



Media Coverage at "Palestine Television (PBC)" and "Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel"
Following Hamas' Military Takeover of Gaza

Media Monitoring Unit

Fourth Report

Phase II

April 2008

In cooperation with the:



European Union

FORD FOUNDATION

Media Monitoring Unit Team:

Unit Coordinator: Ruham Nimri

Information Coordinator: Alaa' Karajeh

Monitoring Unit: Bilal Ladadweh, May Mustafa, Saed Karazon.

Written and Analyzed by: Media Monitoring Unit- MIFTAH

Steering Committee:

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Dr. Lily Feidy, Khalil Shaheen, Atta Al Qaymari, Imad Al-Asfar, Bisan Abu Ruqti, Juman Quneis, Nahed Abu T'eimeh, Joharah Baker, Mousa Qous.

Copyright of
The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and
Democracy-MIFTAH



P.O. Box 69647 Jerusalem 95908

Tel. Jerusalem 972 2 5851842- Tel. Ramallah 972 2 2989490

Fax Jerusalem 972 2 5835184 Fax Ramallah 972 2 2989492

E-mail: info@miftah.org

Website: www.miftah.org

Table of Contents

Preface

First: PBC

News Bulletins

Main Bulletin

Local Bulletin

Breaking News

News Scroll Bar

Programs

Open Channel Programs

Open Channel

Annadwa Assiyasiya (Political Seminar)

Shou Ra'yak (What is your Opinion)

Hamzat Wasel (Link)

Alli Sawtak (Speak Up)

Talk Shows

Ma'a Al-Hadath (With the Event)

Liqa' Khas (Special Interview)

Al-Kalam Masmouh (It is allowed to Speak)

Al-Mawqif Assiyasi (The political position)

Sada al-Qanoun (The repercussions of the law)

Conclusion

Regular Programs

Terminology

Filmed scenes

Songs

Findings

Recommendations

"Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel"

Al-Aqsa Policy

The Sample

Breaking News

News Bulletins

News Programs and Talk Shows

Aqlam Assuhof (The Press)

Hadath Wa Araa' (Events and opinions)

Liqa Ma'a Mas'oul (Interview with an official)

Aynak ala Al-Watan (Keep an eye on the homeland)

Qadiyya ala Bisat Al-bahth (An issue for discussion)

Bidoun Muqadimat (Without any introduction)

Liqa' Khas (Special interview)

Mubaasher (Live)

Sada Al-Shari' (Echoes of the street)

Films and Documentaries

Other Diverse Programs

Songs

TV Spots

Findings

Recommendations

Introduction

This report monitors the coverage of the events that followed Hamas' military takeover of Gaza Strip at the Palestinian Television Channel (PBC) and Al-Aqsa Satellite Television during the period from June 18, 2007 to July 18, 2007.

The Report examines the coverage of events during that period on a daily basis through five hours between 6:00 -11:00 pm, a total of 145 hours of prime time broadcasting, and the richest in news bulletins, news programs and talk shows.

This Report comes in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli monitoring project, launched by the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy -MIFTAH, in cooperation with the Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel "KESHEV," with the aim of monitoring the professionalism of the media, and how it covered the conflict on both sides, and whether it contributed to an independent, professional and bold media that spreads a culture of indulgence, moderation and understanding between the two peoples through monitoring, research and analysis, and attempting at influencing the media and the legislature without infringing on its freedom and its right of expression.

We also took into consideration the difficult conditions under which PBC worked following Hamas' takeover of Gaza Strip, as their headquarters were shut down, the staff failed to attend to work, and broadcasting surprisingly moved to Ramallah studios, and hence the Ramallah staff was not fully prepared to cover the events of that period, particularly that their correspondents in Gaza were not capable of covering news and facts of what had been going on in Gaza, unlike Al-Aqsa Satellite Television, which was working under much more stable conditions and with better resources than those of PBC.

Since PBC is the only official national TV station that reflects the public concern, as it defined itself, the criteria used to analyze its media coverage were different from those used with Al-Aqsa, a partisan media channel that reflects a clear partisan message, but whose coverage was not objective, and just like PBC, which did not maintain neutrality as an official national television station.

This report on the coverage of PBC and Al-Aqsa of the events of a whole month following Hamas' takeover of Gaza Strip is a continuation of Phase II of the Media Monitoring Project.

The report aims at monitoring the events during a period where the media played an extremely active and effective role. PBC and Al-Aqsa played a role as grave as the period itself, and this report attempts at diagnosing the performance of both channels and the degree of professionalism and objectivity of each during that period.

The report presents the media discourse of each of PBC and Al-Aqsa in an internal rift that was ultimately resolved by force. The media discourse was oriented towards an internal issue, utilized similar tools as those used in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but was even more heated and biased.

Palestine Television (PBC)

We did not select Palestine Television randomly. PBC is the official national television that represents the public concern, according to its definition, *"the Palestine Broadcasting Corporation is a public national institution that constitutes a major and significant component of the national structure of the Palestinian society in its march towards achieving its basic rights of liberation and independence and the establishment of its independent state over its homeland."*

PBC legitimacy is enshrined in the Presidential Decree No. (4596) signed by the Palestinian President Yaser Arafat on 6 July 1993 and addressed to Radwan Abu Ayyash, stipulating the establishment of the Palestinian radio and television.

PBC had its first experimental broadcast in Jericho on 6 June 1994, utilizing Palestinian hands and brains, according a special PBC publication.

PBC started broadcasting locally in the Gaza Strip in September 1994. Since April 1995, production has been conducted at PBC premises in Ramallah.

On 1 July 1995, the two-hour evening broadcast moved from Jericho to Ramallah, while the main broadcasting continued from Gaza, where the "Palestine Satellite Channel" was established, staffed and equipped.

In 1998, Palestine Television started satellite broadcasting on Nile Sat, and both the regular and satellite television stations broadcast some joint programs. As the Israeli Army destroyed the infrastructure of the radio and

television in Ramallah during Al-Aqsa Intifada, both channels unified their broadcast.

News Bulletins

The monitoring process included nine and a half hours of monitoring of the 7 o'clock local news bulletin, and 13 hours of the 9 o'clock main news bulletin, a total of 22 and a half hours, out of a total of 145 hours of broadcasting.

The Monitoring Unit did not observe any crucial differences between the local and the main news bulletins, neither in terms of headline news or content, nor in terms of time allocated to each bulletin. The main news bulletin, however, included immense scenes of internal fighting, particularly the scenes of Hamas taking over the PNA offices, and the Executive Force patrolling streets and shooting in the air.

Both bulletins strongly criticized the behavior of the deposed government in Gaza, depicting it as the "coup authority" or the "ruling junta" and described its forces as the "black militias," and "Hamas gangs." They used terms like "abduction" to describe arrests carried out by the deposed government or "execution" for killing members of security services.

Main news bulletin

The news bulletin had an average of 15.6 news items per bulletin, of which 8.2 (52.5%) addressed the repercussions and the developments on the ground of internal fighting, while an average of 4.3 (27.5%) items only covered the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and 3.1 items covered Arab and international affairs. The internal conflict constituted the lead news in 14 out of 29 days of events in Gaza, i.e. 48.3% of main news bulletins. The lead news was on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the field developments, including assassinations, invasions, incursions and killings in 8 days (27.6%), while the President's news took the lead on 7 days (24.1%).

Quantitative analysis reveals that internal fighting and its repercussions ranked first in PBC coverage, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict dropped to second rank, and the interest in Arab and international news ranked last.

This also applied to the lead news in the bulletin, with internal fighting ranking first, followed by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the President's news and the news of the Government headed by Dr. Salam Fayyad.

This data reveals that the strife that ended by Hamas dominating Gaza Strip did not come to an end with the military domination but changed into a media and political rift and a competition over the public opinion among the two parties, Fateh and Hamas, which explains the supremacy of this news in the main news bulletin.

The news had no reliable sources to confirm it. An example is the news item on 13 July 2007 about a blast attack that Hamas was plotting against PBC headquarters at Al-Bireh. The news item read as follows:

"Informed sources mentioned that Hamas is planning an explosive or booby trapped car attack against the PBC headquarters at Al-Bireh. Citizens told PBC that they heard Hamas members threatening of an attack that would lead to the destruction of the premises in a similar manner as what the Israeli occupation forces committed five years ago, when they blasted the premises and the studios."

This news item is based on weak and incredible sources. It referred to informed sources quoting "citizens" who "heard" members of "Hamas" "threatening," without indicating the identity of those citizens. How did they actually know that those who were threatening were Hamas members? This weak news item was not supported by airing the narrative of those citizens who heard these threats, nor through bringing them to the studio to testify.

Despite weak sources, it was the lead news at PBC bulletin for that day, while the news of the Israeli Army injuring 8 citizens during a demonstration against the Wall ranked eighth, and the news of the funeral of a martyr ranked tenth. Between the lead and the eighth news items, there were news items covering the activities of Dr. Fayyad's Government and the practices of the Executive Force.

Other examples include the following:

"Political analysts and experts agree that the coup d'etat perpetrated by the Hamas militia in Gaza Strip comes within the framework of implementing regional agendas, asserting the importance of independent Palestinian decision-making" (June 2, 2007).

This news item did not mention the names of the analysts or experts, or who they represent, and concluded by *"asserting the importance of independent Palestinian decision-making,"* without mentioning the relation between what it called a coup d'etat and independent Palestinian decision-making.

This was repeated in several news bulletins, as the editorial board did not give priority to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but to the rift between 'Fateh' and ' Hamas' and the Presidency's news. Consequently, we saw the President's news came first, while the martyrdom of a child ranked fourth.

On July 3, 1997, the following news item took the lead in the main news bulletin:

"The President receives two Arab Knesset members who expressed their support to the Palestinian legitimacy represented by President Abu Mazen."

The following news item came fourth:

"A child from Hebron is martyred by occupation forces."

Such news which stressed support to Palestinian legitimacy represented by Abu Mazen has been frequently broadcast in news bulletins. It was obvious that such news was related to internal developments and the loss of control over the Authority in Gaza.

On July 15, 2007 the lead news in the main news bulletin was: *"The President's Office spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeineh denies that President Abbas accused Syria, Iran and Qatar of being informed of the explosives that Hamas put in Salaheddin Road"* in an indication of the accusations of the President's Office and 'Fateh' against ' Hamas' of an attempt to assassinate Abu Mazen. The news that the Israeli Army withdrew from Martyr Yaser Arafat's Airport was the second item.

PBC main news bulletin included defamation and incitement too, such as a report on June 25, 2007 on a message by Ayman Zawahri, Al-Qaida No. 2 leader, after Hamas takeover of Gaza. The bulletin started in the following manner:

"Al-Qaida supports Hamas, and Hamas nurtures Al-Qaida, the method is one; one hand, charges of infidelity, exclusion, extremist emirates ruled by the sword, and with its detachment from Palestinian legitimacy, Hamas has created the gap that Al-Qaida has always looked for...."

This news item came first and was highlighted in conformity with the official political discourse that President Mahmoud Abbas and Fateh presented, and which focused then on linking Hamas to Al-Qaida.

Local news bulletin

The local news bulletin included an average of 12.3 items per bulletin, 8.3 (67.5%) of which addressed the internal conflict fighting, while the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ranked second, with 4 news items (32.5%). The number of local news bulletins amounted to 24, 10 (41.5%) of which had the lead item on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, while 9 (37.5%) had the lead item on internal conflict, and 5 (21%) bulletins had the President's news as the lead item.

The above Quantitative data on the lead news item does not reveal a decreasing interest in internal conflict, although the local news bulletins were monitored during 24 rather than 29 days as was the case with main news bulletin. This may explain why the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ranked first in the local news.

The local news bulletin also addressed the repercussions of the internal conflict including the casualties, particularly highlighting casualties of the security services and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades belonging to 'Fateh'. The first news item in the bulletin was about the funeral of Samih Al-Madhoun's cousin, a 'Fateh' leader killed on the eve of Hamas military takeover of Gaza Strip.

The news item came in the following manner:

"Tens of citizens bid farewell to Jihad Al-Madhoun, cousin of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades leader Martyr Samih Al-Madhoun, whose body Hamas criminal militias had mutilated at Al-Shati Refugee Camp. Martyr Jihad Al-Madhoun died yesterday of injuries inflicted by the treacherous militias of Hamas, as they shot and threw bombs at citizens at Rafah border-crossing."

PBC broadcast other news of unreliable sources that was distorted and put out of context as was the case on July 14, 2007.

"Ismail Haniyyeh proposes joint Israeli-European administration of Rafah border-crossing without any Palestinian presence...."

PBC did not identify its sources, and sufficed to say, *"reliable sources asserted...."* Such news was repeatedly broadcast in several main and local news bulletins, such as the news mentioned previously of the intention of Hamas members to blow up PBC premises at Al-Bireh.

Several items were based on stories of citizens that could not be verified. Broadcasting such baseless stories and granting them official confirmation contributed to aggravating conditions and creating a belligerent atmosphere.

On June 19, 2007, the following news item was broadcast in the local news bulletin:

*"Citizens from Al-Shati Refugee Camp in Gaza Strip appeal to all honest people to intervene immediately in order to stop a tragedy in the Camp because of the practices of the outlawed **Hamas Militia**, which surrounded the house of the Omar family, and threatened to blow it up over its inhabitants. Citizens calling from the location said that **"the criminal Hamas group insists on committing a new crime and surrounds the house on the pretext of the presence of Fateh members whom the coup Hamas forces want."**"*

PBC relied on such news despite the exaggeration.

Al-Aqsa Satellite Television, which belongs to Hamas, received PBC coverage, as it broadcast statements by Fateh officials, attacking Hamas and its satellite channel such as:

*"Colonel Yousef Izrail, Director of Police in Nablus, denied the **lies** disseminated by the **Satellite channel of killing and incitement**, that belongs to **Hamas**, about the killing of one of the detainees by the security services in Junaid prison" (June 19,2007).*

The news item did not identify Al-Aqsa, but referred to it as the *"channel of killing and incitement"* that belongs to 'Hamas;'this became a common term used by PBC in depicting Al-Aqsa Satellite channel.

And:

"Specialists: Hamas led Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel constitutes means for incitement and killing" (June 30, 2007)

Here the news sources of PBC are also weak, as the names of these "specialists" were not mentioned, nor did it host any person to say such accusations against Al-Aqsa, whether a media, political, or any expert. PBC rectified this flaw in the next day bulletin when it conveyed the following item:

"The President of the Journalist Association Naim Toubasi criticized Al-Aqsa Channel, of Hamas, the coup perpetrators, describing it as a source of charges of infidelity, incitement and killing; he also condemned Hamas

militia for stealing PBC equipment and using it in Hamas Satellite Channel" (July 1, 2007).

And:

"Hamas members detained by the security services denied the lies spread by the Hamas led killing and incitement Channel, which claimed that detainees were being tortured by the Security Services in a manner that led to the deterioration in their health conditions" (July 7, 2007).

Breaking News

Breaking news is surprising and dramatic news that constitutes a shift from the expected line of events and are of real concern to the targeted public.

It differs from lead news in that it does not wait for the next bulletin, but broadcast is interrupted to announce breaking news. Breaking news comes to an end as the news bulletin gets closer, where the news item is covered in a better manner, as thoughts are more organized, or when the information in the item has been sufficiently covered.

PBC broadcast 36 breaking news items in 29 days, at an average of around 1.25 items per day. According to the above definition, the news was not urgent, but was sometimes opinionated and judgmental. Following are some examples:

"Ahmad Abdul Rahman: Haniyyeh speech constitutes a political coup that complements the military coup" (June 24, 2007); and

"Haniyyeh justifies the military coup in Gaza Strip and refuses to apologize to the Palestinian people for the crimes of Hamas militias" (June 24, 2007); and

"Chiefs of tribes and clans support the decisions of the President and condemn the bloody coup perpetrated by Hamas militias" (June 18, 2007).

Such news may be broadcast in regular bulletins, but not as breaking news, since they comprise positions and opinions, rather than events related to the conflict between Fateh and Hamas and its repercussions, that are of concern to citizens.

Breaking news that conformed to the above definition were broadcast but not followed up. They appeared on the screen for long periods so that they were no more breaking news.

These breaking news items were then moved to news scroll bar without editing or further information.

News Scroll Bar

The news scroll bar was replete with news of the conflict in Gaza, to the extent of transmitting the news of the arrest or detention of one citizen by the 'Executive Force' of Hamas, stressing his factional and political identity, as well as that of the party that arrested or "abducted" him. Following are some examples of what PBC wrote on July 10, 2007:

*"**Citizen Bassam Khalidi** abducted from his home in Gaza by the **Executive militia**;"*

*"**Hamas militia** abducts a Bulgarian national on the pretext of **membership in Fateh** (June 30, 2007); and*

*"**The Executive Force** abducts Iyad Nasrah, a **cadre of Fateh** in Gaza and shoots his father and two brothers" (July 13, 2007);*

*"**The Executive militia** launches a **wide scale abduction campaign** against **cadres of Fateh** in Gaza" (July 13,2007).*

PBC would not have covered all these details had the arrests been made by the Israeli Army. The news scroll bar focused on a specific group, since detainees or abductees were only from "Fateh." PBC mostly referred to the numbers of detainees, martyrs and injuries caused by the Israeli Army, which exploited the internal fighting to conduct incursions, killings and arrests. Examples include:

*"Occupation forces arrested **eighteen citizens** in different areas of the West Bank" (June 30, 2007);*

*"The martyrdom of **three citizens** in Israeli shelling of a car in Khan Younis;" and*

*"Occupation Army **arrests** a young man from Tyil, Nablus"*

Incitement against the deposed government was observed, through focusing on its practices against 'Fateh' members. The news coverage of arrests and pursuits neither included the circumstances of the action, the charges brought against the detainees, nor the sources of news.

Programs

Following the takeover by Hamas of Gaza Strip, PBC allocated two types of programs to address the repercussions of the event. The first type is open channel programs such as *Mawja Maftouha* (open channel), *Annadwa Assiyasiyya* (The political seminar), *Shou Ra'yak* (What is your opinion), and *Hamzat Wasel* (Link) and *Alli Sawtak* (Speak up). The other type is talk shows such as *Ma'a Al-Hadath* (With the event), *Alliqa Al-Khas* (Special interview), *Al-Kalam Masmouh* (It is allowed to speak) and *Sada Al-Qanoun* (Repercussions of the law), which address internal issues by hosting political figures who mostly represented the points of view of Fateh or PLO factions.

Open channel programs

Open channel programs occupied the largest time in PBC coverage of the post 14 June events, during which Hamas took over Gaza Strip. The number of hours allocated for this open channel amounted to 29.25 hours (20%) of the overall number of broadcast time which amounted to 145 hours. It broadcast telephone calls from citizens who did not reveal their real names, but used names like "Abu X." These open channel programs were widely criticized by popular, non-governmental and legal organizations, because despite the importance of such programs and the fact that they provide room for freedom of expression, yet they require the management of the station to be extremely responsible in the proposed topics and the timing, and require competent anchors, who should be fully aware of the prevalent political circumstances that require enhancing internal peace while at the same time maintaining the right of freedom of expression. There were varying opinions towards the open channel programs; some called for imposing technical censorship on open channel programs, screening calls to avoid sending messages that threaten social peace, while others called for the protection of freedom of expression under all circumstances, which necessitates greater responsibility to prevent abuse of live transmission in inciting calls. Such controversy opened room for a discussion of the past, as well as future capacity within PBC, and its ability to play a balanced role in the events, ensure freedom of expression for all citizens irrespective of their affiliation, prevent defamation and slander, and maintain an ethical framework for dialogue that ensures diversity of opinions and freedom of expression.

The most prominent open channel programs that received citizens' calls were:

The Open Channel

This program was broadcast for 14 hours and 48 minutes, i.e. 10% of the total broadcast time, and 50.5% of the time allocated to open channel programs. This long time was kept wide open to receiving calls from fervent audience of almost one political affiliation.

