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Muslim Migration in Our Day

by Donna Krstulovich

Some years ago, a poster on the wall in my office from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) pictured a forlorn, forgotten woman sitting on the bare dirt in a refugee camp, holding her head in her hands. The haunting caption read, “A refugee would love to have your problems.” It was a daily reminder that many people in the world live amid war, grinding poverty, difficult circumstances, political instability, and hopeless situations. One day, any of us could be a refugee!

Why People Leave Their Countries

Some people are “pushed” out of their nations by war, famine, poverty, ethnic cleansing, political upheavals, or persecution, while others are “pulled” by the desire for a better economic future, job relocation, education, or reunification with families. The wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Russia, and many African countries have been a major push factor for refugees who are moving to other destinations.

The word “diaspora” comes from the ancient Greek *dia speiro*, meaning “to sow over” or to “scatter.” In modern speech, “diaspora” refers to populations, such as members of an ethnic or religious group, who originated from the same place but dispersed to separate locations. “The Islamic *diaspora* refers to the global dispersion of Muslims who have settled outside their countries of origin, resulting in diverse communities that maintain their religious and cultural identity.”

From God’s perspective, worldwide upheaval creates an environment in which refugees flee their home country and settle in a new country, thereby creating an Acts 17:26-27 moment:

From one man he [God] made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. *God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.* (NIV, emphasis added)

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Until All Have Heard

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Brink

International Director
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



The Global Initiative Team wishes you a blessed Christmas season! Without the incarnation, we have no Cross. Without the Cross of Christ, we have no salvation. Without salvation, we are without hope, lost in our sins, and condemned for eternity. We thank God for His unsearchable gift of Jesus Christ!

In the lead article of this issue, you will learn about the great opportunity to reach refugees with the gospel. The longer I am in ministry, the more I realize that it is only through intercession and prevailing in the Spirit that the gospel will penetrate Muslim hearts and advance His Kingdom. Wesley Duewel passionately communicates the urgency of prayer:

The greatest need of God today is for men and women who know how to prevail in prayer – mighty intercessors, tireless prevailers, people who will persevere in prayer battle and prayer conquest until heaven's powers are released and God's will is done in the practical situations on earth.

God's cause creeps forward timidly and slowly when there are more organizers than agonizers, more workers than prevailing prayer warriors. We need prayer warriors who have seen the heart of God, who have experienced the power and glory of the cross, who know the Bible meaning and significance of the day of judgment, heaven and hell. We need prayer warriors who feel the slavery, the absence of any eternal hope,

and the doom of the unsaved; who feel the transforming power, joy, and glory from Christ of the saved. We need prayer warriors who pray as though God is God and as though Satan is Satan.

God seeks people to prevail in prayer. It is His ordained means to move the world toward righteousness and the people of the world toward salvation. God seeks people to prevail because He sees earth's millions in their sin and need, loves them infinitely, and longs to save them from sin, Satan, and hell. The price for their atonement is already paid. Calvary's work is finished triumphantly, forever. All things are ready, but man is blinded, fettered, and hardened by sin.

God's only hope for earth's millions is prevailing prayer. For this reason, Jesus is prevailing day and night and needs our prevailing cooperation. God has ordained to save the nations through prayer (Psa. 2:8). It is part of His eternal decree. Therefore, Jesus prays, and therefore, we must pray. (Wesley Duewel, *Prevailing Prayer: The Need of the Church*, available at <https://l.ead.me/PrevailingPrayer>)

Join us as we intercede for the lost Muslims of our world. As you intercede, God will develop your prayer burden, and you will become the solution to God's heart cry for the nations!



Muslim Unreached People Group Prayer Profile: The Aringa of Uganda Population: 1,042,000 88% Muslim

The Aringa people live primarily in the Yumbe District of Uganda, whose northern border is shared with South Sudan. The Aringa are also scattered throughout the West Nile region and, to a smaller degree, in the rest of Uganda. Traditionally, they work as hunters and cultivators, while keeping small scale livestock, mainly for home use. A growing number are becoming businessmen, though most do farming for at least some of their income and food needs. They typically have large families and are hard workers.

The Aringa are primarily Muslim with a very small number of Christians (1.9%). Officially they believe the basic tenets of Islam, but they also believe in the power of ancestral spirits. Their version of Islam contains various elements of animism. The Muslim Aringa response to Christian evangelism is mixed. A few have become Christians, but they fear persecution from other Muslims.

