

The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting: Disseminating the Regime's Ideology Worldwide

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Recent reports from the United Kingdom and Italy about the involvement of Iran's PressTV television channel in sophisticated influence operations in those countries attest to the ongoing efforts of Iran's state propaganda network—operated under the supervision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting—to weaken Western nations and amplify the Iranian narrative within them. The ability to curb Iran's global influence depends, among other things, on the international community's capacity to disrupt this elaborate system that Iran nurtures in order to spread its ideology.

The dramatic Israeli Air Force strike on June 16 against the headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) was primarily intended to damage the Iranian regime's ability to communicate with its people—thus undermining its command reach and destabilizing its rule. At the same time, the strike highlighted another crucial role of the Broadcasting Authority in Tehran: disseminating Iranian propaganda and messaging across the world.

The IRIB operates with a massive budget of nearly half a billion dollars, enabling it to finance dozens of television and radio channels broadcasting in more than 30 languages, including English, Spanish, Arabic, various African languages, and Azeri. This allows Iran to maintain connections with Shiite communities and export its ideological doctrine worldwide.

These television networks are part of Iran's "soft power" apparatus, which also includes "influence operations" through social media, religious organizations and institutions, academic institutions, NGOs (led by the Ahl al-Bayt network), and the Iranian diplomatic corps. All of these elements work in tandem to propagate Tehran's ideology and expand its influence over Shiite communities around the world—and beyond. Because of the Iranian leadership's deep concern over internal divisions within the Muslim world, Iran has also sought to carry out influence efforts among Sunni populations, particularly in the Middle East, aiming to reduce hostility between Shiite and Sunni through support for organizations that promote "rapprochement" between the sects.

An example of the synergy between the different components of Iran's "soft power" framework is that at least some of the [prominent commentators](#) on Iranian television channels, such as HispanTV, are the same imams who head major religious centers in Latin America. These figures were educated in institutions connected to Iran's academic-religious network, notably Al-Mustafa University, which serves as the leading academic arm of the Iranian regime. Tens of thousands of students from Shiite communities worldwide study at this institution, either at its main campus in Qom or at various local branches.

These imams also control local media outlets, such as the Al-Nour radio and television channels broadcast from the Al-Wahid religious center in Buenos Aires, headed by Abdul Karim Paz, a cleric who serves as a key commentator on HispanTV. Paz was educated at Al-Mustafa University and is [directly linked to Hezbollah](#) and to the global influence network operated by [Tehran](#).

Iran's activities in the global broadcasting sphere closely resemble those of the Russian and Chinese regimes, which operate international television networks such as Russia's RT and China's CGTN and serve as propaganda arms targeting the same continents of particular interest to Tehran, mainly Africa and Latin America. Moreover, there is often a noticeable "diffusion" of ideas, whereby reports aired on these foreign channels are later republished and amplified by Iranian media outlets, especially when they malign or contradict "Western" narratives.

Despite the prevailing notion that the rise of the internet and social media has diminished the importance of television channels, recent reports from the [United Kingdom](#) and [Italy](#) indicate that Iran continues to successfully harness its broadcasting apparatus to advance its strategic objectives in these countries. British and Italian authorities have accused Iran of using its English-language channel, PressTV, to conduct deliberate influence operations targeting British and [Italian](#) societies. Examples include promoting Scottish independence as a means to weaken the United Kingdom "from within." These efforts can be added to the network's attempts to influence the 2024 US presidential election, illustrating how Tehran leverages this platform to undermine states it perceives as threats.

PressTV, however, is not alone. Its sister network, HispanTV, which broadcasts in Spanish, plays a key role in expanding Iranian influence in Latin America and provides Tehran with a means to criticize or delegitimize governments that maintain relations with Israel. A notable case is Guatemala, one of Israel's closest allies in the region. Journalists affiliated with HispanTV have been actively working to undermine this relationship by disseminating false reports about Israeli activities in the [Middle East](#).

Iran is also heavily investing in efforts to enhance its political, economic, and security influence in Africa. Particularly prominent is HausaTV, which broadcasts in Nigeria and primarily supports the activities of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). Zakzaky is regarded as the personal representative of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on the African continent. When Zakzaky was arrested by Nigerian authorities, Iran leveraged its control over HausaTV to campaign for his release, including calls to mobilize Shiite masses across Nigeria in support of this goal.

To create redundancy and minimize the risk of shutdowns or broadcast disruptions, these networks operate across multiple platforms and social media channels, from Telegram to YouTube. Hezbollah's television networks, such as Al-Mayadeen, have likewise begun broadcasting in foreign languages, including Spanish. This move largely reflects a response to US government measures aimed at limiting the spread of Iranian media networks, including sanctions against the IRIB and its affiliates. Nevertheless, most of these networks continue to operate and with greater intensity.

Given the considerable challenges of countering these Iranian media networks, it is necessary to adopt a unified, coordinated strategy built on measures that can significantly impair Iran's ability to disseminate its messages worldwide. Such a strategy should include:

Diplomatic action to raise awareness of the threat posed by these channels—many of the countries targeted by them are completely unaware of the nature of the broadcasts and the potential risk they pose to their internal stability.

Development of a coordinated action plan with the relevant platforms, with an emphasis on social networks such as YouTube, which enable Iranian television channels to broadcast their messages, with the goal of shutting those channels down.

Continuous monitoring of the content disseminated on these networks and “raising the alarm” whenever that content threatens the stability of the target countries' policies.

Upgrade of technological capabilities for monitoring social media so they can detect the opening of new platforms intended to bypass platforms that have been closed.

These networks employ many journalists who operate openly on their behalf. It is appropriate to examine measures with the targeted countries that would make those journalists' work more difficult—from revoking press credentials to confiscation.

As part of the pressure applied to the Iranian regime and in an effort to limit its global influence, a combined diplomatic and technological campaign is essential—one that will disrupt, degrade, and, when necessary, terminate the broadcasts of its international TV channels. Such action, together with resolute measures against the other elements of Iran's “soft-power” apparatus—above all, its control of religious centers and its global academic network—would reduce Iran's global reach and likely increase pressure on the Iranian regime, which regards these tools as central to achieving its ideological-strategic objectives.

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