A woman, who used the pseudonym "Bint Al-Yaser" from Gaza, called on June 18, 2007 an open channel program called *Min Ajlikom* (for your sake), originally a program for communication and interaction between Palestinian prisoners and their families, and cursed Hamas describing them as "dogs and spies" and accusing them of "storming and stealing houses:"

*"Gaza is being destroyed now. The martyrs Hamas killed were originally struggled against Jews and fought them and are former prisoners. Even Samih Al-Madhoun, peace be upon his soul, was an earthquake in his martyrdom. They must not call him a collaborator. They are collaborators. They are dogs; they destroyed the movement. What have the members of the National Security that they have killed committed? Even if they had held **Hamas** members accountable, punished or imprisoned them in 1994. True, we imprisoned them, but we did not kill them, or widow their women. They are implementing private Islamic projects from Qatar; each Hamas member has four or five women because **Fateh** women have been widowed. **Al-Aqsa** is cursed; it is full of lies; it transmits spy talk; even hospitals, they looted Tal Al-Hawa Hospital, Abu Mazen's house, **Um Jihad's** house... they stole clothes. Mash'al, the crook, who holds meetings in Beirut and elsewhere, to plot for Gaza... "whoever kills a **member of Fateh** enters Heaven;" that was a Shari'a (Islamic) decree issued by Younis Al-Astal and supported by Haniyyeh and **Hamas** leaders; God damn Haniyyeh, Mash'al, Zahhar and all those who support them...."*

The anchor did not attempt at interrupting the participant, nor intervene positively to prevent her from cursing. It seemed that she enjoyed what Bint Al-Yaser was saying, as she nodded, moved and said yes, before concluding by saying:

"In the end, we are one people, brothers, and Palestinians. We come from the same land, and share one goal, to be liberated from Israeli occupation, and not to kill each other."

The anchor of another episode of the same program on June 18, 2007 interrupted the conversation with his guest to say:

"What happened and is still happening in Gaza is the outcome of the hideous treason and the coup perpetrated by Hamas and its black militias."

The discourse of the anchor was full of defamation and incitement that have become tools for media exchange between the two major poles, 'Fateh' and 'Hamas.'

The majority of the guests of the open channel programs were either members or supporters of Fateh; calls described Hamas as brutal and collaborators with Israel. During the open channel program on June 19, 2007, Amjad Jubran, The Chairperson of the Hebron Teachers Forum even said:

".. This is a fierce offensive that feels like an offensive by Hitler, the Moguls, or the Hyxos; I fail to find the suitable words to describe it; I spare myself the degradation of the use of the language they deserve, as they are below any possible description."

In response to another question, the guest continued to criticize Hamas, its thought and culture by saying:

*"What ruined Gaza is an alien culture of destruction, vis-à-vis a culture of construction, a culture of **accusation of apostasy** vis-à-vis a culture of enlightenment, a culture of isolation vis-à-vis the culture of openness...."*

The anchor sufficed to say "yes," without commenting or making a positive intervention that urged his guest not to use harsh and critical expressions against others.

Sentiments were also directed. The open channel not only opened room for expression, despite the threat it posed against civil peace, but also opened room for participants to disclose their affiliation and allegiance to 'Fateh.' Alternately, it did not give room for a different viewpoint, such as what happened with Dr. Hadeel Qazzaz, a researcher in women and development issues, who was hosted at the open Channel on June 20, 2007.

As Dr. Qazzaz said in the interview:

"Dialogue is inevitable." the anchor responded by saying, "We cannot have dialogue with the coup perpetrators because they went beyond imagination, at least in my viewpoint. If it were possible to think from the perspective of finding a realistic solution I would say: no dialogue before the coup perpetrators reverse all they have done; but how can they undo the killing of innocent people, the burning of buildings and the looting of headquarters?"

He was issuing judgments and accusations and trying to impose his personal opinion on his guest, hence lost objectivity and neutrality the audience expected. He rejected what Dr. Qazzaz said and answered her:

*"We are conducting an objective and democratic conversation now, and your viewpoint is obviously **not that of Fateh**." He added, "What happened in Gaza are war crimes, how can we reconcile with war criminals and murderers? They must be prosecuted rather than talked to." When Dr. Qazzaz said "The option of bringing criminals to justice does not fall by prescription," the anchor ended the conversation with the guest before completing the debate.*

In another episode of the open channel which hosted Fahmi Za'arir, Fateh spokesperson in the West Bank and was broadcast on July 1, 2007, the anchor described PBC policy as extremely objective and transparent in its coverage of the internal conflict and rejected allegations of incitement. Nevertheless, following this introduction, he strongly criticized Hamas media by saying:

*"They disseminate accusations, charges of betrayal and treachery, and involve the Palestinian people in issues that are not of their interest or concern. Furthermore, we at the **PBC**, maintain equal distance from **Fateh** as from **Hamas**, and hence operate transparently and objectively, and exert an effort to maintain objectivity, to the extent that we sometimes depart from reality in order to maintain objectivity, while events escalate in Gaza Strip and are witnessed by everyone."*

He then addresses his guest by saying:

*"Where are you in **Fateh** from such media? How is this propaganda apparatus used by **Hamas** seen by Palestinians and non-Palestinians?"*

On June 24, 2007, the anchor of the open channel interrupted a telephone call from a woman in Jerusalem who called herself Zeinab, and who said:

*"First, Ismail Haniyyeh was giving an interview at Al-Jazeera, why didn't PBC broadcast it? Second, regarding what you are presenting about Gaza, as a Palestinian, what do I benefit when I see **Hamas** and **Fateh** fighting, while people abroad, in Europe and US, can see the brutality of Palestinians? We are conveying the message that we are brutal and deserve this. What do I benefit from this? I want to convey the message that we as Palestinians are peaceful, but these scenes on TV manifest otherwise. I am neither Hamas, nor Fateh, PFLP or any other faction. To the contrary, I say*

to hell with Hamas and to hell with Fateh...." then the anchor hung up saying:

"Thank you for your call and your participation. I wish you did not spell out such words. Thank you Zeinab; I wish a young woman like you did not utter such words on our channel, the Palestine Satellite Channel. We will definitely answer your question on the speech of the deposed Prime Minister Haniyyeh."

This was a rare position taken by an anchor in interrupting a participant to prevent her from continuing the use of abusive words. Nevertheless, after interrupting Zeinab's call, and the anchor's comments, PBC broadcast segments that showed persons stealing bricks off houses and some premises on fire at Al-Shati (frequent use of selective images).

In another episode broadcast on June 24, 2007, the same anchor responded harshly to a citizen named Abu Khaled, who accused PBC of incitement and sedition saying, *"your program is treacherous, it is inciting and promotes sedition...."* The anchor hung up before he could finish expressing his viewpoint and said:

"Fine dear, if our program was treacherous and inciting, do not watch it; you should not watch it. You do not have to watch PBC if it annoys you to that extent and causes sedition. You do not see the people who died, their families, the on-going funerals, and the young men who were abducted and killed. If you do not watch our programs at PBC, you may watch the channel you please..."

The anchor was extremely upset, emotional and expressed contempt towards Abu Khaled, who was not given the opportunity to continue talking and expressing his opinion. He did not mention the funerals, the killed and the abducted persons whom the anchor mentioned; he did not incite or use abusive language, and hence there was no justification for the anchor to hang up on him, even if he accused PBC of incitement and sedition. The anchor did not give him the chance to express his opinion like others who preceded him and did not give room for diverse and different opinions towards an issue of concern to all citizens. It was only normal that such opinions are expressed through PBC, since it is a public and national institution for all citizens and all opinions.

We observed a contrary behavior from the same anchor in another call to the Open Channel on June 24, 2007 from a citizen called Amani, who said:

*"I am a member of **Fateh**, I used to support Hamas, was among the first to support them and vote for Haniyyeh. Unfortunately, I discovered that it is such a waste; I mean they killed and slaughtered people and then took the oath, that mean dog...."*

Here the anchor interrupted the caller positively to say:

"No Amani, I told you that I will listen to you, but we do not want such language used through our screen, PBC. We are Palestinians, and we do not use such a language. If you wish to continue, you may do so but without the use of such a language. Give your message dear without using this language because it is improper for us as Palestinians...."

Amani: *"Everyday they loot and steal; every night they send out their followers to loot. It is a shame that I voted for them...."*

The anchor interrupted her again and commented by saying, *"Ok Amani, we have to apologize, your message has gone through, and thank you for your call and your participation;"* then Amani's call ended.

It can be said that the anchor behaved with a high degree of responsibility, since she gave the participant the opportunity to express her opinion, gave her room for expression, but intervened at the right time when she abused such freedom through slander and abusive language. This was a positive and appropriate intervention that reflected an improvement in the professional performance of the station and raised dialogue up to a decent level.

Such a model of positive intervention by anchors of the Open Channel was rare.

Alternately, unprofessional performance and behavior was repeated. Another episode of the Open Channel hosted journalist Waleed Al-Omari, the Director of Al-Jazeera Channel in Palestine on June 18, 2007. The episode revolved around the coverage of Gaza events on June 21, 2007. The anchor asked Waleed Al-Omari the following question:

*"It is said that the Satellite station in Doha grants more time to Hamas leaders and less time and opportunity to our leaders in **Fateh**."*

The anchor gave the station a political and factional identity by saying our leaders in Fateh, and seemed to be speaking on behalf of a particular faction, in a manner that was far from neutrality and objectivity. She also posed another question that prejudged Al-Jazeera:

"To what extent does Al-Jazeera adhere to its slogan 'the opinion and the other opinion'? What will you at Al-Jazeera do in order to restore the trust of the Palestinian people in the channel?"

The anchor seemed very passionate while talking to Al-Omari, as if admonishing and interrogating Al-Jazeera. This was an extremely un-objective and unprofessional behavior on behalf of the anchor.

On June 21, 2007, another anchor provided sufficient time, two and the half minutes without any interruption, to a caller from Khan Younis calling herself Um Mustafa who said the following:

"Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector against the collaborator Haniyyeh and all those who work at Al-Aqsa Satellite channel because all its broadcasts are lies and fabrications. We were living in safety and security on Tuesday. In the afternoon, when the news spread in our neighborhood, Bareed (The post office) of Khan Younis, which is well-known, that Hamas occupation forces will invade, the security forces evacuated their posts. I saw the security forces fall on the ground, even ambulances were afraid to take them to hospitals, so they treated them in the field. Why do you do this to us? Hamas is eliminating any person who reaches hospitals."

Um Mustafa was extremely affected, and the anchor, as well as his two guests, were listening with interest to what she said. He commented after she finished her call by saying:

"Thank you my sister. God bless your testimony which we take pride in, as a realistic testimony from a Palestinian woman who is just like all our mothers who do not lie."

The anchor was being biased in favor of a story of a so-called eye witness and did not behave professionally and objectively, although he was in charge of running the program and responsible for the dialogue in it. He did not show any proof or facts to support the story of the witness. His pride in her testimony was a diversion from neutrality; it diverted PBC from its role and media mission, particularly with the scenes that accompanied Um Mustafa's statement, comprising previous scenes of the "Executive Force" belonging to Hamas, either shooting in the air or patrolling, and which PBC frequently broadcast in all their open channel programs.

PBC broadcast pictures of persons whom it alleged the Hamas "Executive Force" had tortured, showing persons belonging to the security services whose legs were amputated. These pictures were frequently broadcast amid a conflict that used the media as a main arena and did not show pictures of other civilians who were victims of the shooting of both adversaries.

Annadwa Assiyasiya (The Political Seminar)

During the monitoring period, only one episode of Annadwa Assiyasiya was broadcast. It included telephone calls from citizens and hosted Brigadier Jibril Rjoub, a senior Fateh official. This episode constituted another sample of negative intervention by the anchor towards the guest and towards the public. One participant, named Mahmoud from Ramallah, posed the following question to the guest Jibril Rjoub:

"How do you explain the restoration of quiet and safety in the streets of Gaza following their evacuation from security services? Don't you think that Mohammad Dahlan has committed a coup against the late President Yaser Arafat while he was at the Moqata...?"

The anchor intervened and tried to interrupt the participant more than once and looked upset. Nevertheless, Rjoub asked his interlocutor to give the opportunity to the participant to continue by telling him: *"No, let him talk..."* The call hung up, and the anchor justified that by saying: *"...it seems the problem is from his side."* Hence, he deprived that citizen from expressing his opinion in full freedom as was the case with other participants. He also did not give him as much time as was given to those who were expressing their emotions for minutes, abused their right of freedom of expression by using abusive language, without any intervention by anchors of the open channel programs,

When Rjoub tried to answer the question, the anchor interrupted him to answer it himself, to the extent that the guest said, *"Do not answer for me."*

Shou Ra'yak (What is your opinion)

This is a program that used to address a variety of social issues. One episode was used to receive calls from citizens within the framework of the open channel programs. On June 23, 2007, a citizen from Hebron calling himself Abu Oday said:

*"As for Khaled Abu Hilal, the spokesperson of the 'repudiated' **Ham**as, I have a question for him: Why did they fire you from the security*

services?"The anchor said "Aha." Abu Oday continued to say: "I only want to convey a message to him. He was fired because he was the financier of drug trafficking in Gaza, and his father was a colleague of mine; we were raised at the Force 17...."

In another excerpt of his call Abu Oday added, "but as for the deposed **pig** Haniyyeh (The anchor listened with interest and did not intervene to prevent him from cursing.), if he has no money, I will buy him a fridge and install bricks to his house; he steals bricks and fridges; this is a government of pigs (The anchor continued to listen and did not do any positive intervention); it was founded by Zionists to fight PLO..."

During the call, the anchor looked at her guest with a big smile, before thanking the participant by saying, "Thank you, thank you Abu Oday and you are welcome."

During the same episode, the anchor took a different position towards another call from a citizen from Gaza who called herself Um Mohammad, and who said:

"Are not you asking anyone who knows the truth about Gaza to speak up? I thank you for this spirit, but we want to do that from Gaza."

The anchor answered:

"Go ahead, what did you see that you wish to convey through PBC?"

Um Mohammad: "I did not see, but merely gathered the news that you talk about. This is the television of all Palestinians; I feel that you are extremely biased to Fateh and not to all of Fateh."

(The anchor laughed at what Um Mohammad said and added:

"Fine Um Mohammad thank you for...")

Um Mohammad: "Listen to me; why do you want to hang up on me?"

The anchor: "I do not want to hang up on you, but you are saying that PBC is biased to Fateh and you want to tell us news..."

Um Mohammad: "Wait for me to prove to you that the pictures you show are a mistake...If Hamas committed mistakes, why do you show them? They hurt the feelings; don't you remember their privileges? Hamas caught many thefts since it took over; those expelled persons whom you weep over are wanted persons who destroyed the country. When we wanted to travel, we

had to bribe the Authority in order to be able to travel...the Authority's cars had preferential treatment and traveled first... "

The anchor seemed to be fixing the earpiece, the call hung up, and the anchor said: *"Fine Ms. Um Mohammad, those might have been the prevalent conditions previously, but now we are talking about the current situation and its consequences."*

Hamzat Wasel (Link)

This program constituted a large portion of the open channel programs, constituting 7 hours and thirty minutes, i.e. 5% of the total monitored time, and around 25.6% of the total open channel time.

Just like other open channel programs, 'Hamzat Wasel' included emotional calls from citizens who asserted their allegiance and loyalty to Fateh.

On June 23, 2007, Um Khaled from Nablus said:

*"I am a citizen who belongs to Fateh, and am originally a member of Fateh. Allah is the Greatest over you **Hamas**; you go to mosques and you say you want to educate on religion. What kind of religion do you have? (Um Khaled's voice becomes louder and she continues to shout); Allah is the Greatest over you, I want to express myself but I swear to God I cannot; I forgot what I wanted to say; there are many emotions inside me, and many things in my mind to tell to you Hamas; you say that Dahlan is corrupt, do you want to teach about corruption, you are corruption itself; we want to teach you. I swear to God we will teach you a lesson that you will never forget God willing, but through our education, culture, honor and this television channel; PBC is for honorable people; they are running with packs of Pampers in their hands; you are chatting about packs of Pampers, Allah is the Greatest over you, is this your religious culture? Pampers? Fine; No problem, please let me talk and resume broadcasting: a pack of Pampers is being taken from homes, what kind of privacy is this? What house did you enter, you **dogs**..."*

The anchor intervened then, i.e. after two and the half minutes of talking, thanked the participant by saying, *"Um Khaled, thank you very much for your call."*

While Um Khaled was yelling and cursing vehemently, PBC was broadcasting scenes of the Hamas 'Executive Force' roaming the streets in cars that had green flags on them, so that the audience would have live images to connect to and get a negative perception of 'Hamas' and its

'Executive Force'. These segments were repeated with every call, as if they were live and not recorded.

Alli Sawtak (Speak up)

At least one episode of this program was used as an open channel program, receiving calls about the repercussions of the Hamas takeover of Gaza. The majority of participants had a specific political allegiance, although the program has an interesting name that would encourage the audience to speak up in protest of the internal fighting in Gaza.

PBC gave the opportunity for the audience to speak live, without taking into consideration audience from other groups who have another perception of events. This gave the impression that PBC, which identifies itself as a "public national institution," was in fact being the mouthpiece of a particular faction and was playing an agitating role in the internal fighting, rather than enhancing civil peace. PBC covered the demonstrations that marched in support of President Abu Mazen and Dr. Salam Fayyad's Government and elaborated on the aggression against the headquarters and institutions in Gaza, under the control of Hamas but did not cover the assaults committed against charitable societies and institutions that belong to the Change and Reform Bloc of "Hamas."

An example was a call on June 21, 2007 from a citizen called Mohammad from Tulkarem, who said:

*"We wish to announce the good news that our heroes of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades have changed the name of Azzakat Hospital, which belongs to the **mean militias of Hamas**, to become Martyr Samih Al-Madhoun Hospital, and this news is dedicated to his family and to the heroes of Gaza..."*

The anchor seemed to listen to the participant with interest, without any attempt to interrupt the call or ask him to avoid the use of abusive language. Such calls were repeated frequently, and PBC gave room to participants, most of whom were Fateh members, to curse and use harsh language against "Hamas."

Talk Shows

PBC broadcast eight talk shows on internal fighting during the monitored period, which amounted to 35 hours and 47 minutes (24.6%) of the monitored time.

The most important programs were:

Maa Al-Hadath (With the event)

This program addressed political and economic issues, and occupied 9 hours and 47 minutes (27%) of the political talk show time. Four episodes that discussed economic and political conditions following Hamas' takeover of Gaza were documented. These episodes hosted senior Fateh leaders such as Nabil Amro and Dr. Hasan Abu Libdeh, PLO leaders such as Dr. Samir Abdullah and Yaser Abed Rabbo, and DFLP leader Qays Abdul Karim. These, however, strongly supported Fateh and its political orientation.

Despite this apparent diversity in the guests, the content of the dialogue obscured any discrepancies, as guests' opinions converged with the official perspective and did not reflect the existing discrepancy or the opinion of the other side of the internal equation. Furthermore, it was successfully utilized in service and support of the official discourse. This was made obvious through the justifications given by the guests for the prevalent political and economic conditions, and which were considered a result of the developments on the ground that led to Hamas takeover of the Authority through military resolve.

The program did not host any prominent Hamas members or affiliates, so that that they would present their perception of events, which reflected a bias in selecting guests, and even in telephone calls of citizens who had a different viewpoint from that of PBC. The participants who expressed views that were supportive of "Hamas" or critical of PBC were interrupted, which shed some doubt on the plurality of PBC. The following examples manifest this, while other examples manifest the bias of participants and their abuse of their right to freedom of expression, by using abusive language and harsh criticism against Hamas.

