

Monday 6th January

Morocco **Pop: 36 million** **Muslim: 99%**

Morocco is a beautifully diverse country in the western corner of North Africa and a popular destination for tourists. It has a rich cultural heritage of Berber origins, with influences stemming first from the Arab invasion and later from Spanish and French colonisation. The Moroccan people are warm and friendly with a remarkable culture of hospitality. Any gathering - large or small - will call for a silver pot of extremely sweet mint tea.



Today a staggering 99% of the population is Muslim. The king, Mohammed VI, claims to be a direct descendant of the prophet Muhammad and has declared the state religion to be Sunni Islam. In his efforts to battle any radical Muslims in Morocco, he is seeking to revive the Sufi brotherhoods that were once influential. He hopes that mystical devotion to Allah will be less of a threat to his rule than militant zeal. This attempt to manipulate the people's thinking is often deeply resented. There is relative tolerance of other faiths, but those who show openness to the good news

are nonetheless fearful of discovery and persecution. A short visit to the country gives the impression that there is religious freedom as church buildings can be seen, especially in the main cities. However, in an effort to avoid the religious violence and conflict occurring between Muslims and Christians in other African nations, the Moroccan people and government try to keep all Christian activity secret. It is therefore difficult to assess the true number of believers, but praise God, there are estimated to be a few thousand.

Watch a Prayercast video about Morocco: <https://www.prayercast.com/morocco.html>

- Pray for courage for Moroccan Muslim background believers who fear persecution for their faith.
- We give thanks for the existing church. Pray that local church leaders will find strategic ways for spreading the gospel.
- Let's pray for King Mohammed VI and for Saadeddine Othman, who has been Prime Minister of Morocco since 2017. As well as praying for their salvation, let's ask that they will allow freedom of religious expression for followers of Christ.

Source of some material: <https://www.prayercast.com/morocco.html>

Tuesday 7th January

Barriers to spiritual growth and the spread of the gospel

A couple who work for Frontiers in this country have observed a number of barriers to the spread of the gospel and to spiritual growth among Muslim background believers. These include:

- *The government and the local authorities:* it is forbidden by law for local Moroccans to be recognised as followers of Christ. As a result, they do not have religious freedom, are not allowed to organise gatherings to express their chosen belief and they are not allowed to share their thoughts with others in a way that could be considered as proselytism.

- *The concerns of the local believers:* As they do not have religious freedom, local believers often experience frustration as a church body and also in their individual lives. Though most of them have a desire to meet with others discreetly, some prefer to keep their faith secret and attempt to leave the country to live out their Christian lives. Where they have experienced some threat in the past they are careful not to draw attention to themselves in case it leads to adverse intervention on the part of the authorities.

- *Areas with no known believers or field workers:* despite several decades of spreading the gospel, there are still areas in the country where there are no known believers or field workers. In these places of hard spiritual ground, it is not easy for workers to justify their presence and to obtain residency. It is therefore very unlikely that a Muslim will meet a follower of Christ unless someone seeks them out intentionally. For that to happen, there needs to be a way for believers to go and live among them.

- Let's pray for field workers who desire to go to Morocco. Pray they can find ways to obtain residency and for the Holy Spirit to work powerfully through them.
- Pray for believers who try to live out their faith, but face rejection and intimidation from their family, community and local authority. May they be strong in the Lord and remember that he is their refuge and strength.
- Pray for those who are seeking God but are fearful of being exposed. May they become strong believers who are effective and fruitful in sowing God's Word among their family and friends.
- Pray that a strong movement to Jesus will bring whole families and communities into a rich experience of God's blessing.

Wednesday 8th January

Encouragements for prayer

Our Frontiers couple also shared these encouraging signs which we can pray for today:

Good local role models: Despite the lack of freedom there are some brave local individuals who have a passion for the cause of the gospel to spread in the country. They have often suffered for their faith, but have persevered and been an inspiration to other local believers. As nationals, they have the advantage of knowing the language and the culture and they also have a willingness to be trained in scriptures. They are vital for the future of the country.

