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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

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INTRODUCTION

1. I would like to start by paying tribute to the journalists who have been killed covering the September 11 events and the ensuing US-allied attack against Afghanistan in its “War against Terror.” By the time of writing this report, one reporter was killed in the New York attack and another eight lost their lives in Afghanistan, caught in the crossfire or shot dead by unknown gunmen. The office of the Qatari television channel Al-Jazeera came under American shellfire which the Pentagon said was a mistake. Since then, a number of international human rights groups have appealed to the warring parties to bear in mind the Geneva Convention protecting journalists from becoming targets. They also urged news agencies to remember that no news is worth the life of a reporter.
2. We are now in the fourth month of the international crisis resulting from the terrorist attacks on September 11 against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that left some 4,000 people dead. Since then, the world has witnessed American retaliation, with international backing, against the alleged mastermind of the attacks, Osama bin Laden, head of the extremist Islamist group, Al-Qaeda, and his hosts the Taliban government in Afghanistan. By the time of writing of this report, the Taliban leadership had fallen and four other Afghan factions put together an interim government with the backing of the UN and the US.
3. In tandem with that there have been international efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks as a step toward maintaining Arab support for the US coalition. Increasing violence in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza however, threatened to jeopardise a new US intervention into the conflict.
4. These developments came amid a growing economic recession in most of the world, which begun before the September 11 attack but were exacerbated since then, affecting travel and tourism industries and other businesses.

5. As the US-British war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan went ahead, it became clear that another struggle was developing: that of winning the hearts and minds of the Arab and Muslim world, where resentment for a perceived American backing of Israel was growing. Crowds protested the US strikes in Afghanistan, and even defended Osama bin Laden as a symbol of anti-American resistance. Arab officials publicly attacked Washington's double standards as it retaliated against the Taliban but turned a blind eye to excessive Israeli force.
6. It also became necessary to change perceptions about Arabs and Muslims in America, who experienced growing antagonism amounting to racial and religious hatred following news that the alleged suicide hijackers were of Saudi and Egyptian background, and were linked to the extremist Islamist group Al-Qaeda of Osama bin Laden. President George W. Bush and his administration urged restraint at home and launched a campaign to show the world America was only against Islamist terrorism and not Muslims. Still, the predominant public mood in the United States was aggressive and vengeful, seeking to pit "good against evil," and growing increasingly nationalistic.
7. The role of the media became as important as it always has in times of war, and governments in the West and the Arab states attempted to varying degrees to direct television and press coverage to their own advantage. The media also has had the responsibility of addressing pressing human rights issues including freedom of the press, unjust security measures, violations of international humanitarian laws and the political mood on the street. In a world where antagonisms and prejudices have become sharpened, and the gap between the West and the Muslim world wider, the media's responsibilities are becoming more pressing.

WESTERN MEDIA

Coverage of September 11 and its aftermath

8. The media in the United States and Europe by and large covered in detail and in a balanced way the events following September 11, both domestically and internationally.
9. Media monitoring groups found that most written and broadcast media were responsible in their news analysis, although some carried what could amount to rallying calls, such as "America Fights Back." A significant number failed to raise human rights issues, such as the death of Afghan civilians by US bombs and the civil liberties at stake under new security measures, apparently wary of the public mood. The written press carried commentaries dealing with different issues stemming from the September 11 attacks and apparently could afford to be more bold than radio or television which came under government scrutiny.
10. The first official restraint came in September when the US State Department tried to censor a Voice of America (VOA) program that aired an interview with a senior Taliban official. VOA executives and reporters protested and the interview was broadcast. The Bush Administration also objected to the airing on the Qatari Arabic-language channel, Al-Jazeera, of anti-American views, and of video taped messages of Osama bin Laden. After the war began, scenes of Afghan women and children killed by US raids appeared on Al-Jazeera, which had the only foreign correspondent in Kabul for a few weeks. The reports risked tilting Arab support away from the US-led retaliation against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden which prompted US secretary of state Colin Powell to call on Qatari ruler Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani to use his influence to control Al-Jazeera's news coverage. The Bush administration also launched its own "campaign" on Al-Jazeera, assigning senior officials as guest speakers, including Mr. Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice. American television channels rebroadcast Al-Jazeera's footage, including videotaped messages from Osama bin Laden. In mid-October, Ms.

