Etiquette of Media's Responsibility during Crises (Kurdistan region and 'ISIS' as instance)

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Introduction

Etiquette of media work is one of the sensitive and important topics as it strikes the balance between freedom of media, on one hand, and freedom of individual and community on the other hand. So discussing the topic -and the way the job is practiced in the reality on the ground- is the prior duty of experts and academics, especially when it comes to the consideration of the principles of etiquette involved in the occupation in an atmosphere of crises, complicated and sensitive situations.

The Importance of the Paper

This paper is significant for it draws upon a number of interesting aspects such as the respect of the work of media with consideration of occupational etiquette principles in general and responsibility in particular. This has recently gained familiarity in Kurdish media of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (KRG). The paper takes as a case-study the current situation in Iraq and Kurdistan Region which are involved in the war against the so-called Islamic State (ISIS).

The Objectives of the Paper

1. Investigating the consideration level of responsibility of etiquette by media during crises and abnormal situations.
2. Knowing the consideration level of responsibility of etiquette by the Kurdish media during the war of "ISIS" in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.
3. Exploring the consideration level of national security, general system and social peace during the war of "ISIS" by Kurdish media in the Iraqi Kurdistan.
4. Examining the influence of the propaganda, rumors and IS-related messages on Kurdish media in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.
5. Examining the restriction of the influence of "ISIS" messages on Kurdish media in Iraqi Kurdistan Region as part of a psychological war at the hand of the terrorist organization against Kurdish people and Peshmarga.

Method of the research

The used method in this research is analyzing texts; this is through analyzing the news and materials relevant to the war on "ISIS" that have been published by Kurdish media in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Introducing and clarifying some terms

In order for the contents of this research to be clear, some terms should be clarified and expanded:

1. **Ethics:** its origin is Greek. Philosophically, they divided the word into three parts: **Aesthetics**, which is concerned with beauty and how a person can clarify beauty without depending on evidence. Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge; it was dealing with what learning consists of, and what knowledge deserve to be known. Ethics, which is research about what is good for both the individual and society.
2. **Media Etiquette** is some behavioral and ethical values that should be considered by journalists. These etiquettes sometimes are general and mutual between societies and sometimes they are specific for one society (Philip & Lee, 2008).
3. **Media Responsibility:** It is one of the most valuable basics of a journalist that should be protected by journalists during their job for a better performance. When someone violates their job's principles, they probably end up doing it

wrong. This also applies on journalists who are not exempt from faults and whose faults may incur insulting a society or a large group of people, undermine the morale of people, seduce a generation, or confuse facts for a long (sadaqa 1999).

4. **Crises**: Social Sciences encyclopedia believes that crises are the emergence of sudden, dangerous situations amongst two or more groups (Murad 2013).

5. **Terrorism:** the term terrorism is derived from the word terror, which means system or regime. Generally, terrorism is using violence to gain a political purpose (Cambridge 2015).

6. **Kurdistan Region:** it is a geographical place governed by Kurdistan Region Government with a federal system of government within Iraq, recognized as a region by Iraqi constitution.

7. **Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS):** linguistically, many terms are used for this organization such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Kfir 2015). As a Sunni Jihadist group in Iraq and Syria, ISIS aims to bring chaos and social and political instability in the region in the hopes of establishing an Islamic Caliphate based on Islamic values and principles. Many other terrorist organizations have also joined them (Masters 2015).

The responsibility of media etiquette

Responsibility is one of the significant principles that should be considered by journalists. In addition, journalists have important roles in both media and society, especially during crises. In other words, responsibility is being dedicated to accuracy, subjectivity, equality, and neutrality in one's writings to gain people's trust.

Journalists are responsible for the accuracy of information; they shall not publish any news without reliable evidence, and they should be careful in publishing data.

(Media responsibility) as a scientific concept was derived from Social Responsibility Theory.

The significance of the responsibility of Media etiquette

The importance of the responsibility of media and journalists' etiquette takes its root from the core and basic meaning of etiquette and conscience responsibility.

