



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

July 5, 2009

**Terrorism and media:  
Bitter dispute within Al-Quds TV, Hamas's satellite  
TV channel, which began broadcasting from Beirut  
seven months ago, led to the dismissal of an  
Algerian journalist. He criticized the channel's  
triviality and exposed its Iranian financing, also  
used for the directors' life of luxury.**

---



Algerian journalist Yehya Abu Zakaria, fired by Al-Quds TV (Photo: Al-Quds TV). Among others, he exposed the luxurious lifestyle of the channel's general directors, who were living on funds received from Iran and money earmarked for the families of dead Hamas military-terrorist operatives.



Nabil al-Atibi, Al-Quds TV's general director (Photo: Al-Jazeera TV, October 28, 2009). According to Yehya Abu Zakaria, he turned the station into "an institution for gossip, false reports and a future sectarian struggle."

## Overview

1. On November 11, 2008, Al-Quds TV, Hamas's second satellite television channel, began broadcasting from Beirut, another arm of its vast media empire.<sup>1</sup> According to Al-Quds director Nabil al-Atibi, the channel is registered in London by the Al-Quds radio and television company<sup>2</sup> and it is owned by Arab and Palestinian businessmen and media personnel.

2. The Hamas media network, which has expanded since Operation Cast Lead, now includes two television channels (Al-Aqsa TV and Al-Quds TV), a radio station (Sawt Al-Aqsa), a daily newspaper (*Felesteen*) published in the Gaza Strip, other publications issued in the Gaza Strip and other locations (including *Filastin al-Muslimah*, apparently published in England), a number of news agencies and more than 20 Internet sites and forums directed at various target audiences (the most important of which is the Palestine-Info website).

3. This media empire serves as Hamas's main weapon in its battle for hearts and minds in the Middle East and beyond, and provides it with capabilities far superior to those of its rivals (especially Fatah and the Palestinian Authority). Hamas is fully aware of the importance of the battle for hearts and minds in its campaign against Israel and its internal opponents. It is prepared to invest extensive resources in developing its media empire regardless of its basic financial distress. The large sums of money necessary for the day-to-day operation and expansion of its media **are, in our assessment, raised by Hamas from external sources, especially Iran**. Iran transfers hundreds of millions of dollars a year to both Hamas's political and military-terrorist wings.<sup>3</sup>

4. The Algerian and Arab media recently exposed a bit of what goes on behind the scenes at Al-Quds TV. The exposure came in the wake of internal feuding which led to the dismissal of Algerian journalist **Yehya Abu Zakaria**. He complained of persecution, while Hamas claimed he was fired for not doing his job properly. Abu Zakaria, who had been the general supervisor of the political and news broadcasts, wrote an open letter to Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, attacking Al-Quds' director **Nabil al-Atibi** and demanding the termination of his employment. He demanded that Khaled Mashaal punish both al-Atibi and the director of the

---

<sup>1</sup> For further information see our November 18, 2008 bulletin "[Al-Quds, Hamas's second satellite TV channel, went on air on November 11, further expanding that movement's media empire.](#)"

<sup>2</sup> London is one of the focal areas of Hamas's media and propaganda system; the others are Damascus, Beirut and Gaza.

<sup>3</sup> For further information see our January 12, 2009 bulletin "[Iranian Support of Hamas.](#)"

news department, **“who wasted the channel’s money on restaurants, fancy cars and hotels, money received from Iran”** (*Algeria Times* website, which posted the open letter, sent from Beirut on June 1, 2009). Similar claims were made in an open letter Abu Zakaria sent to Anwar Malek, an Algerian author and media personality, who was asked to start a campaign to support him.

5. One of Abu Zakaria’s main accusations against Al-Quds TV’s directors and the Hamas leadership related to the triviality of the channel. In our assessment, in retrospect the accusation was correct. An examination of the past eight months shows that as opposed to the rapid entrenchment of Al-Aqsa TV, which is considered as representing the Gaza Strip Hamas leadership, Al-Quds TV has so far not won an important place in Palestinian and Arab media discourse. Its news broadcasts are banal, it usually interviews second string politicians and commentators, and its program formats are outdated and not appealing enough to attract Palestinian and Arab viewers.

6. For Yehya Abu Zakaria’s accusations against the station’s directorate, see the Appendix.



Launching Al-Quds TV: pictures from the studio (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, November 12, 2008).