The anchor rarely intervened positively in a manner that maintained the right to freedom of expression for all citizens as enshrined in the Law. Alternately, the anchors reacted in a manner that revealed their acceptance or approval, either through their negative intervention that attempted at orienting the dialogue, or through orienting participants towards a specific perspective that would lead to negative expression of sentiments.

The Special Interview (Alliqa' Al-Khaas)

This political program occupied 9 hours and 51 minutes (27.5%) of the monitored talk show time and focused on the repercussions of the Hamas

takeover of Gaza. Guests belonged to one political affiliation, and the dialogue was directed towards strong criticism of Hamas, as it provided room for guests to attack Hamas.

In an interview on July 18, 2007, PLC member and Fateh leader Mohammad Dahlan responded to the following question:

"Were you surprised with this collapse of the security services and the takeover by the black militias of the security services in Gaza?"

Dahlan: *"Certainly not. I believe that what Hamas did definitely proves and by all means that Hamas is truly the danger that we used to warn the cadres of Fateh, Palestinian citizens, President Abu Mazen and the late President Yaser Arafat from. **Hamas does not have the mentality that believes in unity, partnership or any of the slogans that we raise. Its thought is based on killing, destruction and accusing the others of treachery and treason.** Hence, if given the opportunity, it will not spare an effort to commit all that has been totally prohibited in Palestinian national action. We have not gone through such an experience during the last forty years. Recently, several colleagues and I warned that Hamas mentality does not accept peers, partners or friends. Anyone who is not with **Hamas**, and therefore understands **Hamas**, is therefore against **Hamas**."*

The anchor used the term the "black militias" as an indication of Hamas, but did not address Dahlan with a question on his direct responsibility towards the Gaza events, because of his security and political post and his role as the President's Advisor on National Security. Alternately, he addressed this question to Nabil Amro, the President's Media Advisor, in an episode of the open channel broadcast on the same day:

"The coup d'etat may seem surprising although there were indications that it had been pre-meditated prior to elections. Where were you from all that as security services and as Authority?"

In another episode of the program broadcast on July 12, 2007, and hosted the PLC Secretary General and Fateh leader Ibrahim Khreisheh, and DFLP leader Qays Abdul Karim, the anchor started the program by using expressions that included incitement, defamation and prejudice in the following manner:

"The crimes of the coup perpetrators continue in Gaza, and the coup d'etat continues to reap the previous and the coming. The Palestinian cause continues to be a just cause, and the people are now looking for a solution.

*How can they restore what **Hamas** took over? **Hamas** has ravished the efficient international presence. The just cause is represented by the national project consisting of establishing an independent Palestinian state with Holy Jerusalem as its capital. They have killed once again the martyrs, who are gone so that our national project remains. They have killed hundreds of thousands of wounded persons, through treachery and bloodshed. Through its coup, Hamas transformed the prisoners into living martyrs, witnessing their life sentences in occupation prisoners and the suffering of their families. Hamas continues to storm national institutions and ministries, terrorize employees, and prepare for executing persons whose names are on a list as Islam Shahwan, the spokesperson of the **black militia** had said; a ready list of **Fateh** cadres in Gaza Strip... while Israel in the West Bank regularly assassinates and arrests members of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and **Fateh** , and also those of **Islamic Jihad** ... Hamas coup perpetrators refuse the conditions for dialogue, starting with Haniyyeh, Zahhar, Siyam, and Abu Zuhri, and last but not least Mash'al who has put Gaza Strip to fire, and who requests that Zawahri treat Hamas leniently. Hamas disrupts PLC and rejects the President's decrees, including that on electing a presidential commission for the President's Office."*

This was the introduction the anchor gave, and which included jargon full of slander, libel, defamation and incitement. The anchor summed up his personal opinion in a zealous, biased and unprofessional manner, so that one of his guests, Ibrahim Khreisheh reacted by saying:

"We need to agree that the conflict with Hamas is no longer a legal or constitutional conflict. You must not make a legal argument with those who have given themselves the right to usurp the legitimate authority, the law and the right of citizens to live, but should be compelled, through the power of legitimacy, to abide by the law."

PBC transmitted an excerpt of a speech by Ismail Haniyyeh during the program in which he said:

"We honor the legitimacy of the President."

This excerpt was accompanied by footage of the photos of the late President Yaser Arafat and President Abu Mazen thrown on the ground at the Muntada, together with other quotes of Haniyyeh's speech saying:

"There is no alternative to dialogue."

The background consisted of scenes of the 'Executive Force' shooting in the air in Gaza. PBC showed the following text on the screen towards the end of the segment:

"Quotes of the sayings of the deposed Prime Minister, 'the coup leader' "

Hence, PBC repetitively used events and scenes and adopted an editorial policy that reflected an extremely obvious media message towards Hamas and its actions. In this context, it utilized the statements of spiritual leaders, such as those of The Azhar Sheikh Mohammad Tantawi that included commending President Abu Mazen and were broadcast intermittently through several days. These statements came from two separate interviews with The Azhar Sheikh, but PBC did not indicate their sources and dates.

Different excerpts of Tantawi interview were broadcast three times on July 13, 2007 and during one hour. The first excerpt was broadcast at 6:04, the second at 6:15 and the third at 7:19. New excerpts were broadcast on July 14, 2007 at 7:33, and then on July 16, 2007 at 8:42. PBC did not point out in any of those excerpts that it was a special interview with PBC, but broadcast these segments merely to fill empty time and in a technically bad manner.

Al-Kalam Masmouh (It is allowed to speak)

This program, which addresses diverse social issues, was broadcast for 5 hours and 40 minutes (16%) of the monitored time. Some of its episodes, however, were used in the internal fighting, to discuss pertinent field and political developments. It was successful in the context of the heated media race between PBC and Hamas-led media, particularly Al-Aqsa.

An example was the episode of July 4, 2007, which hosted Dr. Ahmad Sobh of Fateh, Yaser Ammouri the legal expert, and Dr. Samih Shbeib the political analyst, to discuss the legal consequences of the presence of international troops in Gaza Strip.

Al-Mawqif Assiyasi (The political position)

Two episodes of this program were broadcast during the monitoring period, the first on July 4, 2007, discussing the release of the abducted British journalist Allan Johnston, focusing on the identity of the kidnappers rather than on the release operation. The coverage linked the kidnappers to Hamas, although it was known that they belonged to Jaish Al-Islam (Army of Islam), an organization closely linked to Al-Qaida. This seemed as an attempt to link Hamas to Al-Qaida.

The anchor asked his guest, Fateh PLC member Abdullah Abdullah the following question:

"Today journalist Johnston was released; how do you perceive this issue, particularly that it was said that he was kidnapped by Jaish Al-Islam, who are known to be supporters of Hamas?"

The anchor did not provide any information that constituted a base for linking 'Hamas' to 'Jaish Al-Islam,' and whether they are indeed supporters of Hamas. He however said: "who are known to be supporters of Hamas," and which reflected an attempt by the anchor to mislead audience.

Alternately, he ignored other reactions that welcomed the release of Johnston, and did not mention them during the episode, in harmony with the PBC policy, which focused on this side of the release process. Nevertheless, a main news item was the President receiving Johnston, while the news of Haniyyeh, Zahhar and Siyam receiving Johnston was totally ignored.

Sada Al-Qanoun (Repercussions of the law)

One episode of this program addressed the Presidential decisions and decrees made during the peak of the internal rift, most importantly dissolving the National Unity Government. This interesting program hosted legal experts and presented a legal perspective towards some aspects of the conflict.

Conclusion

The time allocated for open channel programs, programs addressing the internal conflict and main and local news bulletins amounted to around 87.5 hours, i.e. 60% of the monitored time (145 hours). The open channel and talk show programs addressing the events amounted to 65 hours (45%) of the monitored time.

Regular Programs

These were eleven programs addressing a variety of educational, religious, cultural and scientific topics. The most prominent were:

- *Al-Aalam min hawlina* (The World around us): a cultural-scientific program
- *Al-Fann Al-Islami fi Al-Quds* (Islamic art in Jerusalem): documentary

- *Min turathina al-shaabi* (From our popular heritage)
- *Al-Barnamij Al-Wathaeqi* (The documentary program)
- *Mubdi'oun* (Innovators)
- *Al-deen wal mujtama'* (Religion and the society): religious
- *Al-fiqh Al-Islami fil Quds* (Islamic jurisprudence in Jerusalem): religious
- *Ya Noun* (Y-N): educational
- *Min Atturath Al Falastini* (from the Palestinian heritage)
- *Yalla ndardesh* (Let us chat): social
- *Khabaya Al-Ard* (The hidden treasures of the Earth):scientific

Moreover, a number of short programs and films were broadcast for one time.

The total number of broadcast hours of all these programs amounted to 20 hours and 38 minutes, i.e. 14.2% of the total monitored time.

This reflected the size of attention given to the core issue, i.e. the internal conflict, at the expense of other affairs related to the daily lives of citizens, including the struggle against Israeli occupation which received a certain level of coverage in news bulletins, but received less attention in both open channel programs and talk shows. This also constituted an indication of the policy that PBC adopted during that period.

Terminology

The internal fighting that led to Hamas taking over Gaza gave room for certain terminology that PBC used in its news bulletins, breaking news, news scroll bar as well as programs. We have monitored frequently used terms by the official political discourse and media that were used by PBC and its news sources, particularly the Palestinian News Agency (WAFA).

Hamas takeover of Gaza Strip was depicted as a coup d'etat, its members as "black militias," "Hamas criminal militias," "the Hamas treacherous militia," "the Hamas outlaw militia," the Hamas terrorist coup militias," the coup perpetrators," the coup group," "the coup murderers," "the treacherous coup perpetrators," "the war criminals in Gaza," "the outlawed Executive Force militia," "the Executive Gangs," "the bloody Hamas militia," "the sneaky traitors," "war criminals and murderers," "coup perpetrators, murderers and **accusers of treason**" and "Hamas gangs."

Presenters and anchors used certain terms to depict actions which Hamas was accused of committing, such as the "crimes of the coup perpetrators" and "the executions" as an indication of Fateh victims during the internal fighting; "crimes of killing and looting," and "abduction operations" described "arrests." They also used "fascist crimes and the ugly terrorism," "war crimes" and "Hamas crimes," while "the channel of incitement for murder" was used to indicate Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel of Hamas. This jargon became the daily language of the official discourse of PBC, influenced by the official political discourse itself.

Such large number of terms with such content constituted a precedent for PBC, as it never used such harsh content to address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The incursions and killings were described in their ordinary names, even amid the peak of Israeli escalation and assassination operations. We barely heard terms such as "fascist" or "terrorist" to depict actions committed by the Israeli Army. The arrests that the Israeli Army committed were not described as "abduction," while those of the deposed government were described as such. The assassinations of Intifada activists were not described in a similar manner as 'Hamas' actions against 'Fateh' activists, as PBC merely described the method used for assassination, such as an aircraft or a land operation.

Such description was not used for the brutal and violent operations the Israeli Army carried out in Beit Hanoun and Khan Younis, which included razing land and uprooting trees. We never witnessed such a situation, in which news bulletins and programs, particularly open channel programs, are not put under responsible censorship. This reflected the fact that internal fighting was given priority over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Filmed scenes

Scenes constituted part of the media coverage of PBC targeting the deposed government in Gaza and aiming at mobilizing the public opinion against it. Scenes of previous events were used in different programs, including the open channel programs. There are many examples, such as the scenes broadcast during an interview with former Jordanian Parliament member Hamada Fara'neh on July 16, 2007, during which a segment that included images of the memorial of the Unknown Soldier destroyed following Hamas takeover of Gaza, with the following written on the screen:

"Pardon us Palestinian unknown martyr: this unenlightened thought that does not cherish your value."

This text conveyed a specific message, especially that it accompanied scenes of a nearby building on which Hamas flags were raised, and members of the 'Executive Force' and 'Hamas' close to the memorial. Such texts were repeatedly used, giving the impression that 'Hamas' demolished the memorial, although the pictures did not show that, and all news and media reports said that unidentified persons demolished the memorial.

PBC also broadcast selections of Haniyyeh's statements:

"We will, God willing, be adherent to our promise to God," with footage of the murder of Fateh and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades leader Samih Al-Madhoun. It was followed by another statement by Haniyyeh:

"There have been some individual mistakes in the past," with images of blood on the floor and Hamas 'Executive Force' stepping on it, while other persons looting houses.

These hideous images were repeatedly aired and constituted messages that contributed to creating a tense and inciting atmosphere.

Songs

A number of songs that PBC transmitted had a similar purpose, most prominently a song entitled "Creators of Sedition" with the following lyrics:

*Creators of sedition
Leave this country*

*Leave us; we want to live
We had enough calamities*

*Why are we afraid of unity
Why are we terrified of unity*

*You will be exposed and seen
The whole world is sick of you*

*Who sent you to my country
Who incited you against the people*

*You are trading with the blood of people
What else will you ultimately do.*

PBC broadcast a clip with this song of "Executive Force" members, using the whole video clip for incitement.

PBC also used songs in the Palestinian-Israeli context, as it continued to transmit old songs such as "*Bab Al-Aqsa Min Hadid*" (Al-Aqsa Gate is made of Iron), another song that glorifies Mohammad Al-Durra, in addition to a song by the Lebanese artist Marcel Khalifeh, a song named *Ya Hamam Al-Quds* (Doves of Jerusalem) and *Ween Aziffak ya Khityaar* (How shall I bring your good news Old Man) which glorifies the late President Yaser Arafat. The most commonly used song was *Bab Al-Aqsa Min Hadid*. These songs were part of the tools that PBC used in its targeted media campaign against the practices of the deposed government in Gaza.

Findings

Monitoring PBC during the period that followed Hamas military takeover of Gaza Strip was not an easy task. It was difficult to follow up, record and analyze such voluminous material quantitatively and qualitatively. Nevertheless, the findings were as follows:

First: PBC media discourse was emotional, fervent, biased and lacked objectivity and neutrality. It was closer to partisan media that aimed at mobilization and advocacy of partisan policies. It was not open to all opinions and failed to live up to its own definition of itself as a national official media channel.

Regardless of whether 'Fateh' was in government or opposition, PBC bias in favor of Fateh was obvious. It seemed even more biased after Hamas formed its government, then under the National Unity Government, and later upon its military control of Gaza when the government was deposed.

Second: PBC conveyed a clear media message that delegitimized Hamas and its government. This message, reflected in different programs and performance of their anchors, was biased and merely consisted of reactions and agitated positions.

Third: PBC used partisan and political terminology that was not objective, but rather depictions and descriptions that were unprecedented even in its discourse on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Fourth: PBC relied heavily on Wafa and other official sources of information and reports on developments on the ground. It rarely used

reports of international news agencies or of its own correspondents in the West Bank.

Fifth: PBC utilized all its talk shows and different other programs in its media campaign against Hamas and the deposed government in Gaza, which led to a lack of political diversity and the prevalence of one faction.

Sixth: Some programs, such as the open channel programs, played an agitating role, which included incitement, libel and defamation, transmitted testimonies of eye-witnesses with unconfirmed information, and censored, and even interrupted opinions that disagreed with the stations' policies.

Seventh: Program anchors were weak and not neutral, intervened and imposed their own views on their guests, and attempted at directing the dialogue in a direction that served one particular political position.

Eighth: PBC broadcast a group of variety programs, some addressed to children, as well as social and economic awareness programs. Despite their diversity, the time allocated for these programs was short. Nevertheless, this constituted a significant development.

Ninth: Songs were used in the conflict that followed Hamas takeover of Gaza. For the first time songs were used in internal conflict, while they were previously used in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Songs were not used to promote civil peace, but for particular political purposes.

Tenth: Filmed scenes and segments were also heavily used in the process of mobilization and rallying public opinion against Hamas; their use was not objective, since they were repetitively broadcast with different news in a manner that contributed to agitation and division.

Eleventh: Interest in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict receded, and alternately there was a focus on internal conflict and on open confrontation with the deposed government.

Recommendations

First: Formulate a clear policy that is consistent with PBC slogan and definition of its national identity identified upon its establishment: a public national media channel that represents the entire national Palestinian masses.

Second: Re-consider its current editorial policy and impose professional and objective checks and balances, in order to convey a message that contributes

to dialogue and civil peace, respects the right of individuals and groups in access to information as well as their rights to total freedom of expression.

Third: Provide professional training to PBC staff, particularly anchors; increase programs that address wide and diverse sectors of the society; stop using these programs for factional political interests, but rather in service of issues of general public interest.

Fourth: Strengthen sources of information and use reliable sources in the news coverage; use stories that are based on facts; reconsider or impose controls on the open channel programs in order to prevent incitement, libel and abuse of the right to freedom of expression.

Fifth: Re-consider the currently used media terminology, since words can either contribute to enhancing and bolstering the internal social fabric, or to its destruction. The current jargon does not serve a professional, objective and neutral media.

Sixth: Avoid technical and professional errors during transmission. Adhere to the timetable of news bulletins and correct and make professional use of live transmission time. During the monitoring period, many technical mistakes were committed. While this may not be relevant to the monitoring report, there is a need to identify them: bad quality transmission of pictures and hearing sounds of mobile phones, slamming doors inside the studio in addition to other sounds.

Al-Aqsa Satellite Television

The Hamas movement launched the experimental broadcasts of Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel on January 7, 2006, giving it the same name as the radio station of the movement in Gaza. This satellite channel constitutes part of the activities of the Ribat Media and Artistic Production Company, with its Chairman of the Board Fathi Hammad, one of the senior leaders of Hamas and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

The Ribat media company started several years ago with the publication of the weekly *Al-Risala* (The Message), and as of December 2003 it launched Sawt al-Aqsa (The Voice of Al-Aqsa) radio station.

According to the Palestinian News Agency Wafa, *Al-Aqsa* started its experimental broadcasts from the third floor of Bashir Mosque in Tal-al-Zaatar street in Jabalya Camp, north of the Gaza Strip. The first broadcast of

Al-Aqsa included verses from the Holy Koran for half an hour. Later, it was launched at the peak of the Legislative election campaigns.

Khalid Mash'al, head of the Polit bureau of the Hamas movement, described *Al-Aqsa* in a radio interview with *Radio al-Aqsa* that went on the air on January 10, 2006, as *"the blessed infant that came from the womb of Radio al-Aqsa,"* and, as he put it, *"aims to give an untarnished media, that supports the resistance and shares with it the road of Jihad."*

Al-Aqsa spearheaded the media campaign of Hamas against the security services that were conquered by Hamas on June 14.

Al-Aqsa Policy

Al-Aqsa adopted an editorial policy closer to war-time media, with party anthems, patriotic songs and military communiqués of the sort usually heard on satellite channels of countries engaged in wars with other countries. It used verses from the Koran politically with references to those it described as hypocrites, apostates and opportunists, in addition to patriotic and Islamic songs and anthems, both in the internal struggle and to appeal to the masses to confront the occupation.

In an interview with the London-based Arabic language daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, published on July 10, 2007, Samir Abu Muhsin, the Director General of Programming and News on *Al-Aqsa* said: *"The board of directors of the channel decides its editorial policy, and usually it issues a series of instructions that define the parameters of the work."*

In the same report published by *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Samir Abu Muhsin denied that the channel is a party organ: *"It is not at all a party organ. It meets at times with the Fateh movement and at others with the Hamas movement and only reports what is taking place on the ground."* He added: *"We did not declare anyone to be an infidel and we did not advocate the killing of anyone. Our criticisms of any person are not a call to kill that person, and we are not spokespersons for any political faction."*

In an interview with *Agence France Press* (AFP) published on January 13, 2006, Ra'ed Abu Dayyir, the Director General of *Al-Aqsa Radio and Television* said: *"Al-Aqsa television is an Islamic television channel that aims to serve the Islamic movement."* He added: *"We have a message to give and through television we can reach out to people in a better way."*

In the same report, AFP quotes Ibrahim Dahir, Director of News at the *Al-Aqsa Radio and Television*: *"Official media is in one direction, and the people are in another direction; that is why we found it necessary to start a*

television broadcast after we received many calls to that effect." He added: "When we are being bombed, it is not permissible to watch TV series or movies on television, and everything is re-written to become in harmony with the thought of the Islamic movement," adding: "And we do not broadcast news that contravenes our traditions and our Shari'a (Islamic Law), and we have our own terminology...."

