

The 2005 terrorism raids in Australia's Arabic-language press

Introduction

Although there has been considerable controversy in Australia over the reporting of issues involving diverse groups, the media which form the focus of this discussion are invariably the mainstream news organisations. While their reportage is a significant issue, media outlets which are not mainstream also play an important but often ignored role. This role would seem to be especially significant when it relates to coverage of an issue such as the ASIO raids in Sydney and Melbourne in November 2005 that resulted in charges being brought against 17 Muslim men. For this reason, it was determined that coverage of the issue by a major section of Australia's Arabic-language press should be examined.

The newspapers

The following case study reports the results of content analysis of reportage of the ASIO raids, and of the period preceding them when proposed anti-terrorism laws were the subject of much public debate, in Australia's three main Arabic newspapers. These are *El Telegraph*, published three times a week, *An Nahar*, published twice weekly, and *Al Furat*, which is published once a week. All three are based in Sydney.

An Nahar, published on Tuesdays and Thursdays, started in NSW in 1978. It dedicates most of its pages to content published in a Lebanese daily newspaper of the same name. The Lebanese version, founded in 1933, is a well-established newspaper with a wide readership. While the Australian *An Nahar* is not available online, the Lebanese *An Nahar* is (<http://www.annahar.com/>). Based in suburban Bankstown, the Australian version has a tabloid format, and focuses primarily on news from Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Lebanon. It usually includes two to three pages dedicated to Australian current affairs, sports and community news, as well as a column focusing on Bankstown Council.

El Telegraph, which is published on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and distributed nationally, began publication in Australia in 1970. It generally ranges from 16 to 22 pages, with two pages dedicated to 'Australian affairs' and, on occasion, a page dedicated to events in Melbourne. It is available online at <http://www.eltelegraph.com/>.

Al Furat has been published every Thursday since 2003, and is available online at <http://furatnews.com/news/>. It focuses mainly on Iraqi news, with usually one page dedicated to Australian and community news. The issues included in this study were all around 16 pages and contained a significant quantity of advertising.

It is worth noting that a fourth Arabic-language newspaper, *Al Mustaqbal* (formerly *Al Bairak*, 1986-2003) did not include coverage of the ASIO raids: its focus is on news from Arabic countries

published in a Lebanese daily newspaper of the same name (<http://www.almustaqbal.com/>). *Al Mustaqbal* is published in Sydney twice a week (on Wednesdays and Saturdays) and distributed free at businesses and community gathering places.

The three newspapers which formed the focus of this study incorporate wide coverage of current affairs in their base countries (Lebanon for *An Nahar* and *El Telegraph* and Iraq for *Al Furat*), as well as news on other Arabic-speaking states. At the same time, all have specific pages dedicated to Australian current affairs, and many of the stories covered are similar to those disseminated in mainstream Australian newspapers and other media. The newspapers use a variety of techniques for indicating the source of their information: *Al Furat* notes the sources of information in small headings under the headline; *An Nahar* quotes the sources within the published items; and *El Telegraph* sometimes omits citing the origin of the published information (indeed, research showed that some of *El Telegraph's* news stories were either summarised or translated from articles in Australian English-language newspapers).

The coverage

The content analysis focused on Arabic-language news stories and opinion pieces relating to the proposed anti-terror laws and the November 2005 ASIO raids in Sydney and Melbourne. The articles were published in the three major Australian Arabic newspapers between Monday, October 31, and Friday, November 18, 2005.

A total of 64 articles focused on the anti-terrorism laws, ASIO raids and other related matters. These articles appeared as follow:

- 28 articles in 9 issues of *El Telegraph*, including 6 editorials and one letter to the editor;
- 25 articles in 6 issues of *An Nahar*, including 4 editorials;
- 11 articles in 3 issues of *Al Furat*, including 1 editorial.

The initial section of this report discusses news items published before the raids (October 31 to November 8); first reports and early reactions (November 9 and 10, the first issue of each newspaper after the raids); and aftermath (November 11 to 18). The second section focuses on editorials and opinions published during the entire investigated period of time. The analysis concentrated on the number and content of news stories; the identities of those whose views were reported; and the opinions expressed.

Articles were examined in relation to the following questions: What news stories are published and how? Who is quoted/acknowledged and what is reported and how? What opinions are expressed?

News reporting

Before the raids: October 31 to November 8

Part 1: October 31 to November 4

In the week before the raids, *Al Furat* did not publish any news stories relevant to this study. *El Telegraph* and *An Nahar* devoted their Australian current affairs coverage to the Government's proposed anti-terrorism laws, extremism and ASIO investigations (ASIO's annual report warned of the risk of terrorist operations in Australia), as well as to the case of Bilal Daye, who had been mistakenly raided by ASIO in 2001 and had just won financial compensation. In their coverage of the anti-terrorism Bill, both newspapers reported on the progress of the proposed laws and the main political reactions nationwide. This reaction focused on the Opposition Labor Party position and highlighted general public reaction and reservations expressed by highly placed personalities or community leaders not necessarily of Middle Eastern origin.

