



Broadcasting
Board of
Governors

Mr. Paul Steiger
Editor-in-Chief
ProPublica
55 Broadway
New York, NY 10006

Dear Mr. Steiger,

ProPublica's "investigative report" on Alhurra television is so lacking in depth and accuracy that it can only be defined as sensationalism. It is filled with inaccuracies and innuendo that draw the reader to erroneous conclusions. With so much flawed reporting, we will not attempt here to address every inaccuracy, but simply to correct a few of the fundamental points:

- According to international research firms such as ACNielsen, Alhurra has the largest weekly audience of any non-Arab broadcaster in the Middle East, up from 21 million in 2006 to 26 million today.
- Alhurra's current programming is in no way anti-Israeli. Alhurra provides the region full and balanced coverage of Israeli issues to viewers in the Middle East.
- Alhurra was created to provide objective news and information to the Middle East about America and Americans. Alhurra was not created to "counter a wave of global criticism that had been building against the Bush administration."
- Alhurra has not experienced a "string of broadcast disasters." We have acknowledged, addressed, and corrected the problems that led to several breaches in editorial control more than 18 months ago. Editorial controls are currently in place to guard against a recurrence.
- Alhurra's live discussion programs highlight policies and opinions from the U.S. and the region. In the process, guests may make comments that are critical of the U.S. and its allies. Alhurra seeks a tone of moderation in all of its broadcasts, but cannot control every word said in a live program. If Alhurra tried to do so, it certainly would not be a model of free press in the democratic tradition.
- Alhurra employs qualified, talented, experienced journalists who are dedicated to its mission. The Vice President of Network News closely directs their work and controls the station's news and information programming.
- MBN's President is eminently qualified; under his leadership a firm strategic direction, sound editorial controls, and strong financial controls have been established.
- Alhurra programming is appropriately overseen by the BBG. In addition, Alhurra programming is streamed on Alhurra's website and Alhurra transcripts are available publicly in English on BBG's website.

Unlike the assertions of the "investigation," these facts all can be supported by evidence. Alhurra provides an important direct link to the people of the Middle East to inform their perceptions of America. Under current leadership, Alhurra is on a sound path to strengthening its already impressive impact. Alhurra's audience has grown more than 22 percent in the past two years.

While this was ProPublica's first investigative piece since its launch, there is clearly room for improvement in its reporting and credibility. The piece was at best a misinformed retrospective.

Sincerely,

Joaquin F. Blaya
Governor
Broadcasting Board of Governors