

alterinfo.net

A website that regularly publishes false information and conspiracy theories, often to advance views considered anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic.



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

Score: 7.5/100

Ownership and Financing

AlterInfo.net is owned by Alter Info apa, a nonprofit organization based in Mulhouse in eastern France. The website was founded by Zeynel Cekici, a former president of the nonprofit Alter Info apa. He is also registered as the owner of a locksmith business in Mulhouse called AlterTravaux.com (Alter'Dep), which is advertised on the site.

Alter Info apa describes itself as an "associative news agency" on the website's homepage. However, the French Federation of News Agencies (Fédération Française des Agences de Presse or FFAP), which represents approximately 100 news agencies, says on its website that AlterInfo is not a news agency because it not accredited by the Joint Commission for Publications and News Agencies (Commission paritaire des publications et des agences de presse), which includes State and journalism officials, and is not registered in the French government publication Journal Officiel.

Cekici "has repeatedly presented his site as a not-for-profit news agency. It's FALSE! The FFAP wants to point out that the work of a news agency is a regulated and protected activity," the FFAP said in an undated statement on its website. ("Zeynel Cekici... a plusieurs fois présenté son site comme une agence de presse associative. C'est FAUX ! La FFAP tient à rappeler que l'activité d'agence de presse est une activité contrôlée et protégée.")

AlterInfo.net generates revenue from advertising. In previous years, the nonprofit has solicited donations from readers of the site.

- ✗ 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

AlterInfo.net describes itself on its Who Are We page

as an "online opinion newspaper" that aims to provide "better information and understanding of sensitive topics at the heart of our modern societies: conflicts and developments in Western societies, the Middle East and the Arab-Muslim world, relations between monotheistic religions, secularism, 'Islamism,' terrorism, communitarianism and 'anti-Semitism.'" ("Notre objectif est d'aider à une meilleure connaissance et compréhension des sujets sensibles au cœur de nos sociétés modernes : conflits et évolution des sociétés occidentales, du Moyen-Orient et du monde arabo-musulman, relations entre les religions monothéistes, laïcité, 'islamisme', terrorisme, communautarisme et 'antisémitisme.'")

In a 2009 interview with the weekly L'Express Cekici, the site's founder, said he had "no taboos." "When you make it your mission to tell the truth, you have to take risks. Even if it means taking freedom of expression beyond its limits," he said. ("Quand on se donne pour mission de dire la vérité, il faut prendre des risques. Quitte à porter la liberté d'expression au-delà des limites").

Alter Info primarily republishes stories from news websites that often promote conspiracies related to France and the Middle East, as well as the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks and, in 2020, the global coronavirus outbreak. The site regularly republishes information from Middle Eastern media organizations, including Hezbollah-affiliated TV station Al-Manar, Iranian news channel Press TV, and conspiracy sites such as Mondialisation.ca and WikiStrike.com.

Articles often criticize the state of Israel and link Israel and Jews to terror plots such as the Sept. 11 attacks and the 2015 Bataclan theatre massacre. The website also frequently writes about Islamophobia, the perceived oppression of Muslims, and claims of influence of Jewish personalities in leading organizations in France, including the media. One typical story, for example, claimed 24/7 news channel BFMTV "is totally under Israeli control."

Content is divided into categories including World (Monde), Middle East (Proche-Orient), Financial power (Pouvoir financier), Society (Société), Economy (Economie), Health (Santé), Justice (Justice), Neoliberalism and Consequences (Néolibéralisme et conséquences), and Deprivation of liberties (Privation des libertés).

Typical headlines include "How Facebook controls our lives" ("Comment Facebook contrôle nos vies"); "Whistleblower: Money laundering at the heart of the globalized economy?" ("Lanceur d'alerte: le blanchiment d'argent au coeur de l'économie mondialisée?"); and "In Israel, Zionism is a religion, and it is mandatory" ("En Israël, le sionisme est une religion, et elle est obligatoire").

