

## Al-Jazeera's wayward demeanor



By: shabait Administrator

Qatari-Government funded TV Channel, Al Jazeera, published last week a defamatory article on Eritrea under the baffling title: "From Abu Dhabi to Washington, how Eritrea turned into a new African weapon".

The unsigned article, which evidently reflects the editorial policy of the Channel, is but the latest in a series of gratuitous smear campaigns that the Channel has been churning out intermittently both in its English and Arabic TV broadcasts as well as in its printed media websites.

What has prompted Al Jazeera to wage relentless smear campaigns against Eritrea in the past few years remains a riddle that the corporation has to explain. What is more puzzling is Al Jazeera's audacity and duplicity to liberally impugn Eritrea (and other countries in the Gulf-Horn of Africa region) for "foreign policy adventures" when it keeps mum on Qatar's military interventions in Libya and Syria or on matters of the large US military base Doha has hosted for decades.

Let us now revert and address Al Jazeera's wayward conduct and spurious allegations:

1. First off, Eritrea is not in the business of "mortgaging its territory" for "military bases" to external powers: US, Russia or others. The fact is Eritrea has never gone out of its way "to offer military bases to the US", or others who may indulge such ambitions, in order to curry favour with them or for short-term financial gains. Naturally, it has an interest in cultivating warm diplomatic and economic ties with the US and other countries on the basis of mutual respect.
2. Eritrea does not, also, pursue reckless policies and "military alliances with external powers" to advance strategies that precipitate instability and wreck havoc in the region. But, as a littoral Red Sea State, it has natural and legitimate interests in promoting and contributing, within its modest

capabilities, to collective and viable security architectures for combating terrorism, piracy and other hegemonic designs that stoke crises to destabilize this vital international maritime route.

3. Al Jazeera falsely claims that Eritrea has offered military bases to Iran in the past. In the same breadth, Al Jazeera asserts that Eritrea also hosts "military presence and Israeli espionage center in the Dahlak Islands". These allegations are not only patently false but they also defy logic and common sense. How can Eritrea host two mortal enemies in its territory? Would Eritrea be so blind to mix oil and fire and render itself a battlefield with all the perils that this entails? Furthermore, and this palpable arguments aside, Al Jeezera knows full well that there are no military bases in the Dahlak islands as these sites have long been destinations of ongoing Tourism Projects.

4. In pursuit of its strident and zealous disinformation campaigns, Al Jeezera further asserts, in the same article, that "the European Union agreed in 2015 to grant a package of 200 million Euros to Eritrea with promises to train the security and judicial services to combat human trafficking ... and that in fact it can be classified as a common European bribe". As it is well-known, Eritrea acceded in 1993, immediately after its formal independence, to the Cotonou Agreement that brings together the EU and 75 African and Caribbean countries. A cursory examination of publicly available documents would have revealed that Eritrea has benefitted from EU development funds (EDF) that are disbursed to all ACP signatories in five-year cycles. The 200 million Euro support that Al Jazeera cites is indeed part and parcel of this 11th EDF development assistance that the EU implements with all ACP member States.

Al Jeezera's distortion of this normative relationship is thus factually wrong and amplifies its malice or utter ignorance. And in as far as illegal migration from Eritrea is concerned, the phenomenon was originally concocted by certain countries to wean the youth and undermine Eritrea's defense capabilities. That was the reason why Eritrea expressly requested the UN to carry out an independent investigation of this despicable crime of human trafficking with a view to redress the injustices perpetrated on the country.

The Ministry of Information had lodged formal complaints to Al Jeezera several times in the past in the hope of finding remedies to these unwarranted and erroneous reports. These approaches were never heeded, apparently because the disinformation campaigns emanate from a deliberate policy to advance some negative agenda. Although these campaigns may confuse some of its audiences in the short term, Al Jeezera is the loser at the end of the day as this unhealthy conduct will ultimately corrode its own reputation.

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