The same is also confirmed by **Ibrahim** Abu Dayyir in an interview published on March 25, 2006 on *Laha On-Line*, a site affiliated with the Islamic Waqf (Endowment) of Saudi Arabia: *"The channel was not created at random, nor was it created for party purposes or goals, but to break the monopoly of the one-party media that is under the control of the official media of the Palestinian Authority."* He added: *"Al-Aqsa television aims to open wide the opportunity before many voices, so that they may express their views and so that the Palestinian people may hear."*

According to Abu Dayyir, *Al-Aqsa* seeks to meet the requirements of a new reality, a media rich with different freedoms, and to secure the right of the public to knowledge. In addition it realizes the principle of the media as supervisor over the Palestinian political system. He added: *"It is no secret that one of the aims of the channel is to introduce the real face of the Islamic resistance movement, especially after its distortion and stigmatization in Zionist and Western media as a terrorist movement. This requires a media campaign to counter Western and Zionist falsifications and we should be up to that challenge."*

The main messages that *Al-Aqsa* tries to spread and entrench within Palestinian society are strengthening the call to moderate Islamic thought, noting that *"the channel will work to separate the fact that the Hamas movement is part of the Islamic movement from the reality that Hamas is a resistance movement that cannot turn a blind eye to Zionist actions carried out by the occupation against the Palestinian people without retaliating or without consequences,"* according to Abu Dayyir, who also added: *"The channel shall also spread awareness in Palestinian society about the role of the movement and its institutions in Palestinian civil society,"* pointing out that military action will not prevail over the humanitarian side that the channel will cover in detail. He added: *"Coverage of Palestinian news and events will not only focus on the activities carried out by the Hamas movement, in which case it would just mirror what is happening and become a party media organ. What we aspire is to serve the Palestinian homeland, with its people and factions of different hues and persuasions, in a balanced way."*

Though these statements made by Abu Dayyir, Director General of Al-Aqsa Radio and Television before it became a satellite channel are important, the messages he promised would be broadcast on *Al-Aqsa* in the service of the Palestinian collective, away from party propaganda and factionalism, did not materialize. Such was not the message at the peak of internal strife, and after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, as the channel spearheaded the campaign led by Hamas against the security services and against 'Fateh' and its leaders and symbols, as will be demonstrated by the media monitoring we carried out. The scenes aired by *Al-Aqsa* were disturbing to viewers because they violated human, ethical and professional values, such as images of armed men from the military wing of the Hamas movement and its 'Executive Force' taking away members of the security services in semi-naked condition, and the scene of the body of Samih Al-Madhoun, one of the leaders of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the military wing of Fateh, dragged in the streets after he was killed on the eve of Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip.

The Sample

This report monitors *Al-Aqsa* broadcasts over five daily hours of broadcast during the period between June 18 to July 18, 2007, following the military takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas.

The monitoring aims to demonstrate the manner in which *Al-Aqsa* covered developments during that period and the content of its media message through a number of programs that were broadcast, whether in the news coverage of events or the political talk shows, and the large numbers of patriotic and religious songs, TV spots, and the content of the programs and terminology used.

Breaking News

Breaking News occupied an important portion of the daily broadcast time of *Al-Aqsa* over the monitored period, as they amounted to thirty-two Breaking News reports, all of them dealing with the subject of the internal conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Breaking News reports that dealt with the internal conflict, and in particular with the measures taken by the Palestinian government headed by Dr. Salam Fayyad and its different security services, occupied the greater part of this group of reports. Up to 27 Breaking News reports covered detentions, or what was described by the channel as "abductions," such as: "*Invasion of the town of Tammoun in Tubas, and the abduction of town council member, town council annulled and replaced by a council from Fateh.*" (June

18,2007). Other news items related to the pursuit of Hamas activists, such as: *"Armed elements from the treacherous stream kidnap Dr. Hasan al-Safarini from Wad al-Tuffah in the city of Nablus."*

Breaking News on *Al-Aqsa* gave extensive coverage to news of documents and statements uncovered that condemn the security services of the PNA, including for example:

"Discovery of documents that confirm the involvement of the Intelligence in photographing Pakistani nuclear sites for the Zionists." (June 20, 2007).

"Discovery of detailed security information related to the household of President Abbas and the behavior of one of his sons." (June 20, 2007).

"Discovery of a document establishing the budget of the Palestinian Intelligence Services for the current year to be 30 million US dollars." (June 20,2007)

It was clear that the broadcast of such a quantity of Breaking News items came within a campaign of mobilization, following the military takeover of Gaza Strip by Hamas. In some parts it appeared as an attempt to justify what took place just before the takeover of PNA offices.

In addition, breaking news on *Al-Aqsa* was put in the service of the political battle led by Hamas against President Abu Mazen and the Palestinian Government headed by Dr. Salam Fayyad, most prominently as can be seen in the reactions of Hamas and its military wing to the speech of President Abu Mazen at the meeting of the Palestinian Central Council.

Al-Aqsa reported a statement it claimed to be issued by Al-Qassam Brigades, which said *" Al-Qassam described the speech made by Abbas to be racist, and his description of the mosques as arms depots to be a call to target these mosques."* (June 20, 2007)

"The masses of Gaza went out into the streets after the Isha' prayer in protest against the speech made by Abbas, announcing the freezing of the PLC."

In the context of the campaign against the security services of the Palestinian government, *Al-Aqsa* continued to break news with reports accusing these services of using torture against the detainees from Hamas, whom they described as "hostages," such as:

"Media sources: The hostages in Junaid prison in Nablus are being tortured and deprived of sleep and food." (June 20, 2007)

"Security Forces break into the Nour Building in Jenin under the pretext that it houses Hamas offices." (June 27, 2007)

The channel also focused on actions of the security services against Koran teaching centers and mosques, and break-ins into these places.

"The security services break into the Nimra neighborhood and surround al-Qassam Mosque and detain a number of citizens in Hebron." (July 01, 2007)

"Preventive Security break into al-Furqan Society for Fostering Koran Houses, confiscate contents and abduct its director." (July 11, 2007)

In fact, devoting a total of 19 Breaking News items to the actions of the Palestinian security services and the detentions in the West Bank, reflects the size of interest given by *Al-Aqsa* to these measures and its attempt to use them for political purposes, and not as violations of human rights, as mentioned in the reports of local human rights organizations that monitored these events, whereas the channel did not make any reference in its coverage to the arrests and detentions of Fateh members in the Gaza Strip.

"The Ministry of Labor in the illegitimate emergency government fires 360 employees on the contract system in the West Bank."

Yet the channel did mention the ousted government in its Breaking News reports, and it referred to the decisions made by it, and presented it as the legitimate authority that was carrying out its responsibilities and taking decisions such as:

"The Cabinet decides that Thursdays and Fridays are official holidays, applicable until the middle of the month." (July 02, 2007)

As for Breaking News on developments in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, they were given low prominence during the monitored period, and only mentioned invasions, raids and the falling of martyrs, or arrests or extensions of detention terms of Hamas leaders and cadres such as:

"A Zionist raid against al-Maghazi Camp in Central Gaza, and reports of martyrs falling." (July 01, 2007)

This was followed by another news report after about 20 minutes, in the following words:

"Martyrs in the Zionist bombardment of a blacksmith workshop in Maghazi camp in Central Gaza."

"The occupation forces release the Minister of Education in the Unity Government, Dr. Nassir El-Din Al-Sha'ir."

Here again we note the interest of the channel in highlighting this news, as Dr. Al-Sha'ir is one of the Hamas ministers in the National Unity Government.

News Bulletins

Al-Aqsa broadcast two news bulletins during the daily hours of the channel for the monitored period.

The first was a short bulletin that was broadcast at around 6:30 and covered a number of important news items. This was followed by the main news bulletin at 10:30 and included follow-ups on the most important news and special reports on specific events.

A big portion of these reports were related to Breaking News items followed up by the channel through its correspondents and media sources, as well as official and party sources.

Both bulletins focused on the developments of the internal conflict, in addition to developments of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The bulletins also focused heavily on criticizing and vilifying the role of Palestinian security services accusing them of treason, and such criticism was also addressed to the Government and the Prime Minister, as well as to President Abbas, who were all described with harsh language, vilified and depicted as traitors.

In its coverage of the activities of the security services, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast the following in its news bulletin on June 19, 2007:

"Security services under the Presidential Guard have intensified abductions and torture in the wake of the Central Council meeting of their leaders in Ramallah. In a grave move of escalation in the kidnapping operations, the security abducted PLC member Ahmad Haj Ali, and also

Ahmad al-Dawleh, Director at the Ministry of the Interior in the occupied city of Nablus." (July 02, 2007)

We note that the channel describes the detentions carried out by the security services in the West Bank as "abduction operations," and usually "abduction" is an illegal and illegitimate act, and whoever perpetrates it lacks legitimacy, and thus the first news item started as follows:

"The armed members of the Fateh movement and the security services have abducted Hamas members and attacked public institutions in the West Bank."

This also is a reference to events as a conflict between two factions, not a conflict to maintain a legitimate authority.

Perhaps the most prominent Breaking News item covered by *Al-Aqsa* about the security services, with focus on the event and coverage of reactions, was the detention of the Director of *Al-Aqsa* channel in the West Bank.

This event led the 10:23 news bulletin on July 02,2007, and was first broadcast to Breaking News as follows:

"Security services in the West Bank have abducted the Director of Al-Aqsa channel in the occupied West Bank Mohammad Shteivi. This development comes in the wake of a vicious campaign against the channel to stop it from exposing the crimes of the security services. It is to be noted that three of the Channel's staff were also kidnapped at the presidential compound in the city of Ramallah."

In its coverage of this news item, the channel hosted Dr. Hasan Abu Hashish, Under-secretary of the Ministry of Information in the deposed government, and he commented on the events as follows: *"If you look at the events in the West Bank you can see that what is unfolding is a "massacre against humanity" in the West Bank. These are actions of systematic piracy, after the Palestinian people succeeded in ridding themselves of it in the Gaza Strip, and now they are doing it in the West Bank, and today the papers published in the Gaza Strip are not allowed distribution in the West Bank by the same institutions that claim legitimacy."*

On the same follow-up, the channel also hosted Dr. Ibrahim Hammami, an Islamist writer residing in London, who was asked the following question by the anchor: *"How do you interpret the death sentence on Dr. Mohammad*

Shteivi after he was abducted by the security services under the command of the wretched Abbas?"

In fact the question of the host and his use of the word "wretched" to describe President Abbas, was unprofessional and lacked objectivity and resorted to defamation and name-calling and that is unprecedented in the Palestinian media discourse, and this in turn provided the incentive for the interviewee, namely Dr. Hammami, who went ahead to vilify President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority and said: *"The death sentence was not proclaimed by an official or governmental institution; it was proclaimed by a **tyrannical and murderous gang**, and it is a false claim to power by this authority that is lead by Abbas and the rest of the gang."*

As Hammami spoke, scenes of Al- Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and other armed groups from Fateh were aired, as they broke into Nablus Municipal Hall, and into an Islamic Society and burned up books while Dr. Hammami continued:

*"These people have reached a stage where we can have no dealings with them whatsoever, and even when we say let us resume dialogue, I say: With whom will the Palestinian people have dialogue? **With a group that has lost all morals and religious and international norms**? I believe the decisive step should come from the people; they should rebel against these people."* As we see, we are before a discourse that involves much defamation and insults, and even accusations of treachery and de-legitimization, and abusive language, which led to increased tensions and divisions, and deepened the culture of strife, rebellion and resort to force.

The channel not only delegitimized the security services of the Palestinian National Authority, but delegitimized President Abbas in its media discourse when it made reference to decrees or decisions or positions taken by the President, raising doubts as to their legitimacy and to the authority of the President himself.

Al-Aqsa's news bulletin on July 14, 2007 started out with a report that opened with the following sentence:

"The Palestinian people continue to be the victims of the illegal decrees of Abbas...inhumane and devoid of conscience, these are the distinguishing features of the Fayyad government."

During its news bulletin on July 01, 2007, the channel broadcast a statement by Dr. Salah Al-Bardawil in which he belittles the authority and legitimacy of President Abbas by saying:

"Dr. Salah Al-Bardawil, the spokesperson of the Parliamentary Bloc of Hamas, affirmed that PA President Mahmoud Abbas does not enjoy one-tenth of the broad popularity enjoyed by Hamas in the Palestinian street and in the Arab and Islamic worlds."

The news bulletin on June 27, 2007 had the following news item, which included accusations of treachery and working for the CIA directed at the President:

"Fateh Al-Yaser: Mahmoud Abbas was recruited by the CIA in one of the Gulf countries in the seventies."

While *Al-Aqsa* continued to broadcast statements that insulted the person of President Abu Mazen, accusing him of complicity in the perpetration of "hideous crimes," to quote a statement by Al-Qassam Brigades broadcast on the channel 10:30 news bulletin on July 12, 2007:

"Al-Qassam Brigades expressed indignation over the Presidential decree that promotes one of the leaders of the treachery-tainted stream, the fallen Samih Al-Madhoun."

The statement went on to say: ***"This decree and other decrees all confirm the complicity of Abbas in the hideous crimes committed by Al-Madhoun and others from the gangs of Al-Madhoun who fled from Gaza."***

The coverage of *Al-Aqsa* of the speech made by President Abbas before the Central Council in which he strongly criticized Hamas started with an introduction full of provocation and instigation against the person of the President, and represented one of the most highly-strung campaigns in the media discourse of the channel.

In the news bulletin on July 18, 2007, the following item was announced:

"The President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas waged a stinging campaign against the Islamic resistance movement Hamas, as Abbas said in his speech before the Central Council of the PLO that he will call on the Council to approve the holding of early legislative and presidential elections without awaiting the approval of Hamas to do so."

To comment, the channel hosted Dr. Ibrahim Hammami –well-known for his political leanings and closeness to Hamas, who said:

*"I am not surprised by the decision of Abbas to be the sole ruler, to be above the law, without recourse to a legitimate reference, as if he were the only guardian of legitimacy. **What Mahmoud Abbas did today is an act not even worthy of a local gangster.**"*

He added: "As a President of the Authority, Mahmoud Abbas has gone mad, as he grants titles to each and every worthless person."

When the anchor asked him: "*Can Mahmoud Abbas ignore ' Hamas' and go ahead to early elections, or is this a form of pressure he is applying against the government?*" Hammami replied:

*"He cannot hold elections, not even in the black area where the Ramallah gangs are gathered under the **protection of the occupation.**"*

In this instance, the channel allowed the guest to go far in cursing and vilifying President Abbas, and the anchor appeared biased in the questions he addressed to his guest and did not allow an opposite viewpoint to be represented or heard.

News bulletins on *Al-Aqsa* focused on delegitimizing the Palestinian government and the Prime Minister, using abusive language against them with many biased descriptions to the point of defamation and accusation of treason.

In its brief news bulletin on June 20, 2007, the channel quoted a statement by one of the ministers of the deposed Hamas government, headed by Haniyyeh, and the report said: "*The Minister of Transport and Communications expressed indignation at the decision of **the illegitimate Fayyad government** to cancel the passports issued from Gaza*". He said: "*It is not permissible for any **illegitimate** minister to cancel an official passport.*"

Meanwhile in its news bulletin at 6:33 on July 01, 2007, the channel quoted the official spokesperson of the Popular Resistance Committees "Abu Mujahid:" "*Salam Fayyad, the head of the **illegitimate emergency government**, is a wanted man for the resistance, after his open admission of collaboration with the occupation.*"

Al-Aqsa also used a decision by the Prime Minister to freeze the salaries of some public employees to attack his legitimacy and to instigate against his government. In its brief news bulletin on July 04, 2007, the channel had this as its lead news item. It reported the matter as follows:

"Thousands of Palestinian employees were deprived of their salaries today as a result of the unjust and arbitrary decisions taken by Abbas and the illegitimate Fayyad government to deprive employees from their source of livelihood."

Such reports were repeated in the detailed news bulletin on July 04, 2007, and provocation and instigation continued as in the earlier report against President Abbas, as the report linked the decision of the government to the dictates of Keith Dayton, the US Security Coordinator, to the President. The report said:

"Thousands of Palestinian employees who were deprived of their salaries expressed their indignation at the unjust and arbitrary decisions approved by Abbas and Dayton to deprive the Palestinian people of their source of livelihood."

The drafting of the news item made touching references to the under-privileged and to injustice and employees targeted in their "very source of livelihood." The channel also reported statements made by the Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad threatening those described by the channel as "Mujahidin," giving him the appearance of a collaborator with the Israeli occupation. This was how it was reported in the brief news bulletin at 6:30 on July 06, 2007:

"The ill-famed Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister in the Dayton government threatened to go after the Mujahidin in the West Bank, saying the success of the campaign is conditional on Israeli abstention from going after them itself."

This news item was the lead in the brief news bulletin and was followed by a second news item, to the same effect:

" Hamas affirms in a statement that the Fayyad government is undemocratic and illegitimate, and is an erroneous reaction, and demands that Abbas order his security services to halt their pursuit of Hamas cadres."

To describe Fayyad as *al-mad'u* (the so-called), and to use the term "the Dayton government" are also references to accusations of treason, collaboration and defamation. It was the norm in the past that Palestinian media only used "the so-called" in reference to those who collaborate with the Israeli occupation, to point a finger at such persons and to degrade them.

In contrast to the language used by *Al-Aqsa* in reference to President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad and the government he heads, the channel dealt in a very different way with Ismail Haniyyeh, the deposed Prime Minister and his government. The channel affirmed the legitimacy and legality of the latter and the legitimacy of its Prime Minister, even after he was relieved of his post, and the channel also had words of praise for the Hamas 'Executive Force, 'and its achievements in the area of security.

As an example, in its brief news bulletin on June 27, 2007, the channel reported that Haniyyeh received a delegation from the Red Cross as follows:

"The legitimate Prime Minister Ismail Haniyyeh received today, at the Prime Minister's office in Gaza City, a delegation from the Red Cross, and the government spokesperson, Ghazi Hamad, said the delegation thanked the Prime Minister and the Executive Force for the efforts they have made for the Red Cross, and for providing safety and security."

In another news item on July 14, 2007, the channel reported the following:

"The legitimate Haniyyeh government provides \$100 in assistance to every citizen who was held at the Rafah crossing point, and to 23,000 Palestinian workers."

The discourse used by *Al-Aqsa* clearly aims to support the legitimacy of the ousted Haniyyeh government and to support the manner in which this government carried out its tasks and responsibilities towards its citizens by offering financial help to sectors of its citizens.

This can also be seen in the following news item, broadcast in its brief news bulletin on June 23, 2007:

"Dr. Khalil al-Hayyeh disclosed documents proving that foreign parties financed the 'coup stream' in order to defeat the resistance, as they also point to the involvement of the security services in scandalous crimes, and sexual entrapment of a number of officials and directors-general for extortion and blackmail purposes."

Al-Aqsa also broadcast on July 2, 2008 the following news item and attributed it to an unnamed website:

"An electronic website today disclosed part of the text of a letter it described as grave, exposing certain facts about the assassination of the late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and establishing the involvement

of Mohammad Dahlan in the assassination through a letter he sent to Shaul Mofaz."

In its brief news bulletin on June 19, 2007, *Al-Aqsa* attributed the following news to the Israeli daily *Haaretz*:

"The Hebrew paper Haaretz disclosed that leading figures from the Fateh leadership in the Gaza Strip had demanded the resignation of the so-called Mohammad Dahlan, so that the Fateh movement may regain its soul. Meanwhile, Palestinian security sources reported that the so-called Rashid Abu Shbak is preparing to settle in Cairo, fearful that he may be held responsible for the Gaza events."