Pray for:

- The Ugandan church to have a burden to reach the Aringa with the gospel.
- The Lord to call individuals who would be willing to go to the Aringa.
- The completion of the translation of the Old Testament into the Aringa language. The New Testament is currently available in their language.
- Dreams, visions, and supernatural healings to occur among the Aringa.
- Christian radio and TV programs to be produced in the Aringa language.



**For further information about the Aringa, see https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/19162/UG*

Migration Categories

To provide clarity regarding the various categories of migration, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) provides the following definitions for the terms “refugees,” “Internally Displaced People” (IDPs), “immigrants,” “migrants,” and “asylum seekers”:

- **Refugees**—people who have been forced to flee their home because of war, violence, or persecution—often without warning. They are unable to return home unless or until conditions in their native lands become safe enough for them to return. Individuals with refugee status obtain protections under international laws and conventions. They receive life-saving support from aid agencies and can become lawful permanent residents and, eventually, citizens.
- **Internally displaced people (IDPs)**—like refugees, these people have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, persecution, or disaster. However, IDPs remain in their home country and do not cross international borders to seek safety.
- **Immigrants**—people who decide to leave their home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there, but not because they are fleeing war, violence, or persecution. Immigrants often go through a lengthy vetting process to immigrate to a new country. Many become lawful permanent residents and, eventually, citizens. Immigrants are free to return to their home country whenever they choose.
- **Migrants**—people who are moving from place to place (within their own country or across borders), usually for economic reasons, such as seasonal work. Like immigrants, they were not forced to leave their native countries because of persecution or violence but rather are seeking better opportunities.
- **Asylum seekers**—people who are seeking international protection from dangers in their home country, but whose claim for refugee status has not been determined legally. Asylum seekers must apply for protection in the country of destination, meaning they must arrive at or cross a border to apply. Then, they must be able to prove to authorities that they meet the criteria to be covered by refugee protections. Not every asylum seeker will be recognized as a refugee.

Our purpose at Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples is not to engage in the political debate of whether refugees should come to the United States (or other countries), but to highlight this incredible



opportunity for Christians and churches to show the love of Jesus to those who arrive in host nations and neighborhoods. Many come from war-torn lands with stories of desperation, trauma, fear, and loss as they search for freedom, safety, and a new life. Global Initiative exists to equip the global Church to reach Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ, who alone gives true freedom and a new life. Many refugees arrive from countries with Islamic populations exceeding 90 percent, and most refugees have never personally met a Christian or read a Bible.

The Connection between Migration and Religion

The Pew Research Center indicates that Christians are the largest migrant group, but Jews are the most likely to have migrated. Based on the latest 2020 United Nations data, more than “280 million people or 3.6% of the world’s population are international migrants—meaning they live outside their country of birth.”

Migration movements are measured in two ways, by *stocks* and *flows*. Christians comprise 47% of the international migrants, Muslims 29%, the religiously unaffiliated 13%, Hindus 5%, Buddhists 4%, and Jews 1%. These numbers are based on *stocks* of adult and children migrants who now live outside their countries of origin that have accumulated over time. This is different than *flows* of migrants which fluctuate year by year due to the push of global crises like wars, natural disasters, persecution, changes in government, and economic changes or the pull of desire for higher paying jobs, better education, or joining family members in the destination country. Since the 2020 UN data, Afghans and Syrians have fled their countries, increasing the flow of refugees to other lands.

Muslims make up about 25% of the world’s population. Of the roughly 80 million people who live outside their country of birth, 29% are Muslim migrants. They tend to move to wealthy, Islamic countries that have a strong demand for labor, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and

Muslim Migrat

Türkiye. Most international migrants move to nearby countries with the same religion. The overall population of the Middle East is 93% Muslim, 4% Christian, and 1% Jewish. Todd Johnson insightfully notes a sizable change in religious demographics:

In recent history, one of the most profound changes in the global religious landscape has been the unrelenting proportional decline of historic Christian communities in the Middle East. ... Nine Middle Eastern countries experienced significant declines in their Christian percentages of their populations between 1900 and 2020: Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Türkiye. Of these, the most dramatic changes occurred in Lebanon (42%), Türkiye, Syria, and Palestine, each of which dropped over 10 percentage points over the century.

Johnson also indicates that six Middle Eastern countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—have experienced a massive influx of Christians, mostly migrant guest workers from the Philippines, South Korea, and other countries. These migrants work primarily in oil production, construction, domestic tasks, and other jobs in the service industry.