Comments reported included:

- The then Labor Party leader Kim Beazley was reported as saying the anti-terrorism laws were lenient towards suspects as it would be difficult to prove the charge of inciting violence (*El Telegraph*, October 31); he would recommend the Labor Party accept the Bill in the nation's best interests, and if the Government did take a permissive attitude towards these matters, Labor's position would be on the next election's political agenda (*El Telegraph*, November 2);
- NSW Attorney General Bob Debus expressed 'doubts' regarding safeguarding legislation in the anti-terrorism laws which 'is in contradiction with the position of [NSW] Premier Morris Iemma who supports the bill' (*El Telegraph*, October 31);
- The President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, John Von Doussa, 'has joined' the 'opponents of the bill' and appealed to Prime Minister John Howard to postpone its presentation as the Bill does not safeguard human rights (*El Telegraph*, October 31);
- The Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, spoke about the need to edit the Bill as it may be challenged in the High Court of Australia (*El Telegraph*, October 31); state premiers said they were not ready to sign the Bill (*El Telegraph*, November 2);
- The founder of 'The Best Party of Allah', Kurt Kennedy, criticised the proposed anti-terrorism laws and declared that Muslims have the right to kill invading Australian soldiers according to Geneva Conventions and laws of Allah (*El Telegraph*, October 31);
- NSW Premier Morris Iemma asked Prime Minister Howard to review the legal aspects in relation to court orders which allow house arrest of suspects for 14 days and restrict their travel overseas (*El Telegraph*, November 2);
- Bankstown MP Tony Stewart said the laws would affect Australians, especially those of Middle Eastern background, with a majority of them living in Bankstown and Lakemba; he had sent a letter to NSW Premier Morris Iemma encouraging him not to sign unless the laws were balanced and included democratic review; he questioned the reasons for the sudden submission of the Bill and noted the insufficient time frame for public debate and understanding of the laws' implications (*An Nahar*, November 3; *El Telegraph*, November 4);

- Shadow Attorney-General Nicola Roxon said the extent of the damage caused by violence in society as a result of hostility among ethnic groups might be greater than the damage caused by terrorism (*An Nahar*, November 3).
- In addition, *El Telegraph* (November 4) reported an article published by *The Australian* and noted that declarations by some clerics could be considered an open challenge to the proposed anti-terrorism laws which condemned to prison anyone who threatens 'peace, the system or the government'. The article related Muslim cleric Sheikh Zoud's declarations to *The Australian* last year that, 'I am against any kind of terrorism in the world [...] why Australians are afraid of Muslims? We have come to Australia because of our countries' problems. Islam teaches us compassion and there is no intention to betray this principle.'

Part 2: November 7 and 8

Just before the raids, *El Telegraph* and *An Nahar* reported on weekend demonstrations against the proposed laws (November 5 and 6). *El Telegraph* (November 7 - front page) had brief coverage of the rallies, where 'supporters of civil rights' marched in demonstrations in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, 'denouncing' anti-terrorism laws. The same article provided an explanation of the section of the Bill dealing with sedition. Another small article in the same issue reported on ASIO investigations, implying the potential of an imminent terrorism attack targeting the Sydney Harbor Bridge and Sydney's Kurnell oil refinery. This information was presented as a justification for 'strict anti-terrorism laws' (reported from *The Daily Telegraph*).

An Nahar (November 8) published two substantial articles, mainly relating declarations by Federal Attorney-General Philip Ruddock and Defence Minister Robert Hill that the laws were considered necessary to stop possible terrorism attacks, especially in preparation for the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. In a separate section of the main article (reported from *The Australian*), there was a mention of the arrival in Sydney of new members of the anti-terror police 'to participate in the surveillance of two people suspected in preparing for an aggression within Australia' as 'one of the suspects has links with the banned Pakistani group Lashkar-e-Toiba'. The same section reported a prediction of 'inevitable raids' on the houses and businesses of six suspects. Other sections of the main article reported briefly on the weekend demonstrations, declarations of Sheikh Zoud and comments by Danny Cass (see below). In addition, there was mention that 'Chechen terrorists, experts in bomb making, had established links with extremist groups in Sydney and Melbourne' and 'members of these groups went to the Philippines where they received training from Chechen experts' (reported from the *Sunday Herald Sun*).

The same issue of *An Nahar* included a small report on pamphlets inviting Muslims to oppose Western governments and declaring that the anti-terrorist laws are part of a plot to end the presence of Muslims in Western countries. The report ended by citing Sheikh Fehmi Al-Imam [Preston Mosque], who called Muslims to ignore such pamphlets, saying 'we are not terrorists and we do not plan for terrorist activities'.