Reaching out to people through media: Moroccans, especially the younger generation, use social media regularly as part of their daily lives. It has become a fruitful strategy to reach out to the population either by using storytelling in their local language or by direct access to scriptures in a country where the Bible is almost only available through smuggling.

The younger generation: The youth of Morocco make up the majority of the population. Many are dissatisfied with the status quo. While some turn to radical Islamist groups, many are increasingly frustrated with Islam itself and search elsewhere for answers. Some want to find real answers to their questions of faith and desire a true relationship with God. It seems that a new generation of believers is emerging amongst young adults.

- Please pray for local believers to endure and be bold in the face of suffering and persecution.
- Thank God for the blessing of social media that allows believers to find a means of encouragement and hope. Pray for those involved in these initiatives to continue to find ways to bring the good news. Please also pray that outreach materials via social media will grow and be effective in reaching many Moroccans.
- Let's pray for these young people to grow strong and stand firm in their faith and to be a great witness to their generation and to their families. Imagine the transformation in this country if this happened! Nothing is impossible with God.

Thursday 9th January

Mildred Swan – a missionary to Morocco's Berbers

The following account is the remarkable story of Mildred Swan who devoted her life to reaching the Berbers of Morocco in a country that had no place for women:

Born in 1910, Mildred Swan knew she wanted to be a missionary. When she was old enough to go to college, she trained as a teacher. Once she finished her training at the Bristol School of Theology in 1941, Swannie as she was then by known, was ready to go to Morocco with the British Churchmen's Missionary Society. It would be another 3 years before she could go because of World War 2. She taught at a primary school in the interim and then, in 1944, boarded a ship bound for Morocco. Once there, she was assigned to a mission station at the foot of the Middle Atlas Mountains, home of the Shilha Berbers. She made regular trips to visit them and grew to love and respect these hospitable people. She longed to reach them with the gospel message. She understood that the best way to do this was through friendship, so she spent a lot of her time with them learning their language.

When on home leave in 1948, Swannie's mission agency told her that on her return to Morocco they expected her to travel in future with a colleague for her own safety. As the only British missionary working among these people, she realised this was not going to be possible. In 1950 she joined a mission station started by the American agency Gospel Missionary Union. Back in Morocco, she worked long hours moving from tent to tent, distributing medicine and teaching literacy. She was becoming proficient in the Shilha dialect and in developing lifelong friendships with Shilha believers. She started to think about translating parts of scripture and radio broadcasts into the Shilha dialect. By 1966, Swannie had begun the preparation of Scriptures for use in Berber radio programmes with the help of Shilha believers. A year later she was forced to leave Morocco. Once this country had gained independence from France in 1956, it was clear that eventually missionaries would not be allowed to stay. She was one of the last to leave.

She took a few Berber helpers with her and moved to Corsica and later Malaga from where she continued her work of translating and producing radio programmes. Her first Berber broadcast was transmitted through Trans World Radio on 8th February 1969. She also translated most of the gospel of John into the Berber language. On her death, she left a legacy to use for Bible translation and distribution among the Berbers of Morocco. Guided by a committee of team leaders from Frontiers and including Wycliffe Bible Translators, her legacy is still being used to translate, promote and distribute Scripture in Morocco's three main Berber languages.

Her biography, *The Touch of Love*, is available through Amazon.

- Let's ask God to raise up more people like Mildred, with a heart and passion to reach the Berbers of Morocco with the knowledge of our One True God.
- Today, as you pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send out labourers into this harvest field, know that you are asking Him to send them with the promise that He will be with them.
- Pray that the Lord will direct field workers to have willing hearts to do whatever He has planned for them in this country.
- Pray for the protection of workers who are already there.

