

Iran – World’s “Fastest-Growing Church,” Celebrates New Bible Translation.

LONDON (ANS) -- A major new translation of the Bible into modern Persian, launched in London Monday, marks a remarkable transformation for the church in Iran.



According to a news release from Elam Ministries, the organization behind the translation, at the time of the Islamic revolution in 1979, there were no more than 500 Christians from a Muslim background in the country. Now Iran is thought to have the fastest-growing church in the world.

“A very conservative estimate puts the number of Christians in Iran at 100,000,” ojdeh Fatehi – Chief Administrator and Exegetical Checker; Rev Dr Mehrdad Fatehi – Coordinator and Chief Editor

said David Yeghnazar of Elam Ministries, speaking in the news release.

He continued, “The generally-accepted estimate is 370,000. Some believe there are 700,000, some over a million. Operation World puts the annual growth rate at 19.7 per cent. If that is the case, Iran will very soon have one million Christian believers.”

Yeghnazar believes there are a number of reasons why the church has grown so rapidly.

“The Iranian identity is not rooted in Islam and there is real disillusionment with the religion,” he said in the release. “The house church movement has emerged, allowing Iranians to go to Christian meetings easily and not risk all by going to a public church. New Christians have zealously shared the Gospel and Scriptures and there has been on-going prayer for Iran around the world.”

Some people expected at the launch have been imprisoned for their faith. One wrote Scriptures on her prison wall for others to read. Indeed, the vision for a Bible in modern Persian was conceived when Iran’s church was in the midst of murderous persecution.

In 1994, three senior church leaders were killed, including Tateos Michaelian, Iran’s foremost

translator of Christian Scriptures and books into Persian.

“Michaelian joyfully accepted the role of lead translator for the new translation,” said Yeghnazar. “One month later he was dead – shot in the head by three bullets. It was a military-styled execution. He had spoken out one too many times against the Iranian government.”

Despite grieving for his loss, Elam Ministries said Iran’s church leaders continued to work on a new translation in Persian that was “accurate, modern and elegant.”

Tateos Michaelian’s widow, Juliet, was at the dedication, along with her granddaughter, born on the day it was discovered her grandfather had been murdered. They were the first to receive the Bible, followed by children of other martyrs.

The dedication of this Bible with representatives of the international church sends out a clear message to those who persecute Christians.

“In 2010 the Mayor of Tehran called evangelical Christians ‘deviants,’” said Yeghnazar in the news release. “The government portrays Christians who love the Bible as a cult-like sect.”

He added, “With 500 or more mainly Christian leaders present on Monday – including representatives of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Vatican embassy, the Orthodox church, the Assemblies of God churches and many others – we are saying the Iranian government’s view of Christians is wrong.”

A gathering of the international church in London also sends out a timely message that the Middle East is Christian as well as Muslim.

“Though the event will be a joyful one, we are sad it is happening outside Iran,” Yeghnazar said

He continued, “This event proves the world wide church will always bring the Scriptures to people, however ‘closed’ a country is meant to be. Rather than try and stop the inevitable – especially in our digital age – it would be much wiser if the Iranian government gave Christians the freedom promised in their constitution and let the Bible in Persian be printed legally inside Iran.”

Elam was founded in 1990 by senior Iranian church leaders with a vision to serve the growing church in the Iran region.

For more information visit www.elam.com

By Jeremy Reynolds - ASSIST News Service