Hence, in light of the previous subject, we can summaries the characteristics of the responsibility of media etiquette in a few points (Mrad 2014 - 2013):

1. Considering the truthfulness of news, accuracy in presenting data and information, neutrality and independency in illustrating opinions, keeping balance between various perspectives and being inclusive to thoughts and directions, avoiding preconceptions and prejudice, and remaining objective.
2. Performing an objective observational task and aiming towards the Fourth Power by monitoring the other powers and the aspects of the society.
3. Endeavoring to establish a firm, mutual responsibility between individuals and society.
4. Working towards public good and doing what is best to citizens, reinforcing the sense of nationhood.
5. Trying to eliminate any threat on the social and political landscape and the national security.
6. Consideration of humanitarian aspects, and staying away from tarnishing others' name and reputation, from creating chaos or promoting ruthlessness and violence, from hatred and racism, and from separatism based on (gender, language, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and belief system, ideological and political beliefs).

Crisis

Crisis or Disaster is a dangerous event that has effect on the welfare of humans or the atmosphere or reputation of the organization. It can lead to organizational malfunctioning or undesirable multi-directionality.

It can also be the turning point in a sudden stance that creates unease, and becomes a real threat to our interests and fundamental structure. It can bring about repercussions that require united, quick actions to control and confront before the expected consequences become too dangerous.

Media in Confronting Crisis

As crises increase in different types and at different levels, the role of media becomes ever more crucial, in spreading the news or taking on a reconciliatory role to solve problems.
So the communication tools have an important role in redefining all the problems affecting the world around us; by adopting an educational role to raise the public awareness in discussing the events or by covering the events (and their influence) in a dramatic way.

Crises get the media attention and rouse public interest in media, and that is how most news get to people. Thus, the media gets more attention at times of crises as the most effective way of communication news.

In general, the media channels have a mediatory role especially by: presenting information, probing the details and the importance of an event, building social structure, yet more importantly reducing people's anxiety and fear about the events.

Ethical Responsibility of Media in Time of Crisis

In the previous paragraphs, the concept of ethical responsibility of the media was discussed in general as applying to normal situations. However, in crisis-stricken situations and at times of conflicts and worrying circumstances there is a higher level of responsibility.

Inasmuch as crisis (whatever it might be) is an abnormal, sensitive and complex situation, a higher level of consideration of the responsibilities is required, in particular, the responsibility of mass communication means, due to their impact on people and the way they perceive of the events.

Considering the ethical responsibility of media in times of crises includes accounting for state responsibility and national responsibility. More precisely, it means considering national security, public system, public health, community peace, etc. In a broader sense, freedom of speech also entails these responsibilities.

In other words, in times of war and crises, the media should be handled with more responsibility. For this end, the media would not evade the ethical responsibility for reasons such as honesty, preciseness, objectivity, neutrality and balance. That is, revealing one fact, for instance, could lead to a great deal of damage. Similarly, 'being the first' to make it public should not lead to irresponsibility. In such cases, preciseness would guarantee neutrality. Furthermore, objectivity, neutrality and balance do not mean disregarding the country and the citizens.

After the attack of September 11/ 2001, the footage of the building collapsing on the people in live coverage had a lot of influence on the reaction towards terrorism. By looking back at this event, we understand that the media faced a huge challenge making American people understand the events. The fallout of this appeared as reaction to war on terror. When the wave of anti-West propaganda of Osama Bin Laden, a counter-attack began, led by George W. Bush, the president of United States of America (2001-2009). Media had the biggest role in spreading this propaganda. The political speech of leaders like (Tony Blair, George Bush, etc.), after the event of September 11, was

more emotional, so the media had to filter out political propaganda characterizing the political speeches, but the media failed in doing so and rather speeded it in an attempt to mobilize the public in favor of the war on terror (Anup 2015).

Harold Lasswell believes that western politicians and governments have filled the public with fear and anxiety to the level of hysteria. It is true that a group like ISIS is well-trained and well-equipped in terms of weaponry -just as they have access to a huge financial support- but we shall not forget the fact that they have done the biggest propaganda campaign on the western societies, especially when they manage to publish professional videos of their inhumane acts on social media like their videos on YouTube and their messages on Twitter (Tracy 2014). So the media needs to be reformed and we should find a way to stop the terrorist groups publishing propaganda on it.

