

Bassam Youssef, Who Knows Something's Wrong But Can't Think About Islam

[Here.](#)

Bassam Youssef has been impressed with just how impressed with him, Bassam Youssef, the famous Jon Stewart has been, and Youssef doesn't mind being compared to Stewart. He's unaware that, beyond the daily-show blather and blague, so loud and often so silly, Stewart's studied ignorance of Islam allows him to continue to dance on the surface of the very things he pretends to discuss more truthfully than others – such others as the Republican “clowns” he makes such easy fun of, fun that is then Facebooked and Twittered by his faithful fans. If Bassam Youssef wants to see Egypt plain, he has to consider Islam, and its effects on the minds of men, and has to think, too, about how to tame Islam, and about Taha Hussain, and of what Husain called “Pharaonism,” a kind of hyper-nationalism that would elevate Egypt in the minds of Egyptians, as Egypt, millennial Egypt, with both its Arab and its Muslim aspects de-emphasized.

That is what Al-Sisi is trying, fitfully, to do, but he is employing the same ruthless means that Ataturk – too many forget – also employed. And Al-Sisi, for his crackdown and denial of all those nice rights that the non-Muslim world can enjoy, is a natural target for Bassam Youssef, and his regime's implacable crackdown, but that implacable crackdown is necessary because, Bassam Youssef might begin to understand, Egyptian society does not consist of tens of millions of bassam-youssefs, but of millions of people who are more like Mohammed Badie and Hassan Al-Banna, and Hassan Al-Banna's suave, modern-appearing grandson, the fork-tongued serpent Tariq Ramadan.

All this – what has to be done to contain Islam – is beyond Stewart. But it should not be beyond Youssef who, in now enjoying his mental freedom and leisure in the West, should be able to begin to grasp what Islam does to minds not as advanced as his, and why the only way to contain the contagion– Ikhwan or ISIS, it hardly matters – is to use ruthless methods, and understand that Al-Sisi himself realises this, and should be supported, as long as he keeps on this path of Taha Husain, and does not succumb, under pressure, to other, more hysterical possibilities.