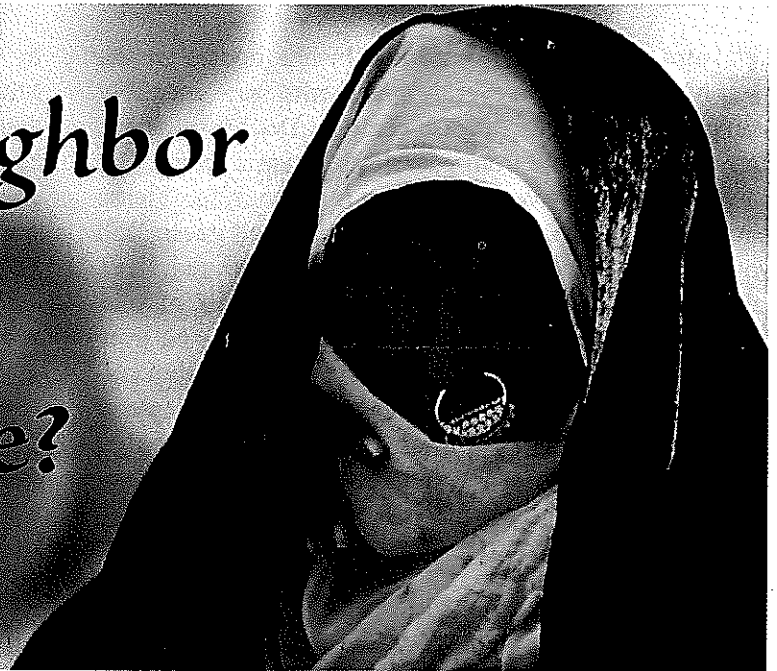


## Friendly Neighbor or Fanatic Foe?

by Paul Parks



There has been much discussion in recent months about the character and values of Muslims generally, and Arab Muslims in particular. Often questions have been posed, such as “Are Arab Muslims friendly, hospitable people or are they hostile fanatics, wanting to kill every Christian they meet?” One expatriate who lived among Middle Eastern Muslims for several years observed, “They are so hospitable and friendly, but a certain tension exists in the culture that may produce explosive reactions even at unexpected moments.”

Recently at a church meeting I spoke to a sincere lady who believed that Christians could not visit certain Muslim countries because the Muslims living there would kill any Christian they met. I was glad to tell her that was not true. Muslims expect that everyone from the West is a Christian and are often fascinated by America and want to know more about our life.

When such a question is posed about people who are generally unknown to us, it is easy to speak in generalities as though the entire group has the same behavior and values. This is especially true if most of our information

comes from the mass media. Because most news broadcasts feature those who do evil, our understanding and opinion can be colored by this and carry a definite bias.

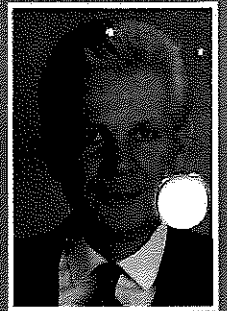
We need to understand that the members of a large group, such as the Muslims, have differing values, beliefs and behavior, just as Christians or even Americans do. However, it is possible to describe in broad terms three different types of Muslims based upon their knowledge of their holy book, the Qur’an, and their desire to lead a religious life. The **Secular** Muslim knows little of the Qur’an and desires to live his life on earth largely apart from God. The **Moderate** Muslim knows more about the Qur’an and wants to make his faith relevant to modern times. These two groups interpret the verses in the Qur’an that condone violence in such a way as to show more tolerance toward people of other faiths. The **Fundamentalist**, however, applies the violent verses as he sees fit and will use any means to show non-Muslims the power of Islam hoping to convert them to the faith. The underlying truth is that a majority of Muslims are peace-loving people, yet they understand what motivates the extremists.



# Until All Have Heard

*How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?  
Romans 10:14*

**Jim Bennett, Director**  
**Center for**  
**Ministry to Muslims**



From my years of visiting Muslim homes in the Middle East, several statements are indelibly stamped in my mind: "Please come in. Double welcome. Only good can come from your visit. Please sit down. You have honored us by your visit. Here is tea or coffee. Please have something to eat. You are our preferred guest. Will you stay for dinner? It's early, please stay longer. Here, take some cakes with you. May the remainder of your evening be filled with good and your morning be even better." The first-class hospitality in the Arab Muslim culture was wonderful; yet, just below the surface a sense of potential violence always hovered. It was a very contradictory world!



