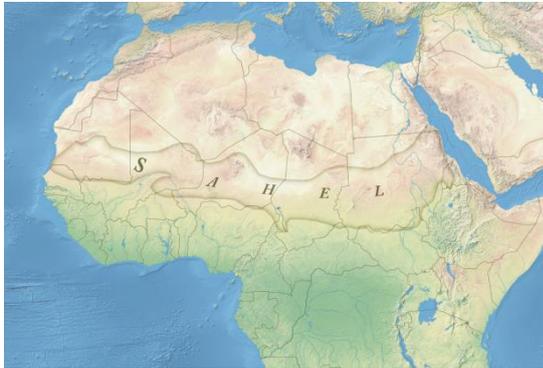


Monday 9th March

"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1

The Sahel is a huge swathe of land stretching across Africa from Mauritania in the west to Sudan and Eritrea in the east, lying between the Sahara desert to the north and the savannas to the south. It is



one of the poorest places on earth and is inhabited by people of different religions and cultures. This leads to constant conflict and animosity as groups clash while attempting to conquer each other, in pursuit of land. A severe drought in 2018 ruined crops, cattle and lands, making survival the greatest challenge. The deforestation, desertification and over-farming of the semi-arid land, isolated floods and the decline in river and lake levels further exacerbates the problem. Added to this mix are militant insurgencies. This has resulted in millions

fleeing within their own countries or further afield. The more fortunate ones make it either to relatives' homes or refugee camps. Many perish.

But God is in this place. In these Muslim-majority nations in this region, churches are being planted and are growing and thriving. Muslim background believers are growing in their faith. In refugee camps, believers are providing care and counselling. Through translators, Christians coordinate prayer meetings in camps, often linking them with local churches. Untold numbers of fleeing Muslims quietly come to Christ while being sheltered and cared for by Christian families or church communities. To the dying and thirsty, hope is springing up in this dry and weary land.

Watch a short 2-minute video about the displaced people of the Sahel:

<https://www.prayercast.com/displaced-people-in-sahel.html>

- Pray for those whose livelihoods have been destroyed, that God will be their protection and provision.
- Pray for all those who are suffering, especially children separated from their parents and those who have lost family members - that God will be their comfort.
- Ask God for workers who are able to live simply in the very challenging physical and spiritual environments in this region.

Source of some material: <https://www.prayercast.com/displaced-people-in-sahel.html>

Tuesday 10th March

Outreach opportunities

Frontiers has workers who are prepared to live in this challenging environment in the Sahel region. One family left the UK to live in Northwest Africa, where they shared the following.

“We have moved back to a place where the temperature is 25 degrees Celsius higher than in the UK, entered an almost zero-humidity zone, changed from western clothes into long, flowing colourful robes and head coverings, given up the pushchair to carry our baby on our backs, become minorities in our faith and ethnicity, work with people from many nations, speak 3-4 languages interchangeably, gone from insulated brick houses to mud houses, entered into a laid-back culture, moved from English tea to sweet, mint tea, live outside more than inside and are the only Christian family for hundreds of miles.

It is tough to live like this, but we are still passionate to see the local Muslims and Fulani entering into the fullness of life in Christ that they were created for. We still have a vision to see the whole of the Sahel come under the Kingdom of God and to spread the hope of Jesus to the north of Africa. We’re still committed to seeing families transformed who will form the building blocks of the church here. But the great thing is, God is even more passionate about these things and we are aligning with Him! He will see them fulfilled! So, yes – we’re limited, humbled and human. But there’s manna for us every morning from God and it strengthens and empowers us to do the works that He has prepared for us.”

- Pray for our workers to find the grace to persevere in this desert land, as long as God has work for them there.
- Pray for them to have everything they need to live and thrive in this place as they live for Jesus to bring His love and blessing to their Muslim community.
- They are in need of more financial support, as so many of our workers across the Muslim world. If you feel moved to support them and others in any way, please get in touch with our finance team at partners@finance.org.uk.

Wednesday 11th March

Fulani **Pop: 40 million** **Islam: 99.5%**

Yesterday we mentioned the Fulani people. They are the largest nomadic people group in the world and probably the largest unreached people group in Africa. They number around 40 million, living across the Sahel region. They work largely as cattle herders. The decreasing availability of land through drought has led to conflict with neighbouring farmers of different tribes. They have followed Islam for over 1,000 years and their nomadic lifestyle makes it difficult to reach them with the Good News of Jesus. Currently there are a few groups of believers, but still very few compared to the total Fulani population.



We have heard of a local Fulani man who has recently been reading a copy of the book of Genesis in Pulaar, the language of the Fulani people. He was so excited by what he read, that he didn’t go to work one day, saying, “I have been reading it since I woke up and I can’t put it down!”

We have also heard reports of growing numbers of believers in Mauritania. In an area around just one city alone, there are

known to be over 100 believers. They are now praying about how to plant new churches in their villages. Wives of male Muslim background believers are coming to faith and some want to be baptised. They are encouraged as they meet together to share God's word and teach one another.

As wonderful as this is, it is attracting attention from locals, shocked that there are so many Fulani believers in this Muslim nation. In Mauritania's tribal culture, leaving Islam is not only religious betrayal, but also betrayal of the tribe and family. It is a huge risk for a Mauritanian to become a Christian. If their faith is discovered, they may not only lose their status in their community but also their citizenship. Conversion from Islam is illegal.

