

**News and Current Events :: Islam spreads in South Africa**

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ISLAM SPREADS IN SOUTH AFRICA, ESPECIALLY IN BLACK TOWNSHIPS

Black South Africans, drawn to the Islam practiced by African immigrants, are converting in growing numbers and slowly changing the face of religious affiliation in the overwhelmingly Christian country.

“The numbers have gone up dramatically if you look at the census figures. . . there is massive growth especially in the (black) townships,” said Dr. Shamil Jeppie, an expert on Islamic history in Africa at the University of Cape Town.

Immigrants from Central and West Africa, escaping poverty at home for life in the continent’s economic powerhouse, have brought with them a new “Africanized Islam.” Just 650,000 South Africans (less than 2 percent of the population) are Muslim.

Christianity—practiced by 80 percent of the country’s 45 million people—is still the predominant religion among blacks. But an estimated 75,000 Africans are now Muslim compared to less than 12,000 in 1991, reported the Human Sciences Research Council, a government-funded institute.

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