

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia

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March 19, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Eisendorf

FROM: Dalis Blumenfeld
Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia

SUBJECT: Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee Hearing:
That Which is Not Obligatory is Prohibited: Censorship and Incitement in
the Arab World
January 22, 2008

Enclosed are excerpts from the above hearing containing your remarks.

Please recommend any necessary corrections in the remarks and fax them to me, at the above fax number, no later than **March 27, 2008**

In recommending corrections, please be mindful of House Rule 11 (e) (1). The rule requires the committee to keep a complete record of all Committee action, including in the case of meeting or hearing transcripts, "a substantially verbatim account of remarks actually made during the proceedings, subject only to technical, grammatical, and typographical corrections authorized by the person making the remarks involved."

If I have not received the corrections or heard from you by the deadline indicated, I will assume that you have no corrections and will send your remarks to the printer as is. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 225-3345.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Enclosures

285 | STATEMENT OF RICHARD EISENDORF, SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER FOR
286 | THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, FREEDOM HOUSE

287 | Mr. EISENDORF. Chairman Ackerman, Members of the
288 | subcommittee and staff, thank you for calling this important
289 | hearing today and for inviting Freedom House to testify.

290 | Freedom House has been monitoring media freedom around
291 | the world for almost three decades. As you noted, our annual
292 | surveys evaluate press freedom by answering a series of
293 | questions in three areas: The legal environment, the
294 | political environment and the economic environment.

295 | Our 2007 report shows that the Middle East and North
296 | Africa have the lowest press freedoms ratings of all the
297 | regions in the world, and that is not expected to change in
298 | 2008. Since 2006, press freedoms in the Middle East have been
299 | on a steady decline. Out of 19 countries in the region, only
300 | one, Israel, is rated as free; two are partly free, as you
301 | noted, Kuwait and Lebanon; and 16 are not free.

302 | As our graph here shows, we see the comparison with the
303 | rest of the world. Worldwide, 47 percent of countries have a
304 | free press. In the Middle East no one does, and no Arab
305 | countries do.

306 | I would like to briefly highlight several ways that the
307 | media is restricted in the Middle East. As Joel mentioned,
308 | attacks and intimidation on journalists, restrictions on the

309 internet, legal measures, and government ownership and
310 control.

311 First on attacks and intimidation, journalists in the
312 region face surveillance, intimidation, sexual assaults,
313 torture, imprisonment and in some cases even death for doing
314 their jobs. In most cases, the source of these dangers is the
315 government, though in some instances in Iraq, Lebanon, West
316 Bank in Gaza, nonstate actors and outside forces also play a
317 part in restricting journalists.

318 In Egypt, for example, several years ago the editor in
319 chief of Al-Nasery newspaper, which has been very critical of
320 the president, was abducted late at night, taken in an
321 unmarked van to an isolated desert 50 miles outside of Cairo
322 where he was stripped naked, beaten and abandoned.

323 Unfortunately, such tactics are still in use today, and
324 in fact last week the head of the Kefaya movement, which was
325 leading a public protest against the government, was picked
326 up by police and left miles from the city. In 2007, in Egypt
327 14 journalists and editors were arrested and prosecuted.

328 The second limitation on press freedoms is through
329 restrictions of the internet. As internet use in the Middle
330 East continues to grow, the governments in the region have
331 taken a variety of steps to control this media, including
332 arresting bloggers, blocking websites, keeping a monopoly
333 over internet service providers and requiring user

334 registration.

335 Censorship, as you noted, is a huge problem. There is a
336 joke in Tunisia, which is also true for much of the Arab
337 world, that the most popular website in the country is: This
338 page cannot be displayed. Sadly, this is what one sees when
339 trying to access human rights organizations, news sites, as
340 well as those sites considered socially inappropriate.

341 International internet sites are also grappling and
342 adapting to this expanding world of internet use as a tool
343 for political activism. In November this past year, YouTube
344 blocked access to Egyptian blogger Wael Abbas's videos, some
345 of which show images of torture by Egyptian authorities. Amid
346 an outcry by international observers and press freedom
347 organizations, YouTube reinstated his account a few weeks
348 later, recognizing that those images were instrumental in
349 prosecuting those responsible for the torture.

