



**The Meir Amit Intelligence and
Terrorism Information Center**

August 26, 2010

For the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV and the Shi'ite Amal NBN-TV broadcast "The Christ," an Iranian-produced series rife with anti-Christian anti-Semitic expressions. The Lebanese Christians protested the program's airing and it was taken off the air.



The Iranian series "The Christ," broadcast by Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV and the Lebanese Shi'ite channel NBN-TV, affiliated with the Amal movement (Picture from the Al-Manar TV website, August 13, 2010).

Overview

1. The series "The Christ" (*Al-sayid al-masih* in Arabic) was broadcast at the beginning of August 2010 in Lebanon both by Al-Manar TV, Hezbollah's satellite channel, and the Shi'ite Lebanese channel NBN-TV, affiliated with the Amal movement and Nabih Berri. It was broadcast for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, a time when the rate of television viewing is particularly high in the Muslim world. It was also broadcast by the Iranian Arabic-language channel Al-Kawthar TV.

2. The Christian community in Lebanon strongly protested the program, and after broadcasting the first few episodes Al-Manar TV and NBN TV were forced to announce they were taking the series off the air. Despite the storm raised by the broadcasts in Lebanon, the Iranian channel Al-Kawthar TV continued airing it.

3. This is not the first time that Hezbollah has broadcast a blatantly anti-Semitic series for Ramadan. In November 2003 it broadcast the Syrian-produced series *Al-Shatat* ("Diaspora," i.e., the exile of the Jewish people from their homeland), and from Lebanon it was distributed to many other countries. The series presented an anti-Semitic, pseudo-historical survey of the history of the Jewish people and Zionism, and included the anti-Semitic blood libel (i.e., that Jews baked the Passover matzo with the blood of Christian children).¹

4. Al-Manar TV is very popular in the Arab world. Arab satellite companies (dominated by Egypt and Saudi Arabia) and others (European and Indonesian) provide the channel with technical services, allowing it to be received by many target audiences in the Middle East and throughout the world (including Muslim communities in the West). The United States and European countries recognized the negative influence Al-Manar TV's hate propaganda and incitement programs had on their Muslim communities (the religious incitement in "The Christ" illustrates that well) and so far imposed limitations on its broadcasts. The limitations are ineffective and both Hezbollah and Hamas circumvent them.²

¹ At the time the United States protested the program. Following the protest the Lebanese foreign minister defended Al-Manar TV's right to broadcast it as "freedom of expression." This time, when "freedom of expression" offended the Christians in Lebanon, the Lebanese took the series off the air.

² For further information see the August 23, 2010 bulletin, "A number of satellite companies (including Western companies) continue providing communication services for Hezbollah and Hamas' television and radio, even though restrictions have been imposed by Europe and the United States. Supported by foreign companies, Hezbollah and Hamas are able to extend their range around the world, including Muslim communities" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e125.pdf

The subject matter of "The Christ"

5. Produced in Iran in 2008, the series tells the story of the life of Jesus. The plot of the story shows the Muslim point of view that he was a prophet, but not the most important one (that distinction is reserved for Muhammad). In addition, according to Islam, there is no foundation for the Holy Trinity.³

6. Examples follow of offensive elements (from the first two episodes, which were uploaded to YouTube):

A. In the first episode Satan appears before Jesus and tries to keep Him from fulfilling His mission as prophet. He tells Jesus that He is the son of God, but Jesus "passes the test" and does not accept what Satan says.



The figure of Jesus in the series (From Al-Kawthar TV)

B. In the same episode Jesus says "I am far less important than [others who] serve God" [which infers that Jesus has less stature than other prophets, especially Muhammad].

C. At the end of the first episode one of His disciples asks Him, "Shall we go catch fish?" and Jesus responds, "No, we'll go hunt men."

7. In addition to the offensive treatment of Jesus, in the first two episodes there are **clear examples of anti-Semitism**. The Jews are depicted as conspirators, liars, traitors, cowards, evil, ugly greedy and Satanic. The Jewish residents of Jerusalem are represented as crooked merchants. [Note: This analysis is based on the first two episodes of the series. It is reasonable to assume that later episodes, which deal with the betrayal of Jesus to the Romans, contain similar and more blatant examples of anti-Semitism]. For example:

³ <http://www.dostor.org/politics/middle-east/10/august/13/25320>



Jews in the series: A Jew informs on plotters against the Roman authorities



Jews in the series: Jews counterfeit coins to build the next Temple.



Jesus calls the Jewish priests "sons of snakes" several times (the snake is a familiar anti-Semitic motif).



A priest says the Israelites have sunk to the depths.

