

Monday 30th September

Afghanistan's recent history

Pop: 36.4 m Muslim: 99.9%

Since the 1979 Soviet occupation, there have been years of fighting, killing, and bombing in



Afghanistan. Even after the Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, the violence did not end. A period of civil conflict began and innocent civilians were often caught in the crossfire.

As chaos spread across the region, a group of religious students led by Mullah Mohammed Omar emerged as the Taliban and took over the country. The capital city of Kabul fell to the Taliban in 1996.

America turned its attention to Afghanistan and the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda on New York City and Washington, D.C

in 2001. The Taliban protected Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda fighters. On October 7th 2001, the US-led war in Afghanistan began, to try to capture or kill Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda militants, as well as replace the Taliban with a US-friendly government.

During the long years of conflict, whole villages and huge areas of cities have been flattened. Communities have been broken and families scattered. About 2.7 million people from Afghanistan are living as refugees; representing the second-largest refugee population in the world. Pakistan hosts nearly 1.4 million, including some second- or third-generation Afghan refugees who have never lived in their home country. As many as 2.6 million Afghans are displaced within the country due to conflict, drought and other natural disasters.

Many people are still being killed today. The Afghan people want to live in peace after many years of civil war and conflict. It's easy to forget the individual souls of people who live this reality day after day. People whom Jesus died to save. People whom He loves! Today, let's proclaim joy and hope over Afghanistan.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Rom: 15:13

- Let's pray for the people of Afghanistan to put their trust in Jesus Christ and no one else, so that they may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Let's cry out to God to soften the hearts of the Taliban leaders and for them to find their hope in Jesus Christ alone.
- Let's pray for an end to this long war and the suffering of so many Afghan people.

Tuesday 1st October

The recent turmoil in Afghanistan

On Saturday 17th August this year, an Islamic State (IS) suicide bomber targeted a wedding in the country's capital of Kabul. At least 63 people were killed and over 180 injured in the attack inside the wedding venue where 1,200 guests were present.

Afghanistan's President, Ashraf Ghani, condemned the attack and blamed the Taliban for giving a platform to terrorists. Although the Taliban were driven out of power in 2001, Taliban and tribal warlords continue to destabilise the country and have more power now than in 2001.

However, a Taliban spokesman said the group condemned the attack.

Two days later on Monday 19th August, Afghanistan celebrated 100 years of independence from British rule. These celebrations were overshadowed by 10 coordinated blasts in and around Jalabad city in the east of the country. They left more than 90 people wounded.

This follows other recent terrible bombings which have killed hundreds, including policemen.

In the meantime, peace talks have been pursued between the US and the Taliban, and at the time of writing, a deal was expected to be signed in the very near future. This would see the withdrawal of US troops, with the hope of less conflict in this country. It is hoped this would also pave the way for peace talks to commence between the Afghan government and the Taliban, trying to bring lasting stability in the country.

- Let's pray for the peace talks to be pursued until a lasting way forward to end the conflict is reached.
- Ask that God would hold back and confuse violent men, protect the innocent and guide the peace process.
- We know there are Taliban and IS fighters who question the causes they are fighting. Please pray for them to find a way of escape and to find the way, the truth and the life. (John14:6).

Wednesday 2nd October

Some challenges facing the country

Afghanistan is one of the biggest exporters of drugs. The drug trade and corruption threaten the country's development.

Women in Afghanistan have few rights; many are denied even basic education or medical care. They are often neglected, abused and mistreated and authorities offer no protection. A third of women in their early 20s report being married by the age of 18.



Today, 71% of boys and 40% of girls begin secondary school, but only 14% of all children complete their secondary education. Almost one third of children are involved in child labour, because their families live in poverty. Without education, the cycle of poverty is likely to continue.

Such is the level of persecution in this country, that it is second on Open Doors World Watch List. Afghan believers must keep their faith completely secret.

Many Christians are cut off from each other and feel

isolated and unsure whom to trust. There are no church buildings and this nation remains one of the least reached in the world.

Despite this, there are a few thousand Christians amongst the country's 36.4 million people and, praise God, the church is growing. There are Afghans who are listening to Christian radio stations or downloading Christian materials from the Internet. Some are genuine and often isolated believers; they and others are disappointed with Islam and want to know more about Jesus Christ.

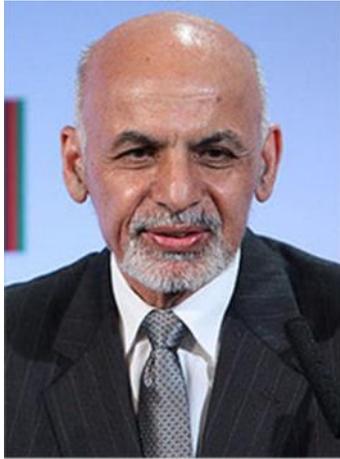
- Pray for wisdom for those working to reaching out with the message of hope and life in such a difficult and hard country.
- Thank God for all those who are there writing gospel materials. Ask for protection from evil men, provision of the right local helpers and resources and robust ways to distribute what they produce for every tribe and language in this country.
- Pray that Christ would break the power of drugs and corruption.
- Pray that Afghan women would be protected and honoured and that through the saving power of Christ, they would know the love of our Father in Heaven.
- Pray for children in this country, that they will not be drawn to radical groups and will find comfort and hope through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Thursday 3rd October

The future

Presidential elections have been postponed and at the time of writing were planned for the 28th September. President Ashraf Ghani was expected to win a second term in office. However the Taliban labelled the elections a sham and said they would disrupt the election process.

