so in the status column.

SCOPE AND METHOD

What we counted and how

Religions. Christian (Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, independent), Jewish, Muslim (Sunni, Shia, Ismaili), Hindu (including guru-led orders and temple trusts) and Buddhist.

Wealth thresholds. Individuals: $500m or more in net worth held directly, through trusts or through companies. Institutions: $1bn or more in assets. We report ranges where sources disagree, and we convert rupee figures at about Rs 96 per USD.

Legal thresholds. Leaders who are convicted of, or accused of, rape, murder, molestation or corruption. We include cases still in court, as you asked, and we mark each as Convicted, Accused/pending, Acquitted, Fugitive or Deceased.

Sources. Court reports and wire services (AP, Reuters), national news outlets (The Week, Scroll, Al Jazeera, PBS, Times of Israel, Africanews), and Business Today for Indian temple assets. Searches ran on 4 November 2026. Some pages could not be fetched; those items are labelled Unverified.

Step	What we did
1	Built a long list from public rankings, institution lists and news.
2	Dropped anyone with no traceable source for a wealth or case claim.
3	Checked legal status against at least one court or wire report where we could.
4	Labelled every number S, R, E or U (page 5).
5	Flagged items a reader must re-verify before quoting (page 30).

OUR VIEW

A rigorous version of this study would pull court dockets, tax filings (IRS Form 990 style disclosures, UK Charity Commission accounts, Indian trust registrations) and forensic asset tracing. We did not have that access. What follows is a calibrated desk assessment.

EVIDENCE DISCIPLINE

Labels used throughout

Label	Meaning	How much to trust it
S	Stated by the institution, or a court record	High, within its date
R	Reported by credible media or a wire service	Medium-high
E	Third-party estimate (rankings, analysts)	Medium-low: methods are opaque
U	Unverified; our recall or a weak source	Low: re-verify before use

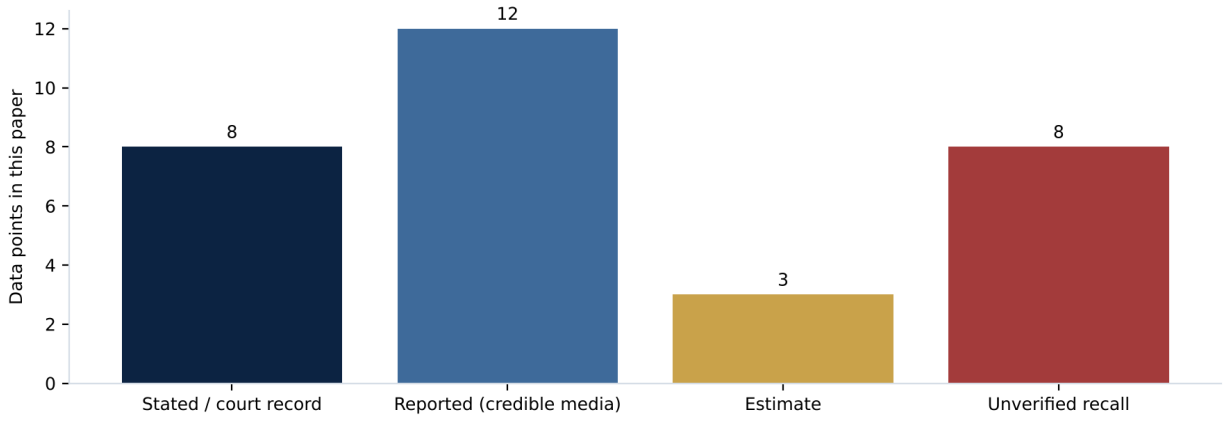


Figure 1. How many data points rest on each evidence level

Only about a quarter of the data points (8 of 31 in the tables) rest on a stated or court-record source. A further 12 are reported by credible media. Treat the rest as leads.

LEGAL LABELS

Convicted means a court has found guilt (appeal may be open). **Accused/pending** means charged or under trial; the person is presumed innocent. **Acquitted** means a court cleared them. **Fugitive** means a warrant is outstanding. A lawyer should review any use of these names outside this paper.

WEALTH CONCEPTS

Owning, controlling and managing are different things

Religious wealth is hard to measure because the law often treats assets as belonging to a deity, a foundation or a community. A leader may control billions and own little. A prosperity preacher may own jets that a ministry says it holds for 'ministry use'. We separate the three.

Wealth type	Example	Counts toward Q1?
Personal net worth	Savings, shares, homes in the leader's name	Yes
Held through trusts or companies	Family trust; a company owned by the leader	Yes, if beneficial ownership is shown
Controlled, not owned	Setad under the Iranian Supreme Leader	No: control is not title
Institutional	A church, temple trust or waqf	No: counts under Q3
Fiduciary	Pope or a temple trustee managing assets	No: held for the institution

Why this matters. Counting Setad as the Supreme Leader's wealth would mislead. Reuters described control and benefit, and did not prove personal ownership. The US Treasury asserted a larger figure in 2019 that we could not test. Equally, excluding every institutional asset would hide real concentration of influence.

Valuation problems. Temple gold is valued at market price, land at book or at market, and shrine treasuries are often not sold. Equity portfolios (the LDS fund) are marked to market and swing by billions in a year. Real-estate and waqf values depend on survey quality.

OUR VIEW

Use three columns in any future dataset: beneficial owner, controller and stated purpose. A single 'net worth' column invites false precision.

PART A | QUESTION 1 AND 2

Leaders with $500m or more: the candidates

Count: 5 candidates, 0 verified. Three have a named published estimate above $500m (Balkrishna, Macedo, Copeland). One is an unverified inherited-estate claim (Aga Khan V). One controls a foundation (Khamenei) and is shown only for completeness. No candidate has audited disclosure of personal assets.

