

BERBER OF LIBYA

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An unengaged Muslim people group

QUICK FACTS

Alternative names:
Amazght, Imazighen

People Cluster:
Berber Saharan

Languages:
Amazght and Arabic

Population: 267,000

Gateway cities:
Ghargan and Yafran

Helpful professions:
English teaching,
Business,
Oil Industry

STRATEGIC INFO

**Various creative
access options for
Western teams**

**Various creative
access options for
Asian or Latino
teams**

**Intermediate
potential for work of
proximate African
churches**

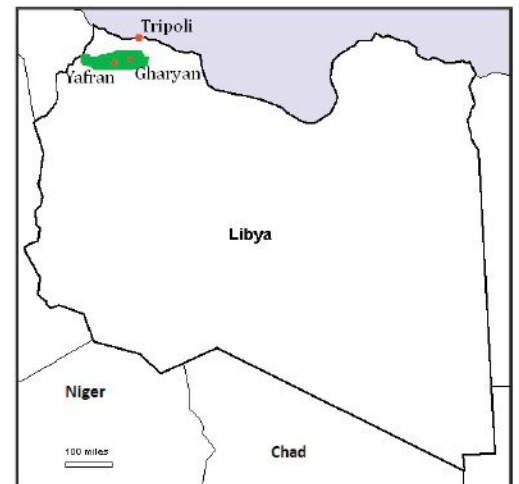
**Positive attitude to
the West and the US**

**Intermediate
hardship level for
teams**

**Receptivity to gospel
untested**

ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Berbers make up the second largest ethnic group in Libya, living among the plateaus and hills of the Jebel Nefusa in the northwest, with many settling in the oasis towns of Gharyan and Yafran, and a sizeable population in Zuwarah on the coast. Other smaller Berber towns include Nalut, Zintan, Qalaa and Awjila.

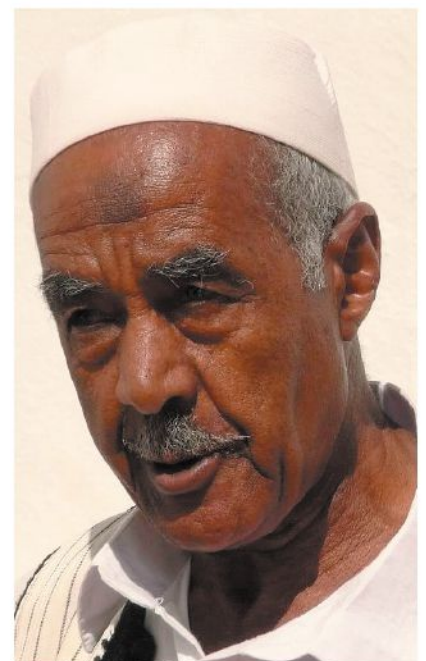


RECENT HISTORY

During the reign of Gadaffi, there was significant oppression, when Berber language, songs and names were banned, and land confiscated. Berbers became the forefront of the independence movement in eastern Libya. During the 2011 civil war the Nefusa mountains became a stronghold for the rebel movement and a focal point of the conflict.

BERBER CULTURE

Since the overthrow of Gadaffi, there has been a new recognition of Amazght language, and a resurgence of cultural expression and ethnic pride. Amazght is being taught by cultural associations, can be heard on radio stations and read on signs in public places. The Berber flag is displayed proudly, comprised of blue, green and yellow horizontal stripes and a character symbolizing a "free man". Festivals take place where Berber music, art and poetry are celebrated.



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PRAYER POINTS

Pray blessing on the Berber people, as they rediscover their ethnic identity after years of oppression

Ask God to raise up church planting teams who move to live amongst the Berbers

Pray that God will reveal himself in dreams and visions to Berber people in Libya

MORE INFO

Web:
www.peoplesgroups.org

www.joshuaproject.net

DAILY LIFE

Most Berbers work in agriculture, herding sheep and goats and cultivating wheat and barley. Men do most of the farming, while women are responsible for milking and harvesting. In humid areas olive and fig plantations have been established. There are many soil and stone dams to collect sparse water from the desert areas. Berbers are known for their intricate crafts including weaving, pottery, woodwork and metalwork.

Berber villages are often small and difficult to reach, with many people living underground in cave-like houses carved vertically or horizontally into the soft limestone and marlstone. The remote mountain and desert villages were established as Berbers fled the invasion of Arab migrants to North Africa several centuries ago. In recent years towns and villages have expanded to include more modern brick homes.

Berber societies can be broken down into three basic units: the community, the district, and the tribe. The community is a political collection of clans; the district is a cluster of communities; and the tribe is a group of districts that are characterized by a common territory, name, and culture. The community is governed by an assembly called the jamaa, composed of adult males who meet weekly.

RELIGION

Most Libyan Berbers are Sunni Muslims who belong to a small Islamic sect called Ibadaya. Ibadaya is an off-shoot of Kharijism and originated in the seventh century when disputes arose about how religious leaders should be chosen. They refer to themselves as “the people of straightness”, and emphasise the equality of believers. As far as we know there has not yet been a witness historically to this ethnic group.

Could God be calling you to pray for the Libyan Berbers, or to go there yourself?

