

Osama Siblani & The Arab American News

The Arab American News, a.k.a. Sada Al Watan (Arabic for “Echo of the homeland”), is a dual-language Arabic-English newspaper published weekly in Dearborn, Michigan. Established in 1984 by publisher Osama A. Siblani, the paper has been described as the largest Arab community newspaper in the U.S. by the U.S. government-funded AlHurra satellite television station.

It has an “unaudited circulation of 30,000 in the Detroit area,” according to a 2009 report by the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. Its reach is likely due, at least in part, to Osama Siblani’s relationship with various Arab American community organizations. The influence Osama Siblani has in the Arab and Muslim communities in Michigan goes beyond his role at the newspaper. Osama Siblani is the chairman and spokesperson of the Congress of Arab American Organizations (CAAO), an umbrella organization that claims to represent the views of 47 local Arab American organizations.

Many Arab American News articles express sympathy, if not outright support, for Hezbollah and Hamas. These articles are in line with Osama Siblani’s own statements of support for the terrorist organizations. In 2006, Siblani told the *Chicago Tribune*: “If the FBI wants to come after those who support the resistance done by Hezbollah, then they better bring a fleet of buses. I for one would be willing to go to jail.” In 2004, Siblani told the *The Washington Post* that Al Manar, Hezbollah’s TV station, enjoys popularity among Arab Americans because of its strong support for “resistance against Israeli occupation... I disagree with the State Department that it incites violence.”

In 2003, Siblani again expressed his support for terrorist groups when he told the *Washington Post*: “Mr. Bush believes Hezbollah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions are terrorists, but we believe they are freedom fighters.” When senior CNN Middle East News Editor Octavia Nasr was fired in 2010 after publicly mourning the death of a Hezbollah leader, Siblani commented, “This is unbelievable what is happening in the United States of America. You can say anything you want- except when it comes to Israel.”

As chairman of the CAAO, Siblani has coordinated anti-Israel protests and Palestinian solidarity projects for the Arab and Muslim community. At a 2006 anti-Israel protest in Washington D.C., Siblani thanked the crowd for its support and led them in a chant, yelling, “Who is a freedom fighter?” and the crowd responding, “Hezbollah!” In a December 2008 rally against Israel’s Operation Cast Lead, Siblani addressed Gaza, saying, “We know that you are being subjected as we speak to the biggest campaign of killing by this military killing machine that is called Israel, that was made by the United States of America.”

Siblani is also the treasurer of the Arab American Political Action Committee (AAPAC), an organization that encourages the political activities of the Arab American community and lobbies on political issues of concern to the Arab American community. In December 2010, in response to Wayne State’s decision to no longer award the Spirit of Diversity Award, which was named after anti-Semitic former White House journalist Helen Thomas, Siblani said, “Helen Thomas means a lot to me and to our community, she’s a part of our story.” Siblani added, “We do not understand why a remark against a political group-the Zionists- would be interpreted as being anti-Semitic... We believe the real problem here is that some in the pro-Israeli community donor base are doing what they do whenever they can, which is silencing debate on the subject of Israel.”

The Arab American News publishes articles by known anti-Semites including Jeff Gates, the author of the anti-Semitic book *Guilt by Association* and numerous articles that propagate theories of Jewish control over the U.S. government and

foreign policy; Paul Craig Roberts, a syndicated columnist who promotes 9/11 and other conspiracy theories and has questioned Holocaust history, alleging that the "Israel lobby" halts those who "study the facts" from coming to an "independent conclusion" on the Holocaust; and James Petras, a retired professor of sociology who has stated that [U.S.] presidents are at the disposal of "Jewish power" and maintained that Jews represent "the greatest threat to world peace and humanity." The paper also offers a voice to critics of Israel that frequently write in support for terrorist groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah.

Below is a sampling of problematic articles that have appeared in the Arab American News:

March 2, 2013: Columnist Franklin Lamb, an American living in Beirut who writes pro-Hezbollah, anti-Israel articles for left-wing and Muslim media, wrote that while Iran yearns for better relations with the U.S., "Zionist" organizations and advocates are preventing it. Lamb blamed the U.S. for its history of meddling in Iranian affairs. Lamb is also a contributor to Press TV, Iran's government-run English-language propaganda station, where he had written on the alleged undue power of the Israel lobby in the U.S.

November 18, 2011: In an op-ed article by Joseph Massad, Associate Professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History at Columbia University, Israel is described as a "predatory" and "aggressive" state "governed by a foundational anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racist state ideology..."