In order to create opportunities for witness among Muslims, it is imperative that we become familiar with their basic cultural traits. In this issue's lead article we have chosen to emphasize the cultural trait of hospitality and its opposite—violence. The underlying question we want to answer is: Why are Muslims, especially Middle Eastern Muslims, so hospitable and yet seemingly capable of producing inexplicable episodes of violence? Tension between hospitality and violence is a complex and contradictory part of Middle Eastern Muslim culture.

The approach adopted in this investigation of two components of Muslim culture draws on insights from the discipline of cultural anthropology. How does life for Muslims make sense? How do various cultural themes reinforce and validate one another? What are the dominant themes in Arab Muslim culture? It is not sufficient to supply ourselves with a list of guidelines of the customs of Muslims. Rather, an understanding of the assumptions about reality that lie beneath such surface behavior is needed.

In his book *Touching the Soul of Islam*, Bill Musk lists the following eight "Themes in Tension" that are typical of Arab Muslim culture: Male and Female, Family and Individual, Honor and Shame, Hospitality and Violence, Time and Space, Language and Silence, Brotherhood and Rivalry, and Resignation and Manipulation. Our lead article touches only on hospitality and violence.

Musk further states: "If we are wishing to communicate at the level of spirit or soul, we need to learn how the Middle Easterner's spirit or soul functions. Ultimately, each Muslim is a separate individual with a unique mix of accumulated experience and inner motivation. He or she needs to be respected as such. Eventually, maybe our apostolic mission will be more suitably fulfilled as we learn to express it in ways appropriate to human spirits very different from our own."

In the particular situation in which you live, how might a growing understanding of cultural themes and social structures be important in your quest to share the gospel with Muslims, especially Arab Muslims? Please read the lead article and let the Holy Spirit speak to you.



# MUSLIM WORLD NEWS



## Eritrea

More arrests along with forced conscriptions targeting Eritrea's independent Protestant Christians have been reported during the last two weeks of April, despite a blanket denial by Asmara officials on May 1 that any religious persecution exists. In an incident in the capital city over Orthodox Easter weekend, two members of the government recognized Evangelical Lutheran Church were arrested and held for three days. Elsewhere, military police invaded work places and private homes to arrest 56 members of independent Pentecostal churches in the northern-most province of Sahel. The military swoop, which occurred on April 29, was justified as "conscription for military service." But according to associates of the forced conscripts, most of the 16 women and 40 men had already completed their mandatory military service. Many of those conscripted were teachers and professionals. They have not been seen since.—*Compass*

## Iran

The country's constitutional oversight body, the Guardian Council, again has rejected a parliamentary bill calling for equal blood-price for non-Muslim Iranians. This means that the worth of a Christian's life remains a twelfth of a Muslim's. The council, comprised of six hard-line clerics appointed by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and six lawyers, rejected the bill because it contradicted Islamic law.—*Pulse*

## Indonesia

Robert Marthinus, an Indonesian pastor jailed in July 1999 in Padang, West Sumatra, was released from prison on April 22. He served more than three years and nine months for allegedly proselytizing a Muslim girl, what Indonesian Christians consider a serious "miscarriage of justice." Marthinus was jailed along with five others for helping a teenage Muslim girl who came to them saying she had been rejected by her family after becoming a Christian. Many suspect local Muslim extremists of mounting a "sting operation" against the Christians leaders. Two of the six, Mr. Salmon Ongirwalu and Rev. Yanawardi Koto, are still being held in prison.—*Compass*

## Iraq

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqi Christians want the country's next constitution to guarantee them full rights to worship, build churches and cultural centers and educate their children according to Christian principles. They also seek to take part in government and not suffer discrimination. While Saddam's government largely tolerated the Christian minority of around 1 million and allowed them freedoms unheard of in other Muslim countries, Christians often suffered job discrimination and lack of opportunity. The former government also nationalized Christian schools and forced Christians wanting to marry Muslims to convert to Islam.—*Pulse*

## Lebanon

An Arab convert to Christianity was killed by a bomb blast outside his Tripoli apartment, adjacent to the home of a European missionary family thought to have been targeted in the attack. Jamil Ahmed al-Rifai, 28, died on May 6 when a 4.5 pound bomb exploded just before midnight in the Qubba suburb of Tripoli, Lebanon's northern port city. The Jordanian Christian was an innocent victim of the attack, which Dutch missionary Gerrit "Joep" Griffioen, who survived, said was "almost 100 percent certain" to be religiously motivated. Griffioen told the Dutch Associated Press that he had been "repeatedly threatened" during his 20 years in Lebanon.—*Compass*

