

US News Networks Remove Reporters Critical of Israeli Attack on Gaza

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On two consecutive days this week, journalists reporting from the Gaza war zone who evinced empathy for the Palestinians and less than unquestioning support for Israel were removed by television network executives.

NBC News' Ayman Mohyeldin, an award-winning Egyptian-born journalist who provided on-the-spot coverage of the Israeli invasion of Gaza in 2008-2009 and had distinguished himself for his objective reporting on the current Israeli war, was suddenly pulled from the region on Thursday.

He was removed after he described via social media and video the murder Wednesday of four Palestinian children by Israeli gunboats as the youth, between the ages of 9 and 11 and all from the same family, played soccer on a Gaza beach near hotels used by foreign journalists.

Mohyeldin wrote movingly of the tragic deaths, tweeting, "4 Palestinian kids killed in a single Israeli airstrike. Minutes before they were killed by our hotel, I was kicking a ball with them." He also sent photos and a video of the devastated parents.

While NBC has given no public explanation for Mohyeldin's banishment, numerous reports have referred to unnamed network executives citing "security concerns" as the reason. However, the *Huffington Post* and other sources have suggested the immediate trigger for his ouster was a tweet he posted, and subsequently removed, questioning a US State Department spokesperson who blamed the Palestinian Islamist movement that rules Gaza, Hamas, for the death of the four youth.

The tweet stated: "The US State Department Spokesperson just said that Hamas is ultimately responsible for Israel shelling and killing 4 boys who were cousins aged 9-11 because Hamas didn't accept the ceasefire. Discuss among yourselves."

Reporting Thursday on the removal of Mohyeldin, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Glenn Greenwald, who has collaborated closely with Edward Snowden in exposing the National Security Agency's secret and illegal mass spying, cited a report last week by Mohyeldin in which he said that "you can understand why some human rights organizations call Gaza 'the world's largest outdoor prison.'" In his news account, Mohyeldin went on to say: "One of the major complaints and frustrations among many people is that this is a form of collective punishment. You have 1.7 million people in this territory, now being bombarded, with really no way out."

Greenwald noted that right-wing and pro-Israel web sites have repeatedly denounced Mohyeldin as a “ Hamas spokesman ” who spouts “ pro-Hamas rants .”

In NBC’s Nightly News broadcast on Wednesday, Mohyeldin was inexplicably absent, and his report on the killing of the Palestinian youth was fronted instead by NBC chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel, reporting from Tel Aviv. Engel, who has unswervingly mouthed State Department propaganda from every recent war zone, including Libya and Syria, has been assigned to replace Mohyeldin in Gaza.

On Friday, CNN removed correspondent Diana Magnay from her post covering the Israeli invasion of Gaza. She was banished in retaliation for a tweet in which she described as “ scum ” Israelis who were cheering the bombing of Gaza and threatening to attack her if her report diverged from the Israeli government line.

Magnay appeared on CNN Thursday, reporting from a hill overlooking the Israel-Gaza border. As she was reporting, Israelis could be heard cheering as missiles were fired at the Palestinian territory. After the live report, Magnay tweeted: “ Israelis on hill above Sderot cheer as bombs land on Gaza; threaten our car if I say a word wrong. Scum .”

The tweet was quickly removed and a CNN spokeswoman issued a craven apology, followed by the announcement that Magnay had been reassigned to Moscow.

These incidents underscore the ironclad and rigidly enforced self-censorship practiced by the corporate-controlled media, which hardly bother any longer to disguise their role as purveyors of government lies and propaganda. Any evidence of sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, any hint of criticism of Israeli war crimes is met with instantaneous banishment, generally followed by blacklisting.

The removal of the two reporters, particularly Mohyeldin, is intended as a warning to any other journalists who retain some commitment to journalistic principles and respect for the truth to keep their mouths shut. Under no circumstances can the people be given access to an honest and objective account of what is taking place in Gaza.

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