



NBC faces credibility test after pullout of Ayman Mohyeldin from Gaza



The support Ayman Mohyeldin got from fans and other journalists added to the criticism addressed to NBC News. (Still courtesy of NBC News)

Rajia Aboukheir, Al Arabiya News
Tuesday, 22 July 2014

Ayman Mohyeldin, a correspondent for U.S.-based news channel NBC, sparked controversy this week following his return to Gaza, four days after network bosses told him to leave the conflict zone, a move analysts say may have been political.

The American-Egyptian journalist was removed shortly after his reporting on a missile attack that killed four young Palestinian boys on a beach in the Gaza Strip.



Ayman Mohyeldin ✓

@AymanM

4 Palestinian kids killed in a single
before they were killed by our hot
with them #gaza

6:34 PM - 16 Jul 2014

5,500 RETWEETS 1,260 FAVORITES

(Twitter)

NBC News declined to comment on the controversial decision, which led analysts to speculate that he was removed for political reasons, with some saying that Mohyeldin's honesty cost him his place in Gaza.

"Mohyeldin, by being too straight forward, by showing the harsh truth and portraying Israel in a bad manner, shocked many and that is not what NBC wants to show its viewers," Ali Younes, a U.S.-based media analyst, told Al Arabiya News.

American media outlets tend to be pro-Israeli for political reasons, Younes said, stressing that some outlets have lost credibility during the coverage of the escalating conflict.

Meanwhile, other analysts believe that NBC News panicked under the pressure of the escalating conflict.

Buckling under pressure

"NBC News buckled under pressure. It's happened a lot when Arab-Americans called a spade a spade or ruffled feathers and told the unblemished truth," Magda Abu-Fadil, a Lebanon-based media specialist and commentator, told Al Arabiya News.

"Criticize Israel in any way and all its irrational supporters see red and start labeling you anti-Semitic," Abu-Fadil said, adding that she would not be surprised if NBC News fires the reporter when the conflict ends.

A **CNN report** published on Sunday suggested that NBC News producers preferred to pull out Mohyeldin and replace him by chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel due to the latter's popularity and level of

audience “trust.”

“The producers are so paranoid about the ratings, they will do anything to stick with the faces viewers know and trust, so that would be Richard over Ayman,” one NBC News employee said on condition of anonymity.

On Saturday, NBC News issued a statement addressed at Mohyeldin who started his career as a news desk assistant with the outlet, mentioning that it was sending him back to Gaza after his “extraordinary reporting throughout the escalation of the conflict in Gaza.”



Amina Samy

@samyamina

Dear @NBCNews. Shame on y
for doing his job and speaking

10:54 PM - 17 Jul 2014

33 RETWEETS 6 FAVORITES

(Twitter)

The support Mohyeldin got from fans and other journalists added to the criticism addressed to NBC for the large amounts of money spent on him pushed the network to call him back, Younes said, explaining another possible reason behind NBC’s decision to bring back Mohyeldin.



Ayman Mohyeldin ✓
@AymanM

Thanks for all the support. Im returnin
#Gaza to report. Proud of NBC's conti
commitment to cover the #Palestiniar
of the story

↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

RETWEETS
6,884

FAVORITES
5,271



4:31 PM - 18 Jul 2014

(Twitter)

In 2001, the beginner journalist was not on high demand until the event of Sept. 11, 2001, that led NBC News to use Mohyeldin's Arabic-language skills and familiarity with the Arab region.

Since then, Mohyeldin, who had seen more than his share of conflict while working for different American broadcasters including Fox News and CNN, managed to prove himself on the international level despite his origins.

"If you're an Arab-American like Ayman, you have to work twice as hard and prove yourself in more ways than a native of the country from which the news organization is from," Abu-Fadil said.

"If you work for American media, you're always under scrutiny – expected to be pro-this or that. You're guilty until proven innocent," she added.

Over the past decade, the veteran journalist has reported on crises including Libya's nuclear-research program, the Iraq War, the terrorist bombings at a Jordanian hotel and more recently the Egyptian revolution.

Exclusive coverage

But it is his exclusive coverage for Al Jazeera of the Israeli offensive on Gaza known as "Operation Cast Lead" in 2008 that made him one of the most "professional" and "impartial" journalists covering the region, according to the commentator.

"He is a professional who reports accurately in a fair and balanced way," Abu-Fadil said.

"He doesn't and didn't wear any bias on his sleeve. He was [and still] is impartial and human at the same

time,” she said, adding that it was a difficult balance to maintain.



(Facebook)

At that time, Mohyeldin, who was working with the Qatari-based channel Al Jazeera, was the only foreign journalist along with his British colleague Sherine Tadros providing live coverage of the Israeli offensive on Gaza.

Once more at the heart of the conflict, Mohyeldin may have changed “the emphasis and tone ... for Al Jazeera English and NBC News,” but he has always “earned his stripes,” Abu-Fadil said.

In 2001, Mohyeldin was named among the 100 most influential people of the year by Time magazine.

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