

## **AZERBAIJAN CRACKING DOWN ON GROWING CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT**

Feb. 1, 07. Open Doors reported that authorities in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan have launched a crackdown on a Christian movement of ex-Muslims that has grown from 40 to 18,000 members since 1991 when the nation first gained independence.

“Even if you just show a little bit of interest in Christianity the government and your family will take action,” said Jenö Sebok, spokesman of the Netherlands-based Open Doors group which investigated the situation.

Authorities have begun to put known Christians under police surveillance or harass them. Several new believers have been arrested or dismissed from jobs under pressure from the government and state-controlled media.

In addition, it is nearly impossible for churches to gain “official registration” while registered churches face frequent government raids. It’s also difficult to obtain permission to distribute Bibles and other Christian literature. Azerbaijan is a small nation sandwiched between Russia and Iran with about 8 million people.