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## Turkey's Radio Shema: Sharing the Gospel Daily

By **George Thomas**

CBN News Sr. Reporter

Monday, July 13, 2009

ANKARA, Turkey - A few miles from the heart of Turkey's capital city Ankara, tucked away in a small room along an ally, Radio Shema FM 98 is doing something that is rarely allowed in a Muslim country.

"We openly talk about Jesus Christ and read the Bible everyday," Soner Tufan, Radio Shema's general manager, said.

Tufan explained that the radio station has become a powerful tool in changing people's perception of Christianity.

"People here have deep suspicions about Christianity -- they view it as a form of imperialism and a faith that belongs to Westerners," Tufan said.

But Tufan said music, especially Christian worship music, has been a key to reaching Turks with the Gospel.

"They really love the worship songs we play," he said. "We are able to communicate important truths -- the truth about God and His love for mankind. And this is helping change people's idea about Jesus."

Christianity has deep roots in Turkey. In the 20th Century, Christians made up about 20 percent of the population. Today, Christians make up only 0.6 of the population. The rest follow the Muslim faith.

Tufan used to be a Muslim until he had his own personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

"There is a growing fascination with religion and spirituality in general," he explained. "More recently, people have become interested in seeing and listening to topics on miracles and healings."

So Tufan and his staff spend several hours every day discussing these and other subjects that resonate with the public.

"What we are doing is planting the seed in the hope that it will find deep ground," said one of Radio Shema's on-air announcers. "We don't always see the fruits of our ministry, but we trust that God is doing the work in people's hearts."

Radio Shema is one of just two Christian radio stations operating in this entire Muslim country. They do need a license to function legally, and so far they have not had any challenges getting that license each year.

But the people who operate the station said sharing the Gospel can be challenging.

"We get threats from radical Muslims who say that this is an Islamic country and that we have no right talking about Christ," Tufan said. "We have been threatened many times. (We have) received letters warning us to stop our broadcasts. But this is nothing new for Christians living in Turkey today."

The status of Christians in Turkey has long been difficult. Converts are often viewed as spies for America. Those caught sharing the Gospel without permission are often detained. And those who convert to Christianity are accused of betraying their Turkish heritage.

"It's not easy trying to convince people that having faith in Jesus doesn't mean that we are a threat to Turkish society," one announcer said. "That's why reading the Bible on-air and teaching people about the word of God allows people to know more about what it means to be a follower of Christ."

Turkey is a secular republic and the constitution provides for freedom of religion. Still, Christians face discrimination. Non-Muslims are barred from joining the police force or the military. Top government positions are off limits to them.

But the team at Radio Shema hopes their efforts will help change people's attitudes about the faith.

"We are careful not to talk against or to attack other people's beliefs," Tufan told CBN News. "We just share the truth about Jesus. We believe that is sufficient to reach people with the Gospel message."

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