

SYRIA

In Syria there are 33 distinct people groups. Following are two of the groups.

Arab, Najdi Bedouin



The traditional homeland of the Bedouin Arab is the Arabian Desert; however, some groups have migrated north. Syria was one of the first lands to be inhabited by the Bedouin, and today, there are over a million still living in the northern Syrian Desert. Most of these Bedouin are herders of sheep and goats. The most well known group is the Rwala.

The Bedouin fall into two basic social classes. One class is known as the "true" Bedouin, and they live as nomadic shepherds. The other group has embraced farming and is known as the fellahin. The fellahin lead a more settled life on the edge of the desert. In

contrast, the "true" Bedouin have been known for raiding any caravans that cross their paths while journeying across barren deserts. They move into the desert during the rainy winter seasons and back to the desert's edge during the hot, dry summers. They speak Badawi, or as it is more commonly called, Bedouin Arabic.

What are their lives like?

The Bedouin Arab have a relatively harsh existence. The nomads have no permanent homes, but live in portable, black tents made from woven, goathair. The tents are divided by a decorative partition called a gata. Half of the tent is for the women, children, cooking utensils, and storage. The other half contains a fireplace and is used for entertaining. The women do most of the work, while the men socialize and make plans for the group.

The material culture of the Bedouin is limited. Their tents are their main possessions, and animals are very important for their nomadic lifestyle. Camels are their main means of transportation, while sheep and goats are bought and sold.

Dairy products are the main food source for the Bedouin. Milk from camels and goats is made into yogurt and butter. Most of their meals consist of a bowl of milk, yogurt, or rice. Round loaves of unleavened bread are served when available. Dates, which can be found in desert oases, are eaten for dessert. Meat is only served on special occasions such as marriage feasts, ceremonial events, or when guests are present.

To endure the extreme heat of the desert, the Bedouin wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. It is very loose-fitting, allowing for the circulation of air.

Although the Bedouin once considered it degrading to have manual labor jobs, this attitude has changed somewhat in recent years. Due to the need for better health

conditions, more money, and better living conditions, some have accepted wage-paying jobs. However, most of them still despise this type of work.

What are their beliefs?

Almost all of the Bedouin in Syria are Sunni Muslims. Islam is based on the teachings of the prophet Mohammed. The Koran ("holy book" of Islam) was supposedly given to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel.

Islam is a religion of works that is centered on five basic "pillars." (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 make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in his lifetime.

Islam has greatly influenced the lives of the Bedouin. For example, to preserve their people, the Bedouin are only allowed to marry those inside their own group. Also, the society is patrilineal, which means that inheritances are passed down through the males.

What are their needs?

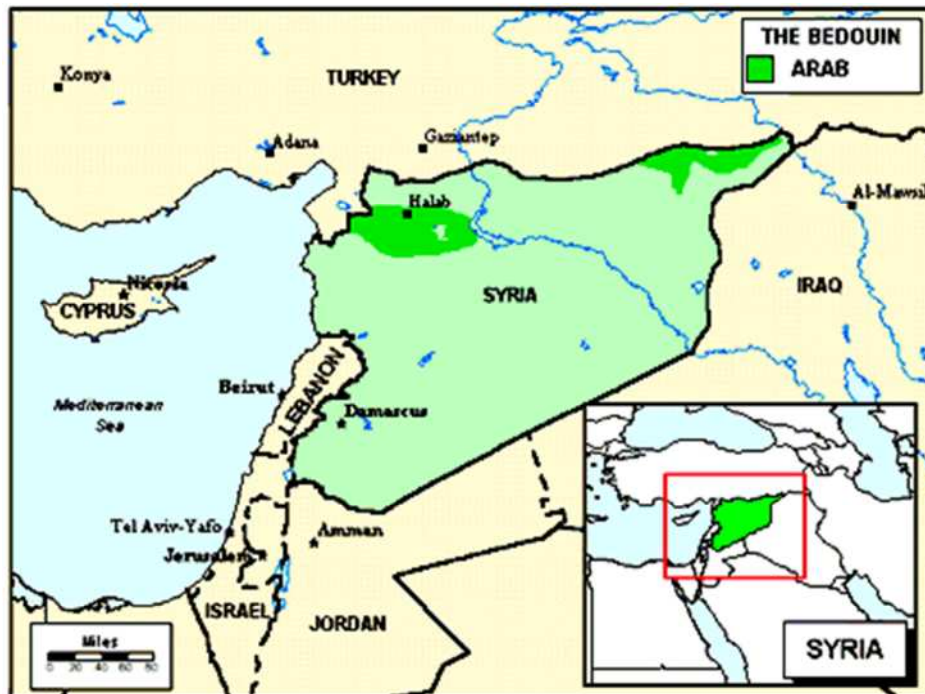
"In most interpretations of Shariah, conversion by Muslims to other religions is forbidden and is termed apostasy. Muslim theology equates apostasy to treason, and in most interpretations of shariah, the penalty for apostasy is death."
(<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

Evangelization efforts among the Bedouin are challenging due to the harsh and unsettled nature of their lifestyle. Missionaries who are able to endure the severe conditions of the Syrian Desert are needed.

