



Arab Vision responds to secularization in the Arab World

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In 2014 the Saudi government issued a law which equates atheism with terrorism. Also in other Arab countries atheism is taboo; the Arab word for atheist '*mulhid*' means literally 'deviator'. However, atheism is on the rise in the Arab world.

Just a quick round on Facebook shows that in the past few years more and more atheist Facebook groups were created such as the 'Atheist Society of Libya', the 'Tunisian Atheists' and others. This is partly due to the Arab Spring which freed many people from the fear of speaking their mind in public. "I thought if we atheists stop being ghosts and materialize, we will be taken more seriously, because our statements will become better thought through", according to the Egyptian atheist Ismail Mohamed, founder of [online-talkshow 'Black Ducks'](#), that offers a platform to atheists and non-religious individuals from the Arab world.

"Atheism *per se* is not the problem, claiming it out loud is. Secular lifestyles are tolerated such as drinking alcohol, while this is prohibited in Islam, as long as you don't drink in public", according to [an article](#) of Ahmed Benchemsi in online magazine 'The New Republic'.

Several regimes in the Arab world issue severe punishments if someone claims openly to be an atheist. Karim al Banna, an Egyptian student of 21 years, was sentenced to three years in prison for insulting Islam, because he proclaimed on Facebook to be an atheist. Even his own father testified against him. Raif Badawi, the founder of Free Saudi Liberals, was sentenced to 10 years in prison and a thousand lashes in Saudi-Arabia. Also in other Arab countries bloggers are in jail for their posts on social media.

The rise of atheism seems peculiar because at the same time a clear increase in political Islam is noticeable. [Brian Whitaker](#), author of the book 'Arabs without God' explains the rise in atheism partly as a response to this increase in political Islam. Arab youth are alienated from Islam by the reactionary views of many Muslim clerics.

The trend of secularization is for example visible on the Egyptian streets where more women are taking off their veils and fewer taxi drivers place a copy of the Koran visibly in their car. In Tunisia however more women are covering themselves since the present government has allowed wearing the niqab and hijab in public. It seems that radical Islam as well as secularization and atheism are developing and are attracting followers.

Arab Vision is a Christian producer of TV programmes in the Arab world. The TV programmes aim to stimulate people to think for themselves and to let them make their own choices to believe, to change religion or even to stop believing.

"Many young people, Muslims as well as Christians, are no longer satisfied with the traditional answers. We are in the process of producing two new programmes in which we want to provide a platform for questions and doubts people have in order to search together for the core of faith. We also want to stimulate the church and parents to offer room to those with doubts in order to discuss doubts and unbelief. Also we want to equip them to explain Biblical truths as their own convictions and to show them in their lives", according to the organization.

About Arab Vision

Arab Vision was founded in 1997 and is a community of Christians in the Arab World committed to spreading the Gospel and working to obtain a more just society in accordance with the Gospel.

Main goals of the organisation are producing and distributing of Christian TV programmes via (satellite)TV and Internet.

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