Migrants may move for religious reasons—both to escape religious persecution and to live among people who hold similar religious beliefs. For example, Muslims move primarily to Saudi Arabia, Jews move to Israel, Christians and the religiously unaffiliated move to the United States, Germany, and Russia. Migrants usually move from poor or dangerous countries hoping to improve their lives and find prosperity and safety.

Origin and Destination Countries

According to the Pew Research Center, Syria is the most common country of origin, due to the war in 2011. Syria accounts for 10 percent of the world's stock of Muslim migrants and they chose destination countries such as Türkiye, Lebanon, Europe, and the United States. India is the second most common country of origin, with destination countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, and the United States, due to job opportunities.

Afghanistan is currently the third most common country of origin. Most Afghans migrated to the destination countries of Iran and Pakistan during decades of war. However, in 2025, both Iran and Pakistan are expelling hundreds of thousands of Afghan



refugees, citing security concerns and limited resources. Pakistan took in 3.5 million Afghans during the decades of war, including 700,000 who arrived after the Taliban takeover in 2021. “The government says the high number of refugees now poses risks to national security and causes pressure on public services.”

Afghanistan is now a major country of destination for uprooted Afghans, some of whom have never lived in Afghanistan. This places millions of Afghans back in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, which is already struggling economically and does not allow work or education for women and girls. Since the 2021 Taliban takeover, the United States is a primary destination country for Afghan refugees.

Settling into a New Country

Ongoing global refugee crises are both a challenge and an opportunity for the worldwide church. Many churches acknowledge the great need and send missionaries and short-term missions teams to the far corners of the earth in obedience to the Great Commission. On the other hand, Christians must recognize and engage the mission field located in

ion in Our Day



their own communities. God is at work bringing refugees to the nations so they can hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. They often have dreams and visions of Jesus that ultimately lead to their salvation.

God takes special interest in foreigners. “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Refugees bring their culture, food, life experiences, religious beliefs, and social practices to their host nation. They arrive with the few belongings they could bring with them. Many are suffering trauma, depression, fear of the unknown, and exhaustion. Although they grieve the loss of their home, family members left behind, their country, and everything familiar, they hope and dream of a better future. Thanks to cell phones and internet connections, most refugees can stay connected with family “back home,” but they need help to get resettled and start their lives in their host country.

Sometimes local residents perceive foreigners as a threat or danger. They may live geographically close but remain culturally and religiously distant. However, in the case of Muslims, it is important to note that they usually enjoy discussing religion and have questions about Christianity. Muslims may be questioning Islam, but they hold it tightly because they do not want to displease Allah. For Christians, the attitudes of fear, anger, hatred, and indifference need to change to love and compassionate action for the foreigners in their midst. In the process of helping them and building relationships, believers often have the joy of sharing the gospel with these refugee families.

Ways Churches and Individuals Can Help Refugees

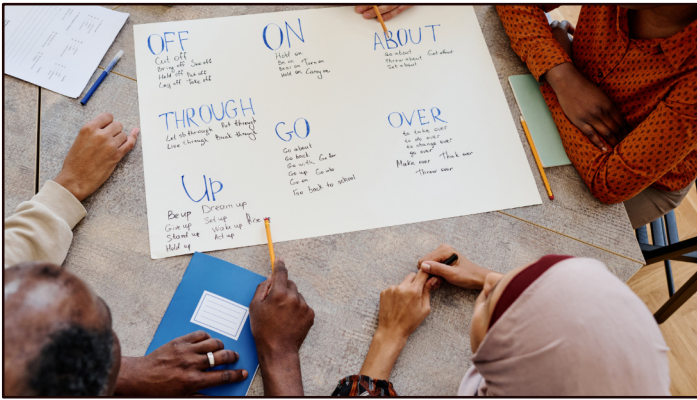
Resettlement agencies help refugee families with basic needs and help them find jobs, housing, and medical care, enroll their children in schools, and deal with legal paperwork. They connect them with government programs and sign them up for public assistance and social services. However, individual believers and churches can likewise come alongside refugee families to help them get established in their new home. Following are some ideas that one could implement.

Offer General Assistance with Daily Life Issues

Initially, churches, and individuals can help families get settled in their home by donating furniture and household supplies and providing food and clothing. Navigating all the adjustments can be overwhelming for refugees. Many need help learning English or the local language. They need to obtain driver’s licenses, buy cars, find jobs, set up internet service, and learn where to shop. Kids need tutoring. They need to learn about the laws and culture of their host nation.

Some church members may work alongside Muslim refugees every day. Teachers interact with students in public schools and universities. Medical personnel, such as doctors, dentists, nurses, counselors, and mental health professionals, treat refugees. Social workers provide necessary social services. For those who do not speak English or the local language, interpreters provide translation services into their native language. Language phone apps provide helpful ways to communicate.

