



الإئتلاف الأردني للمعارضة

The Jordanian Opposition Coalition

Broadcasting Board of Governors
330 Independence Avenue
SW Washington, DC 20237

Re: AlHurra: Mission Statement Compromised

Dear Board Members,

On behalf of the **Jordanian Opposition Coalition, (JOC)**, we would like to thank you and your colleagues for the high quality work, information and values you provide to those suffering from the growing plague of censorship, ignorance and autocratic control while promoting the most basic of true values in the western world: journalism and freedom of press, and support for the democratic values lacking in many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, where thirst for freedom and democracy is growing day by day.

With that in mind, on behalf of the **JOC**, I would like to not only ask a couple of important questions, but also voice our concern about AlHurra TV's recent conduct with respect to censoring our message.

Specifically, on June 1st, 2016, AlHurra approached the coalition about our activities, and asked me if I, as the **JOC's** leader and Secretary General, that I would agree to an interview. The initial contact happened on Facebook by AlHurra's Associate Producer, Ms. Ekram Ibrahim. She requested my contact information and called me shortly after. Ms. Ibrahim expressed AlHurra's desire to interview me to discuss what's going on in Jordan, with a focus being the King's dissolution of the Parliament and his power grab that saw him gain even more Constitutional Powers.

As agreed upon, the cordial and friendly interview was set to take place on Friday June 3rd, 2016 at 14:00 pm Eastern Time. Ibrahim said AlHurra's London offices would contact me to arrange specifics like travel from my home to their office for the interview.

It sure was a great pride and joy to think that I would not only help AlHurra's push the concepts of Democracy throughout the region, but just as importantly, would become the voice of Jordan's silent majority on AlHurra TV. This is a role I have cherished now for almost seven years now, and have been recognized as such by some of the world's most known and respected media: AlJazeera, BBC Arabic, Fox News and countless others around the world. All of the interviews I give have one major commonality - I worked hard to not only promote democracy in Jordan, but to save lives while bringing message from the oppressed Jordanian people to the civilized world.

With that in mind, and nothing more than excitement at the opportunity presented to us, one of the **JOC's** member posted on his Facebook page that I, the **JOC's** Secretary General, was to appear on AlHurra. As we all celebrated in our own way at the hard work we had put in to get this far, we all went to bed very happy knowing that we are making a difference in the future of Jordan and the lives of over 6.5 million Jordanians, and about 2,000,000 refugees. On June 2nd, 2016, Thursday morning, the phone rang and it was Ms. Ibrahim on the phone, calling to politely tell me that the interview was cancelled. When pushed for information, she gave no clear explanation, and clearly was very cautious about supplying any reasons or information about what had happened and why this decision was made.



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Needless to say, we were all disappointed, but just looked at this as 'one step in a long march' that will bring Democracy to Jordan and her people.

Then, on Friday, a show was aired on AlHurra which covered Jordan's celebrations of the 70th independence anniversary and the 100th of the Great Arab Revolt. Some Jordanian viewers were very displeased by the show for two major reasons - the cruelty of the regime against its own people and the relationship and power between the Muslim Brotherhood (a known terrorist group that the USA is working to outlaw) and the regime. To show you how the average Jordanian viewer felt, below is an example of the comments on Social media:



As leader of the **JOC**, I invite you to get your own translation to this message, but for the time being and the purposes of this letter, it is translated as follows:

"Following an announcement by the opposition in exile that there will be an interview with AlHurra Satellite Channel to explain the opposition's vision, in the foreseen future; there came a practice of all forms of pressure and threats on the channel and its sponsors, as a result we are surprised that AlHurra's reporter was called in to talk about the [Great] Arab Revolt, and the talk of the reporter appeared cheap and under pressure in such a shameless and stupid manner.... I do not historically remember any form of cooperation from AlHurra TV about any national [Jordanian] celebration." – Sami Muala Alzieod.

At this point, on behalf of the **JOC**, I would like to point out that the above comments are not from a **JOC** member, rather they come from an oppressed Jordanian citizen who was looking forward to the show because he believes that it will help bring democracy to his country. In fact, it should be pointed out that we have a tremendous following on both Facebook and Twitter, even though in some instances, the King and his henchmen have been rounding up our members, putting them in jail and in several instances, have brutally tortured people for merely "liking" our Facebook page(s).



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Which leads to this fundamental question – why was our interview cancelled and a brutal dictatorship rewarded and promoted?

To the **JOC** membership, we believe that AlHurra cancelled the proposed interview for political reasons and therefore carried the entire matter out in a least professional manner that violates its very own charter, not to mention the foundational Freedom of the Press basics that the west is built on.

With that in mind, we would like to state the following:

International Media Recognition: AlHurra's request for interview came less than 24 hours after I was interviewed by the BBC Arabic TV's most watched show, Nuqtat Hwar. During the interview, I discussed the **JOC's** future and vision for Jordan. Additionally, the BBC gave callers the chance to directly challenge me and ask questions that helped bring things into focus for the viewers. To insure neutrality and fairness, the BBC invited another guest on who is loyal to Jordan's Hashemite regime. As expressed to us, the BBC has opened its doors to us and has exhibited its commitment to fulfill its mission statement and freedom of the press. To make things even more confusing, AlHurra's associate producer (who requested the interview) stated that AlHurra producers had watched my BBC interview and were "keen to hear my point of view".

