SRG Ombudsman’s Office Criticizes Jewish Journalist as Moderator on Middle East and Anti-Semitism Issues

The Ombudsman’s Office of SRG Deutschschweiz has partially upheld a complaint against a Radio SRF program. The complaint concerned an interview with the Arab-Israeli Middle East expert Ahmed Mansour. The Ombudsman’s Office criticized the fact that the interview was conducted by journalist David Karasek. In its statement, it suggested that Karasek was biased on the topics of “anti-Semitism” and “Palestinians and Israel” because he is Jewish.

By Sacha Wigdorovits

The subject of the complaint is the “Tagesgespräch” program from October 6, 2026. On that occasion, SRF radio journalist David Karasek interviewed Ahmed Mansour, an Israeli Arab who grew up in Israel and has been living in Germany for 22 years.

Mansour is a renowned expert on Islam and the Middle East who has been studying Islamism, anti-Semitism, and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians for decades. He lectures on these topics and has published numerous articles and other writings on them. In 2022, the Faculty of Theology at the University of Basel awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contributions to promoting democratic values and combating anti-Semitism.

Ombudsman’s Office Calls for Palestinians to Be Included in Discussions

In the eyes of the SRG Deutschschweiz Ombudsman’s Office, however, none of this appears to sufficiently qualify Mansour as a guest for a “Tagesgespräch” segment on Radio SRF. “Why Ahmed Mansour, of all people, was invited to ‘Tagesgespräch’ (…) is not clear to the Ombudsman’s Office,” it writes in its response to the complaint against the program.

The Ombudsman’s Office would have preferred that “a Palestinian woman or man who could have offered a more nuanced perspective on the topics discussed had been invited to the radio studio.”

This statement is puzzling for two reasons. First, it is not part of the Ombudsman’s office’s responsibilities to dictate to SRF radio and television journalists whom they should interview. Second, during the interview, Mansour spoke at length about “structural anti-Semitism” within the German party “Die Linke.” This is a topic that Palestinians from the West Bank—whom the Ombudsman’s Office would have liked to see in the radio studio—are likely to be unfamiliar with.

Accusation of anti-Semitism against “Die Linke” irks the Ombudsman’s Office

The Ombudsman’s Office was already annoyed by the topic of discussion, “The Left and Its Anti-Semitism.” It complained that it took Karasek 5 minutes and 40 seconds to intervene sufficiently regarding Mansour’s accusation that “The Left” harbors structural anti-Semitism.

The fact is, however, that this accusation is just as well-founded as Mansour’s statement—which was also criticized by the Ombudsman’s Office—that the party won the elections in Berlin not in spite of, but because of, its anti-Semitism and pro-Palestinian stance.

However, the Ombudsman’s Office does not accept any of this; instead, it criticizes journalist Karasek in an unprecedented manner. The Ombudsman’s Office writes that the question arises “whether the host is the right person to address such topics on ‘Tagesgespräch.’”

David Karasek Disqualified Because of His Jewish Heritage

In doing so, it does not accuse Karasek of professional misconduct. It criticizes Karasek for having treated Ahmed Mansour very “meekly” on “Tagesgespräch.” In contrast, when he interviewed SP Co-President Cédric Wermuth a year earlier about his party’s anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian stance, he “asked very persistently, repeatedly interrupting and posing extremely critical questions.”

This comparison leads to only one logical conclusion: The Ombudsman’s Office accuses David Karasek of favoring the pro-Israel Ahmed Mansour and discriminating against the anti-Israel Cédric Wermuth. And this is for one reason alone: because Karasek himself is Jewish.

The SRG Ombudsman’s Office does not deny that its criticism of Karasek was meant as such. In response to an inquiry from FokusIsrael.ch, it simply states: “Neither the Ombudsman’s Office nor the SRG D Executive Office comments on final reports.”

However, by stating that it is questionable whether David Karasek is the right moderator for topics related to the Middle East and antisemitism (because he is Jewish), the SRG Ombudsman’s Office is treading on thin ice. Not only is it thereby interpreting its mandate to review SRF TV and radio broadcasts very broadly, but it is also disregarding the principle that those who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw

stones.

Ombudswoman Girsberger supports a pro-Palestinian organization

This is exactly what Ombudswoman Esther Girsberger does when it comes to the topics of the “Middle East” and “Palestinians.” The former journalist is, in fact, one of the supporters of “Jewish Forum Switzerland – Gescher.”

Gescher represents a small minority of Switzerland’s Jewish population and takes strongly pro-Palestinian stances. As Audiatur-Online reported at the time, the organization called on its members in June 2025 to participate in a Gaza demonstration in Bern, where anti-Semitic slogans and chants demonizing the State of Israel were also heard.

The Gescher board accused the Zurich Cantonal Government of racism because it had refused, on the grounds of security concerns, to accept children from Gaza who had been allowed to enter Switzerland accompanied by three to four adults —escorts whom the cantonal government had good reason to suspect of having ties to, or even belonging to, the terrorist organization Hamas.

BAKOM should investigate Girsberger’s bias

By revealing her ties to Gescher, SRF Ombudswoman Esther Girsberger clearly demonstrates that she herself is at least as biased on the topic of “Palestine–Israel” as the journalist she criticized, David Karasek.

When asked whether she should have recused herself, given her potential bias in handling the complaint against Karasek’s “Tagesgespräch” with Ahmed Mansour, she replied, along with her colleague at the Ombudsman’s Office, Urs Hofmann: “If there is a view that Esther Girsberger should have recused herself as ombudswoman, this can be brought before OFCOM (Federal Office of Communications, Ed.) through a supervisory complaint.”

This suggestion warrants further examination.

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at the University of Zurich and has worked as a US correspondent for the SonntagsZeitung, was editor-in-chief of BLICK and co-founder of the commuter newspaper 20minuten.