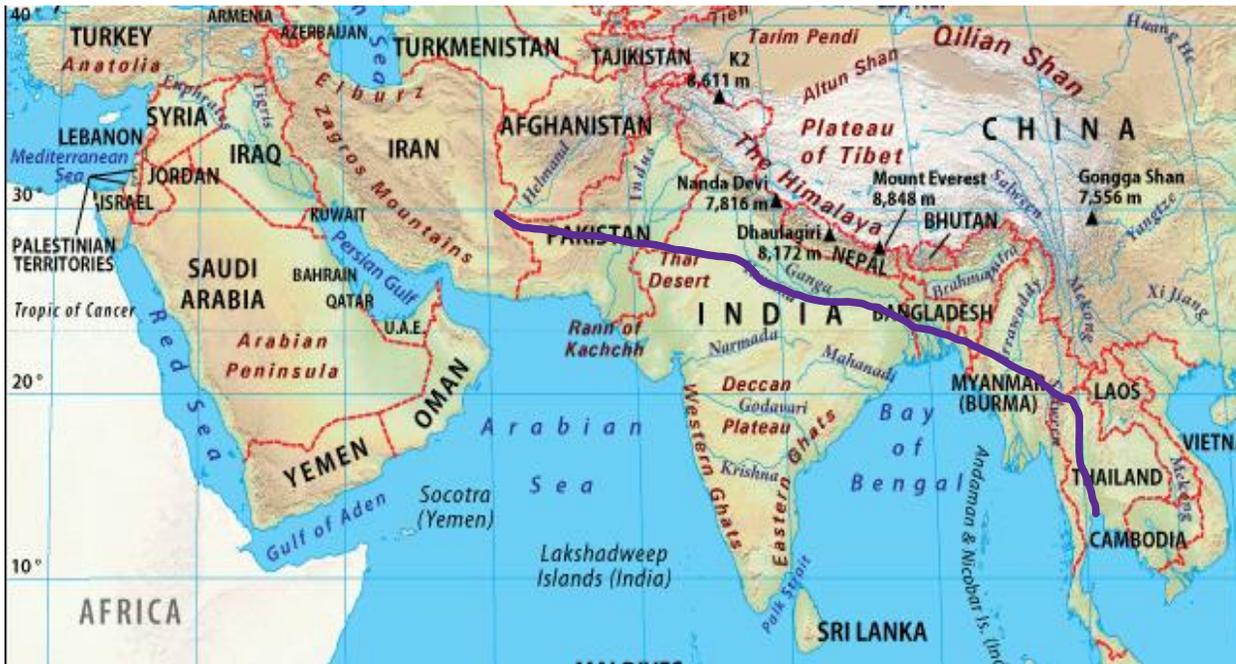


## Walk to Jerusalem Spring Week 4

We had another great week this week. We had 43 participants and walked 1040 miles! At the end of week three, we had ended in The Map below shows our progress through the end of week four (purple line).



from this map, we have completed about two-thirds of our pilgrimage to Jerusalem so far. But we will use all of the miles you walk for sightseeing in Jerusalem when we arrive so keep these miles

coming in for the rest of our journey!

As we enter Pakistan, it is important to know something about the history of the country, the land it occupies and the people who inhabit it. Pakistan, officially the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is the world's fifth-most populous country with a population exceeding 212.2 million. It has the world's second-largest Muslim population. It is the 33rd-largest country by area, spanning 340,509 square miles. Pakistan has a 650-mile-long coastline along the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman in the south and is bordered by India to the east, Afghanistan to the west, Iran to the southwest, and China to the northeast. It is separated narrowly from Tajikistan by Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor in the northwest, and also shares a maritime border with Oman.

The territory that now constitutes Pakistan was the site of several ancient cultures and intertwined with the history of the broader Indian subcontinent. The ancient history involves the Neolithic site of Mehrgarh and the Bronze Age Indus Valley Civilization, and was later home to kingdoms ruled by people of different faiths and cultures, including Hindus, Indo-Greeks, Muslims, Turco-Mongols, Afghans and Sikhs. The area has been ruled by numerous empires and dynasties, including the Persian Achaemenid Empire, Alexander III of Macedon's empire, the Mongol Empire, the Mughal Empire, the Afghan Durrani Empire, the Sikh Empire (partially) and, most recently, the British Indian Empire.

