

The Constants and Conditions of “Gulf” Islam

By [Jacob Thomas](#)

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*Over the last few years, a Kuwaiti web site www.kwtanweer.com has offered us a “window” through which we may read articles and essays of Arab intellectuals who are interested in “**tahdith**” (modernization) and “**tajdid**” (renewal). The following article appeared in mid-May 2006, written by an Egyptian scholar who is very critical of the impact of Saudi money and Wahhabism on the life of his countrymen. Since the Arabic text is filled with idiomatic expressions and allusions that are familiar to Middle Eastern people, I have tried my best to “Anglicize” his contribution.*

Recently I read in the Egyptian magazine “**Rose al-Yousef**” about the “good” news that beginning next **Ramadan**, “**Al-Nass**”* a new satellite television channel, would begin broadcasting throughout the Middle East . As it is funded by Saudi businessmen, all ladies appearing on this channel would be required to wear the **hijab**.

I must confess that I was not surprised by this news. This has been coming for a long time as we have been noticing the rise and imposition of a religious vocabulary in all areas of life. It is a language of “**Islam**” imported from the Gulf countries. Now we are about to face a specific interpretation of Islamic mores coming to us over a new satellite TV station, in addition to the already existing Gulf stations. This new venture comes to us with conditions. But why should we be surprised by such conditions, when they have been waiting to descend upon us for the last twenty five years? It was to be expected that they would arise out of the **constant**, unchanging traditions of “**Gulf**” Islam, especially as they relate to women’s dress and to the very nature and role of women.

Businessmen who live and work in socially advanced countries, and who appreciate their cultural heritage, realize the danger of playing with religion, and the ugliness of any attempt to spread an atmosphere of religious divisions. They invest their capital in ventures that protect peoples’ minds and advance the welfare of their countries. They are fully aware of the dangers of mixing religion with politics, so they do not invest their capital in building churches or houses of worship, nor do they embark on programs that favor a specific brand of religion that would lead to a climate of intolerance. On the contrary, such men employ their extra capital to guarantee a real separation of religion from politics, in favor of tolerance and openness in culture. They would rather subsidize the building of opera houses, theatres, musical institutions, and centers for the advance of scientific research.

Unfortunately, businessmen in our lands invest their monies in the creation of Islamized satellite television stations that require women to cover their heads. Businessmen in other

lands invest in medical research that would help in overcoming various diseases that plague mankind. In contrast, our businessmen pool their resources in sponsoring the creation of several albums of “*Islamic*” songs created by “*Islamized*” singers who traffic with religion and with “*Gulf*” *Islam*; and those advocating radical interpretations of Islam. Some of these businessmen actually live outside their homelands having settled in America or in Europe ! We have already heard of “*Sami Yousef*” and of groups of “*Black*

“*Muslim*” song-writers. Lately, we learned about the venture of “*Massoud Keirts*” and his first Islamic album called “*Safwan*” which has been produced by a company of Muslims who have acquired American or British citizenship. This company announced the production of a new video clip known as “*Al-Barda*” to appear for sale during next Ramadan. In this album one would find an Islamic song “*La Tansa Abadan*” [*Don't Ever Forget*]; it is actually a blatant *jihadi fatwa* rather than a real song. **Its goal is to plant the directives and constants of “Gulf” Islam in the lands of the “Kuffar” [Infidels!]** Those businessmen who financed the album forgot, or purposely ignored the fact that those “*Kuffar*” happen to be the nationals of the host countries [who have welcomed Muslims into their homelands!]

The proposed “*Al-Nass*” TV channel is a home-grown plant that has sprung out of a religious octopus and has propagated a spurious form of Islam. “*Al-Nass*” is the antithesis to the basics of all religions and human commitments, as it exploits men’s religious nature in order to sew discord. The ultimate goal of this TV station is to change Egypt into an [Islamist] religious country to be manipulated by push-button technology, where everybody would speak from the standpoint of the Gulf religious authorities who possess and utilize the power of the purse. After all, a religious authority without a capital accomplishes nothing! Now some Egyptians have been surprised that this satellite channel which is owned by the Saudi Company “*Al-Baraheen Al-Saoudiyya*” declared that it is not basically a religious station, as it plans to telecast a variety of programs, alongside those specifically “modern” religious programs.

In fact, this Islamic religious octopus will Islamize everything it touches. This is its real goal. They will telecast “Islamic” entertainment, and the video clips will also be “Islamic” as well as the children stories. All these programs will be presented before and after meals; before we go to sleep and as soon as we wake up. They will advertise the venues and times of new fatwas. The company that funds “*Al-Nass*” satellite station, as well as several other similar stations, will end up proving one thing: it’s going to take a long time for us to be able to restore our basic [Egyptian] national principle: “*Al-Deen l’illah, wal-Watan lil-jamee*” [*Religion is for God, but the country is for all**.*] And it is going to take a much longer time to eradicate this poisonous octopus from the minds and the hearts of human beings.

**Al-Nass* is a generic term used to refer to people in general.

** A proverb that became current after WWI in the Middle East . It projected a national hope that Muslims and Christians, notwithstanding their differences in matters of faith, can live and work harmoniously within one nation-state.

This article elicited four comments. All were ultra critical of the writer, and invoked Allah's wrath upon him, and disputed his main thesis that there is such a thing as a

“Gulf” Islam! JT