

Ties to Terrorists, the IRGC, and Turkish Intelligence? Introducing Turkey's TRT World

Report by
JewishOnliner



This report examines Turkey's state broadcaster, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), as well as its English-language arm TRT World, and the Arabic-language TRT Arabi. Jewish Onliner's analysis of TRT reveals patterns of editorial bias, apparent terrorist associations, and propaganda operations targeting Western audiences.

Through detailed analysis of the network's funding structure, editorial practices, staffing decisions, and content distribution, this investigation uncovers how TRT functions as a sophisticated state media apparatus that advances Turkish government narratives while potentially providing platforms for individuals with documented ties to designated terrorist organizations. The findings raise concerns about media licensing standards, national security oversight, and the infiltration of foreign propaganda into Western information ecosystems.

Key Findings

- **State Control and Propaganda Operations:** TRT World operates under direct Turkish presidential oversight since 2018, with over 86% of its funding derived from Turkish taxpayer-collected fees, functioning as what opposition figures describe as the ruling party's propaganda arm with an estimated 25% of daily broadcast time devoted to government messaging.
- **Pro-Hamas Editorial Bias:** The network consistently mirrors Turkey's pro-Hamas stance, refusing to label the organization as a terrorist group, while providing platforms to senior Hamas leaders and producing content that glorifies Hamas terrorism.
- **Staff with Apparent Terror Connections:** Multiple TRT personnel have documented ties to terror networks, including News Director Fatih Er (investigated for IRGC Quds Force connections), and Gaza-based correspondents with direct familial ties to Hamas operatives and a history of celebrating terror.

Relationship with the Turkish Government

According to a 2025 investigation by Nordic Monitor, over 86% of [TRT's revenue](#) (18.24 billion TL out of 21.14 billion TL) in 2023 came from mandatory fees on electronic goods (“bandrol” taxes), with only ~14% from advertising and other sources. Historically, TRT also drew [funding](#) from a tax on electricity bills until that levy was abolished in 2023. This reliance on state-collected funds underscores TRT financial dependence on the government.

Although legally a “public service” broadcaster, in practice TRT (and by extension TRT World) is under direct government influence. A 2018 presidential [decree](#) placed TRT under the Presidency’s Directorate of Communications, cementing control by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s administration. In 2025, Dr. Mehmet Zahid Sobacı was [reappointed](#) as TRT’s General Director by Erdoğan, underscoring his direct control over the outlet.

Top executives are appointed through government channels, and there are no strong safeguards ensuring editorial independence. Indeed, observers note that TRT’s content has

consistently reflected a pro-government bias, which intensified after 2018 when it came under direct presidential oversight. An [EU report](#) in 2019 already found TRT exhibited a “significant pro-government bias” in coverage, and opposition figures claim TRT now operates openly as the ruling party’s propaganda arm. One opposition member of Turkey’s media regulator (RTÜK) estimated in 2023 that [one-quarter](#) of TRT’s daily broadcast time is devoted to government propaganda.

As the ruling AKP’s line has shifted in recent years, TRT’s editorial stance has tended to mirror it. President Erdoğan’s government is socially conservative and Islamist-leaning, and [Media Bias/Fact Check](#) accordingly rates TRT World as having a mixed record on factual reporting due to its one-sided pro-government stance.

For example, coverage of Turkish domestic politics on TRT overwhelmingly favors Erdoğan’s party and agenda, to the point that The Spectator (UK) dubbed TRT World “[President Erdoğan’s mouthpiece to woo the West](#).” In short, despite branding itself as an international news network, TRT World is widely seen as [aligned with Turkish government](#) policies and messaging. Critics and analysts frequently describe it as an instrument of Turkish state public diplomacy or propaganda.

Pro-Hamas and Anti-Israel Media Bias

Since its inception, TRT World’s Middle East coverage has often been [sympathetic](#) to Palestinian Islamist terror groups (like Hamas) that [Turkey’s government supports](#). Independent analysts note that TRT World’s content echoes Ankara’s positions – including its stance on Hamas. Notably, President Erdoğan refuses to label Hamas as terrorists (calling them a “[resistance movement](#)”), and TRT World’s [reporting](#) typically mirrors this framing.

Platforming and Content Examples

TRT (including its Arabic-language sister channel TRT Arabi) has repeatedly provided a platform to Hamas officials. In November 2023, amid the Israel–Gaza war, TRT Arabi aired an [exclusive interview](#) with Khaled Meshaal, a senior Hamas leader, allowing him to outline Hamas’ stance and “resistance” agenda to a broader audience.

