


Standing at the brink: A time of prayer for Somalis

by a CMM affiliate



After I taught the group English class, Asha and I walked to the small room in the back. In that back room, Asha came alive. We spent an hour practicing her English by telling each other stories from our lives. This time I asked her to walk me through the market in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. She began to tell me of the sounds and sights she remembered from her happy days in Somalia, and of the people she would have run into at the market. I looked her in the eyes and said, “Asha, I’d love to visit your homeland with you someday.” She took my hand in hers and her eyes welled up with tears — she wasn’t crying because I had said something sentimental. She was full of grief as she told me, “My friend, the Somalia of my memories doesn’t exist.”

At the writing of this article the United Nations calls Somalia “the worst humanitarian crisis in Africa.” It tops the list of the world’s most forgotten and neglected emergencies. Headlines declare: “Somalia’s endless hell” and “Somalia: a depressing prospect.”

Since 1991 hundreds of thousands of Somalis have died in their own brutal civil war. Millions of Somalis have fled their homes seeking refuge in neighboring countries and around the world. Tens of thousands now live across the globe in cities like Rome, London and Seattle, as well as in smaller communities like Barron, Wis., a town of 3,000 with about 300 Somalis.

And ... more than 99 percent of Somalis are Muslims.

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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

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



I urge you to thoroughly review and reflect on the powerful lead article on Somalia. As an informed intercessor, pray for open doors to Somalia, more workers, and spiritual wisdom for workers among diaspora Somalis.

I have the privilege of working with a great staff here at CMM. Inquirers often ask me for updates on the ministry of our team members. Read with joy the following excerpts from just a few CMM staff ministry reports of the last few months.

India: “I taught 9 hours of *Theological Issues* and 6 hours of *Folk Islam*. In addition to 45 students who were taking these courses for credit, 3 individuals who were heavily involved in ministry to Muslims also attended.”

Africa: “The class was *Introduction and Approaches*. The students were from five different countries of West Africa. We had the Chi Alpha director from Nigeria, several Bible school teachers, a couple of missionaries, a presbyter, and a few pastors. Several came with very negative attitudes about Muslims and most of them were changed by the time the class was over.”

France: “In the main church about 600 were in attendance on the first night, including some Muslim Background Believers. About twenty individuals responded to the call to be involved in the church’s outreach to Muslims.”

Central America: “The course *Contextualized Ministry for Muslims* was well received. We are encouraged by the increasing number of Christian leaders in Central America who are recognizing the need to engage in ministry to the Muslim people of the world.”

Philippines: “The sessions went well. It was espe-



cially rewarding to see the large number of Filipinos interested in reaching the Muslim people of Mindanao.”

Amsterdam: “I had 27 students in my *Introduction to Islam* class on the Free University campus. One of the highlights of the ministry in Amsterdam was a Saturday seminar with 45 Dutch pastors from all over the country.”

United States: “This was a one-day seminar on *The Many Faces of Islam* (at a university in the Northwest). Two Muslims came from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) ‘just to make sure we did not put the wrong slant on Islam!’”

United States: “The School of Urban Missions (in a California location) hosted CMM personnel for an Islamic Emphasis. The highlight was a two and a half hour seminar which attracted 48 church leaders from the area.”

I praise the Lord for all He is doing in these momentous days to prepare His church for ministry to Muslims. At CMM we are keenly aware that we have a host of intercessors who regularly bring our names before the Lord of the harvest. We are indebted for your willingness to partner with us.





Muslim World News

Malaysia

NEWSPAPER ORDERED NOT TO USE "ALLAH" FOR GOD

Ranking authorities have confirmed that a Catholic newspaper must abide by a ruling not to use the Arabic word for God. The Malaysian government has clarified that a Catholic newspaper must abide by a previous directive prohibiting it from using the word "Allah." But in the weekly *Herald's* January 6 issue, it continued to use the word since the renewal of its publishing permit did not come with any restrictions. The government previously had threatened the *Herald* with closure if it used the word. The chairman of the Christian Federation of Malaysia, Bishop Dr. Paul Tan Chee Ing, expressed "disappointment and regret" over the decision. Father Lawrence Andrew, editor of the *Herald*, said the publisher will press ahead with its lawsuit against the government over its right to use the word "Allah." — *Compass*

Afghanistan

AFHGAN CLERICS WARN AGAINST MISSIONARIES

Afghanistan's Islamic Council has requested for President Hamid Karzai to prohibit foreign aid groups from converting locals to Christianity and also demanded the reintroduction of public executions. The Islamic Council, an influential group but without binding authority, is made up of Islamic clergy and ulema (scholars) from various parts of Afghanistan and made the warning in a statement during a meeting with President Karzai. The ulema have always played a crucial role in Muslim Afghanistan and have been the catalyst for a series of revolts against past governments. "The council is concerned about the activities of some ... missionary and atheistic organs and considers such acts against Islamic sharia (law), the constitution, and political stability" said a copy of the statement obtained by Reuters. — *Reuters*

