

ADVANCE FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2007

TORONTO – Complaints that an editorial published in The Globe and Mail Feb. 15, 2006, incorrectly declared that a video showing suicide bombers preparing for a mission was displayed on “the Hamas website” have been dismissed with reservations by the Ontario Press Council.

The complaints were lodged by Campbell Robertson of Ottawa, a member of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, and Bahija Reghai of Ottawa, president of the Coalition of Arab Canadian Professionals and Community Associations.

Robertson said that when the editorial writer was asked to identify the source of the video, he said it was Palestine Media Watch, an Israeli organization that Robertson said “is known for promoting one-sided, hateful views of Palestinians.”

Reghai said that when the newspaper was challenged, “it gave websites that may support Hamas but are not ‘the Hamas website’.”

The editorial said that optimists who take the view that the Hamas victory in the January 2006 Palestinian election will lead the militant Islamist movement to moderate its views “should take a look at a video presented on the Hamas website this week.”

The two complaints were lodged in April and July. An Aug. 15 letter from The Globe said the only question to be determined was whether the newspaper was justified in referring to the source of the video as the Hamas website. It said there had been an official Hamas website two years ago that has been deactivated. It added that it had determined that the video was on palestine-info, the site of the Palestine Information Center,

described by the Hamas-PA minister of education as the official Hamas site. In dismissing the complaint, the Press Council said it recognized that it took some time for the newspaper to identify the site on which the video was shown.

MORE: Its reservations dealt with the fact that, in saying the video was on the Hamas website “this week” and “Hamas is airing it now,” there was no independent verification that it was, in fact, newly posted on the site.

Text of the adjudication:

Campbell Robertson of Ottawa, a member of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, and Bahija Reghai of Ottawa, president of the Coalition of Arab Canadian Professionals and Community Associations, complained about a Globe and Mail editorial published Feb. 15, 2006, which identified as the Hamas website the source of a video showing suicide bombers delivering statements before beginning their mission. Robertson said that when the writer was asked to identify the source of information about the site showing the video, he identified it as an Israeli organization, Palestine Media Watch.

Reghai wrote that none of the websites cited by the newspaper are “the Hamas website.”

The Globe responded that, since the official Hamas site was deactivated in 2004, Hamas has been disseminating its information through the Palestine Information Center and it’s fair and reasonable to call it the Hamas site.

The Ontario Press Council is of the view that when the editorial was published The Globe and Mail did not have the information which it subsequently acquired to identify the site as the Hamas site. It does believe that in saying the video was “presented on the Hamas website this week” and that “Hamas is airing it now,” the editorial left the impression that it had just been posted when, in fact, there was no indication how long it had

been on the site.

But with the reservation, it dismisses the complaint.

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