

## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October

By the end of the 8th century, the region of Central Asia, including the countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan was Islamic, especially among the settled, urban populations. Through the centuries these six nations were all part of various powerful empires: the Persian Empire, the Mongol Empire, and in the case of Azerbaijan, the Ottoman Empire, but by the 1860s, it was clear that Russia had control over this region. Russian farmers began to arrive to farm Central Asian soil in the 1870s, and by the 1890s, they were a dominant force. The Russians did not impose their Orthodox Christian religion, but they restricted Islamic teachings fearing that it could promote rebellion.

When Communism was introduced in 1917 the state's official policy promoted atheism, and all beliefs in a spiritual realm were viewed as superstitions or vestiges of the past that had no place in the "progressive" world being envisioned by the communists. Efforts were made to eradicate religious beliefs and weaken Muslim culture. They closed mosques and used them for other purposes, just as they did with churches. The education system was intended to erase or at least weaken Islamic heritage, and make Central Asians more like the Russians.

After the Fall of the USSR, Islam remained an important part of the identity of the peoples of Turkestan, even if they had forgotten many of the tenets of Islam. It was clear that "religion" could not be eliminated by the state. To combat this weakened form of Islam, religious leaders from outside of the former USSR countries introduced mosques and schools designed to strengthen Islamic beliefs.

There were efforts to take the gospel into this part of the world in the early 1990s. For example, the JESUS Film was sometimes used in Russian schools as part of moral teachings. Unfortunately, there was little effort to reach all the unreached in this part of the world. Despite the lack of coordinated efforts, we have seen amazing progress of the gospel since the fall of the USSR 25 years ago and many unreached peoples now have followers of Christ and fellowships within them. There are however, still many to be reached, especially amongst the smaller unreached groups.

- Let's thank God for all those who are now following Christ in this area.
- Pray for believers to stand firm as they face persecution. Pray that they will be salt and light and walk in the fruit of the Holy Spirit even during the darkest times.
- Pray for a powerful disciple making movement among every major people group in this region.

\*Thanks to Global Prayer Digest for this material <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/>

## Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October

Kazakhs in Kazakhstan

'Recalling the tremendous influence the Kazakhs had in Central Asia, the pastor urged his quickly growing Kazakh congregation to again influence Central Asia ... but this time with their faith in Christ! "Endure the persecution," he encouraged them, remembering what Kazakhs have had to withstand throughout the years. About half of the Kazakh population was destroyed during the Russian Civil War a century ago. The Soviets suppressed their religion and seized much of their land.

Traditionally, they were nomadic shepherds roaming the mountains and valleys. They believed in pre-Islamic cults of the sky, the ancestors, fire, the supernatural forces of good and evil spirits. Most survivors escaped to China and Mongolia. Remaining Kazakhs were forced to relocate to cities. Soviet-era nuclear testing and toxic waste dumping still plagues Kazakhstan. While most Kazakhs now live in Kazakhstan, they are still less than half of the country's population, the other half being Russian.

Shamanic beliefs remain strong among the Kazakhs. They still wear charms to protect themselves from evil. But nearly two-thirds of Kazakhs follow Sunni Islam as well. The Kazakhs are now the second largest Muslim people group of Central Asia. With increasing legal restrictions, unregistered Protestant churches suffer worsening persecution. However, the Kazakh church is booming. It is reported by a worker in the region that "Within a generation, the church has grown from a handful of Kazakh believers to 16,300, the largest in Central Asia,"

- Pray for continued growth in the church despite persecution.
- Pray that the Kazakh people who have suffered so much hardship would encounter the kindness and mercy of God.
- Pray for more workers to go to this harvest field and reach out to Kazakhs.

\*Thanks to Global Prayer Digest for this material <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/>

## **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

### **Dungan people of Kazakhstan**

Chinese, Muslim, and Russian – a mixture of these cultures might make your head spin! The Dungan people live in Kazakhstan, located on the north-western Chinese border. The Dungan people originated in China, migrating to Kazakhstan in the 19th century. The Dungans are primarily farmers, living on community farms where everyone plays a part. The farms are the centre of Dungan villages, though they more closely resemble small cities. Each is complete with electricity, plumbing, and cooking gas as well as schools, nurseries, general stores, a hospital, a post office, and more. Those Dungans that do not live on the farms themselves can be found in comfortable extended-family homes. Due to their easy access to meat and vegetables, the Dungan people are considered to be among the wealthier Muslim ethnic groups in China.

