

The Zikri Baluch of South Asia

The Zikris number about 750,000 people, most of whom live in Baluchistan, Pakistan. A large number also live in the region around Karachi and in Iran. Most Zikris are fishermen along the coast of the Arabian Sea, but some are involved in farming, basket weaving and other handicrafts.

The Zikri religious practices differ greatly from mainstream Islam and are based around the teachings of Syed Mohammad Jaunpuri, a 15th century South Asian Islamic Messiah figure (Mahdi). Zikris perform five daily prayer rituals called Zikr in which sacred verses, which differ from orthodox Islamic prayer, are recited.

The name Zikri comes from the Arabic word dhikr (pronounced “Zikr” in South Asia) that refers to remembrance, usually of Allah. This reflects Zikri worship, which is focused on the recitation of Islamic credos. They have faced persecution, mainly from Sunni Muslims, but this usually has occurred in areas where they are in a minority, or when they were in conflict with non-Zikri power groups.

The Pakistani and Chinese governments have been developing a deep-sea port in the city of Gwadar, which will be linked to the rest of Pakistan, China and Central Asia through a system of roads and pipelines. Gwadar’s population is about 50% Zikri. If the forecasted economic development based on the port actually takes place, all of Baluchistan and the region will be significantly affected.

In recent times two Zikri fishermen have reported that, while on a fishing trip, Jesus appeared to them in a storm and rescued them. Pray that many more Zikri fishermen would truly encounter Jesus, and become real fishers of men!



Above: The mountains of the Makran region.

Below, left: The small city of Gwadar on the Pakistani coast.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ *A number of Zikris have become followers of Jesus. Pray for growth in faith and understanding of the ways of God for all of these new believers (1 Cor 13).*
- ▶ *Pray that the top religious leaders of the Zikris would come to know Jesus through the Scriptures, testimonies, films, dreams, visions, healings, etc., so that their followers would also embrace the Truth.*