Describing Dahlan and Abu Shbak as "**so-called**" is a clear indication of what the channel referred to as the "treacherous group" or the "coup stream," and such news items were part of the media and psychological campaign by *Al-Aqsa* in the period prior to the collapse of the security services in Gaza, during the internal clashes and after Hamas took control of the Strip.

As it did in affirming the legitimacy of Haniyyeh and his deposed government, the channel also used the same approach in glorifying Hamas and its security organs, whether Al-Qassam Brigades or the "Executive Force," devoting a large portion of its coverage to certain events and developments that were presented by the channel as being major achievements, as was the case with the release of the kidnapped British journalist Allan Johnston, trying to highlight the difference in security conditions between the period when the security services under President Abu Mazen were in control in the Gaza Strip, and the period when Hamas gained control of the Strip.

In a news item that took the lead in the channel's brief daily news bulletin on July 04, 2007, the following was reported:

"Welcoming reactions continued to be voiced in response to the release of the journalist Johnston, in the wake of intensive efforts made by Hamas, Al-Qassam, and the Executive Force to secure his release. The New York Times said that the release of Johnston will help Hamas impose security in Gaza."

The channel allocated a large part of its main news bulletin for the same day to the coverage of this event, led by the following item:

"Johnston says from Jerusalem: Had it not been for Hamas, he would not have been released."

Further in the report: ***"Had Hamas not come to power and taken over control of matters in Gaza, you would not have seen me here."*** He added: ***"Ever since Hamas came to power, foreigners felt relieved and released of the fear of being kidnapped."***

Further on in the same bulletin: ***"...Johnston addressed the foreign community and said: If you are a doctor or a journalist, do not fear for your safety from entering Gaza, because Hamas has taken control."***

The item concluded as follows: ***"...Hamas, Al-Qassam and the Executive Force were able to free Johnston in the wake of arduous negotiations with Jaysh al-Islam (The Army of Islam)."***

During the bulletin broadcast, the following Breaking News item was broadcast:

"Johnston calls Mash'al to thank him for the efforts Hamas made for his release."

Al-Aqsa used this incident extensively to the advantage of Hamas and its armed organs and its Executive Force, even in the news bulletin which had five news items full of praise for Hamas and describing Hamas as: ***"Hamas is the best, and without it he would not have been released,"*** and Hamas ***"is in control of matters."***

Meanwhile *Al-Aqsa* confronted PBC, when the latter referred to the 'Executive Force' as "militias of darkness," and reported on the next day (July 15, 2007) the following news:

"PBC is waging an escalating media campaign against the Executive Force of the Ministry of Interior in the Strip, accusing the Force of being a militia of darkness, even though the ordinary citizen in the Strip confirms that the Executive Force restrained the situation in the Strip."

As for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the incursions by the army into Palestinian territories and the resulting casualties, these occupied a lesser coverage, but were in the lead in both the brief and detailed news bulletins, with prominence given to the identity of the victims when they were from Al-Qassam Brigades, and to their role in confronting the incursions or in the clashes with the Israeli forces.

The news scroll bar on June 23, 2007 carried the following news:

"Al-Qassam Brigades target a gathering of the Zionist enemy's armored vehicles close to Kisufim with fifteen mortar shells."

Al-Aqsa dedicated ample time to cruel and tough scenes of martyred children and casualties shot by bullets of the Israeli army during its incursion into Shaja'iyyeh camp, including the picture of a child sprawled on the ground, with his guts spilling out, and the channel repeatedly showed this photo, while it highlighted the reaction of Hamas against what it termed the "horrific massacre," and linked between this scene and the call by President Abbas to disband all militias.

In a news item on its main news bulletin on June 27, 2007, the channel reported:

"...The Hamas movement condemned the massacre carried out by the Zionist enemy in Gaza City, and in a statement the movement said the operation coincided with the call by Abbas to disband all factions of the resistance, and expressed its indignation at his description of them as armed militias."

In its brief news bulletin on July 05, 2007, the channel broadcast the following news item:

"Seven mujahidin martyred, six of whom from Al-Qassam Brigades, as they confronted Zionist forces in the Breij Camp, in eastern Gaza."

In a follow-up, and as the number of martyrs went up to eleven, the following news was broadcast:

"Eleven Palestinian mujahidin were martyred, most of whom from Al-Qassam Brigades, and over thirty citizens were injured."

It is expected that the channel give prominence to Hamas and Al-Qassam activists and to highlight their organizational and political identity, at a time when other activists were also confronting the Israeli incursions, and this is clearly the editorial policy of *Al-Aqsa*, as the party organ of Hamas that promotes its way of thinking and its policies. The channel even went so far as to replace the red color of its news scroll bar with the color green, which is the color of the Hamas banner, as an indication of its political identity.

News Programs and Talk Shows:

Al-Aqsa devoted a large part of its broadcast time during the monitored period to news programs and talk shows on the developments and ramifications related to the internal conflict after the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas on June 14, 2007, in addition to programs and documentaries, some of which had some connection to the nascent political situation, while others were of a religious nature, including glorification of martyrdom and martyrs, and the subject of Judaization of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Though these programs and shows were numerous and with different names, they were all very selective regarding the guests hosted, who were in most cases members of Hamas or loyalists to its political and religious line. This is why the channel allocated such extensive broadcast time to its guests, and these programs lacked diversity, with very rare exceptions.

This is why the media discourse of these programs had its own terms, descriptions and jargon, that went beyond the expression of opinion towards defamation and incitement and insults, and even further to accusations of treason and apostasy, as can be seen from the programs of this channel, and the statements and declarations of its speakers, whether official politicians, ordinary citizens or the anchors of the programs themselves.

Aqlaam Assuhof (The Press)

This is a daily 6:00 p.m. program that includes partial reading of selected articles written by select writers, who are either close to Hamas or sympathetic with its political and religious discourse. Articles were taken from "Falasteen," which is close to "Hamas," and from the following Arabic newspapers: Addustor of Jordan, Arraya of Qatar, Al-Khaleej and Al-Bayan of UAE, Al-Arab Al-Yom of Jordan, and exceptionally from Ma'ariv of Israel. The most prominent writers that were quoted were Nahed Arrayess, former Palestinian Minister of Justice; Ibrahim Hammami, a London-based political writer close to Hamas; Yaser Za'atrah, a Jordanian writer close to Hamas; Fahmi Hweidi, an Islamist Egyptian writer; Mustafa Sawwaf, Chief Editor of Gaza-based Falasteen; Tal'at Rumeih, Egyptian analyst and writer; Taher Odwan, Jordanian politician and media person; Nahed Hattar; Jordanian writer; Yousef Rezqa, former Minister of Information in Hamas government and Hamas leader; Abdul Bari Atwan, Chief Editor of Al-Quds Al-Arabi; and Dr. Azmi Beshara, a politician and intellectual.

These selected articles mostly comprised criticism, abusive language and skepticism towards the powers of the President, his government and their legitimacy, in addition to incitement and defamation, charges of treason against security services and glorification of Hamas actions and of Al-Qassam Brigades.

On June 18, 2007, the presenter read the following excerpt from Falasteen newspaper about President's Mahmoud Abbas decision to ban Al-Qassam Brigades:

*"The President's decision to deem Al-Qassam Brigades illegitimate has no value on the ground, since legitimacy is not a mere decision taken by a person, regardless of his post: " **The legitimacy of any Palestinian framework in our society that is under Israeli occupation stems from its sacrifices, particularly that the issue relates to an armed group that has inflicted bitter suffering and humiliation on occupation, and is leading resistance with extreme competence.**"*

These articles express the views of their writers. *Al-Aqsa* however, selected particular writers and used these opinions in favor of Hamas, its government and its executive arms. It adopted a factional and partisan discourse that lacked professionalism and objectivity, as witnessed in many of the articles presented at 'Aqlam Assuhof'.

In an article presented at 'Aqlam Assuhof,' former Palestinian Minister of Justice Nahed Arrayyes said:

"Ruining the Palestinian society was conducted by the Zionist side with the support of the tyrant groups and their acts of collaboration."

He added, *"The corrupt group surrounds Abu Mazen, and the problem in the security services is that they have adopted a tribal system that supports the Sheikh of the tribe."*

On June 18, 2007, the presenter took the following paragraph from an article for Fahmi Hweidi entitled: *"A Legal reading of the International Emergency Government"* from the London-based Al-Hayat:

"A follower of the Palestinian arena may observe several common legal fallacies, including the term legitimacy which is used in reference to the elected President of the Authority, but which is not restricted to him. The government which Abbas ousted is legitimate and elected, and hence the

use of the word legitimacy must also include the elected government. These fallacies also include granting the President a right that is not his...."

Al-Aqsa used such articles to support the official Hamas position in its conflict with President Abu Mazen. Hence, the presenter addressed the audience by saying:

"This article by Fahmi Hweidi, which I shall not read to you but advise you to read, clarifies to you the legal status of the Emergency Government."

The program producer selected some articles by Taher Odwan of the Jordanian Al-Arab Al-Yom on June 20, 2007, entitled *"The Fate of Fateh; The Authority addresses corruption in Fateh and the Authority."*

The following two paragraphs were quoted to manifest the charges of corruption of Fateh that Hamas promoted:

"The dire condition that the PA and Fateh have reached, in terms of the absence of institutions and the spread of corruption, and the transformation of former militants to a rich ruling class that is as corrupt as the ruling classes in several Arab countries..."

"And the wide-spread corruption in the PA, of which international agencies had warned earlier, has led to the establishment of a security authority, rather than a national authority; this has led to a gradual change in tasks, represented by receding national priorities, and their re-identification to serve the interests of the ruling class, which cannot be attained without cooperation with the original occupier, and without relying on security states."

The presenter gave the following comment on the above paragraph:

"Indeed, we were amazed to see the houses of, let us call them, the royal family that used to rule Gaza Strip."

Such selectivity in the choice of articles and writers who are known to be supportive to Hamas was frequent and constituted an approach this program adopted. It quoted the same newspapers as well as the Hamas affiliated Falasteen and others.

In an article by Nahed Al-Rayyes from Falasteen entitled "Ruining the Society of the Land of Al-Ribat," the presenter quoted the following paragraph that addressed corruption and illicit gains;

"...Since illicit money-making is the doctrine of those, the method of recruitment and advocacy to this doctrine and to the 'organization of scoundrels' particularly relied on selecting young men from cities and refugee camps who normally believed in such rogue leaders, contact them and offer them a jeep, a gun and a pistol, to employ four or five young men as escorts and followers of that polished leader."

He also quoted the following paragraph from an article by former Minister of Information Dr. Yousef Rezka entitled "The Pillars of the Gaza Society;"

"This stream has inflicted on the pillars of the Gazan society different forms of harm. The pillars of the society are: tribal dignitaries and intellectuals. The coup stream has ruined the lives of these people through corruption and extortion."

While the security services received a large share of this libel, defamation and incitement, President Abbas himself was a target of the campaign of 'Aqlaam Assuhof.'

The President was the target of a cartoon published on June 25, 2007 in Arrisala newspaper which belongs to Hamas. It depicted Abbas as a fictitious personality (Pinocchio) who is weak, helpless and weeping, and had a long nose (as a connotation of being a liar in accordance with Pinocchio's story) while on top was written "**no comment.**"

The notion of this cartoon was degrading and constituted contempt of the President; it reflected the media discourse that prevailed during internal fighting.

The editor and producer of 'Aqlaam Assuhof' selected particular articles from particular newspapers that targeted anyone who opposed Hamas positions with extreme criticism and slander. Dr. Salam Fayyad, the Prime Minister of the Cabinet that Abu Mazen formed, was targeted by UAE daily newspaper Al-Khaleej on July 10, 2007, from which the presenter quoted the following paragraph:

"As if Salam Fayyad came from another planet and suddenly came down to Earth. The Zionist entity practices its natural right in aggression, invasion and assassination in defense of its security from armed militias

that disturbed that security. Ever since Fayyad assumed his post he has taken several positions opposed to resistance. Hence, Fayyad's calls are found both surprising and astonishing. Such calls concur with the Israeli goal to defeat resistance and end its role."

This program was fully utilized to reflect positions that are sympathetic with Hamas in the wake of the escalating internal conflict following its military takeover of Gaza and which included conflict over the Authority and legitimacy. *Al-Aqsa* selected paragraphs that help formulate a public opinion that supports Hamas and opposes the other side that was subjected to charges of treachery and apostasy and delegitimized. This was evident in the paragraph selected from an article on July 14, 2007 by Nuhad Al-Sheikh in Falasteen entitled:

"Abu Mazen and the Statement on the Legitimate Palestinian Political System"

"It seems that President Abu Mazen and the ruling elite that surround him do not know what compliance to the Law is. Since the Elections in January 2006, the President has been attempting to violate the Law and to exploit it in perverted ways in order to serve his political vision."

"Recently he has been trying to annul legal laws, issue illegal laws, disrupt existing institutions and revive absent institutions, while there is unanimity that these have lost their legitimacy and are in need for reformulation."

On July 18, 2007, the presenter quoted a paragraph from an article by Rashad Abu Shawar in Al-Quds al-Arabi entitled "Unethical Persons," and included slander, abusive language and an explicit call for killing:

"Those unethical persons that our people are afflicted with ridicule our prisoners, some of whom have spent 20 years in jail...Can you believe that? They ridicule armed struggle...Those are liberals... and democrats in the Bush and Condoleezza style...friends of Ross, Beilin and any Zionist...Those are worms that devour roots from within and ravage the core, hence must be treated with an efficient remedy that leaves no trace of them so that they do not spread again."

Hadath Wa Araa'(Events and opinions)

This is a talk show that addresses internal political developments and is broadcast at 6:30. It hosts Hamas PLC members, political and academic

personalities who are close to Hamas and mostly hosts select personalities who adopt the political and intellectual positions of Hamas.

This program was also utilized in the context of the continuous campaign against President Abbas and the security services, in addition to some Fateh symbols in Gaza Strip and West Bank. It frequently used biased terms and expressions of treachery that violated symbols and persons.

On June 18, 2007, the episode broadcast at 6:45 hosted Ismail Al-Ashqar, a Hamas PLC member, and Mohammad Lafy, a political analyst. The anchor started by directing his guest Ismail Al-Ashqar towards what he called "***the continuous crimes of the security services members against anyone who has any contacts with Hamas,***" in reference to the attack against PLC Speaker Dr. Aziz Dweik's house during which his house was burnt by unidentified persons. He left to his guest the task of responding as such: "***Those who attacked belong to Lahd's groups who are the allies of Israel and the Devil against Palestinians.***"

The factional discourse as well as the bias and lack of neutrality were evident in the anchor's question, when he said "***against anyone who has any contacts with Hamas.***" These were also evident in the following question addressed to his second guest Mohammad Lafy:

"Mr. Lafy, I would like to ask you: what does Abbas' coup against the Basic Law represent?, in a reference to the President's decision, based on his powers, to dissolve the National Unity Government. The anchor described the President's use of his own powers as a 'coup.' The guest responded by saying:

"He is entitled to remove the government and form another government, but it is not permissible unless this government is presented at the PLC for confidence."

In an attempt to make up for the previous answer, the anchor intervened and asked his guest with sarcasm towards President Abbas: "***We heard Abbas statements quoted by Nabil Amro and Abed Rabbo and other Palestinian leaders... Has he lost the ability to talk? How do we explain that?"***

The guest answered by using accusations, abuse and slander:

"Those who talk and try to steal the legitimacy...Those who are speaking are a tyrant group, Nabil Amro lost his foot because of that... Those are thieves who stole the Palestinian legitimacy...."

In another episode on June 23, 2007, hosting Dr. Mohammad Al-Misfir, The Political Science Professor from Qatar, Majed Al-Zeer, Director of Al-Awda Palestinian Center in Britain, and Ibrahim Alloush, a political analyst, all of whom have political positions that conform to those of Hamas, the anchor posed a question that included sarcasm and abuse of Mohammad Dahlan-Fateh leader and PLC Member. He said:

"Haaretz newspaper described Mohammad Dahlan, the man of Israel in Gaza, as a fluffy-feathered rat, and the question is who deceived who? Did Mohammad Dahlan deceive Israel, or did Israel deceive Dahlan?"

"The man of Israel in Gaza" included charges of treason, hence incitement and deflation of a senior Fateh leader and PLC Member. Furthermore, the anchor quoted an Israeli newspaper depicting him as *"a fluffy-feathered rat."*

The guest responded with elaboration by saying:***"Those collaborators usually provide false information. We say that Dahlan and his team provided false information, but I cannot say that they deceived Israel, but I say they extorted money from Israel, and gave it the impression that they were an efficient and effective force."***

Such dialogue that lacked objectivity prevailed during other episodes, with continuous use of biased language, as evident in the following examples:

On June 25, 2007, the episode hosted Dr. Azmi Al-Tamimi, a writer and researcher residing in Britain, and Aa'edh Al-Qirni, a Saudi Islamic Advocate. The anchor started in the following manner:

"Haniyyeh decided to speak openly to the Palestinian people in his speech that was frequently interrupted by the cheering public. Haniyyeh denied that the problem was with Abbas, or between Fateh and Hamas, but with stream within Fateh that is pro-Zionist occupation, and that puts obstacles to fail the government."

"Haniyyeh welcomed the release of Palestinian funds by Israel and stressed the need to distribute them equally among all groups of the Palestinian people."

"There was news that Abbas went to Sharm Al-Sheikh with a plan to liquidate the Palestinian resistance and dismantle Al-Aqsa and Al-Qassam Brigades. Do you believe that the Arab states will give Abbas what he pleases?"

We also observed such a negative performance by the anchor in the episode on June 27, 2007, broadcast at 6:47, which hosted Mustafa Bakri, the Chief Editor of the Egyptian Weekly Al-Usboo, and Dr. Abdul Sattar Qasim. The episode discussed "the Aftermath of Sharm Al-Sheikh Summit."

The anchor addressed Dr. Abdul Sattar Qasim with the following question: ***"If the Zionist enemy cares only for the security aspects, why do we not care, and why do others who have accepted to become a mouthpiece of the **Zionist enemy**, why do not they care for our dignity and pride, as they said: **we will not have dialogue with murderers, while the enemy commits a massacre every day.**"***

This included a clear depiction of President "Abu Mazen" as a "mouthpiece of the Zionist enemy" who "does not care for the dignity and pride of his people." It included slander and abuse, which the anchor reiterated after his guest answered, by asking again:

"In this context, and this team that is fully supported by the International, American and Arab levels, which claims to have absolute legitimacy, issues decrees to disband and ban Palestinian factions, while Occupation forces continue their military operations from Jenin to Gaza."

The anchor gave personal opinions and used agitating and inciting language even when addressing internal issues and used these events to score against the opponent.

On June 28, 2007, the episode broadcast at 6:43 and entitled "A Coup against Everything" hosted Dr. Yaser Za'atrah, a Jordanian writer and political analyst, and Imad Al-Franji, a writer and political analyst from Gaza, both of whom are politically and intellectually close to Hamas. The anchor started the episode by saying:

"Al-Jazeera may become again the target of that 'group' that has become preoccupied with venting their enmity and hatred against platforms that objectively present different points of view. The statements of Hani Al-Hasan, Fateh Central Committee member at 'Bila Hudoud' (without frontiers) program of Al-Jazeera annoyed some "escaping leaders" to the West Bank, since he said facts that annoyed those who held press

conferences and attacked Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel. This is not the first time it is criticized by the "Fateh coup perpetrators," but this took several forms; Al-Jazeera house and office in Nablus is a testimony to the aggression against the freedom of speech in Palestine and the coup against the freedom of the press, which is our topic in today's episode of 'Hadath Wa Araa'."