350 In the Middle East, now bloggers are being targeted for
351 arrest and intimidation. For example, in December of 2007 a
352 leading blogger in Saudi Arabia, Fouad al-Farhan, was
353 arrested apparently for criticizing the government and
354 voicing support for political prisoners.

355 Another problem is the absence of personal freedoms. It
356 is becoming a common tactic to require sites or users to
357 register, removing the anonymity that provides a veil of
358 safety for internet users and bloggers. According to Human

359 Rights Watch, in Syria the Ministry of Communication and
360 Technology ordered in July 2007 that all website owners must
361 display the name and email of the writer of any article or
362 comment appearing on their sites.

363 The third way that the media is restricted is through
364 legal measures. Most countries have laws that criminalize the
365 publication of information. These laws are often vaguely
366 worded to give authorities a free hand to adjust the red
367 lines as they see fit. These restrictions are found in many
368 countries--Algeria, Iran, the Gulf and Egypt to name a few.

369 The most common restrictions include criticism of the
370 president, the king or the royal family, criticism of Islam,
371 information that is perceived as harmful to the country's
372 reputation, information likely to hurt relations with other
373 countries.

374 As you can see, a wide net is cast and much can fall
375 into that. In many cases these restrictions are not only in
376 the press law, but also in emergency legislation and the
377 penal code. Syria and Egypt have had their emergency laws in
378 place for decades, giving the state broad and unregulated
379 powers vis- -vis the media and civil society.

380 The fourth way that media is restricted is through
381 government ownership and control. In most states there are
382 significant restrictions on independent media. Most regimes
383 in the region maintain control over broadcast media like

384 | radio and television as these are the main sources of
385 | information for the majority of the populations. The
386 | exceptions are the satellite stations such as Al-Jazeera,
387 | Al-Arabiya, Abu Dhabi TV, which operate much more freely.

388 | To conclude, I would like to offer three recommendations
389 | for expanding press freedoms in the Middle East. First,
390 | through congressional and diplomatic actions. We ask that you
391 | call for the release of journalists who are in prisons for
392 | their legitimate right to free expression and stand in
393 | solidarity with them.

394 | Freedom House has in fact formed an International
395 | Solidarity Committee which pairs prominent individuals with
396 | local reform advocates and journalists. Congressmen Frank
397 | Wolf and Gregory Meeks, as well as European parliamentarians
398 | and others, are already active members of this committee, and
399 | we invite you as well to join.

400 | Second, ensure that U.S. Government continues to fund
401 | local and international civil society organizations which are
402 | fighting for free expression, advocating for legal reforms
403 | and defending the rights of journalists to report the truth.

404 | Third, support overseas broadcasts, web and print media,
405 | which provide a space for the open exchange of news and views
406 | in Iran and the Arab world and likewise take the opportunity
407 | to engage with the Arab satellite stations by appearing as
408 | guests and sharing your own views.

409 | Thank you for this opportunity.

410 | [The statement of Mr. Eisendorf follows:]

411 | ***** INSERT *****

575 Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much.

576 Let me ask as the first question who makes the decisions
577 in these various countries in the Arab world about censorship
578 and what gets censored?

579 Mr. CAMPAGNA. If I could start, Mr. Chairman, I think it
580 varies from country to country. The Ministries of
581 Information, which in many countries handle the media
582 portfolio, if you will. They enforce media laws. They carry
583 out censorship.

584 In other instances it is the security services who carry
585 significant weight in carrying out censorship, imposing
586 self-censorship, so it is several mechanisms of control which
587 may emanate from many different sources, whether it be a
588 government ministry, the security services, the courts, which
589 are frequently used and in most, if not all, countries are
590 not independent and under the thumb of authorities.

591 Mr. EISENDORF. I would agree with that. Just to
592 emphasize the point, in addition to the press laws that exist
593 are emergency laws in some states and other penal codes that
594 all affect their freedom of expression and the freedom that a
595 journalist can exercise, but it is the instances that also
596 set the tone for the rest of the media.

597 As Joel mentioned, self-censorship becomes the norm in
598 those cases. When one person is prosecuted and faces
599 considerable jail terms or other punishment, that sends a

600 message to the entire press corps.

601 Mr. ACKERMAN. What role does the head of government or
602 the head of state play in these countries? Do they influence
603 the process? Do they sign off on it?

604 If you can go to jail for criticizing the leader's
605 health or questioning the leader's health or discussing the
606 leader's health, does the leader make that decision?