Name	Religion	Country	Estimate	Route	Label
Acharya Balkrishna	Hindu	India	$2-3bn	Company (Patanjali Ayurved, shareholding)	E
Edir Macedo	Christian	Brazil	$1.1bn	Media/bank assets (Record TV, Banco Renner) said to be held through associates	E
Kenneth Copeland	Christian	USA	$0.3-0.8bn	Ministry-linked property, aircraft; personal holdings via trusts	E
Aga Khan V (Rahim)	Muslim	UK / Portugal	$0.8bn	Family trusts, AKDN and private holdings inherited from Aga Khan IV	U
Ali Khamenei (office)	Muslim	Iran	$95-200bn	Control of Setad (Reuters 2013: ~$95bn), US Treasury claim ~$200bn (2019)	R

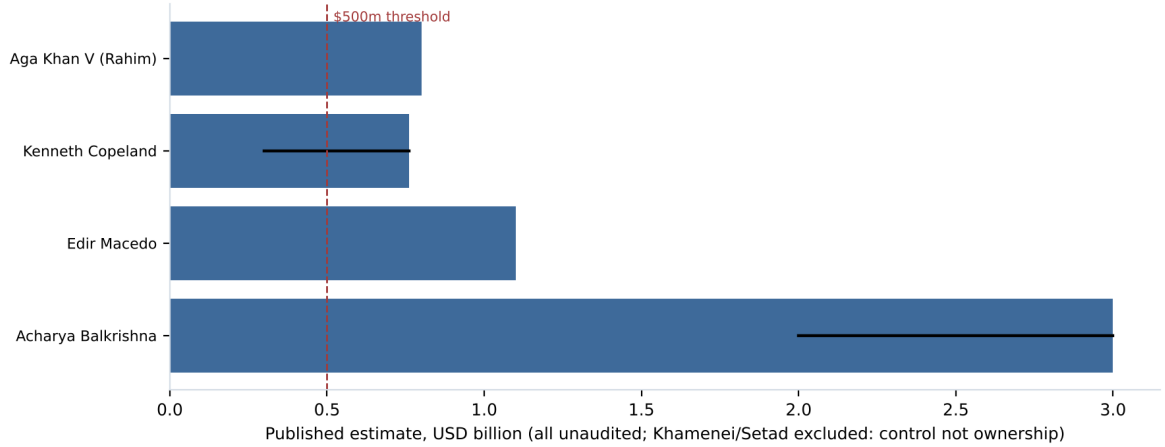


Figure 1. Published wealth estimates for individual candidates

No Jewish or Buddhist leader reached our evidence bar. The Dalai Lama, the Pope, chief rabbis and the heads of Thai and Japanese orders hold no documented personal fortunes.

PART A | PROFILES

Balkrishna, Macedo and Copeland

Acharya Balkrishna | Hindu | India | Label E

Route: Company (Patanjali Ayurved, shareholding). **Note:** Forbes-style listings put him in the low billions; he is a business executive and yoga-ayurveda figure, so 'religious leader' is debatable.

Balkrishna is the managing executive of Patanjali Ayurved, the company associated with Baba Ramdev. His wealth is shareholding in a consumer-goods business, not temple or ashram assets. We list him because he is widely described as a Hindu spiritual and ayurveda leader, but a strict reading of 'religious leader' excludes him. If excluded, the Hindu count of verified individuals above $500m is zero.

Edir Macedo | Christian | Brazil | Label E

Route: Media/bank assets (Record TV, Banco Renner) said to be held through associates. **Note:** Forbes Brazil list 2013 (~$1.1bn); later listings dropped him; church denies he owns the assets. Stale.

Macedo founded the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Forbes Brazil put his wealth near $1.1bn in 2013, tied to Record TV and a bank. The church disputes the characterisation and says the assets are owned by others. He has also faced money-laundering and tax allegations in Brazil. We did not verify the current status of any case.

Kenneth Copeland | Christian | USA | Label E

Route: Ministry-linked property, aircraft; personal holdings via trusts. **Note:** Published estimates vary widely; no audited figure exists. Range shown is the spread, not a finding.

Copeland leads Kenneth Copeland Ministries in Texas. Published estimates of his net worth range from about $300m to $760m. Ministry property and aircraft are held in entity names, and a 2007 US Senate inquiry examined several televangelists' finances. Under US law churches file no public financial returns, so no audited figure exists.

> OUR VIEW
> Of the three, only Macedo has a named estimate above $1bn, and it is now 13 years old. The defensible statement is 'estimates cluster in the hundreds of millions to low billions; none is verifiable'.

PART A | PROFILES

Aga Khan V and the Iranian Supreme Leader

Aga Khan V (Rahim) | Muslim | UK / Portugal | Label U

Route: Family trusts, AKDN and private holdings inherited from Aga Khan IV. **Note:** Press quotes estate claims from ~$800m to ~$13bn; none is documented. Treat as unverified.

Prince Rahim Aga Khan succeeded his father in February 2025 as the 50th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis. Press stories cite an inheritance of between $800m and $13bn. The Aga Khan Development Network is a group of non-profit agencies; its assets are not personal property. We keep him in the table because readers will look for him, and we label the figure Unverified.

Ali Khamenei (office) | Muslim | Iran | Label R

Route: Control of Setad (Reuters 2013: ~$95bn), US Treasury claim ~$200bn (2019). **Note:** CONTROL, not personal ownership. Reuters did not establish personal title. Succession status after 2025-26 not verified here.

Reuters (2013) found that Setad, a Tehran-based organisation, controlled about $95bn in real estate, companies and other assets, much of it seized property. The Supreme Leader controls it. The US Treasury later claimed his network controlled about $200bn. Neither source proved personal ownership. We also could not confirm the current office-holder after 2025-26 events, so the profile should be read as the office, not the person.

