



Press Release

Algeria to launch Islamic satellite TV channel

17 March 2009



Final arrangements are being made for this month's launch of a first-of-its-kind religious TV station by the Algerian government. Alongside the already operating Radio Qur'an, this new TV station is tasked to satisfy the programming needs of a large cross-section of Algeria's citizens and enhance national religious identity.

"The new TV station will air religious programs presented by Algerian Muslim scholars who will offer fatwas and preaching that are in line with the Maliki School adopted in Algeria," said Minister of Communication Azzedine Mihoubi. This seems to be part of a concerted effort to shift the focus of Algerian TV viewers away from the diverging views of the religious channels from the Gulf, as well as the popular Arabic Christian satellite TV channels. A media advisor for the religious affairs ministry told Magharebia that the new channel is to be "an icon of moderation and a platform for disseminating correct religious ideology."

Asked to comment on this development, the international director of the Christian TV production company, Arab Vision, said, "It is clear that the Algerian authorities hope that by presenting Islam in a moderate way, they can save some Algerians from being 'trapped' by radical Islam and its preachers that abound on satellite broadcasts. They seem to think the problem is one of information only. But the reason why many Muslims turn away from the religion of their government is because they deeply loathe their government. That may also explain why so many Muslims in Algeria are interested in the Christian faith."

In the past 7 years, Arab Vision has produced many TV programs in the Algerian Arabic and Kabyle Berber languages that are spoken in Algeria. The numerous e-mails, letters and phone calls from Algerian viewers leave no doubt that these Christian programs have led many Algerians to faith in Jesus Christ; especially among the Kabyles, tens of thousands have adopted the Christian faith.

Proclaiming the Gospel on TV in the Arab World

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“The impact of television programs is so significant that Algeria has adopted rather strict laws forbidding the showing of these TV programs in public,” continued Arab Vision’s director. “I suspect that another reason the Algerian government is keen to start this new station is to show their Muslim population that they are doing something to stem the tide of Algerians joining the church.” The Ministry of Religious Affairs is encouraging prominent Algerian religious scholars and teachers to use this medium to speak against terrorism in order to reach the goal of “achieving security and inviting terrorists to return to their senses.”

The new satellite channel will initially broadcast eight hours per day, but the plan is to gradually expand to a comprehensive national program of specialized channels, including one for the Kabyle culture and language, another targeting children, and a third featuring scientific programming.

“The government’s plans to launch Kabyle channels are especially significant. The Kabyle citizens are not the ones engaging in terrorist activities in Algeria. So the real agenda for these Kabyle programs would seem to be more about neutralizing the effect of Christian TV broadcasts than discouraging terrorism,” concluded Arab Vision’s director.

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