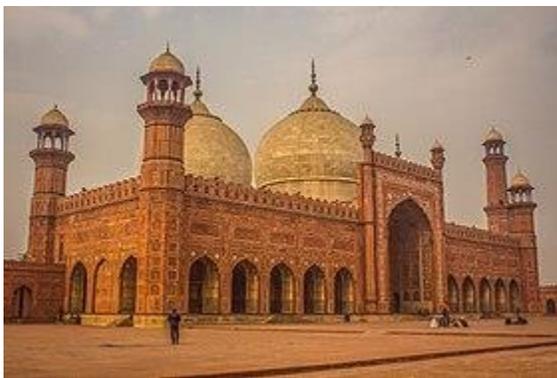
Pakistan gained independence in 1947 as a homeland for Indian Muslims following the Pakistan Movement, which sought statehood for the Muslim-majority regions of British India through partition. It is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country, with similarly diverse geography and wildlife. Initially a dominion, Pakistan adopted a constitution in 1956, becoming an Islamic republic. An ethnic civil war and Indian military intervention in 1971 resulted in the secession of East Pakistan as the new country of Bangladesh. In 1973, Pakistan adopted a new constitution which stipulated that all laws are to conform to the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Quran and Sunnah. In 2008, Pakistan transitioned to civilian rule. In 2010, Pakistan adopted a parliamentary system with periodic elections.

A middle power, Pakistan has the sixth-largest standing armed forces in the world and is also a nuclear power as well as a declared nuclear-weapons state. It is ranked among the emerging and growth-leading economies of the world, and is backed by one of the world's largest and fastest-growing middle class

populations. Pakistan's political history since independence has been characterized by periods of military rule, political instability, and conflicts with India. The country continues to face challenges including poverty, illiteracy, and corruption. Pakistan is a member of the UN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the OIC, the Commonwealth of Nations, the SAARC, the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, and is a major non-NATO ally.

Some of the earliest ancient human civilizations in South Asia originated from areas encompassing present-day Pakistan. The Indus region, which covers most of present day Pakistan, was the site of several successive ancient cultures including the Neolithic Mehrgarh and the Bronze Age Indus Valley Civilization (2,800–1,800 BCE).

The Arab conqueror Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sindh in 711 CE. The Pakistan government's official chronology claims this as the time when the foundation of Pakistan was laid but the concept of *Pakistan* came in 19th century. The Early Medieval period (642–1219 CE) witnessed the spread of Islam in the region. During this period, Sufi missionaries played a pivotal role in converting a majority of the regional Buddhist and Hindu population to Islam. These developments set the stage for the rule of several successive Muslim empires in the region.



*Badshahi Mosque, Lahore*

The Mughals introduced Persian literature and high culture, establishing the roots of Indo-Persian culture in the region. From the region of modern-day Pakistan, key cities during the Mughal rule were Lahore and Thatta, both of which were chosen as the site of impressive Mughal buildings, such as the mosque to the left. In the early 16th century, the region remained under the Mughal Empire ruled by Muslim emperors. By the early 18th century, increasing European influence contributed to the slow disintegration of the Mughal Empire as the lines between commercial and political dominance became increasingly blurred.

During this time, the English East India Company (EIC) had established coastal outposts. Control over the seas, greater resources, technology, and British military protection led the EIC to increasingly flex its military muscle, allowing it to take over the subcontinent by 1765 and sideline European competitors. Expanding access beyond Bengal and the subsequent increased strength and size of EIC's army enabled it to annex or subdue most of region by the 1820s. Many historians see this as the start of the region's colonial period. By this time, with its economic power severely curtailed by the British parliament and itself effectively made an arm of British administration, the EIC began more deliberately to enter non-economic arenas such as education, social reform, and culture. Such reforms included the enforcement of the English Education Act in 1835 and the introduction of the Indian Civil Service (ICS). Traditional *madrasahs*—primary institutions of higher learning for Muslims in the subcontinent—were no longer supported by the English Crown, and nearly all of the *madrasahs* lost their financial endowment.