Rice urged a group of US television executives to use caution when airing pre-recorded messages from Osama bin Laden and his associates. She said the statements could contain instructions to terrorist cells. MSNBC and Fox News did not air the next Osama bin Laden tape, and CNN showed only brief excerpts.

11. As US air strikes against Afghanistan intensified, American television also beamed news of civilian deaths and destruction of villages and non-military buildings. But some network executives asked their journalists to balance their report by reminding viewers that the Taliban harboured terrorists responsible for the death of 4,000 in the September 11 attacks. And even when civilian casualties were reported, there was little reference made to the point that these deaths resulted in violation of International Humanitarian Laws by American forces or the Northern Alliance.
12. The US Department of Defence put its own guidelines allowing pool coverage on the ground, ensuring that military personnel did not divulge classified information to journalists, and requesting the press to withhold any information that could jeopardise the safety of US personnel or operations. The Pentagon held daily press briefings, much as it had done during the Gulf War ten years ago. Many correspondents complained that they could get more information from the Northern Alliance on the ground than from their own officials at daily press briefings. However, even on the ground in Afghanistan, broadcast and print journalists were restricted for security reasons, or came under Taliban control of information.
13. Meanwhile, the Bush administration set up its own modern propaganda machine, hiring an advertising executive to use her marketing skills in conveying American values overseas, especially to the Muslim world. Official US-allied information centres in the White House, London and Islamabad sought to keep one step ahead of news beamed on TV channels and the press showing numbers of dead civilians killed by US air strikes. The information centre also issued a list of atrocities that the Taliban had committed, hoping it would diminish support for the fundamentalist movement in countries like Pakistan, whose government faced some popular anger for its pro-US stand. On the battlefield in Afghanistan, the American military dropped propaganda leaflets claiming the United States was a friend of the Afghan people. This was usually accompanied by an airdrop of food packages. The Bush administration even got Hollywood to help, as President Bush's chief political advisor, Karl Rove, met with 40 of the movie industry's top executives early November.
14. In Europe, coverage of the American retaliation was often critical. When by early December US raids had reportedly killed at least 70 villagers from Kama Ado near a suspected Osama bin Laden hideout in eastern Afghanistan, the UK Independent newspaper questioned: "Was the bombing of Kama Ado entirely a mistake or was there a ruthless logic to it? Al-Qaeda members holed up in the Tora Bora area have networks in the surrounding villages, and are paying local people to give them food."¹ Major American papers carried straight news reports of the bombings, with Pentagon denials. At a daily defence department news briefing, a senior official said the Tora Bora casualty figures were "orchestrated by the Taliban," and had no comment when told it was the US-Backed Northern Alliance who had made the claim.
15. The US-media was caught in a dilemma. The Washington Post started an on-line question and answer with its executive director Leonard Downie who in reply to a question on coverage of the war, replied that it was "not always popular" to report on casualties among Afghans since some readers complained that this was not "supportive of the war effort." However, the New York based media watchdog, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), warned that media outlets

¹ "Village Air raid: Error or act of terror," by Richard Lloyd Parry, The Independent, 02 December, 01.

were not showing the same care in evaluating the Pentagon's statements on casualties as they were doing with other sources.²

