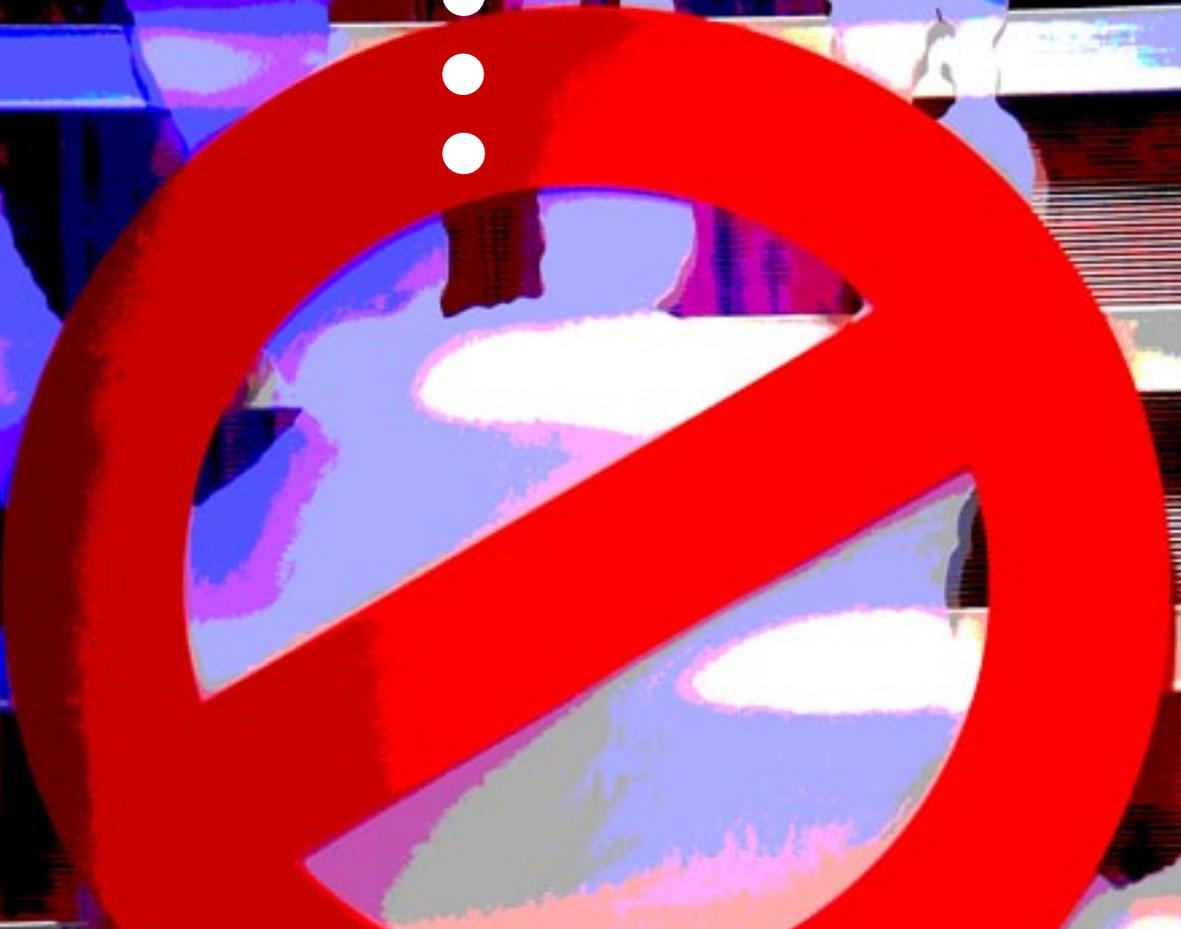




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Quarterly news from SAT-7
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Forbidden

Fighting for religious equality in North Africa

The name of a new program on SAT-7 ARABIC is sure to pique the interest of viewers and capture channel surfers. *Forbidden* evokes a great deal of curiosity about what taboo subjects each episode might broach.

Unlike other current affairs shows on SAT-7, *Forbidden* deals specifically with issues relevant to North Africa. This show is very personal to the presenter, Emad D., who is a Tunisian poet and Pastor. The inspiration for the show comes from John 11:35, “Jesus wept.” Emad wants to show the Arab world that Jesus cares about them and weeps over them.

From politics to art, *Forbidden*

proves that Christians have something to contribute to any situation that arises in life.

The first episode of *Forbidden* discussed the spring 2011 uprisings in the Middle East. It was a groundbreaking episode, considering Emad hosted a Muslim guest on the program. Interfaith dialogue sometimes occurs on-air, but it is unusual to see public interfaith dialogue with someone like Emad—who was not born into Christianity but adopted the faith later in life.