607 Mr. CAMPAGNA. I think sometimes it is very difficult to
608 know what that process is short of being behind closed doors.

609 I do think that officials do impact how specific press
610 freedom violations occur. In Egypt, for example, we cited the
611 case of editors who had published reports about President
612 Mubarak's health. The court cases against these editors were
613 not launched until a very nasty campaign was played out in
614 the state press. President Mubarak's wife in fact in an
615 interview singled out journalists for spreading rumors about
616 his health and said that there had to be accountability.

617 It wasn't long after that that Ibrahim Eissa, who is one
618 of the most independent Egyptian journalists today, was
619 brought before a court and charged, a case that is still
620 pending, so where those lines flow is not clear. I think that
621 case shows there is some high level pressure that is exerted
622 in many of these cases.

623 Mr. ACKERMAN. What is the purpose of these particular
624 laws? Are they all laws, or are they regulations of an

650 They appear designed to allow control over the media
651 from licensing to what can and cannot be printed, and it is a
652 mechanism--

653 Mr. ACKERMAN. To what end?

654 Mr. CAMPAGNA. To allow the authorities to control or
655 reign in dissenting journalism, to have an ability to control
656 members of the press when they exceed acceptable boundaries
657 of criticism. The regulations in these laws--

658 Mr. ACKERMAN. Are these regimes that are worried about
659 being overthrown, or are they just hypersensitive? They don't
660 like having their feelings hurt. Please.

661 Mr. EISENDORF. I think what you see is these types of
662 laws exist not just for the press, but for the rest of civil
663 society and political activism as well, so I think there is a
664 clear trend in terms of consolidating power and not allowing
665 voices of dissent and voices of opposition.

666 In many instances opposition parties don't have the
667 freedom to organize freely and independently. Civil society
668 does not have the opportunity to organize freely and
669 independently and so unless it is simply providing a service
670 and welfare and schooling and so on when it enters into the
671 area of political opposition or confrontation to the
672 leadership, and that includes confrontation to the societal
673 norms, Islam and other issues, then there are restrictions.

674 That is across the board, so I think it has to do with

675 | the consolidation of power and not allowing threat to that
676 | power.

677 | Mr. JACOBSON. I would also add that what they allow is
678 | also an effort to divert attention from some of the potential
679 | problems that exist among the population vis- -vis the
680 | particular government, so in effect it is a bit of a safety
681 | valve to be able to focus on attacking Jews, which
682 | historically has been true.

683 | It is also interesting that in some of the states there
684 | are laws protecting not only Islam, but Christianity and
685 | Judaism, in terms in terms of libeling those religions, but
686 | in practice obviously that is not conducted that way.

687 | Mr. ACKERMAN. Which states have those laws?

688 | Mr. JACOBSON. I don't have them off the top of my head,
689 | but there are definitely several, at least a number of them
690 | that have such laws, and clearly as we saw in all the
691 | conflicts that took place with the Danish cartoons and the
692 | like, obviously even in a foreign country if there is some
693 | criticism of Islam that generates tremendous hostility.

694 | Clearly within those countries any criticism of Islam
695 | would be severely punished, but obviously that doesn't apply
696 | to Judaism, and I have some doubts that it applies to
697 | Christianity as well.

698 | Mr. ACKERMAN. What is the reaction among journalists,
699 | the actual effect it has on journalists? I am sure no real

725 | of the world when Noriega was under fire and attack some
726 | years ago and he was derided in the press by many
727 | journalists.

728 | The derision got personal and commented continuously
729 | about his complexion. Evidently he is very pockmarked and
730 | they kept referring to him as pineapple face, so they passed
731 | a law that you couldn't refer to the nation's leader as
732 | pineapple face, and that became the law of the land.

733 | One newspaper took up the challenge and every day of the
734 | week until we snatched Noriega they had a different recipe
735 | referring not to Noriega, but just describing a pineapple
736 | recipe. The whole country caught on.

737 | Not that it is a substantive issue, but certainly it was
738 | a huge up or standing up against what the government was
739 | trying to do, and that was to eliminate any kind of criticism
740 | against the nation's leader. They found a way around it.

741 | Except for journalists, I don't see any human cry. Is
742 | there a cultural difference in that part of the world? Are
743 | people more compliant? I can't think of too many countries
744 | that might have had any semblance of real journalistic
745 | experience where the populous was strenuously objecting to
746 | the extent that the number of people arrested would just be
747 | anecdotal.