CAUTION

Heads of state who are also religious figures (Gulf monarchs, Brunei's Sultan) are outside the brief. Their fortunes are state-linked and political, and we excluded them to keep the definition of 'religious leader' consistent.

OUR VIEW

The largest numbers in this field are control figures, not ownership figures. A study that sums them would overstate leader wealth by an order of magnitude.

PART A | BELOW THRESHOLD

Names often cited, but below the bar or unsupported

Online lists of 'richest pastors' are dominated by low-quality sites that copy each other. Our searches for these returned mostly such pages, so we treat their numbers as leads only. Most named figures sit between $50m and $200m even on generous estimates.

Leader	Religion	Country	Published estimate	Label
David Oyedepo	Christian	Nigeria	$150m-$1bn claims online	U
T.D. Jakes	Christian	USA	~$150m	E
Joel Osteen	Christian	USA	~$100m	E
Benny Hinn	Christian	USA	~$60m	E
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar	Hindu	India	Not documented	U
Sadhguru (Isha)	Hindu	India	Not documented	U
Mata Amritanandamayi	Hindu	India	Trust-held; not personal	U

OUR VIEW

A threshold of $500m is very high for clergy. Even prosperity-gospel leaders mostly fall below it. The institutions behind them hold far more, which is why Part B matters more than Part A.

Why individual wealth stays low in documents. Most traditions pay clergy modest stipends, and orders hold property communally. Large personal fortunes appear where a leader also runs a for-profit business (Balkrishna), a media group (Macedo) or a family estate (Aga Khan).

PART A | SUMMARY

Question 1 by religion

Religion	Verified >$500m	Candidates	Comment
Christian	0	2 (Macedo, Copeland)	Estimates only; Macedo's is from 2013
Jewish	0	0	No documented individual fortunes in the brief's sense
Muslim	0	1 (Aga Khan V); 1 control case (Khamenei)	Inherited estate claim unverified; Setad is control
Hindu	0	1 (Balkrishna)	Business executive; religious status debatable
Buddhist	0	0	Orders hold assets communally

Answer to Question 1. On the evidence we could verify, the number of religious leaders with $500m or more in net assets is not established. Five names recur in public estimates; none passes a verification test. Do not state any one of them as a fact without checking primary filings.

What would raise confidence. (a) Court-recorded asset disclosures (affidavits in divorce, bankruptcy or tax cases); (b) beneficial-ownership registers; (c) audited accounts for any for-profit entity the leader owns; (d) sanctions designations that cite specific holdings.

Reading ranges. A range such as $300m-$760m for Copeland reflects different methods, not uncertainty about a true value that a better source would reveal. Without tax or court disclosure, no method can fix it.

OUR VIEW

If your work needs a defensible number, report 'none verified; up to five contested' and show the table. That is accurate, and it will survive a challenge.

LEGAL NOTE

Naming living persons with wealth or criminal allegations carries defamation risk in several countries. This paper attributes each claim to a source and uses neutral status labels. Have it reviewed before external publication.

PART B | QUESTION 3 AND 4

Groups above $1bn: the long list

Count: 8 institutions at or above $1bn. Four rest on reported figures (Setad, LDS, TTD, Padmanabhaswamy). Four rest on wide ranges or unverified recall (Waqf Boards, Church Commissioners, Holy See, Astan Quds Razavi). Three further institutions are shown as below the threshold.

Group	Faith	Country	Assets, USD bn	Label
Setad (Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order)	Muslim	Iran	95	R
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Christian	USA	55-100	R
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD)	Hindu	India	23.5	R
Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple	Hindu	India	12.5	R
Waqf Boards (India, combined)	Muslim	India	14	U
Church Commissioners for England	Christian	UK	12	U
Holy See / Vatican (consolidated)	Christian	Vatican City	5-20	U
Astan Quds Razavi	Muslim	Iran	5-20	U
Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan	Hindu	India	0.3	R
Guruvayur Devaswom	Hindu	India	0.2-0.3	R
Vaishno Devi Shrine Board	Hindu	India	0.2	R

