

# french.presstv.com

The French-language website of Press TV, an Iranian state-owned global news network that has advanced discredited conspiracy theories and publishes Iranian propaganda.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.**

**Score: 7.5/100**

## Ownership and Financing

The French and English-language television channel Press TV is owned and funded by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), although that is not disclosed on the site. IRIB is an Iranian state-owned company with a monopoly on the broadcast media market in the country. Based in Tehran, IRIB owns television channels, local and national news agencies, radio stations, newspapers, and news sites in Iran.

IRIB also operates channels for audiences outside Iran, including Press TV, Persian-language Jame Jam TV, and the Arabic-language channels Al-Kawthar TV and Al-Alam News Network. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei oversees IRIB and appoints its head.

The Iranian government has extensive control over the media in Iran, according to nonprofit press advocacy group Reporters Without Borders. "The regime's crackdown on freedom of information is not limited to inside the country. International media are now also victims of the crackdown," the group reported. ("Cette répression contre la liberté d'information ne se limite pas à l'intérieur des frontières du pays. Ainsi les médias internationaux sont également victime de cette répression").

The site does not run advertising.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

## Content

French.PressTV.com describes its vision on the site's About page, which is written in English, as "Heeding the often neglected voices and perspectives of a great portion of the world; Embracing and building bridges of cultural understanding; Encouraging human beings of different nationalities, races and creeds to identify with one another; Bringing to light untold and overlooked

stories of individuals who have experienced the vitality and versatility of political and cultural divides firsthand."

The French-language version of PressTV.com publishes news articles and video clips from the Press TV television channel. French.PressTV.com describes itself on its Youtube page as "the first French-speaking media in Iran, positioning itself as an alternative source of information." ("Le premier média francophone d'Iran qui se positionne comme une source d'information alternative.")

French.PressTV.com covers Iran and international relations in various formats, including text articles, talk show segments, video interviews, and news broadcasts. According to its About page, the content is produced by Iranian and foreign media professionals based in its headquarters in Tehran and in "bureaus located in the world's most strategic cities." Most news reports draw on reporting from other news organizations, including the Russian outlets Sputnik and Russia Today. Other articles are based on public statements and interviews with Iranian government officials.

French.PressTV.com primary features content on geopolitical issues, including tensions between Israel and Iran and regional Middle Eastern politics. News coverage is typically presented from the perspective of the Iranian government and often takes positions critical of the U.S., Israel, and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Typical headlines have included "By the end of 2020, Iran will stock up on offensive weapons" ("D'ici fin 2020, l'Iran s'approvisionnera en armes offensives"); "Iran does not tolerate any meddling in its domestic affairs" ("L'Iran ne tolère aucune ingérence dans ses affaires intérieures"); and "France: Anti-government movements intensify" ("France: les mouvements antigouvernementaux s'intensifient").

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#### Credibility

French.PressTV.com sometimes feature video recordings of news events shot by Press TV staff, along

with expert commentary. Articles often cite unverified information from Iranian and Russian government sources, as well as reports from French websites that are known for spreading false stories and conspiracy theories, such as AlterInfo.net, Egalité et réconciliation, and Réseau International. French.PressTV.com has also published stories on debunked conspiracy theories, including on the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

For example, a January 2020 article stated: "According to information gathered by Chinese sources, the replication of the new 2019-nCoV coronavirus is ... the result of the transfer of a highly sensitive biological material between two countries ... as part of an economical, commercial and financial asymmetric war strategy using campaigns in media as well as biological 'disruptive' carriers." ("Selon des indications recueillies par des sources chinoises, la répllication du nouveau coronavirus 2019-nCoV (...) mais le résultat d'un transfert d'un matériau biologique hautement sensible entre deux pays (...) dans le cadre d'une stratégie de guerre économique, commerciale et financière asymétrique utilisant aussi bien des campagnes de médiaguerre que des vecteurs de 'disruption' biologiques"). The article did not provide any sources or evidence to back this claim.