748 | Mr. EISENDORF. You know, I think you do see a culture of
749 | those, and Joel mentioned there are instances in many

750 instances where journalists are out front and are taking a
751 stand on pushing the edges of what is possible.

752 Mr. ACKERMAN. In Pakistan the lawyers went to the
753 streets because they knew they were going to be arrested.

754 Mr. EISENDORF. Yes.

755 Mr. ACKERMAN. And the picture was hundreds of lawyers
756 being arrested and the world took note.

757 If you have two journalists get arrested in a country
758 that is not a heavy moment in the history of the world where
759 nobody is going to be looking at that except the people who
760 follow the issue.

761 There is no civil disobedience or journalistic
762 insistence or whatever you want to call it to any massive
763 extent I take it? You don't see a journalist today getting
764 arrested. You don't see people challenging the system in any
765 of these countries.

766 I don't know. On the issue that Mr. Jacobson brings to
767 the table, and it is not by accident that I meld these two
768 issues to show the irony of the rigidity of imposing
769 restrictions on the press except for a certain area where it
770 is encouraged to do all of those things; that if you did it
771 to somebody else it would be a crime against a country, the
772 government or its leaders. I don't see any letters to the
773 editor.

774 Mr. JACOBSON. I think in a non-Arab country is the one

775 | that I think of most, which is Iran. In Iran there are quite
776 | a few journalists who make efforts.

777 | Mr. ACKERMAN. In?

778 | Mr. JACOBSON. Iran.

779 | Mr. ACKERMAN. In Iran?

780 | Mr. JACOBSON. Yes. Non-Arab Muslim country. As a matter
781 | of fact, there have been articles recently indicating that
782 | there is actually a greater crackdown on journalists and
783 | others who are trying--

784 | Mr. ACKERMAN. In Iran?

785 | Mr. JACOBSON. --to expand the borders of freedom of
786 | speech.

787 | Mr. ACKERMAN. And yet there are more journalists that
788 | stand up and challenge the system?

789 | Mr. JACOBSON. Yes. Yes.

790 | Mr. EISENDORF. In the past that was true, and they also
791 | had political support to do so so they took a strong stand,
792 | and every time a newspaper was shut down a new one would open
793 | up and a new set of editors would step forward.

794 | Mr. ACKERMAN. How does the public know that an editor
795 | was arrested?

796 | Mr. EISENDORF. Well, today blogging I think is one of
797 | the big ways that information flows.

798 | Mr. ACKERMAN. How many people? What percentage of the
799 | people in the Arab world read blogs? The same as here or

800 Finland or Poland?

801 Mr. EISENDORF. No. I think the numbers are going to be
802 smaller. If you take Egypt, for example, use of internet is
803 not widespread throughout the country, but among an educated
804 class of people it is widespread, and blogging and reading of
805 blogs is very common.

806 Mr. ACKERMAN. What happens if you report that a
807 journalist was arrested for being a journalist?

808 Mr. CAMPAGNA. I think to answer that question, Mr.
809 Chairman, I think we are seeing more journalists speaking out
810 about arrests of their colleagues, harassment of their
811 colleagues, and I think that is one of the bright spots in
812 Arab media, the emergence of press freedom organizations,
813 civil society groups.

814 In Egypt we are seeing members of the Journalist
815 Syndicate and some of the political reformists who are
816 protesting when journalists are--

817 Mr. ACKERMAN. How do they protest?

818 Mr. CAMPAGNA. Through demonstrations at the Journalist
819 Syndicate in Egypt has been a place where journalists have
820 congregated to protest the tax on freedom of expression in
821 the press, through the media on satellite news stations, on
822 the internet, blogs.

823 I think the debate is still open as to how effective
824 blogging is, but one place where we have seen its effects has

825 | been in Egypt where bloggers have helped lead the reform
826 | movement. They have helped organize demonstrations, protests
827 | and things like that.

828 | Mr. ACKERMAN. Are they massive protests? Are there
829 | journalists that show up to write about it?

830 | Mr. CAMPAGNA. I hesitate to quantify the size, but these
831 | have been I would say substantial protests that have been
832 | reported by Egyptian media and regional media.