Hence, the anchor used a 'Fateh' related event and its relation with Al-Jazeera, to support ' Hamas' story about 'Fateh' and how it dealt with opposing media. The anchor accused those he called "some escaping leaders to the West Bank," in reference to Fateh cadres who left Gaza following Hamas takeover and described them as coup perpetrators. He mentioned the assault against Al-Jazeera and its correspondents in a discourse that was clearly biased and lacked neutrality. This became more evident in the question that followed his lengthy introduction and was addressed to his guest Yaser Za'atrah:

"Was the attack which Fateh leaders launched against Al-Jazeera targeting Al-Jazeera in particular, or does it target Al-Jazeera in its capacity as an advanced media platform?"

The formulation of the question opened the floor for the two guests to give opinions and positions that conformed to Hamas' views and its accusation of Fateh to violate freedom of the media.

Za'atrah responded by saying: *"Those from Fateh hunt Al-Jazeera because it truly conveys the picture and reality,"* while the other guest Imad Al-Franji said, *"The least that can be said about what Fateh leaders did is that it is shameful and constitutes an elimination of freedoms. We have never heard any Palestinian faction threatening journalists and restricting their freedom",* adding *"the dominant trait of Fateh is that it wants the media to change as they please, and not as the media wants."*

Al-Aqsa used such positions taken by Za'atrah and Al-Franji to shape and direct public opinion in their favorite direction. This is a characteristic of partisan media, which identifies a cause and mobilizes all its efforts to rally public support.

On June 30, 2007, the episode hosted the PLC Security and Internal affairs rapporteur, to discuss statements of Dr. Salam Fayyad, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Emergency Cabinet. Questions included:

"What can Hamas practically do to stop his aggression against resistance?"

Another question was:

*"Are there any contacts between you and the **virtuous stream** within Fateh, in order to make their voice heard, rather than the voice of the **American stream** within Fateh?"*

The program adopted a factional and partisan discourse, in its use of terms, and in its accusations. This was evident in the case of the arrest of Mohammad Ishteivi, the Director of Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel office in the West Bank by Palestinian security services. On July 3, 2007 and during the episode aired at 6:48 pm, the anchor addressed the following question to Fathi Hammad, Director of Al-Aqsa Network:

*"Today the West Bank Al-Aqsa crew are either abducted or banned from operating, how can Al-Aqsa deal with the situation in the West Bank, especially amid the crimes perpetrated by the **treacherous stream**?"*

Hammad then answered by saying:

"I say that the treacherous stream in the West Bank has only two options: either resort to God, or flee the country because they will be eliminated."

The anchor focused in his media discourse on the "treacherous stream," reiterating the term in almost all episodes. He often linked symbols of 'Fateh' and the 'Authority' to field developments related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as incursions and assassinations and highlighted the close link between them.

In the episode aired on July 5, 2007, the anchor asked his guest Dr. Atef, Hamas PLC member the following question:

*"It was observed that Zionist incursions were preceded by calls of Fayyad to **attack the resistance**, is there a link between these calls and the Israeli aggression?"*

Dr. Odwan responded by saying:

"Yes, there is a link, as Salam Fayyad is one of those persons who cannot be innocent in this case."

\

The anchor posed another question

"Targeting Al-Aqsa and Al-Arabiya came after a declaration by the Minister of Information of the illegitimate government to shut down Al-Aqsa, how do you perceive this synchronism?"

The anchor continued to talk about the "illegitimate cabinet," de-legalizing and delegitimizing it and repeated such depiction in another question:

"Does the President intend to keep this illegitimate cabinet until the early elections, so that no one can hold this illegitimate cabinet accountable for the decrees it issued?"

Liq'a' Ma' Mas'oul

This is a talk show that hosts political and academic persons and is mostly broadcast after 8:00 pm. It addresses political and internal issues. Four episodes were broadcast during the monitored period. These addressed the following topics:

- The President's decrees and decisions
- The economy and the security amid the current situation
- Journalists and the role of the Ministry of Information and the Journalists' Association in their protection
- The Emergency Government of Dr. Salam Fayyad

Al-Aqsa policy was not different, as it continued to adopt a partisan discourse that aimed at rallying support and controlling public consciousness.

On June 25, 2007, the episode broadcast at 8:10 hosted Jamal Talab Nassar, Head of the PLC Economic Committee. The anchor started his dialogue with the following question:

"Without any introduction, Gaza has been liberated from a 'corrupt gang,' a criminal clique that was corrupt and caused instability to the area. How do you perceive the current situation in the wake of what had happened?"

This inciting political discourse appeared in another question, using a term like "the second liberation of Gaza:"

"Where do you stand from the perspective of the second liberation of Gaza, before and after?"

In this context, the military takeover of Gaza Strip was described as “liberation.”

Following its first liberation from occupation and settlers, *Al-Aqsa* adopted a discourse that warned of dialogue and its consequences, represented by the return of the Preventive Security and the Authority to Gaza Strip. The anchor said the following:

"What is the guarantee that would preclude the resumption of the state of lawlessness that had prevailed?"

Then he addressed another question to the guest: *"...But if dialogue is resumed, the Preventive (security) and the Authority will return, and things will go back to what they used to be."*

Such behavior by the anchor lacked objectivity even in the use of terminology and depictions and characterized the performance of *Al-Aqsa* anchors.

'Aynak 'ala Al-Watan (Keep an eye on the homeland)

This is another talk show broadcast around 8:30 and usually hosted persons who are close to Hamas and its leadership and who come from different sectors to discuss current issues and major political developments. On June 21, 2007, the episode hosted Yehya Al-Abadseh, Deputy Head of Hamas Parliamentary Bloc and a Hamas leader. The episode addressed President Mahmoud Abbas speech at the meeting of the PLO Central Council.

As was the case with other **oriented** programs, the anchor gave the following introduction:

"We dedicate this episode to shed light on Abbas' speech to the PLO Central Council, and that included many fallacies and lies according to Hamas leaders. We will be introduced to these lies through discussions with Dr. Yehya Al-Abadseh, the Deputy Head of Hamas Parliamentary Bloc."

The anchor gave the floor to his guest, who answered elaborately through depictions and accusations against the adversary, represented by President Abbas, and which aimed at justifying what happened in Gaza by saying:

"What happened in Gaza represents the beginning of the restoration of the Palestinian national project that had been stolen and ruined. All the on-going war against Hamas aims at removing Hamas."

The anchor gives the guest space to continue his delegitimizing attack against the President by saying:

"Abbas has lost his national capacity, first when Abbas asks Olmert to occupy Gaza after it had been partially liberated; what kind of leader asks occupation to come back, when Abbas Requests Ban Ki- moon to send international troops to Gaza, and when Abbas requests Europe to continue its siege against the Palestinian people, is this the national project? As such, Abbas has lost his national capacity since he has not performed his duties."

"As for getting rid of Mohammad Dahlan, we heard Fateh leaders calling for removing him, but will these voices be heard and find their way to Abbas?"

Hence, Al-Abadseh's response was even stronger and included clearer slander and accusations to the person of the President. It also included a strong attack against those he called the **"corrupt group"** insinuating Fateh leaders as he said:

*"Obviously the President is perseverant in his injustice and arrogance, deriving strength from Israel, America, Europe, some American systems that America is sympathetic with and which it describes as moderate...the worst thing that Abbas did when he became President was keeping that **corrupt group**, the most corrupt of the corrupt, rather than changing them; to the opposite, he fell under the influence of the **treacherous Lahd** team that surrounds him."*

Broadcasting such positions constituted an attempt to formulate the public opinion in a manner that violated the freedom of expression even for partisan media, which is entitled to promote its positions and ideas, but within a framework of objectivity and legality.

This time of live transmission dedicated to abusing opponents and accusing them of treason conveys strong and negative messages to the audience and to the public opinion and deepens division within the society that suffered from internal conflict and fighting.

While all citizens have the right to express themselves, such a right has to be restricted when it infringes on the freedom of others, including opponents.

The dialogue and the anchor's behavior in this program did not acknowledge such rights. The guest encouraged the anchor to issue further accusations as he said:

"I understood from what you said that President Abbas is the head of this gang and stream, but Abbas said that this plot was pre-meditated by Hamas leaders here and abroad, and in cooperation with regional parties; do you think that Abbas statement serves American interests to target Syria and Iran?"

Qadiyya 'ala Bisat Al-Bahth (An issue for discussion)

This program is similar to 'Liqa' Ma' Mas'oul' and to other *Al-Aqsa* programs, as it usually hosts political and academic Hamas members mostly. It was broadcast at 8:30 alternately with 'Liqa' Ma' Mas'oul'.

Four episodes of this program were broadcast during the monitored period. The first episode discussed the documents that Hamas found in the security services premises. The second episode discussed Hani Al-Hassan statements at Al-Jazeera that caused controversy within Fateh; the third episode discussed the issue of the Palestinians held at Rafah border-crossing, and the fourth episode discussed the 'Executive Force' of 'Hamas' and the controversy surrounding its formation, and the nature of its role and tasks.

The first episode addressed the documents that were found at the security services premises in Gaza Strip. It presented the content of these documents and included in its context defamation and accusations of treason against the security services within the framework of a "mobilization campaign" targeting the security services and led by the guest Dr. Fathi Hammad, the Director-General of *Al-Aqsa*, introduced in his other capacity as a Hamas PLC Member.

The anchor gave the Director of the Channel and PLC member, room to defame and incite against the security services and to justify Hamas military takeover of Gaza without any comment on the guest's statements who said:

"The security services were built on Zionist foundations to accomplish unpatriotic goals. The accumulation of corruption and treason led to discontent, and the moment came for a popular military attack supported by the people to eliminate centers of corruption."

The episode on the 'Executive Force' which hosted Brigadier Jamal Al-Jarrah (Abu Obaidah), the Force leader, included glorification and praise of

the 'Executive Force' that was a major contentious issue in the on-going conflict between Hamas and Fateh. Moreover, disbanding the 'Executive Force' was a demand by PLO factions.

In the interview with the 'Force' leader, the anchor gave the following introduction:

"The 'Support Unit' or the 'Executive Force'... this service was born amid complicated circumstances; its membership comes from the battlefield of Jihad and resistance; it gave martyrs and wounded, citizens commended this force for its ability to restore order, but some are attacking it in the media, and have explicitly asked the occupation to smash it..."

The anchor dropped neutrality and objectivity at the first question, as he said:

"You have come from the trenches of resistance and 'ribat' (resilience) in order to provide security to citizens what is the reality of the 'Executive Force' now, after the final military resolve against the bygone Palestinian security services?"

That was the introduction and the first question of the episode. The introduction commended "those who came from the battlefield of Jihad and resistance" and the "martyrs and wounded who sacrificed." This was followed by an insinuation against Fateh leaders, particularly Azzam Al-Ahmad, the head of Fateh Parliamentary Bloc, in relation to requesting Israeli occupation to eliminate the 'Executive Force,' i.e. accusing Al-Ahmad of complicity and coordination with occupation. The anchor referred to the military takeover of Gaza Strip as the "military resolve," one of the terms Hamas and its media used to describe the Gaza events. He also described the security services as "bygone," a term that may be used to depict the outcome of wars and battles between separate states.

Bidoon Muqadimat (Without any introduction)

This is a talk show that openly discusses current issues with senior figures, and is broadcast at 8:00 pm.

The topics that this program addressed in three episodes broadcast during the monitored period were political and internal issues: Sharm Al-Sheikh Summit, appointing Tony Blair as the President of the Quartet, and the U.S. policy in the Middle East.

It hosted Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, Ahmad Yousif and Dr. Azmi A-Tamimi, the latter being the Director of a London-based research and studies center, who fully conforms to Hamas intellectually and politically.

Such selectivity in choosing guests and in identifying topics and themes for discussion constituted a clear violation of standards of professionalism and objectivity.

Liqa' Khas (Special Interview)

This talk show usually hosts central and senior Hamas officials for open debate. It is broadcast after 6:00 on certain days.

We found a program that has a similar name, "Liqa' Ma' Mas'ool". Furthermore, this program is not different in terms of its content and topics from other above-mentioned programs.

This program, of which three episodes were aired during the monitored period, addressed the topic of the documents that were found in security services premises and the developments in Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The guest in two episodes was Said Siyam, the former Minister of Interior. The third episode hosted Khaled Abu Hilal, the former spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior and addressed the launching of 'Fateh Al-Yaser,' in his capacity as the Secretary-General of that movement.

The episode that hosted Said Siyam on June 30, 2007 and was dedicated to discussing the issue of the documents, showed an obvious biased performance by the anchor, in his comments on the guest's statements about Hamas' willingness to have dialogue with Fateh despite what had happened. It showed a partisan approach by *Al-Aqsa*, particularly when the anchor posed the following question in disapproval, reflecting a personal opinion and revealing a total lack of objectivity:

*"Mr. Said, Hamas and its leaders, throughout the media, and for tens of times if not even more, spoke about dialogue... dialogue...dialogue. Usually the wrong-doer, or the party that has received a blow requests dialogue; but this time Hamas is requesting dialogue although it has rescued the people from a criminal group, and wide groups of the masses have supported Hamas in what it did in Gaza. Why do you insist on dialogue? Ahmad Abdul Rahman speaks about rejection; Samir Al-Mashharawi, Hussein Al-Sheikh, and President Abu Mazen said: **No dialogue with the coup perpetrators until they apologize.** Everyone who speaks on behalf of Fateh says no*

dialogue. So why this strange persistence by Hamas on dialogue amid Fateh rejection and arrogance?"

In fact, the anchor was unprofessional in his disapproving question, as it was a clear expression of his personal opinion in several issues mentioned in his question. He spoke of a 'wrong-doer' or "one that has received a blow." He also spoke of the 'arrogance of Fateh,' in an indication of the latter's position that starting dialogue with Hamas was conditional on Hamas retreating from its military control of Gaza Strip by force.

The anchor's conduct was also revealed in his pronunciation and his body language. He stressed certain words, such as 'dialogue...dialogue...dialogue.' When he mentioned Abdul Rahman, Hussein Al-Sheikh, and President Abu Mazen, he counted them on his fingers.

The same anchor showed similar behavior in another episode hosting Said Siyam, broadcast on July 3, 2007, and that revolved around developments in the West Bank and Gaza.

The anchor gave the following introduction:

*"This episode of 'Liq' Khas' attempts at discussing several issues of concern to Palestinian citizens, and how matters are being handled in the West Bank and Gaza following what happened in Gaza Strip, in terms of its liberation from the **abominable actions of a rogue clique** that used all means to dominate the Palestinian people and their resources."*

He asked his guest the following question: *"Now, after the liberation of Gaza from that rogue clique, some insist that Gaza will look like Afghanistan or Hamastan; They say this to Egypt in an attempt to exert pressure on it, that a bomb called Hamastan is neighboring you, and how can it live in the presence of Hamas; Does the presence of Hamas pose a threat to the brotherly state of Egypt?"*

The anchor used the term 'liberation' of Gaza in his introduction, in an indication of Hamas' takeover of the Strip by force, and described the latter as a 'rogue clique,' which Hamas succeeded in rescuing Gaza from its 'abominable actions,' meaning its 'corruption' and 'bad deeds'. Such use of terms lacked professionalism and objectivity and constituted a violation of the journalism code of ethics.

As *Al-Aqsa* did with regard to statements of Fateh leader Hani Al-Hassan to Al-Jazeera and their ramifications within Fateh, it also adopted the event of launching 'Fateh Al-Yaser' movement by Khaled Abu Hilal, the former

spokesperson of the Hamas Ministry of Interior. *Al-Aqsa* used this event to continue its directed campaign against Fateh and its political and security symbols.

Al-Aqsa covered the launching activities of this new formation, named 'Fateh Al-Yaser,' and in an episode on July 6, 2007 hosted Khaled Abu Hilal, the Secretary-General of this movement.

The anchor started this episode with the following question:

*"Talks about launching Fateh Al-Yaser came following the **cleansing** of Gaza from collaborators and traitors by Hamas. The question is: was 'Fateh Al-Yaser' launched following the Gaza events?"*

This introduction and question included a new term in the Palestinian media discourse, which is 'cleansing' that had previously been described as 'liberation,' and later as a 'second liberation'. The anchor used extremely clear jargon, in his reference to Fateh members as 'collaborators and traitors,' leading the guest to use even sharper depictions towards the main 'Fateh,' which he described as the treacherous stream and even towards President Mahmoud Abbas, although he distinguished between this stream and the virtuous sons of the movement. He said:

*"The virtuous members of Fateh are our brothers, and we wish they would come to us, so that God can bestow on us victory against the treacherous stream within it. There is no room for reconciliation in our relation with the **collaborating leadership**, and here we differ with Hamas, which calls him President Abbas, while we say **the traitor and spy Abbas**. I say this man is bad, and it is not possible to reach an agreement with him. **I am convinced that Abbas is worse than Mohammad Dahlan**, because he embraced him and provided him with cover."*

This episode of the program constituted the climax of abuse of air time, as it gave access to one of its guests to vilify opponents, accuse them of treason and open collaboration, to the extent of incitement and defamation. Such conduct did not target the President only, but also Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, whom the anchor described as the 'Dayton Prime Minister,' not only reflecting the anchor's viewpoint, but also the editorial policy of *Al-Aqsa*, which used a variety of depictions and terms in its programs, news bulletins and all other material.

Mubasher (Live)

This is a live talk show that was broadcast on June 27, 2007 at 9:32. The main topic was the decision of President Abbas to gather the arms of resistance. It hosted four persons, Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas leader and spokesperson, Daoud Shehab, spokesperson for Islamic Jihad, Yousef Ibrahim, Professor of Geo-politics, and Abu Mujahid, a spokesperson for the National Resistance Committees. This was the only program that reflected diversity in political inclinations, but no diversity in opinions towards the issue of gathering the arms of resistance, as there were no representatives of national factions such as the PFLP, DFLP, Fateh and other PLO factions.

In the introduction, the anchor discussed with his guests *"the relation between gathering the arms of resistance by the security services in the West Bank, and the emergence of 'Hamas' as an authority that imposes law and order, while President Abbas's authority plays a role that harms resistance and its existence."*

The anchor then moved to another question that supported his vision of the current events, namely the Israeli invasion of Gaza Strip and linked it to Sharm Al-Sheikh Summit, through the following question addressed to Sami Abu Zuhri:

"Few hours after Sharm Al-Sheikh Summit, the Israeli tanks appear in the streets of Gaza, how do you perceive that?"

He addressed the same question to Abu Mujahid, spokesperson for the National Resistance Committees, concluding towards the end of the episode with the same proposition he had started with:

"Peace Be Upon You, and welcome again to this special episode on the events in Gaza Strip and the West Bank; in Gaza Strip there is the Israeli invasion that has reaped 12 martyrs, and also the events in the West Bank, where the security services continue to practice terrorism against the Palestinian resistance there."

Hence, the message of the program the anchor gave about the Israeli invasion that killed 12 martyrs in Gaza Strip, and "the terrorism of the security services against resistance in the West Bank," linked two events that were used by Hamas in the conflict both in the field and in the media.

Sada Al-Shari'(Echoes of the Street)

This talk show hosts some personalities and political leaders and receives call-ins from citizens. It is broadcast after 8:00 pm at its scheduled time.

Two episodes were broadcast during the monitored period. The first was broadcast on July 30, 2007 about Palestinian conditions, including talks about bringing international troops to Gaza, imposing a Mandate in the West Bank, the issue of salaries, political arrests and gathering the arms of resistance.

The second episode was broadcast on July 10, 2007 and discussed the injury of Imad Ghanem, *Al-Aqsa* cameraman.

The first episode gave much room for participants who expressed a connection to 'Hamas,' 'Al-Qassam Brigades' and the 'Executive Force'. The majority of participants expressed views that conformed to those of 'Hamas,' while calls of citizens who wanted to express a different viewpoint were interrupted.

