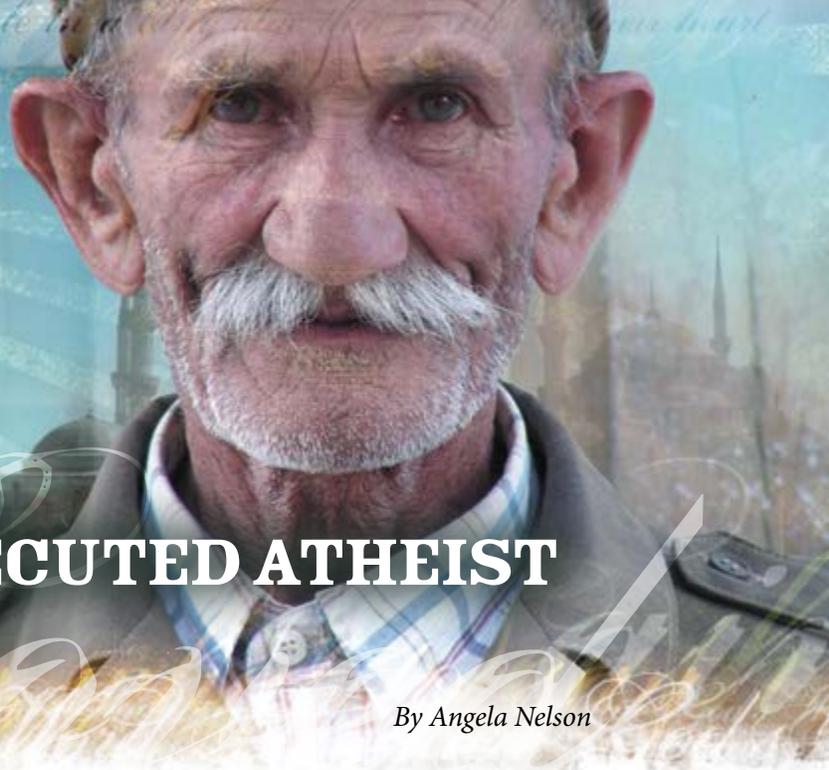
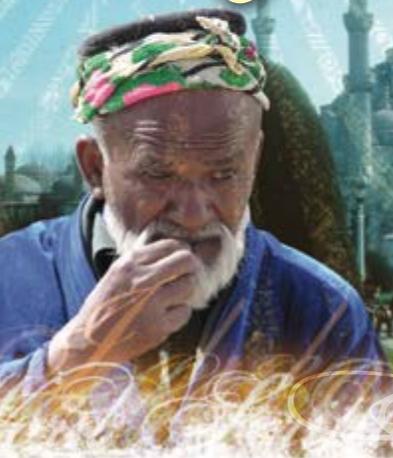


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A PERSECUTED ATHEIST

By Angela Nelson

Many of the people who speak languages that don't have a Scripture translation are located in areas that are difficult or impossible to access. Sometimes God works out His purposes by bringing refugees from these places to work on Bible translation outside their countries.

This happened with a man named Hamza* who didn't believe that God existed—a view that didn't bode well in the restrictive West Asian country where he grew up. Those who didn't adhere to the majority religion were often persecuted. And after being imprisoned once for his atheistic beliefs, Hamza realized he wasn't safe in his own country.

So Hamza fled to Central Europe as a refugee. There he soon met several other people from his homeland—one of whom was very vocal about his Christian faith. Hamza got tired of hearing this man talk about Jesus, but he decided to attend church with the man anyway to see what it was about.

That's where Hamza met Robert,* a Wycliffe missionary working with refugees who speak Shali*—a language spoken by almost four million people from Hamza's home country.

Hamza liked Robert and friendship developed. Hamza offered to help Robert translate a short document, and Robert later returned the favor by going to Hamza's apartment to fix his computer. While he was there Robert took the opportunity to tell Hamza that God had a plan for his life. Hamza listened politely, but he wasn't ready

to accept the message yet. In fact, at the time he thought Robert was crazy. Months later, as Hamza was feeling particularly discouraged and homesick for his family, he happened to pass by a church where he heard people singing in his mother tongue. Softened by this personal connection, Hamza went inside and finally opened his life to Christ that very night.

As a new believer, Hamza was eager to serve God by helping Robert and several Shali refugees with the Shali translation project. And after working with the team for several years, he's now become the team's co-leader. Together they've translated the Gospel of John, the story of Joseph, and the story of Abraham. They've almost finished the book of Acts and have many other Scripture portions in the process. The finished Scriptures have been distributed via booklets and audio CDs and have been broadcast on satellite TV and on the radio in Hamza's home country. The team has also created a website, a Facebook presence, a YouTube channel, and an iPhone app to help people download text, audio, and video versions onto their computer or smart phone.

"I've just been amazed—people have been downloading this [app] all over the world," Robert said, "Even inside [Hamza's country] where it isn't easy to have an iPhone, people are downloading and using the app, even though there's risk with using [it]."

For many of the Shali, having God's Word in their heart language is well worth the risk.

*A pseudonym.



DEAR FRIENDS,

In November of 2012, for the first time in history, the number of language communities needing a Bible translation project dropped below two thousand. Today there are more Bible translation programs in progress (2,075) than there are translation needs (1,967).

Now that's worth celebrating!

But as we celebrate, we must not forget those language communities (representing approximately 209 million people) that are still waiting for translations to begin. They do not have one word of Scripture in the language they understand best.

The road ahead of us has many challenges in both starting and finishing these translations. Many of the last languages are 'last' for a reason, and reaching them will require much prayer and innovation. But we serve a God who is not limited by these challenges and who works in creative ways, as He did for the Shali people described on the front page of this issue of *InFocus*.

Thank you for partnering with us to start and then complete the Scriptures for every group still needing them. What you do matters. Your prayer and financial support help people groups like the Shali meet the God who cares so much for them that He sent His Son to die for them that they might live.

Rejoicing,

Bob Creson
President/CEO
Wycliffe USA

WORLD *focus*

WHICH SCRIPT?—NIGERIA

Sometimes Wycliffe publishes two versions of Scripture using different scripts (alphabet characters). For the Fulani people of Nigeria, translators published one version of the New Testament with a Roman alphabet and a second version using an Arabic alphabet. People in that region of the world are used to seeing the Arabic alphabet and sounding out the characters, even though they don't necessarily speak Arabic. So, when the Fulani received the New Testament in their own language using the Arabic alphabet, they were already a step closer to learning how to read it. For those who don't read, the team has been distributing audio versions on solar-powered MegaVoice players.

AUDIO BIBLE—JAMAICA

Jamaicans are celebrating the new dramatized audio recording of the Jamaican Creole New Testament. Celebrations began in London last fall, and now Jamaicans around the globe can access the Scripture at Bible.is on their smart phones.

COUNTED—GHANA

When a Nawuri chief was handed the first copy of the New Testament in his language, he declared, "We have now been counted among God's people... When we go to politicians we are not known. But when we go to God we are known!"

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