



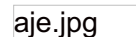
Breaking the Ban – AlJazeera English’s coverage from Gaza (guestblog)

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/01/09/breaking-the-ban-%e2%80%93-aljazeera-english-%e2%80%99s-coverage-from-gaza-guestblog/

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 [Polis Silverstone Fellow](#) Nina Bigalke has been researching Al Jazeera’s English channel for the last 18 months so she was in the perfect position to monitor their coverage of the Gaza crisis. Here is her report.

The Israeli assault on Gaza had been waging for two weeks. For twelve days the Israeli government managed to uphold a ban on foreign media appealing to enter the embattled enclave. If twelve hours are a very long time in the world of journalism, twelve days seem like an eternity. Some [pictures and voices](#) speaking of appalling humanitarian conditions made their way out of Gaza , but the major networks were largely [restricted](#) to pacing the Israeli side of the border.

 While yesterday the first international journalists had been allowed to accompany Israeli armed forces to cover house-to-house searches, [Al Jazeera English](#) continued to do what it had been doing from day one of the invasion: providing continuous and extended coverage from inside Gaza.

The reason why the Israeli government’s ban was not effective in the case of AJE is strikingly simple. Their correspondents were around before the news broke. As coincidental as this may sound, it is symptomatic of a different approach to reporting where continuous presence takes precedence over momentary action.

Ayman Mohyeldin had been in Gaza since October 2008 to cover the siege. Shortly after he had been joined by Sherine Tadros. Make no mistake, from one perspective Al Jazeera English simply was in a position to deliver the kind of reporting many others had been prevented from producing.

Those who are turning to Al Jazeera English for an entirely different kind of journalism may not find what they are looking for – but in its reporting on Gaza, the channel shows where its real potential for making a difference lies: in having a presence before news breaks in regions where other networks predominantly engage in situations of acute crisis. And in the political and cultural sensitivity on the part of the journalists that is growing out of this presence.

These lessons are not novel. When asked in 2007 in an [interview](#) with [PR Week](#) USA about accusations that the media was not telling the full story about Iraq, Ayman Mohyeldin’s return question could have just as well described today’s situation in Gaza:

‘Western media definitely committed a lot of resources [...]. The question is what kind of access did a lot of these people have?’

After receiving mixed critiques for its coverage of the US election, this time around those who watch seem unanimous in their praise of the one network reporting live from Gaza for the fourteenth consecutive day.

This report by [Polis Silverstone Scholar](#) Nina Bigalke

More view on AJE’s coverage here:

[LA Times Blog](#)

[Huffington Post on Media Channel](#)

[New America Media](#)



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