Comments reported included:

- David Bernie from the Council for Civil Liberties asserted there was no need for the section of the legislation dealing with sedition (*El Telegraph*, November 7);

- Federal Attorney-General Philip Ruddock promised to review the section on sedition which is seen as threatening to inhibit freedom of speech and affect innocent citizens (*El Telegraph*, November 7); ‘the new anti-terrorism laws’ which were ‘quickly’ adopted in Parliament may not lead to any arrests ... ‘arrests were not expected as a result of issuing the laws’ (*An Nahar*, November 8);
- Defence Minister Robert Hill said special laws would be in place before the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in March 2006; these laws would allow for army deployment with the power to ‘shoot to kill’ within hours of the onset or threat of any terrorist attack in Australia; current laws were ‘complex and not practical’ (*An Nahar*, November 8);
- Queensland Premier Peter Beattie said Robert Hill’s declaration were creating unnecessary terror (*An Nahar*, November 8);
- Criminal defence lawyer Rob Stary said the proposed ‘control orders’ were considered ‘ugly and abhorrent’ in other countries (*An Nahar*, November 8);
- Sheikh Abdul Salam Zoud warned the Howard Government that the anti-terrorism laws may intensify extremism in the youngest and may lead them to terrorism, and that many Muslims feel ‘marginalised and persecuted’. He expressed concern that some of the proposed changes granting new powers to authorities such as arrest and inspection may be used on racial basis, so it may be possible to only arrest and inspect a Middle Easterner or a Muslim. He denied that he called to the triumph of Mujahidin in Iraq in a prayer speech on October 31, confirming that he was overseas (*An Nahar*, November 8);
- Danny Cass from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons appealed for a national plan to coordinate Australian medical resources in case of a large-scale terrorism operation or natural disaster (*An Nahar*, November 8).

First reports on the raids and early reactions: November 9 and 10

In their first issues after the raids, *El Telegraph* (November 9), *An Nahar* (November 10) and *Al Furat* (November 10) published details of the raids on their front pages, with *El Telegraph* and *An Nahar* mainly focusing on the large scale of the raids (‘the largest security operation in Australia’s History’ [*El Telegraph*], ‘the biggest [security] operation in the country’ [*An Nahar*], ‘the use of helicopters and gigantic airborne police forces’ [*An Nahar*]), the serious danger that the raids had prevented (‘thwart the biggest terrorism plan [...] that would have led to a human disaster’ [*El Telegraph*], ‘[Australia has] escaped terrorist disaster’ [*An Nahar*]) and the general reactions to the raids. Both *El Telegraph* and *An Nahar* focused on the meticulous ASIO investigations leading to the raids (‘It was revealed that the operation is the culmination of 3 years (since the explosion in Bali in 2002) of surveillance, listening to phone communication and tracking’ [*An Nahar*]). Both published information about the suspects and their links with radical Muslim leaders.

Other than the coverage of the ASIO raids, *El Telegraph* (November 9) published a brief article reporting on calls to delete the sedition section from the anti-terrorism legislation, and finishing with

calls to introduce a bill of rights to protect citizens from the anti-terrorism laws (Federal Liberal MP Steve Ciobo). *Al Furat* published two articles on the anti-terrorism laws. The first reported on growing racism in Australia ('a study conducted by Tanja Dreher from University of Technology and presented by a local newspaper (*Torch*) published in Canterbury area in Western Sydney where large ethnic communities live'). The second article related information about ASIO's annual report and the case of Bilal Daye (see above).

Whereas articles in *Al Furat* and *El Telegraph* (November 9) on the ASIO raids were relatively short, *An Nahar* devoted a couple of its internal pages to providing details of the operations. In their coverage of the raids, the three newspapers based their reports on comments by police, prosecutors, the Prime Minister and other officials. They also reported comments by the defence lawyer, who described the raids as 'scandalous political actions' and said there was no evidence to incriminate the accused. However, *An Nahar* offset this with a quote from NSW Premier Morris Iemma in the same paragraph, inviting whoever believed there was no danger to NSW to reconsider their position and saying that the terrorism threat was serious and dangerous.

Reactions of community leaders

An Nahar (November 10) published a small article devoted to disparate declarations by various community leaders. These were:

- Mufti Taj Eddine Al Hilali: calling for reason and patience;
- Sheikh Fehmi el-Imam, Preston Mosque's Sheikh: hoping the accused are innocent;
- Sheikh Zoud: declining to comment;
- Islamic Liberation Party spokesman Wasim Durei/Wasim Doureih: interpreting the raids as proof that the anti-terrorism laws do not only target those who speak about violence but also those who speak about 'Political Islam';
- Lebanese Muslim Association spokesman Abdallah Al Ayoubi: reporting concerns among the community that the raids are targeting Muslims and not terrorists;
- Keysar Trad, president of the Islamic Friendship Association in Australia: criticising the media's coverage of the raids;
- Ghayath Al-Shelh, head of Al-Ahbash, a Muslim charity group in Australia: supporting the raids and the anti-terrorism laws as they will ensure protection for citizens;
- Ameer Ali, president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils: expressing concern that certain members of the wider Australian community may take on their shoulders the task of applying the law by targeting people from the Muslim community;
- Martin Hosking, secretary of the Australian Arabic Council: supporting the raids as they will reinforce security and clear suspicions about all Arabic-speaking communities.