## Sudan

Six weeks after a court jailed an Episcopal priest for refusing to tear down his church, Rev. Samuel Dobai Amum has been set free. Amum was sent to Soba Prison until he either demolished the mudbrick St. Matthew's Parish on the outskirts of Khartoum North or paid 7 million Sudanese dinars (about \$2,700) to purchase the land on which he had built it 11 years ago. He was released on May 21, just after a court in Khartoum accepted payment for the property on which his congregation has worshipped since 1987. Two days following his release, Amum's congregation packed into St. Matthew's Parish for Friday worship, a service that lasted five hours.—*Compass*

# Friendly Neighbors

continued

**A Tradition of Hospitality:** Most Westerners are unaware of the long tradition of hospitality that exists among Arab Muslims in the Middle East. This practice is often expressed in short phrases that people teach their children, such as: “Our home is your home.” This phrase is spoken to people who arrive from a journey and who may be complete strangers. In the Bedouin tradition, Arab hospitality mandates an Arab person take care of the stranger or visitor in his tent until that visitor is able to continue his journey.

The most common social event used to express hospitality is eating a meal together. A good host must be prepared for people to arrive at any time of the day or night. Guests can arrive without warning, and may stay for several hours. In most homes a special room, apart from the rest of the home, is set aside just for guests. When guests arrive there is a long series of greetings that must be exchanged. These can take several minutes to complete and involve questions about the condition and health of the family and life in general. Then it is time for coffee or tea with cakes and cookies. The guests are urged to stay while a meal is prepared. The home, or an entire village, can be judged on its ability to provide for guests.

Visits to a home and family are required at times of “rights of passage” such as a wedding, graduation, birth, death or even a circumcision. To fail to visit or show hospitality at such times could adversely affect relationships between families for years.

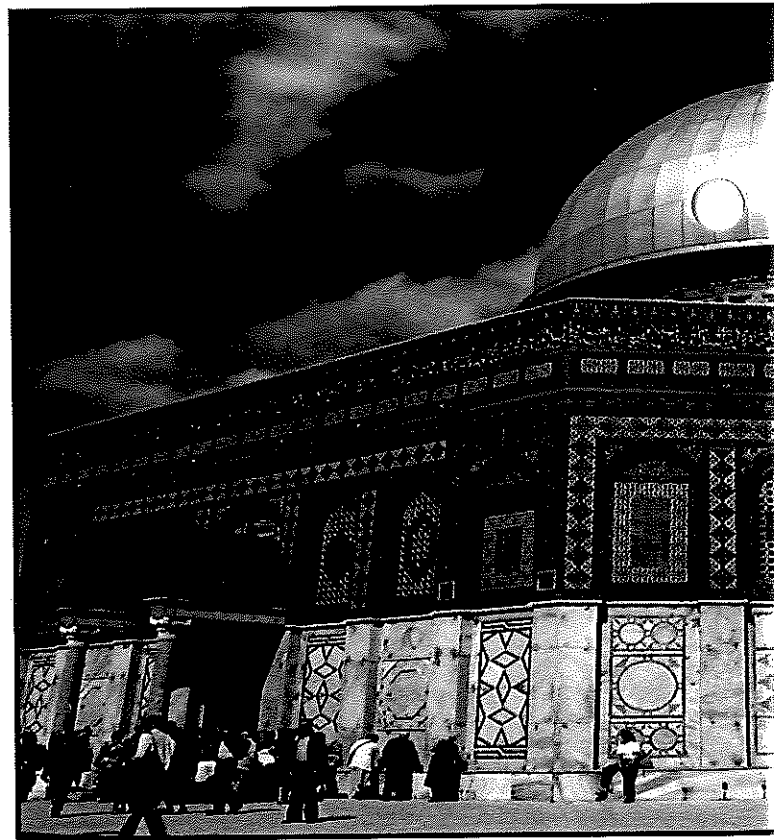
Even outsiders living among Arabs experience this same hospitality and concern. Arabs have a sincere desire to protect the outsider when any danger or hardship may be approaching, such as a confrontation with fundamentalists. This is based on the conviction that protection must be provided for any guests under their cover.

