

How This Turkmen Transformed From Muslim Atheist to Persecuted Christian

As a young man in the former Soviet republic of Turkmenistan, Silas was immersed in communism's atheistic ideology. Though his mother was a devout Muslim and, as a Turkmen, he too was a cultural Muslim, he had embraced atheism and rejected religion.

"I was an atheist in my head," he said, "but a Muslim in my heart."

Silas held a special hatred for the Christian faith, which he viewed as endemic to corrupt Westerners and to the Russians who'd invaded his homeland. It did not belong among the Turkmen people. Then Silas heard the gospel in the Turkmen language through a VHS copy of *The Jesus Film*. Suddenly, his world turned upside down.

"Hearing Jesus speak my language, the gospel became real," he said. He watched the movie from start to finish, then rewound the VHS tape and watched the whole thing again. By the end of that second viewing, Silas was a new creation, having committed to following the Jesus who spoke his language.

Silas' life changed almost immediately. He experienced overwhelming joy and peace, and questions that had consumed him for years were answered in Christ. There was no way Silas could keep this good news to himself, so he began to tell others in his village about Jesus Christ.

That's when the persecution began. Silas was arrested repeatedly when government agents raided church meetings, and his name and reputation were smeared in the newspapers. He and his family were no longer safe even at home, so Silas, his

wife and their young children went into hiding as pressure and threats from the secret police intensified.

Eventually, Silas was detained and tortured for his obedience to Christ. In his darkest hours, he simply trusted the Lord in his suffering. Through his faithful witness, Silas saw God work in the hearts of others – including his torturers – in miraculous ways!

Hear Silas tell his story on VOM Radio, now included in the Charisma Podcast Network. Listen as he tells about his opportunity to forgive and pray for the secret-police officer who ordered his torture. Silas also shares how we can pray for the Turkmen people, with whom he continues to share the Jesus who speaks his language. {eo}

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