

# Egypt After the Passing of Sayyid Al-Qimni



Dr. Sayyid Al-Qimni

by Bassam Michael Madany

On Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, Dr. Sayyid Al-Qimni, an Egyptian author and human rights activist passed away at his home in Cairo. Two days later, the Arabic section of BBC News gave a brief report on the event. The following is the translated text:

“The Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Al-Qimni passed away on Sunday at the age of 75. In his writings and speeches, Al-Qimni advocated the updating and reforming of the hermeneutics of the Qur’an and Hadith. Some critics charged that his proposal was inspired by a Marxist ideology. Others claimed that Al-Qimni should have refrained from dealing with sacred subjects that must be shielded from any critique.”

Dr. Sayyid Al-Qimni founded the Egyptian Secular Party and was

a very active proponent of “*Ilmaniyyah*” (Secularism/Laicity) I had expected that by mid-week, some online Arabic newspapers and magazines would have commented on the passing of Sayyid Al-Qimni. Their hesitancy to comment on his work may be due to his consistent critique of Islam,

On the other hand, a major Cairo daily *Al-Ahram*, published the news of Al-Qimni’s passing, in its Arabic and English editions. The following are excerpts from the English edition of Thursday, 10 February 2022.

“Sayyid El-Qimni, the Religious Critic Who Met Fire with More Fire*[i]*”

“Controversial Egyptian secular thinker and researcher in the history of religions, Sayyid El-Qimni, who rattled Islamists and gained both criticism and praise from academic scholars, died on Sunday at the age of 74. The late author stirred up controversy over his views on the Quran and his battles with Al-Azhar accusing the latter of sponsoring terrorism. El-Qimni, who was born in 1947, focused mainly on the Islamic tradition and the history of monotheistic religions. He offered what he labelled a socio-political reading of the life of Prophet Muhammad and the beginnings of Islam, in a series starting with *Al-Hizb Al-Hashimi* (The Hashimite Party), *Huroob Dawlat Al-Rasoul* (The Wars of the Prophet’s State), and *Naskh in Al-Wahy* (The Abrogation in the Revelation).

“His problems with Al-Azhar and the Islamic Research Academy came in 1996 after he published his book *Rab Haza Azzaman* (The God of This Age), which the academy demanded be confiscated. In 2005, he received death threats on the internet from *Al-Qaeda*, which prompted him to stop his writing in the media. In 2009, El-Qimni was awarded the state’s appreciation award for his body of work.

“El-Qimni’s thesis that treats the Quran as a historical

text that can be examined in a critical fashion, brought the wrath of scholars and Islamists who asserted that the Quran is the word of God, and not an earthly text. His critical approach to Islam brought accusations of apostasy and blasphemy on him.”

On Monday, February 14, 2022, Egypt’s Attorney General issued an order for the arrest of Sayyid Al-Qimni’s daughter *Isis*, for “*describing the Qur’an as Meaningless and Worthless.*” The Egyptian law known as “*Izdira’ al-Adyan*” (Demeaning of Religions), is strictly enforced. The Social Media in Egypt is preoccupied with Al-Qimni’s legacy, some supporting his views for a secularized society, while conservative Muslims regard him as *Kaffir* (Unbeliever) whose views are extremely dangerous and must be stopped from spreading.

To get an idea of the encyclopedic learning of this Egyptian scholar, the following is a list of some of the speeches and lectures he gave, both at home and abroad.

On 31 May 2013, Al Qimni described “*The conditions and future of the minorities according to the Muslim Brotherhood’s Jurisprudence.*”

On 7 and 8 December 2014, Sayyid Al-Qimni lectured on a Cairo TV Station on “*The Right of a Secular Egyptian to Life and Freedom.*”

On 7 June 2016, Al-Qimni spoke at conference in Brussels, Belgium, on “*The Roots of Violence in Islam.*”

On 13 August 2015 and 22 August 2016, Dr. Sayyid Al-Qimni lectured at Egypt Secular Party’s Headquarters in Cairo. [\[iii\]](#) Even those who are not familiar with Arabic, by listening to his delivery, might experience the passion of a pioneering scholar attempting to reconcile Islam with modernity. Top of Form

[\[i\] Sayyid El-Qimni, the religions critic who met fire with](#)

[more fire – News – Books – Ahram Online](#)

[المحاضرة الكاملة للدكتور سيد القمني في الحزب العلماني \[ii\]](#)  
[YouTube – \( المصري – برنامج البط الأسود ٢٢٠ \) حلقة خاصة](#)