The British government announced its intention to end the British Rule in 1946–47. Nationalists in British India—including Jawaharlal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad of Congress, Jinnah of the All-India Muslim League, and Master Tara Singh representing the Sikhs—agreed to the proposed terms of transfer of power and independence in June 1947 with the Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten of Burma. As the United Kingdom agreed to the partitioning of India in 1947, the modern state of Pakistan was established on 14 August 1947, amalgamating the Muslim-majority eastern and northwestern regions of British India. It comprised the provinces of Balochistan, East Bengal, the North-West Frontier Province, West Punjab, and

Sindh.



In the riots that accompanied the partition in Punjab Province, it is believed that between 200,000 and 2,000,000 people were killed in what some have described as a retributive genocide between the religions while 50,000 Muslim women were abducted and raped by Hindu and Sikh men and 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women also experienced the same fate at the hands of Muslims. Around 6.5 million Muslims moved from India to West Pakistan and 4.7 million Hindus and Sikhs moved from West Pakistan to India. It was the largest mass migration in human history. A subsequent dispute over the princely state of Jammu and

Kashmir eventually sparked the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947–1948. Just in February 2021, the two countries agreed to a truce regarding the Kashmir region!

After Pakistan's first ever general elections the 1973 Constitution was created by an elected Parliament. The Constitution declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic and Islam as the state religion. It also stated that all laws would have to be brought into accordance with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Quran and Sunnah and that no law repugnant to such injunctions could be enacted. The 1973 Constitution also created certain institutions such as the Shariat Court and the Council of Islamic Ideology to channel the interpretation and application of Islam.

*[A note about Shari'a: Shari'a is Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith and Sunna), prescribing both religious and secular duties and sometimes retributive penalties for lawbreaking. It has generally been supplemented by legislation adapted to the conditions of the day, though the way it should be applied in modern states is a subject of dispute between Islamic fundamentalists and modernists. The Islamic revival of the late 20th century brought along calls by Islamism movements for full implementation of Sharia, including corporal punishments, such as stoning. In some cases, this resulted in traditionalist legal reform, while other countries witnessed juridical reinterpretation of Sharia advocated by progressive reformers. Some Muslim-minority countries recognize the use of Sharia-based family laws for their Muslim populations. Sharia also continues to influence other aspects of private and public life.*

*There are ongoing debates as to whether Sharia is compatible with democracy, human rights, freedom of thought, women's rights, LGBT rights, and banking. Full implementation of Sharia theoretically refers to expanding its scope to all fields of law and all areas of public life. In practice, Islamization campaigns have focused on a few highly visible issues associated with the conservative Muslim identity, particularly women's hijab and the criminal punishments (whipping, stoning and amputation) prescribed for certain crimes. For many Islamists, these corporal punishments are at the core of the divine Shari'a because they are specified by the letter of scripture rather than by human interpreters. Modern Islamists have often rejected, at least in theory, the stringent procedural constraints developed by classical jurists to restrict their application. To the broader Muslim public, the calls for Sharia often represent, even more than any specific demands, a vague vision of their current economic and political situation being replaced by a "just utopia".]*

Pakistan's leftist Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto faced vigorous opposition which coalesced into a movement united under the revivalist banner of *Nizam-e-Mustafa* ("Rule of the Prophet") which aimed to establish an Islamic state based on Sharia laws. Bhutto agreed to some Islamist demands before being overthrown in a coup. In 1977, after taking power from Bhutto in a coup d'état, General Zia-ul-Haq, who came from a religious background, committed himself to establishing an Islamic state and enforcing *shari'a* law. Zia established separate Shariat judicial courts and court benches to judge legal cases using Islamic doctrine. Sectarian tensions increased with Zia's anti-Shia policies. According to a Pew Research Center (PEW) opinion poll, most of the Pakistanis support making Sharia the official law of the land. In a survey of several Muslim countries, PEW also found that Pakistanis tend to identify with their religion more than their nationality in contrast to Muslims in other nations such as Egypt, Indonesia and Jordan.

Today Pakistan has a multi-party parliamentary system with clear division of powers and checks and balances among the branches of government. The first successful democratic transition occurred in May 2013. Politics in Pakistan is centered on, and dominated by, a homegrown social philosophy comprising a blend of ideas from socialism, conservatism, and the third way. As of the general elections held in 2013, the three main political parties in the country are: the center-right conservative Pakistan Muslim League-N; the center-left socialist PPP; and the centrist and third-way Pakistan Movement for Justice (PTI).

