



# Acehnese in the New York Metro Area

## QUICK FACTS:

ALL PEOPLES INITIATIVE

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**Place of Origin:** Indonesia  
(Aceh territory located in Northwest corner of the island of Sumatra)

**Location in New York City Metro:** Queens  
(Elmhurst, Long Island City, Corona, Woodside, Roosevelt)

**Population in New York City Metro:** 100  
(Community Estimate)

**Primary Religion:** Islam

**Secondary Religion:**  
None

**Status of Christian Witness:** No known Christians

**Other People Group Names:** Acehnese, Atjeh, Achenese, Achinese

**Primary Language:**  
Aceh (Tunong)

**Registry of Peoples Code:**  
100036

**Significant Notes:** Out of around 4 million Acehnese in the world, there are only several hundred evangelical Christians; The largest Aceh population in the United States is in Queens

Aceh (pronounced AH-Chay or ah-Chee) is a special territory of Indonesia located at the north-western end of Sumatra. They have consistently been at odds with the Indonesian government over autonomy issues. The Acehnese have had enough autonomy, however, to largely implement Shari'a Law. In December 2004, the western coast of Aceh was devastated by a tsunami. Most of the Acehnese in New York lost friends and/or family in the tsunami. Approximately 200 Acehnese live in the United States; about 100 are in New York.

## When Did They Come to New York?

Acehnese appear to have begun immigrating to the United States around 1998. They have long fought for independence, so many likely came to America because they opposed their government. Others came for economic or educational reasons.



Photo by Pierre Pouliquin, [http://flickr.com/photos/pierre\\_pouliquin/415306102/](http://flickr.com/photos/pierre_pouliquin/415306102/)

## Where Do They Live?

The largest population of Acehnese in the United States resides in the Elmhurst, Corona, Roosevelt, and Woodside areas of Queens. They have formed a very tight-knit community.

## What Do They Believe?

Acehnese have adhered to Islam for several centuries. Aceh was likely the first place Islam was established in Southeast Asia, and it is the only province in Indonesia where Shari'a law has been formally instituted. From this outpost, Acehnese have been fervent in their spread of Sunni Islam throughout Indonesia. Though having a strong Muslim identity, Acehnese are heavily influenced by animism, mysticism and magic. In New York, the Acehnese worship at the Masjid Al-Hikmah Mosque in Long Island City. There is currently no evangelical church working among the Acehnese, but the complete Bible is available in the Aceh language. Only several hundred of the 4 million Aceh in the world are evangelical Christian.

## What Are Their Lives Like?

After attending college or graduate school, some immigrants have assimilated into the work force as teachers, managers, professionals or white-collar workers, but most work as service workers. Almost all are literate. Acehnese in New York congregate at the mosque and local Sumatran and Indonesian restaurants on Whitney Avenue in Elmhurst, Queens and elsewhere. At least one Acehnese journalist lives and works in New York. There is a strong movement based in New York to publicize atrocities in Aceh committed by the Indonesian government in an attempt to seek freedom/independence for the Aceh region of Sumatra. Of the 100 Acehnese in New York, there are some strong activists. One Queens-based advocate, Jafar Sid-diq Hamzah, was killed when he went to Indonesia in 2000.

## How Can I Pray?

∞ Pray that the Acehnese search for freedom will reach beyond political troubles and into a search for answers to the spiritual troubles that ail all mankind. Pray that true freedom will be found in Christ.

∞ The Acehnese are looking for help from Americans. Pray that compassionate and merciful Christians will advocate for the Acehnese people and will share a hope that completely satisfies.

∞ Between political strife and facing the horror of natural disasters, the Acehnese are a grieving people in the midst of crisis. Pray that God would show grace, justice, and mercy to the Acehnese people.