



**Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center**

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**The French government is banning Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV for inciting hatred and encouraging terrorism. Hamas denounced the French government's decision, saying that the shutdown of its channel was an assault on the freedom of speech.**

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**حملة التضامن مع  
قناة الأقصى الفضائية**

Al-Aqsa TV's campaign against France's ban of its broadcasts  
(Al-Aqsa TV website, July 5, 2010)

### **Overview**

1. On July 7, 2010, the French government instructed its broadcasting authority to take Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV off the air. The satellite channel was broadcast on Eutelsat, a French satellite company headquartered in Paris. French Foreign Ministry spokesman Bernard Valero said that the instruction was given when France received a warning from the European Commission that the channel repeatedly violated European laws by showing programs which incited hatred or violence for reasons of religion or nationality, mostly against Israel and Judaism (AFP, June 7).

2. **In the past, the French government took similar measures against Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV and Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV**, motivated by the anti-Israeli (and anti-Jewish) incitement and support of terrorism on those channels. The French government believes that the hatred and incitement to terrorism **trickle down to local Muslim populations in France and in other European countries**. It is, therefore, our assessment that the current ban as well as the previous measures taken by the French government must also be considered **within the context of France's internal considerations**.

3. France's Eutelsat said it would comply with the European Commission's request, "but that it had to go through several technical and contractual steps before it could turn off the Al-Aqsa TV stream" (Wall Street Journal, June 10). Eutelsat also informed Al-Aqsa TV that it would stop broadcasting the channel via its satellites within several days. **Hamas denounced the decision**, saying it would lose most of its target audience as a result. **Hamas has launched a propaganda campaign calling on ministers of telecommunications and information in Arab countries to take action**. The management of Al-Aqsa TV released an announcement **saying that it holds the government of France responsible for the decision and its consequences, and calling on it to reconsider**.

4. **On March 18, 2010, the US Treasury Department designated Al-Aqsa TV as a terrorism-financing organization. It also appears on the European Union's list of terrorist organization**. However, despite the restrictions imposed on the channel's broadcasts, Al-Aqsa TV is still broadcast by other (Arab) satellite operators and is available online, diminishing the effectiveness of the French resolution.

## **Satellite operators' responses to the French government's order**

5. **Al-Aqsa TV is broadcast via Noorsat, a company which uses the satellites of the French Eutelsat to broadcast to European countries**. The French company has no direct contract with Al-Aqsa TV, but rather with Noorsat, which leases satellite-broadcast capacity for channels targeting audiences in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

6. Following the request from the French government, Eutelsat said it would comply with the European Commission, "but that it had to go through several technical and contractual steps before it could turn off the Al-Aqsa TV stream" (Wall Street Journal, June 10, 2010). On June 14, Noorsat informed the managers of Al-Aqsa TV that it would stop broadcasting the channel via its satellite within 48 hours (Al-Aqsa TV, June 14). This may cause considerable decrease

in the availability of the channel in European countries and will make it more difficult for Al-Aqsa TV to broadcast to Arab countries.

**7. This is not the first time that France's satellite provider Eutelsat has been warned by the European Commission.** In 2008-2009, the European Commission warned Eutelsat that **providing satellite services to Al-Aqsa TV was a violation of French law, prohibiting programs which promote incitement and hatred. It now appears, however, that at the time, the warning did not have any effect on the contents of the programs broadcast on the company's satellites** (AFP, June 7, 2010).<sup>1</sup> It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the recent order given by the European Commission and the French government will be upheld with any consistency. **It can be assumed that Hamas is going to look for ways to circumvent the restrictions imposed on it.**

8. Commenting on the announcement of the French government, Eutelsat said that it always complies with the demands of the European Commission. According to Eutelsat, in 2008 and 2009, when it received the European Commission's report on Al-Aqsa TV, the company contacted its client (Noorsat), the satellite provider responsible for Al-Aqsa TV's broadcasts, and demanded that the channel conform to the requirements of the EU (AFP, June 7). Obviously, there has been no significant change in the programs broadcast on Al-Aqsa TV, fed by the radical worldview of Hamas.

## **Hamas' reaction**

**9. Al-Aqsa TV deputy director Muhammad Thuraya** reported that the Noorsat company was going to terminate the channel's broadcasts on June 17. He further added that the decision was motivated by programs inciting hatred. The channel asked for a one-day extension to contact lawyers and international legal professionals in an attempt to reverse the decision. **He noted that the decision would cause the channel, which employs 400 people, to lose about 70 percent of its viewers, since Al-Aqsa TV broadcasts on the Arabsat satellite only reach about 30 percent of the viewers** (AFP, June 15).

10. The management of Al-Aqsa TV **released an announcement saying it is holding the government of France accountable for the decision and its consequences**, calling on it to reconsider. An official announcement released by the management of the channel says that the only explanation for the decision is pressure exerted by Israel and the US to suppress public freedom and the freedom of expression. According to the announcement, the decision is not consistent with international broadcast and press laws (Ma'an, June 15, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> See our January 11, 2009 Information Bulletin: ["Terrorism and the media: Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV no longer broadcasts via the European Eurobird satellite"](#).