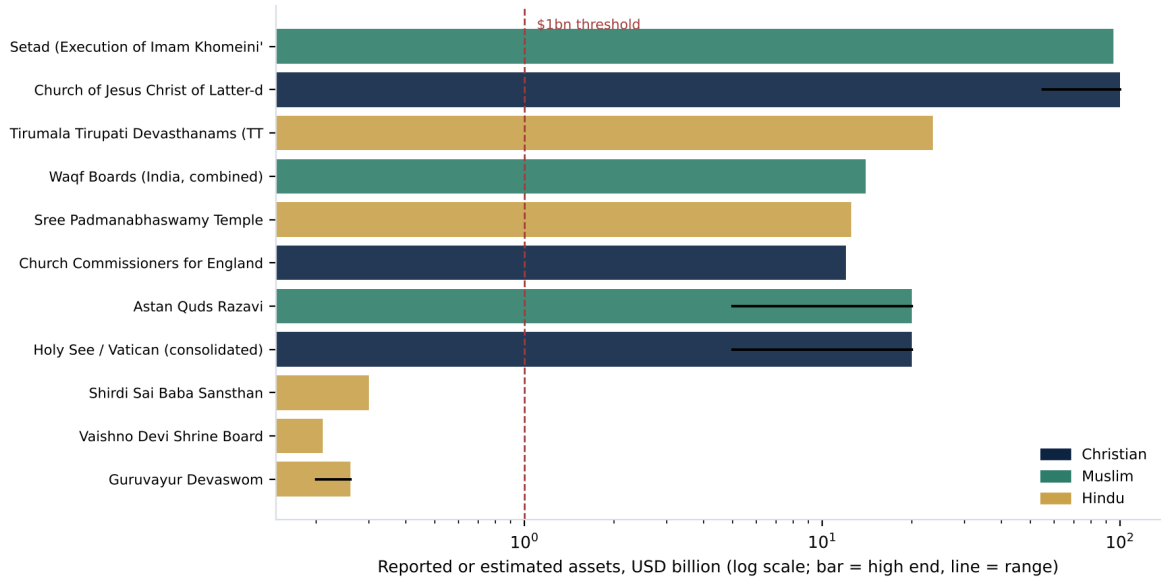


Figure 2. Institutional assets on a log scale against the $1bn threshold

PART B | CHRISTIAN

LDS Church, Church of England and the Holy See

LDS Church (USA). The Church's investment arm, Ensign Peak Advisors, discloses a US equity portfolio of about $55bn in regulatory filings. A 2019 whistleblower alleged the Church held about $100bn in a fund while telling members funds were for charity. Ensign Peak paid a $5m SEC penalty in 2023 over filing structure (analyst recall; verify). The Church says its reserves are prudent and for the long term. Total Church assets, including real estate, businesses and temples, are not published, and some online claims of $265bn are unsupported.

Item	Figure	Source basis
Ensign Peak equity portfolio	~$55bn (2024)	Regulatory 13F filings reported by press
Whistleblower claim	$100bn stockpile (2019)	Complaint to the IRS; disputed by the Church
Church Commissioners (England)	~GBP 10bn+	Analyst recall; verify against annual report
Holy See	No consolidated figure	Partial APSA and IOR reports

Church of England and the Holy See. The Church Commissioners manage an endowment of roughly ten billion pounds and publish annual accounts. The Vatican has no consolidated balance sheet; the Vatican Bank (IOR), APSA and the Vatican City Governorate publish separate numbers. Estimates of the 'Church' as a whole mix institutions (dioceses, orders, hospitals) and are not meaningful.

OUR VIEW

The Catholic Church is better described as thousands of separate legal entities than one balance sheet. A single 'Vatican net worth' figure is a category error.

PART B | HINDU

Temple trusts in India

Temple trust	Figure (Rs)	Approx. USD	Basis
Tirumala Tirupati (TTD)	~2.26 lakh crore	$23.5bn	Latest white paper, via Business Today (Jul 2026)
Padmanabhaswamy	1.2 lakh crore+	$12.5bn	Supreme Court-supervised inventory; one vault unopened
Shirdi Sai Baba	2,500-3,000 crore	$0.26-0.31bn	Below threshold
Guruvayur	1,700-2,500 crore	$0.18-0.26bn	Below threshold
Vaishno Devi	2,000 crore+	$0.21bn	Below threshold
Siddhivinayak; Kashi Vishwanath	500 crore+ each	$0.05bn+	Below threshold

Two Hindu institutions pass $1bn on reported figures. Both are temple trusts managed under state or court oversight, not under the personal control of a guru. Guru-led orders (Isha, Art of Living, ISKCON, BAPS, Amrita) hold substantial land, schools and hospitals, but none publishes a consolidated net worth we could source, so none is listed.

Governance difference. TTD is run by a statutory board. Padmanabhaswamy is managed by a trust headed by the royal family under Supreme Court direction, following a 2020 ruling. Guru-led trusts are private charitable trusts, and their accounts are filed with charity authorities, not published.

OUR VIEW

Indian temple wealth is public wealth in practice: statutory boards, audits and court oversight apply to the biggest trusts. The accountability gap sits with private guru trusts, which are where most of the criminal cases in Part C arise.

PART B | MUSLIM

Setad, Astan Quds Razavi, Waqf Boards and the AKDN

Institution	Figure	Control	Label
Setad	~$95bn (Reuters 2013); US claim up to $200bn	Supreme Leader	R
Astan Quds Razavi	$5-20bn (wide range)	Appointed custodian; Leader's office	U
Waqf Boards (India)	~$14bn combined (recall)	State waqf boards	U
Aga Khan Development Network	No consolidated asset figure	Imam; agencies are non-profit	U

Iran. Setad and Astan Quds Razavi are the two largest religious-linked holdings in the Muslim world by most estimates. Both operate commercially, and both have been sanctioned by the US. Neither publishes audited accounts, so figures are investigative or political estimates.

India. State Waqf Boards hold property dedicated to Muslim religious and charitable use. Lakhs of properties are recorded, many are encroached or disputed, and valuations differ by orders of magnitude depending on method. India's waqf law has also been amended recently, which affects reported holdings (verify current figures).

Others. Gulf endowments (awqaf) and Al-Azhar hold large assets, but we found no sourced consolidated figures. Saudi religious endowments around the holy cities are state assets.

CAUTION

Do not read Setad as a mosque or charity balance sheet. It is an economic holding whose proceeds the Reuters investigation tied to the Leader's office. Statements that it is 'his wealth' go beyond the evidence.

PART B | JEWISH AND BUDDHIST

Where the data runs out

Jewish. No single Jewish institution reaches a sourced $1bn of assets in our evidence. Chabad-Lubavitch and large community federations report large combined budgets, but they are networks of independent legal entities. Israel's religious institutions are state-funded through ministries. Communal wealth is large in aggregate, but not held by a 'group' in the sense of the brief.

Buddhist. Soka Gakkai (Japan), Tzu Chi (Taiwan) and Wat Dhammakaya (Thailand) are the largest candidates. Reported figures run into the hundreds of millions to low billions but we could not source current asset totals. Soka Gakkai's finances are largely private; Tzu Chi publishes accounts but is a charity with a revenue focus; Dhammakaya's assets were examined in a Thai money-laundering case.