Pakistan is divided into three major geographic areas: the northern highlands, the Indus River plain, and the Balochistan Plateau. The northern highlands contain the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Pamir mountain ranges, which contain some of the world's highest peaks, including five of the fourteen "eight-thousanders" (mountain peaks over 8000 meters or 26,250 feet), which attract adventurers and mountaineers from all over the world. The Balochistan Plateau lies in the west and the Thar Desert in the east. The 1,000-

mile-long Indus River and its tributaries flow through the country from the Kashmir region to the Arabian Sea. There is an expanse of alluvial plains along it in the Punjab and Sindh regions. The map left shows the regions. We entered the Punjab region and walked across the Balochistan region on our journey this week, approximately along the purple line.



The climate varies from tropical to temperate, with arid conditions in the coastal south. There is a monsoon season with frequent flooding due to heavy rainfall, and a dry season with significantly less rainfall or none. There are four distinct seasons in Pakistan: a cool, dry winter from December through February; a hot, dry spring from March through May; the summer rainy season, or southwest monsoon period, from June through September; and the retreating monsoon period of October and November. Rainfall varies greatly from year to year, and patterns of alternate flooding and drought are common. Fortunately, we were there in the cool dry winter!

As has been our pattern we sought out Catholic churches in the country. The Catholic Church in

Pakistan is part of the worldwide Catholic Church, under the spiritual leadership of the pope in Rome, but is quite limited in Pakistan. In 2018, there were 1,333,450 Catholics in Pakistan, which represents less than 1% of the total population. There are 7 ecclesiastical units in Pakistan comprising 2 archdioceses, 4 dioceses, and one Apostolic Vicariate, all Latin Rite. There are 7 churches in Pakistan but none of them are on our route or even close to our route.

The Catholic Church continues to be persecuted in this primarily Islamic state. As recently as April 2009, armed men attacked a group of Christians in Taiser Town, near Karachi. They set ablaze six Christian houses and injured three Christians, including an 11-year-old boy, who was in critical condition in the hospital.

The minorities in Swat Valley were fleeing the area as the Taliban have imposed a tax on non-Muslims, the Catholic Bishops' Conference president Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha has said, urging the Pakistani president and prime minister to intervene. The government has recently allowed the imposition of Sharia laws in parts of the North West Frontier Province much to the detriment of non-Muslims. In 2009, Pakistan is the only country in the world with a "blasphemy law". The constitution also ensures that a non-Muslim cannot become president, prime minister, or any of the 11 senior government positions in the country.

On 30 July 2009, tensions arose in the Christian village of Korian after pages containing Islamic inscriptions were found in front of a Christian home. Muslims then accused a family there of blasphemy against Islam. On 1 August 2009, a Muslim mob raided a Christian settlement in Gojra vandalizing and looting houses and causing the deaths of eight people and injuries to many others. Fifty Christian homes were destroyed. Pope Benedict XVI expressed profound sorrow at recent anti-Christian riots in Pakistan and appealed to everyone to renounce violence and take up again the path of peace. He communicated this message in a telegram to Faisalabad Bishop Joseph Coutts. St. Thomas' Church, Wah Cantt, was attacked by a group of armed men on 28 March 2011, which resulted in damages. It is believed that the incident was related

to an episode of the burning of the Quran by Pastor Terry Jones in the U.S. The situation in Pakistan deteriorated to such an extent that by 2013 large numbers of Christians started to seek asylum overseas.

We arrived at Rahim Yar Kahn at the end of week three but waited until we started week 4 to explore it. Rahim Yar Khan is in the Punjab province of Pakistan. It is the 17th largest city of Pakistan by population. It is the capital of Rahim Yar Khan District. According to the 2017 Census of Pakistan, the population rose to

420,419 with a growth of about 80.02% in 19 years.



Bhong Mosque, Suni Muslim



Bhong Mosque is in Rahim Yar Khan. It was designed and constructed over a period of

nearly 50 years (1932–1982) and won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1986. The construction of the mosque was under control of Master Abdul Hameed who worked to make sure it was exquisite and a landmark for Pakistan. The city also has a zoo, but it wasn't as nice as Riverbanks at home. Despite being a large city, there was little to see in terms of sights or cultural events, so we proceeded along our route west.