833 | Mr. ACKERMAN. What happens to the Egyptian media? These
834 | are protests in Egypt?

835 | Mr. CAMPAGNA. In Egypt in the past couple years.

836 | Mr. ACKERMAN. And when people protest the imposition of
837 | restrictions of journalism what is the reaction? Does anybody
838 | cover it?

839 | Mr. CAMPAGNA. They cover it. Many of these
840 | demonstrations have been violently dispersed by the
841 | authorities. In fact, I believe there was just one a few days
842 | ago, if I am not mistaken, that took place in Cairo in which
843 | a journalist was detained, a foreign journalist.

844 | Mr. EISENDORF. Protests are not allowed in Egypt.
845 | Because Egypt is under emergency law, any gathering can be
846 | dispersed and not allowed.

847 | As I was mentioning in the testimony, the government has
848 | a free hand in applying its emergency laws in these cases and
849 | so in the instant of the recent protest in fact the leaders

850 | of that movement were picked up, driven out into the desert
851 | and dropped off in that case.

852 | Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Eisendorf, I am going to accept your
853 | suggestion or challenge and discuss with Mr. Pence, the
854 | Ranking Member of the subcommittee, who the record should
855 | indicate was here earlier, the drafting of a congressional
856 | resolution condemning the arrest of members of the
857 | journalistic community for practicing their trade.

858 | Being that you are all at the same table, is there a
859 | comment that the two of you, Mr. Eisendorf and Mr. Campagna,
860 | might have concerning the other issue, and that is the
861 | tolerance and the unique circumstance of criticism of
862 | Israelis and/or Jews and/or Americans when we marry up the
863 | political issues that are involved?

864 | I know nobody is in favor of censoring, and I appreciate
865 | Mr. Jacobson's comments that you have a right to legitimate
866 | criticism of the issues, but the irony of allowing that
867 | special place or place to be critical of a way that is
868 | reminiscent of the cartoons that were in Germany.

869 | I mean, some of these are as vigorous--I will use that
870 | word--as I saw emanating historically in the buildup of the
871 | National Socialist party and the hatred and incitement that
872 | that led to.

873 | Mr. CAMPAGNA. If I may, it is not something we monitor
874 | at the committee to protect journalists, but I think perhaps

875 | a parallel issue is something we notice in state media in
876 | countries where independent journalists are under threat, and
877 | that is state media launching nasty attacks against
878 | independent journalists who criticize the state, defamatory
879 | attacks in countries like Egypt and Tunisia, which is another
880 | added pressure these individuals face in doing their work.

881 | Mr. EISENDORF. Let me note that the restrictions that
882 | governments put on media generally reply to what they report
883 | about their own country.

884 | Journalists have a rather free hand to talk about other
885 | countries and other situations, particularly those that are
886 | considered enemies.

887 | Mr. ACKERMAN. You say particularly those that are
888 | considered enemies. What would happen in the case of their
889 | commenting on a country that is considered an enemy, but in a
890 | favorable way? Is that not restricted?

891 | Mr. EISENDORF. I think it could get a response in the
892 | media and through intellectual engagement, but I am not sure
893 | that that would have any impact in terms of a legal effect on
894 | them.

895 | People are free to engage on issues. They may not be
896 | popular issues. I think you see that in many of the media.

897 | Male VOICE. Yes. I would just like to comment--

898 | Mr. ACKERMAN. I am not talking about contrary. I am
899 | talking about issues that might be contrary to government

900 | policy. Is there freedom for journalists to do that, to
901 | champion the cause of an enemy of the government?

902 | Mr. EISENDORF. I think in many cases in the Arab press
903 | you are very free to express your opinions on government
904 | policies and relations with other countries, but I think
905 | where the line is drawn in some cases, Jordan and--

906 | Mr. ACKERMAN. In Syria can you say that Lebanon deserves
907 | to be independent and free?

908 | Mr. EISENDORF. Lebanon is a special case in the Syrian
909 | press, and they actually have a restriction on commenting
910 | on--

911 | Mr. ACKERMAN. So you really can't comment on something
912 | that is contrary to government policy. So it has to further
913 | the interest of the government?

914 | Mr. EISENDORF. There are many issues that can be
915 | reported on, but there are some that are going to be red
916 | lines.