What does the Qur’an say about violence as seen through the eyes of secular and moderate Muslims? They may ignore the verses advocating violence and embrace the verses that speak about kindness and peace toward “the people of the Book” (Christians and Jews), such as:

*So, if you (Muhammad) are in doubt concerning that which We have revealed unto you then ask these who are reading the Book (Bible) before you (Surah 10:94).*

*You will find the nearest in love to the believers those who say: “We are Christians” (Surah 5:82).*

Many Muslims see these verses as the approach to take to non-Muslims if Islam is to be a religion of peace.

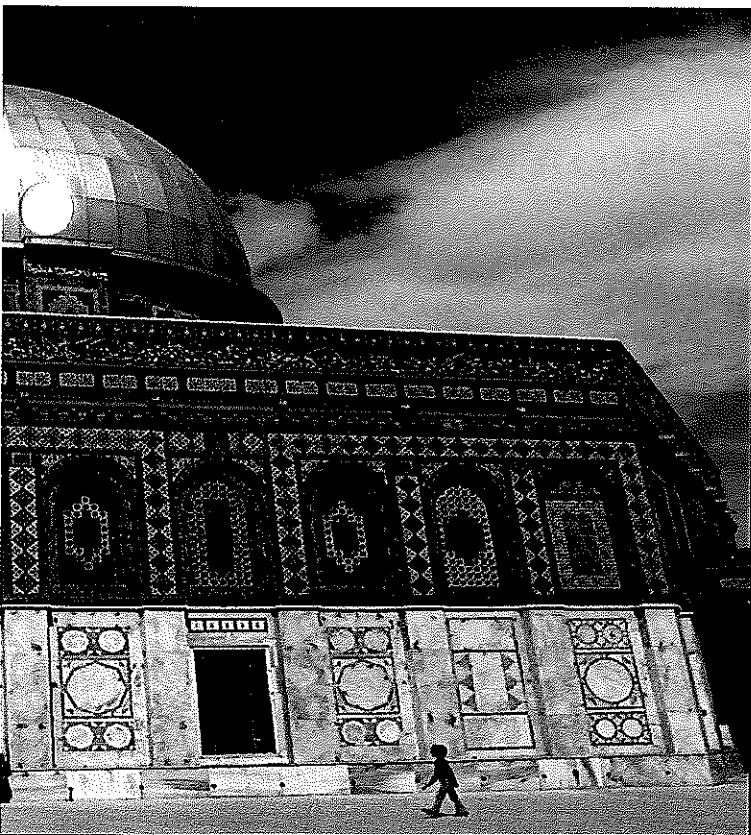


**A Violent Edge:** There is another side to Middle Eastern Islamic culture—the side which has been called the “violent edge.” A common phrase in the Arab world reflects the darker side: “I against my brother, my brother and I against the stranger.” This side of Islam is taken by the extremists—the people who look to Muhammad’s example from his later life—and the words of the Qur’an from that period that allow interpretations involving violence.



In the early years of Muhammad's "ministry" when his followers were few, he spoke kindly about Christians and Jews, probably with the hope of converting them to Islam. When he moved from Mecca to Medina, he became more like an earthly king and military leader. In this later stage, he changed his opinion concerning Christians and Jews, as seen in such statements as:

*Jihad is ordained for you (Surah 2:216).*



*Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the last Day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His messenger and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth among the people of the scripture until they pay the tax with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (Surah 9:29).*

*And fight them until there is no more Unbelief and all*

*worship is for Allah (Surah 2:193).*

*Kill the unbelievers (mushrikun) wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush. But if they repent and perform the public prayers and give alms, then leave their way free (Surah 9:5).*

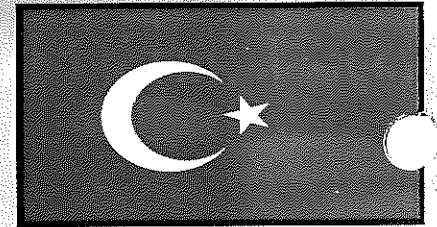
These verses and other similar ones directly contradict the earlier verses. Orthodox Islamic interpretations say that the earlier verses were replaced by these later ones, which may be used to advocate violence. Many Muslims believe these verses do not apply for today and believe that Islam must be a peaceful religion, winning converts by the spoken and written word, and not by the sword.

