



Monthly Missions Focus: Saudi Arabia



Location: Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, north of Yemen. The main portion of the Arabian Peninsula; almost entirely desert but containing 25% of the world's known oil reserves.

Area: total: 1,960,582 sq km – slightly more than one-fifth the size of the US

Population: 27,019,731

Capital: Riyadh 3,350,000

Peoples: Arab 83.8%; Asian 14.2%; African 1.4%; Other 0.6%

Official language: Arabic. All languages 5.

Politics: Absolute monarchy and a semi-feudal state with administration, diplomacy and commerce tightly controlled by the large royal family.

Religion: An Islamic state committed to the role of the custodian of Islam and its holiest sites. Muslim 92.83%, Christian 4.54%, non-Religious/other 1.4%, Hindu 0.6%, Buddhist/Chinese 0.42%, Sikh 0.19%, Baha'i 0.02%

Challenges for Prayer

🌐 Saudi Arabia once had a large Christian population. They were expelled when Islam gained control 1,300 years ago. It is now one of the least evangelized nations on earth. No Christian workers are permitted and all Christian "propaganda" banned. No Christian is permitted to set foot in Islam's holiest city, Mecca.

🌐 Saudi Arabia probably has the world's worst record on religious freedom and human rights. This has been achieved through a corrupt judicial system, arrogant religious police (mutawwa), and the corroboration of the government. Pray for an easing of the tight control, and for freedom of religious expression.

🌐 A massive Islamic missionary effort is coordinated by the Muslim World League in Mecca.

🌐 Although Saudi Arabia signed the U.N. Charter, which guarantees freedom of religion, Saudis who confess Christ face the death penalty if discovered.

🌐 Life is difficult for expatriates. Often pressured to leave home to make money here, they lose their personal and religious freedom.

(Statistics are compiled from *Operation World* and *CIA – The World Factbook 2006*.)

Muslim Saudi Arabs

Sitting in a coffee shop in Riyadh's glitziest mall, Omar, a young Saudi, talked quietly with his friends about his frustrations. "I'm tired of this! Every Wednesday night we come here, get e-mails or cell numbers from the girls, talk to them through the chat room, and go home. Everything in the air is tense and the religious police are constantly watching us. They make this country a giant prison!"

Of Saudi Arabia's 15 million citizens, 60 percent are under the age of 20. Saudi youth, both male and female, are looking for answers and are drawn to the Internet. The government does not have the resources to monitor all of their Internet use.

Thus Internet cafes provide answers to two problems for Saudi youths. The coffee house has been part of Arab society since long before Westerners even heard of coffee. Ironically, Starbucks is very popular in Saudi Arabia. But along with the good coffee comes the Internet. Can the Saudi government keep their people secluded much longer? (*Global Prayer Digest – May 18, 2006*)

More Christians arrested in Saudi Arabia raid.

Officers raided a private worship gathering on June 9th in Jeddah and took the four they believed to be leading the group into custody. While it is a common practice to deport Christians arrested in Saudi Arabia, what happens between the arrests and actual deportation can be troubling.

Greg Musselman of Voice of the Martyrs Canada says the Saudi government insists that Christians are free to worship within their own homes. However, all public worship, other than Islamic, is strictly prohibited.

As evidenced by these arrests, even private worship can be a problem for the religious police. Musselman says, "I think we need to be praying that our brothers and sisters in Christ that are trying to bring the Gospel to the Saudi people, that they would continue to be strong and not fearful."

He adds that as hard as it is on Christians, it often goes worse for others. "[Pray] also for the Christians that have come out of Islam. Many of them are having to be very, very low-key." (*Mission Network News – July 3, 2006*)