

YEMEN

In Yemen there are 29 distinct people groups. Following are two of the groups.



Yemeni, North

The Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula are the original Arabs. The Arabian culture was developed by tribes of nomads and villagers who lived in the Arabian Desert. It was also from there that Arab migrations began, eventually leading to the expansion of the Arab world.

The social structure of the Yemeni Arabs consists of four classes of people: the Sayyid, or wealthy (who trace their descent to the grandson of Muhammad), the Qatani, (tribesmen), the Shafi'ite townsmen (merchants, artisans, and craftsmen), and the Akhdam (slaves).

The Yemeni Arabs have had a close association with Islam throughout their history. Today, nearly all of the Yemeni Arab (both in the Republic of Yemen and in the other nations), are Muslims. About half of them are Zaydis Muslims, many are Shafi'ites, and a few are Ismailis.

What are their lives like?

Yemeni Arab society is tribal in structure with over 1,700 different tribes or clans. These various tribes are ruled by sheiks (Arab chiefs), who often fight with each other.

Today, the majority of the Yemeni Arabs in Yemen still live in fortress-like villages that can be easily defended. Each house has windows on all sides and is built facing the outside of the village. All goods and persons passing through town are strictly controlled.

Individual dwellings tend to be elaborately decorated, flat-roofed homes called "town houses." Lime wash and brickwork are used around the windows as a form of artistic design. The rooms usually have some type of carpeting, and when entering the house, people must leave their shoes at the door. The walls are lined with mattresses and cushions to sit on and lean against. A main reception room and a kitchen are located on the top floor. The flat roofs are used by the women for drying laundry.

Little is known about the lifestyle of the small number of Yemeni Arabs who have migrated to other countries. It is assumed that while many of their social customs and traditions are still adhered to, their occupations and living conditions are quite different.

Social life is extremely important to Arabs. They like to share a daily coffee time by sitting on the floor and drinking coffee from cups without handles. Their diet basically consists of wheat bread and porridge made with boiled meat or chicken.

Despite Islamic teachings, the reality that there are different classes of Arabs still persists. The type of clothing worn has become one of the determining factors. Yemeni tribesmen dress differently than other villagers and can be easily recognized. The women wear veils both in town and at home. Boys show that they are becoming men by changing their headgear and wearing daggers.

Yemeni Arab society is patrilineal, inheritances being passed down through the males. Since children are considered a family's greatest asset, females are valued for their ability to bear children.

Although many Muslims are allowed to have up to four wives, most marriages among the Yemeni Arabs are monogamous. In the past, all marriages were arranged by the parents; however, it is becoming more acceptable for young people to choose their own mates. Young girls are considered ready for marriage by age nine.

In recent years, many of the nomads of Yemen have settled into mountain villages where they now raise grains, vegetables, coffee, melons, dates, mangoes, and pomegranates. Domestic animals are kept to supply milk and eggs.

What are their beliefs?

Almost all of the Yemeni Arabs are Muslims, and Islam has greatly influenced their society.

The Zaydis sect of Islam (part of the Shi'ite tradition) is quite fanatical in its form. Most of the Zaydis are warriors and perceive all wars to be a manifestation of Jihad (Muslim crusade against infidels or holy war).

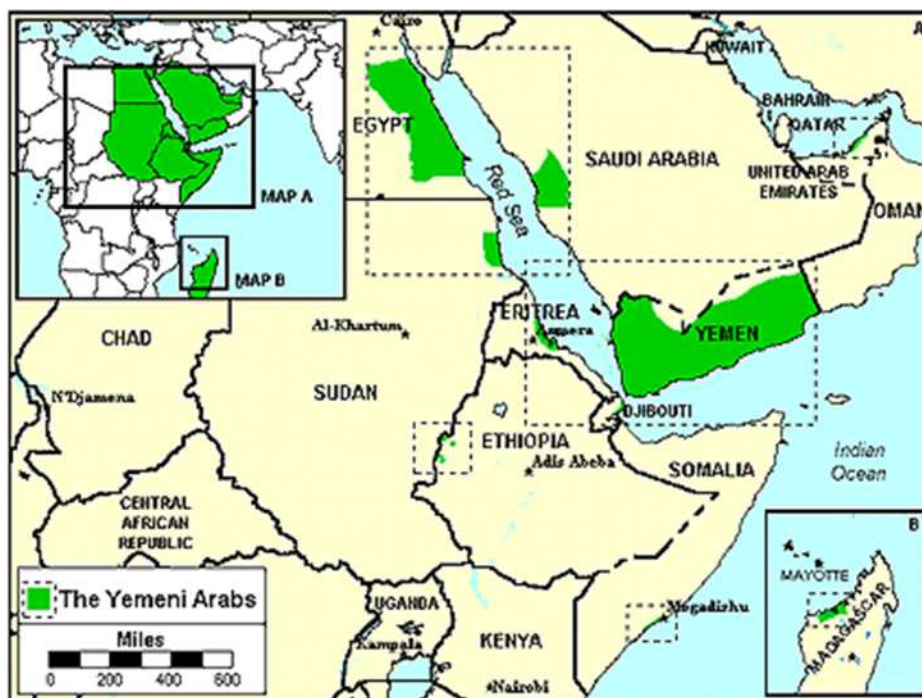
What are their needs?

