

# Al Jazeera America Set to Debut

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

On November 1, 1996, Al Jazeera began operating. It's headquartered in Doha. It's owned and operated by Qatar's monarchy.

Chairman Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani's a distant cousin of Qatari Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Al Jazeera News channel (JNC) is indistinguishable from other mainstream media. It long ago fell from grace.

It abandoned professionalism and objectivity. Its programming lacks credibility. It features largely pro-Western propaganda.

Wadah Khanfar served earlier as managing director. His pro-Western support got JNC staff to leave. They refused to report managed news.

In December 2012, Al Jazeera bought Current TV. Terms weren't disclosed. Reportedly it was for \$500 million. Depending on distribution, JNC potentially will reach 40 million households.

It'll be headquartered in New York. It'll have 12 news bureaus nationwide. They'll be in major US cities. In announcing JNC's plans, general director Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani said:

"For many years, we understood that we could make a positive contribution to the news and information available in and about the United States and what we are announcing today will help us achieve that goal."

"By acquiring Current TV, Al Jazeera will significantly expand our existing distribution footprint in the US, as well as increase our newsgathering and reporting efforts in America."

In 2002, Al Gore and Joel Hyatt established Current. On August 1, 2005, it began operating. Gore and Hyatt announced the sale, saying:

"Current Media was built based on a few key goals: To give voice to those who are not typically heard; to speak truth to power; to provide independent and diverse points of view; and to tell the stories that no one else is telling."

Its programming fell woefully short. It's viewership suffered. Gore and Hyatt added:

"Al Jazeera has the same goals and, like Current, believes that facts and truth lead to a better understanding of the world around us."

It's replacing Current. It's adding its own on-air staff. It plans programming tailored to US viewers. They'll get far less than they deserve.

They'll soon find out. Al Jazeera America's (AJAM) no different from other mainstream media. On August 20, it's set to debut. Hold the cheers.

Credible news reporting's excluded. Truth and full disclosure are prohibited. Avoid AJAM. Choose reliable alternative sources instead.

Former Anderson Consulting executive Ehab Al Shihabi heads AJAM. He's CEO. He represents Qatari and pro-Western interests. He's a political opportunist. He's a propagandist. He's no newsman. He has no editorial experience.

He spurns independent voices. He eschews them. He wants them silenced. His claims about wanting Al Jazeera America being "the voice of Main Street" don't wash.

Former Palestinian Balad party MK Azmi Bishara heads the Doha-based Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. He deplores censorship. He addressed Al Jazeera America's debut, saying:

"If the price of (its) entry into the United States means its submission to Zionist dictates, then this means that America will be moving into Al Jazeera and not the reverse."

Marwan Bishara's a senior JNC political analyst. He's an on-air host. He writes extensively on geopolitical issues. He's Azmi Bishara's younger brother.

On July 10, he sent a highly critical [letter](#) to JNC executives. In part it said:

"I had long decided not to interfere in the working of AJAM, but it has become clear to me over the last few days and weeks that some terrible decisions" were made.

They'll "insult the intelligence of the American people."

"I've been hearing many ill-conceived assumptions and baseless conclusions about what's good for Aljazeera and what makes it successful in America. And it seems to me a few tend to believe their own feeble pseudo-marketing claims..."

"Secrecy corrupts the system. That's why it's high time to speak out and to discuss the almost secretive ways in which AJ matters and interests have been handled in America."

Does criticizing US policies make AJAM anti-American, Bishara asked? Does replicating US broadcasters and cable channels matter more than good journalism?

Viewers crave it. They hope AJAM will provide it. "That's why it's high time for a serious reflection about where we are heading editorially...and other potential projects."

"It's truly insulting to the greater majority of the Americans who I suspect want to watch us and support us that AJAM communicates with them through empty gimmicks and poor marketing theatrics."

"If we fail America around the launch time, it will be ever more difficult to salvage a tarnished image and compromised credibility."

Bishara's especially upset about Ehab Al Shihabi's appointment. His background is business, not journalism. He held a highly publicized meeting with Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

He's a former White House chief of staff. He's an unindicted war criminal. He's a committed Zionist. He's one-sidedly pro-Israel.

Bishara said Al Shihabi's "personal ambition (leads him) astray. (He) should make no more appearances in public forums or photo-ops with political characters, shady or otherwise, that would only hurt us in the long run."

He should "stay clear of our content. Journalism is not (his) thing."

On June 1, former JNC English head Tony Burman [headlined](#) "Al Jazeera America has the odour of disaster," saying:

It's abandoning international news. It's trying to be "American through and through. (It's) curry(ing) public and political favour."

"It will, in other words, operate much like CNN and Fox News. (T)he rumoured shortlist of potential (presenters) includes several of the people who have driven US cable networks, including CNN, to a level of utter mediocrity."

"Does it make sense that Al Jazeera's new-found timidity in its dealings with the United States flows from a desire by its Qatari patrons to improve relations with Washington?"

Is it currying favor with the Israeli Lobby? There's "no point being a pale imitation of what" growing numbers of Americans reject.

### **A Final Comment**

Georgetown University's Adel Iskandar calls today's Al Jazeera polar opposite its original incarnation. "The director general of the network has left and was replaced by a member of the (Qatari) royal family," he said.

"Al Jazeera Arabic has very much become an instrument of Qatari foreign policy, so it's no longer a freewheeling network."

"The English network has higher standards, but still has problems. We've seen the departure of various people at the network who claim that it no longer practices independent journalism."

Freelance journalist Vivian Salama writes on Middle East issues. On January 9, she [headlined](#) her Columbia Journalism Review article "Al Jazeera in America."

It's not completely new to America, she said. A "small handful of cable providers have been showing the network's English-language broadcast(s)."

"Many questions remain about Al Jazeera's American enterprise at this juncture, including whether the Qatari government will seek heavy involvement in its content, as well as about the news executives who will become the architects of this new network."

Salama's fears are realized. AJAM intends replicating the worst of what growing numbers of Americans reject.

They want real news, information and analysis. AJAM plans same old, same old. It bears repeating. Opt out. Avoid it.

Choose reliable alternative sources. Many are available online. This writer hosts the Progressive Radio Network's Progressive Radio News Hour. It's polar opposite managed news misinformation.

PRN's the most popular online news and information service. It adds thousands of new followers weekly.

It features what people want. So do many other reliable online choices. They're easy to follow live or archived. Why stay informed any other way.

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*His new book is titled "Banker Occupation: Waging Financial War on Humanity."*

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<http://www.dailycensored.com/al-jazeera-america-set-to-debut/>

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