The answer to our original question is complex, because Islam is a complex religion. As in other faiths, the response of an individual depends on how he has been trained in his religion. So it is in Islam. Most Muslims have been told Islam is a religion of peace. They want to live in peace, to raise their family and go to heaven. They usually want to help spread Islam, but not in a violent way. A small number, often in desperate situations, are willing to try to advance Islam by any means, often in a violent way, with the promise of entry into paradise. They get this understanding from people who have told them, often with great assurance, that death during jihad guarantees entrance into paradise for themselves as well as their family.

As Muslims come to the West, we, as followers of Jesus, have two choices in our relationship with them. We can either view them as a threat to our way of life and our freedom of religion and respond to them with fear and anger. Or, we can view their coming as an opportunity, sent from God to test and strengthen our faith and to help these who are living in darkness to see the light. If we respond with anger, we will be no different than people of the world. Jesus told us how we should respond: "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Our goal should be to fulfill the law of love as Jesus practiced it.



# TURKEY



**Population:** 70,000,000

**Religions:** Muslim 99.6%, Christian 0.32%

**Official Language:** Turkish

**Peoples:** Turks 76-80%, Kurds 14-20%, Arabs 1.8%,  
Muslim minorities 1.8%, Refugees 1.3%

The Republic of Turkey straddles both Europe and Asia. Turkey's cultural links with Central Asia and proximity to conflicts in Iraq and the Balkans have enhanced Turkey's strategic importance. Once guardian of all the holy places of Islam, Turkey has officially been a secular state since reforms of the 1920s. Islam has become a more important political factor, making the lot of non-Muslim minorities more difficult despite the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. Turkey remains the largest unreached nation in the world.

## *Pray that...*

... God will create a hunger in the hearts of the Dimili and an openness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

... God will grant wisdom to those who are working to get scriptures to the Dimili Kurds.

Information from *Operation World*, 2001 edition and Bethany World Prayer Center's "The Unreached Peoples Prayer Profiles."

## *Unreached People Group...*

### *Dimili Kurds of Turkey*

**Location:** Turkey, Iran and Iraq

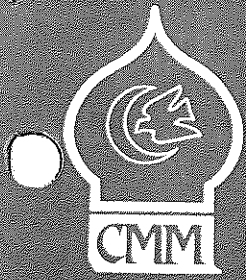
**Population:** 1,200,000

**Religion:** Muslim (Alawites 98%) (Sunnis 1%)

**Language:** Dimili

The Kurds are the largest people group who do not have their own homeland. Instead, they spread across Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The area, known as "Kurdistan," was divided into three nations after World War II. The Dimili Kurds inhabit the northern edge of Kurdistan in eastern Turkey.

The Dimili Kurds differ from other Kurds in primarily two ways: language and religion. The Dimilis speak their own distinct dialect of Kurdish. While most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, the majority of the Dimili are followers of the "Alevi Sect" of Islam.



# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims  
Around the World!



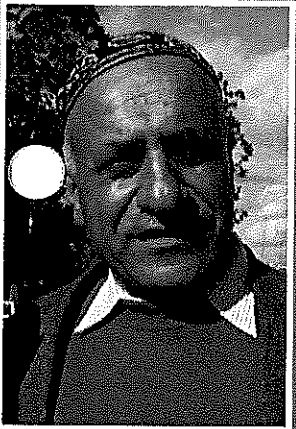
**Friday, September 5, 2003. Please pray**

*...for the Indonesian Christians who have been displaced by years of persecution. Many are living in refugee camps and are suffering from ailments, such as malaria.*

*...that peace will reign in the hearts of Christians in Iraq—Kurds, Assyrians and Armenians. May God protect them and let their lives so radiate with confidence and hope that others will seek to know the Savior.*

*...for qualified Arabic speakers who are able to help translate Arabic language radio scripts into English so these messages may be translated into other languages.*

*...for the CMM team member who will be participating next week in the KAIROS missionary training program being held in Brazil. Pray that many of these missionary candidates will be called to work among Muslims.*



**Friday, September 12, 2003. Please pray**

*...for families of the victims of the April earthquake in Turkey. Many school children lost their lives in that quake. Pray that disasters like this will open doors for Christians to share love, concern and friendship during these times.*

*...that security may be increased in Iraq to prevent the widespread looting and damage to property, and the country will be speedily brought back to order.*