The Media, Security Measures and Military Courts

16. On November 13, President Bush signed a military order allowing non-US citizens suspected of involvement in international terrorism to stand trial in military courts where there is no recourse to appeal, and safeguards for fair trial are minimal. The government and Congress also passed the Anti-terrorist Act of 2001 (ATA), allowing for FBI wiretapping, the suspension of client-lawyer privacy privileges, lengthy detentions without charge and secret evidence. At the same time, British Home Secretary David Blunkett declared a state of emergency, allowing the government to derogate from international human rights standards protecting detainees, including Article 5 of the European Convention on human rights that prohibits detention without trial. The Emergency Bill allows suspects to be held for up to six months under orders of a High Court judge in a private hearing.
17. Amnesty International and other human rights organisations as well as a number of lawyers and commentators attacked the new measures in the United States and Britain, which drew fierce debate in the media. The Independent and other newspapers argued that Britain did not face a public emergency threatening the life of the nation, which would justify derogation from Article 5. Major US papers were also mostly critical of the ATA, which allowed the detention of more than 1,200 men mainly of Arab descent most of whom have been held on no known charges. Many opinion pieces charged ATA and President Bush's military order would undermine America's civil liberties and introduce racial and ethnic segregation, defeating values Americans had won after a hard struggle. In an op-ed in the Washington Post, Barbara Kingsolver, author and recipient of the National Humanities Medal in 2000 said: "Faith and speech have taken hard blows, as countless U.S. citizens suffer daily intimidation because their appearance or modes of belief place them outside the mainstream of an angry nation at war."³
18. But in the atmosphere of fear following the September 11 attacks, the new American measures did not meet with overwhelming popular resistance, apart from some readers' letters and the refusal of a few police officers to call in Arab residents for questioning. An ABC poll as late as 6th of December showed that nearly three-quarters of Americans were in favour of President Bush's Military Order, while 80 percent supported interviewing young men of Middle East origin. A New York Times editorial made the point: "Right now the country wants very much to be supportive of the war on terrorism, and is finding it hard to summon up much outrage over military tribunals, secret detentions or the possible mistreatment of immigrants from the Mideast."⁴ The editorial urged, "[t]hat makes it even more important to speak up." But FAIR found that the large TV networks had hardly aired any reports on the security bill, and one of them had suggested that to stay safe, Americans might have to give up some civil liberties without examining the issue any further.⁵ In the same New York Times issue, Thomas Friedman's column defended the Bush administration's position on grounds that "our legal system depends on certain shared values and assumptions between accusers and accused. But those simply do not apply in this case. With Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda we are up against radical evil." It is interesting to note that in an exchange forum around Mr. Friedman's articles, the majority of letters posted opposed his view on grounds that innocent people could be targeted, and that his approach meant that only Islamists were guilty of evil against America.

²FAIR Action Alert: Fox: Civilian casualties not News, November 8, 01.

³ Op-ed "Reflections on Wartime," 23 November 01.

⁴ The New York Times, editorial, December 2, 2001.

⁵ FAIR Action Alert: Nightly News Glosses over Anti-Terrorism act, September 29, 2001

19. In the face of growing antagonism toward Muslims in the West, the media attempted to inform the public about Islam, and many newspapers, such as The Guardian and Le Monde introduced chat lines and television networks which brought on expert speakers. Most major European papers carried special updated sections on the September 11 attacks and their aftermath.

ARAB MEDIA

20. In this report I shall focus on the coverage and political mood in the largest Arab country, Egypt, which has the farthest-reaching press and television programs, apart from the newer, and generally more controversial Qatari channel, Al-Jazeera that has extensively covered the post-September 11 crisis.
21. In Egypt there are at least 12 state-run dailies and political magazines, around nine party papers, an official news agency, some ten local television and satellite channels and more Arabic-language satellite channels that enjoy wide audiences. In the Arab world, nearly all television channels are state-run. The written press comes in shades of independence ranging from official and semi-official to political party papers and at the end of the scale a few fully private and non-partisan papers in places like Cairo, Beirut and Algeria. Media coverage, opinion pieces and editorials depend mostly on government policy - and funding - to varying degrees. The public is aware of that fact and often do not lend much credibility to what they read, therefore it is difficult to determine how far the media influences people's thinking.
22. After September 11, the Arab media has to varying degrees covered developments in a straightforward way while commentaries have more often than not reflected the mood of the general public, but did little in attempting to modify prevalent views in a responsible manner. Western media is easily accessible, as major American and European newspapers and television channels have outlets and markets in the Middle East. Comparatively, not much Arab public opinion gets to the Western world as regularly.
23. Arab anger at the United States for its perceived support of Israel was never as clear as on September 11, when cameramen caught crowds celebrating in Gaza or people expressing satisfaction in Cairo and other cities in the region. Although reflecting a minority, these scenes shocked the world. Equally incomprehensible to the West was the belief in the Middle East that the New York and Washington attacks might serve to awaken the United States to its unjust foreign policy, held by many as illustrated below:

Media reaction to the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon

24. A week before the September 11 attacks, there were increased signs of strains between Egypt and the USA because of their opposed stands at the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa over the question of equating Zionism with racism. That friction came on top of serious Arab anger at the new Bush Administration for not intervening in the escalating Middle East conflict. At a popular, but private level, many were also resentful of American backing for repressive governments in the Arab Gulf and Egypt, Syria and other states to varying degrees.
25. Most of the regional official and private media reflected the prevailing anti-American mood in its response to the September 11 attacks. As in the rest of the world, people in the region were genuinely horrified and nearly every Arab government leader scrambled to express condolences and condemnation of the terrorists. The reality though was not so simple. Since the start of the Second Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza in October 2000, viewers in the region had watched

daily television footage of Palestinian women and children dying under Israeli shellfire and Israeli military forces assassinating Palestinian activists. Activists around the Arab world held protest rallies, newspapers printed official criticism of the United States and cartoons ridiculing America for backing Israel at the expense of Arab victims. After September 11, most of the regional media strongly denounced the New York and Washington terrorist acts, but pointed out that the US government had made enemies in the Middle East. The media echoed a public opinion sceptical of Osama bin Laden's guilt, because it was perceived that not enough evidence had been produced.

26. According to some analysts in Cairo, many party papers actually exploited the existing fury to bring up sales, ignoring the threat of intensifying hatred, and creating a situation similar to the stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims that occurred in the US. "Some of the editorials and headlines were in very poor taste," said Hisham Kassem, publisher of the weekly Cairo Times, and President of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights. "There was terrible coverage, which could be called incitement, and they continued to exploit the anti-US sentiment which started after the (second) Intifada... it could be considered incitement," he said.⁶ Some opposition party papers blared headlines about the collapse of the USA or of its Central Intelligence Agency, others gleefully described the September 11 attack as the USA's first big defeat. However, the centrist New Wafd Party commented that although the United States had provided no proof of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the September 11 attacks, he was widely recognised to be a terrorist therefore nobody would dare defend him.⁷
27. State-run papers shared similar views. In its September 13 edition, Al-Gomhuriya carried a commentary stating that America was "the first to be blamed" for the attacks because it had imposed its control over the world. The semi-official daily Al-Akhbar ran a front-page editorial entitled "Israel is responsible," and commented "it is Israel for which Washington has sacrificed all its interests, values and the principles on international law."
28. Columnists and television commentators lent weight to rumours begun by obscure sources, such as one claiming that Zionists were behind the US attacks, or that the arms industry had hired Osama bin Laden to do the job for them. Only a few writers attempted to discredit these assumptions. Television guest speakers repeatedly questioned how it was that the mighty CIA had been unable to detect the developing threat and stop the terrorists in their tracks. The American media had also blamed CIA failure, but in the Arab world this took on a different dimension and the intelligence agency itself was seen as a partner in a large conspiracy.
29. As the American-allied war on the Taliban drew nearer, anxiety grew about targeting Afghanistan. Although Osama bin Laden and the Taliban government who sheltered him were not generally regarded as good Muslims, the impending war took on the shape of a battle against Islam since it was attacking an Islamic country. President Bush's early declaration, quickly withdrawn, that he was embarking on a crusade, certainly fuelled that belief. The Islamist-leaning Al-Haqiqa showed a front-page cartoon with missiles pointing to a crescent moon bearing the inscription "Islam." Its editorial said that America had forgotten that God was the greatest avenger who defended the faithful. Commentaries blamed the US for atrocities against the helpless Afghan people, often without verifying civilian casualty figures provided by the Taliban. Washington was also ridiculed for its food air drops, as cartoon after cartoon lampooned the Americans and Osama bin Laden, showing Taliban leaders ordering ketchup for their meal package, and US marines taking orders for menu items.
30. The official government line had been to urge Washington not to strike until it had provided enough proof of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban's involvement, and gathered international

⁶ Interview with Mr. Hisham Kassem, 11, November 2001

⁷ Al-Wafd, 18, September, 2001

support. But, soon after the first US-allied bombing of Kabul on October 7, senior Egyptian officials relented and said Washington had the right under international law to retaliate if it had sufficient evidence. By the second month of the war, the Cairo government had quietly instructed state-run and party papers to tone down their anti-US rhetoric. This was generally obeyed, and the fall of Kabul and main urban centres to the US-backed Northern Alliance lent credibility to the international campaign.