A February 2020 article, titled "Why have only 'enemies' contracted the coronavirus?" ("Pourquoi seuls les \"ennemis\" ont contracté le coronavirus?"), stated: "What's curious is that this virus has propagated to several countries, but the number of confirmed cases in the US or their allies is very low.... Could that be a biological war the Americans have waged against Iran?" ("Ce qui est curieux c'est que ce virus est propagé dans plusieurs pays, mais le nombre de cas recensés aux États-Unis ou chez leurs alliés est très infime (...) De toute évidence, il aurait dû y avoir beaucoup plus d'Américains atteints par ce virus (...) Serait-ce une sorte de guerre biologique que les Américains ont lancée contre l'Iran?").

There is no evidence that the virus originated somewhere other than Wuhan or that it was man made and brought to China as part of a hostile campaign.

According to a February 2020 report by the World Health Organization, "increasing evidence demonstrates the link between the 2019-nCoV and other similar known coronaviruses (CoV) circulating in bats." A study published the same month in Nature found that the virus is "96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus."

In January 2020, the site falsely claimed that 139 U.S. troops died in the Iranian missile strike on the Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq, which followed the U.S. military's killing of Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani. The article based the claim on what it described as a U.S. military document.

In fact, no U.S. troops were reported to have died in the attack, and The Washington Post later reported that the document cited by the site was a forgery that had been circulated on social media by individuals linked to Iraq's pro-Iranian militias.

The day of the attack, Jan. 8, 2020, the site published an article titled "Ain al-Asad: 224 injured U.S. soldiers evacuated to Tel Aviv" ("Ain al-Asad: 224 soldats américains blessés évacués à Tel-Aviv"). The article claimed that an Israeli journalist named Jack Khoury tweeted that "a US aircraft carrying American soldiers wounded by Iran's missile strike on Ain Asad Air Base, landed in Tel Aviv hours ago. Based on informed sources, 224 soldiers were taken to Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center Hospital." The same article also falsely claimed that 80 US troops had been killed in the attack.

The tweet actually originated from an account impersonating Jack Khoury, a real journalist for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, as Khoury and other outlets reported. In January 2020, Twitter issued a statement to the Daily Beast saying that the account that tweeted the false claim "was permanently suspended for violating our platform manipulation policy."

The site also frequently promotes content from Russian state-owned outlets Sputnik and RT, which NewsGuard found repeatedly publish false claims and Russian propaganda. For example, French.PressTV.com often

promotes Russian claims meant to discredit reports of chemical attacks carried out by the regime of Bashar al-Assad on Syrian civilians.

In December 2019, the site published an article titled "White helmets to prepare new staging of chemical attack" ("Les Casques blancs prépareraient une nouvelle mise en scène d'attaque chimique"), which stated that the Syrian relief organisation known as the White Helmets was going to stage a fake chemical attack in the Idlib province of northwest Syria, citing as a source the Russian Reconciliation Center for Syria. The article asserted that "those behind this plan are planning to shoot videos and take pictures of it, which will later be distributed and published by the media in the region and in the West in order to accuse Syrian government forces of using chemical weapons against civilians." ("Ceux qui sont derrière ce plan envisagent d'en tourner des vidéos et d'en prendre des photos qui seront distribuées et publiées par la suite par les médias de la région et de l'Occident, afin d'accuser les forces du gouvernement syrien d'usage d'armes chimiques contre les civils.")

The article also stated that the U.S. military "accused Damascus of having launched a chemical attack." ("et elle a accusé Damas d'avoir lancé une attaque chimique.")

There is no evidence to back up the claim that the White Helmets have staged fake chemical attacks in Syria, or that they plan to do so. According to the European Union's fact-checking unit EU vs. Disinfo, such claims are part of an ongoing Kremlin campaign to portray the White Helmets as terrorists.

Claims denying that Syrian government forces conducted chemical attacks against civilians, or that these attacks were staged, contradict a large body of evidence, including international investigations, press reports, first-person accounts, and video footage. A fact-finding mission by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed in June 2017 that people in Khan Shaykhun were exposed to the nerve gas sarin. A joint UN-OPCW investigation

found that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government was responsible for the atrocity, which left approximately 100 people dead.

French.PressTV.com has also spread widely debunked conspiracy theories, including claims related to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S. For example, a September 2019 article stated that the fall of the 7 World Trade Center building near the Twin Towers was caused by a controlled demolition and that a study by a group of civil engineers "found obvious evidence" that an explosive "was used to destroy the twin towers" ("ont trouvé des indices évidents montrant que de la nanothermite avait servi à détruire les tours jumelles").

