



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

July 6, 2009

## The Palestinian Authority and Fatah improve their media capabilities by launching a satellite TV channel and a Hebrew website

The top screenshot shows the Wafa News Agency's Hebrew homepage as of July 2, 2009. The date is 2009/07/02. The page features a navigation bar with language options (Eng, Fra, ערבי) and a search bar. The main content area displays a list of news items, including 'שמן הזית הפלסטיני הטוב ביותר בתחרות בינלאומית' (14:14) and 'היום פתיחת הפסטיבל הבינלאומי למוסיקה וריקודים ברמאללה' (11:18). A sidebar on the right contains a menu with items like 'ראשי', 'מבזקים', and 'חדשות היום'. The bottom screenshot shows the homepage as of July 5, 2009, with the date 7/05. The news list is updated, featuring 'הנשיא עבאס: נושא הפליטים יונח על שולחן המשא ומתן במסגרת פתרון הקבע' (14:38) and 'תשעה פלסטינים נהרגו בחודש יוני שעבר גירי כוחות הביטחון הישראליים ונעצרו 365 אזרחים' (13:23). The sidebar menu remains the same.

Top: Wafa News Agency's Hebrew homepage, July 2; bottom: the homepage as at July 5.

## Overview

1. The Palestinian Authority and Fatah have recently launched two new media outlets geared towards two distinct target audiences:
  - a. **The Israeli target audience:** on June 15, Wafa, the official news agency of Abu Mazen's **Palestinian Authority**, launched a **Hebrew version of its website**, until then available in Arabic, English, and French. The independent Hebrew edition aims to focus on issues of interest to Israeli government officials, ordinary readers, and media. The contents produced by the website will be sent through the Internet to influential parties in Israel.
  - b. **The Palestinian and Arab target audience:** on June 6, **Fatah** began test broadcasting a **new satellite TV channel** called **Al-Filastiniyya**. According to the channel's director, its broadcasts will reflect the policy of Fatah and the PLO.
2. The website and the TV channel join the Palestinian Authority's existing media, chief among which are the Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, Al-Ayyam, and Al-Quds dailies, the Palestinian Authority's official TV channel, as well as its websites and news agencies (mainly Wafa and the unofficial Ma'an news agency, which also has a website in Hebrew). The launch of Wafa's Hebrew-language website will improve to some extent the Palestinian Authority's ability to compete for Israeli public opinion, while the new TV channel may help promote its media capabilities with the Palestinian and Arab target audiences (provided it can take its place among already existing Palestinian and Arab channels).
3. Hamas's Al-Aqsa and Al-Quds TV channels, which enjoy the support of the popular Qatari channel Al-Jazeera, easily outperform Palestinian Authority and Fatah media, **giving Hamas an advantage in the battle for hearts and minds among Palestinian, Arab, and even (directly and indirectly) Western target audiences**. Fatah and the Palestinian Authority do have the upper hand when it comes to the Israeli target audience, seeing as Hamas's websites are published in eight languages but **not** in Hebrew (since the Israeli target audience is not one of Hamas's priorities in the battle for hearts and minds).

## Wafa News Agency's Hebrew-language website

4. On June 15, the Palestinian Authority's Wafa News Agency<sup>1</sup> launched a Hebrew version of its website, until then available in Arabic, English, and French. According to **Riyadh al-Hassan**, Wafa's Chairman of the Board, the agency's Hebrew website will not be a translation of its Arabic-language counterpart but rather an **independent website**. It will focus on issues of interest to Israeli readers and media, including news, articles, and journalistic stories pertaining to all areas of Palestinian life: politics, economy, society, and culture. The website will also **address Israeli Arabs**, because that sector of society "plays an ever-increasing role in shaping the future of the Middle East conflict". Riyadh al-Hassan further noted that the information on the website would be accurate and reliable, and that it would reflect the views and positions of the Palestinian government.



The Wafa News Agency offices in Ramallah (Wafa Agency Hebrew website, July 2)

5. The Hebrew website is run by a **team of Palestinian journalists who speak fluent Hebrew** (some of them may be Israeli Arabs). The website aims to provide reliable information on the goings-on in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories and on the peace negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel from the Palestinian Authority's perspective. The website will particularly emphasize interviews with Palestinian personalities regarding the peace process as well as personal stories. According to the website's directors, the Hebrew version will feature articles by

---

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1972, Wafa is the official news agency of the Palestinian Authority, which is subjected to the presidency. It has its offices in Ramallah.