In many Muslim countries, Muslims who profess faith in Jesus Christ can be put to death. Evangelization efforts are challenging due to restrictions in many of the countries, and general antagonism to the Gospel.

Prayer Points

- * Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to reach out and share the love of Christ.
- * Pray that God will raise up faithful intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Yemeni Arabs.
- * Ask God to give the Yemeni Arab believers opportunities to share the love of Christ with their own people.

- * Pray that their traditional Muslim culture will soften, creating open doors for the Gospel to be preached among them.
- * Ask the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of the Arabs towards Christians, so they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- * Pray that God will reveal Himself to these Muslims through dreams and visions.
- * Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Yemeni Arabs.
- * Pray for translation of the Bible to begin in this people group's primary language.
- * Pray for the availability of the Jesus Film in the primary language of this people.



Yemen is not easily accessible to outsiders, and not open to Christian testimony.

Outreach Ideas

Christian television and radio provide effective means of access that transcends country boundaries.

Pray for the followers of Christ

Pray for the few believers among the Sanaani Arabs, that they would be united around the truth of Scripture, growing in holiness and love.

Pray for the northern tribes of Yemen, that they will increasingly hunger for the righteousness and forgiveness found only in the person and work of Jesus Christ.



Scripture Focus

"Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations." Romans 1:5

Country: Yemen

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

Persecution Rank: 7 (Only top 50 ranked, 1 = highest persecution ranking)

10/40 Window: Yes

People Name in Country: Yemeni, Northern

People Name General: Arab, Northern Yemeni

Alternate People Names: Northern Yemeni Arab

Population in this Country: 11,131,000

Affinity Bloc: Arab World

People Cluster: Arab, Arabian

People Name General: Arab, Northern Yemeni

Primary Language: Arabic, Sanaani Spoken (11,131,000 Speakers)

Primary Religion: Islam

% Christian Adherents: Data not available

% Evangelical: 0.01 %

Mahra



The Mahra are one of the smaller groups of Arabs in the country, composing a small percentage of the total population. The Mahra live in the far eastern corner of Yemen near the borders of Saudi Arabia and Oman. They speak an Arabic dialect called Mahri, Mehri, or Biljaf.

□□Yemen's social structure is based on a tribal system of placement. The tribes are classified into levels of nobility based upon genealogy, responsibility, and marital freedom.

The Sunni Muslim Mahraare classified as semi-nomadic warriors, which is, by Arab standards, a position of low recognition.

What are their lives like? □Most of the Mahra Arab operate in tribes. Each tribe is ruled by a sheik, who is considered an expert in Islam and in relating to the outside world. His responsibilities include administering justice, protecting the tribe, sustaining tribal status, and providing grazing territory for the herds. Their territory is staunchly defended, partly by controlling all of the goods and persons that pass through it. □□The Mahra are divided into two main groups. The first group, the semi-nomads, can be found living in the far northeastern portion of the desert. During the winter grazing months, they stay out with their animals; and in the dry, summer months, they move into the villages. The second group, the settled Mahra, spend the year in small, semi-fortified villages raising camels and goats. Some farming takes place in these villages, and domestic animals are kept to supply milk and eggs.

□□Social life is extremely important to the Mahra. They share a daily coffee time while sitting on the floor and planning the next day's activities. Because wood is expensive and somewhat scarce, animal dung is used as fuel for cooking. The typical daily diet consists of wheat bread and porridge, with an occasional addition of boiled meat or chicken. □□The Mahra are an endogamous tribe, which means that they only marry within a small social circle. They are also generally monogamous (one wife, one husband). In the past, marriages were arranged, but, increasingly, individual choice is becoming acceptable.

Children are seen as the family's greatest asset. They receive inheritances patrilineally (inheritances are passed down through the males). In this system, boys inherit more than girls. The value of young girls is seen in their ability to have children and bond

families through marriage. □ □ Despite the teachings of Islam, traditions that uphold different social classes still persist. The manner of dress has become one of the distinguishing factors of class. Women wear veils both when they are in town and at home. When boys become men, they change their headgear and begin wearing daggers.

What are their beliefs? □ Being Muslims, the Mahra follow the teachings of the prophet Mohammed. They believe that the only way to God is through following the teachings of their holy book, the Koran. Their Muslim religion is a religion of works based on these five "pillars" of faith: (1) A Muslim must affirm that "there is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet." (2) Five times a day he must pray while facing Mecca. (3) He must give alms generously. (4) He must fast during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim year. (5) He must try to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life.

What are their needs? □ The Mahra in Yemen are virtually all Sunni (orthodox) Muslim. Presently there are very few known believers within their communities. A profession of faith in Jesus may cost a Mahra his family, his honor, his job, and sometimes his life. Evangelization will be challenging due to the nature of the Arabs' lifestyle and belief system.

□ **Prayer Points**

* Ask the Lord of the harvest to open the doors of Yemen to the preaching of the Gospel. * Ask the Holy Spirit to call people who are willing to go and share the love of Christ with the Mahra. □

* Pray that God will reveal Himself to the Mahra through dreams and visions. □

* Pray that God will give the small number of Mahra believers boldness to share Christ with their families and friends. □

* Ask God to raise up an army of intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Mahra of Yemen. □ * Pray that strong local churches will be raised up among the Mahra. □

* Pray for completion of Bible translation in this people group's primary language. □

* Pray for the availability of the Jesus Film in the primary language of this people. □

* Pray for Gospel messages to become available in audio format for this people group.