October 1, 2011: In a reprint of an article originally published on the anti-Israel *Electronic Intifada* blog, Sanah Yassin commented that the U.S. government is working in collusion with Israeli interest groups to stifle awareness of the Palestinian situation, "The Israel lobby and the U.S. government are working hand-in-hand against efforts to raise awareness about the occupation and human rights abuses perpetrated against the Palestinians."

July 25, 2011: Columnist Sobhi Ghandur wrote an article denying Israel as a state for Jews and mockingly stating that a Jewish state will only be acceptable once there is a state for each sect or minority group in the region. "The slogan 'Jewish' state of Israel, or 'Israel is a state for Jews,' will be accepted not only internationally, but also in Arab states once there are Sunni, Shi'a, Druze, Alawite, Maronite, Coptic, Kurdish, Nubian, and Berber states!"

May 28, 2011: In an editorial by former editor of the Arabic edition Adnan Baydoun titled, "Netanyahu and the Horror from the 'Arab Spring,'" Israel is described as a "state founded on usurpation and a continuing battle (paranoia) which the Jews have historically suffered (for reasons related to their mental setting)." Baydoun also claimed that the West is imprisoned "in a cage (of guilt) from the Jewish Holocaust," and that now the "people of the Holocaust" are perpetrators of crimes while the world remains silent.

May 28, 2011: Frequent contributor Miriam Shahaab wrote an opinion piece in Arabic titled, "Time of the Wolves!!" in which she denied the right of Israel's existence and any Jewish connection to the land. "I have no doubt that the state of the tribe of Zion is a big myth and the establishment of a Jewish state is a greater myth..."

August 21, 2010: Rannie Amiri, an anti-Israel commentator who once compared Tzipi Livni, former Israeli Foreign Minister, to Adolf Hitler, claimed Israel was responsible for Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's death. In an article titled, "Israel's fingerprints surface on the Hariri assassination," Amiri detailed his conspiracy theory alleging, "Israel's unfettered access to critical phone records will have framed Hezbollah for the crime."

June 26, 2010: In an article published in the English section of the paper titled, "Israeli War Crimes and Piracy," James Petras trotted out the widely debunked USS Liberty conspiracy theory alleging that Israeli forces purposely attacked an American ship during the Six Day War. Petras peppered his condemnation of

Israel with anti-Semitic canards, such as the existence of a “Zionist Fifth Column” in the U.S.: “For the U.S. mass media the problem is not Israeli state terror, but how to manipulate and disarm the outrage of the international community. To that end the entire Zionist power configuration has a reliable ally in the Zionized Obama White House and U.S. Congress.”

June 5, 2010: In an article published in the English section of the paper titled, “The Madness of Arrogance,” Alan Sabrosky, a U.S. veteran and 9/11 conspiracy theorist, compared the Israeli spokesperson for the IDF to “her public relations soulmate [sic] Dr. Josef Goebbels,” the Nazi minister of propaganda. In the article, Sabrosky accused Israelis of “spraying automatic weapons fire into people around them—another of their longstanding habits.” He insinuated the Congress and U.S. media are controlled by Jews, citing as evidence news correspondents reporting from Israel who are Jewish.

April 25, 2010: Yousef Munnayer, Executive Director of the Washington-based Palestine Center, wrote: “The ideology at the foundation of the state of Israel and the very justification for its existence requires the existence of apocalyptic anti-Semitic forces with the intent and capability to annihilate. Without these bogeymen, whether it is Saddam Hussein, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Arabs who ‘want to push Israel into the sea,’ the state of Israel ceases to have any justification for the maintenance of a Jewish majority by force or for its ongoing occupation of Palestinian lands.”

March 27, 2010: Frequent contributor Miriam Shahaab wrote an opinion piece in Arabic titled, “Thanks America!” in which she declared: “...Israel does not want peace with the Arabs and is not headed toward it. The only peace is the death of Israel.”

March 20, 2010: In an opinion piece in Arabic titled, “Where does Shaytan [Satan] come in?” frequent contributor Miriam Shahaab discussed Satan’s role in the world as tied to the anti-Semitic myth of ‘Zionist’ world domination: “Nothing is

truer with respect to that which we suffer, and [the point to which] we have arrived in the East than the ruin of Palestine: there's the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the verge of collapse in order for the dream of World Zionism to be realized. They [the Zionists] are plotting, spreading weapons to the world and beautifying their evil deeds..."