

# Albanian Muslims



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 3,500,000

Albania: 1,450,000

Serbia: 1,400,000

Macedonia: 300,000

Greece: 100,000

**Religion:** Islam—Sunni, Shia

**Believers:** 0.14% (MBB)

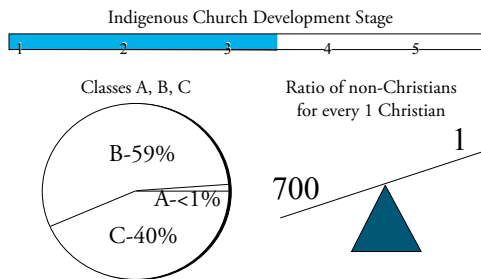
**Scriptures:** None

**Ministry Tools:** JRGT

**Church Status:** 3

**Mission Status:** 3

**MS Subgroups:** 15+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church  
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined  
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

**Identity:** The Albanians are the descendants of the ancient Illyrians. Culturally and linguistically they are divided between the Gheg (in the north) and the Tosk (in the south). Though once a Christian people, they began converting to Islam in the 14th century. Today, they are about 60-70% Muslim, with many nominal believers.

**Lifestyle:** Albanian converts to Islam were given estates and positions in the Ottoman empire, and many became quite wealthy at the expense of the Christian peasantry they ruled. Forty years of national Marxism changed all that, and today Albania is Europe's poorest country. About half the population is engaged in low-mechanized, traditional farming. Though the country abounds in natural mineral and oil resources, little has been done to exploit these for national development.

**Customs:** The Gheg Albanians are regarded as Europe's longest surviv-

ing tribal society. Patrilineal clans can trace back their origins as far back as 14 generations. Marriage had to occur outside of one's own clan, thus strengthening historic alliances. The Communist government sought to break down all tribalism, though in rural areas remnants of the old system still survive.

**Religion:** Most Albanian Muslims are Sunni, though a small minority (10%) belong to the Bektashiyya Sufi order, which is Shiite. Under the Communists, all religions were suppressed and Albania was declared an atheistic state (the world's first and only). Following the collapse of the Marxist regime, Muslim nations invested large sums to rebuild hundreds of mosques and re-convert the Albanians to Islam. Thousands have been given scholarships to go abroad and study Islamic theology.

**Christian Outreach:** Dozens of mission agencies are at work among the Albanians, though only a few are focused on

the more high-identity Muslim population. Most are working among the non-religious or nominal Christian background Albanians. Less reached, and more Islamic, are the Serbian Albanian Muslims, or Kosovars.

## How to Pray:

Over 10,000 Albanians in Kosovo were killed by Serbian "Christians" in the 1990s, and missionaries have found it difficult to maintain long-term ministry in this region. Pray for supernatural openness among the Kosovars, and for the love of Christ to reconcile peoples and bring the forgiveness that only He can give.

Praise God for the rapid response of missionaries who entered Albania as soon as the country became open. Pray that many would begin to focus on reaching the more difficult Muslim population. Pray also against attempts to ban evangelical churches and missionaries

Albanian Muslims are scattered over dozens of countries. Pray for effective outreach among each group.

Pray for the equipping of Albanian evangelicals to reach their Muslim "neighbors," especially in Muslim dominated rural areas.

**Every year 31,000 Albanian Muslims die without Christ.**