Some business owners in the church employ refugees. Keep in mind that many refugees held responsible jobs in their own country, but now they



must start over with menial jobs while they learn English. Often refugees start businesses, open restaurants, and build places of worship. Muslim taxi and Uber drivers may have been teachers, engineers, and bankers in their own countries, but now work long hours at menial jobs far under their qualifications in the hope that their children will have future success in their host country.

Celebrate Holidays with a Refugee Family

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2).

Christmas presents a wonderful occasion to extend Christ’s welcome to refugees and to share the true meaning of Christmas. Most Muslims have never been invited into a Christian home and have never heard that Christmas is about celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! Months before Christmas, shops are filled with Christmas decorations, Christmas music, and new toys, giving the impression that Christmas is all about glitz and gifts.

A refugee family joined us and another family for Christmas. The kids loved the lights and ornaments on the tree. They got covered with icing as we decorated Christmas cookies for Jesus’ birthday. They loved opening their stockings and gifts. We told the Christmas story with the manger scene figurines and shared with them about Jesus, God’s best gift of all. They had never heard this story!

Sharing holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, or special occasions, such as birthdays, baby showers, and weddings, helps Muslim refugees experience and better understand the culture of the host country. In return, they may invite you to their homes to share food and celebrate their holidays.

Special occasions provide times when we can learn about each other’s culture and share beliefs. It is important to understand that Islam teaches that the Bible has been corrupted, and that Jesus did not die on the cross or rise from the grave. In short, Islam takes the

heart out of the gospel. Our times together can create deeper friendships, special memories, and opportunities to introduce our friends to the truth about Jesus, who invites us to His home in heaven forever to experience the greatest hospitality we will ever know.

Pray for Refugees

- Pray that Jesus would lead them to exactly the place that He has marked out for them to live, so that they can come to know Him.
- Pray that Jesus would heal those whose hearts are broken through trauma and loss.
- Pray that they will meet Christian friends who will share Christ’s love with them and help them in the process of adjusting to a new country.
- Pray that they will gain fluency in the language to help them thrive in their work and relationships.
- Pray that Jesus would appear to them in dreams and visions and that they would experience His answers to prayer, miracles, and healings.



Endnotes

¹ “Diaspora,” in *Britannica*, accessed September 9, 2025, bit.ly/3JQUNdE

² “Islamic Diaspora,” Fiveable, accessed September 9, 2025, bit.ly/4nuWgov

³ “Migrants, Asylum Seekers, IDPs, Refugees and Immigrants: What’s the Difference?” International Rescue Committee, posted June 22, 2018, accessed September 10, 2025, bit.ly/42ohFaD

⁴ Stephanie Kramer and Yunping Tong, “The Religious Composition of the World’s Migrants,” Pew Research Center, accessed August 19, 2025, bit.ly/46hIgHs

⁵ Todd Johnson, “Christianity in the Middle East,” Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, blog, posted February 26, 2020, available at bit.ly/42oi251

⁶ Johnson, “Christianity in the Middle East,” blog.

⁷ Kramer and Tong, “The Religious Composition of the World’s Migrants.”

⁸ Maziar Motamedi, “Inside Iran’s Crackdown on Afghan Migrants After the War with Israel,” Aljazeera, accessed September 9, 2025, bit.ly/4n16eOx

⁹ Yama Bariz, “Pakistan Expels Tens of Thousands of Afghans,” BBC, posted April 19, 2025, accessed August 13, 2025, www.bbc.com/news/a



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Friday, November 7, 2025. Please pray for

...*fifteen families who lost loved ones* in three separate church bombings perpetrated by radical Islamists in Surabaya, Indonesia. Of Surabaya's population of 3.2 million, 83% are Muslim.

...*pastor Hanna and his church in Gaza*. They are coordinating teams that prepare and distribute food inside Gaza amid the ongoing conflict. Pastor Hanna says, "Each day brings more loss, but in the midst of darkness, God's light continues to shine."

...*protection for Iranian convert Somayeh*. Her husband found her Bible, ripped it up, then divorced her. Due to her work with an underground church, she had to flee the country.

Friday, November 14, 2025. Please pray for

...*protection for Christians in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, especially in the eastern part of the country where Muslim groups are responsible for ongoing violence.

...*courage for churches in Mozambique*, where Christians make up 62% of the population of 34 million. Islamic terrorists randomly slaughter congregants and abduct clergy. Pastor Jonathan reports, "Yes, we are persecuted, but many Muslims are receiving Jesus."

