

AI JAZEERA ENGLISH: Executive Summary

QUESTION: Should Canadians be allowed to decide for themselves whether or not they want to watch the Al Jazeera English news channel?

ANSWER: 'YES'

1. ***AJE provides news and information not available elsewhere and from parts of the world that go unreported. There is also evidence that it serves as a 'bridge' to understand other cultures.***

AJE is the only truly global English-language, all-news channel. Al Jazeera's English and Arabic services have a combined total of 69 news bureaus, more than either BBC or CNN. AJE also broadcasts live out of Asia (Kuala Lumpur), the Middle East (Doha), Europe (London) and the Americas (Washington). AJE is firmly rooted in regions well beyond the traditional Western power centres, letting the world tell its own story. As a result, it has quickly become the leading international news service in Africa, key markets in Asia, as well as the Middle East. AJE also serves as a bridge to the understanding of other cultures. As George Clooney once described it: "Al Jazeera English TV is a perfect example of how we can open up the doors to see what these cultures are and that our differences with them are not so many ." As evidence of this, a 2008 American academic study of AJE's impact in six countries in Asia , Europe, the Middle East and the United States (www.ajerp.com) revealed that in contrast to other channels AJE's viewers "found it to function as a 'conciliatory media'... more likely to cover contentious issues in a way that contributes to...cooperation, negotiation and reconciliation." AJE is a part of the Al Jazeera broadcast group, but a separate and independent member of it. Just as the News Corporation's Star TV, Times of London, Sun newspaper, Sky News and the Fox TV network all have independent voices, priorities and brands within one international multimedia company - so does Al Jazeera English.

2. ***Canadians, as part of the most multicultural country in the world, would particularly appreciate its unique perspective on global issues.***

The editorial policy of AJE is firmly rooted in fair and fearless reporting. We cover every story from every side, from as many angles as we can. AJE gives a voice to all sides in conflicts and in all of our stories. This policy of fair reporting is exemplified by our journalistic perspective, which sees the world through the lens of the global South.

This is a stark contrast to other international channels, such as CNN and the BBC, which focus on the Western centres of power and reflect their own national American and British perspectives in their reporting. The same could be said of France 24, Russia Today as well as Iranian Press TV – all of which are anchored in national agendas. In contrast, Al Jazeera English tries to bring the perspective of the South – of the developing world – to the forefront of public policy debates, and to give voice to the voiceless - holding the powerful accountable regardless of the

consequence. In a recent academic study of BBC, CNN, and AJE, it was shown that, in the period examined, 81% of AJE's news items were about the news and stories of the South (Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America, etc.), and this was roughly double that of BBC and CNN whose `news` focused more on Western Europe and the U.S. (estimated 55-60% of their newscasts.) Canada's long and rich tradition of multiculturalism means that Canadians understand in a unique way that the world is full of different perspectives and stories. And these are the stories and perspectives that AJE tries to report.

3. ***Al Jazeera operates within a strict Code of Ethics and adheres to the rigorous regulation of Britain's regulatory authority, Ofcom.***

Al Jazeera English is available and popular in Britain, and it is regulated by Ofcom, the respected UK body which oversees that country's media organizations. AJE is required to adhere to Ofcom's very strict Broadcast Code that deals with issues of impartiality and fairness. In two years of broadcasting, AJE has never experienced a problem. AJE journalists are also required to follow Al Jazeera's Code of Ethics, which is available on our website: www.aljazeera.net/english. It's precisely the same type of Code which governs journalistic quality and integrity at the BBC and CBC. In two years of broadcasting, AJE has never experienced a problem. Like all news organizations which deal in 24/7 coverage of sudden and emerging news from all over the world with breathtaking speed, AJE can make mistakes. But we also do rigorous and self-critical post-mortems to ensure that these mistakes are not repeated.

4. ***Al Jazeera has a reputation for reporting stories no one else does. AJE received international acclaim as the only international English-language news channel which covered both sides of the Gaza-Israeli conflict.***

AJE has special pride in its coverage of the Middle East. Again, the goal here is not to push a line or cater to a bias. The goal is far more revolutionary: we simply want people to understand the full story, not a narrow one. In recent weeks, AJE has gained international acclaim through its coverage of the Gaza-Israeli war from The Financial Times, The Economist, The Guardian, Le Monde in Paris, the Columbia Journalism Review, The New York Times and the Haaretz newspaper in Israel. The Haaretz piece – titled "My Hero of the Gaza War" - includes this paragraph: "My war hero is Ayman Mohyeldin, the young correspondent for Al Jazeera English and the only foreign network broadcasting during these awful days in a Gaza Strip closed off to the media. Al Jazeera English is not what you might think. It offers balanced, professional reporting from correspondents both in Israel and Gaza".

