

## Brazilian Electronic Bazaar Brings Middle East Closer

Contributed by Isaura Daniel  
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A virtual store is ensuring that Arab and Islamic articles reach cities in the interior of Brazil. Lojinha.net (which in Portuguese means 'little store'), an e-trade website kept by Walid Shukair, receives, every month, between 35 and 50 orders, most of them from residents of the interior of the southern states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul

The site also gets orders from the northeastern state of Ceará; Mato Grosso and Goiás in the Midwest and São Paulo, in the Southeast. "Those who live in São Paulo can buy the articles in the stores, but who lives out of the main economic axis doesn't have access to these products," says Shukair.

The website sells from articles directed to the Muslim religion to traditional Arab products. There are decorative and prayer carpets, Korans in Arabic, CDs with Muslim prayers, Islamic caps, narghiles and accessories, papyruses, Palestinian clothe hatas, cards with pictures of Mecca, Islamic books for tourism in the Arab countries, flasks of Egyptian perfume and jewellery boxes from Damascus.

Shukair says that 80% of the buyers are people who don't have Arab origin, but identify themselves with the culture of the region. "They are admirers who wish to have at home, for example, an Arab carpet," he states.

Among the buyers there are also Brazilians who converted to Islamism and Arab descendants. The average sale, according to the proprietor, is of US\$ 23,00 to US\$ 27,00.

The website was created by Shukair, who is a journalist, in April last year. The goods, originated from Arab countries, are bought by Shukair from an importer.

The idea of the website came when the journalist worked in a magazine called Al-Urubat, kept by the Muslim Society and directed at the Islamic community.

"I used to receive many calls and emails from people asking for books, material about Islamism," recalls Shukair. So much that he started taking orders, by email, about four years ago.

Today Shukair doesn't work in the magazine anymore, even though he still carries out his journalist activity at the press advisory for the São Paulo Legislative Assembly, and increased his sales of Arab articles.

Shukair's aim is to make his business even bigger, but keep it in the virtual field. "The aim is to make out of the website an Islamic and Arab 'Submarino'", he jokes. The 'Submarino' is one of the main electronic sales websites in Brazil.

Shukair is descendent of Palestinians. His parents came to the region about 50 years ago escaping from the conflict with Israel. Shukair was born in Brazil, but has been to Palestine on two occasions, once in 1994 and again in 2000.

The Arab articles are part of Shukair's daily life, who is of the Islamic religion and has at home from the carpets and decorations, such as papyrus, to the Koran. Apart from him, web designer Herbert Silvestre also works on the site in the technology area.

The orders for Lojinha.net are made directly in the website and can be paid for through bank transfer, ticket or deposit. According to Shukair, the delivery deadline is of up to seven days.

The shipments are made through the express mail. Delivery fees depend on the location and are calculated at the

moment of purchase, on the website.

Lojinha.net  
www.lojinha.net  
contato@lojinha.net  
Telephone: +55 (11) 4138-1973

Translated by Silvia Lindse  
ANBA – Brazil-Arab News Agency