

Netanyahu government closes Al Jazeera channel in Israel, seizing equipment, cameras, microphones, servers and laptops



Tel Aviv, May 5 (RHC)-- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet has voted unanimously to close Al Jazeera's operations in Israel, according to a government statement.

The cabinet vote on Sunday came after Israel's parliament passed a law allowing the temporary closure in Israel of foreign broadcasters considered to be a threat to national security during the months-long war in Gaza.

Netanyahu announced the decision on X, formerly Twitter. “The government headed by me unanimously decided: the incitement channel Al Jazeera will be closed in Israel,” he posted in Hebrew.

In another X post, Israel’s Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi said he had signed the orders against Al Jazeera, which would be effective immediately. Karhi also ordered the seizure of Al Jazeera’s broadcasting equipment “used to deliver the channel’s content”, including editing and routing equipment, cameras, microphones, servers and laptops, as well as wireless transmission equipment and some mobile phones.

The decision escalates Israel’s long-running feud against Al Jazeera. It also threatens to heighten tensions with Qatar, which funds the media network, at a time when Doha is playing a key role in mediation efforts to halt the war in Gaza.

Israel has long had a rocky relationship with Al Jazeera, accusing it of bias against it and collaborating with Hamas. The Qatar-based network has repeatedly rejected the accusations.

Al Jazeera is one of the few international media outlets to remain in Gaza throughout the war, broadcasting bloody scenes of air attacks and overcrowded hospitals, and accusing Israel of massacres.

Last month, Netanyahu had said he would “act immediately to stop” Al Jazeera’s operations in Israel after its parliament approved a law that grants senior ministers powers to shut down foreign news networks deemed a security risk. “Al Jazeera harmed Israel’s security, actively participated in the October 7 massacre, and incited against Israeli soldiers,” Netanyahu had posted on X.

The network accused Netanyahu of “incitement”, holding the Israeli leader “responsible for the safety of its staff and network premises around the world, following his incitement and this false accusation in a disgraceful manner”.

Al Jazeera’s Zein Basravi, reporting from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, said the Palestine-Israel conflict is “one of the main reasons that our network exists.”

“So to have our journalists, our operations, threatened in this way ... Definitely, the worry here in the occupied West Bank is that we will be next,” he said.

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