## Appendix

### Yehya Abu Zakaria's accusations against the directors of Al-Quds TV (from the Algeria Times' and other Arab websites)

1. The main accusations cast against the directors of Al-Quds TV by Yehya Abu Zakaria were the following:

i) **His extreme criticism of Azmi Bishara led to tensions between himself and the Al-Quds directorate and, he claimed, eventually to his dismissal:** He wrote an article entitled "Azmi Bishara, the empty-headed intellectual" (apparently based on the first chapter his unpublished as yet book). The article, which he said made waves throughout the Arab-Muslim world, claimed that Bishara was not worthy of the title "intellectual" and that his becoming a source of authority for Arabs and Palestinians was unmerited. He said Bishara magnified Israel's might and attacked Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah for having turned "an easy achievement into a giant victory." He also said that Bishara had claimed that Palestine could not be liberated by the resistance (i.e., terrorism) from within because "Palestinians are incapable of liberating Palestine" and even recognized the Israeli Knesset and received a salary from it. Abu Zakaria concluded, in view of the internal contradictions he found in ideas raised by Bishara, that one of two things was possible: "either Bishara is schizophrenic with regard to his thinking or he has multiple personalities, one of which is Israeli and the other Arab..."

ii) **He accused the directors of Al-Quds TV of wasting the channel's money and living lives of luxury:** He said the money came from Iran and was intended for the channel's operation and for the families of *shaheds*. He called the directors in Beirut "**the jihad fighters of the hotels,**" who did not represent the genuine Hamas movement, which was, he said, represented by "the loyal 'internal' jihad fighters." He claimed that the channel's directors wasted the money on restaurants, fancy cars and luxurious hotels, instead of paying the salaries of the channel's employees. He therefore predicted that Nabil al-Atibi (Al-Quds TV's director) and Muhammad Ramadan (director of the news department) would be consigned to "the garbage dump of history" (*Algeria Times* website, from an open letter posted on June 3, 2009).

iii) **He deplored the triviality of the channel and its political biases (for the sake of Sunnis at the expense of Shi'ites):** He claimed that Al-Quds TV had "turned into an institution for gossip, false reports, and a future sectarian struggle." The station

employees, he said, were troublemakers and unprofessional. As an example he gave broadcasts which defamed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, as opposed to praise showered on the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. He said that "sectarian terminology has begun to rule the channel, and the Shi'ites are being unjustly treated." Among employees, he said, there was "a culture of informers, gossip and treachery."<sup>4</sup>

iv) **He made personal attacks against the characters of two senior employees**, Nabil al-Atibi and Muhammad Ramadan, who, he said, conspired against him, persecuted him and denied him severance pay (\$20,000 according to his contract). He added they were acting in ways that were inconsistent with Islamic ideology and the doctrines of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. He directed his allegations against "those who robbed me of my rights, confiscated my files, books and documents, and forcibly removed me from [my job at] the Al-Quds TV station," and demanded they be fired. He said that the Palestinians running the channel, who claim that they are from **Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood**, "were frightened because a successful Algerian media personality served as the brains of this channel." For that reason, he said, "they plotted against me and defamed my respectability..." One of his open letters, written on May 14, ended by wondering "how can these careerists and receivers of benefits liberate Palestine?...**How can Hamas, which does not know how to run a TV station, lead a country?**"<sup>5</sup> Hamas, for its part, claims that Abu Zakaria was fired because he did not do his job properly and damaged the channel.

---

<sup>4</sup> In May 2009 the **Akher Khabar** website (launched in Denver, Colorado in April 2008) posted an article from Amman written by Tareq Dilwani. He wrote that according to "reliable sources" there were deep dissensions within Al-Quds TV, which was established by Hamas alongside Al-Aqsa TV in the Gaza Strip. The source of the dissensions was a power struggle between the channel's directors, during which administrative steps were taken to get rid of all the Shi'ite employees and to hire Sunnis to replace them. According to the article, the information was denied by Al-Quds TV sources.

<sup>5</sup> Initially, Al-Quds was vague about its Hamas affiliation. After it was launched Nabil al-Atibi said that it sought to be pan-Palestinian for "all those who devote themselves to Jerusalem and Palestine." The affair of Abu Zakaria's dismissal illustrates that the channel is in fact **run by Hamas, and directed by the leadership in Damascus with funds received from Iran**.