El Telegraph (November 9) reported brief comments from the president of the Islamic Friendship Association in Australia, Keysar Trad, that he does not consider military training overseas as sufficient evidence of terrorism plans.

Al Furat (November 10) did not publish any community leaders' comments about the ASIO raids. However, it reported in one article on the anti-terrorism legislation, highlighting concerns that it may target the Australian Muslim community (Zachariah Mathews, president of the Australian Islamic Mission) and may encourage religious intolerance. In another article, focusing on 'shoot to kill' that would be allowed by the new laws, Waleed Kadous (from the Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network, AMCRAN) was quoted as saying that, 'the Federal government has breached lots of international treaties and charters and has made matters unclear [...] whether terrorism or the government is threatening [...] civil rights'.

Reactions: November 11 to 18

From November 11 to 18, the three newspapers published numerous articles following up on the raids, the suspects, Government and officials' statements and reaction by community leaders.

The suspects

Both *An Nahar* and *El Telegraph* published extensive details about the suspects and the investigations. Many of these were negative toward the suspects and highlighted their links with international terrorist organisations and other local groups under investigation. These details included that: six among the arrested were supporters of cleric Sheikh Omran and one of them was waiting to undertake a terrorist suicide bomb attack; the suspects had downloaded electronic documents linking them with Al Qaida; munitions and explosives were found in the house of one of the arrested, as were videos on dying for Jihad; excerpts of recorded conversations showed the suspects were planning to kill and destroy; the suspects undertook military training in a farm in NSW; three among them were followed near Sydney's Lucas Heights nuclear reactor; one of the suspects was arrested while trying to steal batteries and timers; members of terrorist cells were using mobile phones under false identities to avoid being listened to while preparing for their meetings. Both newspapers also published many details about the informant who helped in the investigations leading to the raids, noting his previous links with Al Qaida before his decision to help the authorities. This was followed by commendations from officials about the role this cooperation played in leading to the arrests as well as reassurances that the informant would be protected.

Al Furat did not publish any stories on the investigations that reflected negatively on the suspects. However, it dedicated one article to personal details about them (a numbered list of the nine suspects with their names, ages, occupations, family life, connections with terrorist groups and suspected terrorist activities, as well as a large image with a profile depiction of the suspects showing stern bearded faces). Another article related a family recount (brother) about one of the suspects who wanted to undertake a suicide bomb operation (as reported in *The Daily Telegraph*).

Government and officials' comments and community reactions

The three newspapers reported the Government invitation to Muslim community leaders to cooperate in eradicating fanaticism within the community. A direct answer to the Prime Minister's appeal was published in *An Nahar* (November 15) in an article focusing on the response of Ameer Ali, president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, saying Islamic organisations are not security agencies. The Prime Minister was quoted as confirming that Islamic values reject fanaticism and that the Government's declarations on 'the urgent need to eradicate and counteract terrorism

should not be taken as an attack on Muslims in Australia or on their identity' (*Al Furat*, November 17).

The declarations of Treasurer Peter Costello in asking Muslim extremists to leave Australia were reported and commented on in *An Nahar* (November 15) and *Al Furat* (November 17) as intended to dissuade the Muslim lobby from believing that the Government would change its position on the anti-terrorism laws. This declaration attracted one comment from the Muslim Lebanese Association, who found it 'unacceptable and inciting hatred' (*An Nahar*, November 15, quote marks in Arabic text).

Comments by community leaders about the raids and investigations were published in both *An Nahar* and *El Telegraph*. *Al Furat* did not publish any community leaders' reactions. The published reactions were:

- The Australian Arabic Council: supported the raids and the arrest of the suspects as this would ensure security and help the authorities to this end; it is possible the arrested are innocent (*El Telegraph*, November 11);
- Amjad Mehboob, president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils: condemned the arrested, with the Muslim community said to consider the suspects as evil and misguided; appealed to the Australian community not to judge all Muslims according to the conduct of a handful of community members (*El Telegraph*, November 11);
- Lakemba Mosque Muslim Association: considering providing support for the suspects' families, as the suspects are considered innocent (*El Telegraph*, November 11);
- Kuranda Seyit, director of the Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations: invited the Government to review the ways it dealt with terrorism threats; considered that the increase of police powers and the legislation's amendment to facilitate the capturing of terrorism suspects would not help in building close relationships between Muslims and society in the long term; according to the new laws, all Muslims are suspects of terrorism; expressed concerns regarding the arrest of citizens from western Sydney without charges against them, which has led to 'torturing families and destroying lives on suspicion grounds only or because they have friends who hold extremist opinions' (*El Telegraph*, November 11);
- Sheikh Al Hilali: stated that exaggerating the use of violence and intimidation against women and children may provoke young people and get them involved in unwanted actions; urged the Muslim community not to engage in negative reaction when faced with racist provocations or when prosecuted (*El Telegraph*, November 11); described the raids as 'frightening women, children and elderly and breaking in the middle of the night and using firearms with civilians', 'racist', 'exaggerated', 'reminded Muslims of the countries they had left where such operations are conducted under despotic systems' (*An Nahar*, November 15); defended Sheikh Zoud, saying he had become moderate and accepting of Australian multiculturalism after previously being an extremist (*El Telegraph*, November 16);
- A spokesperson for Sheikh Zoud: denying links between Zoud's association and the suspects (eight of the suspects belonged to a group with suspected links with the Sheikh's association in Lakemba, according to police) (*El Telegraph* November 16);

- Keysar Trad, president of the Islamic Friendship Association: declared that suspect Baladjam is a 'nice man'; observed that crime against Muslims has escalated and the situation may deteriorate to a greater degree, which could lead to the marginalisation of the Muslim community in Australia (*El Telegraph*, November 11); noted that Muslims have been suffering from the consequences of the raids and young Muslims do not know how to deal with their identities because of the arrests; businesses and mosques have been under observation by security forces in south-western Sydney, where Muslims feel they have been wrongly targeted (*El Telegraph*, November 16); highlighted that some young Muslims are rejecting their traditions and religion as they have been attacked in shopping centres – whatever these young people will do, they will remain suspicious and will become more marginalised (*El Telegraph*, November 17);
- Ameer Ali: stated that Muslim citizens and Islamic organisations should not be used as a police force and Islamic sermons in mosques and prayer halls should not be monitored (*El Telegraph*, November 16); Muslim religious leaders need to be careful in their choice of language in sermons and speeches (*An Nahar*, November 15);
- Waleed Kadous, from the Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network (AMCRAN): ASIO's investigations have become regular and sometimes repulsive (*An Nahar*, November 15);
- Suspects' lawyer Adam Houda: accused the authorities of listening to his mobile phone and intercepting his phone calls, preventing him from defending his clients (*An Nahar*, November 15);
- Hassan Moussa, president of the Arabic Council Australia: welcomed the foiling of the terrorist threats as it might have saved innocent lives (*El Telegraph*, November 16);
- Sheikh Fehmi Al Imam: commented that Abdul Nacer Benbrika's opinions put at risk Islam and Muslims and intoxicated his followers' minds; also noted that Benbrika has shown his lack of gratitude towards Australia, whereas Islam 'teaches us to be grateful to whoever treats us well and who is generous with us' (*El Telegraph*, November 16).

Newspaper editorials and opinions, October 31 to November 18: an overview

Before the raids, *El Telegraph* (October 31) published a main editorial on its front page questioning the ambivalent position of the Australian media towards Arabs and Arabic-speaking communities. The editorial explored possible reasons behind the conclusion presented in a recent study: that more than half of Australians do not like migrants from the Middle East. The author speculated on what might be the causes of such negative attitudes, focussing in particular on media that produced 'racist headlines' and 'vilifying comments on radio stations'. The author finished by blaming the community itself as it did not have anything uniting its members. This editorial attracted a response (November 2) from a reader [the only one found in the issues included in this study] which could indicate that the matter raised in the editorial expressed a problematic vision shared among the community.

Editorial attention in the following issues of both *An Nahar* and *El Telegraph* moved to the anti-terrorism legislation. Two editorials (one in *El Telegraph* on November 2 and the other in *An Nahar* on November 3) suggested the laws breached human rights as they allowed the detention of suspects for 14 days without charge and gave police the power to 'shoot to kill'. Furthermore, *El Telegraph's* editorial suggested the laws targeted the Muslim community. On November 7, after the laws were amended and accepted by all the state premiers, the anti-terrorism laws were seen as a better solution than dropping multiculturalism and stopping the immigration of Muslims to Australia (*El Telegraph*).

Just before the raids and after an inflammatory Friday speech by Sheikh Zoud, *An Nahar's* main editorial (November 8) criticised the Sheikh's views (the new anti-terrorism laws will transform young Muslims into terrorists) and suggested they were harmful to the Sheikh himself and to the young people he was trying to defend. The editorial finished by confirming that the harmonious Muslim society does not feel targeted by any reform in security laws because this society is innocent. On November 10, the day after the raids, the same author wrote an emotional appeal to the community to accept the new laws as they had been democratically adopted by Labor and Liberal together. The editorial reminded readers that without anti-terrorism laws it would not have been possible to abort the suicide operation that was being planned. It also highlighted that terrorism, if it is allowed to occur, affects everyone, and concluded by inviting everyone to protect Australia's democratic society. Another editorial in the same issue of *An Nahar* warned that in Australia and Western countries 'seeds of religious hatred are sown today; tomorrow these states will become forests of hatred'.