11. At the same time, Hamas launched a media campaign against the decision. **Al-Aqsa TV broadcast a series of special programs dedicated to the issue of the ban**, including interviews with various personalities who condemned the French government's decision. **The Al-Aqsa media network organized a demonstration of journalists in front of the French culture center in Gaza City.** The demonstration was attended by senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan, a member of the Al-Aqsa board, and Khaled al-Batash from the PIJ.

12. The Hamas administration's information bureau released an announcement saying it considered the decision to be yet another attempt to silence "the channels of resistance which expose Israel's crimes", wondering at the fact that the decision was made by France, a country which prides itself on being the birthplace of democracy and liberty. The information bureau calls on the council of Arab information ministers to take measures to secure the rights of Arab satellite channels, saying it will send France's Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) a letter demanding that the decision be reversed.

13. Hamas activists strongly condemned the decision (Al-Aqsa TV, Radio al-Aqsa, Safa, June 15, 2010):

a. **Al-Aqsa TV director Hazem al-Sharawi** called on France to reconsider the decision, promising that **numerous actions will be taken to exert pressure on France for that purpose.** He submitted a letter of protest to a representative of the French consulate in Gaza, who promised to deliver it to the French consulate in Jerusalem.

b. Al-Aqsa TV board member **Isma'il Radwan** said that **the decision exposed France's false claims on the freedom of press**, and that its purpose was to tighten the so-called blockade on the Gaza Strip. According to Radwan, the decision proves that the campaign has become one of propaganda, with Israel attempting to discredit the Al-Aqsa channel by accusing it of inciting anti-Semitism and terrorism.

c. Top Hamas figure **Salah al-Bardawil** said that France's decision was "oppressive and racist", **and that its purpose was to cover up "the crimes of the occupation" against the Palestinians** and to silence the voice of the free media of the "resistance" which exposes said "crimes". According to Al-Bardawil, France's talk of democracy is just a façade. He called on Arab ministers of information to translate their previous resolution against the French decision into practical measures.

d. **Youssef al-Manasi**, the minister of telecommunications in Hamas' de-facto administration, said that the decision had no legal or moral justification, **and that France bowed to pressure from the US and Israel**. He called on Arab ministers of telecommunications and information to take a firm stand on that issue and take measures to ensure freedom of action for Arab media and information institutions.

## Appendix

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### Details on Al-Aqsa TV and satellites broadcasting the channel

14. **Al-Aqsa TV is Hamas' most important TV channel.** It started broadcasting in the Gaza Strip on January 9, 2006, after Hamas had won the legislative council elections. **Since it was first launched, it has been an instrument for disseminating messages of hatred and incitement against Israel. The channel often airs children's programs packed with severe incitement against Israel, the Jewish people, and even the West.<sup>2</sup>**



Al-Aqsa TV's logo

15. Following are examples of messages of hatred broadcast by Al-Aqsa TV, which may influence Arab/Muslim communities in France and elsewhere in Europe:

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<sup>2</sup> See our October 8, 2009 Information Bulletin: ["Hamas recently broadcast a children's TV show which specifically called for the slaughter of the Jews. Hamas thus continues brainwashing the children of the Gaza Strip with hatred and the use of violence against Israel and the Jewish people, contradicting the moderate image it tries to market to the West"](#).

## Anti-Semitic incitement rooted in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion



Ziyad Abu al-Hajj, Hamas-affiliated preacher who had taken part in an international convention in Spain for religious dialogue, repeating myths taken from The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and calling for the genocide of the Jews (Al-Aqsa TV, April 3, courtesy of Palestinian Media Watch)<sup>3</sup>

## Children's programs full of incitement and hatred



From the Al-Aqsa TV children's program called "Pioneers of Tomorrow": Nassur the bear: "We want to slaughter [the Jews] so that they leave our land, right?" (September 22, 2009, courtesy of Palestinian Media Watch)

16. The channel's broadcasts in Europe are made possible thanks to **Noorsat Global Satellite Communication Company**, a provider of satellite communications services to the Arab world. It was established in December 2004 as a private enterprise for developing and operating satellite telecommunications networks for the Arab world. **The company is headquartered in Bahrain and has offices in Amman.** In October 2009, it announced that it had signed a multi-year agreement for leasing telecommunications satellites with Eutelsat, considerably expanding the company's coverage.

<sup>3</sup> See our April 21, 2009 Information Bulletin: ["The hate industry: Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV continues its crude anti-Semitic incitement, using The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and calling for the genocide of the Jews. In addition, a book was seized during Operation Cast Lead, rife with anti-Semitism"](#).



The company's logo

17. In order to broadcast Al-Aqsa TV in Europe, Noorsat makes use of telecommunications satellites owned by Eutelsat, a French-owned corporation headquartered in Paris. Using those satellites, the channel is broadcast to central and western Europe, home to sizeable Arab and Muslim communities exposed to Hamas' blatant incitement against Israel and the Jewish people and encouragement of terrorism rooted in Hamas' radical Islamic ideology.



The corporation's logo

18. The channel also uses Arabsat and Nilesat, Arab and Egyptian satellites. In addition to the Gaza Strip, the channel can be watched in Judea and Samaria, in the entire territory of Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East. It is broadcast to Europe via **Atlantic Bird 4A**, a satellite operated by **Eutelsat**, a leading satellite provider in Europe and one of the three leading providers in the world. If the latest decision of the French government is put into practice, the channel's availability in Europe is likely to decline.