

## **IRAN - THE GOSPEL IMPACTING**

"Not only Iranians in western exile, but also Muslims in Iran are coming to faith in Christ in their thousands," reports the aid organisation Open Doors. "In the 1980's, we rejoiced over two or three new believers each month. In the 1990's, we were impressed when we heard about a group of new believers. Today, we are just somewhat surprised to discover an entire new underground church," says an Iranian pastor.

The Islamic Revolution took place in 1979; the Shah was deposed, and Ayatollah Khomeini ruled the nation with an iron grip. Almost all Iranians were at least nominal Muslims. There was a minority of around 250,000 Armenian and Assyrian Christians who were allowed to practise their faith, but not in Farsi, the national language, and were forbidden to evangelise. But after 25 years of the Islamic Revolution and its propaganda promising answers to all life's questions, people are disappointed in Islam and its broken promises.

So the nation set off on the quest for alternative answers. People are coming to faith in Christ as never before: an Iranian who emigrated to Scandinavia for economic reasons found Christ there. On his first visit to Iran, he was itching to tell his relatives of his new faith. Within one month, 50 of his relatives came to faith. By the time he returned again one year later, the church had grown to over 250.

"60% of all Iranians have heard the Gospel. Children of ministers and Mullahs are also coming to faith. Every day, 50 Iranian youths secretly join a Christian church, according to Shiite leader Hassan Mohammadi of the Iranian Ministry of Education,

One example of the openness to the Gospel: an Iranian Bible courier was on a long bus journey. The bus was very modern, with air conditioning and a video player. The Bible courier went to the driver and gave him a video of the Jesus Film, asking him to play it. The courier was then shocked to discover a Mullah a few seats behind him. How would the Mullah react to the Jesus Film? The man could not keep his eyes off the video, and soon jumped up, shouting with a shaking voice "Please be quiet! This is a film about a holy man, the Prophet Jesus. His life deserves our full attention!" Immediately, the noisy bus fell silent, and the passengers concentrated on the video. At the end of the film, which ends with an evangelistic call, the Mullah sat in his seat, weeping.

These developments are a catastrophe for the Islamic authorities. They have lost control of the church. In September 2004, they arrested 86 Assemblies of God pastors. Pastor Hamid Pourmand, who is still in prison, could face the death sentence, because he is an ex-Muslim. The other pastors have since been released.

Christians meet in independent groups which are springing up like mushrooms - with the exception that they are invisible. In contrast to most Islamic nations, new believers are not immediately expelled from their families. Quite the contrary - the relatives often follow the new believers in their change of faith. There are now far more than a quarter of a million believers in Iran, according to the Iranian authorities, an estimate that is likely to be conservative.

Source: Open Doors [ [Top](#) ]