

Attachment A

10th October, 2005

Audience Affairs Manager
SBS
Locked Bag 028
Crows Nest
NSW 1585

Dear Sally Begbie,

Following my previous complaint regarding an SBS radio **segment** (program) presented by [redacted] I would like to let you know that I have in my possession a number of translated transcripts of other segments by the same commentator, suffering from the very same serious violations of basic journalistic standards as well as violations of your stated SBS Code of Practice.

Whilst a number of these broadcast violations may fall outside your (somewhat arbitrary) six week time limit for submitting complaints, they nonetheless uncover what appears to be an unchecked, consistent pattern of vilification and demonisation of Israel. This brings into question the standard of existing checks and balances SBS uses to filter substandard material. Similarly, one is led to question what other foreign language material may be broadcast that constitutes an unacceptable level of bias and propaganda. You would agree that in these times of increased global terror, the last thing we need is the incitement to hatred and cross-cultural tensions that [redacted] clearly espouses and represents.

I have in front of me a translation of a [redacted] segment which was broadcast by SBS on August 29th at approximately 7.33 am. Please accept this as a formal complaint. Once again [redacted] paints a grossly distorted, negative and erroneous picture of Israel, Ariel Sharon and the Israeli government. As in my previous letter, I contend that this violates your Code of Practice Article 2.1 Prejudice, Racism and Discrimination and Article 2.5 in that it has the potential to contribute to disharmony and cross-cultural tensions between Greek and Israeli/Jewish communities in Australia.

RECEIVED
14 OCT 2005

BY: Audience Affairs

continually attributes sinister motivations to the activities of the Israeli government, Prime Minister and army - with no basis in fact. The program therefore does not represent in any way a fair, objective, balanced or professional presentation of the issues and thus violates Article 4 of your Code of Practice eg :

"...Israel's withdrawal from Gaza was not for some peace initiative but to leave a piece of useless hostile land... in order to gain the West Bank" and :

"Sharon has decided to take the West Bank away from the Palestinians... and cut it in small pieces and keep the best of those pieces ""....in those pieces of land Palestinians will not be allowed to live a normal life ..."

And so it goes on!

The broadcast fails Article 2.4.3 as the quality is NOT appropriate to the SBS schedule and clearly constitutes unsuitable content. It is pure propaganda and is of deepest concern. Certainly material of this caliber would never be allowed on air in any English speaking program!

Your previous letter assured me that SBS works hard to ensure the highest possible standards. But it has failed to convince me in light of the above and other examples of substandard propaganda coming over the SBS airwaves. I also remain uneasy that other language broadcasts are similarly vitriolic and I would appreciate your early attention and response to these very serious concerns.

Yours faithfully

SBS RADIO - GREEK PROGRAM SEGMENT 29-08-2005, 7 AM

BROADCASTER: In continuation,
comments on the topic relating to the departure of Israeli soldiers from the Gaza Strip.

PROFESSOR Dear friends, hello from Athens.

Last week I was telling you that Israel is abandoning the Gaza Strip, not in the framework of some peace plan, but rather in the framework of their total win, of the defeat of the Palestinians.

I claimed that the departure from the Gaza Strip was a tactical move by Israel, by Sharon, much like the move made by all armies when they sacrifice a land of lesser importance in order to control other land of greater strategic importance and value.

Quite simply, Israel judged that the "site" known as the Gaza Strip - a "site" that contains, other than a lot of dust, one million two hundred thousand Palestinians and only ten thousand Israeli settlers - this piece of land was not of value to them. It wasn't worth their efforts, it wasn't worth the huge cost incurred by the continuation of their unlawful occupation of the land.

Either way, the Gaza Strip is very small for a Palestinian State to be created there. So in the end, the withdrawal from the area cost nothing to Israel. The big game for Israel is played in the West Bank. The West Bank which is unlawfully occupied by the Israelis... The West Bank, which Prime Minister Sharon has decided to take from the Palestinians. To cut it up into so many small pieces, and to keep the best parts for the Israelis, so that it will be impossible for the Palestinians to form a State from the pieces that they will be given, but also it will be impossible for them to live a normal day to day life.

And to be more specific, here are some examples.

You would have heard about the great wall that Israel is putting up in the West Bank. A great cement wall, which supposedly is being

raised there to stop suicide bombers against Israel. If they truly simply wanted to build this wall to have as a safety measure, then the Israelis could have built this wall on the border of Israel and the West Bank - on the international boundaries of Israel. They didn't do this though. It is worthwhile for you to have a look at a map, to see where they are building this wall. They are building this cement beast in the West Bank, in such a way that it divides Palestinian communities into two. In order for a Palestinian on one side of the wall, to visit neighbours and relatives who live only a few metres away on the other side of the wall, these Palestinians have to travel for many kilometres to reach the closest gate, and to go through humiliating checks which go on for hours.

Let me give you an example. In the area of Khalhigia(?), the residents can't go to their farms. We are talking about farms that are six thousand acres, a very big area in Palestinian terms. Why they can't go there? - because the Israelis have purposely built the wall there so it will be an obstacle for the Palestinians to have access to their farms. So the Palestinian farms in Khalhigia(?) are between, on the one side, the boundaries of Israel and on the other side the walls. Their farms are like the cheese in a sandwich. The Israeli army regards the area a military zone, which means (according to a law which was passed by the Israeli Parliament), that for the Palestinians to have access to their farms, they need a special visa which is issued by the Israeli army. These visas can be cancelled or simply not given out, depending on the wishes of the Israelis.