This puts a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of those who work in media; they should inform people about the mental war waged against them, and inform citizens about the symbol and signs of that war on the one hand, and avoid advertising for them on their programs onto the other.

Media not Considerate of the ethical responsibility

The art of convincing and persuasion with propaganda are effective historical tools that have been used in politics, especially at time of war. In general, propagating violence through the means of media leaves a lot of prolonged impacts on the classes of the community, thus benefiting the radical groups (Karen 2005).

Here it becomes clear that the publication of lots of violent content indirectly has led to the promotion of these groups and lead to these groups becoming more active and strong. This in turn brings fear and terror into the hearts of citizens.

Furthermore, it is important to know about the propaganda and gossip of the others (terrorists), to understand and probe them, to access them via different modes and messages, and to confront them, so that the falsified, distorted images the terrorists are making are destroyed and the real images are shown. Such propaganda and gossip hold in them the seed of fear and terror, and can easily enter people's minds, if not confronted.

Media experts believe that the media in general, and the internet and social media in particular, have proven very effective mediums of spreading the propaganda of terrorists in the world. Sometimes, they use the term 'cyber-terrorism', to describe what is happening. Although the term was first used to talk about electronic attacks, with the increasing use of terrorists of the internet the term has become a fact (Brunst 2015).

One of the terrorist groups that emerged in June 2014, and started another wave of violence, and inhumane images, throughout social media and even in more conventional media by showing images of human beheading, burning humans alive, and many other atrocities and images of violence, was "ISIS". This group is still continuing their crimes and publishing them on Media. The publication of this type of violence negatively affects the society and spreads fear and terror. It can even weaken the morale of the people, thus posing a threat to the national security (Carlson 2014).

The publication of videos and images of violence by terrorist groups in the world not only affected families, children, and societies, but also become an underpinning factor of the formation of a coalition against the group. Thus, at times of uncertainty and war censoring and even filtering internet content might be reasonable to make sure the national security is intact and to prevent the spread of fear and terror (Pippa 2003). During crises, and more precisely in war time putting temporary censor on media or filtering the images, videos, and information about the war could be a good solution to reduce the level of fear and terror in public.

This does not mean the media should abandon its main job, but can -on an ethical base-temporarily act like that until the situation calms down and certainty prevails. This is not unusual, even developed and democratic countries allow such exceptions and considerations. For example, during the second Gulf War, the Pentagon rewrote the function of media for The United States of America in a ten-amendment package. The package focuses on putting a lot of surveillance, and making the news more in favor of American interests, under the principle of (nationalism, defense, national security) and neglecting such types of actions as (investigation, examination, observe) in some sensitive news, trying to make them less sensitive, disallowing different opinions, limiting the connection between people and the war, making sure they do not get involved in the details of the war, and creating (white painting) about the war, undermining the term (victim), not showing blood in the coverage, showing more images than videos of horror of war, favoring short, often-repeated news about their successes to raise the morale of the people.

War of Terror and Media Coverage

Now "ISIS" is a terrorist group that is known in the world, and the world is against them. This group has created many media centers used to show their messages, videos, and images of their crimes; they even manage to indirectly use the media of opposite side for their advantage. They have so many accounts on social media such as (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). So these groups need media. As the British

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979 - 1990) said rightly, "media campaigns are oxygen for terrorists".

Winston Churchill in his book "Gathering Storm" explains how Hitler used media in a bad way to his own interests, and to promote his public base, concentrating his personal power and creating more enemies, and starting war. Dr. Noam Chomsky in the documentary film, *Manufacturing Consent*, explains this topic in more detail, saying that the media covering the Vietnam war and Gulf war used the same techniques (Achbar and Wintonick 1992).

The terrorist groups have found a good ally in mass media that can be very important in attracting public and the desires of these groups. Marshall Macluhan, one of the experts on mass media, said 'the terrorism doesn't exist without communication' (Macluhan, 1978). This is a weakness of the media which has unconsciously become a medium of transferring terroristic acts.