Next we headed to Jacobabad in Sindh, Pakistan, serving as both the capital city of Jacobabad District. It is the 43rd most populous city in Pakistan and is a hub for train travel and a major intersection for highways in the area. During British rule, the town of then called Khanger was renamed to Jacobabad in honor of British Administrator John Jacob. The city also became well known for consistently having the highest temperature in South Asia, and has a mean summer average of 98 °F (I was glad we were there in February). Jacobabad has a hot desert climate with extremely hot summers and mild winters. The highest recorded temperature was 127.0 °F, and the lowest recorded temperature was 25.0 F). Rainfall is low, and mainly occurs in the monsoon season (July–September). The city has a railway station, a few hotels, and an airbase but not a lot else of interest, so we continued trekking westward, and headed to Khuzdar. Khuzda is the capital city of Khuzdar District in the central part of Balochistan Province, Pakistan. Khuzdar is the third-largest city of Balochistan province and It is the 47th largest city of Pakistan by population according to the 2017 census.

Khuzdar is at the apex of a narrow valley at an elevation of 4,058 ft. Despite this altitude, Khuzdar like most of Balochistan has an arid climate with extremely low and erratic rainfall. Unlike most parts of the

province, the heaviest average rainfall comes from the Asian monsoon in July and August, though this rainfall tends to be very erratic and, in many summers, there is no significant rain at all.

However, a river flows nearby through a canyon shown below, left, and right, which is fed by the



nearby hills and flows all the way to the Arabian Sea.

While we were there, we took a rafting trip on this river. The canyon walls are high with some lovely waterfalls. While the average high temps for February are in the 60–70-degree range, we had a day when it reached 80 so rafting was a great way to cool off after all our walking!

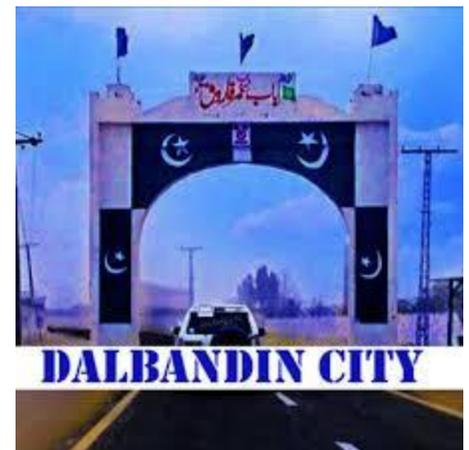


Our next stop was at Dalbandin is a town in Balochistan, Pakistan. Dalbandin is famous for fruit orchards. On 19 January 2011, it was struck by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. At that time, it was a sparsely populated area with a population of 15,000. The tremors of the earthquake were felt from Dubai in the middle east to Karachi and Lahore in eastern Pakistan. The damage from earthquake was limited since Dalbandin is sparsely populated and the earthquake was shallower.



The people were friendly but communication was difficult.

*Aerial view of the Western outskirts of Dalbandin, Balochistan in the flat Chagai Desert, below, left.*



As we continued walking, we saw camels grazing along the roadway. While there were some mountains in the west, we knew we'd

have a long trek through the desert before we reached our next destination, and we would also have to go through the mountains.

Nok Kundi ("the blunt point"), is a township and region in western Pakistan in the province of Balochistan. Blunt Point is an apt name if you look at the map of Pakistan. The original word for this region is Zaranka which means "watermill" or a "spring". This

word occurs in old Balochi and Persian as "Waterland", but we didn't see much water in the region. Nok Kundi



Below, soliders and cyclists were common sites in the area.

has a hot desert climate with extremely hot summers and mild winters. There is virtually no rainfall whole the year. The climate is very dry with just 1.4 in of rainfall each year. The people (left)were friendly but again communication was difficult.

Dry Mountains approaching Nok Kundi, center and Trango Tower, right, found there.



From Nok Kundi we crossed the border arriving at Zahedan, Iran



which is also relatively near the Afghanistan border. Zahedan is located only about 25 miles south of the tripoint of the borders of the three countries, at an altitude of 4,436 feet above sea level.