Source: <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/issue/day/Missionary-Biography-Mildred-Swan3/>

Friday 10th January

Southern Shilha Berbers

Pop: 3.4 million

Islam: 99.8%

The Southern Shilha, also known as the Soussi Berbers, is one of Frontiers priority people groups for outreach. They are a poor but proud people, tough and hardworking, eking out a living in a part of the world that is physically difficult to farm or raise sheep in.



They have a strong degree of unity as a people group; one that extends beyond tribal boundaries to encompass all who speak Tachelhit, their native language. In the villages, the Berber way of life has remained unchanged over the centuries. Most Shilha villages contain between 50 and 500 people. They typically live in two-storey, mud-brick homes with flat roofs. In the more rugged mountain areas they live in sturdy goatskin tents.

Since the late 19th century, many Shilha have left their poor, overpopulated valleys, in hope of finding work in the northern cities of Morocco. Some have become profitable grocers, shopkeepers or wholesalers; others have entered the fabric trade. Today, they are some of the most important businessmen in Casablanca are Shilha. In rural areas, only about half of the people have access to health services. These facilities usually only consist of a small clinic with a nurse, but no doctor. Most villages contain a shrine for their particular 'saint' which people visit in search of healing.

Although the Shilha are nearly all Muslim, their religion is mingled with spiritism and mysticism. Interestingly, this blended religion has created in them a curiosity and yearning to know more about their god. They worship a god whom they believe wants to be present in their daily lives. This gives great opportunities to talk about the God of the Bible who longs for a personal relationship with them.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to stir a hunger in the Shilha people to have a personal relationship with the one true God.
- Pray for medical teams with believers to go and work among the Shilha.
- This prayer was very recently posted on Pray Africa's website: <https://prayafrica.org/project/berbers-north-africa/> : "One new sister invited a friend to come and hear the gospel. He became a believer last Tuesday and both were baptised on Saturday. Pray for courage to be a witness and for unity among the believers. The Berbers love the Berber songs from Algeria...the Arabs love the songs from Egypt... May they encourage each other and sing together!

Source: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14911/MO

Saturday 11th January

Short-Term Teams Pray in Regions of North Africa with No Gospel Witness

"Forget the former things: do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise." Isaiah 43:18-21

During 2019, several teams of young people went to pray in a region of North Africa with no believers and no field workers to share the gospel. Meeting the people and seeing their spiritual needs helped them to grasp God's heart and to pray in a way they couldn't have done if they stayed in the UK. Several also went to see if God might want them to live in the Muslim world long-term and they continue to explore the possibilities for the future with Frontiers.



The teams went to an area where 2.5 million people live and have no chance of meeting a national believer. They prayed as they went through the towns and villages. A key prayer request was for workers to come and live in this region. Praise God this prayer has already been answered and it is hoped a church planting team will be established there soon. While this is a fantastic start, more is needed.

The most immediate emotional and spiritual impact for the team was fellowshiping with the few local believers who live just outside the region. They risk much to follow Jesus. They actively share their faith and have counted the cost of doing so. Proselytism is illegal. Pressure comes mainly

from families and society. One believer was delighted to have fellowship with the team – normally he only has fellowship with the expat workers - and he openly said he was a follower of Jesus in front of other Muslims. Excitingly, a national believer has come to help to lead the first fellowship in the local language in that town.

Not only did they value prayer, but the ongoing visits showed them they were not alone – they are part of the worldwide family of God. One team had a very multi-ethnic/cultural flavour which wonderfully demonstrated to the local church that Jesus is for everyone, not only Westerners. As we had fellowship, shared meals and tea they repeatedly asked, “Pray for us.”

If you would like to learn more about coming with us next Easter to pray for a part of North Africa please contact jess@frontiers.org.uk

Pray for:

- The church throughout North Africa may be reborn, regain its strength and shine more brightly than before.
- God’s Kingdom to come in North Africa, particularly for the totally unreached part of the country we travelled in.
- The encouragement, spiritual maturity, witness and protection of local believers and for more believers to come to this region.
- Those on the teams - both those exploring future ministry amongst Muslims and others who continue to pray.