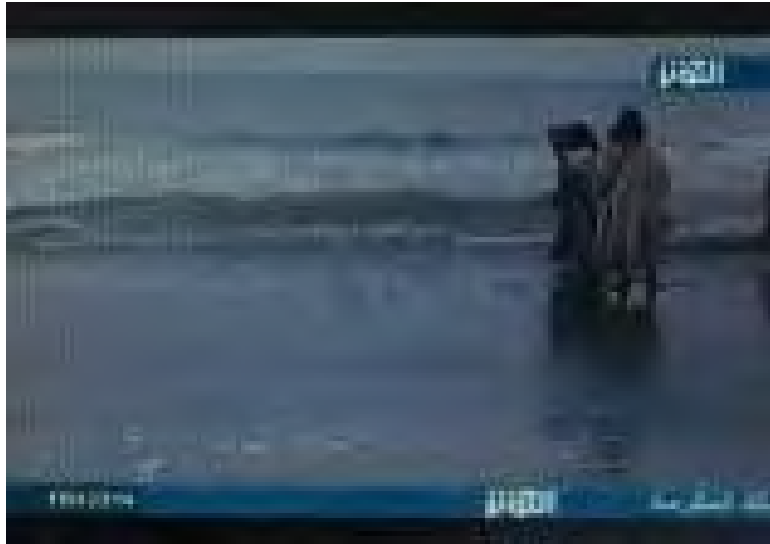


The Jews are worried by Jesus' success, and one says, "This may destroy our profits."

"



Jesus again calls the Jews "sons of snakes."



Jesus to his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee: "Among the Israelites are many devils who stir up terrible civil wars."

Broadcasts stopped in Lebanon following strong Christian protests

8. The first episodes of the series broadcast in Lebanon were perceived as insulting Christianity and led to strong protests by Christians. **The Catholic Information Center said that the series contained "offensive deception." The pastor of the Maronite Church in Byblos (Jbeil), Beshara Raii, called the series a sectarian civil war** violating the National Pact⁴ and the [principle of] living in cooperation (www.dostor.org).

9. **It was reported that following the protests, Lebanon's general security apparatus, which is responsible for censorship, ordered Al-Manar TV and NBN-TV to stop broadcasting the series because it infuriated the country's Christians** (www.nowlebanon.com and *Al-Nahar*, August 13, 2010). In response, on the same day the two channels said in a joint announcement that they had decided to stop broadcasting the series "in respect of some sensitivities and to avoid any attempt for negative exploitation." However, they said, the series "reflects, with full honor and glorification, [Jesus'] life, picture, role, pain and sacrifices."

⁴ The National Pact was an unwritten agreement forged in Lebanon in 1943 among the various ethnic sects which divided positions of political power and determined the modus vivendi for the internal Lebanese arena and the principles of the country's foreign policy.

Lebanese Communication Group
AL-MANAR TV

المجموعة اللبنانية للإعلام
قناة المنار

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Al-Manar, NBN Stop Broadcasting 'The Christ' TV Series

13/08/2010 Al-Manar and NBN television channels on Friday announced they will stop airing "The Christ" TV series after it stirred a row among Lebanon's Christians.

In a joint statement they released, the two channels noted that the TV series they chose for their Ramadan holy month's schedule was aimed at highlighting the great personality of Prophet Issa bin Mariam (pbut) and his Divine message. "The Christ TV series reflects, with full honor and glorification, his life, picture, role, pain and sacrifices," the statement said.

Al-Manar and NBN declared the decision to stop broadcasting the show "in respect of some sensitivities and to avoid any attempt for negative exploitation."

Both channels began showing "The Christ," an Iranian series, at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

Pastor of the Maronite Catholic Church in Byblos, or Jbeil, Bishop Beshara Raii has said the film series is based on the Gospel of Barnabas, a Gospel "not recognized at all by our church." He said that all the events in the television series contained distortion to the Christian ideology. "This series undermines the foundations of every religion and creates strife," he went on to say.

NBN Director-General Qassem Sweid defended "The Christ," saying it does not harm Christians at all. "We made sure it was produced in accordance with the Koran," he said. "We were not told of any reason to convince us to stop the film," Sweid had said, expressing his surprise by Raii's position and that of the Catholic Information Center.

Al-Manar TV and NBN-TV announce they are stopping the broadcasts (Al-Manar TV, August 13, 2010).

10. Despite the protests in Lebanon which led to ending the broadcasts, **the Iranian Arabic-language channel Al-Kawthar TV continued airing the series.** It even used its website to ask viewers what their opinion of it was. The responses posted praised it.

From the Arabic-language website of the Iranian Al-Kawthar TV; the surfers considered it an excellent series