*Arial view of Zahedan. left*

Zahedan has a hot desert climate with hot summers and cool winters. Precipitation is exceptionally low, and mostly falls in winter. At the 2016 census, its population was 587,730.

The demographics of Zahedan's inhabitants are a mixture of ethnic Baloch who speak the Balochi language and Sistanis Persians who speak various dialects of Persian

language. There are also small numbers of Kurds.

Zahedan lies east of the Dasht-e Loot desert. The city was part of the historic region of Sistan, situated today on the borders of southeastern Iran and southwestern Afghanistan. One portion of Sistan is part of the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan. The other portion is part of the Nimruz Province of Afghanistan.

Zahedan and the area of Sistan has a very strong connection with Zoroastrianism and during Sassanid times Lake Hamun was one of two pilgrimage sites for followers of that religion. In Zoroastrian religion, the lake is the keeper of Zoroaster's seed and just before the final renovation of the world, three maidens will enter the lake, each then giving birth to the saoshyants who will be the saviors of mankind at the final renovation of the world. The most famous archaeological site in Sistan is on Kuh-e Khwajeh, a hill rising up as an island in the middle of Lake Hamun.

Lake Hāmūn is also known as Hāmūn-e Helmand. Hamun is generic term which refers to shallow lakes (or lagoons), usually seasonal, that occur in deserts of southeast Iran and adjacent areas of Afghanistan

and Pakistan as a product of snowmelt in nearby mountains in spring.. Lake Hamun (right) is fed by numerous seasonal water tributaries; the main tributary is the perennial Helmand River, which originates in Afghanistan Hindu Kush mountains. In modern times, and prior to the existence of the dams for agricultural irrigation, spring floods would bring into existence much larger lakes.



Zahedan is a center for Sunni Muslims in Baluchistan.

The Makki mosque (left) and its school play an important role in Baluchistan's society. Shaikh Abdolhamid Ismaeelzahi is the main and most influential religious and Sunni community leader in Iran. Zahedan also has a Friday mosque (main mosque) for Shi'ite (Shia) and a *Jame mosque (a congregational Mosque)*, where many members of the community gather to worship on Fridays. A colorful bazaar, *Rasouli Bazaar*, can also be found in the city, where Baluchi and Pashtun (a Persian group of Afghanistan) traders intermingle.

About 62 miles south of Zahedan is an intermittently active volcano, Taftan, which rises abruptly 13,261 feet from the surrounding plain, below, right. Taftan is Persian for "blistering, smoldering,

fuming") and the volcano is an active stratovolcano in south-eastern Iran situated in the Sistan and Baluchestan province. With variable heights reported, all around 13,000 feet above sea level, it is the highest mountain in south-eastern Iran. No one in the group seemed inclined to climb the volcano.



Taftan has two main summits, Narkuh and Materkuh, and various heights have been reported for both summits. The northwestern Narkuh has two craters and is the older of the two summits. The southeastern Materkuh summit is surrounded by fresh-looking lava flows and has at least three craters. Currently, the volcano features vigorous fumarolic activity that is visible from a great distance and involves numerous vents on Materkuh. Taftan appears to be part of a geothermal area, and a number of hot springs can be found around the volcano. Taftan is part of a volcanic arc in Iran, together with Bazman, also in Iran, and Koh-i-Sultan in Pakistan. This volcanic arc has formed on Cretaceous-Eocene sedimentary layers and has resulted from the subduction of the oceanic Arabian plate beneath Iran at the Makran trench.

Although the surrounding area has many ancient sites, Zahedan itself developed mainly in the 20th century. Before being chosen as the provincial administrative center in the 1930s, Zahedan was a small village. Its population reached 17,500 by 1956 and increased more than fivefold to 93,000 by 1976. After 1980, large numbers of refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan helped triple the population of Zahedan to more than 281,000 by 1986, a number which has since doubled again.



*Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mosque*

Zahedan is the home of the Islamic Azad University of Zahedan, the Zahedan University of Medical Sciences and the University of Sistan and Baluchestan. Besides, the largest Sunni seminary, Darululoom Zahedan, is in Zahedan. There are some other religious Sunni schools in the city and the vicinity.

*University Amphitheater right*

Next week we will be walking across Iran toward Iraq and getting closer to Israel.



I hope you have a great week!  
Kathy Scharer  
Your Tour Guide