

News from SAT-7
September 2019

INSIGHT

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

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**MAKING
GOD'S LOVE
VISIBLE**



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A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Dear SAT-7 friend,

Have you ever struggled to forgive someone who has hurt you deeply?

It is something that many Christians in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are faced with. Growing up during war in Lebanon, I have experienced this challenge first-hand.

In recent decades, the people of the MENA have lived through so much conflict and war. Many Christians in the region have faced discrimination and persecution for their faith, including physical attacks.

Jesus tells us that we must forgive our enemies, and those who persecute us. The Christians whose stories are shared in this edition of *INSIGHT* are an example to us all as they live this out. In the face of loss, grief, and pain, their powerful acts of forgiveness bring healing – and even hope for peace and reconciliation in the region.

At SAT-7, our satellite television programs promote values that are not often shown on other channels in the region – tolerance, love, and forgiveness. It is wonderful to be able share the message that God's forgiveness is available to all. We stand in solidarity with Middle Eastern Christians as they bravely forgive their enemies.

I hope you are inspired and strengthened in your own faith as you read these stories of forgiveness from our viewers. Please continue to pray for these dedicated believers who have endured so much.



Rita El-Mounayer
SAT-7 CEO

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SAT-7 ACADEMY CONNECTS WITH COMMUNITIES

In a region where political instability and tragedy have been making headlines for decades, SAT-7 ACADEMY is raising awareness of on-the-ground social initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

SAT-7 ACADEMY's social media team are venturing outside the walls of the studio to inform and inspire viewers that positive change in their society is possible – and that they can be a part of it.

Kindness Initiative in Tripoli

Santa Hawa, SAT-7 ACADEMY's Social Media Officer, produces and presents short video clips on Facebook to raise awareness of social impact initiatives, and inspire viewers to get involved.

One such initiative took place in Tripoli in Lebanon, a city where 51 percent of its residents currently live in extreme poverty levels, and where the income of a household of five may be less than \$4 a day.¹ SAT-7 ACADEMY's social media team visited to capture a "Kindness Fridge" movement initiated by the city's municipality and other contributors.

"Do you have? Give!"

Refrigerators were placed in different locations around the city with signs requesting that more privileged citizens place food in the refrigerator, and encouraging those in need to come and take food for themselves and their families. Santa and the

SAT-7 ACADEMY team reported on the project, urging their online audience to get involved.

The SAT-7 team placed food in the refrigerator, and Santa read out the slogan on the fridge: "Do you have? Give! Do you need? Take!"

With videos such as these attracting thousands of views on Facebook, SAT-7 ACADEMY is helping social projects gain traction. "After hearing about this, a similar initiative was put in place in Beirut," shares SAT-7 ACADEMY Manager Juliana Sfeir.

Encouraging students under pressure

On another occasion, SAT-7 ACADEMY visited a school to encourage students before their exams. Following the tragic suicide of a student who felt extreme pressure and shame after failing an exam, the SAT-7 ACADEMY team created an awareness campaign and provided students with advice on how to cope.

By filming on location and connecting with people, SAT-7 ACADEMY aims to authentically engage with different communities, raise awareness of social issues, and inspire change. ■



At least **1 in 4** children in the MENA are living in poverty.²

¹ UN Habitat Lebanon Tripoli City Profile 2016.

² UNICEF survey, 2017.



A JOURNEY OF THE IMAGINATION

Upstairs in the empty attic of an old house in Lebanon lies a forgotten painting – a painting that comes to life! Out of the frame step four friendly characters, who tell stories to the children of the house. But these are no ordinary tales. These stories teach SAT-7 KIDS viewers how God is concerned about everything that we are experiencing, especially difficult situations.

“I know that Jesus is with me,” says SAT-7 Scriptwriter and Actor Layal Ghanem. “And I want children to know it, too.”

The stories told in *Stories in the Attic* will address challenging issues such as child labour, gender inequality, and disability. These are among the many human rights violations affecting children in the MENA. But although the topics are weighty, the stories are filled with warmth, meaning, and joyful comedy. “If we are laughing, we loosen up,” says Ghanem. “And we start listening.” ■



LIFE BEYOND LIMITATIONS

The world can be an intimidating and inaccessible place for those who suffer from physical impairments or mental illnesses. The simplest daily activity, such as getting on a bus, can become a major challenge for someone confined to a wheelchair.

