

# Abuse of Media: Al Jazeera and Support for Terrorism and Extremism



Al Jazeera Arabic (hereafter AJA) has been accused of glorifying terrorism and supporting extremist views. At the same time, the entire Al Jazeera network, both English and Arabic, are heralded as the leading example of media freedom in the Middle East. AJA is responsible for supporting high levels of hate speech, anti-Semitic views, and calls for Islam to be imposed upon Europe and the world. Looking more closely at the structure and management of Al Jazeera, along with what it reports and how this is done, the claims of media freedom become more difficult to sustain. Furthermore, evidence shows that what AJA broadcasts run contrary to hate speech and incitement laws across the West. The belief that AJA is objectively reporting on terrorism and extremist issues is unfounded, but it effectively presents “two faces” to convince the world otherwise (<http://bit.ly/2uqCPpZ>).

The connection between the government of Qatar and Al Jazeera is clear. Due to this Al Jazeera cannot be deemed an independent media organisation, rather better described as a state controlled institution. Media sources (*The Guardian* UK, <http://bit.ly/2u0T2RB>) have taken from Wikileaks sources, information on how the Qatari government uses Al Jazeera to “champion press freedom elsewhere, but generally does not tolerate it at home”.

In the presentation of news reports, documentaries and extended stories, AJA has given the impression of unbiased and inclusive. They will include different individuals, such as US officials, or Israeli officials in the presentations. But in reports from the individuals who participated in these broadcasts, it is clear that their presence was merely tokenistic, and not for substantive unbiased coverage (<http://bit.ly/1pcXf7G>). There was no real engagement with the positions, instead it was primarily blame and accusation, while the opposing terrorist/extremist supporters were given a supportive platform.

Allowing designated terrorist groups to directly support their cause, as well as adopting strategies in support of terrorism and extremist views that fuel hatred, is an abuse of any media freedom. Reports have documented how AJA has adopted the public communications strategies of designated terrorist groups (such as Hamas, <http://bit.ly/1pcXf7G>). The regulatory authorities in Canada are the only Western authority that has expressed public concern over AJA’s broadcasting (<https://tgam.ca/2vtG2Sm>).

## Support for Terrorism and Extremism

There are a number of examples where AJA provided platforms and voice for those supporting terrorism and extremism. In the cases below, there is a strong case that the statements provided run contrary to hate speech laws in Europe as the instances entail the use of threatening, insulting, abusive language that is intended to incite hatred and violence.

**Osama Bin Laden** – for a period of time, the most wanted terrorist in the world. AJA played the videos he sent, not as information or reporting, but as a platform for Bin Laden, hailed as a hero for the Islamic world, to express the Al Qaeda platform and ideology. The then Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, refused USA requests to stop giving Bin Laden a public platform (<http://bit.ly/2u0T2RB>).

**Khaled Mashaal** – leader of Hamas 1996 2017 - Hamas and its military wing, Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, are designated terrorist organisations by at least 10 states. During the 2014 Gaza conflict, the Hamas Ministry of Interior produced guidance on how the conflict was to be reported with all Palestinian fighters

to be described as innocent martyrs. AJA adopted this guidance as their editorial approach to the event. During the conflict, AJA broke regular programming to give Khaled Mashaal a 45 minute slot to give a speech. AJA also gave time to the military commander of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Mohammed Deif to give a speech, followed by a Hamas propaganda video (<http://bit.ly/1pcXf7G>).

**Ramadan Shallah** – secretary general of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a designated terrorist organisation, was given full coverage for a press conference where he declared victory in the 2014 Gaza conflict and vowed to keep attacking Israel (<http://bit.ly/1pcXf7G>).

**Yusuf al-Qaradawi** – known as the ideological leader of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. He was the host of the AJA widely viewed programme, *Shari'a and Life*. With this platform, al Qaradawi has made the following statements “Oh Allah, take this oppressive, Jewish, Zionist band of people. Oh Allah, do not spare a single one of them. Oh Allah, count their numbers, and kill them, down to the very last one,” (<http://bit.ly/2u0sm1A>). He has praised the Holocaust saying it has been “exaggerated” and there is regret the Nazis did not “finish the job” (<http://bit.ly/2rUrE3t>). In line with the rhetoric of political Islam, he has explained that freedom, does not mean freedom in the Western sense, but only the freedom to choose Islam as the only way to order government and society, glorifying Iran as a perfect example (<http://bit.ly/2tw64mP>).

**Samir Al Quntar** – a member of Hezbollah, responsible for the kidnapping and killings of the Haran family in 1979. Reports say Al Quntar killed Einat Haran, the four year old daughter of Danny Haran, who Al Quntar shot at close range, by smashing her head with his rifle. Upon his release in 2008 as part of a prisoner swap, AJA held a birthday party for Al Quntar which was broadcasted live. The AJA host called him “Brother Samir” and said he deserved even more recognition for his actions (<http://bit.ly/2t6ZLqk>).

**Ahmad Daqamseh** – the Jordanian soldier responsible for the Island of Peace Massacre where Israeli schoolgirls were killed and wounded. Upon his release (2017) AJA interviewed him, presenting him as a hero, allowing him to say “The [Israelis] constitute human garbage, ... This garbage must be removed, ... Allah willing, the generations to come will burn this human garbage.” (<http://bit.ly/2v9cdqP>).

**Hussein Muhammad Hussein** – in a 2014 AJA debate with a Kurdish politician on the role of ISIS, Hussein continually praised ISIS for creating a Caliphate, and pledged his own allegiance to ISIS leader, Al Baghdadi. The interviewer permitted Hussein to carry on with statements such as claiming all Arabs desire the imposition of the Caliphate, including “the beheading of the infidels, lowlifes, and criminals.” (<http://bit.ly/2uzBw8w>).

If the above statements and presentations are acceptable in law and morality, then AJA is not to be questioned. At the same time, the above examples demonstrate that AJA supports and glorifies terrorism and extremist’s views. Through the West there are laws and regulations that limit such behaviour. If AJA is permitted to broadcast in Europe, European law and regulations on hate speech and incitement need to be applied.

## About TRENDS

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