United Nations

ISLAMIC BLOC SCORES RESOLUTION AT UN

The UN recently passed a number of human rights-related motions, and most significantly one of them, introduced by a host of Islamic nations, focuses on combating the "defamation of religions." The motion on defamation of religions consistently has been a priority for the 57-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) since 9/11. It took on new impetus following a Danish newspaper's publication in 2005 of cartoons satirizing Mohammed. Introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the OIC, it passed by a 108-51 margin, with 25 abstentions. The resolution decries "the negative projection of Islam in the media" and voices "deep concern that Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism." The OIC soon will release its first-ever annual report on "Islamophobia." — *CNS News*

Standing at the brink — a

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The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, the LORD, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them. — Isaiah 41:17

There is a reality about Muslim people that you will not hear in the headlines. *The New York Times* and *Mother Jones* won't publish it. Neither Rush Limbaugh nor Al Franken ever mention it. The Qur'an doesn't say this and neither does Osama Bin Laden. Only God in His Word and through His message is telling you: Muslims are desperately thirsty for living water.

You may hear about humanitarian needs, maybe emotional and social needs, but not about this reality. Yes, Islam declares war on the "Christian" West. Yes, men, women, and children commit suicide bombings in the name of their cause. But beneath the rhetoric of Jihad, behind the front of violence and terror, our God says Muslims are, "afflicted and needy and seeking water, but there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst."

Almost four years ago I sat alone in my office watching a video about Somalis, listening to their incredibly brave and heartrending testimonies. One was a



father whose 16-year old daughter was raped and then stoned to death for her impurity. In another, a woman said, "I was hit with the butt of a gun. I resisted. I was raped with my parents present. I was three months pregnant. My husband divorced me the next day. He says I should have died." I began to cry. The destruction overwhelmed me. I saw the hopelessness in their eyes. I thought, I haven't been doing enough, I've only been focused on the thousands of Somalis in my area and here is a nation that is totally destroyed and Somalis are crying out for help like dying people.

Then I had one of those moments where the reality of the presence of God began to press into that office and dwarf everything else. I realized I had not been watching alone. God had been watching with me. It was very clear that He had been watching Somalia all along. He had not been surprised or overwhelmed or negligent or aloof. He said, "I'm up to something spectacular here. I know you don't see the whole picture yet, but trust me, the ending is gorgeous!"

The last words of the video echoed in my ears, "Will Somalia be left dying as it is dying now? Who will help Somalia recover?" In that moment God spoke "*I, the Lord, will answer them Myself. As the God of Israel, I will not forsake them.*"

I will open rivers on the bare heights and springs in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land fountains of water. I will put the cedar in the wilderness, the acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree; I will place the juniper in the desert together with the box tree and the cypress. — Isaiah 41:18-19

We don't see the rivers, springs, pools, and fountains yet. And, we know we have barely scratched the surface of what needs to be done among Somalis. But we do see God's servants around the world bringing handfuls and maybe cupfuls of living water to their dry Somali souls. Would you like to know exactly how it happens?

year of prayer for Somalis

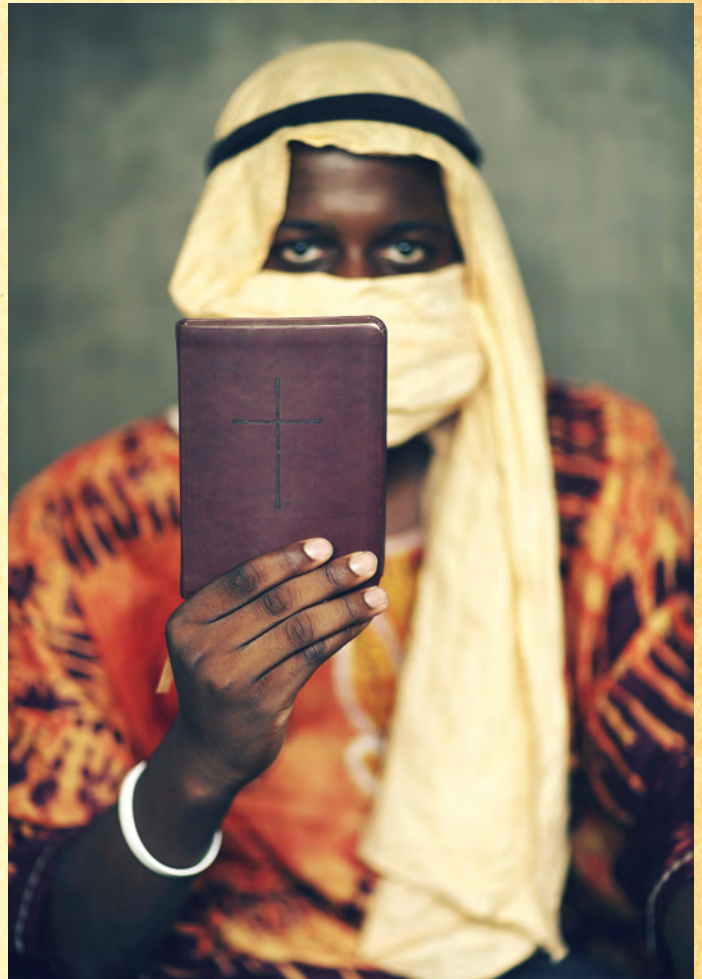
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It happens in the back room of our English class with Asha's hand in mine and tears rolling down her cheek. I tell her there's a little part of me that knows what it feels like to be a nomad or refugee — because this world isn't my home — I'm just passing through. I'm living for heaven to be my home. It happens in the living room of Anisa's home the day after September 11, 2001, when she begins to understand that all Americans aren't Christians just like all Muslims aren't terrorists.

