



Day 23

Hard realities for Muslim men and families

Total Somali population: 9,119,000 (July 2007 est.)

Traditionally 90% of the Somali population lived a nomadic, pastoralist life (this has fallen to about 60% at present). Groups of men traveled through the desert with their camels and livestock. While traveling, they had to endure the hot sun, walk for months across vast distances and protect their animals from wild beasts. Somali men often possess great courage and boldness. Being a warrior has traditionally been one of their greatest ideals. It is in this setting that the Somali oral culture developed. Somali men are known for being poets and storytellers, and they love to debate. These cultural aspects continue to be highly valued even in the growing urban centers.



Somalia has suffered from a complicated civil war for over 20 years. Traditionally, Somali men were the providers of their families' basic needs. However, when the war erupted there were several hundred thousand deaths. Thousands more were maimed or exiled. Over the past decade, more than half a million people fled the war - many of them men. This has devastated the family structure and left many families fatherless. The involvement in fighting, the trauma, and the life in refugee camps have destroyed the vitality, vision and hope of Somali men.

Trying to escape: Some men have found a way to escape from the harsh realities of Somali life. Khat (Catha Edulis) is an evergreen shrub that grows in the highlands of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Yemen. Chewing the leaves of khat has a stimulating, narcotic effect, and like most drugs, khat is addictive and must be consumed daily. The majority of Somali men are addicted to khat, which has a huge influence on their life in Somali society. Men buy their khat at the market and then in the afternoon and evening, they meet

with friends, drink tea, and chew khat. Kept awake by the drug, men often come home late. Many children grow up seeing little of their fathers. The women are left responsible for the household chores, raising the children, and providing for the family. Khat chewers suffer from various health problems, yet those who really suffer the most are their families. Men often spend most of their money on khat, while their families go hungry.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ *Pray that the bondage of khat would be broken. Social pressure encouraging men to chew is huge. Strength, wisdom, and courage are needed to break this national addiction.*
- ▶ *Pray for wives and children to know how to cope with the absence of men.*
- ▶ *Pray that Somali society will experience God's healing of families and come to know true fatherhood at home and know the heavenly Father.*

Many Christians worldwide will be praying for Somalia in 2008 and 2009 as an organized prayer effort to see change in this troubled nation. See: <http://www.prayforsomalia.org/>