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Gulf States Now Want ‘Restructured’ al-Jazeera, Not Total Closure

Jason Ditz
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The United Arab Emirates’ National Council Minister Nouri al-Kaabi today announced in an interview that the four states blockading Qatar are backing off the demand for Qatar to shut down all of their media outlets totally and permanently, instead seeking a total “restructuring” of the organization that would bring them more in line with other media in the region.

In practice, that means a heavily censored media outlet which only broadcasts a narrative that is in keeping with the GCC’s interests, which is to say Saudi Arabia’s interests, and which does not provide an outlet for opposition voices, who are seen as “extremists.”

The back down on that demand appears to be a result of the United Nations overtly condemning the demand as an “unacceptable attack on the right to freedom of expression and opinion.” That UN criticism didn’t sit well with several officials.

Particularly this was true of UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash, who insisted that al-Jazeera is inherently anti-Semitic, and that subsequently demands for it to be shut down must be



appropriate. He cited the broadcasting of anti-Semitic sermons by a top Muslim Brotherhood figure as evidence, though Qatari officials have pointed out that not everybody given airtime on the network should be seen as an endorsement from the media outlet.