Candidate	Faith	Country	Status in this paper
Chabad-Lubavitch network	Jewish	Global	No consolidated figure
Soka Gakkai	Buddhist	Japan	Unverified; multi-billion claims
Tzu Chi Foundation	Buddhist	Taiwan	Below threshold on our evidence
Wat Dhammakaya	Buddhist	Thailand	Unverified; legal case

OUR VIEW

A fair answer is: zero Jewish and zero Buddhist institutions verified above $1bn. This reflects data scarcity, not necessarily absence of wealth. A systematic review of Japanese religious-corporation filings and Thai Sangha accounts would settle it.

PART B | ANALYSIS

Where the verified money sits

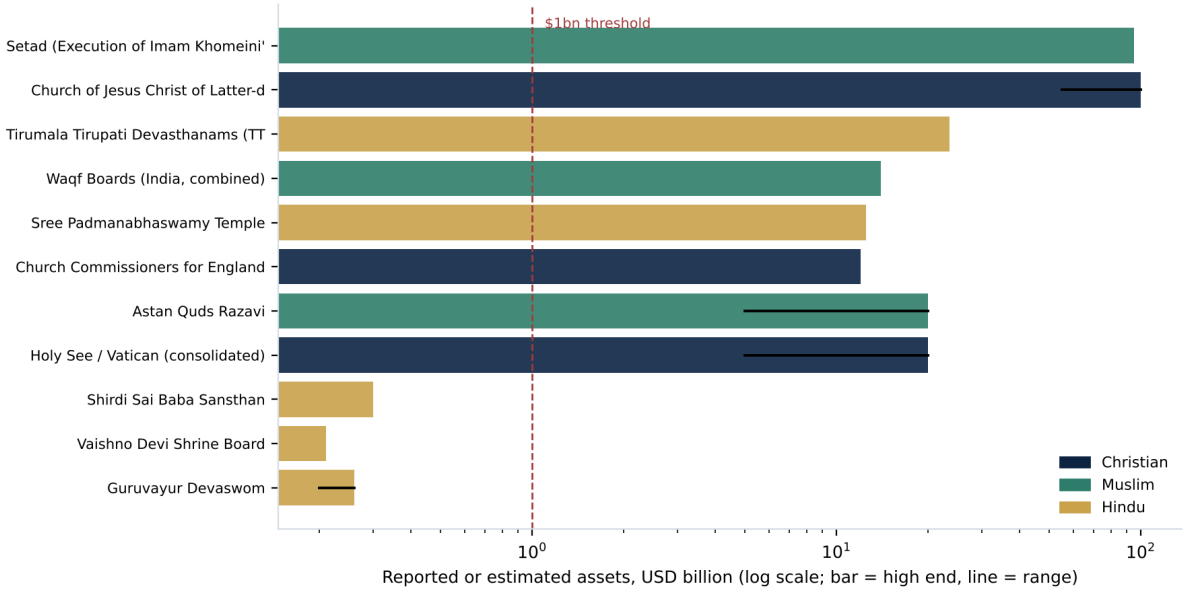


Figure 3. Institutional assets on a log scale (repeated for reference)

The distribution is steeply skewed. Setad alone is several times larger than any other listed institution, but it is a control case. Remove it, and the LDS portfolio, TTD and Padmanabhaswamy lead the verified list. Temples under statutory or court oversight hold more documented wealth than any guru-led order.

OUR VIEW

Concentration risk is highest where assets are unaudited and controlled by one office. That combination is rare among Christian and Hindu institutions, which publish more, and common in state-religious systems.

PART B | FUNDING FLOWS

How religious money moves

Funding stream	Typical in	Visibility	Risk
Tithes and offerings	Protestant, Pentecostal, LDS	Low (US churches file no return)	Prosperity-gospel misuse
Temple donations (hundi, gold, land)	Hindu temples	Medium (statutory boards)	Valuation, theft, litigation
Zakat, sadaqah, waqf	Muslim	Low to medium	Diversion; encroachment
State support or church tax	Germany, Nordics, Israel, Italy	High	Political dependence
Foreign donations	Missions, ashrams, madrasas	Medium (FCRA in India)	Foreign-influence concern
Business income	Setad, Patanjali, Church media	Low	Conflict with charitable status
Endowment returns	LDS, Church of England	Medium to high	Market swings

Funding structure predicts where abuse of money and abuse of people are most likely. Where a charismatic founder controls donations and the accounts are private, both kinds of misconduct are recorded more often. Where a statutory board or independent trustees oversee funds, the cases involve theft and valuation disputes, not personal enrichment.

Foreign funding. India regulates foreign donations to religious and charitable bodies under FCRA, and licences have been cancelled for many organisations across faiths. We did not count these as corruption cases because most are regulatory actions.

OUR VIEW

The pattern is practical: more transparency, fewer scandals. A common disclosure rule across faiths (annual accounts, named trustees, independent audit) would do more than any ranking.

PART B | REGULATION

Disclosure regimes by country

Country	Disclosure regime for religious bodies	Gap
USA	Churches exempt from filing Form 990; others file	Large ministries opaque
UK	Charity Commission accounts; exempt charities exist	Partial
India	Trust registration; statutory boards for big temples; FCRA	Guru trusts private
Iran	No public audit for Setad or AQR	Total
Italy / Vatican	Reforms since 2013; limited publication	Partial
Japan	Religious corporations file but need not publish	Opaque
Thailand	Sangha oversight; weak financial transparency	Opaque
Israel	State funding with ministry audits; private networks opaque	Mixed

The countries with the best data on religious wealth are not the countries with the most wealth. The best-documented sums are in the UK and the US equity market (where investment filings are public), not in countries where assets are held by state or clerical authorities.