Another episode dealt with human trafficking and how the Church ought to be involved in confronting the problem.

The presenters and their guest, a Moroccan minister, voiced convictions that Christian media should defend victims whose voices are suppressed—working children, maids, and those caught in prostitution.

Constantly seeking a deeper spiritual interpretation of life, Emad devoted an episode to popular culture. He interviewed Wadia al-Safi, a Lebanese singer, songwriter, and actor who is well loved throughout the entire Arab world, by both Muslims and Christians. Al-Safi is known as the “Voice of Lebanon,” but he is also a believer. Emad introduced al-Safi, saying, “Before us is an artist who



could unite us with his voice and his words of encouragement... not just with his words, but with his testimony as a servant of the Lord." By featuring al-Safi as a significant influence on the arts and on society, Emad illuminated the importance of Christian leaders achieving a position of excellence and leadership in popular memory.

In a strategic interview with a Lebanese ex-soldier who became a pastor, a recent episode of *Forbidden* confronted war and forgiveness. Emad held nothing back as he posed several tough questions about war. As a combatant, what was it like for the ex-soldier to talk to a captive face-to-face? How has society become so accustomed to killing that we can sit and drink coffee while watching it on television? What is biblical forgiveness? In a discussion aimed at capturing the severity of war and the power of forgiveness, the ex-soldier, now pastor, concluded that the only way to achieve true forgiveness is through

the power of the Holy Spirit.

Doubtless a controversial figure as a believer who was not born into the faith, Emad is already attracting an enthusiastic following. Some viewers have expressly touched on the need for this kind of show. One viewer wrote to Emad:

"I would like for you to make a special episode for us about the problems faced by those who are new to the faith. Also, discuss the different kinds of new believers...the ones who are really seeking God and His Truth, and those who are after other things, so they won't be a stumbling block to others."

Clearly, there are Christians in North Africa who identify with Emad's testimony and his willingness to discuss issues that are both controversial and ubiquitous.



Presenter Emad D., a Tunisian poet and Pastor.

Emad has ambitious goals for the show, and hopes to use testimonies to demonstrate that the Church is spreading all over the world. He longs to see equality between people of all religions—with more respect for new believers. Moreover, the show aims to overcome negative perceptions of the North African Church. Currently, negative stereotypes that Christianity is a distinctly western phenomenon abound amongst many Arab communities. *Forbidden*, on the other hand, presents a different perspective of Christianity. It is a perspective that is not constrained by the cultural connotations of Western churches, but instead presents the unpolluted Truth of the Bible in a manner that is culturally relevant to North Africans. Simply put, the show demonstrates that the Gospel is for all nations and cultures.

Filling a Void in Iranian Discipleship

The recent wave of political shakeups in Iran adds to the challenges facing the Church as it strives to grow in number and encourage its members.

Limited access to Bibles and other Christian training materials leaves believers feeling isolated and makes individual spiritual growth difficult. All Iranian Christians—men and women, young and old, new believers and church leaders—desperately need biblical training, encouragement, and support from fellow Christians. Some have recently given their hearts to Christ but lack the resources to grow. Iranians who become believers cannot always express their faith to family or community because of the potentially negative reaction in a country like Iran.

House churches must meet in secret. Many of the pastors of these untold thousands of house churches have been followers of Christ themselves for only short periods of time, and yet they find themselves in positions of leadership.

From a religious standpoint, many Iranians have become disheartened after living under the oppression of a theocracy. As a result, many are open to hearing about other beliefs. Their search for meaning and purpose frequently leads them to SAT-7 PARS! While ownership of a satellite dish is still illegal in Iran, half the population has access to satellite television. It is their only source of uncensored information and is viewable in the privacy of

their individual homes. SAT-7 is using this opportunity to meet a great need and offers in-depth leadership training through its *Seminary of the Air (SOTA)* program.

Most traditional seminaries in Iran have closed, and the SOTA project aims to fill that void by providing a broad range of information in the same way that classroom lectures, and books in a seminary library or a pastor's study would in other places. Since their inception in 2008, SOTA programs have aimed to grow church membership, equip church leaders to become effective ministers of the Gospel of Christ, and guard new churches against the pitfalls of heresy and stagnation. The programs address the needs of individuals at every stage of their spiritual journeys including basic teaching for seekers, discipleship for new believers, and advanced training for Pastors and other leaders. Some of the program titles include: *Ten Steps to Healing, Christian World View, Ways of Worship, The Suffering Church, The Great Commission, and Christ in the Family.*

The strategy that makes the SOTA project successful is based on two important components: 1) the use of un-censorable satellite technology, and 2) a carefully planned curriculum. The curriculum is written and

I especially like your teaching programs because they help me grow in my Christian faith."