TRT appears to repackage anti-Israel rhetoric as journalism, amplifying [Hamas narratives](#) while contextualizing the group's violence, with TRT Arabi posting content glorifying Hamas, including an [animated video](#) depicting former Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar as a heroic “martyr” in Gaza. Additionally, TRT World [published an opinion article](#) praising the grotesque hostage release “ceremonies” organized by Hamas in Gaza, calling them a “theatre of defiance.” The article was subsequently deleted after significant international condemnation of the spectacle.

Documentary Removal for “Promoting Terrorists”

In September 2024, TRT World reported that Meta (the parent company of Facebook) [removed](#) a TRT-produced Arabic documentary titled “Journalism Under Genocide.” According to TRT, Facebook deleted the content, stating it praised or supported individuals and organizations defined as dangerous. Meta’s action implied that the documentary crossed a line – possibly by venerating reporters affiliated with groups like Hamas.

Controversial Figures Associated with TRT World

According to findings from Nordic Monitor, [Fatih Er](#), TRT World's [News Director](#), was named as a suspect in a Turkish probe investigating ties to the [IRGC Quds Force](#). Wiretapped in 2013 for alleged links to Iran-backed networks, Er was also involved with [IHH](#), an Islamist charity with alleged links to Turkish intelligence and Al-Qaeda. Though never charged, his appointment to lead TRT World's news operations raises concerns.

Nordic Monitor's investigation also revealed that [Enes Adli](#), the network's [Washington Bureau Chief](#), signed U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) documents claiming TRT engaged in no political activity on behalf of Turkey—a claim disputed by watchdogs given the broadcaster's clear alignment with Ankara's viewpoints and sympathetic treatment of Hamas. As such, his filings may have misled U.S. regulators, in violation of the law.

[Rumeysa Kalın Karabulut](#), a TRT reporter and daughter of Turkey's intelligence chief İbrahim Kalın, represents another connection between the broadcaster and intelligence networks. In a separate FARA filing dated January 26, 2025, Saltzman & Evinch—a law

firm that provides lobbying services for the Turkish government and handles legal representation for its Washington embassy—reported earning \$50,000 from the Turkish Embassy between July and December 2024. The firm has a standing \$1.5 million contract with the embassy. Among its notable alumni is Karabulut, who previously worked at the firm as a law clerk and has been employed by TRT in Turkey since 2019.

TRT Staff with Apparent Hamas Ties

TRT's Gaza-based correspondents have been found to have familial ties with Hamas and have associated with or given public statements of support to the U.S.-designated terrorist organization:

Sami Barhoom

[Sami Barhoom](#), a [TRT Arabi correspondent](#), has documented meetings with Hamas leadership. Barhoom's social media shows a photo from [2019](#) of him meeting with former Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh.

After Haniyeh's elimination in Tehran in 2024, Barhoom [reposted](#) the photo praising him. More damning are Barhoom's direct familial ties to Hamas—following Israel's November 2024 elimination of [Ala'a and Baha'a Barhoom](#), sons of senior Hamas figure Fawzi Barhoom who were delivering salaries to Hamas personnel, Sami Barhoom [mourned](#) them as "martyrs" and "cousins" on social media. Sami Barhoom also posted a photo of himself next to Fawzi Barhoom, further solidifying their connection.

A previous [Jewish Onliner investigation](#) revealed that Muslim Brotherhood spokesman Ali Hamad [identified](#) Alaa as a "media cadre of Hamas" and Baha as a "Qassam martyr," indicating that he was likely a member of Hamas's military wing. Alaa was even cited as working in "[Ismail Haniyeh's media office](#)" and attended a [meeting](#) with the [Popular Resistance Committees](#), Gaza's third-largest terror group.

Sami Shehadeh

[Sami Shehadeh](#), a TRT Arabi cameraman, regularly posts photos of himself [happily posing](#) next to [armed](#) members of [Hamas's military wing](#) and has praised [Haniyeh](#) and [Ahmed](#)

[Jarrar](#), who led the terror cell responsible for [murdering Rabbi Raziel Shevach](#) in 2018. His social media includes an image of Palestinian protesters holding a [swastika-adorned kite](#).