*...that churches may continue to multiply in Ethiopia. Praise God for the many witch doctors and other villagers who have come to faith.*

*...that godly women will be raised to positions of leadership in Morocco and will use their power to advance the kingdom of God.*



**Friday, September 19, 2003. Please pray**

*...for work among university students in Kosova. They seem to be the most open to the gospel. Pray for the right people to minister on the campuses.*

*...that the responsiveness of Algerians to the gospel will continue and that God will raise up the necessary workers for outreach.*

*...that the churches in the United Arab Emirates will seek God for strategic ways to minister to children in that nation.*

*...for the students at the Western Pentecostal Bible College in British Columbia, Canada, who will be taking an Islamic course being taught by a CMM team member next week. Pray that they will catch a vision for the great need of the Muslim world.*

**Friday, September 26, 2003. Please pray**

*...for a resolution to the conflict that continues between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. In the northern state of Bauchi church leaders have called for the creation of separate public schools for Christians because of the hatred generated.*

*...for the Church in Jordan in its outreach to refugees who have taken refuge in Jordan as a result of the war in Iraq, as well as relief efforts being made inside Iraq. Pray that there will be a spiritual impact on the lives of those being ministered to.*

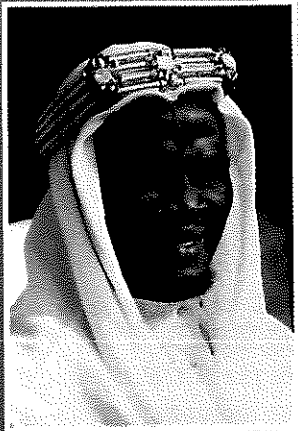
*...for the systematic evangelization that is happening in Chad. Thank God for the concerted effort in reaching the unreached people groups. Pray for a great response.*

Pray, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. (1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)



# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims  
Around the World!



**Friday, October 3, 2003. Please pray**

*...for the Church in Malaysia as they are restricted by the government in their worship and witness. Pray that they will continue to successfully exert pressure to enable them to have the Scriptures in their local language.*

*...for the Eritrean Pentecostal Christians who are being prevented from holding religious services. Pray for more than 50 Christians who were beaten and imprisoned in May.*

**Friday, October 10, 2003. Please pray**

*...for two Christians from Eritrea and Ethiopia who were deported from Saudi Arabia in May. No doubt they had to leave Saudi with nothing. May the Lord supply their needs.*

*...for a medical doctor in Turkey who is a new Christian. She recently suffered a heart attack. Pray for her speedy recovery and a reduction of stress in her life.*

*...for the CMM team members who will be ministering this weekend and next week in a missions convention and seminar in Ecuador.*

**Friday, October 17, 2003. Please pray**

*...that the situation in Cyprus will be resolved peacefully. Greece is attempting to annex Cyprus. If Southern Cyprus is annexed by Greece, Turkey will likely annex the North.*

*...for Christian workers in Belgium as they distribute Christian literature to Turkish homes in Brussels, Liege and Charleroi. Pray that many Turks will respond favorably.*

*...for a Bible translation in Central Asian Russian. This translation will use Central Asian terms that are culturally relevant to those from a Muslim background.*

**Friday, October 24, 2003. Please pray**

*...for the thousands of prisoners in 22 prisons in Kazakhstan who have received the New Testament on cassette. Pray that they will understand and make Jesus their Savior.*

*...that many Turkish-speakers will find the Turkish Christian websites on the Internet and respond. There are more than 30 sites that are now linked at [www.giriskapisi.net](http://www.giriskapisi.net).*

*...for relief workers to have a spiritual impact on the people of Iraq. Even before the war more than half of the people were dependent on humanitarian aid for food.*

*...for a pastor and peace advocate in Sulawesi, Indonesia, who has been imprisoned since August 2002, despite the case being dismissed three times for lack of evidence.*

**Friday, October 31, 2003. Please pray**

*... that the expatriate Christian community of about 50,000 practicing believers in Saudi Arabia will be encouraged and strengthened despite the constant surveillance they endure and the threat of being imprisoned or deported at any time.*

*...for the Episcopal priest who has been jailed "indefinitely" in the Sudan for refusing to demolish the church he built for war refugees. Pray that the congregation will rally around his wife and children and that God will provide a meeting place for them.*

*...for Z., producing women's literature in a studio set up in her apartment in Algeria.*



*I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. (1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)*