...*Syrian Christians*. After a recent church bombing by Muslim radicals, an elderly church-goer stated, "How can we worship when death stalks us even inside the church?"

Friday, November 21, 2025. Please pray for

...*Nigeria's Christians*—roughly half the population of 232 million—who face "near-genocide levels" of violence, including the kidnapping of women for sexual abuse.

...*wisdom and protection for Sonja Dahlmans* who is under pressure from Egyptian Islamists for producing an alarming report that raises the issue of Muslim abductions, rapes, and forced conversions of Coptic [Christian] girls and women in Egypt.

...*Digba Katsala, a street evangelist in N'Djamena, Chad*. For the past five years, he chooses a location, opens his Bible, either in French or Arabic, and proclaims the gospel of Jesus. He says, "There is resistance, but many give their lives to Christ, even Muslims."

Friday, November 28, 2025. Please pray for

...*the ministry of Wesley in Malaysia*. Legally, all ethnic Malays are regarded as Muslim and evangelization efforts are illegal. Through a ministry called Ground Zero, Wesley has launched "new and creative approaches" for sharing the gospel with ethnic Malays.

...*New Christians in Yemen*. Islam is the state religion and renouncing it is a crime punishable by law. Practically all Christians are secret converts from Islam who live in constant fear.

...*protection and courage for Samira in Afghanistan*. She says, "There are many dangers: persecution, rejection by family or community, losing a job, and even threats to our lives. But even with all this, we stay faithful, because we believe Jesus protects us."

*All personal names used herein are pseudonyms, except for Sonja Dahlmans, a Dutch theologian who is well-known for her work and writing regarding abductions, forced marriages, and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minority groups in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.



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Friday, December 5, 2025. Please pray for

...*Yasin in northern Iraq*, who was raised in a Muslim family. A pastor befriended him and read the Bible with him. Yasin says, "I cried because of the beautiful words. Immediately, I wanted to follow Jesus. Pray that I will be able to evangelize as many Muslim friends as possible."

...*fruit to be produced from recent evangelism efforts* in a major city of Pakistan. The local pastor reports, "In two days, we distributed 1,000 Gospels, 850 SD cards, and 500 tracts."

...*Abdoulaye, an African missionary who once followed Islam*. His ministry group targets unreached Muslims in the Sahel region of Africa. He says, "God is working in the Sahel. Muslims are coming to Jesus in large numbers, and their lives are being transformed."

Friday, December 12, 2025. Please pray for

...*Miriam in a Middle Eastern country*. After her conversion to Christianity, Miriam's relatives placed her under house arrest. Eventually, she fled to another area where no one knew her. She says, "I simply want to live a normal Christian life and tell others about Jesus."

...*the country of Kyrgyzstan*. The Open Doors organization states that there has been a sharp increase in violence against the church. Many registered churches have been forced to close. Of Kyrgyzstan's population of 7.2 million, 90% are Muslim.

...*Sudan's Christians*. Sudan is now home to the world's largest displacement crisis; 9 million people have been forced to flee their homes. In addition, Sudanese Christians who have come from a Muslim background increasingly face severe backlash.

Friday, December 19, 2025. Please pray for

...*a strong Holy Spirit anointing on upcoming Christmas services, celebrations, and presentations* by local churches in predominantly Muslim countries.

...*the growth of an "All Africa" prayer movement*, whose focus is Muslim Unreached People Groups. The leader says, "Prayer transforms us to be willing to lay our lives down and fulfill the Great Commission, no matter the cost. Prayer gives us the burden."

...*local church evangelism outreaches to Muslims* in the country of Brazil. The number of Muslims in Brazil is estimated to be 1.5 million, roughly 1% of Brazil's total population.

Friday, December 26, 2025. Please pray for

...*physical and spiritual healing in the lives of traumatized Christians in Burkina Faso*. In recent years, invading Islamists have displaced 2 million people and killed many Christians. Of Burkina's population of 24 million, 63% are Muslim.

...*Chinese "missionaries" in Linxia, China*, who are stepping up their evangelism efforts among the Muslims in that area. Linxia has been one of the main religious centers of China's Muslim community, earning itself the nickname of "the little Mecca of China."

...*Nahid in Bangladesh*. As a young adult Muslim, Nahid read the Scripture in order to refute it. The power of conviction fell upon him and he made the decision to follow Jesus. His ministry now is to establish discipleship centers throughout northern Bangladesh.

**All personal names used herein are pseudonyms.*