From November 14 to 18, *An Nahar* did not publish any editorials following up on the raids or related matters. However, there were two in *El Telegraph* and one in *Al Furat*. The main editorial in *El Telegraph* (November 14) invited the community to observe a 'politics of speech' that will help in avoiding declarations in discordance with what the majority think. There was also a call to believe in the Australian justice system and be 'happy with a law that we have willingly chosen in a democratic way'. The editorial pointed out that the threat of terrorism is present in many other places in the world, and that other countries were also executing raids to counteract the danger (several Islamic countries were cited to illustrate the argument). This led to a rejection of 'the theory of a plot against a racial, ethnic or religious group' and to appeals to the community to be positive as the raids 'will finish today or tomorrow' and 'because the perpetrators will be charged and the innocents will be freed'. Following up with the same views, the main editorial in *El Telegraph* (November 16) questioned the silence of moderate voices in the community which could 'ease the tension and deflate the hatred that has been growing'. It also affirms that Australian citizenship should protect society not with racism or division but by showing up and urgently meeting together.

The editorial in *Al Furat* on November 17 was its only relevant opinion piece. It has a dryly humorous tone and puts the situation into perspective, including the ASIO raids, the anti-terrorism legislation, growing racism in Australia and reactions on NSW-based talkback radio host Alan Jones' program.

Meaning

This study highlights one conclusion even before any minute inspection of the articles is completed. It becomes obvious that the very diverse types of content and the different Australian ethnic minorities that form the audiences of these newspapers in themselves illustrate the futility of any attempt to construct a monolithic “Muslim” community. Al Furat appeals largely to an Iraqi audience, An Narhar to a Lebanese audience and only El Telegraph (predominantly appealing to a Lebanese audience) attempts a pan-Arabic approach.

Of the 64 articles inspected, 22 (or 34.5 per cent) of them could be characterised as reporting official sources, in that they principally quoted federal or state Government or Opposition figures, or sourced their stories from bureaucrats. This represents the largest category of sources.

Fourteen stories (nearly 22 per cent) were editorials or opinion pieces – that is, they were sourced from within the papers themselves or were specific opinion pieces by named writers. This figure differs from the list above because in inspecting sources, two news stories containing elements of editorialising have been included here.

Leaders or representatives of Arab communities in Australia were the principal sources of news in only eight stories (12.5 per cent). While this seems low, Arab-voice representation is reinforced in a fourth category, Other Reports.

The Other Reports category covers issues reported on from a range of perspectives, including court cases, interviews with relatives and acquaintances of the accused, and quotes from other newspapers. In these reports, while Arab voices may not be the primary news sources, they nevertheless are prominently represented. This was the second-largest source of stories, with 20 articles, or nearly 33 per cent, being represented here.

Primary source of story:

<i>Source</i>	<i>Official Community</i>		<i>Editorial/Opinion</i>	<i>Other Reports</i>
N=64	22	8	14	20
% of total	34.5	12.5	22	33

An earlier study by the researchers (see Print News, www.reportingdiversity.org.au) found four mainstream English language newspapers had attempted to deal with the raids by taking what could be regarded as standard news approaches. For example, they attempted to provide balance by differentiating between ‘the Islamic community’ in general and ‘extreme’ or ‘militant’ Islamic elements and they relied heavily on official figures like government or police spokespersons as the sources for their stories, just as the Arab language newspapers have in this study. Although the papers tried to acknowledge the diversity of Australia’s Muslim citizens, their reports nevertheless contained frequent references to ‘the Muslim community’.

This new study shows that before the ASIO raids, discussion around the proposed changes to terrorism legislation contained few voices from within Muslim communities, relying largely on

official sources. Immediately after the raids, however, sources from within Muslim communities formed a majority of those providing advice and opinion. However, while the representation of ethnic spokespersons had moved from a minority to a majority position, the inherently conservative stance remained largely unchanged, with spokespersons referring to the need for national security to be underpinned by law and to Australia's reputation as a country that respected the law. For example, of the nine community leaders quoted in one article in *An Nahar*, five supported the ASIO raids, three confined their comments to increased fears of reprisals in their communities, and one declined to comment.

In the week following the raids, the papers published a considerable amount of news and comment from community leaders. Both *An Nahar* and *El Telegraph* published extensive details about the suspects and the investigations. Many of these were negative toward the suspects and highlighted their links with international terrorist organisations and other local groups under investigation. In this respect, the coverage was strikingly similar to that of the mainstream newspapers.

