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—Shawn Levy, *The Oregonian*

“You are likely to emerge from ‘CONTROL ROOM’ touched, exhilarated and a little off-balance, with your certainties scrambled and your assumptions shaken.

AN INDISPENSABLE EXAMPLE OF THE INQUISITIVE, SELF-QUESTIONING DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT.”

—A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*



Introduction and discussion with journalist and Middle East correspondent Karin Leukefeld.

CONTROL ROOM

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On 24.4.2024, from 8 p.m. in Lecture Hall D of the Philosophenturm (Von-Melle-Park 6)

“Control Room”

A film by Jehane Noujaim
(USA/QTR, 2004)

Anyone seriously concerned with the question of how sustainable peace can be created in the "Near and Middle East" must not remain silent about the role of the self-proclaimed "value-driven West" in the region. For centuries, it has been characterised by ignorance, hypocrisy, cultural arrogance, colonial chauvinism, geopolitical unscrupulousness and crude, arbitrary military force. Since the coup against the elected Iranian president Mohammad Mosaddegh (1953), every regime that seemed even remotely capable of secular, independent development has sooner or later been removed with the help of Western secret services and/or military forces. The low point of the recent past was the war of aggression launched by the USA and its allies against Iraq in 2003, which violated international law and claimed the lives of more than a million civilians.

As in every war, the dispute over the media's interpretation of the events played a central role. However, it took on a new quality, which at the same time shed a harsh light on the importance of committed truth-finding, free debate, public opinion-forming and international understanding for ending even today's virulent conflicts.

With the impressive film "Control Room", the Lebanese-born US director Jehane Noujaim documented precisely this explosive conflict by accompanying the international team of the TV channel Al-Jazeera over several weeks in its work of war reporting at the press headquarters of the CentCom ("Central Command") of the US armed forces in Doha, Qatar.

This work is a tireless fight for humanity. The correspondents, editors, translators and technicians of the private news channel supported by the Qatari sovereign wealth fund, which emerged from the former Arabic department of the BBC in 1996 and has become the most watched broadcaster in the Arab world, see their work as partisan in the

sense of civil, enlightened, democratic development and are therefore particularly committed to objectivity in their reporting. They show the side of the war that is concealed by all other stations:

"Me-Ti was asked: How can you demand that someone is objective and partisan at the same time? Me-Ti replied: If the party is objectively the right thing, there is no longer any difference between objective and partisan." Bertolt Brecht, "Me-Ti. Book of Turns", written in exile in the 1930s.

its catastrophic consequences for the civilian population. As a result, they are immediately accused by the US administration of inciting the Arab world against the West. At the same time, they document, translate and analyse speeches and assessments of the situation by the US leadership and are accused by the Iraqi

regime and fundamentalist forces of collaborating with the US invaders.

As advocates of enlightened values, they are in favour of a necessary emancipatory awakening of the Arab majority against their corrupt rulers and therefore reject any interference from the West. Deeply moved and involved, they argue about the meaning of their work and try to explain the devastating effects of the war on the perception of the West in the Arab world to their colleagues in the US press office. Even the targeted bombing of the Al-Jazeera office in Baghdad, with which the US army wanted to ensure the media staging of its occupation of the Iraqi capital as a "liberation" and during which the channel's most important Iraq correspondent was murdered, did not make them refrain from this mission.

With its sober portrayal of this conflict, the film, which provides profound personal insights, shows in an exemplary manner in which shape "freedom, democracy and human rights" actually are in the world when war is waged in their name. It is also an indispensable plea for the peace-building importance of militant humanity, controversial opinion-forming and empathetic-critical international understanding across all borders and deeply rooted structures of prejudice. Courageous sanity, as the world urgently needs it.

Honour the truth: Bread, peace, dignity - now! International solidarity: Stop austerity.

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