5. ***After only two years on the air, AJE has a huge audience reach that is growing faster than any other international news channel in history. It is available in over 100 countries. Why not in Canada?***

Al Jazeera English has been on the air for just more than two years. It is broadcast now in more than 100 countries and 140 million households – which is a figure that both CNN and the BBC took many more years to reach. It is widely watched in Israel, having replaced the BBC on one of the country’s largest satellite carriers. AJE is a truly unique news channel that will provide Canadians with news and perspectives that they can’t get from any other news source. Additionally, with a new Canadian news bureau – the only international news organization which would have a bureau in Canada - AJE will tell Canadian stories to, and about, Canadians with a perspective that recognizes the desire of Canadians to understand their own multicultural identity as well as the diversity of the world around them.

6. *AJE’s editorial staff is made up of 50 nationalities and brings a truly international treatment of world issues.*

AJE has a worldwide staff of about 1200 employees, drawn from more than 50 nationalities. It constitutes the most diverse news service in the world. There are many from the BBC, CNN and, yes, the CBC – but many more come from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Australia and the Middle East. Its staff is as multicultural as is Canada.

7. *AJE is widely respected throughout the broadcast industry, and has already won many major journalistic awards.*

Last July, Al Jazeera English won the award at the Monte Carlo Television Festival for “Best 24-hour news program”. In September, AJE was the only international English-language news channel in the world to get nominated for International Emmies for both for its news and current affairs programming. And in February, AJE was nominated as “Best News Channel of the Year” by Britain’s prestigious Royal Television Society.

8. *AJE is a distinct channel within the Al Jazeera group – with separate editorial staff, priorities and audience – but it is proud to be part of the Al Jazeera journalistic tradition.*

Although the Al Jazeera ‘brand’ is widely respected and popular in most parts of the world, it is generally misunderstood in the U.S., and these stereotypes sometimes affect its image in Canada. They flow from the political and partisan aftershocks of the events involving the U.S. after 9/11.

Several points need to be understood if an accurate portrait of Al Jazeera is to be drawn:

- Day in and day out, Israeli politicians speak directly on Al Jazeera – on both its Arabic and English channels – more than on any other network in the world outside of Israel. That actually was one of the first notable achievements of Al Jazeera Arabic when it was created in 1996 by the Emir of Qatar. For the first time in history, the Arab world directly saw and

heard Israelis - speaking freely, frequently, live and unedited. That was revolutionary. Until then, traditional Arab journalism has been limited to state-run propaganda machines, usually serving very narrow interests.

- Relations between Qatar's ruler, the Emir, and the U.S. Government have occasionally been strained because of Al Jazeera - but this is recent. Al Jazeera was created in 1996 to mitigate the smothering media climate of censorship within the Arab world. In fact, Al Jazeera - until 9/11 in 2001 - was seen by Western governments, including the U.S. and the Clinton White House, as the poster child for the strengthening of Arab democracy.
- Criticism of Al Jazeera by the former U.S. government began in November, 2001. As the only news organization in Afghanistan after 9/11, it had the temerity to report that, yes, civilians were being killed in the American attack on the Taliban, contrary to U.S. claims. That angered the Americans. In addition, Osama Bin Laden released his first videos to the world's most popular Arabic channel, Al Jazeera, although these videos sometimes appeared first on other international broadcasters. The airing of these videos, which were clearly newsworthy, was not an endorsement of Al Qaeda by Al Jazeera anymore than The New York Times could be accused of endorsing the notorious American 'unibomber' when he leaked his documents to that newspaper. In fact, Bin Laden has frequently accused Al Jazeera of being "pro-American" and "pro-Zionist".
- But the criticisms by the Republican White House and the Pentagon of Al Jazeera did work, although in a bizarre way. It has complicated the efforts of Al Jazeera English to be carried nationwide in the U.S. But Al Jazeera Arabic itself - the main source of friction with the former U.S. Administration - is actually available nationwide on television throughout the United States. That's because the deal was done well before 9/11.
- Shortly after its launch, Al Jazeera quickly became, as it is today, the Arab world's most popular and respected news channel - by a wide margin. It gave voice to a multitude of views that for the first time reflected the mood and moment of the Arab world. In addition to its Arabic 'main channel', Al Jazeera has a smaller channel that broadcasts live speeches, seminars and sermons - it's like a C-Span - that has been uncensored since its creation. On rare occasion, not often, personal views expressed on this channel by certain speakers - *not views held by Al Jazeera itself* - have been outrageous. Angry, hateful words about Israel and Jews - just as there have been angry, hateful words voiced in the Israeli media about Arabs and Muslims. No one in this painful, bitter conflict has a monopoly on virtue.
- Al Jazeera's hallmark is fearless reporting and wide-open debate - regardless of what controversy it triggers. This can challenge the rich and the powerful. And it has enraged authoritarian Arab governments. Al Jazeera journalists, at one time or another, have been

thrown out of many Arab countries. As recently as last March, at the Arab Summit, several governments condemned Al Jazeera for its critical reporting of the Arab world.

- Qatar is one of the most liberal of the Gulf States. Its capital city – Doha - is home to Education City: many European and North American universities have campuses there. Qatar has diplomatic relations with Israel – the only Arab country that doesn't directly border Israel to do so. As a close U.S. ally, it also hosts one of the largest American military bases in the world.