Did Political Pressures Hinder Actions: After doing some research (including talking to insiders and reporters in Jordan), we have been told **that on his behalf, the king's offices exerted political** pressure that led directly to the cancellation of the interview. With that call in mind, we not only wonder what threats were made, but more importantly, why the king is so opposed to democracy taking root in Jordan, and how come AlHurra supported his positions and claims?

Mission Statement Unfulfilled – The Basics: No matter if we are interviewed again or not, the **JOC** believes that this constitutes a direct breach of AlHurra's very own mission statement and supporting covenants. To the world, this mission statement can be looked at in one of two ways. First, many in the world look forward to the truth that is spread by the channel. The second is, the world that lives under the cloud of censorship, appreciates the huge sum of US taxpayer money spent on promoting democracy around the world. These are concepts we will address as this letter develops.

Mission Statement Unfulfilled – Specifics: Many in the Islamic world who know of your work, understand this: the station's guiding concepts – combined with the freedom of speech, means that the news will come to them without political pressure from outside dictators. With that, I would like to call your attention to the following sentence from your mission statement:

The mission of AlHurra is: "to provide objective, accurate, and relevant news and information to the people of the Middle East about the region, the world, and the United States. [To do so] Alhurra supports democratic values by expanding the spectrum of ideas, opinions, and perspectives available in the region's media."

In this case, we believe that AlHurra has not lived up to its mission statement and the concept of freedom of the press. As a result, we believe that it has failed to educate the masses about what is really going on in Jordan, what the Jordanian people demands are, what the **JOC** is all about, the impact Jordan has on the region and how they can help make a difference that will lead to democracy.



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What makes this serious is this: during the celebrations, using a slight of hand that can only be compared to Houdini type magic, the king not only expanded his powers to an unprecedented extreme, but dissolved the Parliament. We believe that BBC Arabic saw this matter as a significant development in the country, and as such, dedicated an entire show to it. In fact it was so important to them, that they invited me – as a color commentator – as well as one of the king’s loyalists, to express different views on the issue, in essence, debating the issue before the world. What makes this even more interesting is this: this comes at a time when the king is going around the world begging for money to pay off Jordan’s crushing debt – a debt that could bring about Greece-like consequences to the region. Right now, because of the coverage you gave him, he looks like a hero and is filling his coffers with money that will either go into his pocket or be used to oppress not just Jordanians, but Syrians and other refugees in the country. Overall, this undermines democracy and your mission statement, which does not include doing propaganda on behalf of Arab dictators.

Mission Statement Unfulfilled – Democratic Values: Taking this one step further, AlHurra actions have worked against its own mission’s commitment – a commitment to supporting the growth and expansion of democratic values. By excluding the opposition from any show on Jordan, it de facto reinforces the following concepts:

- 1) That the King is doing good
- 2) That they have freedom of speech and the press
- 3) That democracy is flourishing in Jordan

What makes this interesting is this: The **JOC** is the first Jordanian political movement that has exhibited our points of view by using the democratic process to advance change by using gentlemanly, professional and peaceful means as a benchmark that others in the Middle East can learn from. For example, we have not only taken positions on legislation and spoken before Parliamentary and Congressional bodies, but we have outlined our thoughts and feelings the same way the Magna Carta and Thomas Jefferson have – through a platform, a bill of rights and a written constitution. What makes this unique is this: during the Arab spring, none of this was in place and everyone was calling for peace, while promoting violence. We are promoting peace through democracy, in a similar fashion to that of Gandhi. We believe that AlHurra has missed an opportunity to show the world what can be done to “expand the spectrum of ideas, opinions and perspective(s)” that make a democracy effectively operate.

At this point, I would like to go one step further - when AlHurra associate producer Ekram Ibrahim approached me, she said they was going to have a counter-guest - Yahia AlSoud, who is an appointed (by the king) Jordanian member of Parliament, and is known for his vocal and extreme support and loyalty to the king and his regime. This could have been a very balanced, informative and critical show at a time when many American and Israeli politicians believe Jordan’s regime is fragile and the country is open to change, for example Presidential Candidate Clinton’s comments that “Jordan’s future is not clear’, had AlHurra not cancelled the show, AlHurra would have been there to both record it and report on it, as well as promote the benefits of democracy the media that fosters not just these democratic concepts, but more importantly shown the world what a true commitment to journalistic integrity is all about.

Mission Statement Unfulfilled – Budget Allocation: In addition to violating the above concepts, the **JOC** believes that AlHurra has violated another very important agreement that it has with the American Public: effectively using all funds allocated by the Government on behalf of the US taxpayer. As we



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scratch our heads and wonder what happened, we wonder how promoting a dictatorship/monarchy over a democratic movement is in the best interests of the US Taxpayer? Additionally, how is blocking the voice of Jordan's peaceful opposition, serve to either educate or add to the information of the American public?

Before I close, I would like to comment on one final thing that the regime might claim that could sway you and your staff: an appearance by anyone from the **JOC** on AlHurra could have "Compromised America's relationship with the Hashemite regime". To show you that the claim is both false and ridiculous, one can simply look at the segment that was done in UK by the BBC Arabic TV - the UK has a historical relationship to the Jordanian government and is keen to keep it positive, and obviously did not see my presence on its TV network as an obstacle or hindering of its relationship to Jordan.

In closing, you can see that this is an overall concern to us, and we are pleased to not only bring this to your attention, but hope that we can work with you to find an equitable solution to this problem. Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from, and working with you and your staff as this situation unfolds.

Sincerely;

Mudar Zahran

Secretary General of the **Jordanian Opposition Coalition**

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CC: Selected members of the US Senate and House of Representatives