SAT-7 TÜRK's program *Obstacle Overcomers* educates its viewers about disabilities, challenges, and possible treatments. The program aims to raise awareness among healthy individuals and encourage them to empathise with the difficulties a disabled person faces in daily life, and to learn how they can assist them through these struggles.

Prepared and presented by Birtanem Candaner, the show has become one of the most watched programs on SAT-7 TÜRK. ■



I AM SAT-7

Mariam Rasouli
Presenter, SAT-7 PARS

What does your role with SAT-7 involve?

I work part-time in the Broadcasting team and I'm a Presenter on the live SAT-7 PARS children's show *Golband*.

What aspects of your work do you especially like?

I like that I'm in contact with the kids from Iran. Even though I am Iranian, I was not born there, and I am not able to visit. It's really nice to know that there are kids in Iran who are Christian. I like to hear from them what Iran is like, and it's inspiring that their faith is so strong.

Tell us about some encouraging conversations you have had with viewers.

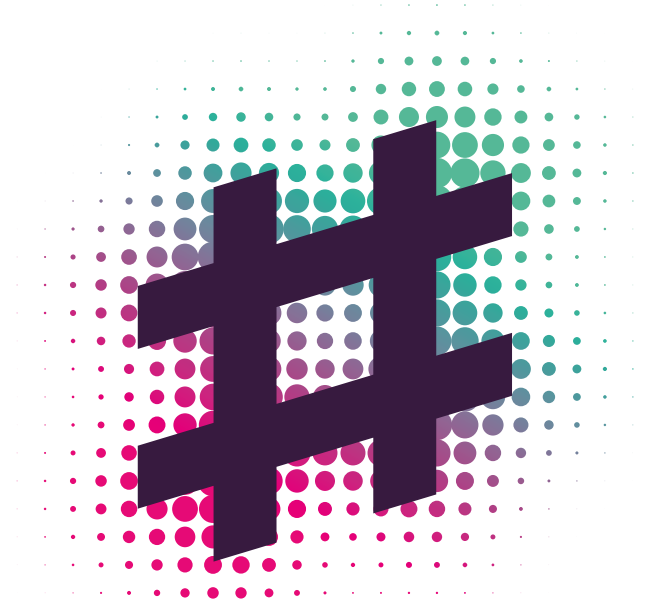
We have some regular viewers who call into the show and pray for us. Every time one boy, Daniel, calls, I cry because he always prays that we would all meet in Iran one day. On our last program of the season, we were asking the kids about what they liked the most about the program. One girl from Iran called and told us what she had learned from us and that it made her faith in Jesus stronger. I would never expect that these children would learn so much from our program! It motivates me to make more shows and teach them even more.

If you could sit down with Jesus today, what would you like to ask Him?

When will I be able to go to Iran and meet all the kids who watch the show face to face?

What is your passion outside SAT-7?

I like singing worship songs, going out with my friends, and spending time with my mother. ■



#NEW_LIVE_SHOW

After two successful seasons, the popular Persian-speaking children's program *A Girl's World* is having a make-over! It is hoped the show will reach a wider audience with its new format, which is now targeted at both girls and boys aged 10-16. The re-branded show, called *Hashtag*, will still go live every week and continue to be produced and presented by Parastoo Poortaheri.

Please pray that the show will be even more successful in the new format, and positively impact many young Persian-speakers. ■



RELATIONSHIP ADVICE FOR YOUNG COUPLES

SAT-7 ARABIC's live marriage and relationship counselling program, *From Heart to Heart*, is now producing episodes offering advice on relationships for youth. With the instability in the region caused by conflicts, and increasing rates of divorce, young people can grow up with little understanding of how healthy relationships function.

Presenters Rawad and Marianne aim to equip young adults with a Christian perspective on relationships and marriage. ■

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is at the core of the Christian faith. We receive the gift of forgiveness from God, and He calls us to forgive others as He has forgiven us. But how do you forgive in the midst of continuous violence, conflict, and persecution? This is a challenge that many Christians in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) must grapple with every day. Some societies in the region have been torn apart by conflict for generations, and many believers are being specifically attacked for their faith.

In Iraq, ISIS forced thousands of Christians from their homes and destroyed churches. Violent attacks on Christians and their places of worship have become commonplace in Egypt. In countries like Iran, Christians cannot worship openly and are persecuted for their faith. And yet, many believers stand strong in the face of fierce opposition. Instead of retaliating with hate and violence, their choice to forgive is a light shining in the darkness. Forgiving in the face of such persecution is a powerful example of faith and humility. It silences bitterness and hatred, and paves the way for reconciliation and restoration.

