



Reaching Muslims in Asia: Mindanao The Southern Philippines

"Twenty dead in the southern Philippines". "Explosion kills on market in the Philippines". "Hand-grenade explodes in southern Philippines". These and other headlines in the press and on TV news have been frequent in recent years. Although not every day, unrest and terror attacks regularly hit this predominantly Catholic country. Attacks are frequent - mainly on the southern island of Mindanao and the smaller south-western islands.

Spiritist healer called for the Philippines

Islam reached the Philippines in the 14th century and spread quickly through Muslim traders and "missionaries". Even the capital Manila was under Muslim domination until the Spanish colonised the islands in the 16th century. Since then, most of the population has become Catholic, whereas the Muslims form a strong minority mostly on the southern islands. Two centuries after the Spanish colonisation, the government encouraged many Catholic families to move to the south by promising them land in that region. This marked the beginning of enduring conflicts that still continue today through terrorist acts.

Thirteen Muslim people groups (approximately 6 million people) are native to the southern Philippines. All have their own language, their own tribal areas and their own traditional social structures. Each of these groups is unreached. All groups practise a form of orthodox Islam mixed with pre-Islamic beliefs concerning spirits.

Seven children lived under the care of their Muslim parents Lano and Oli, when a mass epidemic hit their village. As they had done so many times before, they asked Allah to spare their children. As they had done so many times before, they prayed after the traditional Friday prayers in the mosque that the sickness would not end in death. On top of that, a small sacrificial house was suspended in the sick room and the local "spiritist healer" was called to sacrifice to the spirits and conjure away the invisible powers of sickness. Despite all these efforts, four of the seven children died. A terrible hopelessness and desolation came upon this family.

Ambassadors of Christ to the Philippines

Approximately 6 million Muslims live and believe this way. Some of them are closer to the teachings of Islam, others put their trust more in the spiritualist healers. Others mix both beliefs. Even though some have become Christians from a Muslim background, there are not sufficient numbers of Christians in any of these 13 Muslim people groups to reach their own people group with the Good News. In some areas, God has called small churches and Bible study groups into



{ Muslim majority area of Southern Philippines }

being, but they are too few and it is difficult for them to witness. Nevertheless, some of these former Muslims have become ambassadors of Christ to their own peoples. There is a growing readiness to preach the gospel to their own Muslim countrymen.¹

References: ¹ <http://www.30-days.net/muslims/muslims-in/asia-east/brunei>

Prayer Points for the Philippines:

- Pray for the scattered believers from Islamic background to be strengthened in their faith. Pray that their Bible study groups become indigenous churches.
- Pray for more Filipino Christians to desire to share their faith in Jesus with their Muslim countrymen.
- Pray for the evangelistic outreaches which are often linked with practical works demonstrating the love of Jesus.
- Pray for those currently hearing the gospel through Bible study, witness, literature or the Jesus film to turn to Jesus.
- Pray for new workers to be raised up, go, live among and be Jesus' witnesses among Philippine Muslims.

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