Africa Inland Mission have produced a 2-minute video on this people group:

<https://vimeo.com/243101308>

- Please pray for new Fulani believers as they risk so much to follow Jesus.
- Pray for Fulani believers to be wise and bold as they share the Good News.
- Let's praise and thank God for all He is doing among the Fulani people.

Source of some material: <http://prayafrica.org/project/fulani-west-africa/>

Thursday 12th March

Mauritania

Pop: 4.5 million

Muslim: 99.3%

We have recently been praying for countries in the north and east of Africa. Let's spend the next three days praying for Mauritania, the furthest country in the west of the Sahel region.

Mauritania has been under military rule for more than 30 years, with only a short democratic interlude in 2007. Promises to bring democracy back to the country have been thwarted by rigged elections. The unstable political situation of the country has been characterised by successive coups, with the army serving as the country's dominant political institution. The current president of the country, Mohamed Ould El-Ghazouani, was elected in June 2019. He was the candidate for the ruling Islamist party, which came to power in a military coup in 2008, and many observers consider the election process to have been unfair and fraudulent. The country is formally a multi-party democracy, but its parliament is completely dominated by the ruling Islamist party; indeed the country has officially been designated as the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.



Today, this country faces many similar challenges to those across the northern half of the African continent. It is one of the world's poorest countries. It is estimated that one third of Mauritanian children are malnourished. Unemployment is high at 31% and particularly affects young people; two out of three of the unemployed are less than 35 years old. This and the political and social situation in Mauritania make the country conducive to the rise of radical Islam. Corruption is widespread and

powerful people with connections to the army and presidency can enrich themselves and act with impunity.

- Pray for President Ghazouani and his regime to prioritise respect for all human rights, irrespective of ethnicity or religious background.
- According to Al Jazeera, hundreds of thousands of people are at risk of going hungry in the coming year in Mauritania owing to a lack of crops. Pray that people are spared from famine.
- Pray against any insurgency and that radical Islamists would come to know the Saviour they persecute.

Sources of material: World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International.
<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/mauritania/>

Friday 13th March

Slavery in Mauritania

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” Eph 2:14

It is a shocking fact that slavery still exists in Mauritania today. It was the last country in the world to abolish slavery in 1981 and in 2007 it was criminalised, but in reality slavery still exists as the law has not been enforced. Many, including government officials turn a blind eye to it. It has led to social division and acrimony. The Haratines, a black ethnic group making up half of the population are Mauritania’s ‘slave caste.’ The rest of the population is divided between the white Moors and other black ethnic groups. The Haratines are at the bottom of the social scale and since they were born into slavery, many just assume that hard work, abuse and a lack of education is their lot in life.

Many Haratines believe in a misguided interpretation of Islam: slaves are told that their paradise is bound to their masters. In fact, Islam dictates that a Muslim cannot enslave a Muslim. Education is the main key to reform – education for both the misguided illiterate Haratines as well as their educated masters. However, there are few teachers as well as few students in the black schools, and the buildings have in many cases fallen into disrepair. This is because there is apartheid in Mauritania. There are white neighbourhoods and white schools and black neighbourhoods and black schools. White Moors opt for private schools.

Mauritania's government denies slavery is widespread and says cases are rare and handled swiftly. Anti-slavery groups paint another picture, in which the state rarely supports victims and people of influence protect slave owners, who share their class. Haratines, whether slaves or free, face ongoing discrimination and marginalisation across Mauritanian society.

- Cry out for an end to the practise of slavery in Mauritania and for reforms to be put in place that give equity to all.

- Pray for all Haratines to have access to the truth of God’s Word and to know that they are fearfully and wonderfully made and have value in God’s eyes.
- Pray for efforts by organisations that are attempting to reach and teach the Haratines and enable them to know and believe that they are beloved children of our Heavenly Father.

Sources: World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International.
Window International Network

Saturday 14th March

Hungry for the Word

Arab World Media supports Muslims through online discipleship and by connecting them with other believers near to them. They posted the following article on their website:

“Abu grew up in a conservative Muslim family. By the age of 8, he had memorised the Qur’an. By the age of 21, he lived on his own in a different city to his family, giving him a measure of freedom. One day as he was browsing the internet, Abu encountered some information about the Christian faith. The words he read stayed with him. He then watched some videos on the genealogy of Jesus Christ and it wasn’t long before he was convinced that Jesus is the true Saviour of the world.

Abu talked to a believer online who answered his questions and shared about Jesus’ salvation through the cross. He was hungry to understand the Word of God. He read the Gospel of Luke but there was so much more that Abu wanted to know. He wondered if there was a Christian in Mauritania whom he could meet face to face.

Abu then had a dream in which he met three people who taught him about the Bible. An Egyptian couple who were visiting the country came to see him together with a friend of theirs and they taught him from the Bible, gave him a copy and prayed for him. He was so excited when he learned that the Egyptian couple had prolonged their stay in Mauritania. He took a whole month off work so that he could study the Bible with them each day.”

- Pray for Abu as he continues to explore the meaning of being a disciple of Jesus.
- Pray that he would not feel isolated from his friends and community, but will find ways to share his faith with them.
- Pray that more Muslims in Mauritania would come to know Christ’s transformative love and that Abu would find other believers to meet with so they can encourage one another in their life of faith.

Source: <https://www.arabworldmedia.org/articles/hungry-for-the-word/>