31. The Egyptian press also reversed track and acknowledged the possibility that Osama bin Laden and the Taliban could have been behind terror acts in the world. The semi-official Al-Akhbar carried British Prime Minister Tony Blair's statement in which he displayed evidence of Osama bin Laden's guilt. As the anti-American rhetoric fell, a columnist in another wide-circulation semi-official, Al-Ahram, wrote in praise of US Secretary of State Powell's speech on Middle East peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Editorials and commentaries accused the Taliban of atrocities against humanity and disavowed their brand of Islam, and Arab leaders distanced themselves from Osama bin Laden's claim that he was promoting Palestinian rights.
32. After the reported massacres in late November of Taliban prisoners and mutineers in Mazar by Northern alliance forces, blame was spread to all Afghan fighters for killing fellow Muslims, especially during the Holy month of Ramadan. There was little mention made about the violation of International Humanitarian Law by US-backed Northern Alliance forces, or of demands by international human rights organisations for an enquiry into the massacres.
33. Regional journalists closely followed another media outlet, Al-Jazeera. The only channel with footage directly out of Afghanistan for the first few weeks of the US campaign, it re-beamed its images on other television channels showing devastation by American air strikes of Afghan villages, international agency buildings and the death of Afghan children, women and elderly. One of the rare open and free television channels in the Arab world, the Qatari Al-Jazeera station gained notoriety for its coverage of the September 11 crisis, angering viewers and governments alike after it had been one of the most admired channels in the West for a rare boldness and professionalism. Even before the air strikes, the Bush administration had cautioned Al-Jazeera to tone down what it viewed as its anti-American bias as reflected in its choice of talk show guests, commentaries and broadcasting of Osama bin Laden's video taped messages. On November 13, US war-planes hit Al-Jazeera's bureau in Kabul, dropping two 500-pound bombs on what military officials later said was a mistake. There were no casualties but the building was destroyed.
34. Started in 1996 with a \$140 million grant from the Qatari government, Al-Jazeera soon gained a reputation in the Arab world for its unusually outspoken policy in a region where government policies dictate the media, in particular television, and where heads of state are almost never criticised. The reporters who set up Al-Jazeera came from the BBC Arabic channel after it closed down, bringing with them a professional standard and technological facility new to the Arab world. Al-Jazeera became widely popular for its political, social and cultural debates far from any state-censorship and presented in an attractive and different way. Al-Jazeera was particularly appreciated in the West, while in the Arab world it fell afoul of presidents and kings, because of the criticism it aimed at its leaders and for showing political dissidents from these countries. Many ordinary Arab viewers, including Egyptians, also resented what they saw as excessive criticism of their leaders while shying away from addressing problems in Qatar or Saudi Arabia. But Al-Jazeera was still widely watched, alongside other news favourites such as Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), and Abu Dhabi television. After September 11, and the airing on Al-Jazeera of videotaped messages by Osama bin Laden from his hideout in Afghanistan, the channel became known as the voice of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. That, in addition to its negative portrayal of America led the Bush administration to ask the Qatari ruler to rein in Al-Jazeera, drawing reaction from media monitors, but little else in the Arab world. As the New

York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) stated: "To Al-Jazeera's defenders, the station is a reliable, professional, and informative news channel that reflects the perspective of its audience but also tries to present all sides of the story. In a region where the US media are viewed as fundamentally partisan and biased in their own right, the Bush administration's efforts to stifle the channel appear as a hypocritical attempt to smother unwelcome news coverage."⁸

