From Sacha Wigdorovits

The terrorist organization Hamas can broadcast its propaganda unhindered on the cable networks of Swisscom and Sunrise. This happens via the Arabic-language channel of the television station Al Jazeera. Following a tip-off from FokusIsrael.ch, Swisscom is now reviewing the channel and the Federal Police (Fedpol) is also scrutinizing it. Sunrise sees no need for action.

Al Jazeera is owned by the Qatari state, which is one of the main supporters of Hamas. The broadcaster operates an English-language and an Arabic-language channel.

The English-language channel endeavors to convey an image of moderation and impartiality to Western viewers. In contrast, Al Jazeera Arabic, the leading television channel in the Arab world, makes no secret of its fundamentalist attitude and closeness to the Muslim Brotherhood in its broadcasts.

And: it is the most important propaganda medium of the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas. This is confirmed by a recently published report by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center ITIC. This center has been involved in research and analysis in the field of terrorism and intelligence activities for 25 years.

Overall, ITIC’s analysis of the broadcasts revealed that Al Jazeera regularly provided and continues to provide Hamas with a platform for its propaganda throughout the Gaza war, including by broadcasting statements by high-ranking members of the Hamas leadership without commentary and often in real time:

- Various leading journalists and presenters of Al Jazeera Arabic are/were members of Hamas, some even as snipers;
- Hamas has a direct influence on Al Jazeera Arabic’s reporting and pre-empts certain Al Jazeera Arabic broadcasts. To this end, the Hamas leadership in Gaza has set up a direct, secure telephone connection to the Al Jazeera Arabic broadcasting center in Doha (Qatar);

- Al Jazeera Arabic often uses the language – and emblems – of Hamas in its broadcasts;
- Interviews with Palestinian interviewees by Al Jazeera journalists are immediately interrupted if the interviewees make critical remarks about Hamas;

“For years, Al Jazeera, with its large audience, has been a central media platform for Hamas to convey its messages and mobilize public opinion, as well as to increase its own credibility in the regional and international media,” ITIC summarizes its study.

Initial results of a research commissioned by FokusIsrael.ch from an Arab political analyst confirm the assessment that Al Jazeera consistently makes propaganda for Hamas and “glorifies” the terrorist organization in its reporting.

According to this analysis, it is also particularly problematic that Al Jazeera’s Arabic-language program often refers to its own website. This serves as a platform for blatant anti-Semitic incitement. Sometimes a glance at the headlines is enough to recognize the hatred of Jews – for example in the article “How the Jews manipulated religions and ideas to serve their interests“.

Another serious example is provided by the text “The Jews, that’s their habit” by Al-Jazeera correspondent Mohammed Abdullah. In it, he defames Jews across the board as “traitors to God”, accuses them of corroding moral values through “pornography” and claims that they merely deceived the world with the Holocaust in order to push through political interests.

This Holocaust denial is systematic on the channel: Al Jazeera Arabic tirelessly tries to sow doubt about the Nazi genocide by referring to it as “the alleged Holocaust”, as in this article. The anti-Semitic orientation has a long tradition at Al Jazeera: as early as 2000, Al Jazeera figurehead Ahmed Mansour offered a stage to the notorious Holocaust denier David Irving. In the interview, Mansour portrayed Irving sympathetically as a victim.

It is particularly revealing of the channel’s mindset that Mansour demonstratively uploaded this very interview to his YouTube channel again in 2024 – in the middle of the Gaza war. The comments section below the video, which is teeming with the

vilest anti-Semitism, shows which audience is being served by this – with statements such as: “The ‘global’ campaign against this courageous historian publicly proves the extent of Jewish control over the ‘world'” or “The biggest lie in the history of mankind is the lie about the gas chambers”.

Despite its obvious anti-Semitic orientation and the dissemination of Hamas propaganda, Al Jazeera’s Arabic-language program is an integral part of the most important TV packages in Switzerland. The two largest Swiss telecommunications companies, Swisscom and Sunrise, offer the Arabic-language channel on their cable networks. Some smaller providers in the Geneva area also do the same.

When asked about the problematic connection between Al Jazeera and the terrorist organization Hamas, which is banned in Switzerland, André Krause, CEO of Sunrise, replied: “Sunrise provides its TV offering in a politically neutral manner and without judging any political content of a TV station. In principle, we distribute free-to-air channels in Switzerland (…) in the interest of a broad diversity of offerings.”

The Federal Office of Communications OFCOM also relies on passivity. “OFCOM can only prohibit the broadcasting of a program if binding regulations under international law for Switzerland are permanently and seriously violated. We have no knowledge that these conditions are fulfilled in the present case,” the Federal Office stated in response to a corresponding inquiry.

And it adds: “We assume that any violations of international law would also be an international issue and would be pursued. In an initial phase, we would discuss the content of the broadcasts and possible courses of action with any affected federal offices and other regulatory authorities.”

Those responsible at OFCOM clearly lack the desire to take the initiative and study the ITIC report available to them in order to determine any possible violation of international law by Al Jazeera Arabic.

Swisscom’s reaction is completely different to Sunrise and OFCOM. Switzerland’s largest telecommunications company is taking FokusIsrael.ch’s reference to the Hamas-affiliated and anti-Semitic program from Al Jazeera Arabic seriously. In principle, the channels on the blue TV platform are not selected according to political criteria, explains a Swisscom spokesperson. “But we will now review the offer.”

Unlike Sunrise and OFCOM, the Federal Office of Police, Fedpol, does not want to remain passive either. According to the Federal Act on Safeguarding Internal Security, the Federal Police is responsible for securing material “which may serve propaganda purposes and whose content specifically and seriously incites violence against people or property.”

When made aware of the distribution of Hamas propaganda in the cable networks of Swisscom and Sunrise, the Swiss Federal Police responded immediately: “Your request is being processed and you will hear from us again in due course.”

For the heads of Swisscom and Sunrise, Christoph Aeschlimann and André Krause, Articles 260ter (Criminal and terrorist organizations) and 261bis (Discrimination and incitement to hatred) of the Swiss Criminal Code could also become problematic.

This is because Article 260ter states in connection with organizations that attempt to “impose a political, ideological or religious order by criminal means” (which is what the terrorist organization Hamas does): “Whoever supports such an organization in its criminal activity (…) shall be punished with imprisonment of up to five years or a fine.”

And Article 261bis SCC states in connection with incitement to hatred (as it applies to Al Jazeera Arabic according to the present investigations): “Anyone who publicly disseminates ideologies aimed at the systematic disparagement or defamation of such persons or groups of persons, who promotes propaganda actions (…) with the same aim (…) shall be liable to a custodial sentence not exceeding three years or to a monetary penalty.”

This raises the question of whether Aeschlimann and Krause are also guilty under criminal law because they allow Al Jazeera Arabic and Hamas propaganda to be broadcast on their cable networks.

Both offenses are official offenses. This means that the investigating authorities must take action on their own initiative if they receive a corresponding tip-off.

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