917 | You know, in answer to what you were saying and I think
918 | what has been reinforced by every one of us is the importance
919 | of reinforcing freedom of expression so that we open up that
920 | space and not seek to identify other areas to restrict it.

921 | Mr. JACOBSON. Actually there was one notable occasion in
922 | the Egyptian press with regard to these conspiracy attacks
923 | and stereotypes about Jews when there were Holocaust denial
924 | articles written.

975 | tragic that we can point to one unique response--

976 | Mr. JACOBSON. Right. Exactly.

977 | Mr. ACKERMAN. --on the part of anybody having to do with
978 | the government.

979 | Mr. EISENDORF. If I can comment? There are other
980 | examples, and I think that you have seen that in recent years
981 | in relation to Iran's policy and statements against Israel
982 | and Holocaust denial.

983 | Let us look at the most popular press in the region,
984 | which is the satellite television, Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and
985 | others. They frequently have American guests. They have
986 | Israeli guests on their programs. I think this is very
987 | important to both recognize and support and encourage.

988 | They have programs where they are engaging on issues and
989 | opening debates and giving a forum for different points of
990 | view to be heard. These can include call-ins and other
991 | elements.

992 | Mr. JACOBSON. Yes. Actually there is an Al-Jazeera
993 | correspondent in Israel, and just this morning there was a
994 | dispute between Israel and the Al-Jazeera correspondent over
995 | the question about the lack of electricity--that was the big
996 | story yesterday in Gaza--in which the Israelis accused the
997 | Al-Jazeera correspondent of hyping the story in a false way.

998 | The very fact is that there is an Al-Jazeera
999 | correspondent to report on Israel, and it is an interesting

1000 | phenomenon in the region.

1001 | Mr. ACKERMAN. Would you encourage more members of our
1002 | government, including Members of Congress, to do shows on
1003 | Arab media?

1004 | Mr. EISENDORF. I think that these are opportunities to
1005 | engage, to share views, to open a dialogue on some of the
1006 | very same issues that are concerned about here, about
1007 | American policy and about the policies and actions in the
1008 | region and have open exchanges on these issues.

1009 | Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Chabot?

1010 | Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for
1011 | being a little bit late. A number of us just came from the
1012 | Mall at the March For Life, but I did want to stop by and
1013 | thank the panel. I apologize for not having heard their
1014 | testimony, but I will definitely read it.

1015 | I was in the Persian Gulf a month or so ago and went to
1016 | UAE and Oman and Bahrain, and I would be interested--and
1017 | again not having actually heard your testimony, I apologize
1018 | if you have already properly covered this in some detail, but
1019 | I would be interested to know what is the press freedoms
1020 | particularly in those areas or what direction do they seem to
1021 | be heading?

1022 | Are there any trends that are notable in those three
1023 | countries in particular? If any of the members of the panel
1024 | would want to touch on that?

1050 Mr. CHABOT. Relative to the UAE in particular, any
1051 distinctive differences between say Dubai and Abu Dhabi, for
1052 example, or any of the other Emirates?

1053 Mr. CAMPAGNA. I will defer to Rich if he wants to add.
1054 In terms of local media coverage, local newspapers and
1055 television, I would not say a great deal of difference in how
1056 they approach covering the political leads, which is not much
1057 at all.

1058 Mr. CHABOT. Go ahead.

1059 Mr. EISENDORF. Yes. What you do see in United Arab
1060 Emirates is a very attractive environment for international
1061 media and Arab media.

1062 Dubai has the Media City which is a hub for media from
1063 all over the region, I believe, and MBC, Middle East
1064 Broadcasting, recently located there.

1065 Abu Dhabi has its own satellite station, Abu Dhabi TV,
1066 which is very popular throughout the region, in fact maybe
1067 the most popular channel because it is a diverse channel. It
1068 has entertainment, news and talk shows, whereas Al-Jazeera is
1069 a news channel. One of the most popular shows, Who Wants To
1070 Be A Millionaire, is broadcast on Abu Dhabi, so there is on
1071 the satellite side a lot of attraction in those countries.

1072 Mr. JACOBSON. I would just add on the issue which I
1073 spoke about, which is anti-Semitism in the Arab media, that
1074 actually Oman and Qatar have sort of taken over from Egypt as

1100 Mr. EISENDORF. Let me try to answer it in this way.
1101 Lebanon has one of the freer media in the country. Al-Manar
1102 emanates from Lebanon.

