

Bookstore Ministries

Thrive Amid Danger

BY ALAN DOERKSEN

Danger and Christian bookstores don't seem to go together in Canada, but in the Middle East, it is a dangerous business running a Bible bookstore. Yet **Turkish Mission** and **Manara Book Ministries**—two indigenous partners of **Intercede**—are willing to take risks and face danger in order to bring God's Word to the spiritually needy people of the Middle East.

In April 2007, three evangelical Christians were brutally murdered in a small Christian publishing house in Malatya, Turkey. Although they were not connected with Turkish Mission, their murders had a profound effect on Pastor Kaya, the leader of Turkish Mission, and his co-workers.

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"Two of these [murdered] brothers were at our Christmas celebration," reported Kaya in 2007. "We were warned to be very careful as a church and as the Bible Bookstore in our city. The police have since provided very tight security around the Bible Bookstore.

"Because of the ministry, churches are growing. Many people are getting saved and Christianity is spreading all over Turkey. That started to get on the nerves of some of the radical Islamic organizations. Now they are trying to do their best to stop us. Please pray for our Lord's protection and mercy over us."

In 2001, after waiting 18 years from the time of his first application to the government, Kaya was granted permission by the authorities to open the first publicly-advertised Bible bookstore in southern Turkey.

The bookstore sells Bibles and other Christian literature. The store has a place where people can take a Bible and read while having coffee. "Muslims are coming either early in the morning before they go to work, or they come in the afternoon after they go home," explains Kaya. "Some of them cannot take Bibles into their homes. It is safer for them to come and read the Bible and leave it at the bookstore and go. Some of them are asking questions about the Bible and about Jesus Christ, so it is going very well."

Three full-time ministers are on staff to do counselling, listen to people's problems, study the Bible together and answer questions about it. Each year the stores sell thousands of Bibles and New Testaments—often at greatly discounted prices—and also provides them to Christians in neighbouring countries.

Currently, the Bible Bookstore is operating "not physically in the public but as a Bible distribution centre," reported Kaya recently. "The reason we did this is because we received a lot of threats"—so TUM's leaders decided to just to close it for a season. This summer it's going to be opened again.

Running the Bible bookstore is "a wonderful opportunity to introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His salvation, but it is a very expensive ministry," says Kaya. "We really had a very hard time to keep up with the expenses of the Bookstore in 2008. Please pray that the Lord will provide all the needs of the Bookstore in order for us to keep it open in 2009.

"We buy all the Bibles with the donations of our supporters. So if you buy a Bible for \$5, and then we turn around and sell it for 25 cents to the Muslims who cannot afford to pay \$5, really no profit is going on. There is profit for the Kingdom of God, but not financial profit. So the Bible bookstore is costing us \$5,000 a month." That includes the cost of bookstore, staff salaries, books

BELOW:
Intercede's Eliud Herrera (left) visits with two Turkish Mission workers at one of the Bible bookstores.



The Good Book Shop



and literature, refreshments for bookstore visitors, utilities and taxes.

Making a Dream Come True

Since the late 1970s, Manara Book Ministries has grown from a Christian bookshop to an international ministry working in Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East. MBM's book ministry started in 1977 as a bookshop serving the evangelical community in Jordan. Today it holds displays in secular book fairs and exhibitions throughout the Middle East, using educational books along with Scriptures and Christian literature.

MBM accomplished a major goal by delivering one million Bibles and New Testaments to Iraq, Syria and the Arabian Peninsula by the year 2000. It distributes Christian adult and children's literature, videos and cassettes to help build up churches.

A major part of MBM's work is operating five Christian bookstores and distributing Bibles and Christian books. MBM has a Christian bookstore in Beirut, Lebanon, which is one of the largest Christian bookstores in the Middle East. It was started by another ministry in 1958, and was taken over by MBM when it was struggling to survive a few years ago.

One MBM bookstore is in Baghdad, Iraq, one in Tripoli, Libya, and two in Jordan. MBM strongly encourages Christians to help cover the cost of Bibles in Arabic to be sent to Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Ghattas believes that these countries soon may close the doors for outsiders due to escalated violence in these areas. Each Bible costs \$3.25 for MBM.

In 2007, bombs fell close to the bookstore that MBM operates in Tripoli. None of the workers were injured, but obviously they were disturbed by the happenings around them. Please pray for their safety.

MBM has been running a bookstore and Internet Café in its building in Baghdad. Most Iraqis are unable to afford the full cost of books, so MBM sells the books at lower than cost—just as Turkish Mission does. There is a need for funding these books.

Ghattas shares the story of “a little girl who walked up to one of our Iraq team every time she saw them at church asking when our store would be opened. She said she is saving what little money she has in order to buy her first book from our store when we open. It is because of her and many other thirsty souls that we are pushing to make this dream come true.”

MBM's interest in Iraq is partly due to the significance of Iraq in the Bible and the large Christian population that lives there—as well as the crises its people have faced over the past two decades.

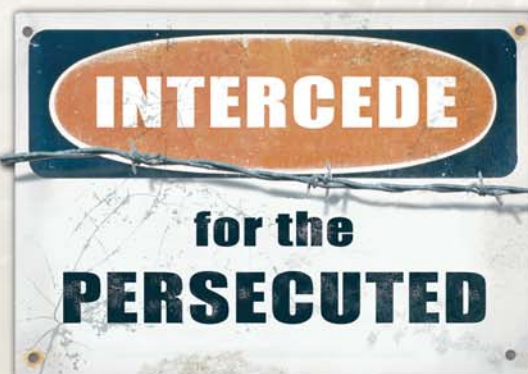
“Bombings continue to plague the streets of Baghdad,” reported Ghattas earlier this year. “When the fighting will cease, no one knows. However, the Northern Iraq area of Kurdistan for now remains peaceful and continues to receive people fleeing from the violence in the south. Recent trips to Kurdistan have opened up opportunities for literature and community development within Kurdistan.” MBM hopes to open a Christian bookshop in Kurdistan in 2009.”

Pray for safety and success for these ministries as their missionaries bring the message of God's power and love to the people of the Middle East.

BELOW:
A coffee shop inside MBM's bookstore in Amman.



For more information and a quarterly Field Report from these ministries, contact Intercede mentioning these project codes: 416TUM, 420MBM.



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