Human Rights and anti-terrorism measures

35. For the past decade or so, the United States, European Union and individual Western states have been critical of human rights records in the Arab world. Egypt has been a case in question, living under a state of emergency in force since the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. This has resulted in arbitrary arrests, long periods of detention without charge, trial by special courts with no right of appeal for political dissidents, and very often, torture. Western states were particularly mindful of the trial by a Supreme State Security Court last year of prominent Egyptian-American sociologist and human rights worker, Ibrahim Saadedin, who was given a seven-year prison sentence. They also monitored the "Gay Case" of 52 men, charged with practising debauchery. A State Security Court in October acquitted 29 defendants and handed down prison sentences of 2-5 years to the rest in a court session that was heavily covered by international news agencies.
36. However, outside of the opposition press, human rights issues have had little fair, unbiased coverage in the Arab media, and accordingly there has been little criticism of new security measures introduced in Egypt or other Arab countries in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. In fact, some commentators found it was suitable to crack down on potential "terrorist networks," without questioning the judiciary means. Most Egyptian lawyers and journalists interviewed acknowledged that the government had cracked down on groups of Islamists and political activists after September 11, arresting Islamists and referring more than 200 detained fundamentalists to military trial. These measures, they said, indicated the government's desire to prevent potential terrorist activities, as well as obtain information that could be pertinent to the Al-Qaeda group, to which some defendants allegedly were connected. Lawyers and human rights activists feared that the government in Egypt and other Arab countries would take advantage of the mood after September 11 in the West that was willing to overlook human rights violations in its quest for security. In a clear message of warning, the government briefly arrested a leftist-leaning activist, Farid Zahran, after he organised an anti-Israeli protest march that would have included the banned opposition Muslim Brotherhood members. But under Egypt's state of emergency, the new measures were neither drastic nor unexpected. The local media reported the arrests and trials without further comment, in contrast to the wide coverage that new emergency measures in the United States and Britain received in the Western media.
37. Human rights experts were concerned that without American and European scrutiny, which would ring false now, Arab governments would go further in their disregard of human rights standards. But semi-official papers highlighted the satisfaction President Hosni Mubarak and senior government officials expressed over arrests in Britain and the United States of Egyptian and Arab political exiles suspected of links with Osama bin Laden. The semi-official Al-Akhbar in a front-page headline in late September wrote that "Mubarak stressed several times that terrorism knows no border or homeland," and in Al-Gomhouriya of September 22, renowned columnist Samir Ragab said Britain had been deemed to be a "safe haven for terrorists who kill innocent people and spread terror everywhere around."
38. Only a few papers criticised the West for what they saw as a betrayal of hard-gained democratic values that had been admired worldwide. One went as far as commenting that the US was now

⁸ "Between Two Worlds: Qatar's Al-Jazeera", (A CPJ Briefing), October 23, 2001

becoming more like a developing country. “Now with the military trials and other restrictions of civil liberties, other ills will be transferred to the American society, such as special and state security courts and a declaration of emergency,” said columnist Magdy Mehana of Al-Wafd, who also stated that “[t]he US should soon copy us and establish state-run media with government control over most of the media so as to dominate peoples’ minds.”⁹ Many did however, express concern for the hundreds of Arab detainees in the USA, held under the new security act.

CONCLUSIONS

39. The issues covered and debated in the Western and Arab media differed little, but while the press in America and Europe scrutinised human rights issues evolving out of the post-September 11 crisis, that in the Arab world did not, linking instead developments to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and America’s backing of Israel.
40. The Arab media’s coverage of the aftermath of September 11 and its initial insistence that the United States was fighting Islam should be seen in the context of the Arab resentment against Washington. However, with very little real free media in the region, it can also be said that the government “encouraged” these opinions. The Cairo government eventually balanced that approach by cautioning the press to tone down its anti-American rhetoric, apparently in order to preserve its long-standing friendly relationship with the United States.
41. It is less simple to break down the media in the United States and Europe, for while it has been free of state intervention, governments have been on a war footing and have imposed control over some of the coverage, limiting information on the war and urging reporters to back the American-led “War against Terror.” The media is also subject to competition and public opinion, leading to sensationalism by some television networks and papers, and limitations on more serious papers that risked being labelled unpatriotic by a public outraged by the September attacks. The media in America especially has faced a dilemma in balancing between providing truth and maintaining its readership and viewers. Overall however, the major Western press and broadcast media displayed balance and responsibility especially in addressing the risk of racial hatred after the September attacks, and the new emergency bills and measures.
42. The differences cannot be boiled down simply to the fact that the media is free in the West and less so in the Arab region. They are also explained by the very different mind set and public opinions held in both parts of the world and it has become more imperative for the media to fine tune its coverage in order to prevent further racial or religious hatred and resist violations by governments of human rights standards in the name of freedom, democracy or safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

43. Journalists must practice sensitivity and extreme responsibility in covering potentially flammable issues such as religious or racial hatred. This is especially true of television networks and talk shows, which reach wide audiences. They must be careful not to simplify complex issues into good and evil, and must present matters in their full cultural and historical contexts.
44. The media must avoid exploiting the public mood for their own interests, such as commercial or partisan gains, to the detriment of human rights values or the incitement of the population to racial or religious hatred.

⁹ Al-Wafd, 16 November 2001

45. In order to fully assume the responsibility to inform in a time of crisis, journalists must be aware of international human rights standards and report on violations, whether in the battlefield or at home.
46. Journalists and press freedom groups must continue to pressure governments to allow them free and full coverage of the developments and news.
47. Media organisations must remember to protect their correspondents in the field and ensure that they are not sent on assignments that could cost them their lives.