



PEOPLE GROUP

Photo by Jordi Zaragoza Anglès

THE HARATINE OR BLACK MOORS OF MAURITANIA

The word Moor traces its origin to the historical term Mauri, which originally described any speaker of Hassaniya – the regional Arabic dialect of Mauritania. Today, Mauritanian society remains deeply structured along racial and ancestral lines. It is broadly divided between the Beidane (White Moors of Arab-Berber descent) and the Haratine (Black Moors).

Numbering approximately 2.64 million, the Black Moors constitute nearly 40 per cent of the nation's population. As descendants of sub-Saharan Africans, the Haratine were absorbed into Moorish culture through centuries of servitude. Despite formal legal abolitions of slavery, many Haratine continue to navigate the lowest strata of society, facing systemic marginalization, economic hardship, and social discrimination.

Almost entirely Sunni Muslim, their moral framework, social customs, and daily rhythms are steeped in Islamic

traditions. With evangelical presence estimated between 0.0 and 0.1 per cent, the Haratine remain one of the most least-reached people groups in West Africa.

Ranked 21st on Open Doors's World Watch List for Christian persecution, Mauritania enforces strict laws prohibiting citizens from converting away from Islam. Public expressions of the Christian faith by non-citizens are regulated, with penalties including imprisonment and deportation. Believers and local converts face immense pressure, ranging from clan and family rejection to ethno-religious hostility and broader societal oppression. Radical leaders frequently incite hostility against believers, making public faith dangerous; yet, God has not left himself without a witness. Christian organizations – including World Vision, Caritas, and Lutheran groups – are serving and demonstrating Christ's love through health education, environmental stewardship, and poverty relief.

AT A GLANCE

- The Haratine are a warm, vibrant, and incredibly resilient people. Culturally, Islam is the bedrock of their identity.
- Daily life for them revolves around communal strength, family ties, manual labour, herding, and agriculture.
- The New Testament has been fully translated into Hassaniya. Audio-visual tools such as the Jesus Film are available to share the gospel in their heart language.

PRAY FOR

- An end to systemic discrimination and for new economic and educational opportunities to break generations of poverty among the Haratine.
- God to grant wisdom, favour, and safety to Christian development groups serving as living witnesses.
- Protection, deep spiritual strength, and bold perseverance for the few Mauritanian believers, and for hostility toward Christians to be replaced with open-hearted inquiry.

Sources: Operation World, Joshua Project, Wikipedia



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