

Operation Mobilization Celebrates 50 Years in Muslim Ministry

Islam has been in the spotlight via the news a great deal this year and in recent years. Especially during Ramadan, Muslims are on the hearts of believers. Many have joined in prayer efforts for the Muslim world this month, from Aug. 1 to Aug. 30.

But is it enough? Is the Muslim world a bigger mission field than we thought?

As Operation Mobilization celebrates 50 years of ministry in the Muslim world, Julyan Lidstone, the leader of OM's ministry in Western and Central Asia, believes reaching this growing population is more vital now than ever.

"In the 20th century, communism was the big global issue facing the world. I think everybody would agree that in the 21st century, the big issue facing us all is Islam," says Lidstone. "So it needs to be our strategic focus."

Even the phrase "Muslim world" can strike fear in the hearts of some believers, though, and with good reason. "Over the years, we've had several folks deported, their visas refused. We've had people in prison for fairly short periods. We've had some folks killed," admits Lidstone.

Still, these factors have not deterred OM, nor have they remotely dimmed their fervor for reaching this unreached people group.

For one thing, "It's kind of like 'risk' is a bad word, where as if you're going to get into mission, risk is inevitable," notes Lidstone.

More than that though, Lidstone adds, "There is amazing opportunity that God is working in the Muslim world, that more people are coming to faith in Jesus than has ever been the case in history, and we are looking to a harvest in the days ahead."

During this past week, we at Mission Network News have been focusing particularly on prayer for safety for believers in Muslim countries during the month of Ramadan. But even on this issue, OM is more excited than afraid.

"For Ramadan, what we like to pray is that God would reveal Himself to Muslims as they are kind of on a spiritual search," says Lidstone.

And He is revealing Himself more than ever. When OM first came to Turkey, they began a correspondence course through the mail. Although the man who began the program was initially arrested, the ministry lived on. Today, about half of believers in Turkey report that the correspondence course has been part of their pilgrimage to faith.

OM is celebrating 50 years of ministry to the Muslim world. Lidstone says since their start, "We've grown now so that we have about 1,000 people in 50 countries right around the world reaching out to Muslims."

Still, the biggest need remains recruits. Eighty percent of the Muslim world does not even have contact with a believer who can tell them about Christ.