

Christian Radio Impacts Middle East and North Africa

A French human rights group estimates up to 2,000 people could have died in the revolt against Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. As reports of human rights abuses continue to emerge, Christian radio broadcasters say the message of the Prince of Peace is still being beamed into Libya and other North African nations.

President of HCJB Global Wayne Pederson says, "We know that satellite signal is going into those countries, but we're not hearing much coming out because internet and cell phone and texting have all been blocked, so we're not hearing out. But we know that we have at least 1.5 million households listening to us in that part of the world."

According to Pederson, the evangelical church is quite small. Quoting a Libyan expert, there are only a few national churches in the country: "Most believers have either been exported from the country or have been placed in prison. So the Christian population in the country is very small." However, Pederson is sure "there are followers of Jesus that are living underground who depend on media to be sustained spiritually through all of this."

According to Pederson, God providentially provided for expanded outreach in this area six months ago by allowing them to join a new satellite provider which expanded their coverage by up to 300 percent. "We just have to see God's hand in this. Some of the other satellite signals—Al Jazeera and SAT 7—have been blocked from time to time, but God has protected our signal, and it continues to beam strongly into that part of the world today."

Satellite is just one way of distribution. HCJB Global also

broadcasts via short-wave and the Internet.

The programming is locally produced “by people in country that know the language and know the culture, and are best able to address the needs and fears of people in that part of the world,” says Pederson.

While the broadcasts are providing hope, Pederson says, “We also know through the text messages that have come through, that people are coming to know Christ for the first time. They hear a message of love instead of hate. They hear a message that gives promises instead of threats, and they’re responding saying, ‘I want to know more about Jesus. Where can I get a Bible? Where can I connect with other believers?’ So the amazing thing is: there is a great spiritual harvest taking place.”

Pederson says the only thing certain in the area of the world is uncertainty. “It seems, right now, that God is shaking things up. And we wait to see what this means for the proclamation for the Gospel. What’s this going to mean for religious freedom? What’s it going to mean for the church of Jesus Christ on the ground? We don’t know, but we need to be praying that God would intervene.”