In a short period of time from now, when the wall will be completed, one hundred thousand Palestinians will find themselves between Israel and the wall, and will require this special visa in order to stay in their own homes. A visa which is so hard to obtain, as it is to gain permanent residency in the United States, the Green Card, or residency in Australia. The difference however is that they do not get this visa in order to migrate, but rather to be able to remain in their own homes, in their own land. For the farmers who need to pass to the over side of the wall, in order to cultivate their land or to transport their harvest to the marketplace, live with the daily agony if they will have enough time to pass through - to have enough time to

go to cultivate their farms and then to go back to their homes.

You see - the wall gates (listen, this is very interesting - so you can see how sadistic the situation is) open for the Palestinians twice a day - once in the morning and once in the afternoon, for only half an hour. Whoever gets a chance to pass through, may do so. Whoever doesn't - bad luck. Good luck, passing through a tractor, harvest and workers... Imagine the que that is created at the gates, and the disappointment for the majority of those Palestinians waiting at the gates, when after half an hour, the Israeli soldiers close the gates and most people don't get a chance to pass through. At the same time, the Israeli citizens and all the Jews of the Diaspora have the right to pass through these same gates freely whenever they wish.

And the most repulsive part - if the farms are not cultivated systematically, according to an Israeli law, their ownership is passed to the Israeli state which then it can do whatever it wants with them. For example, to give them to the Israeli people. Do you understand this crime? What is Sharon's plans for the West bank? First they build a wall, supposedly for purposes of security, which has enclosed the Palestinians and has isolated them from the land that they wanted to rob them of. Then, they make the Palestinians' lives difficult, by not allowing them to cultivate this same land. And lastly, they declare this land uncultivated. And they say that since no-one is cultivating it, it does not belong to anyone, therefore it is ours. Is this logical thought? How do you find it? And this is not the only thing going on. The crime goes further to involve the areas enclosed by this wall. Israel, inside the heart of the West Bank, has built hundreds of settlements for Israelis - on Palestinian land. This land, which they took by force from the Palestinians twenty to thirty years ago. Usually they (t.n.: the settlements) are found on hills, so they can observe Palestinians from higher ground, with all the surrounding land being levelled. The olive trees have been uprooted and the land has been cemented over, so that way, they can see from far away, if the Palestinians dare to approach. These houses of the Israeli's are reminiscent of Switzerland - they have swimming pools, internet access, lots of wealth, gardens, lawns...

The settlers who live there, surrounded by the very poor Palestinians, from whom they have taken their land, these settlers have at their disposal ultra modern roads which connect them with Israel. On these roads, it is strictly forbidden for a Palestinian to travel. Conversely, the Palestinian villages are either completely isolated one from the other or are connected by dirt roads, where every one thousand metres are stopped by Israeli soldiers and are subjected to humiliating checks. On their own land - their country. And the rest of the world doesn't utter a word. Then they wonder why, when one of these Palestinians straps himself with explosives and blows himself up. But for this inhumane regime in the West Bank to continue to exist, as things are today, requires many Israeli soldiers and many expenses. It almost brings the Israeli economy to its knees. The withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip was done for this reason. To save on human and financial resources. So they can focus all their attention, all their resources, on the completion of their crime against humanity which is being carried out in the West bank... their ultimate aim is to make impossible the creation of a Palestinian State.

Good bye and have a good week.

END



SBS Corporation - Australia's multicultural broadcaster

18 November 2005

Audience Affairs

POSTED

SBS's Office of Audience has finalised its investigation into the commentary on the Greek Language Program, broadcast on 29 August 2005. Your complaint has been upheld. SBS considers the commentary breached Code 1 'Introduction and SBS Radio' and Code 2.1 'Prejudice, Racism and Discrimination' of the SBS Codes of Practice.

It is the view of this Office that

is an appropriate person to interview or to engage with as a commentator on a range of economic issues. However, is not a political scientist or an expert of Middle Eastern politics and therefore does not have an expert position from which to speak about ongoing tensions between Israel and Palestine.

was used as a commentator in the general area of the Greek Language Program and not as a News or Current Affairs correspondent on the Program. Therefore he is not subjected to the same standards required by News and Current Affairs reporters and correspondents in regard to fairness, objectivity and balance, as contained in Code 2.4 'News and Current Affairs' of the SBS Codes of Practice. Having regard to the topic under discussion, Codes 2.5 'Religions' and Code 4 'Advertising and Sponsorship,' as you have nominated, are not applicable. However Code 1 states:

SBS will present diversity carefully and responsibly, ensuring a balance of views over time.

SBS would expect that commentary be balanced by an alternative point of view within a reasonable time period. On the advice provided to me, this was not done. Therefore the particular anti-Israeli line of his commentary could be reasonably held to have assisted in the promotion of negative stereotypes about Jews and more particularly Israeli Jews.

Code 1 of the SBS Code of Practice also requires that language groups while endeavouring to be responsive to the needs of their particular community, are also expected to remain impartial and objective.

SBS would like to apologise to you for any distress this broadcast may have caused you and would like to assure you that Radio Management is reviewing existing arrangements between and the Greek Language program.

If you consider this response to be inadequate you are entitled to take your concerns to the Australian Communications and Media Authority. SBS is grateful that you have brought this matter to our attention.

Yours sincerely



Sally Begbie
Audience Affairs Manager