Implication for counts. Every ranking of 'richest religious groups' is biased toward disclosers. Non-disclosers are under-counted or inflated by rumour.

> OUR VIEW
> If you plan a public list, publish the method and the evidence labels with it. A list without them will be quoted as fact, and then corrected, at the expense of your credibility.

PART C | QUESTION 5 AND 6

Leaders convicted or accused: the count

Documented sample: 15 leaders. 9 convicted (appeals may be open), 5 accused or pending, 1 acquitted. By faith: Christian 6, Hindu 5, Jewish 2, Muslim 1, Buddhist 1. Convictions by offence: rape or sexual assault 6, molestation or child abuse 2, murder 1. Accused or pending: sexual offences 3, corruption or embezzlement 2. Ram Rahim was also acquitted of two murder charges, and Pell of child abuse.

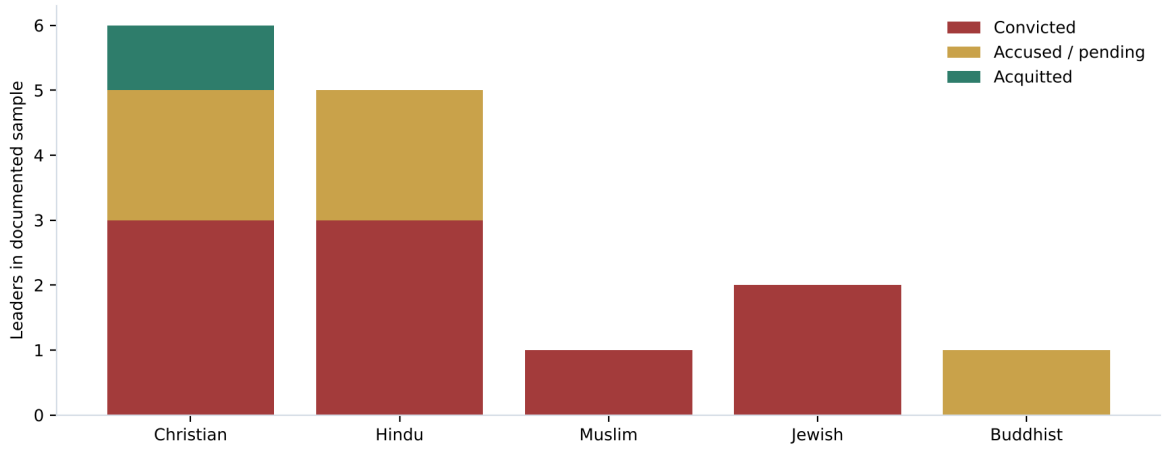


Figure 4. Legal status by faith in the documented sample

> **CAUTION**
> This is a sample, not a census. Accusation is not guilt. The 5 accused persons are presumed innocent. Pell is shown as an acquittal because a high court overturned his conviction.

PART C | CHRISTIAN

Christian leaders: convictions and open cases

Name	Country	Status	Offence	Label
Pastor Bajinder Singh	India	Convicted	Rape	S
Cardinal Angelo Becciu	Vatican	Retrial pending (conviction nullified)	Embezzlement / corruption	S
Apollo Quiboloy	Philippines	Accused (in custody)	Sex trafficking; child abuse; fraud; money laundering	R
Paul Mackenzie	Kenya	Convicted (appeal planned)	Murder	S
Jung Myung-seok (JMS)	S. Korea	Convicted (final)	Rape / sexual assault	R
George Pell	Australia	Acquitted (conviction quashed 2020); deceased	Child sexual abuse	U

Reading the table. Jung Myung-seok's 17 years is final after the Supreme Court upheld it. Bajinder Singh's life sentence is open to appeal. Mackenzie's conviction follows 191 murder counts, mostly of children, in the Shakahola starvation deaths. He is due to be sentenced on 6 November 2026, and the defence plans to appeal.

Becciu. The Vatican court convicted him in December 2023 of embezzlement connected to a 350m euro London property purchase. In March 2026 the appeals tribunal found procedural errors nullified the indictment and ordered a new trial, set to start 22 June 2026. All defendants maintain their innocence. We did not find a verdict from the retrial.

PART C | HINDU

Hindu leaders: convictions and open cases

Name	Country	Status	Offence	Label
Asaram Bapu	India	Convicted (2 cases)	Rape	S
Narayan Sai	India	Convicted	Rape	S
Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh	India	Convicted (rape); Acquitted (murder x2)	Rape; Murder	S
Nithyananda	India (fugitive)	Accused / fugitive	Rape; Kidnapping	R
Shivamurthy Murugha Sharanaru	India	Accused (status unverified)	POCSO / sexual abuse	U

Asaram. Convicted in Jodhpur (minor victim) and in Gandhinagar in January 2023; both carry life terms. The Gujarat High Court extended temporary medical bail through 2025; the Rajasthan High Court was hearing a separate interim-bail plea. He remains a convicted prisoner on medical release, as far as we can verify.

Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. Serving 20 years for the rape of two disciples. The Punjab and Haryana High Court acquitted him in the Ranjit Singh murder case (2024) and in the Chhatrapati journalist murder case (March 2026), upholding the life terms of three co-accused. A challenge to the acquittal was reported before the Supreme Court. He stays in prison because of the rape sentence.

Nithyananda. A Karnataka trial court framed charges and issued a non-bailable warrant in a rape case; police have said they cannot trace him, and he claims a self-declared state, 'Kailasa'. We could not verify the current status of related matters.

PART C | MUSLIM

Muslim leaders: convictions and open cases

Name	Country	Status	Offence	Label
Tariq Ramadan	Switzerland / France	Convicted (Swiss); French charges pending	Rape	S

Tariq Ramadan. A Geneva appeals court convicted him of rape in September 2024, overturning a 2023 acquittal, and imposed three years, of which two were suspended. The Swiss Federal Tribunal upheld the conviction in August 2025. His lawyer said she would go to the European Court of Human Rights. In France he has been charged with rape over two alleged assaults, and a third complaint was filed in 2023. He denies wrongdoing. We found no trial date.

