

Afghanistan

The Aimaq people

700,000+ Aimaq in Afghanistan (estimate)

Possibly 200,000 Aimaq in Iran (estimate)

The name “Aimaq” (the Mongolian word for tribe) refers to the tribal peoples living in the largely barren and mountainous region of western Afghanistan and northeastern Iran. The Aimaq are actually a group of up to 20 smaller tribes which have historically linked themselves together through alliances and marriage. The most numerous tribes are the Taimani, Char Hazara, Jamshidi, Firozkuhi and Timuri (remember Revelation 7:9). Tribalism dominates so much that local customs and concepts of honor and shame are more important than Islamic or state law. Disputes tend to be settled by tribal rather than government authorities.

Ethnic Backgrounds: As a result of various migrations and invasions, the ethnic make up of the Aimaq is one of the greatest mixture of people anywhere (the ethnic traits of Persians, Mongols, Turks, Greeks, Huns and Arabs are all present). The languages spoken by the Aimaq people could generally be described as Dari (Afghan eastern Farsi) which also contains Turkic and Mongolian words.

This semi-nomadic people spend the spring and summer in the mountains with their herds of sheep and goats. In fall and in winter they move to their villages where they weave carpets of traditional design, which differ according to each clan. They raise wheat, grapes, rice, barley, oats, melons, and vegetables,



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sometimes with primitive hoes and wooden plows. Agriculture is still considered only a secondary activity in their culture, and a man's wealth is determined by the size of his herds. Some Aimaq, like many other Afghans, have been significantly involved in the Afghan opium drug trade.

Women: Aimaq women have exceptional freedoms when compared with others in rural Afghanistan. Women sit with men while talking, even if strangers are present. Often girls are not married until about age 18 and are free to reject a groom proposed by their fathers.

The Aimaq are largely illiterate Sunni Muslims, yet the veneration of deceased Muslim holy men is significant. There are few, if any, known followers of Jesus among the Aimaq. Various Christian radio broadcasts have been done in Dari and Farsi. However, the extent to which these broadcasts are even received by the Aimaq in Afghanistan is not known.

PRAYER REQUESTS

► *Almost everything needs to be done to reach these people with the Gospel. Pray for qualified believers to take the message, various media tools and open doors (Luke 10:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).*

AFGHANISTAN'S PEOPLES

The great majority of Afghanistan's 27 million people are Muslims. Most of them have little or no access to Gospel. Of the 10 largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan, only four have portions of the Scriptures available in their native tongue. Very few ethnic groups have Christian broadcasts or the Jesus Film available in their language. Possibly 85% of Afghans have never heard the Gospel.