Reza, a viewer in Iran



delivered by mature and balanced theologians and overseen by an Advisory Committee comprised of highly respected Iranian Christian scholars and Bible teachers.

During 2011 alone, SAT-7 PARS received over 18,000 contacts from viewers—a truly amazing figure, given that virtually all Christian activity is prohibited in Iran. Viewers are anxious to connect with other Christians, and they reach out by contacting the SAT-7 PARS Audience Relations team. Reza from northwestern Iran shared: ***“I have been a believer for about a year and I watch your programs every day. Since I don’t have a church or a pastor, my only resource is your channel. I especially like your teaching programs because they help me grow in my Christian faith.”*** Reza is one of thousands of viewers searching for a sense of Christian community in Iran.

An estimated 1.8 million different people viewed SAT-7 PARS programs in 2011. While it is difficult to determine exactly how many of those viewer specifically watched SOTA programming, we do know that almost one third of all viewer responses were attributed to SOTA. Studies and reports likely fall short of the true number of viewers because many people in Iran are afraid to admit that they watch a Christian television channel, or even satellite television at all! Despite the threat of persecution, some viewers who contact SAT-7 are open about their background and studies. Mahdi, a viewer in Iran, said the following about his connection to SAT-7: ***“I want to thank you for your teaching programs, which explain the Trinity. This subject is very controversial for us who come from [a different] background. It is not easy to understand, but your teaching programs, especially Dr. Fatehi’s lessons, help me a lot.”***

As Mahdi makes evident, SOTA not only teaches biblical principles for the first time, but shines a light on common misconceptions about Christian theology in Iran.

Given the combined Farsi-speaking populations of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and the availability of satellite television in the region, the number of potential viewers of SAT-7 PARS reaches millions! SOTA programming will not only build a solid foundation for the unknown thousands of people giving their lives to the Lord each year, but will also provide the structure on which new churches can grow and become self-sustaining. SOTA transcends traditional methods of teaching to grow the Church, equip its leaders, and encourage its people in a meaningful and lasting walk of faith.

SOTA programs: 1) ‘Advices & Smiles’, 2) ‘Blessed Life’, 3) ‘Bible Answers’, 4) ‘Church History’, 5) ‘Friendship’, 6) ‘Resurrection Teaching’



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Adapting Ottoman Tradition

An Ottoman storytelling tradition assumes a unique style in *Karagöz and Hacivat*, the SAT-7 TÜRK production.

Karagöz and Hacivat is a shadow puppet play born during the 14th century in the Ottoman Empire. At that time, an Ottoman sultan ruled the lands now considered North Africa, the Levant, Turkey, west Asia, and parts of Arabia. According to legend, a lowly commoner visited the Ottoman sultan, as many did in those days to raise complaints or make requests. Employing a bit of ingenuity, the commoner decided to put on a shadow puppet play for the sultan. The puppeteer wove a clever tale about corrupt government officials. The sultan was reportedly delighted by the performance. He rewarded the puppeteer by appointing him as Grand Vizier and punished the corrupt officials responsible for inspiring the tale.

The character development in a typical play pits *Karagöz and Hacivat* against each other as polar opposites. Karagöz, whose name means "black eye" represents the illiterate but straightforward public, whereas Hacivat, whose name means "Cevat the Pilgrim", is a symbol of the educated class.

Traditionally, each episode begins with Hacivat singing, reciting a prayer, and searching for his friend, Karagöz. He calls Karagöz onto stage with a speech that concludes, "Oh, for some amusement." A dialogue commences, which leads the pair into the main plot of the story. The two friends resort to bickering, at which point Hacivat blames Karagöz for ruining the day's events. Karagöz responds to Hacivat's complaints, saying, "May

my transgressions be forgiven."