Credibility

Many Alter Info stories promote false information and debunked conspiracy theories and are republished from sites that NewsGuard has found to repeatedly publish false information such as WikiStrike, Russian government-owned website RT, and conspiracy site ReseauInternational.net.

The website promoted several false stories about the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. For example, in March 2020, an article titled "COVID-19 Coronavirus: A fake pandemic? Who's behind it? Global economic, social and geopolitical destabilization" ("Coronavirus COVID-19: Une fausse pandémie? Qui est derrière cela? Déstabilisation économique, sociale et géopolitique mondiale"), republished an article from the French-language version of Canadian site Globalresearch.ca, which suggested that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had advance knowledge of the outbreak. The story reported that in October 2019, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore, "undertook a carefully designed simulation of a coronavirus epidemic entitled nCoV-2019," which was sponsored by the Microsoft founder's foundation. ("a entrepris un exercice de simulation consciencieusement élaboré d'une épidémie de coronavirus appelée nCoV-2019").

It is true that the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security organized a simulated emergency preparedness exercise for a pandemic in October 2019, but according to FactCheck.org, the exercise involved a mock coronavirus. It was not called nCoV-2019 and had different features than the virus that causes COVID-19.

The article also referred to the 2009 H1N1 swine flu pandemic, claiming, "There was no H1N1 pandemic in 2009. It was a money making scam as revealed by the European Parliament." ("Il n'y avait pas de pandémie de H1N1 en 2009. Il s'agissait d'une fraude pour faire de l'argent, comme l'a révélé le Parlement européen"). The World Health Organization did declare the 2009 swine flu outbreak a pandemic. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 60.9 million cases of swine flu reported in the United States between April 2009 and 2010, and approximately 12,500 deaths.

In March 2020, the site republished another Global Research story titled "COVID-19: Further Evidence that the Virus Originated in the US" ("Covid-19 : de nouvelles preuves de l'origine américaine du virus"), which falsely claimed that "the new coronavirus could have originated in the US since that country is the only one known to have all five types [of virus strains] – from which all others must come from." ("Le nouveau coronavirus provenait presque certainement des États-Unis, puisque ce pays est le seul dont nous sachions qu'il a sur son sol les cinq types – dont tous les autres doivent descendre.")

There is no evidence to support the claim that the COVID-19 virus originated in the U.S. The outbreak was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. In February 2020, a report by the World Health Organization-China joint mission found that "since the COVID-19 virus has a genome identity of 96% to a bat SARS-like coronavirus and 86%-92% to a pangolin SARS-like coronavirus, an animal source for COVID-19 is highly likely." A study published the same month in Nature found that the virus is "96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus."

The site has frequently promoted conspiracy theories related to terror attacks and disasters. For example, in December 2019, Alter Info republished a story from anti-Israel site Panamza.com, titled "Massacre at the Bataclan: The hall was controlled by Mossad" ("Carnage au Bataclan : la salle était contrôlée par le Mossad").

The article claimed that the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad knew in advance about the November 2015 mass shooting at the Bataclan theater in Paris, adding that "French 'Jewish officials' were warned (by Mossad) about the imminence of the attacks" ("'officiels juifs' de France qui furent avertis (par le Mossad) de l'imminence des attentats").

There is no evidence that Mossad was briefed about the Bataclan shooting before it happened. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack one day after the shooting on several social media accounts.

In August 2019, the site shared a YouTube video of Urandir Fernandes de Oliveira, who has published videos claiming that the Earth is flat and that UFOs exist. Fernandes de Oliveira said in the video that Brazil's Amazon rainforest was never on fire during the summer of 2019. Without offering any evidence, Fernandes de Oliveira added that the Amazon "cannot be burned" ("n'a pas moyen de brûler") and stories on fires are "manipulations to destabilize Brazil" ("sont des manipulations pour déstabiliser le Brésil").

