

## Central Asia update

### *Persecution on the rise*

The vast area called Central Asia is home for more than 100 million people. A large majority of Central Asians are Muslims, though there are significant numbers of Russians, Ukrainians and Chinese. Many Muslims in the region do not practice Islam with zeal, but the number of committed Muslims seems to be growing in the whole region. People are returning to their historic cultural and religious roots after many decades of atheistic communist domination.

In the 1990s hundreds of believers made their way to Central Asia in order to live there and proclaim the Gospel in the region. Thousands of people came to the Lord in the former Soviet Republics at that time. However, in recent years most governments in the region have started to persecute believers. The majority of foreign believers who sought to proclaim Christ have been expelled from one country after another.

In 2008 and 2009 Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan voted laws which significantly restrain religious liberty. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had already become very oppressive for individuals and whole communities of believers. The body of Christ in these countries will probably continue to suffer because proclaiming the Good News, changing religion, spiritual education for children, holding meetings and creating new communities have been made illegal or have been severely restricted. One believer who knows the region well says that “the young assemblies of believers which have developed in the last 20 years will suffer, but they have deep roots. They will survive!” We still need to pray. Probably 90%+ of people in the region have never heard the Good News of the Kingdom.



*Uzbekistan 27.35 million*  
*Turkmenistan 5.2 million*  
*Kyrgyzstan 5.36 million*  
*Tajikistan 7.2 million*  
*Kazakhstan 15.35 million*  
*Afghanistan 32.75 million*  
*Xinjiang Province, China 19.6 million*  
*(See the Uyghur article on page 30)*

*Look up the following names of Central Asian cities on the web. You might be surprised by what you see: Urumqi, Tashkent, Dushanbe, Bishkek, Ashgabat, Astana*

#### *Languages spoken in Central Asia:*

*Turkic languages:*

*Kazakh · Kyrgyz · Tatar · Turkmen · Uyghur · Uzbek*

*Iranian languages:*

*Baluchi · Bukhori · Dari · Kurdish · Pamiri · Pashto · Persian · Tajik*

*Other major languages:*

*Chinese · Mongolian · Russian · Tibetan*

#### **Prayer Points:**

- ▶ *Lord, you have said, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.” (Hab 2:14) Lord, may you be proclaimed to all in the region (Mt 24:14).*
- ▶ *Lord, strengthen your people (2 Cor 12:9).*
- ▶ *Many are in prison or will be in prison for their faith in the coming years (Heb 13:3; Acts 16:23-25).*
- ▶ *Pray for all the language groups and cities represented in the lists on this page. May God guide you.*