

## **BELARUS and elsewhere September 2004**

Belarus is one of the poorest and most repressed countries of Eastern Europe. There are frequent news items about the repression of Protestant groups there. To quote from one of many:

“Belarus' repressive new religion law enters into legal force this coming Saturday (16 November), Keston News Service has learnt. From that date all unregistered religious activity by organised groups will be illegal; all communities with fewer than 20 members will become illegal and will not be able to function; any religious activity in private homes - apart from occasional, small scale meetings - will be illegal; religious communities that do not have a registered umbrella body will no longer be able to invite foreign citizens for religious work or run any religious teaching establishments; and all religious literature will be subject to compulsory prior censorship before it can be imported or distributed”.

Source: <http://www.worthynews.com/christian-persecution/features/belarus-religion-law.html>

Despite these problems, the Truth continues to grow here. A recent visit was made by two of our brethren, resulting in a total of 6 baptisms. We began with the baptism of the husband of our sister Nina, who lives in a remote farmstead in a rapidly depopulating village. They have one treasured cow, and are now storing their harvest of potatoes to eat throughout the Winter. You can see from the following photo how malnourished is our new brother VLADIMIR. We were further able to interview and baptize a friend of sis Nina's daughter, IRINA. Both these baptisms were performed in the open air, in very cold water!



Photo: Bro. Vladimir's baptism



Photo: Bro. Vladimir with his cow, outside their poorly constructed home

Next stop was the home village of one of our Belarussian brethren currently working in another Eastern European country. The drastic economic situation in Belarus is scarcely believable - pensions and wages are around \$30 / month. It was a pure pleasure to interview and baptize GALINA, who was well versed in both Scripture and Bible Basics, and who had been waiting some time for baptism.

Our last stop was Baranovichi, a town where there have been several arrests of Protestant Christians for holding meetings in their homes. Our sister Larisa lives here in great poverty along with her two young children. Along with many people in Belarus, she suffers from the results of radiation from the Chernobyl disaster, and the presence of so much radioactivity still in the ecosystem. She has been prescribed medicines for her radioactivity-related thyroid problem which cost around \$150 / month. This is totally out of her reach. We gave her some funds and undertook to try to obtain and mail the drugs to her. She asks for your prayers, as her youngest

son is also sick with the same thyroid problem. To quote from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/medical\\_notes/461921.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/medical_notes/461921.stm) :

“Radiation can also cause little understood changes to the body's genes, which can be manifested through the development of diseases such as cancer later in life, and possibly as birth defects in future generations... It is now widely accepted that the Chernobyl nuclear disaster has led to a massive increase in thyroid cancers in the three countries most affected ... Belarus has shown a 100-fold increase, from 0.3 per million in 1981-85 to 30.6 per million in 1991-94. Unicef has noted significant increases in many types of health disorders in Belarus since the disaster. For example, problems of the nervous and sensory organs have increased by 43%; disorders of the digestive organs by 28%; and disorders of bone, muscle and the connective tissue system have increased by 62%.” The reality for the brotherhood is that there some of our brethren and sisters have died as a result of the disaster, and others like sister Larisa are now seriously ill, along with their children. Please do pray for them! These tragedies occur and are often ‘forgotten’ as the news media brings others to our attention. But our brethren and sisters and their children continue to suffer and die. However, our sister preaches very bravely- despite the risk of persecution- and it was a pleasure to witness the baptisms of her sister IRINA and two of her nephews, KIRILL and MAXIM. We ask for your prayers for them all, both spiritually and physically.

## **TUNISIA**

You may recall announcements regarding our brother K in this North African moslem country. He is still facing persecution, and asks for our prayers:

dear br.!

this is me br. k. from north africa. I can't use my old e-mail no more! cause my family don't trust me and she had now the password of my old e-mail! moreover my father took my mobile phone away! for that I lose all contact ..... and for this reason I took all time possible to convince them that I was stopped but despite this time I studie (ed) 'the bible basic's'

in the last year i trayed to improve my english language and I wish that i was succeeded. and it 's so possible that I will travel to Russia after 10 month in (July) for studing there; for that I begin(ed) to studied the russsian language. and I can't wait this day's

NB: my family denied to me the access to use the internet for this reason maybe I'll take a time before answering your nest e-mail!

## **PAKISTAN**

We've had some news from Steve, Stephanie and Liz who are currently on an exciting trip there. Bro. Steve wrote briefly:

“Yesterday we had the pleasure of interviewing and baptising four members of the one family - a man and wife, and their two daughters.They are Iranian refugees living in Pakistan and had first met Iranian Christadelphians (also refugees) through the internet, and then had further discussions with a local Pakistani brother before asking to be baptised.

It was really exciting for all of us to participate in this, and is just one more example of the amazing way God is working here.

With love in our Lord,  
Steve”

Our new sister Azita wrote:

“dear brother

We are baptized! On 24 September we met brother Steve, his wife Stephane and sister Liz. We are so happy to meet them. On 25 we were baptized and tonight we were all together breaking-bread. We thank you for helping us in meeting them, and We are so happy to be baptized by them. God bless you.

Azita”

The Iranian refugee brother who did so much to teach them over the internet wrote from where he is hiding out at the moment:

“Dearest brother

i was aware about the news and if i didn't tell you i thought that you know it already , you can't imagine how i'm happy about Azita and her family who joined us as our true family! hope that God help them for the other things as well , i'm so glad that the times that i spent on net preaching had some fruits as well ! i'm so happy that liz and stive and his wife are with them

lots of love and regard to you

your brother  
N”

We see here how the world-wide network of our fellowship in the Lord comes together to make increase of the body, edifying itself in love- just as Paul said. We simply give thanks, confident from such wonderful experiences that the Lord is surely working with us.