



The Republic of Georgia



With a Mediterranean-like climate along the Black Sea coast, the Republic of Georgia is actually mostly mountainous terrain. Peaks rising more than 17,000 feet separate it from the Caucasus and from Russia. Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan border Georgia to the south. Grapes, citrus fruits, and hazelnuts are plentiful enough to be exported, but Georgia's reliance on importing natural gas hampers political and economic development. Absorbed into the Russian empire in the 19th century, Georgia proclaimed independence in 1991.

Throughout history, Georgia was conquered by Muslim empires several times. Tbilisi (the capital) was conquered by Arabs in the 8th century, and a Muslim community remained. From the 16th century, Ottoman Turks and Iranian Safavids (Persians) controlled much of Georgia. Migrants, later known as Tatars, also decided to make the region their home.

During the Soviet era, Islamic law (Shari'a) and administration were abolished in 1926, but by 1930

a compromise was reached allowing Muslims certain freedoms. During the Second World War the Soviets set up Muslim Religious Boards to manage Muslims throughout the region. Some Muslims were deported (depending on ethnicity) and the deportation actually continued late into the 20th century. It is still a political issue today.

There are three main Muslim populations in Georgia: ethnic Azeris (in rural areas and Tbilisi), ethnic Georgian Muslims of Ajara (in the southwest), and ethnic Chechen Kists (in the northeast). Each of these main peoples has a distinct history.

Georgia Statistics

- Population: 4,661,473 (July 2006 est.)
- Orthodox Christian 83.9%
- Other Christian 5.5%
- Muslim 9.9%
- Atheist / Agnostic 0.7%

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ *Pray for the Azeris. The Bible and the Jesus Film are available in the Azeri language but the Gospel needs to be shared in culturally effective ways.*
- ▶ *Pray for the Kists and the Muslims of the Ajara area. Pray for wisdom, favor, and opportunities for Christians who are reaching out in the area. (1 Cor 16:9).*
- ▶ *Pray for Christians. Relations between the Georgian Orthodox Church and Protestant congregations have not always been positive. Love, mutual respect and*