



A VOICE OF REASON IN A WORLD OF CONFLICT

SAT-7 ARABIC's current affairs program *Bridges* stands in welcome contrast to the conflicting stories and aggressive talk-show hosts that often dominate the news in the Arab region. With its credible sources and trusted guests, the show guides viewers on a path towards acceptance, empathy, and greater awareness.

With its credible sources and trusted guests, the show guides viewers on a path towards acceptance, empathy, and greater awareness. *Bridges* offers its viewers reliable news and unbiased analysis. The weekly program aims to discuss all subjects openly, from important world events such as the wars in Syria and Iraq, to sensitive, taboo topics.

The program is broadcast live and encourages audience participation through phone calls. Many viewers and experts call in and contribute to the live discussions.

A program for all viewers

Bridges never restricts its content to a Christian viewpoint or viewership. The program invites experts and guests from all backgrounds without discrimination, aiming to build bridges of understanding between all factions of society. *Bridges'* guests include researchers, journalists, members of parliament, and activists from all religions and denominations. Minority and civil rights are high priority topics for the program.

In 2016, *Bridges* dedicated a series of episodes to minority rights in the Middle East. Haroun, a representative of the tiny population of Jews remaining in Egypt, was one of the guests.

Attacks on Christians in the region are also discussed. In May 2016, *Bridges* reported on an attack on a Christian community.

Bridges also sheds light on the suffering caused by war, with team members travelling to Iraq and recording with church, community, and government leaders.

Always quick to respond

When 27 people were killed, and at least 40 wounded, in a suicide bombing at a Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo, Egypt, *Bridges* was quick to respond. On the same day in December 2016, the program went live with a special episode to cover the incident and invited guests from different religions to give commentary.

In another episode, *Bridges* made a live phone interview with Abdullah Kurdi. He is the father

of Aylan, the Syrian toddler who became an icon for the plight of refugees crossing the Mediterranean when his body was washed-up on the shores of Turkey in September 2015.

An essential program

Current affairs programs like *Bridges* have high costs associated with research, field interviews, hiring crews, operating studios, and airing live episodes. ■

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As modern voices diminish and Arab societies become more polarised, a balanced program like *Bridges* is much needed.

TEACHING AND EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS IN THE MENA

The continued conflict and unrest in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are directly impacting the lives of more than 50 million Arabic speakers. As a result, there is a spiritual hunger for truth, change and peace.

SAT-7 is a beacon providing spiritual guidance to its audience of 21.5 million Arabic people. Viewers are responding: in 2016, SAT-7's ARABIC Facebook pages attracted almost 3 million 'Likes' and there were nearly 19 million video views, a third more than in 2015.

Spiritual hunger

Amidst danger and uncertainty, SAT-7 viewers are grappling to live faithfully for God. One way in which SAT-7 is seeking to teach and equip Christians in the MENA is through the TEACH project (Theological Education for Arab Christians at Home). TEACH aims to provide systematic theological teaching for Arab believers who often have no other means of receiving it. This encompasses a raft of interesting television programmes ranging through documentaries, game shows, dramas, talk shows and web series. All of them seek to offer viewers a deeper theological understanding, leadership and pastoral skills, using content developed by Bible colleges in the region.

Over four series, *Dear Jessy*, hosted by Jessy Tohme, a well-respected marriage facilitator, led the audience to a better understanding of pastoral counselling and Christian ethics, using drama based on real-life stories and conversation covering all kinds of issues. Examples addressed included leadership, character building, listening skills, and the use of money and time. One viewer commented on an episode on YouTube: "wonderful episode, this is an example of the virtuous Christian woman".

Building on success

In Spring 2017, SAT-7 will build on this success with an exciting new web series, *H2O*. Short, straight to the point and visually engaging, *H2O* covers the essentials of Christian faith such as building a Christian family, effective leadership, developing your personal relationship with God and the life teachings of Jesus. The short programmes make good use of graphics and music to ensure the key teaching elements come across clearly, whilst also encouraging viewers to meditate on the content.

Emphasising how the TEACH series is inspiring people to apply the truth of God's word to their everyday lives, producer Juliana Sfeir, explains: "it's all about theological teaching but also a full-fledged holistic and creative approach to Christian education". ■

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Pray for all who are involved in leading Christian education across the region, that it would equip Christians with practical and spiritual wisdom.



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