

Quarantined People in Middle East Turn to Christian TV for Hope

In the eye of the coronavirus storm, anxious viewers in the Middle East and North Africa are looking to live Christian TV for reassurance—desperate to see “living hope” as the crisis escalates.

“Right now, with many countries introducing quarantine measures and lockdowns—and people staying home in isolation because of the COVID-19 virus—millions are searching the channels for hope that’s alive and real,” said Dr. Rex Rogers, SAT-7 USA president (), a Christian satellite broadcaster in the Middle East and North Africa.

SAT-7’s programming reaches viewers in their own homes via live, “real life” shows in Arabic, Farsi and Turkish languages, as well as a children’s channel, showing viewers what it means to be a follower of Christ, especially in a crisis.

In Iran—one of the world’s coronavirus hotspots where more than 700 people have died so far—worried viewers, many of whom are “self-isolating” and anxiously stuck at home, are tuning into the live, interactive *Signal* show to share their experiences and get on-air advice from guest doctors.

With more than half of Iran’s 82-million-strong population under age 35 and 800,000 believers in Iran’s explosive underground church movement, satellite TV plays a vital “encourager” role—especially during crises and persecution. It’s illegal for Christians in Iran to hold church services in Farsi, or share their faith with non-Christians.

One viewer, Nadia—a pharmacy technician—said: “Iranians are

very concerned about the coronavirus, myself included. Friends tell me to leave my job, which they say exposes me to the virus. But I have put away fear and trust the Lord for myself (and) my family. My hope is that I will wake up and find this nightmare is over.”

In Egypt, viewers are being encouraged to fight fear with faith.

“When you’re a member of the family of Jesus, you never have to be afraid of anything,” presenter Melad Awad told viewers of SAT-7 KIDS’ show *Family of Jesus*, broadcast in Egypt. “Don’t be afraid of a virus, or anything that might happen, because Jesus himself is with us,” Awad told his young audience.

“Satellite television is encouraging viewers who face great uncertainty and tribulation in their lives,” Rogers said. “It’s a powerful visual medium for spreading the good news—getting the message directly into people’s homes, regardless of the coronavirus or any external circumstances.”

“Never before have so many people across this region been so open to the gospel and receptive to our programs that introduce them to a visual ‘living faith’,” Rogers said. “They’re desperate to see real hope in Christians who are living out their faith and full of God’s love.”