CAUTION

Our sample includes only one Muslim leader because our search was in English, and because many cases involve scholars or preachers whose legal records are in Arabic, Urdu, Bengali or Indonesian. Corruption cases against clerics in the Gulf, Pakistan and Iran are usually political and hard to assess. The low count is a data gap, not a finding that fewer cases exist.

OUR VIEW

Be careful with allegations against Muslim figures in politicised settings. Convictions in an independent court (Switzerland) are firm evidence; accusations by states with captive courts are not.

PART C | JEWISH AND BUDDHIST

Jewish and Buddhist leaders

Name	Country	Status	Offence	Label
Eliezer Berland	Israel	Convicted (plea)	Molestation / indecent acts	S
Malka Leifer	Australia / Israel	Convicted	Child sexual abuse	R
Phra Dhammachayo	Thailand	Accused (never convicted)	Embezzlement / money laundering	U

Eliezer Berland. Convicted in a plea deal of two counts of indecent acts and one of assault, sentenced on 22 November 2016 to 18 months. He fled Israel in 2013 and was caught in South Africa in 2016. Senior rabbis later issued findings of misconduct; those are religious rulings, not court verdicts.

Malka Leifer. Convicted in Australia of child sexual abuse after a long extradition from Israel; she received a 15-year sentence. She was a school principal in the ultra-Orthodox community, so she is an institutional leader, not clergy.

Phra Dhammachayo. The founder of Wat Dhammakaya faced Thai charges of embezzlement and money laundering from 2016. He avoided arrest and was never convicted. We did not re-verify his current status.

PART C | DETAIL

Case notes: Quiboloy, Mackenzie and Becciu

Apollo Quiboloy (Philippines). The founder of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was indicted in the US in 2021 with eight others for conspiracy, child sex trafficking, sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion, marriage fraud, money laundering, cash smuggling and visa fraud. He was arrested in the Philippines in 2024 and is in custody. The US formally requested extradition in August 2026, which needs two Philippine courts' approval. He is tried in two Philippine courts on human trafficking and child abuse charges. He denies all allegations. Status: Accused.

Paul Mackenzie (Kenya). A court in Mombasa found him and 28 others guilty on 19 October 2026 on 191 murder counts after the Shakahola deaths, including 190 children. Sentencing was expected on 6 November. The defence plans to appeal. Earlier, he had been convicted of lesser offences in separate matters (recall).

Cardinal Becciu (Vatican). Convicted in 2023 of embezzlement; five and a half years. A Vatican appeals tribunal ruled in March 2026 that procedural failures by prosecutors and an unpublished papal decree nullified the indictment, and ordered a new trial. Eight other defendants were also convicted in 2023. Status: Retrial pending; presumed innocent.

Date	Event
Nov 2021	US indictment of Quiboloy unsealed
Dec 2023	Becciu convicted, 5.5 years
2024	Quiboloy arrested in the Philippines
17 Mar 2026	Vatican appeals tribunal nullifies Becciu indictment
22 Jun 2026	Becciu retrial scheduled to begin
Aug 2026	US formal extradition request for Quiboloy
19 Oct 2026	Mackenzie and 28 others found guilty
6 Nov 2026	Mackenzie sentencing expected

OUR VIEW

Becciu's case shows why 'convicted' needs a date. A person convicted in 2023 may be untried by 2026. Any list must be re-checked at publication time.

PART C | DETAIL

Case notes: the Asaram family and Dera Sacha Sauda

Cases in numbers. Asaram: 2 convictions. Narayan Sai: 1 conviction, others reported. Ram Rahim: 1 rape conviction, 2 murder acquittals, 1 further acquittal challenge reported. Nithyananda: at least 1 rape case with charges framed, plus others reported.

Person	Cases we can count	Of which pending	Outcome so far
Asaram	2 convictions	Bail and appeal matters	Life x2; medical bail
Narayan Sai	1 conviction	Appeal and furlough matters	Life (2019)
Ram Rahim	1 conviction, 2 acquittals	Challenge to acquittal reported	20 years (rape)
Nithyananda	1+ rape case (charges framed)	All	Fugitive; warrant
Sharanaru	Complaints (2022)	Not verified	Unverified

Pattern. In India, most convictions of guru-led figures concern sexual offences against disciples, including minors, and they follow years of delay, witness intimidation and acquittal appeals. Convictions mostly occurred after Supreme Court or High Court pressure, and the leaders retain mass followings.

Timing. Asaram was arrested in 2013 and convicted in Jodhpur in 2018 and in Gandhinagar in 2023, a gap of ten years. Narayan Sai was convicted in 2019. Ram Rahim was convicted in 2017, and the High Court judgments on his murder cases came in 2024 and 2026. Long delays, appeals and bail applications mean the number of live matters stays high even after convictions.

CAUTION

Do not equate convictions with the whole movement. Followers number in the millions, and the institutions run schools and hospitals. The cases concern individuals.

