

Saudi religious police aren't funny

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By Terry Sanderson

If you are going to have a special police division to enforce morality in a country that is already very religiously conservative, then they are bound to make frequent idiots of themselves.

In Saudi Arabia, where religious mania seems to be a requirement of citizenship, the religious police have just forcibly evicted three men from an annual cultural festival and sent them back to Abu Dhabi from whence they came.

The men had been deemed "too handsome" and that women would find them irresistible, according to the Arabic language newspaper *Elaph*.

"A festival official said the three Emiratis were taken out on the grounds they are too handsome and that the Commission [for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vices] members feared female visitors could fall for them," *Elaph* reported.

No doubt the gentlemen in question were highly flattered to be chucked out of the country on such grounds and will find the reputation that follows them of no handicap whatsoever in their future romantic endeavours.

But stupid and authoritarian as the Saudi religious police may be, they aren't very funny if you get on the wrong side of them, as many women who have accidentally allowed a few strands of hair to fall from their veils know to their cost.

And nor were they particularly amusing when they refused to allow school girls to leave a burning building in case men should see them without face coverings. That incident resulted in [fourteen deaths and many horrific injuries](#).

The religious police are an indication of a country that has profound sexual hang-ups inspired by extremist religion.

On this occasion it was men who fell victim to the puritanical foolishness, but in the main it is women who must put up with the minute-to-minute control of their lives by this bullying and brutal brigade.

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Terry Sanderson was the former president of the National Secular Society. The views expressed in our blogs are those of the author and may not necessarily represent the views of the NSS.

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