Previous elections in the war-ravaged country have been delayed and marred by violence, technical and organisational problems and allegations of widespread fraud.



President Ashraf Ghani

There is now doubt about when or even whether the election will happen. Because of the US/Taliban peace negotiations, many are saying that it should be delayed or postponed. That could mean an interim government being formed, leading to more chaos. The President and the international community need much wisdom.

Yet God is in control of this country! He loves the people of Afghanistan. When God sees Afghanistan, he doesn't see it as too hard a place for his gospel workers nor does he see the people as too hard to reach.

Listen [here](#) to the worship song, Rescuer, and let's praise God, who is the rescuer and who has come to seek and save the lost of Afghanistan.

- Pray that God would be the architect of a new government that would honour all parts of society, serve the poor and marginalised and rid the country of fighting and oppression.
- Ask for integrity from all parties and that each would keep their promises.
- Ask for miraculous compromise and humility where people have been so proud!
- Pray for many intercessors to commit to praying for Afghanistan, for a fairer system for all and for many there to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Friday 4th October

Lines and circles

The following account is a true and encouraging story from a Frontiers fieldworker:

“How can the president of Afghanistan have a Christian wife?” Salek asked.

Frontiers worker Jeremiah took a spoonful of rice from a large plate he was sharing with his employees. They sat huddled around the lunch plate in the middle of the workshop, surrounded by low-cost water purifiers in various stages of assembly.

Jeremiah knew that Afghanistan's president was married to a woman from a Lebanese Christian family. But his employee's question wasn't defensive or condemning. Salek was simply curious to know what Jeremiah's religion says about such marriages and if they are even allowed.

Living in the Muslim world, Jeremiah had seen that Islam is about thick lines and prescribed rules for many men and women. He saw how his Muslim friends tried to stay inside the lines and follow the rules down to the letter. They hoped that all their efforts would be good enough to allow them into heaven. And Salek wanted to know if the rules worked the same way in Christianity.

Jeremiah didn't want a debate over which religion has the better rules. In those types of conversations, no one wins. Instead, he started drawing circles on a piece of paper.



“Let me tell you what God is interested in,” Jeremiah said to his employees. “We are in this circle out here, apart from God. He wants us to be moving towards Him. We can be really close to God, right next to His circle. But if our hearts aren't right, then we are moving away from Him. He wants us to be moving in His direction.”

The men considered this. One of them, Rasul, had never shown any interest in spiritual things and had refused to talk about God. But now, he was visibly moved.

“Yes,” Rasul said. “This is right. This is how God wants us to be.”

Instead of turning into a contest to see whose religion has the superior rules, the conversation focused on how their hearts can be closer to God. And the way to be closer to God is through Jesus Christ. These tender conversations are opening opportunities for Jeremiah to share from the Word.

“I'm grateful to see some of the men letting their spiritual walls down,” Jeremiah says. “They're engaging with questions about Jesus that they weren't willing to ask before.”

- Pray for Salek, Rasul and the other employees to have minds and hearts open to the gospel.
- Pray they discover the emptiness of following rules and the joy of following Christ.
- Let's thank God for the wisdom and willingness of workers such as Jeremiah and indeed all workers in Afghanistan, as they labour daily to serve Him to reach the lost.
- **Finally**, we ask you to pray for a course that began yesterday and finishes on Sunday. It is to train people who are planning to go the field. Some already have a heart for a particular people or country. Others are still exploring and praying about this. Please pray over the coming days that each one would have a real sense of where God is leading them. Perhaps God is already preparing one of them to go to the Afghan people. Pray for courage to obey God's call.

Saturday 5th October

Shina – an unreached people group

There are 77 people groups, both tribal and nomadic, throughout Afghanistan. Of these, 72 are unreached according to Prayercast. One of them is the Shina – a UPG that is part of our Pray for Zero campaign and is one of Frontiers priority groups for prayer.

The Shina of Afghanistan are unengaged and unreached. They are part of the Kashmiri people. They live in only two countries; primarily in northern Pakistan, but also in northern Afghanistan. Their total population is estimated at about 700,000. Their primary language is Shina and they follow Sunni Islam.

They are known as quiet, peace-loving and brave people. Most of them live in the upper valleys, where farming is very difficult due to the dry, rugged mountain terrain. They are primarily farmers and shepherds.

Many suffer from health problems due to poor water quality and poor nutrition. Educational facilities are also lacking and there is a great need for qualified teachers. Praise God that some portions of Scripture and gospel recordings are available in their language.

Let's declare God's word over them:

"Shout and be glad, O Shina, For I am coming, and I will live among you" declares the Lord. The Shina people will be joined with the Lord in that day and they will become my people. I will live among you and you will know ... the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 2:10-11).

- Pray that the Shina people will shout and be glad when they understand that God's desire is to live among them and to know them intimately.
- Ask God to send the medical teams, humanitarian aid workers and teachers that are much needed among these people.
- Pray that the Lord will raise up labourers, perhaps one or two from the training course, who are willing to invest in long-term service to the Shina people.
- Please continue to pray for the training course which ends tomorrow, for candidates planning to go overseas.
- Is God placing the Shina people on your heart? Perhaps your church or prayer group might consider adopting this people group. For further information about them and Pray for Zero, please contact charlotte@frontiers.org.uk

Sources: <https://peoplegroups.org/explore/GroupDetails.aspx?peid=24014>
https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14913/PK