

Egypt: Parliament to enact law to criminalise atheism

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The Independent (23.12.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2DKA0BQ> – The Committee on Religion in the Egyptian Parliament has disclosed plans to pass into law, a bill that makes atheism a criminal offence in the North African nation.

Current Egyptian law says atheists can be prosecuted for expressing their disbelief in public but the committee's proposal would go further and criminalise disbelief itself.

It would be recalled that in 2014, little more than a week after Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi was sworn in as Egypt's President, the government announced that it was preparing a national plan to crush every form of atheism.

A few months later Al-Shabab, a government-linked newspaper, stated that atheists were "the country's second enemy after the Muslim Brotherhood" and quoted a psychologist saying that "atheism leads to mental imbalances and paranoia".

As part of its effort to suppress the Muslim Brotherhood the Sisi regime began promoting a version of Islam that is often characterised as "moderate" – though "militantly mainstream" might be a better term.

Saudi Arabia adopted a similar position in 2014 when "promotion of atheist thought" became officially classified as an act of terrorism.