

# PAKISTAN

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“[Thanksgiving and Prayer] We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3

## WELCOME

Population: 170 million people  
Capital: Islamabad  
37% live in urban areas  
Religion 95.8% Muslim, less than 2% Christian  
Language: Urdu, with 77 other local languages.

## BACKGROUND

Pakistan has an impressive a 1,046 kilometre (650 miles) coastline along the Arabian Sea in the south, although sunbathers are not to be seen in this Islamic republic. This area of 796,000 square kilometres is where South Asia links central Asia with the Middle East, bordering Afghanistan and Iran in the west, India in the east and China in the far northeast.

Pakistan offers both sandy beaches and mangrove swamps in the south, to icy mountains to the north and west, with the fertile Indus valley running the length of the country. The Tharparkar desert in the southern province of Sindh is the only fertile desert in the world.

Uncontrolled population growth and a massive refugee problem as a result of long-term war, together with the large-scale earthquake centred in the north of the country in October 2005, has hugely impoverished this nation. Devastating flooding in 2010 and 2011 has further added to national, wide-scale poverty.

Pakistan achieved independence from the British in 1947, followed by a number of military dictatorships.

Pakistan is an Islamic republic, but there is a surprising degree of religious freedom, under the law.

As a nation fraught with the challenges of security, governance and poverty, Pakistan has been struggling to define itself and provide its citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim, with a coherent national identity. The central question that confronts the discourse on citizenship is “Can you be a Pakistani and not a Muslim?”

## THE STATE OF THE CHURCH

The Church has been present in the Indo-Pak region since the very first century. The Church was planted in this region by one of the Disciples of Christ, St. Thomas, who after the ascension of Christ came to preach the Gospel in the Indian region. Since then, the church has existed in Indo-Pak in different conditions and forms. The church grew after the arrival of Portuguese and Western missionaries in Indo-Pak during and after the sixteenth century. By the time India divided into two countries: India and Pakistan, there was a well organised and recognized church in the region.

Many Christians thought that by living in Pakistan they would have comfortable lives, since Islam and Muslim ideology see Christians as ‘The People of the Book’ – as referred to in the Quran; but in fact, Christianity has faced many challenges in Pakistan since 1947. As Christians in Pakistan are a minority group, they face prejudice on a daily basis. Christians have

been concerned to establish businesses, in case no Muslim will do business with them, which has hindered the economic and social development of the Christian community in Pakistan. Many Christians carry out menial cleaning jobs and live in very low quality housing provided by the government.

Blasphemy Law 295 B & C are also a big challenge for the Christian community. According to the Law, anyone who commits a blasphemy against the Islamic Prophet and their book will be put to death. Many Christians have been falsely accused of this law. As a result, Christians and churches are reticent to share their faith in Pakistan because of the possibility of being accused of blasphemy. A number of people accused of blasphemy did not survive long enough to reach the court. 2010 ended with violent protests over amendments to the controversial blasphemy laws. 2011 began with killings of two influential supporters of amendments in the law.

Although there is no anti-conversion law in Pakistan, if a Muslim converts to Christianity, he has many challenges to face, such as persecution, loss of family and belongings and even life. There are many 'hidden' believers in Pakistan who come from the wider community, but through fear of persecution, remain secret.

Church planting among different Muslim communities is also developing throughout Pakistan; and several movements have brought encouraging, fruitful results, in spite of difficulties from communities and national faith families. These fellowships are multiplying, whilst dealing with issues such as local mistrust, lack of funding, opposition from families, and un-trained leadership. God is clearly on the move.

## GOING BEFORE OUR FATHER

### General Requests.

1. Please pray for political stability for the government, and those who govern and make its laws.

2. Please pray for the economic difficulties of Pakistan – with power cuts there is unrest throughout the nation. Resources are scarce and prices are rising.

3. Please pray for those millions who have been affected by the earthquake of 2005, then the flooding of 2010 and 2011 – communities have been shattered, and lives changed irrevocably through trauma, loss and devastation. Many have not recovered, whilst the eye of the world's media has moved on. Communities remain broken and fragile; livelihoods have yet to be rebuilt – hope in the future no longer seems possible.

Pray for the much needed aid to continue to come to those who need it most. Pray for on-going partnerships with those nations who have the resources to help. Pray for those who do help already, that they would not become overwhelmed and simply give up through the lack of support. Pray for local partnerships to carry on reaching out to those in need, distributing aid, helping rebuild homes, schools, community projects for years to come.

Pray, most of all, for those who have suffered as victims: that they may receive what they need: comfort, help, support, and the encouragement to will to live on.

### Requests for believers from the majority background

1. That discrimination against believers is substantially diminished, particularly in areas where it is severe.
2. That the church would grow, as national believers mature, serve their churches and develop a heart to serve their own community. Pray for the equipping of believers, and the resources needed.
3. That believers would not be discouraged through adversity or financial hardship to gain an education or obtain employment.
4. That believing young people would find their part to play in the future of Pakistan and its society.
5. That God would strengthen the church in Pakistan to serve its nation.



“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”  
John 3:16,17