**"For if you forgive
other people when
they sin against you,
your heavenly
Father will also
forgive you."
Matthew 6:14**

At SAT-7 we stand with and support the Christians of the MENA as they courageously forgive their enemies. In the following pages, we share inspiring stories from our viewers who have chosen to forgive, even in the darkest of times. The power of forgiveness has changed both themselves and the world around them.



Image of Jesus defaced by ISIS in a church in Qaraqosh, Iraq.

THE GIRL WHO FORGAVE ISIS

In December 2014, a SAT-7 KIDS crew visited Iraqi Kurdistan, where they planned to tell the stories of child refugees who had fled from ISIS. But in a camp in Erbil, something even more profound took place. Presenter Essam Nagy met a little girl who would change his life and inspire millions around the world.

Nine-year-old Myriam was from Qaraqosh, the largest Christian town in the Nineveh plains. She loved watching SAT-7 and was delighted to talk to Essam on camera.

Despite her suffering, Myriam said she felt grateful to God for protecting her family and providing for them. Then, Essam asked how she felt about the ISIS fighters who had seized her hometown – and Myriam spoke the words that would resonate with millions.

“I will only ask God to forgive them,” she said. Did Myriam forgive them herself? Yes, she replied – without missing a beat. Later, she sang a beautiful worship song.

A wake-up call for all

Months later, the video clip of Myriam’s interview had been watched by millions and picked up by several international news outlets who were inspired by this little girl’s choice to forgive her enemies. “She spoke from her heart and communicated something very precious,” says Essam. “It was a wake-up call for the whole world.”

Myriam’s words are powerful because they show the heart of the Christian faith, the Presenter explains. “Some of Jesus’ last words on earth were, ‘Father, forgive them, because they don’t now what they are doing.’ Myriam’s testimony shows the same faith.”

Myriam prompted many people around the world to work towards forgiveness themselves. Essam’s own spiritual life has never been the same. “You can sense that the Bible is true when you see something like this,”

he shares. “Since then, I have seen life in a completely different way.”

“Jesus is my everything”

Five years on, Myriam’s family have been able to return home. Recently, Essam visited Myriam in Qaraqosh, filming his trip for a new SAT-7 documentary.

In *Sequel of Hope*, Myriam shares how her faith sustained her during her years as a refugee. She believes God protected her family home, which, unlike many others, was left standing.

“God is always protecting you, and you can count on Him,” she says. Then, with a light in her eyes, she speaks about Jesus. “He is my friend, my brother... my everything.”

Essam hopes we all take an enduring message from Myriam’s story.

“I believe if people learn to forgive, it will prevent atrocities in the future and the world will be different.” ■

“This little girl’s choice to forgive her enemies was a wake-up call for the whole world.”

Left: Myriam, aged nine, speaks to SAT-7 Presenter Essam Nagy from a refugee camp, 2014.

Right: Myriam with her parents and SAT-7 Presenter Essam Nagy, after returning to her home in Qaraqosh, 2019.



THE CHURCH THAT FORGAVE ITS ENEMIES

SAT-7's live broadcasts from Resurrection Church in Beirut are a blessing to thousands of Middle Eastern believers. But when the church began helping Syrian refugees, its members found they needed healing themselves – and the Holy Spirit worked powerfully, turning their anger and pain to forgiveness.

When hundreds of thousands of refugees began fleeing war-struck Syria for Lebanon in 2011, Pastor Hikmat Kashouh thought his church was ready.

“It was as if God had prepared us for this,” he says. The church was already supporting migrant workers from Syria and they were well-placed to provide refugees with food, shelter, winter survival kits, and medicine.

Old wounds re-opened

The congregation were not prepared, though, for how they would feel.

Becoming family to their vulnerable new neighbours meant bridging religious, ethnic, and cultural divides. But some church members were paralysed by feelings of resentment and hurt that ran even deeper.

“Syrians were our enemies for so many years,” Kashouh explains. Confronted with reminders of Syria's long occupation of Lebanon – from 1976 to 2005 – many locals thought first of retaliation.

“God bows down to heal”

One day, Kashouh invited a Syrian community leader up to the church platform. The pastor took a bucket and sponge, preparing to wash the leader's feet. As he did so, he found his own anger and hurt flooding his mind.

“As I got close to his feet, I saw the feet that stepped on our childhoods and destroyed Lebanon. I remembered our war and all that happened to us,” he remembers.