Sunni Islam is the primary religion of the Dungan people. The older Dungans are strict adherents, though the younger people tend to forgo religion, remaining indifferent until middle adulthood. The Dungan people have yet to receive significant exposure to the gospel.

- *Pray that the Dungans of Kazakhstan would be introduced to the good news.*
- *Pray for the Dungan people to find freedom in obedience to the King of kings and Lord of lords.*
- *Pray for the Holy Spirit to direct and empower work amongst the Dungans that is developing in other locations.*

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## Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October

### Ingush people of Kazakhstan

Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world, John 16:33, NLT

The Ingush people have suffered greatly at the hands of Russia. Only Jesus can bring them true peace and victory over anger and bitterness. Originally from Russia's Caucasus region, the Ingush number over 420,000 in that region, with approximately 20,000 more in Kazakhstan where they were deported during WWII.

Though living in continual hardship, the Ingush have a history rich in storytelling, music, dance, art, and wood carving. A strongly traditional people in customs and behaviour, they are nonetheless considered well-educated and sophisticated in the modern world.

The Ingush people are Sunni Muslims, with many following Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam. The Ingush hold strongly to their Islamic beliefs, which forms a key component of cultural tradition and their ethnic identity. There are very few followers of Christ among the Ingush in Russia, and no believers among them in Kazakhstan. The Ingush language contains only Bible portions along with the JESUS Film and audio recordings about Jesus.

- *Pray for faithful intercessors for the Ingush people. Ask for Spirit-filled witnesses to bring Jesus' grace, peace, and self-giving love to Kazakhstan's Ingush.*
- *Pray for a complete Ingush-language Bible to transform hearts.*
- *Ask for dreams, visions, and supernatural breakthrough to help bring the Ingush to Christ.*
- *Pray for the Lord to deliver the Ingush and other peoples who face hardship and oppression.*

## Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October

### Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan

For what are the Kyrgyz famous? The Kyrgyz are famous for having the world's longest ballad with over half a million verses! They differ from other Muslim peoples in wanting to convert Christians to Islam by love, sympathy, and shame, the latter an important aspect of their society.

Once a Caucasoid people who were blue-eyed and red-headed, they are now a Turkic-speaking people of Mongoloid stock who were pushed from nomadism into urban living under the Soviets. Most, however, remain pastoralists. Originally said to worship fire and cremate their dead, they are

now Sunni and Sufi Muslims. Because much of their Islam is folk-Islam mixed with shamanism, they have been undergoing an Islamic revival where they are re-learning to be Muslims. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, some 3,000 new mosques have been built. Yet there is good news: Since the collapse of the USSR 25 years ago, the number of Kyrgyz believers has risen considerably. Some estimate that there are now 3,000 Kyrgyz believers.

- *Pray that the Scriptures, the JESUS Film, and Christian radio will find a receptive audience among the Kyrgyz people.*
- *Pray that Kyrgyz believers will renounce the demonic, and be strengthened in their faith.*
- *Pray for a disciple making movement to move rapidly among the Kyrgyz.*

## **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October**

Crimean Tatars of Kyrgyzstan and Russia

Listen to the song below – Always by Kristian Stanfill:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HetTT8SULw>

2 Sam 22:33, NET

The one true God is my mighty refuge; he removes the obstacles in my way.

“Get out! Quick!” Shouts and the sounds of soldier’s boots rang through the house. Arire sat up in bed in sudden shock, her heart pounding. What was happening? The orders of the Soviet soldiers could not be ignored. Arire desperately grabbed what few clothes and belongings she could before she and her family were forced out of their home. It was May 18, 1944. Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin, had ordered the deportation of every Crimean Tatar from their homeland as punishment for supposed collaboration with the Nazis. Starting that day, 200,000 people were loaded onto trains and taken to Soviet Central Asia. Thousands died along the way.

Today, their descendants still live there. Among other countries in the region, Kyrgyzstan was once home to about 45,000 Tatars, but this number has decreased, as many have at last returned to Crimea. The ones that remain continue to hold onto their own language and customs. All Crimean Tatars, in Kyrgyzstan or elsewhere, are Sunni Muslims. There are not yet any disciples of Christ found among them in Kyrgyzstan, and there are no current efforts to reach them. The Tatars in Kyrgyzstan are far from Christ, as they are far from their homeland.

- *Pray that just as the Crimean Tatars in Kyrgyzstan desire to return to Crimea, they would also desire to “return” into the presence of the God who seeks them*
- *Pray that this desire would be satisfied and that they would find their true home in Christ*
- *Pray that the Lord will soon become the refuge for the Crimean Tatars of Kyrgyzstan and Russia.*