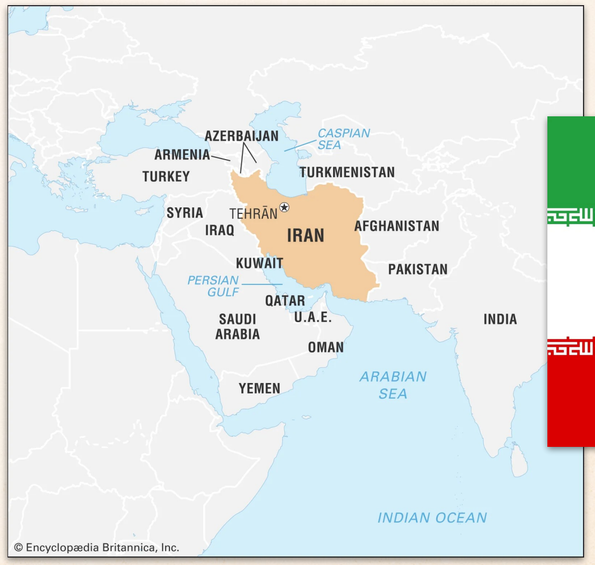
IRAN

All information provided by PrayerCast

IRAN

- Continent: Asia
- Population: 85,888,910
- Religion:
  - Muslim 99%
  - Christian 1%
- Literacy Rate: 85.5%
- Unreached: 99.6%



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Known as Persia until 1935, today's Islamic Republic of Iran is predominately Muslim (98%), mostly Shi'ite. With its proximity to Arabic speaking countries, it is often perceived to be Arabic, but Iran is Persian. The Elamites, descendants of Noah's son Shem, first settled in the area and were followed by the Medes and Persians who established an ancient civilization and world empire. The Bible records the names of some of its most famous: Cyrus the Great, Darius, and Xerxes. Over the centuries, the Persian language (Farsi) and culture have prevailed even with many conquerors crossing through this land. Persians comprise over sixty percent of the 79 million people in Iran and it's as 'Persians' that many identify themselves. With coastlines on the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman in the south, Iran's large land mass is politically strategic as it shares borders with Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Geographically in the Middle East and Central Asia, Iran is a recognized regional power.

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The 1979 Islamic Revolution overthrew the twenty-five-hundred-year-old monarchy and converted Iran into a Shi'ite Muslim, cleric-ruled country. A year later, Iraq attacked Iran and an 8-year war followed, helping solidify the rule of the Muslim clerics (Ayatollahs) and worsening the already hurting economy. Currently, Iran's over dependence on the country's rich oil and natural gas exports, a significant increase in the birth rate in the 80's, and economic reforms that fell short of their targets have resulted in high unemployment and underemployment, double-digit inflation, and almost 20% of the people living in poverty. Furthermore Iran's questionable nuclear program along with its geographic location and attitude toward Israel has stirred up considerable worldwide political concerns for the stability of the region and has resulted in economic sanctions and continued close scrutiny of all Iranian political activities.

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In Iran all ethnic Persians and those from Muslim backgrounds (even if not practicing) are considered Muslims. Anyone who converts to Christianity is declared an apostate and could face death. The Iranian constitution recognizes the historic minority religions of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity, but it does not allow churches to preach or distribute materials in Farsi and proselytizing is forbidden. Yet, the number of Muslim background believers coming to Christ in Iran continues to grow greatly regardless of certain persecution. Believers and non-believers are having Holy Spirit-inspired dreams and visions and are seeing wonders. Many are curious about the Bible, but Bibles and Christian printed materials in Farsi are illegal. Smuggled Farsi Bibles and materials are quickly put to use. The Internet and broadcasts by radio and satellite TV are providing encouragement, resources, and training for believers as more come to Christ and more underground house churches are established.

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PRAYER POINTS

"If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." John 14:14

- Pray for a great harvest resulting from faithful believers sharing bold accounts of their faith.
- Pray for the church to rapidly multiply and mature despite horrendous persecution against non-Muslim peoples.
- Pray for Christians to capitalize on unprecedented opportunities to spread the Gospel via Internet, TV, and media.

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