

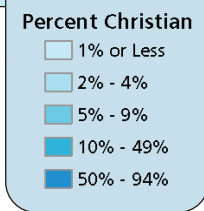
## The Turkic world

The former Soviet States of Uzbekistan (32.8 million people), Kazakhstan (18.6), Azerbaijan (10.0), Kyrgyzstan (6.2) and Turkmenistan (5.9) are each home to Muslim peoples who speak closely related Turkic languages. Tajikistan (9.3 million people), also in Central Asia, is majority Persian and a quarter Turkic.

These countries have much in common:

- They were the heart of a forgotten renaissance between around 750 and 1250AD, when (mostly Persian) thinkers and scientists led the world in philosophy, poetry, maths, medicine and astronomy. This renaissance lost its energy as Islam became increasingly suspicious of philosophy and reason.
- Central Asia was almost destroyed by Mongol invasions and the Black Death and has never recovered its old strength.
- The Central Asian states were incorporated into the Russian, then Soviet empires; and experienced a few short years of freedom after 1991 when Communism fell. Today they are ruled by autocrats who suppress opposition, prevent a free press, drain the economy, and have become personally very wealthy.
- Before 1991 each country was home to almost no local Christians.
- Each country now has a church of some few thousands of believers.

Christians face police raids, arrests, fines, beatings, and their homes bugged, phones



tapped and churches infiltrated. Family and friends also oppose and oppress converts to Christ.

- 🙏 Thank God for these churches, for their love and endurance.
- 🙏 Pray for their strengthening by the Holy Spirit, and that they may be seen as a force for good in their countries
- 🙏 Uzbekistan is the heart of Central Asia. It has a new president, who appears to be trying to dismantle the repressive apparatus built by the former strongman. This would be remarkable in a region with a dismal record for human rights; pray for a miracle.

## FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLICS



Serbia (population 8.7 million people) is the largest of the states of the former Yugoslavia. The Balkan wars left it with a devastated economy, a weak democracy and poor relations with nearby countries. The economy has stabilized, and Serbia seeks to join the EU while remaining a keen ally of Russia. Many Serbs are angry and bitter about their treatment by surrounding nations, and follow a narrow nationalism, often supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church. Evangelicals in Serbia are few and harassed, but growing.

The other countries of the former Yugoslavia - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro are, apart from Slovenia, also notable for ethnic divisions and unhealed wounds from previous conflicts. Kosovo's unresolved status is indicative of these wounds. Croatia and Slovenia have joined the EU. The others wait outside with varying hopes of joining the bloc. Croatia and Slovenia have a long Protestant tradition alongside their Catholic heritage, but evangelicals are few in all these countries, especially where Orthodoxy or Islam is the major tradition.

- 🙏 Pray that through Christ, people in these countries may find an escape from old bitterness and become part of the people of God.
- 🙏 Pray that the gospel will grow and bear fruit across all the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

## SLOVAKIA



This central European state of 5.5 million people is in the midst of great change, driven by economic reform and EU membership. Slovakia has a strong Christian heritage, but the many Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed Churches struggle with low attendance. Evangelical denominations are few and small.

- 🙏 Pray for a new day for the gospel and that Christ would capture the hearts of many in Slovakia.