But as he stooped, something happened. “I felt that God bowed down and started to clean my wounds,”

Kashouh says. “I learned a great lesson. When you bow down to wash your enemy's feet, God bows down to meet you in your pain.”

A model of forgiveness

Similar transformation was occurring throughout the church – both in the congregation, and among the refugees. Over time, Resurrection Church went on to open school classrooms and two medical clinics to serve the refugees.

Since then, the congregation has grown from 90 to 1,300, and its services – beamed out weekly on SAT-7 ARABIC – are a model of diversity and tolerance in a region so often marked by division.

“I discovered that the most powerful tool in sharing the Gospel is forgiveness,” says Kashouh. ■

From top to bottom: Worship services from Resurrection Church Beirut, Lebanon, are regularly broadcast on SAT-7 ARABIC.

Pastor Hikmat Kashouh prays for the congregation at Resurrection Church Beirut.



FORGIVENESS MAKIN

The Christian community of Egypt has suffered an astonishing number of terrorist attacks over the past few years, ranging from bombings on churches to kidnapping and mass murders. Despite these heart-breaking incidents, many believers have made headlines due to their willingness to forgive in the face of brutal attacks. During these difficult times SAT-7 provided a platform for viewers to express their pain, grief, and testimonies of forgiveness.

2013

21 October

Drive-by shooting outside a church wedding in Cairo, Egypt. 5 people died and 18 people were injured.

Howayda, mother of 8-year-old Mariam who died during the attack was interviewed by SAT-7.

“

As Christians we pray ‘forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us,’ so we must do as we pray... Some people think I’m crazy because I’m comforted. But I know [my daughter] is with Jesus.

-Howayda

“

I am thankful they left the audio when the martyrs screamed, declaring their faith and calling out to Jesus Christ. This strengthened our faith... Dear God, please open [Daesh’s] eyes to be saved and to quit their ignorance and the wrong teachings they learned.

- Bashir



2015

15 February

A video is released of 21 Coptic Christian men who had been kidnapped and beheaded by Daesh militants on a beach in Libya.

Bashir, a brother of two of the martyrs, called SAT-7’s live program *We Will Sing* to share a testimony of faith and forgiveness.



2016

11 December

Suicide bomb attack on Botroseya Church, Cairo, Egypt kills 29 people – including children – and injures dozens more.

Nahla, the mother of two girls who died in the attack, shared her testimony on SAT-7 ARABIC’s *Speak Up* program.

“

I broke down after I saw them both dead. They were my life. In the middle of my overwhelming sorrow, Jesus would always send me consolation. Four months later when a bomb struck Christians on Palm Sunday, I immediately went to their families, knowing how they felt, to give them support.

- Nahla

G HEADLINES IN EGYPT



2017

9 April

Suicide bomb attacks on St Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria and St George's Coptic Church in Tanta, Egypt on Palm Sunday. The twin bomb attacks killed 47 people and injured over 100.

“

God has sent me consolation. Whenever I break down, I resort to prayer... May God forgive [the suicide bomber]. - Mary

Mary's husband died in the attacks. Mary was also injured and lost the pregnancy of their first child as a result.

“

My sister refused to renounce her faith and they shot her in the head. I was also injured. I wasn't very forgiving of the killers in the beginning, but God comforted me through messages from the priests. What can we do but forgive? [My sister and niece] are now joyful in heaven.
- Gihan

2017

26 May

Gunmen attack a bus coming out of St Samuel Monastery in Upper Egypt, opening fire and killing 28 passengers and injuring 25.

Gihan, survivor of the attack, shared on SAT-7 program *Women and War*.



“

I prayed a lot and my mother appeared to me and told me she's in heaven. She asked me not to be upset, and to take care of my younger brother. I felt joyful when I saw her.

- Fady, age 11

“

Lord Jesus, I thank you for being with me even in difficult times. Lord forgive the attackers and open their eyes so they may know you, amen.

- Mina, age 8

2018

2 November

Gunmen attack three buses full of Christians returning from a pilgrimage to St Samuel Monastery in Upper Egypt. Two buses manage to escape but the third bus, carrying two families, is gunned down – killing 7 and injuring 14.

SAT-7 KIDS' *Family of Jesus* program visited the hospital to speak with survivors Mina and Fady, who lost their mother during the attack.