Prayer Points

- * Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to reach out and share the love of Christ with them.
- * Pray that God will raise faithful intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Bedouin.
- * Ask God to strengthen, encourage, and protect the few known Christian Bedouin living in Syria.
- * 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 Bedouin Arab towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- * Pray that God will reveal Himself to them through dreams and visions.

- * Ask the Lord to raise strong local churches among the Bedouin.
- * 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.



Country: Syria

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

Persecution Rank: 41 (Only top 50 ranked, 1 = highest persecution ranking)

10/40 Window: Yes

Population in this Country: 1,608,000

Largest Provinces: Al Hasakah, Al Qunaytirah, ArRaqqah, As Suwayda'

Dar'a, DayrazZawr, Dimashq, Halab, Hamah, Hims

Affinity Bloc: Arab World

People Cluster: Bedouin, Arabian

People Name General: Arab, Saudi – Najdi

Primary Language: Arabic, Najdi Spoken

Primary Religion: Islam

Religion Sub-division: Sunni

% Christian Adherents: Data not available

% Evangelical: Data not available

Druze



Druze refer to themselves as 'Mowahhidoon' (plural) or 'Mowahhid' (singular), which means "monotheistic". They are commonly referred to as "Druze" or "Druze", a name derived from el-Drzi, the name of one of the known propagandists of the Druze religion at its beginning. There are sources suggesting that the Druze were a people of their own even before conversion to the faith of al-Hakim, a Muslim caliph.

Unsubstantiated theories say the Druze are descendants of Persian colonists, while another theory says they are of Christian descendant, from the time of the crusades. The latter is not very likely, because the first crusade came about 80 years after al-Hakim's disappearance. Druze do not seek their own country, but they are loyal to the country which governs their land. They can be found in Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, and are said to be the best warriors because they are not afraid to die.

What are their lives like?

Druze are village and mountain dwellers, attached only to their individual plots of land and property, harboring no separatist national aspirations. They follow a lifestyle of isolation. Conversion, both to and from their faith is forbidden. Soon after the religion was founded, they stopped making new converts and have instead

perpetuated themselves through their children. Until recently, most girls were married between the ages of 12 and 15, and most men at the age of 16 or 17. When Druze live among people of other religions, they try to blend in, to protect their religion and for safety. They can pray as Muslims or as Christians, depending on where they are living. This system seems to now be changing in response to higher security, allowing Druze to be more open about their religious beliefs. Druze have earlier been reported to practice polygamy, but there is no evidence of this practice among Druze today. Druze abstain from wine and tobacco, as there are clear prohibitions against any practice that could involve profanity of their religion. Druze have a strong sense of community, and they consider themselves related, even across country borders.

What are their beliefs?

The religion of the Druze began in the 9th century AD, as a sect of Islam. Darazi, a preacher, and Hamzaibn Ali ibn Ahmad, a Persian mystic, were instrumental in popularizing the religion. They announced that God had manifested himself in human form as al-Hakim Bi-amr Allah (985 or 996-1021 AD), a Muslim caliph from Cairo, Egypt. They now believe that Darazi began to distort the message; his writings are now considered blasphemous.

Druze hold the Qur'an to be sacred, but look upon it as an outer shell, holding an "inner, esoteric meaning". Their religious texts are known collectively as "Kitab Al Hikma", the book of wisdom. This is a collection of books, of which the first six are most commonly used. They are firmly monotheistic, believing in a single God. They recognize seven major prophets, including Adam, Abraham, and Jesus (who they believe only to be the son of Joseph). Each major prophet had seven minor prophets; each of the latter had twelve disciples.

Druze believe in the transmigration of the soul. That is, at death, one's soul is instantaneously reincarnated (in time and space), and it is reborn into another life. Their concept of heaven and hell is spiritual in nature. It is believed that heaven is the ultimate happiness that the soul encounters when it unites and meets its creator. Hell is the bitter feeling of being deprived endlessly of the glorious presence of the Almighty.

What are their needs?

Druze have lived in parts of northern Israel since the 16th century, and with the establishment of the State in 1948, joined their destiny with the people of Israel. Over the years, more than 300 of their men have given their lives in the country's defense. The Druze have yet to reap the full benefits of the society they do so much to defend. Israel has worked to address the community's needs by connecting Druze villages to utility networks, upgrading health services, and adopting an initiative to boost academic achievement among the mainstream students.



Country: Syria

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

Persecution Rank: 41 (Only top 50 ranked, 1 = highest persecution ranking)

10/40 Window: Yes

People Name in Country: Druze

Population in this Country: 514,000

Affinity Bloc: Arab World

People Cluster: Arab, Levant

People Name General: Druze

Primary Language: Arabic, North Levantine Spoken

Primary Religion: Other / Small

Religion Sub-division: Druze

% Christian Adherents: 0.00 %

% Evangelical: 0.00 %