According to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), there were more than 90,000 fires in the Amazon rainforest in summer 2019.

Because Alter Info frequently republishes stories that advance false claims and conspiracy theories, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

AlterInfo.net does not articulate a corrections policy. NewsGuard found only one correction published on the site from 2014, and the site has not corrected several

false stories on the website, which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for regularly issuing corrections.

The site discloses its alternative political viewpoint on its Who We Are page, stating that its mission is "to promote alternative information that is the opposite of official versions." ("de promouvoir une information alternative aux antipodes des versions officielles"). Although the site calls itself an opinion newspaper, and has a separate opinion section, it also includes unlabeled opinion in news articles. Stories often advance views that criticize Israel and the administration of French President Emmanuel Macron.

For example, in October 2019, the site published an article labeled "National News," titled "French secularism: Collateral victim of the Arab-Israeli war?" ("Laïcité française : victime collatérale de la guerre israélo-arabe?"). The article's author stated that "Jews, formerly progressive and champions of civic, republican and human rights emancipation, built a retrograde, tribal and delinquent state, in relation to international law." ("Ces juifs, jadis progressistes et chantres de l'émancipation citoyenne, républicaine et droit-de-l'homme, ont construit un État rétrograde, tribal et délinquant vis-à-vis du droit international."). The article also claimed that Israel started "a total, uninterrupted, war to exclude [the muslim community] from French citizenship." ("Une guerre totale et sans répit afin de l'exclure de la citoyenneté française.")

In January 2020, Alter Info republished an article from the site Vududroit.com, also labelled "National News," titled "Emmanuel Macron - Illegality, illegitimacy and imposture" ("Emmanuel Macron – Illégalité, illégitimité et imposture"). The article blamed the French president for "the corruption that surrounds him, his political inanity, his unbearable character traits and his personal arrogance." ("La corruption qui l'entoure, sa nullité politique, ses traits de caractère insupportables et son arrogance personnelle...")

Because Alter Info publishes unlabeled opinion in news articles, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Alter Info did not respond to two NewsGuard emails seeking comment on the site's editorial practices, its false claims, failure to correct inaccurate articles, and use of opinion in news articles. Cekici declined to respond to questions when NewsGuard contacted him by phone.

Transparency

The site discloses that it is owned by Alter Info on its Who We Are page. Readers can find Alter Info's email address by clicking on contact on the homepage. However, the site does not provide any information about the nonprofit's donors or finances, which does not meet NewsGuard's ownership disclosure standard for nonprofits.

The site does not reveal who is in charge of its content. Although most articles include author names, Alter Info does not provide any contact or biographical information for its editorial staff and contributors.

Alter Info did not respond to two emails from NewsGuard seeking comment on the site's lack of disclosure regarding its ownership, leadership, and content creators.

Advertisements are distinguished from editorial content.

History

AlterInfo.net launched in 2005.

Cekici was convicted in June 2009 by the Mulhouse Criminal Court of inciting racial hatred, denying crimes against humanity, as well as racial and religious defamation, for publishing anti-Semitic articles on the site, including a text that claimed "The Holocaust may have been covering up the real nature of World War II, which was an attack by a Jewish heretical Satanic sect (the bankers) against white Christians in general." ("L'Holocauste peut avoir été un habillage du vrai caractère de la seconde guerre mondiale, qui était une attaque par une secte satanique hérétique juive (les banquiers) contre les chrétiens blancs en général")

Cekici told Agence France-Presse at the time, "People want to portray us as antisemites when we simply are antizionists." ("On veut nous faire passer pour des antisémites alors que nous sommes simplement antisionistes").

Cekici received a suspended sentence of four months in prison, according to local newspaper L'Alsace.

Two months after his conviction, Cekici announced that he would resign from his position as Alter Info publishing director. The website never announced his replacement.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

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Ownership and
Financing

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