FINDING FREEDOM THROUGH FORGIVENESS

SAT-7 shares with the people of the Middle East and North Africa that God's love and forgiveness is available to everyone, no matter what. Every week we receive testimonies from viewers who have experienced God's forgiveness in powerful ways.

For Alborz*, a SAT-7 PARS viewer from Afghanistan, the loss of his brother was 'the most overwhelming event' of his life. A graduate of civil engineering and working in that field, Alborz's 25-year-old brother was a follower of Jesus and for that he paid with his life.

Alborz explains: "When the Taliban found out that he was a Christian they hung him upside down, broke his hands and fingers, and burned his face with cigarettes. They put that child of God through the most dreadful torment and killed him."

Alborz was devastated and felt unable to forgive his brother's killers. He found himself in a constant state of distress and anger, with a strong desire for revenge.

"Feelings of hate became my constant companion," he admits. "The anguish and bitterness that filled my being took its toll and soon I found myself with no friends. Even at home I did not speak with kindness to those around me.

A father speaks

"One day my father told me: 'you must forgive those who killed my son.'" Fathers in this part of the world are likely to encourage or even demand that a murdered child is avenged by his siblings, but Alborz's father had been a believer in Jesus for more than thirty years.

Alborz was brought up in Iran where it was very difficult to find Bibles or Christian

material. "I didn't grow-up with the right Biblical teaching," he explains. "It was only when we returned to Afghanistan that my brother, then 24, was able to find a Bible that we started to read. I considered myself a Christian, but my faith was weak.

"So, when my father told me that I must forgive my brother's killers or it would destroy my life, I could not accept it."

The words of Jesus

For three years Alborz struggled and had further conversations with his father. During this time he also read the New Testament, which deeply affected him.

"The words of Jesus about anger, revenge, and forgiveness had a huge impact on me," he says. "Reading the sermon on the mount truly shook me. My tears flowed, my heart softened, and I finally forgave the Taliban. That moment the burden I had been carrying was lifted from me.

"For the last eight years I have been a genuine believer and I am now able to forgive. I have a great joy in my heart that God has placed there.

"My prayer is that the Lord will touch the hearts of Afghans. I also pray for the wonderful people of Iran and pray for those who are weak in their faith, as I once was, to be strengthened in their conviction." ■

“
My tears flowed,
my heart
softened, and
I finally forgave
the Taliban.
That moment
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me.”

“

I found out that my daughter was being abused by my brother-in-law. Sharing this with my husband was very difficult. We were in such rough waters, such a storm, that for us to survive was a true miracle.

As followers of Jesus, we couldn't seek revenge. We couldn't give him an eye for an eye. We could only let our just God deal with this terrible experience. With God's grace and mercy, my husband, myself and my daughter have been able to forgive and heal.

**Gizem, a viewer
from Turkey**

“

I thought God would never forgive me for the things I've done wrong. The more I read about God, the more I would feel fearful and hopeless. I was telling myself that my place is in hell.

When one of my friends told me that he was a Christian, I mocked him saying, 'I would rather go to hell with all my sins, which I know God won't forgive, than to accept Christ.'

A few months ago, someone I knew was searching for a Bible, and I helped him find a digital version. I read the first book, the Gospel of Matthew, and I was touched. I said: "Father, I feel so guilty, can you help me?" The next day I felt relieved, and full of peace. Jesus brought to life my dead soul!

Since I came to faith, I can sleep well and have no dreams about hell anymore. I feel the presence of our Heavenly Father over me and I do not fear death.

**Ramin, a viewer
from Iran.**



TURKEY: CURIOUS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY?

Questions about faith, requests for Bibles, and messages of thanks and encouragement make up most of the messages SAT-7 TÜRK receives from its viewers. The surprising thing, however, is that many of these messages come from non-Christians.

In the midst of economic and political uncertainties, the Turkish people are beginning to question the world around them. Subsequently, attitudes towards religion are also starting to shift.

Source of information

Since it began broadcasting, SAT-7 TÜRK has been providing its viewers with reliable and accurate information about Christianity, and this is being acknowledged by its viewers.

“I’m not a Christian,” explains Ulvi, who called the SAT-7 TÜRK channel, “but I follow your channel because I can see it is a clean and honest one.”

Many non-Christians have been writing to the channel, their messages often long and full of questions. Reading through message after message, the TÜRK Audience Relations team is able to get a glimpse into the quest for truth and information.