- Palestinian personalities, speaking directly to the Israeli public with no censorship or mediation.
6. The stated purpose of the website's creation is to **directly influence Israeli public opinion** through the objective coverage of various events. The website's founders intend to e-mail **a daily news coverage to all Israeli Knesset members, government offices, and media**. The directors of the website said that they would make efforts to keep the coverage professional and reliable, with no incitement or demagoguery. They further added that they counted on the intelligence of Israeli readers and their willingness to read the Hebrew edition and get the information from a primary source. **The website welcomes comments from Hebrew readers**, asking them to be professional, relevant, and reliable where possible, and to avoid incitement. According to the directors of the website, they trust that their Hebrew-language readers are **ready for "matter-of-fact interaction"**.
  7. The first article appearing on the editorial page was written by Riyadh al-Hassan, Wafa's Chairman of the Board, and it is titled **"Why Wafa in Hebrew?"** According to the article, the question should be why it took Wafa so long to launch a Hebrew version. The author says that Wafa should have seen a long time ago that it needed to address and interact with the Israeli reader, to examine his ability to understand and study his Palestinian opponent, and to get to know him "just as the Palestinian is determined to study his Israeli opponent".
  8. A look at the website shows **that it includes the following sections:**
    - a. **Newsflashes**—short newsflashes updated in real time. Most of the reports pertain to happenings in Judea and Samaria and to IDF's activities.
    - b. **Daily news**—more detailed stories, updated in real time, about happenings in Judea and Samaria.
    - c. **Interview of the week**—a section featuring a weekly interview with a senior Palestinian Authority figure. For now, there are no interviews in this section.
    - d. **Women**—no stories appear in this section as of yet.
    - e. **Economy**—articles about economy.

- f. **Culture and arts**—articles on culture and arts in Judea and Samaria.
- g. **Sports**—sports articles.
- h. **Opinions**—this section features opinions by various authors (**including Israelis**) on various subjects. The articles include commentary on the negotiations between Fatah and Hamas, Salam Fayyad's speech, opinions on social matters such as gunfire at weddings, and so forth.

**הנשיא מחמוד עבאס באגרת לקוראי וואפא בעברית**  
**'אנו שותפים לחלום השלום ועתיד טוב יותר'**

15:10 - 2009/6/16

---

הנשיא מחמוד עבאס באגרת לקוראי וואפא בעברית  
'אנו שותפים לחלום השלום ועתיד טוב יותר'

הנשיא מחמוד עבאס שלח אגרת למבקרים באתר סוכנות הידיעות הפלסטינית בעברית 'וואפא' ובו כתב 'אנו מאמינים בשלום והחיים המשותפים בין שני העמים ולרגל הוצאת וואפא בעברית, שתהווה צינור ישיר לדעת הקהל הישראלי ותעביר במקצועיות ואובייקטיביות את השאיפה של העם הפלסטיני לחיות בכבוד במדינתו העצמאית ובשכנות למדינת ישראל' כתב הנשיא עבאס שהביע תקווה של הגשמת החלום לשני העמים לחיות בשלום וביטחון ושגשוג.

**President Mahmoud Abbas in an open letter to the Israeli readers of Wafa's Hebrew website: "We share the dream for peace and for a better future." President Abbas expressed his hope that the two peoples would achieve the dream of living peaceful, secure, and prosperous lives (Wafa's Hebrew website, July 5).**

## Al-Filastiniyya, Fatah's satellite TV channel



The logo of satellite TV channel Al-Filastiniyya

9. On February 18, Fatah's revolutionary committee decided to launch a satellite TV channel headed by **Nabil Amr**.<sup>2</sup> Named **Al-Filastiniyya**, the new channel started its test broadcasts on June 6. The channel currently broadcasts three hours a day, from 7 PM to 10 PM. According to Nabil Amr, the channel's inspector general, the channel is now in its initial testing period. The full-scale test broadcasts, due to begin in several weeks, will last for three months, after which it will start broadcasting regular shows. According to Amr, **the channel will be broadcasting "for unity and for the policy of Fatah and the PLO"**, maintaining professionalism. He further added that the channel would recruit Palestinian college graduates and local Palestinian experts instead of relying on experts from abroad.
10. The channel broadcasts from **Ramallah** and has three offices in **Cairo, Amman, and Beirut**. It is registered in the Palestinian Authority and broadcasts through **Nilesat**, an Egyptian-owned communications satellite. According to channel supervisor Nabil Amr, **it is funded by Fatah** rather than by external funding sources.
11. Judging by the contents of the experimental channel, it appears that it broadcasts **talk shows and current events shows** dealing with such pertinent **political issues** as Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's speech, the internal Palestinian dialogue, and the situation in Jerusalem. The channel also broadcasts a daily press review called "Local Press". Even though the channel claims to be objective, the various contents seen on it

make it clear that it represents the PLO factions, **mostly Fatah**. The channel provides positive coverage of Palestinian Authority leaders, primarily Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. The channel also broadcasts songs and video clips dedicated to Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to such mixed Jewish-Arab cities as Jaffa and Acre. At this point, there is no evidence of anything that falls in the category of incitement; however, there have been reports portraying Israel and the IDF in a negative light.

---

<sup>2</sup> **Nabil Amr**, former Minister of Information and Abu Mazen's advisor. Appointed the Palestinian Authority's Ambassador to Cairo, Egypt in March 2008.