In fact, the study mentioned in the article contradicts multiple official accounts of what happened on 9/11 — a caveat that was not included in the article. A 2008 investigation by the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology about the collapse of 7 World Trade Center concluded that flying debris from the Twin Towers sparked an intense fire in 7 World Trade that "caused a critical support column to fail, initiating a fire-induced progressive collapse that brought the building down." It found no evidence that explosives were placed inside the trade center, and said that the impact of the crash of hijacked airplanes that flew into the towers caused the buildings to collapse.

In April 2019, French.PressTV.com republished a story from the French satirical news site Legorafeuj.com and presented it as true. The article falsely claimed that President Macron agreed in principle to allow indicted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be tried in France, where he hopes to be granted total immunity. "For the Israeli Prime Minister, it is about finding a way to avoid going to jail at all costs," the article stated. ("Pour le Premier ministre israélien, il s'agit de parvenir à éviter à tout prix la case prison.")

French.PressTV.com features some opinion posts in an Editorials section. However, many articles and videos in the News section of the site include political opinions that generally reflect the Iranian government's views on French policies and Iranian–Israeli relations, among other issues.

For example, a November 2019 news article described France as “patronizing” and claimed that Macron’s policies are meant to “undermine the upcoming presidential election and extend chaos and destabilization.” (“donneuse de leçons... Question évidemment de saper la présidentielle à venir et de faire prolonger le chaos et la déstabilisation.”)

A December 2019 article, titled “Paris is preparing a dangerous showdown with Iran in Tel Aviv’s interest” (“Paris s'apprête à un dangereux bras de fer avec l'Iran pour les intérêts de Tel-Aviv”), described Macron’s policy with Iran as “more than execrable.” Another December 2019 article stated that “the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism is a new Zionist manipulation aimed at using the Jews as human shields after sacrificing them during World War II at the altar of nationalism.” (“L’assimilation de l’antisionisme à l’antisémitisme est une nouvelle manipulation sioniste visant à utiliser les juifs comme boucliers humains après les avoir sacrifiés lors de la seconde guerre mondiale sur l’autel du nationalisme.”)

Because French.pressTV.com frequently publishes fabricated stories and disinformation, often to advance Iran's views and state propaganda, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, fails to avoid deceptive headlines, and does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

French.PressTV.com does not post a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

NewsGuard contacted Press TV French by email and phone, seeking comment on the articles cited above, the site’s corrections policy, and its handling of opinion content. A representative for the channel said Press TV French declined to comment.

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#### Transparency

French.PressTV.com does not disclose its ownership by the Iranian government and does not say who is in charge of its content.

The site does not provide contact or biographical information for its writers, and articles do not include author names. The website publishes general email addresses and phone numbers to contact its business and editorial departments.

Asked about the site's lack of disclosure regarding its ownership, leadership, and content creators, a representative for the channel said Press TV French declined to comment.

The website does not run advertising.

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## History

Iran launched its satellite television channel Press TV and PressTV.com in July 2007. The French version of Press TV launched online in 2016.

In 2011, Press TV failed to pay a £100,000 fine imposed by British media regulator Ofcom for airing a coerced confession of Newsweek journalist Maziar Bahari, which he gave under duress while imprisoned on espionage charges in Iran in 2009. In January 2012, Ofcom revoked Press TV's broadcasting license, according to the BBC.

In March 2012, the European Union placed sanctions on Ezzatollah Zarghami, then director and head of IRIB, for authorizing the broadcast of forced confessions of detainees and "show trials." In October 2012, the European satellite provider Eutelsat cut 19 IRIB channels, including Press TV, to comply with European Union sanctions imposed on Iran for failing to halt its nuclear program.

In February 2013, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned IRIB for "restricting or denying the free flow of information to or from the Iranian people" and "censoring multiple media outlets and airing forced confessions from political detainees." The same month, Galaxy 19, Press TV's North American broadcaster, pulled the channel off the air in the U.S. and Canada.

*Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on March 5, 2020.*

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