The anchor interrupted a telephone call by a child named Bushra from Gaza (at 8:21), after she introduced herself and said that she wanted to read a verse for President Abbas. The interview proceeded in the following manner:

Bushra: *"I am 8 years old."*

Anchor: *"God protect you, fine Bushra, they are gathering the arms of resistance so that we fail to strike occupation, what do you tell them Bushra?"*

Bushra: *"I want to read a verse to Abu Mazen."*

Anchor: *"Fine we do not want to read a verse to Abu Mazen, and thank you, may God protect you, and God willing you will become one of the soldiers of the great Islam."*

(The anchor said this comment with a big smile; the question he posed at a child as young as Bushra was striking).

While Bushra was interrupted and not given the chance to read a verse to 'Abu Mazen.' Adham from Gaza was given sufficient time to say what he pleased.

Adham: *"We tell Abbas, the Oslo group, the gang that surrounds him, and this American-Israeli gang (accusations of treason), we tell them: leave Gaza alone; Gaza does not need international troops and is not in need of a new occupation. We, thank God, are done with Israeli occupation; why do they want to bring in a new international occupation; Gaza is pure, Gaza is clean.. Gaza is protected by Al-Qassam Brigades."*

(During the conversation with Adham, Al-Aqsa aired scenes of a wedding in Gaza, with decorated cars, people walking on the streets and normal life to indicate that security prevailed there.)

Adham continued to say: *"See how security prevails in Gaza. Pictures are enough, and there is no need for comment. We neither need a security plan, joint troops, nor need 30,000 or 50,000 troops... Only 6,000 members of the 'Executive Force' in Gaza have totally controlled the security 100%, from Rafah to Beit Hanoun. We are against the last decisions of Abbas which are dictated to him by his Aunt Rice... the Congress... America, Israel and the Knesset, and they bring them and implement them here in Gaza and the West Bank. Abbas would be better off to gather the arms of the black militias I in the West Bank that burn mosques, Zakaat (alms) committees, charitable societies and even nursery schools... it is better for Abbas to gather those arms."*

The anchor did not try to interrupt the participant but seemed interested in his comments, as he commended the 'Executive Force' and its role in keeping security and safety, and his criticism of President Abbas and attack against his decrees and decision and about the dictates of Rice, the Congress and the Israeli Knesset. The anchor sufficed to say:

"Thank you very much Adham, and God bless you."

A participant from UAE named Mohammad Abdul Khaleq, failed to express his viewpoint as the call was interrupted. He started in the following manner:

"Dear brother, which resistance are you talking about? Your resistance is a resistance of terrorism; you are a terrorist nation..." The call was interrupted here and anchor intervened by saying:

"Yes brother Mohammad, yes brother Mohammad, if you can hear me...It seems that, yes Mohammad. Ok, thank you very much brother Mohammad for your call from UAE and for this contribution."

During this call, a press conference for Al-Qassam Brigades was shown, crowded public parks in Gaza, children playing and normal activity on the streets.

The scenes of Al-Qassam were mixed with scenes of normal life on Gaza streets to pass a message that security prevailed when Al-Qassam members mingled with citizens.

The anchor concluded the episode with a message addressed to 'Fateh' members, in which he presented the situation in Gaza from his own perspective and gave a political position that justified what happened there. He said:

"Those scenes you see our dear audience are of a safe Gaza that is now living safely and securely. There are still some people who have their concerns towards the situation, who may be our brothers from 'Fateh,' but we tell them: Look at the streets of Gaza, look at the prevailing security and you will feel assured. Give up your fears. The message that we want to convey is that we do not want to use the language of victorious and defeated parties; we do not want that. My message to you is that what happened is a service to every Palestinian, every free person and every person with dignity who refuses to comply to the orders of occupation, who refuses to stand on the side of occupation, in the ranks of occupation; Any honorable 'Fateh' member who contemplates alone for one moment would realize that this is the correct path and what happened in Gaza is a model that should be followed all over the homeland..."

The anchor gave a personal opinion when he said "we want to convey," and he gave lessons to 'Fateh' and decided that what happened in Gaza was a model that should be followed all over the world.

One observes that the role of the media at *Al-Aqsa* is not to give information and facts, but positions and judgments.

Films and Documentaries

During the monitored period, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast a series of films and documentaries of its own production, the most prominent was a program called 'Ragham Al-Alam' (Despite the Pain), which spoke about the martyrs of armed operations. Each episode presented the life of one of the martyrs as narrated by his family and friends, and glorified his deeds.

An example was a documentary on the life of Rami Abu Mheisen, an implementer of a military operation in Gaza Strip during the Intifada that killed and injured Israeli soldiers.

The film showed scenes of the implementer during training on the use of arms, within a group of other comrades who were also receiving training. Then there was a talk with his father Abu Mheisen who gave some details about his son's life. These are excerpts of what he said:

"Rami was excellent at school, as his teachers said. He was even superior in his class, but during high school, particularly in the Second Secondary class, he had an incident with the Intelligence of the Palestinian Authority. One month before the exams, the Intelligence summoned and investigated him because he was the Emir of the Islamic Bloc at the high school and threatened to deprive him of the Secondary School Certificate. This had an impact on Rami's psychological condition. When I asked him to study for the High School Exam he answered me: Why should I study? They will deprive me of the High School Exam anyway. So this had an impact on his grade, and he got 61%. He enrolled at the Azhar University School of Commerce, Department of Accounting, and was martyred during the Third Year."

While Rami's father was talking, images of training of Al-Qassam members and a picture of Rami holding arms were shown.

His father said the following about his martyrdom:

*"During the last days that preceded the martyrdom operation, I asked him to go and register at the university, since October had already started, and I gave him the money to pay the tuition. He told me: save the money, because my brothers have chosen me to be a member of a group in a martyrdom operation. That was five days prior to the operation. I realized that Rami intended to carry out an operation. **I spent all those days just filling my eyes of Rami.**"*

(The program broadcast scenes of the operation that Rami carried out, his pictures bidding his friends farewell while carrying a Kalashnikov gun).

Such films were repetitively broadcast, including Rami's father's statements about his son's experience with the Palestinian Intelligence, which was the reason for not continuing his college education, and how he discovered later that his son "will carry out a martyrdom operation," and "he used all days to fill his eyes of Rami." He narrates his son's story, despite the pain...

Such glorification of martyrs and martyrdom by Rami's father, and what Rami himself did, is also repeated in the story of Nidal Farhat, of Shaja'iyyeh neighborhood, who was one of the implementers of a military operation that targeted Israeli soldiers. His wife spoke about his life, his relation to his sons and family and her role as a wife of a martyr in raising her children following the martyrdom of their father. She spoke with extreme pride in what her husband did.

The programs about the life of Farhat as well as the lives of two other martyrs, Nabil Abu Salamiyyeh and Ali Al-Imawi were repeated several times during the monitored period.

Other Diverse Programs

During the monitored period, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast a large number of religious programs, such as: 'Al-Islam Wal Hayat' (Islam and life), 'Dayf Al-Aqsa' (The guest of Al-Aqsa), 'Yas'alounak' (They ask you), 'Fityat Al-Koran' (The youth of the Quran), 'Mawaqif Wa 'Ibar' (Experiences and lessons), in addition to scientific documentaries about oceans and seas. The most interesting documentary was about "security disorder" during the Palestinian security services era, and 'Fateh' members kidnapping ' Hamas' members.

This program was repeated often in the context of an oriented propaganda campaign against these services. It included narratives of victims and their families about abduction operations. On June 28, 2007, at 7:23 pm. *Al-Aqsa* broadcast the following story of a mother whose son was abducted:

The mother: *We were having lunch at home, and after lunch, we found the mean criminals inside our home; How did they get in...God knows; they came up from the workshop straight to the house. Thank God we were covered (decently dressed). The moment we heard the shooting and the chaos we covered our heads and I started to say 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector'. What happened to them...What do they want from us... He said they want Mazen, held my head cover, pulled me and started to curse against God and religion, and things you cannot even imagine (We ask God for forgiveness). I told him that my sons were not home, and that they were at the condolences of Al-Rifa'I, the Imam of Al-Abbas Mosque, but he did not believe me. I told him if you do not believe me go inside; this is Mazen's house, search it and if you find him then take him. He told me you have to bring him; I said I swear to God, and every time I swear he would curse God. Believe me even infidels would not do their deeds. And who are they? They are our neighbors who live across the street, and their faces were not covered, can you imagine? Anyway he pulled*

my head cover; I held it and was afraid that they would remove it. Of course they had broken all the glass of the house and went down from the fourth to the first floor. They arrested him. I was barefoot, but thank God it did not hurt me, not one piece of glass pricked me, as if I was walking on a carpet. They left me in the middle of the street, and when they did, I saw something I could never imagine; there were at least, at least sixty or seventy armed men...."

Al-Aqsa broadcast scenes of Fateh activists covering their faces and beating men and women from ' Hamas,' the scene of a house on fire, and scenes of armed Fateh members shooting, some of whom had their faces covered. The following comment was written on the screen:

"They killed Ulama (clerics) and Mujahedeen...They assaulted women and terrorized children..."

While it held Fateh and the security services responsible for the security disorder and shed light on the abductions against Hamas activists, Al-Aqsa broadcast during the same period a program entitled 'Gaza Al-Yom' (Gaza today), that presents a new era in which security and safety prevail because of 'Al-Qassam Brigades' and the 'Executive Force'.

The program was broadcast on June 28, 2007 at 9:13 pm, i.e. two hours after the program on 'disorder and abduction operations,' as if Al-Aqsa was comparing two eras, one of disorder, chaos and abductions, for which Fateh and the security services were responsible.

'Gaza al-Yom' included five news reports. The first started with the following introduction by the anchor:

"Today's episode monitors through the camera of our cameramen, the life of people in Gaza following the 'terrorist practices' of the security services in the past era; owners of jewelry shops testify on the highest level of security provided by the 'Executive Force' and police services..."

The report was about the prevailing security that reflected on shop and workshop owners who felt secure about their property because of what the 'Executive Force' and the Police did.

The presenter read the following text during the report:

"...And from the market to schools; secondary schools students were not spared the attacks of the security services, as several students were

kidnapped and beaten, and they all lived in extreme fear. In addition to the fear of questioning, they faced the fear of checkpoints and shooting, to the extent that reaching the exam hall was a risk that might cost one's life, which resulted in lack of concentration. Today, they can sit for their exams without having to live with such feelings."

Accompanying this text, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast scenes of Ismail Haniyyeh's visit to schools and which contributed to assuring students, according to the presenter. Then Haniyyeh appeared in an interview within the report and said:

"This year the exams faced several difficulties, most notably the armed clashes in Gaza Strip, which affected the students' ability to study, and caused some to be absent. The worst aspect was that the security services in the Occupied West Bank leaked questions."

The program then moved to speak about free access to mosques for prayer, without fear of being shot or kidnapped. The presenter said:

*"Between two periods, the past and the present; in the past citizens used to live in fear and lawlessness, and in the present, they live in safety and security...mosques are full of people praying... They leave calmly and quietly, as God has relieved Gaza from the **treacherous stream** that inflicted on the guests of God fear and oppression. Al-Hidaya Mosque witnessed the hatred of those **criminals** who persisted in their corruption..They fought against God and their master is the Devil (exploiting the religious discourse)."*

Then the report broadcast an interview with a person who had been shot by the security services: *"I was at the mosque during Abu Anas Al-Mansi events. I was at the washroom and those who were martyred were behind me. I received 18 shots in this mosque. The person whose face was covered was aiming at us and we had given in, i.e. we were in a surrender situation. He started shooting with the Kalashnikovs that he had and I received 18 shots."*

(Scenes of blood, wounded persons who were shot, pictures of prayers at Al-Hidaya Mosque were broadcast.)

The program concluded with a report on amusement places, such as the beach, that were absent during the era of Fateh. It presented a comparison between two eras, through broadcasting pictures of families and children at the beach.

All these programs, including the news, talk shows, as well as the national and religious, reflected *Al-Aqsa* message to its audience and adopted an advocacy and a political discourse on internal issues as well as on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Songs

Al-Aqsa Satellite Channel widely used fervent national and religious anthems and songs during the period that followed Hamas takeover of Gaza Strip. A significant part of these songs were *Al-Aqsa* productions and reflected the reality of the internal conflict and fighting as well as that of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They used similar terms and depictions in their lyrics. Some songs were based on religious symbols and the glorification of martyrs and spiritual and military leaders of Hamas, such as Ahmad Yaseen and Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi.

In the context of internal fighting, the lyrics addressed issues such as: the security disorder, glorifying the heroism of 'Al-Qassam,' 'Hamas' and the 'Executive Force,' incitement against those who were described as the 'treacherous stream' such as President Abu Mazen and Dahlan, in addition to other topics such as stressing the 'right to return,' the Arab identity of Jerusalem, the Islamic identity of 'Al-Aqsa Mosque' and the threats against it, the siege, the Separation Wall, the steadfastness, and the Israeli excavations around 'Al-Aqsa Mosque'.

Jerusalem was also present in the songs produced by *Al-Aqsa*. This was a message that *Al-Aqsa* wanted to convey on the Arab identity of Jerusalem, persistence towards restoring it, and that its liberation would be achieved by Al-Qassam brigades, who were described as the 'heroes of Al-Banna,' indicating Hasan Al-Banna, the founder of the 'Muslim Brethren Group,' the global organization from which Hamas evolved. Consequently, this song entitled "They are coming to you the land of Jerusalem" contained religious and partisan discourse in the following manner:

*"They are coming, land of Jerusalem
coming and revolting as a volcano and a flame*

*Holding our souls for the sake of Palestine
the heroes of Al-Banna and Izzedin*

*The Grand children of Salaheddin are coming
Heroes in the battlefield of the homeland*

*Those men do not surrender in hard days
They fight today the enemy*

The lyrics of songs that glorify ' Hamas' and its armed wing are not void of religious terminology and symbols, even when speaking about tools of warfare. In fact they couple these belligerence tools with The Koran, as this is a symbol that ' Hamas' adopts in asserting its political identity and expressing its religious affiliation. This is made clear in the following song, entitled "At you service Islam of Heroism"

*It is righteousness mobilizing its soldiers
And preparing for the day of resolve*

*The Brigades have mobilized their lions
To destroy the state of vice*

*The sons of faith have quit sleeping
And have no more an appetite for food*

*We have risen to God (like the spear of splendor)
With the magnificence of our Perfect Koran*

*All those who live on Earth testify
And under the sky of the pride of Muslims*

*Claimers of right we cannot see
Any reward without sacrifice*

This song speaks about war and how the soldiers of the right mobilize for it. It calls for the 'destruction of the state of vice' i.e. Israel, and speaks about tools of warfare, the spear, and glorifies it as (the son of splendor), and considers that the establishment of the state of virtue requires sacrifice of blood. This song is a Hamas propagating discourse that aims at raising the morale until victory is achieved.

The songs of *Al-Aqsa* adopt a discourse that glorifies the spiritual and military leaders of ' Hamas' such as Sheikh Ahmad Yaseen and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi.

The song entitled 'Ya Rantisi bi damak jood' (Rantisi, sacrifice your blood), includes connotations of sanctifying martyrdom and martyrs, and calls for retaliation for their assassination. The lyrics say:

*Rantisi sacrifice your blood
Your wound is a medal on your chest*

*Your men all over frontiers
Have held the banners of Qassam*

*Death is inevitable and
We wish to become martyrs*

*Your words we shall not forget
Carved on the rocks of our homeland*

*Yaseen today we will meet you
Living up there close to God*

*Rantisi it is a pledge to God
Your blood is a fellowship of Islam*

*We are your men and this is a promise
We will not relinquish guns forever*

*The response will consist of hundred responses
We will never relinquish our promise*

*Mark with your path the path of glory
And you are the leader of our movement*

*Abu Mohammad we are behind you
You are precious, take the lead*

*Our brigades are in the millions
The people will be united*

*Aqsa we are coming
No matter how long the march is*

*Rantisi and Yaseen
Two wounds that afflicted the heart*

*The wounds have become many
But Al-Qassam will heal them ...*

The song is accompanied with a clip that shows Al-Rantisi addressing the masses, and other pictures for him with Sheikh Ahmad Yaseen.

The song "Sawtuna thaeran fil Quds"(our voice roars in Jerusalem) reflects the interest of *Al-Aqsa* in the issue of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Hence, the songs may vary but the issue is one. Furthermore, there is an intense use of fervent religious and national symbols in the songs. The lyrics of this song are:

*The more the enemy's army
Strangles us*

*Our voice roars high in Jerusalem
Our voice is the voice of Al-Buraq*

*From the wounds of revolutionaries of our Koran
The voice is loud and free forever*

*No, you will not emigrate, as pure soil
Is always good to embrace.*

The accompanying clip consists of checkpoints, Israeli soldiers, scenes from Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque, demonstrations, martyrs and masked persons receiving military training and raising ' Hamas' banners.

This is also repeated with other songs that were produced for certain occasions or events on the ground, most notably Israel's excavations at the Moroccan Gate, removing the historic hill that links Al-Aqsa Mosque to **Al-Buraq Square**. This song started with scenes of Israeli soldiers preventing Palestinians from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque, accompanied by sighs (of the singer), after which Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, the head of the Islamic Movement inside Israel appears to say:

"They continue to dig long trenches to erect giant poles on which they want to build a new bridge until the Moroccan Gate." Then the following song starts:

*What will be written or said
While Al-Aqsa Mosque is there calling*

Then sheikh Salah appears again and says:

"They are still confiscating and attacking Al-Malha Graveyard, Ein Karem Graveyard...Okashah Graveyard... As if they want to Judaize the land..Judaize the land..Judaize the present and future of the land...Judaize the daily life at the Holy Aqsa."

The song resumes in the following manner:

*Am I dead or is it the noise
That has faded my hearing and hence I seem indifferent*

*The branch of oil of the fields, light our way
From your oil **of the weight of an atom***

*We are startled with the gloominess we have seen
Does there seem to be light and hope*

*I long to embrace your pure soils
Jerusalem I have been nostalgic for so long*

This discourse on Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque is frequently repeated in other songs produced by *Al-Aqsa* and aired several times a day. The most prominent song was "Ya Aqsa" (Aqsa), which includes an oath to continue fighting because it is 'more fruitful than dialogue of delegations.' The lyrics are:

*Captive Aqsa
Don't you long for prayers*

*Our foreheads long for you
To take the definite pledge*

*We are on the path of faith
We will never deviate or go astray*

*Our blood will clean the altar
From the filth of Jews*

*Our prayer in Jerusalem is more beneficial
Than the dialogue of delegations*

*Jerusalem adores our tears
And does not want the ink of promises*

*In our Jerusalem the crow has toiled
While the nightingale of Jerusalem is a fugitive*

*Its soils smell like musk
Because of our ancestors' heroism*

*The Companions of the Prophet have cultivated
It with veins*

*There is reluctance to reach it
While we seek to climb the peaks*

*We came with our bodies
That are decorated with your love and with roses*

*Hold 'Buraq' tight and
Shake those fake promises*

As was the case with other songs, this song was accompanied with a clip of Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem and prayers at the Mosque, in addition to Israeli soldiers shooting at Palestinian young men. There is a continuous use of symbols, incitement on fighting and calls for 'Jihad,' so that the Temple would not be built on the ruins of Al-Aqsa Mosque. This is an appeal to all Muslims.

This large number of songs broadcast at Al-Aqsa carried several messages not only on Jerusalem, but also on crucial issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as the right to return, adherence to land and refusal to submit.

As for the right to return, a song entitled 'Raj'in' (We shall return) had the following lyrics:

*We shall return, we shall return
We leave as a small family and come back in the millions*

*We shall return, we do not forget your sea
The port and the ship sing we shall return*

*We shall return as you are of us and your name is not far from us
Whether we go east or west we will return after many years*

We shall go back home, we shall go back to our Arab identity

We shall go back to our village which we miss

The lyrics speak about the sea and the port, i.e. about Palestine from the Sea to the River, and the return of millions of refugees to the cities of Haifa and Safad, as the names of these cities appear on the screen.