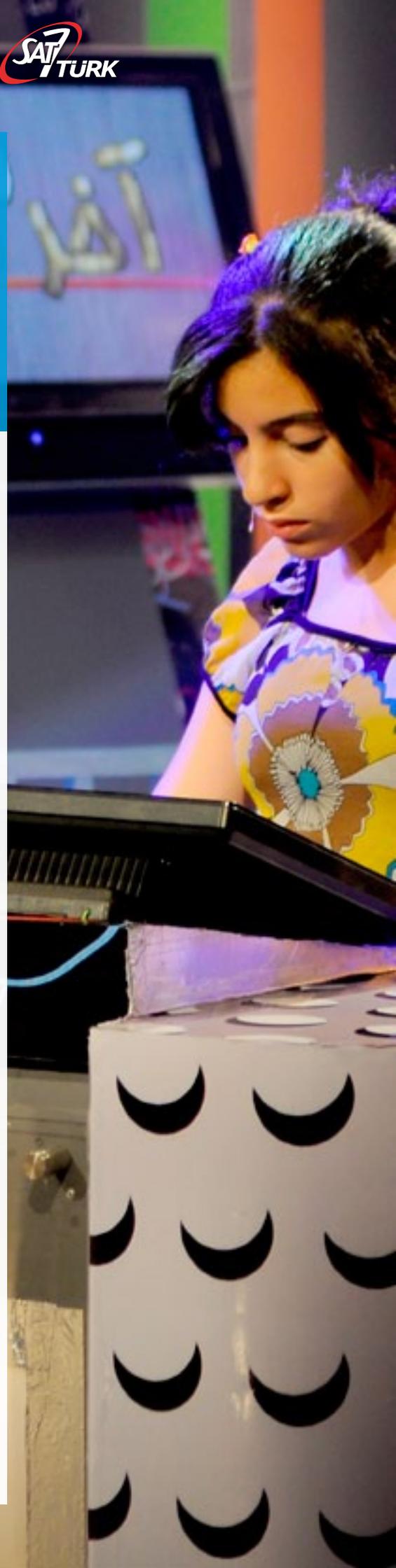
Today, SAT-7 TÜRK has created a modern adaptation of *Karagöz and Hacivat*. The story lines demonstrate how biblical concepts apply to everyday life. An additional character, Mr. Father Pastor, has joined the cast to reinforce Bible teaching. Mr. Father Pastor acts as a mediator and voice of reason between the fickle friends during disputes.

Considering the myriad of animated cartoons on television today, the art of shadow puppets presents a magical charm to the public. The puppets have jointed limbs and are made of camel or water buffalo hide. Once the hide is cut, it is worked until it reaches a semi-transparent state. Finally, the puppet is colored and ready for the show. Unbeknownst to the audience, an oil lamp known as em'a (meaning "candle"), shines from behind the puppeteer, creating a magical illusion of puppets moving about on the screen.

The heritage of *Karagöz and Hacivat*, along with the adaptations of SAT-7 TÜRK, offers entertainment and life lessons that can impact a wide audience of both children and adults.



Shadow puppets Karagöz and Hacivat.



A High-Tech Bible Study

Final Answer—a Bible knowledge competition on SAT-7 KIDS—has drawn children from Assiut, Port Said, Cairo, and all over Egypt.



Presenters Karim Bassem and Marianne Khalil.

The production of a second season of *Final Answer* is underway, and improvements in facilities have allowed the program to grow since its first broadcast two years ago. The new *Upper Room Studio* at SAT-7's Egypt office allows space for contestants' families to be part of a live studio audience for the first time ever! Studio Manager John Adly emphasized, **"There would be no way for this show to come to light, if it wasn't for the new Upper Room Studio."**

On the show, Presenters Marianne Khalil and Karim Bassem quiz the contestants about Bible facts. Contestants who answer correctly can win books, t-shirts, iPhones, and iPads as prizes. *Final Answer* was created in cooperation with The Egyptian Bible Society, which provides SAT-7 with the book prizes. Producer and Director Farid

Tawfik commented, **"My main concern was the people...we made sure to give away small gifts to everyone who came."** Families of the contestants were also welcomed on the set with a free meal to honor their efforts of traveling from sometimes faraway places to be on the show.

Staff vamped up excitement surrounding the show with laser lighting, a smoke machine, LCD and plasma screens, and a live band. The special effects added appeal for the show's target audience, who are between 10 and 14 years old.

The participants came from a variety of family backgrounds. One boy, who studies in the USA, was spending the summer in Egypt when he competed on the show. A young girl brought her father, who is an orthodox priest, to the set with her and won a PlayStation Portable. Also

(Continued overleaf)



“It was a very joyful experience that I’ll never forget. I’ve learned so many wonderful things while studying the Bible!”

Mirna Nessim, Contestant on *Final Answer*

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on the show were two siblings who had lost their father. During the competition, they won a PlayStation Portable and an iPad. The high-dollar value of the prizes undoubtedly stiffened the competition, but it was not all that mattered to the contestants. Jacob Remon, the 13-year-old winner of a t-shirt, said, ***“I’m happy that I learned more about Jesus, and it was a good challenge for me.”***

The educational and spiritual impact of Jacob’s participation is at the heart of SAT-7’s goal for this program.

Contestant Mirna Nessim

studied long hours—even more than she studied for school—to be on the show. The 14-year-old winner of an iPad reflected on the show: ***“It was a very joyful experience that I’ll never forget. I’ve learned so many wonderful things while studying the Bible!”*** Mirna’s enthusiasm is echoed by children all over Egypt.

According to Assistant Director Ereeny Gamal, ***“This is one of the best programs SAT-7 has ever done.”*** As Ereeny filmed an episode of *Message from Sunday School*, the children swarmed her inquiring about how they might also participate in *Final Answer*.



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