1103 One of the reasons for that is the diversity of the
1104 media that you find. In television, Al-Manar is a Hezbollah
1105 channel. You have other channels affiliated with different
1106 political parties and different factions within the country,
1107 so they allow diversity within the country and they allow a
1108 fair degree of expression compared to other countries.
1109 Al-Manar in fact benefits from that by having that
1110 opportunity to operate in that environment.

1111 I am not sure of the connection between Al-Manar and
1112 NileSat and ArabSat. These are satellite providers which have
1113 dozens and dozens of stations.

1114 Mr. JACOBSON. I just wanted to add when I hear of
1115 Al-Manar I think of the fact that six days after 9-11 it was
1116 Al-Manar who sent out this little piece of information, as
1117 they called it, that they had just learned that 4,000
1118 Israelis were working at the World Trade Center and, lo and
1119 behold, none of them showed up for work that day.

1120 I remember. I am a New Yorker, and I lost a cousin that
1121 day. We all knew people, the people who died that tragic day,
1122 made up the diversity of New York's population, including
1123 foreigners who died that day, and we all thought Al-Manar is
1124 just playing with dreams and fantasies.

1125 Unfortunately, around the world, particularly in many
1126 parts of the Islamic world, that fantasy has taken hold as
1127 the real explanation of what took place on 9-11. That came
1128 from Al-Manar.

1129 Mr. ACKERMAN. Also in Mr. Eisendorf's testimony, which
1130 very helpfully categorized the types of communication or
1131 advocacy that can land somebody in trouble, one of the most
1132 interesting of these was the detrimental effect to the
1133 country's relationship with Saudi Arabia category.

1134 You mentioned two countries, but if I am not mistaken
1135 the heavy-handed Saudi big brother has come down everywhere.
1136 Is not that the case, and how does Saudi Arabia enforce its
1137 will on others? Are we really as powerful as we seem in this
1138 regard, or are we just not paying attention to how the
1139 professionals do it, or do they use methods that are
1140 inconsistent with our values?

1141 Mr. EISENDORF. I think Saudi Arabia presents a very
1142 interesting level of influence in the media. Saudi investors
1143 and usually members of the royal family are owners or
1144 majority owners of major newspapers, Al-Hayat and Shohood,
1145 among other media.

1146 In some cases, these are considered the best print
1147 publications in the region, and yet they will restrict what
1148 is written about Al-Jazeera and the tone that it takes on
1149 issues that affect Saudi interests. So there is definitely a

1150 | great deal of influence that can be exercised through media
1151 | ownership and these media.

1152 | I am not sure if that answers your question.

1153 | Mr. ACKERMAN. Does anybody else want to comment?

1154 | Mr. CAMPAGNA. In addition to what Rich said about Saudi
1155 | influence over the media, I think we see it in other ways in
1156 | which officials pressure other Arab governments to crack down
1157 | on journalists who are critical of the royal family.

1158 | We have had prominent cases in Yemen where journalists
1159 | have been taken to court, criminally prosecuted under
1160 | statutes that prevent criticizing a friendly Arab nation or
1161 | insulting a friendly Arab leader for their criticism of the
1162 | Saudi royal family.

1163 | This provision of criticizing friendly Arab states
1164 | exists in the press laws of many countries in the region, so
1165 | you see Arab states pressuring other Arab states to bring
1166 | legal action or other repression against media when they
1167 | criticize those states, so there is a level of coordination
1168 | and cooperation among states in the region to suppress
1169 | criticism.

1170 | Mr. EISENDORF. If I can add as well, just last week or
1171 | over the past few days the Saudi Government had called Qatar
1172 | to account, called the Government of Qatar to account for
1173 | coverage in Al-Jazeera, and is exercising its political
1174 | weight with Al-Jazeera, which is owned by the Qatari

1175 Government, and so this is an example of what you are talking
1176 about, Joel.

1177 It will be interesting to see how that plays out and to
1178 the extent to which coverage does change in Al-Jazeera
1179 vis- -vis Saudi Arabia, but both countries at times when it
1180 is to their advantage claim well, this is an independent
1181 media. It is not our responsibility. Obviously who pays the
1182 bills can exercise a great deal of influence.

1183 Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Jacobson, when they run any of these
1184 cartoons in the Arab media does anybody ever object or
1185 protest or say that wasn't fair?