How the Kurdish Media has been Irresponsible during ISIS War

There are some examples to see the irresponsibility of Kurdish media in details:

- In order to gain more audience and money, many websites rush to publish ISIS's videos even when sometimes YouTube deleted the videos. Still, the websites who copied the video published it again, Xendan website being an example.

- PDK Radio station, too, jeopardized the lives of Shangal Mountain's refugees by publishing fake news claiming that the Peshmarga has taken control of the city.

- Rudaw newspaper in the last year's August edition published an article claiming, "…exposes 100 isolated Ezidis's places," From the details of the article, Rudaw stated that 100 Ezidis in West of Shangal mountain known as Qandil have disappeared from the public eye and the outside world without having any possible reach to them.

- Xendan website in breaking news with an image attached to it stated, "ISIS has launched an attack in Gullalla," and this was soon followed by an ISIS tweet about their success and courageousness. And what they published on social media is that, "The Kurdish newspaper's website (…) in breaking news is stating that the entire Peshmarga forces are falling back in Gullalla leaving control of the area in the hands of ISIS."

- With the recapture of Makhmur by the Kurdish Peshmagra, Rudaw satellite channel interviewed a civilian who had survived ISIS's attack. The interviewee

described the humanistic attitudes of ISIS and its leader towards the civilian to an extent that they performed group prayer together.

+ Kurdistan TV's journalist and cameraman's photo gets exposed in a way that indicates that he has gone beyond journalizing and has been holding a gun pretending to be a Peshmarga fighter.

+ In accordance with a report, Gali Kurdistan TV channel with a relatively big font size wrote on the screen, quoting a "A female Peshmarga fighter" saying "ISIS fighters are defending so hard."

+ After he is released from prison, NRT channel arranges an interview with Mala Krekar, former leader of Ansari al-Islam. What was weird in the interview was that very few serious and direct questions could be asked after Mala Krekar's responses. He used NRT's screen for his personal advantage and his radical religious ideology. He was very careful in gaining control of the TV program and having it serve his purpose. For instance, when discussing "hard headedly in his religion," or when says, "If I had authority and power, I would have used a cutter to cut him in the neck." However, neither the interviewer nor the channel could resist Mala Krekar from publishing his ideology taking advantage of their screen.

+ The night when ISIS took over Makhmur was mainly due to the fact that people from Erbil got discouraged, publishing terrifying breaking news on people evacuating the city, posts from social media and articles on the internet here and there, and comments from terrified people.

+ It was shown on Rudaw channel how Peshmarga forces in the south of Kurdistan were going to Kobane city in the east of Kurdistan using detailed maps and graphs.

+ During this time, especially from satellite channels and social media, we were exposed to top secret military intelligence, videotapes and photographs from Peshmarga forces at frontlines. Furthermore, the types of guns Peshmarga forces were using, the numbers of Peshmarga fighters, names and numbers of military units, the name of the general, the places where Peshmarga forces settled, the arrangements of the central commanding unit, the timing of launching attack, directions of the attack and objectives of the attack and more were televised to the public.

Results

After presenting a number of topics regarding the subject, after that mentioning the irresponsibility through giving some instances and reasons, the results of the study are to be presented:

1. Not taking into account the etiquette responsibility and lack of a particular media coverage for war, journalists, and media specialists who are all facilitators in increasing the rate of crime and terror.

2. Being affected by the impacts of war and propagandas of violence. In other words, advertising for the movement, and discouraging Peshmarga fighter and civilians.

3. Creating an image in the subconscious minds of individuals.

4. Involving misunderstanding terminology, causing imbalance, publishing biased and fake content.

Suggestions

Taking into account the indications and reasons of ignoring Kurdish media etiquette responsibility during the terrifying circumstances of ISIS, we the paper come to a conclusion, lead by the findings of this research paper, that it is worth offering some suggestions for the Kurdish media, parliament, the government, Peshmarga commanders, and to whomever it may concern to:

1. Urgent work is needed on developing professional journalism etiquette fundamentals and a national responsible media, establishing special military media and journals.

2. There is need for a board of journalism and establishing a journalistic terms of agreement which is accepted by at least the majority of media and journalistic agents.

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