I can tell you of one tree, strong and tall. We'll call him Abdi. He was a devout Muslim in a strict Somali Muslim family. He is a rare Somali who met Jesus in Somalia. He was a part of an underground fellowship of 14 believers. They came together one time in secret and one was missing — he had been martyred. They met together again in secret and another was missing — another had been martyred for his faith in Jesus. They would disperse, then come together sporadically, always in secret, but the blood kept spilling, as more of the group were treated as apostates.


Believer after believer was slain: Liban Ibrahim, Dr. Ahmed Gobe, Mohamed Haji, Sheik Don, and Saleban Mohamed. These and seven others until only Abdi and one other remained — 12 gone, 2 left. Abdi survived numerous attempts on his life and eventually felt God's direction to leave Africa and study in the U.S. for some time. Now, he is back in Africa sharing Jesus with Muslims. Abdi is a tree rooted deep in the middle of the desert — a picture of God's heart and a testimony of God's authority over the impossible.

And now here we stand at the brink of eternity. The cries of the dying ringing in our ears. The impossible dreams of God filling our hearts. What can we do? Have you ever tried to dive into a problem that overwhelms the U.N.? Doesn't sound like the wisest thing to do. But it is precisely what God does. He always does it for one very particular reason. He intends to be recognized and honored as the Creator, Lord of all. When faced with suffering, difficulty, and complexities like Somalia we have a tendency to

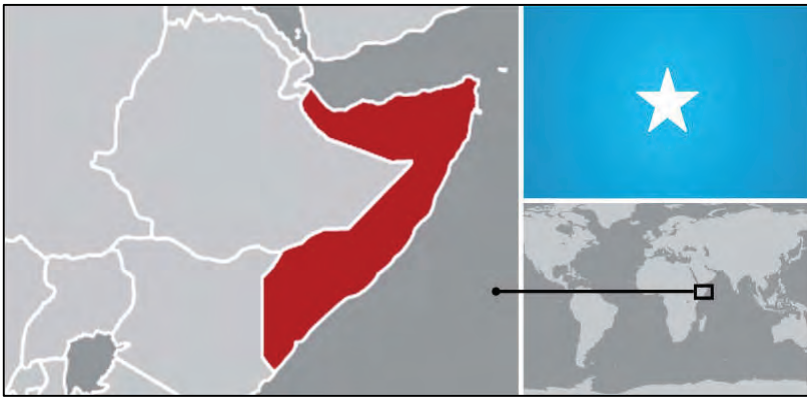


say things like, "I'm so messed-up myself. It's too overwhelming. It's too dangerous. It's impossible. I'm too small. It's just too hard, we could never solve a problem that big."

The momentum is growing. God's purposes cannot be thwarted.

If you find yourself beginning to think and feel about Somalis the way that God thinks and feels about Somalis, we encourage you to respond! These are just a few things you can do. Join thousands from countries around the world for the *Year of Prayer for Somalis*. Visit www.prayforsomalia.org or email info@prayforsomalia.org. Find out more about individuals and organizations committed to loving and serving Somalis. Contact CMM at info@cmmequip.org or call (417)-866-3313. 

SOMALIA



GOVERNMENT Transitional national government, but considered the most lawless nation in the world.

RELIGION Islam.

PERSECUTION There is a saying that a Christian Somali is a dead Somali—when discovered, they risk immediate death. Globally there may now be 2,000 Somali Christians.



PEOPLE & PLACE

Somalis are a Muslim people warm in hospitality and rich in friendship. Since January of 1991 their lives have been torn apart by fear, destruction, and death because of the brutal civil war in their homeland Somalia.