1186 Mr. JACOBSON. Not only don't they protest, but when we
1187 make or others make representation to them--as I noted
1188 earlier, we have done that on several occasions personally
1189 with President Mubarak. There is always taking refuge in
1190 freedom of the press, first of all. We have freedom of the
1191 press.

1192 You in America wouldn't want to tell the government to
1193 tell people if they can't publish certain things, which of
1194 course from all this conversation is absurd, and again the
1195 point is that we make that what we do expect from leaders in
1196 a democratic society, not acknowledging that these societies
1197 are democratic, is of course that in any case leaders can use
1198 their own bully pulpit to denounce this kind of hatred, which
1199 of course the opposite really happens that gets encouraged.

1250 | that President Mubarak in 2004 promised that he would work to
1251 | eliminate prison sentences against journalists. That is a
1252 | promise that remains unfilled to this day.

1253 | Mr. EISENDORF. But there are instances where press
1254 | freedoms had been expanding, and I think given the right
1255 | conditions they will continue to expand.

1256 | Algeria in fact has a very vibrant press, print
1257 | publications in particular, and even though the political
1258 | environment may be challenging at times and there are
1259 | additional restrictions imposed at different times the press
1260 | itself is able to exercise a great deal of freedom within
1261 | that context.

1262 | There are consistently I think initiatives where that
1263 | struggle between press freedoms and control takes place and
1264 | has its advocates and detractors.

1265 | Mr. ACKERMAN. I know in a lot of places it is very
1266 | popular when people stand up and demand the release of
1267 | political prisoners or terrorists that somebody else might
1268 | have arrested, but what would happen to somebody who stood up
1269 | in public in any of these countries, absent any particular
1270 | issue at hand, and said the country should not have a policy
1271 | of doing that? What would happen?

1272 | Mr. CAMPAGNA. It depends on the country, Mr. Chairman.
1273 | In Libya were that to happen you can expect that that person
1274 | protesting might be sent to jail or worse.

1275 In Morocco or Egypt or Yemen we are seeing journalists
1276 do just that. Though these protests or expressions of
1277 opposition are relatively small they do exist, and
1278 journalists, press freedom organizations that have sprouted
1279 up, human rights groups, are taking a stand on these issues,
1280 and I think these are people who are very important to
1281 support because they are the people of civil society who are
1282 fighting for press freedoms, and they are raising their
1283 voices.

1284 Mr. ACKERMAN. The recent advent of bloggers raises a
1285 question. Which journalists in which media are more
1286 susceptible to being censored and which have more protection,
1287 print media, TV and radio or internet media?

1288 Is there more protection in one than the other? Do you
1289 get to hide out more if you are a blogger or what?

1290 Mr. EISENDORF. You probably could. I think television is
1291 largely government controlled, so clearly television has the
1292 least amount of freedom to operate.

1293 Print probably next because that is a more visible and
1294 popular media. Blogging is a relatively new phenomenon, and I
1295 think it is only recently in the past year or so that we are
1296 seeing prosecutions of bloggers.

1297 I think what you are seeing, though, is the same
1298 pernicious laws being applied across the board, but it is a
1299 matter of how well you can track those different media.

1325 international journalist organization. I might be mistaken.

1326 Should not, without an issue on the table, have a
1327 statement or policy condemning any internet provider, host or
1328 what have you who acquiesces to any government's demand on
1329 censorship to establish some basic principles of good
1330 journalism internationally. Would that be something worthy of
1331 consideration?

1332 Mr. EISENDORF. Absolutely.

1333 Mr. ACKERMAN. I am doing a resolution. Give me a break
1334 here.

1335 Mr. EISENDORF. Absolutely. I think international
1336 organizations should stand up on this issue and reinforce
1337 freedom of expression and the opportunity for those
1338 journalists to--

1339 Mr. ACKERMAN. I think people should be talking to
1340 YouTube and eBay and what have you about participating in
1341 those kinds of things.

1342 Mr. EISENDORF. I think it is a fantastic idea, and I
1343 think it is one that the international community's support of
1344 bloggers and other journalists in the Middle East is critical
1345 to helping to expand their freedom.

1346 In addition to governments, I think that engaging with
1347 fellow journalists, civil society and the international
1348 community is invaluable.

1349 Mr. ACKERMAN. Does anybody want to add something before