

18/10/2003

#### Case for global alternate media

A MUSLIM media has been suggested as a solution to the problem of biased reporting by mainstream international newspapers, television and radio. It should be not unlike the television news channel Al Jazeera, but with the difference that its reach will extend beyond the Arab-speaking world. It will present an alternative perspective, an approach kinder to Muslim sensibilities, as carried out by Al Jazeera during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and no less accurate. It will pick up where the Western media leaves off. It will make complete a picture purposely left incomplete.

That the international media has been very selective in its reporting of both the Afghan and Iraqi invasions is borne out by the recent criticism by CNN's leading international correspondent, Christiane Amanpour. She not only savaged her own channel but also others, with special mention given to Rupert Murdoch's Fox News. Her criticism is validated by the very fact of her continued employment with CNN which, in turn, legitimises the grievances voiced by much of the Muslim world and farther afield.

To make matters worse, selectivity and omissions are not the only faults of the Western media. It is prone to putting its own spin on stories, as is happening with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's OIC speech, which has been slammed as anti-Semitic when it is not. This is clear from the overall intention of the address, but the spin is, nevertheless, taking its toll.

The need for a universal media, funded from non-traditional sources, which serves the global village of Muslim and non-Muslim alike is then undeniable. Not only will Muslims be better served by it, it will also serve to sort the spin from the truth. With a Muslim media, for example, the cultural context of Dr Mahathir's reference to the Jews will be understood in inoffensive ways. Not burdened with the legacy of the Holocaust, Jewish economic dominance can be accepted as simple fact and voiced as such. To interpret the remarks as anti-Semitism is to load the guilt of others on the shoulders of the innocent. And so, the position vis-a-vis a universal Muslim media is made.