Hossam Salem

[Hossam Salem](#), who works as a cameraman for TRT Arabi and has [worked](#) as a photojournalist for Al Jazeera and New York Times, has an extensive history of celebrating terror attacks on social media. The watchdog group [Honest Reporting](#) found that he praised the 2011 Jerusalem bus bombing that killed British student Mary Jane Gardner, expressed joy over the 2014 Har Nof synagogue massacre, applauded 2015 terror attacks, and repeatedly eulogized suicide bombers responsible for the 2004 Ashdod port attack that killed ten workers. On October 7, 2023, Salem [posted](#) "O writer of history: The youth are taking a stroll around the country," seemingly in support of the Hamas massacre.

TRT's Platforming of Terror Operatives

Beyond employing staff with alleged terrorist connections, TRT World has actively provided platforms for individuals with documented ties to designated terrorist organizations, raising further questions about the network's editorial standards and security screening processes.

On March 19, 2025, TRT conducted an [interview](#) with [Majed Al-Zeer](#), who has been identified by European authorities as a central Hamas operative operating in Germany. European law enforcement has issued an [arrest warrant](#) for Al-Zeer in connection with his alleged activities on behalf of the designated terrorist organization.

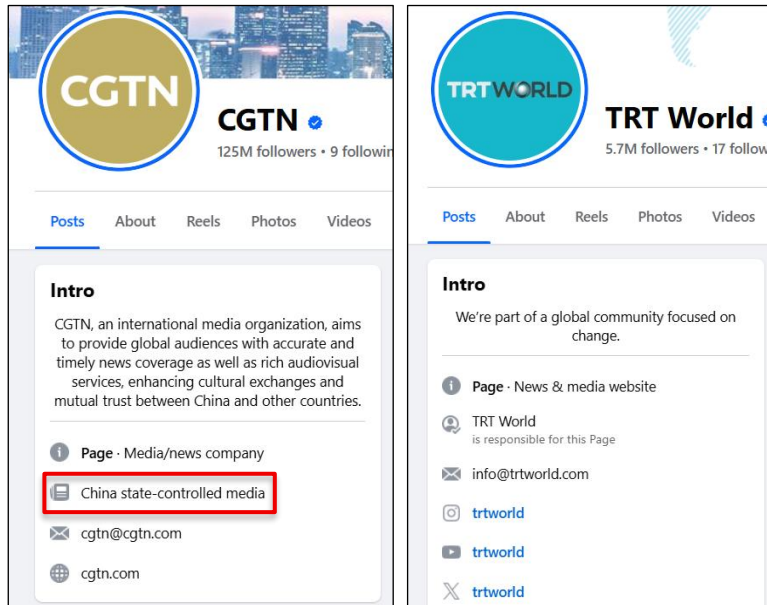
TRT has repeatedly [interviewed](#) and featured [articles](#) authored by Sami Al-Arian, who [pleaded guilty](#) in 2006 to providing services to Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization. Al-Arian was deported from the U.S. in 2015 and now appears to reside in Turkey. In August 2024, Al-Arian [spoke](#) at TRT World's panel discussion in Istanbul and was listed as a [speaker](#) on the TRT World Forum site. Al-Arian currently serves as director of the [Center for Islam and Global Affairs](#) (CIGA) at Istanbul Zaim University, an institution that has repeatedly [hosted Hamas-affiliated individuals](#) and serves as a hub for pro-Hamas academic and media activities.