PART C | ANALYSIS

What the sample says, and what it cannot

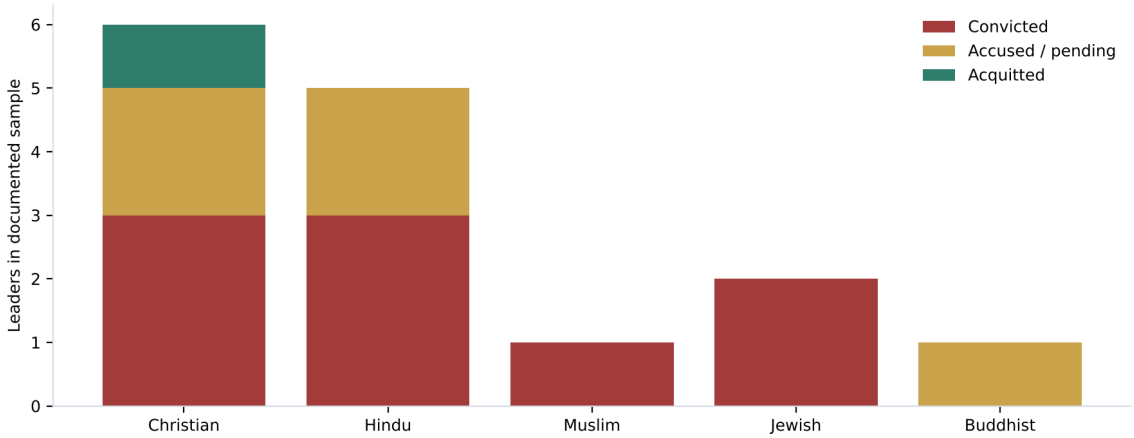


Figure 5. Legal status by faith (repeated for reference)

Offence	Convicted persons	Accused/pending	Acquitted
Rape or sexual assault	6	2 (Nithyananda, Quiboloy)	0
Molestation / child abuse	2	1 (Sharanaru)	1 (Pell)
Murder	1 (Mackenzie)	0	2 charges (Ram Rahim)
Corruption / embezzlement	0	2 (Becciu, Dhammachayo)	0

Each person is placed under their main charge; some face several. Unique-person counts are on page 20.

OUR VIEW

The sample is skewed toward India, the US-Europe press and English sources. A fair global count needs local-language court data for Nigeria, Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan and Thailand.

SYSTEMIC ABUSE

Thousands of cases sit beneath the headlines

The 15 leaders above are individuals whose cases reached major news. The wider record is much larger and is mostly about ordinary clergy, not famous leaders.

Tradition	What the record shows	Basis
Catholic	Databases list thousands of accused priests in the US alone; national inquiries in France, Germany, Ireland, Australia and Spain found many thousands of victims	Public inquiry reports; BishopAccountability database
Southern Baptist (US)	A 2019 newspaper series found hundreds of church leaders and volunteers with abuse allegations over two decades	Press investigation
Jewish (Haredi)	Cases in Israel, the US and Australia; communal pressure on victims is documented	Court and press reports
Hindu / Buddhist / Muslim	Cases exist but are less often reported in English or compiled	Gap

Counting rule. We cannot say how many religious leaders globally have been convicted of rape, murder, molestation or corruption. If 'leader' includes priests, pastors, imams and monks, the number is in the thousands. If it means heads of denominations or founders of movements, it is dozens.

OUR VIEW

Pick one definition and publish it. The two answers differ by two orders of magnitude, and a headline that blurs them will mislead.

CONCLUSIONS

What to take away, and what to do next

1. Wealth of individuals. Not established. Five names recur; none is verified; one is a control case.

2. Wealth of institutions. Eight institutions exceed $1bn on our evidence, with four on reported figures. The largest verified holdings are the LDS portfolio and two Indian temple trusts.

3. Convictions. Nine convicted and five accused or pending in a documented sample of 15, with one acquittal. Rape and child sexual abuse dominate.

4. Method. The count is limited by sources, language and disclosure law, not only by the underlying facts.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

(1) Re-verify the Unverified items on page 30 against primary sources. (2) Pull court dockets for each named case to confirm current status. (3) Build a leader-level database with the evidence labels and legal statuses shown here. (4) Add local-language sources for Africa, Latin America, South and South-East Asia. (5) Have counsel review before publishing named individuals.

OUR VIEW

The strongest public-interest finding is structural, not personal: the least transparent funding structures are those controlled by one charismatic leader, and that is where the worst abuse records cluster. Disclosure and independent trustees are the practical remedy.

SOURCE REGISTER

Sources and items to re-verify

Source	Used for
Business Today, 'India's richest temples' (10 Jul 2026)	TTD, Padmanabhaswamy, Shirdi and other temple figures
Reuters investigation on Setad (2013); Wikipedia list of wealthiest religious organisations	Setad, institutional wealth lists
Business Insider, Salt Lake Tribune, Religion Unplugged	LDS Ensign Peak portfolio and whistleblower claim
The Week (7 Mar 2026), Scroll, Tribune	Ram Rahim acquittals and rape sentence
The Week, Scroll, Udayavani, Onmanorama	Asaram convictions and bail; Narayan Sai
WTOP/AP (Aug 2025); The National; Malay Mail	Tariq Ramadan convictions
PBS NewsHour; Catholic Review; KUNC/NPR	Becciu conviction and March 2026 nullification
Al Jazeera (6 Aug 2026); AP via Washington Times	Quiboloy charges and extradition request
Africanews (19-20 Oct 2026); Citizen Digital	Mackenzie verdict
Times of Israel; Ynet	Berland sentence; Leifer sentence
Korea Times; Asiae	Jung Myung-seok 17-year sentence
Business Standard; Deccan Herald; Organiser	Bajinder Singh life sentence
The News Minute	Nithyananda case

Re-verify before quoting	Why
Waqf Boards, Church Commissioners, Holy See, Astan Quds Razavi figures	Analyst recall or wide ranges
Copeland, Macedo, Balkrishna, Aga Khan V estimates	Unaudited; dated
Pell, Sharanaru, Dhammachayo status	Not re-checked this session
Becciu retrial outcome; Mackenzie sentence (6 Nov 2026)	Events after search date
Iran Supreme Leader's current office-holder	Not confirmed