The papers' opinion pieces tended to be reasoned arguments for restraint by members of Muslim communities. Where they were critical of the Government, for example with the case for new terrorism laws, the criticism was based on facts presented in a clear and concisely argued way. While the editorials strongly supported the idea of democratic freedoms, they did, however, refer to growing racism in Australia and asked the question 'Why do they hate us?'. The papers suggested the answer lay in the fact that most Australians lived secular rather than religious lives. Overall, the editorials – and the letters to the editor that got published - tended to reflect the conservative agenda of the news columns.

Conclusions

What, therefore, can we say about the way in which the Arabic press in Australia reported one of the nation's big news stories – a news story that continues to catch the attention of Australians?

1. Mainstream newspapers' references to a representative Muslim community are misguided.
2. The Arabic press gave a wider range of voices the opportunity to be heard. More community leaders' opinions were published here than in the mainstream press.
3. But the Arabic press felt constrained to take a conservative line in their reporting and editorialising. To have done otherwise would have invited greater alienation from mainstream society.
4. The Arabic press is largely invisible to mainstream society. If they had published 'extremist' views, those views might have been translated into articles in the English language press.

This research indicates mainstream Australian print media do not represent the range of opinion and voices that exist in the wider Australian community. When contentious issues arise, minority voices are restricted to specialist publications and even then conservative viewpoints are given preference. Further research remains to be done with the news media of other ethnic minority groups.

Appendix 1: Newspapers included in the study

El Telegraph

Published in Sydney every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, *El Telegraph* was established in 1970. It usually has between 16 and 20-22 pages, with two pages dedicated to "Australian affairs". It sometimes includes a page focusing on Melbourne. It includes a high proportion of local advertising (mainly NSW) and is available online at <http://www.eltelegraph.com/>.

El Telegraph contact details:

Linkban Pty Ltd
290 South Terrace
Bankstown NSW 2200
Phone (02) 9707 4955
sydney@eltelegraph.com

An Nahar

Published in Sydney every Tuesday and Thursday, *An Nahar* started in NSW in 1978. It dedicates most of its pages to content published in a Lebanese daily newspaper of the same name. While the Australian *An Nahar* does not appear online, the Lebanese daily *An Nahar* is available at <http://www.annahar.com/>. The Lebanese publication was established in 1933 and has a wide readership. The issues included in this study were of up to 38 pages (tabloid format) and focused mainly on news from Arabic-speaking countries, with particular emphasis on Lebanese current affairs. Each issue included two or three pages usually dedicated to Australian current affairs, sports and community news. It also contained a column dedicated to Bankstown Council (an editorial from the Mayor).

An Nahar contact details:

An-Nahar Independent Lebanese Arabic Newspaper
Suite 4, 400 Chapel Rd
Bankstown NSW 2200
Phone (02) 9793 9911

Al Furat

Published every Thursday in Sydney from 2003, it is also available online at <http://furatnews.com/news/>. *Al Furat* focuses mainly on Iraqi news, with usually one page of Australian and community news. The issues in this study were all of about 16 pages and contained a significant quantity of advertising.

Al Furat contact details:

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Al Mustaqbal was not included in this study because it has been published only since 2007 (its predecessor was *Al-Bairak*, 1986-2003). *Al Mustaqbal* is published in Sydney twice weekly (Wednesdays and Saturdays) and distributed free in community businesses. It focuses on news from Arabic countries as published in a Lebanese daily newspaper of the same name (<http://www.almustaqbal.com/>).

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Appendix 2: Published articles

Following is a complete list of the newspaper articles included in the content analysis

(Highlighted rows are opinion articles)

Publication Date	Newspaper	Pages	Headline
31-Oct	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Beazley: terrorism laws are lenient
31-Oct	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	An innocent Australian claims for compensation because ASIO and police agents mistakenly raided his home
31-Oct	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Why do they hate us?! [Editorial Antoine Al Qazi]
31-Oct	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Anti-terrorism laws are not constitutional
31-Oct	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 5	The founder of “The Best Party of Allah” criticizes anti-terrorism laws
1-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 9	Public Prosecutions documents uncover links between Jamal and al-Zarqawi
2-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 5	Letter to the editor [Letter signed by Safwat Shahateh]
2-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Anti-terrorism laws lack of humanity [Editorial Hani al –Turk]
2-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Anti-terrorism laws presentation postponed
3-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 10	ASIO’s Annual Report: Australia at risk of terrorism operations
3-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	An out-of-court settlement ends with a payout after an ASIO mistaken raid
3-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1, 36	Howard includes Labour’s amendments to anti-terrorism laws
3-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 2	Industrial relations and terrorism [Editorial: Wadih Saadeh]
3-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 10	Stewart criticizes the new anti-terrorism laws
4-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Granted financial compensation after ASIO breached his privacy
4-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Three clerics preach hatred against the West