Al Jazeera Code of Ethics

Being a media service globally orientated, Al Jazeera shall determinedly adopt the following code of ethics in pursuance of the vision and mission it has set for itself:

1. Adhere to the journalistic values of honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity, giving no priority to commercial or political over professional consideration.
2. Endeavour to get to the truth and declare it in our dispatches, programmes and news bulletins unequivocally in a manner which leaves no doubt about its validity and accuracy.
3. Treat our audiences with due respect and address every issue or story with due attention to present a clear, factual and accurate picture while giving full consideration to the feelings of victims of crime, war, persecution and disaster, their relatives and our viewers, and to individual privacies and public decorum.
4. Welcome fair and honest media competition without allowing it to affect adversely our standards of performance and thereby having a "scoop" would not become an end in itself.
5. Present the diverse points of view and opinions without bias and partiality.
6. Recognize diversity in human societies with all their races, cultures and beliefs and their values and intrinsic individualities so as to present unbiased and faithful reflection of them.
7. Acknowledge a mistake when it occurs, promptly correct it and ensure it does not recur.
8. Observe transparency in dealing with the news and its sources while adhering to the internationally established practices concerning the rights of these sources.
9. Distinguish between news material, opinion and analysis to avoid the snares of speculation and propaganda.
10. Stand by colleagues in the profession and give them support when required, particularly in the light of the acts of aggression and harassment to which journalists are subjected at times. Cooperate with Arab and international journalistic unions and associations to defend freedom of the press.

AJE English Senior Editorial Team

- **Tony Burman, Managing Director, AJE** - In AJE role since May, 2008. Former Editor in Chief and Executive Director of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC News) for eight years; award-winning news and documentary producer in more than 30 countries; senior program and executive roles in Radio, TV and Online. Started with The Montreal Star.
- **Al Anstey, Director of News, AJE** - Joined AJE from the UK's ITN where he was the head of Foreign News. Has covered all major stories in world news, from the Kosovo war to the Sydney Olympics. Before moving to Doha, he was based in London, Hong Kong, New Delhi, Sydney, and Washington. He first became a Producer at CBS News.
- **Catherine Cano, Deputy Director of News, AJE** - Former Editor in Chief of RDI, the French CBC 24 hours news channel in Canada and former Radio-Canada's Senior News Director; award winning news and current affairs programs; Started her journalism career in Washington and has covered most of the major world's events of the last 20 years.
- **Heather Allan, Head of News Gathering, AJE** - Career spanning 30 years with NBC News. Member of team that launched SABC television in South Africa. Field producer Africa for ABC News; Bureau Chief, Africa for NBC. 20 years in the USA. Bureau Chief Los Angeles. Led coverage teams for big news stories, including the last five Olympics.
- **Ibrahim Helal, Deputy Managing Director- Editorial** - More than 20 years experience in international journalism, including roles with Egyptian TV, BBC Arabic TV, the BBC World Service Trust and the Al Jazeera Arabic Channel. Joined AJE in May 2006 from the BBC World Service Trust, where he was Project Director for the training of Arab media organizations.
- **John Pullman, Head of Output, AJE**- Former editor of News at Ten at ITN in the UK. Produced award-winning coverage of Iraq War, and worked across newsgathering and production. Began his career on local and national newspapers in the UK. Joined AJE before launch.
- **Max Uechtritz, Director of Programmes, AJE** - Former Executive Director of Australia's ABC News & Current Affairs, Network News Director Nine Network Australia, Editor in Chief Ninemsn portal; award-winning correspondent covering events across five continents including conflicts in the Balkans, Middle East and China.
- **Sue Phillips, Director of Foreign Bureaux and Development, AJE** - A U.K. citizen, she joined the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1978 with senior production roles in Moscow, Rome and Washington. Became CBC's London Bureau Chief in 1997. Joined Al Jazeera English in 2004 where she was appointed London Bureau Chief.

How to Reach the CRTC

Comments to the CRTC in response to AJE's application can be sent in the following ways:

1. By Mail:
CRTC
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2
2. By Fax:
819-994-0218
3. By Email:
<http://support.crtc.gc.ca/rapidscin/default.aspx?lang=en&applicant=2009-254>
Follow the link to comment on notice 2009-254

Comments must be received by the CRTC no later than June 8, 2009

The CRTC requests that you number each paragraph of your submission. In addition, please enter the line *****End of document***** following the last paragraph.

Individuals submitting comments on the request should also submit a true copy of their comments to the Canadian sponsor, ECG, at the following address:

Ethnic Channels Group Limited
907 Alness Street
Toronto, Ontario
M3J 2J1
Attention: Mr. Slava Levin
E-mail: slavalevin@ethnicchannels.com
Fax: 416-736-7677

Proof that comments have been sent to ECG must accompany the original version of the comments sent to the commission.

For additional information visit www.IWantAJE.ca