Influence on American Audiences

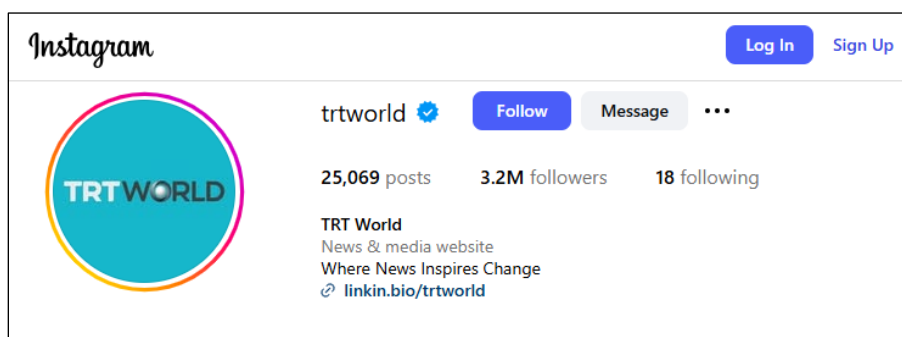
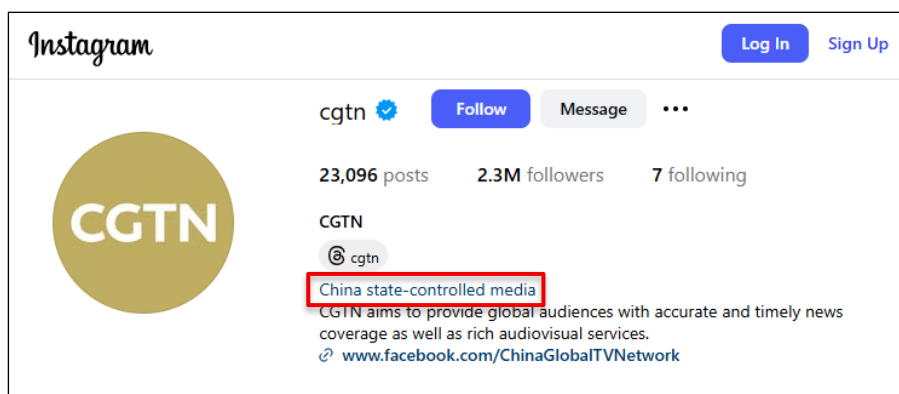
TRT World – the network’s English-language arm – has invested heavily in reaching Western markets. By 2019, it was available to [260 million households worldwide](#), including U.S. cable systems. In the U.S., it is registered under [FARA](#) as foreign state media. U.S. [critics](#) and analysts have described it as equivalent to Russia’s RT, China’s CGTN, or [Qatar’s Al-Jazeera](#).

TRT World maintains an impressive presence on social media platforms, with nearly 10 million subscribers on YouTube, 5.7 million likes on Facebook, 3.2 million followers on Instagram, 2.1 million followers on TikTok, and 666 thousand followers on X (all as of August 2025). However, the only prominent social media platform to attach a “state-controlled media” label to TRT World is YouTube. For example, while Facebook and Instagram (both owned by Meta) attach the label to the China Global Television Network’s (CGTN) pages, it has not attached it to TRT World’s.

The absence of such labels prevents people from understanding the source of the news they are consuming and the agenda it is aimed at promoting.



Credit: [CGTN](#) & [TRT World](#) on Facebook



Credit: [CGTN](#) & [TRT World](#) on Instagram

Moreover, the network's employment of personnel who appear to have ties the IRGC, Turkish intelligence, and U.S.-designated terror groups — while maintaining this extensive Western reach and succeeding in injecting Ankara's narratives into policy and activist discourse — raises serious questions about broadcast licensing and national security oversight.

TRT World's Anti-American Content

TRT World, which seeks to shape perceptions among Western audiences, particularly in the United States, often promotes narratives that can be described as anti-American, portraying the country as deeply racist and oppressive, or as inflammatory, stoking existing social divisions and contentious debates.

For example, in November 2021, TRT World [posted a video](#) about the Thanksgiving holiday, captioned “For Native Americans, Thanksgiving is a reminder of genocide and loss of land.” Similarly, in June 2024, TRT World [posted that](#): “Oscar-nominated Lily Gladstone is pleased that Indigenous people are getting better representation on the silver

screen but warns there is an ‘ongoing genocide’ of Native Americans that must be addressed.”

In addition, TRT World has [created videos](#) about “how systemic racism in the US impacts the health of Black patients.” Relatedly, TRT World has [published videos](#) titled “Institutional racism in US explained through a Michael Jackson song.” Other videos [have argued](#) that “Addressing racism in the US begins with atoning for past sins. Repatriations for slavery and levelling the playing field between the races are the only ways racism can ever be ‘solved.’”

Disclaimer

Any reliance on the information provided in this document by any individual shall be based on his/her own independent investigation and verification as to all research, data, communications, contained in this document. The foregoing document is provided as a supplemental research report contained on the topics therein. Any use of screenshots, visuals, graphics, or pictures contained (“Images”) herein may be subject to copyright and other intellectual property rights. The Publisher makes no warrants or guarantees regarding the usability of these images; therefore, citation, display or redistribution of any Images as-is shall be at Recipients’ own legal and commercial risk. No such part of this documentation shall be utilized for any other purpose other than informational. The unauthorized dissemination of the materials contained herein and any reliance thereon by any third parties, agents of same or individuals shall not be in any way associated or attributed to the Publisher of this document. Publisher does not make any warranties as to the accuracy, content, completeness or reliability of the information contained herein.