4-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Anti-terrorism laws presented to counteract a terrorist attack on Australia
4-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Tony Stewart criticises anti-terrorism laws
7-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Terrorists target Harbor Bridge and Kurnell petrol refinery
7-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	The alternative to the Anti Terrorism Bill is to cancel multiculturalism [Editorial Hani Elturk]
7-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Demonstrations in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra to condemn anti-terrorism laws
8-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1, 28	Sheikh Zoud and the reasonable language [Editorial Anwar Harb]
8-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1, 29	Demonstrations in Sydney and Melbourne and Sheikh Zoud denies and warns anti-terrorists laws grant broad powers to the army
8-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	Pamphlets in Melbourne calling to support those who are fighting the war against Islam
8-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	Hill: Army deployment in cities within hours from any terrorist attacks
9-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	The largest raid operation in Sydney and Melbourne to abort/thwart a terrorist attack on Australia
9-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Calls for cancelling the section on sedition from the anti-terrorism laws
10-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 1, 28	Australian Police puts an end/thwarts a “big/large” terrorist attack
10-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 1 - 2	A new Anti-Terrorist Bill in Australia
10-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	Anti-terrorist laws proposal one of them allows shooting to kill
10-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	A report alarming on growing racism in Australia
10-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	ASIO: Australia is a permanent terrorism target and a Muslim couple win a court case granting them compensation from the Australian intelligence agency
10-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1, 36	Enough enough ... [Editorial by Anwar Harb]
10-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 2	Evil seeds will sprout soon [Editorial by Wadii Saade]
10-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1,11,12	Defence lawyer considers it a scandalous political case; Australia has escaped a human disaster after a second raid operation; “An-Nahar” publishes the names of the accused and the most extensive details on their plans
10-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 12	Disparate reactions among Muslims Al Hilali calls for reason and Zoud supporters expressed their inclination to support the families of the arrested
11-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Arm yourselves with love [by Antoine Al Qazi]

11-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1, 4	Urging Muslims to not react Al Hilali: We are all Australia's soldiers and Muslims are part of the solution and not the problem
11-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Explosives found in a burnt car in Bankstown
14-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Transferring the suspect of terrorism from hospital to jail
14-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	Jihad against the West
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1, 28	Who was the informant who helped the authorities to discover the terrorist cell? Homes, businesses and Mosques under rigorous surveillance
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 10	Australian newspapers publish a report on the suspect Abdul Nacer Benbrika", Inset: Members in extremist Muslim organisations in Egypt and Algeria have obtained asylum
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 10	Ameer Ali: The Muslim community is not a police force to track extremists
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	Our withdrawal from Iraq would not stop threats" Howard invites new migrants to integrate in the Australian society
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	Costello: Australia is not going to become a Muslim state and won't be governed by Shari'a
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	Denouncing anti-terrorism laws and the raids, Al Hilali: acts stimulated by racism around you
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	Lawyer Houda accuses the authorities to listen to his cellular phone
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	In a unique operation Baladjam transported from hospital to jail
15-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 11	A car containing chemicals burned in Bankstown and the police hint there will be new raids and arrests
16-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 1	Do not hide!?! " [Editorial Antoine Al Qazi]
16-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	In sympathy with the Muslim community" [Editorial by Hani Elturk]
16-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	A plan for a terrorist attack on a nuclear reactor. lemma: tight security measures to protect the reactor
16-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	lemma wants to change the section on "Sedition" on the anti-terrorism law
17-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 8	Night writing: Muslims and Alan Jones ... [Editorial by Wassif Shanoon]
17-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	The brother of one of the suspects says he prevented his brother from going to the Middle East to undertake a suicide bomb operation
17-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	John Howard invites Australian Muslim leaders to cooperate
17-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	Australian veiled Muslim women speak out about what is happening

17-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	Peter Costello: Australia will never be an Islamic and whoever is not happy with this they would rather get out
17-Nov	<i>Al Furat</i>	p. 4	The names and identities of the arrested suspect of planning to do terrorist operations in Australia and further information about them
17-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 1, 34	Intriguing information revealed about the suspected terrorist cell: the Federal Police are questioning a prominent member in Jamaa Islamiya sent by Hanbali
17-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 10	Releasing on bail the attackers of the cameraman and retaining their passports
17-Nov	<i>An Nahar</i>	p. 10	Surprising news about a clergy man who had worked in a ministry: the discovery of a new terrorist training camp
18-Nov	<i>El Telegraph</i>	p. 4	They transformed the farm to a training camp and some of them were visiting others who are in detention; half of the arrested in Melbourne were charged by car thefts, in possession of weapons and false credit cards; Sheikh Fahmi Al Imam: Ben Brika opinions put at risk Islam and Muslims and intoxicate his followers' minds