Hunger for truth

Very little is known about Christianity in Turkey, and there are many misconceptions; it is widely considered to be a Western religion and people are generally suspicious of Christians. Unaware of Christian

history in the region, there is a firm belief that being a Christian is essentially ‘un-Turkish’. However, as people start looking beyond their own country, they become curious about the rest of the world and other people’s beliefs.

“There are billions of people in this world with different beliefs and 2 billion of them are Christians,” continues Ulvi. “I want to understand them, I want to learn more about Christianity.”

Fear and doubt

Unfortunately, some people in Turkey are afraid to express curiosity about Christianity. Many new believers have faced isolation from their families, have lost their jobs, and faced opposition to varying degrees. The consequences for people with high standing among their communities can be especially difficult.

“I’m a well-known person, a businessman,” explains Ulvi. “I can’t just go to a church.” Thankfully, this isn’t stopping him from looking for answers. “If there is anyone who would be willing to spend some time talking to me about Christianity, I would love to learn more.” ■



HELP IMPACT MORE LIVES

SAT-7 is a consistent voice of God's love and hope in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – broadcasting Christian programs which provide spiritual strength and encouragement on four satellite channels, 24/7.

Many Christians in the MENA face discrimination, or even persecution, on a daily basis. Our diverse range of programs seeks to address the various needs that people in the region are facing. Our viewers often reach out to our Audience Relations teams, or call our live shows, to connect with a wider community of Christians for prayer and guidance.

Your donation helps us to continue supporting Christians of the Middle East and North Africa as they persevere through difficult circumstances.

Please donate to support the Christians of the MENA today.

YES, I want to make a life-changing gift!



Credit card / PayPal:

www.sat7.org/get-involved/donate



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US DOLLAR ACCOUNT

Account number: **57319020**

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Bank: **Pax-Bank eG**

IBAN: **DE19 3706 0193 0057 3190 20**

BIC (SWIFT-address): **GENODED1PAX**



EURO ACCOUNT

Account number: **57319011**

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How to find SAT-7

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SATELLITE: Nilesat (E7WA) at 7° West, 11.353 GHz Vertical;
Covering Middle East & North Africa.

ONLINE: www.sat7.com / www.facebook.com/sat7ar
www.youtube.com/user/SAT7ARABIC
Smartphone App: SAT-7

SAT-7 KIDS (ARABIC)

SATELLITE: Nilesat (E7WA) at 7° West, 11.353 GHz Vertical;
Covering Middle East & North Africa.

ONLINE: www.sat7kids.com / www.facebook.com/sat7kids
www.youtube.com/user/SAT7KIDS
Smartphone App: SAT-7 KIDS

SAT-7 TÜRK (TURKISH)

SATELLITE: Türksat 4A at 42° East, 11.824 GHz Vertical;
Covering Turkey, Europe & Central Asia.

ONLINE: www.sat7turk.com / www.facebook.com/sat7turk
www.youtube.com/user/SAT7TURK
Smartphone App: SAT-7 TÜRK

SAT-7 PARS (PERSIAN)

SATELLITE: Eutelsat Hot Bird 13B at 13° East, 10.949 GHz
Vertical; Covering Middle East, North Africa & Europe.

Yahsat 13 at 52.5° East, 11.958 GHz Vertical;

Covering Middle East

ONLINE: www.sat7pars.com / www.facebook.com/sat7pars
www.youtube.com/user/SAT7PARS
Smartphone App: SAT-7 PARS

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DARE TO DREAM

WEEK OF PRAYER | 20-27 OCTOBER 2019

Do you have a heart for the Middle East and North Africa? Do you want to be part of a global Week of Prayer, joining thousands of believers in prayer for this region?

Sign up for Week of Prayer

At SAT-7, we hear testimonies of how God is changing lives in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) every day. Despite conflict and turmoil caused by social, economic, and political upheaval, the people in the region continue to dream that their circumstances will change. This year, we want to “Dare to Dream” with the people of the MENA. No matter how difficult a situation is, nothing is impossible for our God.

Visit www.sat7.org/week-of-prayer-2019 for more information, and use the sign-up form to receive Week of Prayer and other SAT-7 updates. Thank you for your commitment to pray with us.

Resources you can use

We have created a digital prayer guide which will provide further insights into what to pray about, every day of the week. It can be used by individuals, prayer groups, and church congregations.

More resources are available for download at www.sat7.org/week-of-prayer-2019, including our printable poster and invitation. Share these with your friends, neighbours, and communities, and join us in creating a global prayer chain!



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