

## **TAJIKISTAN**



### **Missionaries,**

Missionaries traveled the "Silk road" during the dark ages, and were likely the first Christian witnesses in what is now known as Tajikistan. At the West-end of the Himalaya and about the size of Wisconsin, Tajikistan is landlocked by China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and shares its complete southern border with Afghanistan.

### **Moslems,**

The Persians populated it in the 6th century, and Arabs brought their new religion (Islam) in the 7th to 8th century. The population of 7 million is about 95% Islam, with roughly 75% ethnically Persian (Iranian), and roughly 25% ethnically Turkic, and 10% lives in the capital Dushanbe. Uzbeks controlled Tajikistan from the 15th to 18th century. The Russians controlled it since the 1860s, and incorporated it in the USSR in 1924. When Tajikistan became independent in 1991 it was secularized Islam and used to heavy government restrictions on religion. Much of Islam is nominal.

### **Christians,**

Connected with European Baptists, while the Soviet Union broke up, the few small Baptist Churches in Tajikistan were accepted as independent union, to still be part of the EBF (European Baptist Federation). Reading frequent and extensive reports on the country indicate that it deals with issues that are common for former Soviet states in central Asia, as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as families (lords) in power heavily enriching themselves, and secret service (KGB heritage) putting restrictions on religion; primarily on Moslems but also on the few Christians (less than 0.1% Christians). Many "orthodox" Russians migrated.

### **Poverty,**

After the civil war with regional war-lords ceased in 1997, there is some stability, but still the country is the poorest of all former Soviet states with \$795 annual GDP (2% of the USA). 83% of the population is under the poverty line. Spiritual poverty and hunger are also widespread. In recent months government restrictions called hundreds of students back from a.o. Imam-schools in Iran and Pakistan, while forbidding foreign religious education it also affects the Christians. Religious literature (including evangelistic or theological books) are charged a fee of up to \$0,75 per page (for the censorship office) when brought into the country.

### **Thank for answers to prayer:**

- Birth of the Tajik Church, with indigenous Christians.
- Improvement in stability since the end of the civil war.
- Broadcasting and internet options to share the Gospel.

### **Challenges for prayer:**

- Pray that churches may change from the mode to surviving restrictions or hardship, to a mode of testimony, missional witness and evangelism.
- Pray for supply of Christian literature and training books
- Pray for training, wisdom and protection for Christian leaders.
- Pray that Islamic extremism may be restrained and especially that the many nominal Muslims may have opportunities to discover Christ.
- Pray that Christians might find ways to teach and minister despite government restrictions.
- Pray for unity among the new young emerging churches in Tajikistan.
- Pray for the one million Tajiks living and working outside the country to support their families back home.
- Pray for unreached groups like the non-Russified rural Tajiks; the Uzbeks, the largest minority; and for the mountain peoples, where there are no churches or Christians known; and for the other ethnicities.
- Pray for the use of the Tajik Bible, and the progress of the work on the more simplified Bible translation.
- Pray for the spread and effect of the Jesus film in Tajik.
- Pray for Christian Radio broadcasting 90 minutes weekly in Tajik (by TWR) 2,5 hrs in Uzbek (by others).
- Pray for effect of Satellite TV - Christian programs available in Russian and Farsi (watched by many Tajik)
- Pray for the use and witness of the two websites, which are sharing the gospel in Tajik.
- Pray for Baptist leaders pastors Alexander and Dmitriy.

### **Volunteer Short Term Mission options:**

If you prayerfully feel that God is calling you to serve in this country, please inquire with us for volunteer options with a recommendation from your church and region.

### **Prayer & support for IM Missionaries, the Kalkmans:**

Based in the Czech Republic assigned as liaison and volunteer coordinator from International Ministries with the EBF (European Baptist Federation), Tajikistan is one of our 50+ partners.

Your help and support to do our ministry is needed. If you feel God is leading you to partner with us in reaching out to Europe, please pray for us and consider financial support by sending a check to International Ministries (with "Target Kalkman" in the memo) to: P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA. 19482; or go: [www.internationalministries.org/missionaries/70](http://www.internationalministries.org/missionaries/70) to give on-line; or call IM office at: 1-800-222-3872 ext. 2324

Contact us at: [www.kalkmaneuropa.org](http://www.kalkmaneuropa.org) by clicking on "Send us an e-mail" in the top bar, asking for prayer information and newsletters. Thank you for your prayers! Thank you for your support!  
-- Pieter & Nora Kalkman