The formation of the 'Executive Force' aimed at meeting the need of people for security and freedom, according to the lyrics of the song that glorifies and commends this Force:

*For the sake of change and reform
My people live in freedom*

*For the sake of security and safety
The Executive was born*

*God is with (the Executive)
We support (the Executive)*

*They raise the banner
And keep the flame lit*

*We came in our coffins
To meet the definite promise*

*In the name of Aqsa
In the name of Nasser*

*In the name of Qassam
A national unity has emerged*

*Despite the shelling ...the destruction
And the Zionist hands*

*The injustice of the siege brought a resolve
In the name of the Executive Force*

Since the ramification of internal fighting was still on-going, songs were used for incitement and defamation of opponents, as was the case with 'Sunn'a al-fitan' (Creators of Seditious) which targeted senior Fateh leaders such as Mohammad Dahlan, Rashid Abu Shbak, Azzam Al-Ahmad, Sa'eb Erekat, Tawfic Abu Khousa, and even President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu

Mazen). This song was broadcast in the following manner:

At the beginning a segment of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades roaming the streets with their guns and pictures of Dahlan shake hands with Olmert.

The song starts:

Creators of sedition leave this country
Leave us we want to live we had enough calamities

Then pictures of six Fateh leaders are shown, with Dahlan in the middle, and around him Jamal Nazzal, Tawfic Abu Khousa, Rashid Abu Shbak, Azzam Al-Ahmad, Sa'eb Erekat and Maher Miqdad. The following Koranic Verse is written over their pictures:

"And they devised plans and Allah too had arranged a plan; and Allah is the best of planners."

A segment is shown of Abu Jabal, an Aqsa Martyrs Brigades leader with a group of his comrades destroying offices of Hamas PLC Members in the Governorate of Nablus (use of koranic verses in internal conflict).

The first verse of the song is repeated:

Creators of sedition leave this country
Leave us we want to live we had enough calamities

with a picture of Mohammad Dahlan, Sa'eb Erekat and Ahmad Qurei' with Sharon, and a page of a newspaper with the following subheading "From Nicaragua to Gaza," 'Abrams' Plan to start a civil war is Palestinian-led," with a picture of Dahlan and Elliott Abrams beneath it (in an indication of the American support to the regimes in those two countries).

The second verse is as follows:

Why are we afraid of unity why are we terrified of unity
You will be exposed and seen the while world is sick of you

As the singing starts, the picture of a person holding the Palestinian flag and sitting on the ground in an attempt to stop 'Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades' and the 'Executive Force' from shooting; the streets are crowded with people raising Palestinian flags and attempting at stopping the shooting (during a shootout).

Then again a segment with a group, including Abu Jabal, of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades armed on the streets, sometimes arresting persons, with a repetition of the verse 'creators of sedition' and pictures of offices full of arms and ammunitions.

The third verse is:

*Who sent you to my country that incited you against the people
You are trading the blood of people what else will you ultimately do.*

Segments

Rice stepping down of the airplane, Erekat shakes hands and kisses her, and a picture of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades group carrying weapons.

Then lyrics are repeated: *Creators of sedition leave this country...*

Then pictures of Mohammad Dahlan surrounded by Tawfic Abu Khousa, Azzam Al-Ahmad, Sa'eb Erekat and Rashid Abu Shbak.

The picture next to Mohammad Dahlan is for Mahmoud Abbas shaking hands with Olmert, with the following Koranic Verse written on it too:

"And they devised plans and Allah too had arranged a plan; and Allah is the best of planners."

Then weapons that the security services possessed are shown and the picture of Dahlan and the six Fateh leaders is repeated.

*Creators of sedition leave this country
Leave us we want to live we had enough calamities*

They continue to show weapons, and the last picture is for Dahlan, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Azzam Al-Ahmad, and beside them a picture of persons killed mostly at Al-Hidaya Mosque, with the following comment written on the screen:

Blood at the altar of Al-Hidaya

And on the bottom is written:

"The crime of Al-Hidaya Mosque..The same story is repeated and the murderer is Palestinian!!"

Such a severe propagating discourse was also imminent in 'Ilama' (until when) song, which was used to target 'Fateh' leaders. The lyrics are:

*Until when will their injustice go on
And treachery continues to inflict on us all this bitterness*

*Tyrants, criminals, shameful
We will rein them fully*

During this song, pictures of Dahlan and victims killed in the internal fighting are shown, in addition to repetitive shots of armed Fateh members, in a denotation of the lyrics.

Songs at *Al-Aqsa* also represented a period of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, i.e. the bombing operations, whose implementers are referred to as martyrs. The most prominent was a song named 'May' which commends Reem Al-Riyash, a mother who carried out a bombing operation. The song commends and glorifies her, and reflects the relation of the mother with her sons after and before her departure. The lyrics are as follows:

*Mother, your heart, my heart is not of stone
Your arms are full of love and good*

*But it is stronger than all mankind
Against the aggressor, your voice is a roar*

*You are carrying in your arms
A toy for me or a gift*

*It may be a toy for me
Show it to me just for a while*

*(Duha) is nice and not naughty
She does not take anything that you brought to me*

*Mom Reem why did you put on your head cover
Mom are you going out?*

*Obaidah always went out with you
Why are you not taking Obaidah with you?*

*I can carry him..even with Dad..Mom
He would not stay with him...he would only be in your lap*

*He only eats in your lap
What shall we do after you*

*I wish to know who is more important
Than (Obaidah) and (Duha)*

*We keep calling you and you rush your steps
I cannot sleep without you
Telling us a story I (Obaidah) so that we go to sleep*

Such a content is repeated in another song "*dathirouni bil Qanabel*" (*Wrap me with bombs*), which speaks about implementers of bombing operations, glorifies and commends them. The lyrics say:

*Wrap me in bombs and let bullets pour on me
The (wheat spikes) are not dead*

*The salvation day has not come to an end
They destroyed all homes*

*They put them to darkness
They killed my family*

*Let all alien talk stop
The body remains of women
Are rising above the rubble
Childhood, blood, hand and bones*

*Can you see the beloved ones
You whose sword has bit the plains and dominated some time*

*Darkness prevailed and screamed..
The son of Zion hid and the insolent came to the front
For long and used his money for unrighteous purposes*

The accompanying video clip consists of acting and not real footage, of a person covering his body with bombs and weapons, and a group of comrades shooting at Israeli soldiers during armed combat, and in the end he is killed by Israeli bullets.

TV spots

TV spots occupy significant time in *Al-Aqsa* Satellite television. Their content is mostly a religious and political mobilizing and inciting discourse, based on glorifying spiritual and military leaders of ' Hamas' and 'Al-Qassam

Brigades,' in addition to some issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict such as the 'right to return,' 'prisoners,' 'occupation,' and others related to internal conflict such as security disorder and subsequent calls for dialogue.

The glorification of spiritual and military leaders of ' Hamas' and 'Al-Qassam' focus on two senior leaders, Sheikh Ahmad Yaseen and Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi, who were assassinated by Israeli forces, triggering reactions that called for retaliation and reprisal, in the context of a religious discourse and promises for martyrs of going to Heaven.

Examples include what *Al-Aqsa* broadcast on June 18, 2007 at 6:09 and was repeated later.

Text: "From the heart of pride, our tears and sad hearts we mourned you; you have in the heart the most precious sacrifice...and for your sake Al-Qassam always retaliates."

You have not died, but are in Heaven; you continue to be a Sheikh and a lion in the den.

You ascended and sublimed with your straight and unyielding doctrine. We are your sons in religion, and have accepted to spill our blood over years."

The following text appears on the screen:

"Do not say he died. Lions do not die." This is accompanied with the scene of a weeping child, Ahmad Yaseen with children surrounding him and a picture of Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi.

Another TV spot entitled 'Sheikh Qa'eed Harrara Umaman' (a crippled Sheikh liberated nations), shows Sheikh Ahmad Yaseen among demonstrating people, with comments and poetry verses that glorify him.

Al-Aqsa broadcast another TV spot on July 3, 2007 entitled "Sa'ad Al-Batal"(the hero ascended), which speaks about the ascension of Al-Rantisi to Heaven, and what awaits him there of large-eyed beautiful women (Al-hur al-ein). It describes him as 'hero'. The text is

"The large-eyed beautiful women cheer that their knight has arrived. The Arab leaders are filled with shame for the ascension of the hero..The hero won, he paid the tax in red blood..Indeed he carried the arms and did not give in...Abdul Aziz...These are the omens of the procession of the hero to

Heaven, and the beloved... spill tears and rage for your departure... On this day the hero ascended".

It included the use of religious terminology, such as 'the wide-eyed beautiful women,' and a repetitive glorification of Rantisi and depiction as a 'hero'. It also included an urge to carry arms and incitement on fighting regardless of the price, "*he paid the tax with red blood...*"

While *Al-Aqsa* glorified Sheikh Ahmad Yaseen, Hamas founder, and Dr. Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi, a senior 'Hamas' leader, it allocated a number of TV spots to incite against President Mahmoud Abbas, the security services and Fateh leaders, such as Mohammad Dahlan and others, describing them as collaborators and traitors, and as the 'treacherous stream.'

These TV spots adopted a religious mobilizing and inciting discourse, as it broadcast scenes and texts about what it called attacks against mosques, Imams and praying public. An example is the following TV spot broadcast on June 21, 2007 at 6:18:

"Upon Zionist instructions: Abbas (And also mosques must be supported so that they continue to be places of worship)

(In the meantime, scenes from Al-Hidaya Mosque, the killed Imam, blood and burnt copies of the Koran are shown). The following text appears on the screen:

“Who are the killers targeting prayers, beards, and veils”

This is followed by another complementary TV spot entitled:

"...Pictures confirm"

A quote by Abu Mazen: *"We assert that restoring security and order and enforcement of the law will not continue to be a mere slogan in our homeland."*

In the background, scenes of shooting and pictures of security services members and 'Al-Aqsa martyrs Brigades of Fateh' and an activist saying: *"This evening all the kidnapped persons will be executed"* and the phrase *"what then"*: Pictures are more accurate.

Quotes of President Abbas:

"Even churches were not spared...a church in Gaza has been burnt and looted, and it is one of the oldest churches in Palestine."

(The church is shown intact and free of any destruction or harm). This is followed by statements of a Christian saying:

"I want to tell him not to play with fire, and not to be part of the corrupt people. Hamas is the way; Hamas is our family and brothers; Hamas protected us and we protected them, and will protect them and they will protect us; we are one people..."

The following comment appears over a black background: *Do you want more.*

Such TV spots were used to propagate 'Hamas' story within the context of the open warfare against the official media under President Abbas authority. They were used in the exchange of accusations, in which each party held the other responsible for the killings, abductions and violation of places of worship, both mosques and churches. These TV spots used many terms that reflected the then prevailing belligerent atmosphere, including the use of religious terms.

On July 6, 2007, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast at 6:39 the following TV spot:

"Dahlan: we admit that the Palestinian situation faced problems because of the presence of some elements who say that all problems can be solved through prayer."

Then a scene of a cleric saying: *"We confront it by raising the religion of God on Earth, and that God's word is the supreme word and the word of infidels is the lower."*

The spot ends with the following Koranic Verse:

"Allah said pray and I shall accept your prayer."

These TV spots were repeatedly used in the political conflict. On July 11, 2007, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast at 8:12 pm the following TV spot:

"Alert: The picture of President Abbas appears with the following expression written on it:

The mission of international troops:

- Prevent resistance movements from targeting Israel in-depth.
- Stop trafficking arms and warfare tools across the borders between Gaza and Egypt
- Dismantle arms and warfare tools trafficking operations across the borders between Gaza and Egypt.
- Achieve the common goal of the Zionist Entity and Abu Mazen in ousting Hamas rule.

This TV spot was broadcast at least three times on the same day, because of the importance of President Abbas' call at the time, and the reactions of 'Hamas,' which refused to deal with the call, while Al-Qassam Brigades threatened to receive these troops with rockets and bullets.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict occupied significant time at *Al-Aqsa*. TV spots reflected all aspects of this conflict. *Al-Aqsa* broadcast tens of TV spots with touching scenes, such as:

"It is our land and we shall return to it soon."

This addresses the right to return, adherence to the land, identity and **skies** of Palestine, and refusal to abandon it. Another TV spot is:

"We shall not relinquish even a span of the hand of the homeland."

Along with these TV spots, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast quotes from Sheikh Ahmad Yaseen on the inevitability of the exodus of Jews from Palestine, with comments like:

"We will remain loyal to you." This reflected Hamas perspective of adherence to the national cause.

Regarding resistance, throwing mortars, and asserting the right to resistance, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast the following TV spot as a threat from a masked member of Al-Qassam Brigades:

"We will resume throwing mortars in response to aggression." The following Koranic Verse appeared on the screen:

"But Allah came to them whence they did not expect, and cast terror into their hearts." Such use gives resistance a religious character.

TV spots also glorified martyrs and martyrdom, most notably: A scene of Dr. Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi, the late senior Hamas leader, in a statement in which he said that *"he preferred to die by an Apache."*

It was followed by pictures of Al-Rantisi's car after it had been shelled by an Apache.

This TV spot was broadcast tens of times during the monitored period, sometimes more than once a day.

Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons were also present in TV spots of *Al-Aqsa*. Examples are:

Mothers of prisoners addressing their sons and praying for their release with the following comment on the screen:

"Our prisoners, we will not forget you."

Imprisoned Hamas PLC members were also addressed through TV spots. They showed pictures of the sons of these prisoners, holding the pictures of their fathers and awaiting their release. In the background, the following comment appeared:

"Freedom for the prisoners of legitimacy"

Regarding targeting *Al-Aqsa* cameraman Imad Ghanem by the Israeli Army which led to the amputation of both legs, *Al-Aqsa* had a TV spot that showed Ghanem wounded and wobbling of pain. The following comment appeared in the background:

"You will never assassinate the truth."

In terms of the daily confrontation in the field, *Al-Aqsa* broadcast scenes of dead and sprawled children, their bodies ripped off, and a killed person with blood covering his face, in an indication of the Israeli shelling that killed a Palestinian citizen and 6 family members, as Israeli shelling targeted the family's house. The following comment appeared in the background of bodies and body remains:

"...And your blood will continue to draw features of the map despite the deception of conspirators."

Findings

First: *Al-Aqsa* was the spearhead for Hamas, and it spoke in its name and acted as its media organ to promote its way of thinking and its policies. This is to be expected, but it lacked professionalism in its coverage, balance in its presentation of events and fairness in its usage of language. Its discourse was factional and closer to a holy text.

Second: A regular viewer of the channel can only conclude that this discourse lacks objectivity, and it is a provocative discourse that brands others with treason and reflects an intellectual and religious doctrine that claims monopoly over the truth, and its performance is based on instigation and defamation, as can be seen in its references to political figures and leaders such as its attack on the person of President Mahmoud Abbas, as well as other leaders of 'Fateh' and in the government of Dr. Salam Fayyad.

Third: As for the news bulletins, the internal conflict was given priority in coverage, as well as allocation of more time. This was the case in both brief and main news bulletins, and even in breaking news, without overlooking news related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and giving such news the lead in the news bulletins. Events related to discovery of certain documents in the offices of the security services occupied a prominent space and exposure in breaking news, and the same applies to the arrests carried out by the Palestinian security services against Hamas activists, or the break-ins into their offices.

Fourth: As for the usage of patriotic and religious songs in the internal conflict, it was observed that the content of these songs reflected a very narrow viewpoint of the adversary, a negation of him, and instigation and defamation against him, as can be seen in a number of these songs. In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict context, these anthems glorified Hamas and its leaders and military formations, such as 'Al-Qassam Brigades' and the 'Executive Force,' with religious symbols and references that glorified battle, martyrdom and martyrs.

Fifth: *Al-Aqsa* used TV spots extensively, and these played a role similar to that of the songs and anthems, and took up the same issues and meanings, with a prevalence of religious and partisan symbols, and editing scenes and statements through cut and paste to take on a new content harmonious with the policies of the channel and of 'Hamas.'

Sixth: It was observed that there were numerous analysis and talk show programs addressing the internal conflict and its ramifications and had many different names and hosted symbols and leaders from one political

orientation, namely Hamas leaders and deputies, and military and security leaders. Only very rarely did they host non-Hamas leaders, albeit people who held identical political thought to that of Hamas. The performance of the anchors was mostly biased and lacking in objectivity.

Seventh: *Al-Aqsa* adopted a set of terminology, descriptions and jargon, whether in reference to their adversaries or in their reference to Hamas and the deposed government and its various organs and formations. While it described the opponents of 'Hamas' from 'Fateh' as "coup stream," the "treacherous stream," the "corrupt clique" or the "coup d'etat plotting clique" and described the Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad and his government as the "Dayton government," and used similar adjectives to describe President Mahmoud Abbas, it used a different set of terms and descriptions for 'Hamas' leadership and the deposed government, describing Ismail Haniyyeh as "the legitimate Prime Minister" and "head of the legitimate government," and thus the channel lacked fairness in its use of terminology and depictions.

Eighth: Intensive airing of brutal scenes of victims of the internal conflict and the victims of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, including torn up bodies of the victims and their spilled blood, with long exposure time, and even using these scenes as the background to some talk shows, especially those live programs, and usage of such footage in songs that were used for instigation against the adversary, which would intensify agitation and feelings of hostility and hatred.

Ninth: Immediate and direct coverage of many events related to the internal conflict or to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, ongoing follow-up of the events and their ramifications, noting that coverage of some internal conflict-related events was exaggerated and inaccurate, such as coverage of arrests that took place in the West Bank, while avoiding any mention of arrests and detentions that were taking place in the Gaza Strip; inaccurate news of torture to which some of those arrested were subjected to, later to be denied by the persons who were detained.

Tenth: *Al-Aqsa* was "selective" in its selections from the printed press and other media of the events in the Gaza Strip in the wake of the Hamas takeover, as was the case with 'Aqqaam Assuhof ' where the channel selected specific subjects and headlines from a select group of papers, written by commentators who held the same political and intellectual views as Hamas, and the selection of excerpts from these articles that reflect the policy of the channel.

Eleventh: Even though the program anchors in the channel were capable in their performance and ability to manage talk shows, yet their manner and performance was factional, as they always guided the guest speaker in the direction that served the channel and its mission.

Twelfth: It was observed that females were absent in the management and presentation of talk shows and news bulletins, as well as among the correspondents of the channel. The channel solely depended on young male journalists in its programs.

Recommendations

First: *Al-Aqsa* must adopt an objective discourse and avoid accusations of treason, and stop the use of religion and Koranic Verses in the internal conflict because this has grave ramifications on civil peace.

Second: *Al-Aqsa* must adhere to a professional and objective editorial policy that respects the right of expression and listens to the other opinion, rather than negate and cancel the other. This includes the use of objective terminology, and avoidance of the use of depictions that degrade the opponent and promote violence and warfare.

Third: Stop the negative use of songs and TV spots in internal fighting and in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, particularly those that promote violence, killing, and bloodshed under the pretext and justifications of conflicts and wars.

Fourth: Stop the use of brutal scenes of victims of internal fighting and those of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict out of respect for human dignity, the feelings of the victims' families and in order to prevent establishing the culture of in-fighting and deepening the feelings of hatred and enmity.

Fifth: Stop exploiting children and using them as material for the media in the internal conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, since such use distorts the image of Palestinian people and constitutes a violation of the children's right to live.

Sixth: Adopt accuracy and objectivity in covering events; avoid exaggeration, and use diversified sources in coverage; present balanced stories on topics that have an impact on civil peace and social unity, such as the internal conflict that had an impact on internal relations.

Seventh: Intensive training on the job for *Al-Aqsa* crew members, especially managers and decision-makers, to separate the policy of *Al-Aqsa* Satellite Channel from that of the movement.