

# God's Strategic Plan for Iran

*An Iranian evangelist says a spiritual awakening of unprecedented magnitude is occurring behind the scenes in a nation known for its terrorism.*

Most Americans have put Iran on a blacklist. We're concerned about Shiite militants who spread terrorism around the world, we don't trust Iran's nuclear weapons plans and we can't stomach Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's human rights record or his maniac ways.

But my friend Lazarus Yeghnazar, an Iranian evangelist based in England, hopes you will develop some compassion for this part of the world. Most of us associate the Bible with Israel, but did you know that Esther, Daniel, Nehemiah, Ezra and Habakkuk all walked on Persian land that is now called Iran? In fact, the tombs of Esther, Daniel, Habakkuk, Cyrus and Darius are in Iran.

**“Yeghnazar says the churches are growing so fast in Iran that some leaders have wondered if they should stop evangelizing. ‘One church leader told me they have stopped sharing their faith because every Iranian they witness to comes to Christ.’ “**

Yeghnazar points out that Iranians were among the first Christian converts. The people known as Parthians, Medes and Elamites, who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:9,11), were from what is now Iran. Jeremiah

prophesied that God would “restore the fortunes of Elam” in the last days (see Jer. 49:39). Elam is modern-day Iran.

This promise of spiritual restoration is no longer a far-off dream. A vibrant New Testament church is thriving in Iran, in spite of brutal persecution under Ahmadinejad’s regime. And this growing spiritual awakening in Iran could play a significant role in end-time events.

“In this repressive atmosphere many Iranians are coming to Christ,” says Yeghnazar, whose 222 Ministries is reaching millions through television and Internet broadcasts. Currently more than 3,000 Iranians are converted each month through 222’s work, even though the Iranian government has cracked down on satellite television and smashed satellite dishes in Tehran and other cities.

“The need is so great,” says Yeghnazar’s wife, Maggie, who does special gospel broadcasts for Iranian women. She says the women respond to Christ faster than men because they tend to stay at home.

Yeghnazar and his wife fled Iran in 1988 to base their operations in the U.K. Their Farsi-language programs not only bring Iranians to faith in Christ but also serve to strengthen the underground house church movement.

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Says Yeghnazar:

“One church leader told me they have stopped sharing their faith because every Iranian they witness to comes to Christ. [The leader] told me, ‘We don’t have enough New Testaments to handle the growth.’ There is a huge need for discipleship!”

The challenges in Iran are huge. The country has an extremely high rate of drug addiction, and at least one-fourth of the people are depressed. About 60 percent of the nation’s 71 million people are under age 26—and many of these are university students who are growing increasingly restless under Ahmadinejad’s dictatorship. Police brutality is common—and it is often aimed at Christians who gather in groups smaller than 20 to worship.

“Believers in Iran are not praying for persecution,” Yeghnazar told me, “but they know it is helping fuel the growth of their churches.”

Yeghnazar is aware of the danger lurking inside Iran. The country has exported trained terrorists for 30 years and has fueled the growth of Hezbollah, the Palestinian Intifada and suicide bombers in Iraq as well as radical Islamic

movements in North  
Africa and the Philippines. Yet he believes there has never  
been such a huge  
open door for the gospel in Iran.

The evangelist  
quotes from Isaiah 65:1 to describe what is happening in his  
homeland. "God  
said, 'I permitted myself to be found by those who did not  
seek Me. I said,  
"Here am I, here I am," to a nation which did not call My  
name.'" Today Iranians  
are not only coming to Christ in record numbers but they are  
downloading Farsi  
New Testaments on MP3 players, receiving smuggled Bibles and  
training young  
pastors to start new churches.

"In this repressive  
atmosphere people are coming to the Lord in record numbers,"  
Yeghnazar says,  
noting that almost 200,000 unique visitors come to 222's Farsi  
gospel site each  
month. Many of them are seeking discipleship because they just  
gave their  
hearts to Christ.

I've been shocked  
to hear some sword-rattling Christians say they hope someone  
drops a nuclear  
bomb on Iran to stop Ahmadinejad. Let's put aside hate and  
open our eyes to  
what God is doing behind the scenes. The next time you hear  
bad news coming out  
of that country, remember that a growing underground church  
full of new  
converts is spreading from Tabriz in the north to the southern  
city of Shiraz,

where Esther prayed and stopped a genocide.

J. Lee Grady served as editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and is now contributing editor. You can find him on Twitter at leegrady. Find out more about the work of 222 Ministries [here](#).