CURRENT SITUATION IN SOMALIA

“...one of 5 forgotten and neglected world emergencies” – UN

“...total fragmentation of a society” – Doctors Without Borders

“...an appalling humanitarian situation” – ICRC (Red Cross)

“...the capital is in ruins and under factional control” – BBC

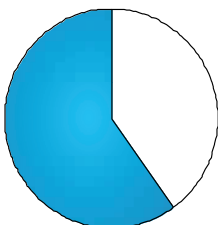


SOMALIS IN AMERICA

Almost all Somalis in America are refugees from the war in Somalia. They settle in cities where they have been welcomed and where they have found social infrastructures able to handle many of the complex issues they face. They are very active in business, education, and politics in the cities where they live. In general, they live in tight knit communities that emphasize adherence to Islam and are not open to Christianity.

Many first generation immigrant Somalis (age 35 and older) dream of returning to a restored Somalia. Second and third generation immigrant Somalis (age 34 and younger) face a tremendous identity struggle.

STATISTICS



Minnesota holds 60% of all Somalis in the USA. 30,000 to 50,000 live in the Twin cities alone.

Population

Worldwide - 12-15 Million
USA - 75,000-150,000
Christians Worldwide - 2,000



Less than 0.1% of ethnic Somalis are Christian



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, March 7, 2008. Please pray

...for thousands of Muslims suffering from the recent hurricane in Bangladesh. Pray that despite their losses, someone will show them care in the name of Jesus Christ. 1.5 million Bangladeshis were displaced from their homes.

...for believers in Eritrea. 2,000 Christians remain incarcerated, without proper charges or due process.

...for an Iranian couple flogged in Iran. The man, a Muslim Background Believer (MBB), was attending an underground church with his Christian wife. Both have been charged with apostasy.

Friday, March 14, 2008. Please pray

...for the Church in Uzbekistan. Pressure from the Muslim government is expected to continue, and probably escalate throughout 2008.

...for hundreds of converts to Christianity in Yemen. The numbers are not substantiated, but the gospel of Jesus Christ is definitely reaching Muslims in Yemen.

...for peace in Lebanon. A number of key government officials are attempting to steer the country toward Islamization.

Friday, March 21, 2008. Please pray

...for Christian domestic workers across the Arabian Gulf. Often, they will be the only witness of Jesus Christ that many of their employers ever will hear in an entire lifetime.

...for the Muslims of Tanzania. The government is presently deciding whether to establish a *sharia* court as part of the Tanzanian legal system.

...for Muslims in the country of Georgia. They number almost 500,000 and have had very little witness of the gospel since the fall of communism.

Friday, March 28, 2008. Please pray

...for the people of Malaysia. In another sign of Islamization, the state of Kelantan has increased the maximum penalty for trying to convert a Muslim.

...for the South American country of Suriname, where Islam continues to gain converts.

...for a positive outcome to the World Islamic Conference to be held in Senegal in the spring of 2008. Despite a host of dire predictions, pray that opportunities for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be heard will come out of decisions made at this conference.

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. —1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, April 4, 2008. Please pray

...for the plight of the Sudanese in Darfur. There are now 2.1 million refugees from the conflict.

...for Christians in Southern Sudan. Despite incredible hardship and persecution, a vibrant church has emerged.

...for the 30 million Muslims of Northern Sudan. Perhaps no more than a few hundred Christian workers provide witness to this multitude.

Friday, April 11, 2008. Please pray

...for continued prayer for MBBs in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Libya. Pray that these precious brothers and sisters would genuinely feel God's protection on them.

...for thousands of Muslims to make a decision for Jesus Christ as they receive witness through satellite television.

...for Southern Thailand. Violence continues through Muslim unrest. Pray for a permanent peace.

Friday, April 18, 2008. Please pray

...for a priest in Iraq whose son was murdered. Despite a recent ease in tensions, priests continue to be abducted and sometimes killed. Christians continue to face threats and violence.

...for Morocco's growing number of converts from Islam. Pray for safety for these new MBBs. Despite limited freedom, a fundamentalist undercurrent threatens Morocco.

...for an ease to tensions in Gaza. Radical political groups, even more extreme than Hamas, have been forming.

Friday, April 25, 2008. Please pray

...for a particular MBB suffering from family pressure in an undisclosed country. There are literally thousands more in similar circumstances across the Muslim world.

...for the unrest in Nigeria. Violence against Christians continues unabated. Reports of deaths and demolished churches are frequent.

...for wisdom for President Hamid Karzai. Afghanistan's Islamic Council has told President Karzai to stop foreign aid groups from converting locals to Christianity and also demanded the reintroduction of public executions.