



Al Jazeera ridicules beheading of U.S. journalists as 'Hollywood' show



Steven Sotloff, the American journalist beheaded in a video released on Tuesday, by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

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A **report** by Al Jazeera News channel has ridiculed the horrific beheading of two U.S. journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff as "Hollywood" casting, saying the executions were "unconvincing" and could be used as a pretext for a Western intervention in Syria.

Appearing insensitive to the feelings of the victim's family, the report - published under the "reports and interviews" section of the pan-Arab channel's Arabic website on Thursday – said Foley likely fabricated the video, despite confirmations from the U.S. government that the video was real.

"Perhaps the first thing that draws the attention of the viewer" in the first beheading video is that "Foley was playing the role of champion not the victim only, for he recites a lengthy statement in peerless theatrical performance, and it seems from tracking the movement of his eyes that he was reading a text from an autocue," the Al Jazeera report said.

The report even expressed doubts over the identity of the masked killer, saying: "he does not have the features of common jihadist figures, but he was rather similar to a Hollywood actor."



(Al Jazeera Net's report casting doubt on the killing of U.S. journalists by ISIS)

To support the claim that the beheading was "staged," the Al Jazeera report went into details of the execution. It claimed that a review of the video in slow motion showed that "the knife being moved on the neck of the victim six times triggered no blood."

"The filmmaker wanted to convince us that slaughtering was done after they cut the shot to show his head detached from the body in and unjustified montage leap," the report claimed.

It added that the same remarks also apply to the video of Sotloff's execution. Similar to Foley, it claimed, Sotloff displayed no signs of fear, neither during his statement nor during the execution.

It also raised questions over how Foley, who was kidnapped since 2012, reached the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Even more, it raised doubts over the identity of the executed man, claiming that he does not look like Foley.

It quoted unidentified "activists" as claiming that Foley had previously worked for the U.S. Department of State and that he might have had links with intelligence, "which could mean that he colluded in the fabrication of the tape."

The Al Jazeera report claimed that "purported beheadings" could be used to justify a future war, like the

George W. Bush' justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In 2003, Bush marketed his idea to invade Iraq on the basis of reports that Saddam Hussein had weapons of Mass Destruction.

A spokesperson on behalf of Al Jazeera said he would get back with a comment by Sunday when contacted by Al Arabiya News.

Further more, there was no translation or mention of the article which doubts of Foley and Sotlof found on Al Jazeera English website, which continues to lobby to free the arrested Al Jazeera staff in Egypt through posts and has received much media attention from U.S., international media as well as Arab media, including this website.

In comments to Al Arabiya News, Magda Abu-Fadil, a Lebanon-based media specialist and commentator, said it was "quite a scenario the writer came up with."

"The question is why? If, as he claims, it's all staged, can he prove that without a shadow of a doubt? Does he have tangible proof it didn't happen, or is he just rehashing others' suspicions? In a court of law, one would need solid data, not just circumstantial evidence. Were there witnesses?" Abu-Fadil said.

"While I have no way of proving or disproving the horrifying Foley and Sotloff beheadings, I can say that in the last week we've had two Lebanese citizens who were beheaded by extremists and their bodies handed back to their families. Those weren't Hollywood productions. It would be absolutely cruel to tell their loved ones that it was all a TV show," she added.

"As for ethical journalism, I'm despairing at the bestiality of some media in their aim for ratings and how low they're willing to stoop for scoops. Insensitivity to bereaved relatives and victims of terrorism seems more the rule than the exception. It's truly revolting," Abu-Fadil said.

Al Arabiya News is the English language platform of Al Arabiya News Channel, which Al Jazeera Arabic aims to compete with as a 24 hour news pan-Arab news channel

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