

Palestinian-American journalist files lawsuit against firing by CBS News Detroit for his Gaza reporting

Kevin Reed
26 March 2024

Journalist Ibrahim Samra has filed a federal lawsuit against CBS Detroit for firing him when he complained about the discriminatory treatment he faced for opposing the broadcaster's biased coverage of the Israeli assault on Gaza.

Samra, 27, is a Dearborn, Michigan, resident and had worked for WKBD, the Detroit affiliate of CBS News, since 2022. He was the only Arab, Palestinian and Muslim employee at the station. He was fired on February 28 after the station refused to air his reporting on a campaign urging Democratic Party primary voters to cast "uncommitted" ballots to protest President Joe Biden's support for the genocide of Palestinians by Israel in Gaza.

Samra filed his lawsuit in US District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan against CBS/CTS Inc., WKBD Inc., CBS Broadcasting Inc. and Paramount Pictures Corporation. According to a report in the *Washington Post*, the journalist said executives at CBS Detroit came down on him for posting scenes of local protests and rallies on his social media accounts. They then "quizzed him about his views on Hamas in a way he believed implied he supports the group, which the United States has designated as a terrorist organization."

The Samra case is important because it exposes the collaboration of the corporate media with the US government and the fascistic Netanyahu regime in Israel in spreading lies about the unfolding genocide in Gaza and what brought it about in the first place. It also exposes the ongoing efforts by the government and the media to silence those seeking to tell the truth about the mass murder of over 30,000 Palestinians and the ethnic cleansing of Gaza by the Zionist government with the backing of US imperialism.

The *Post* article said that, while Samra was in Chicago caring for his sick mother last October, he posted a video

of a nearby antiwar demonstration on his Instagram account. His lawsuit says after he returned to work in Detroit, his CBS bosses brought him into a meeting and "bombarded him with a series of accusatory and offensive questions about the 'intention' behind the video."

Amanda Ghannam, the attorney who filed the federal lawsuit on behalf of Samra, told the *Post*, "All he wanted was equal airtime for Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim voices to be able to tell timely, relevant, newsworthy stories about the war in Gaza as it unfolded. And he wasn't allowed to do that."

CBS Detroit declined to respond to questions about the lawsuit and issued a statement saying it does not comment on pending litigation or employee matters.

Ghannam said that the case is not just about Samra: "This case is about the community that he was assigned to cover and their stories and the work that he was doing to make sure that communities here in Metro Detroit had access to the information that he was reporting on."

Ibrahim Samra is a native of Chicago and was hired by CBS Detroit after a short period with WNDU-16 in South Bend, Indiana. He began with assignments to cover the Arab American communities in Dearborn, Dearborn Heights and Hamtramck as well as other areas of the Downriver area of Michigan.

A report in the *Detroit Free Press* states that the silencing of Samra by CBS News began shortly after October 7 when "he attempted to raise his concerns about a 'bias' in coverage." He objected to the prioritization of the Israeli narrative in local coverage over Arab perspectives. Samra also complained that non-Arab employees of the station were permitted to speak openly on and off the air about living in Israel and to publicize their opinions about the events in Gaza.

The *Free Press* report says a CBS news standards and

practices official told Samra that she took issue with his war-related Instagram video posts. This included a video Samra posted of a protest in Chicago for Palestine on October 22, 2023.

The network then excluded Samra from covering any Gaza related stories and blocked the airing of coverage he pitched to CBS about a Livonia, Michigan, resident who was trapped in Gaza. At this point, Samra filed formal complaint about his treatment by station and its biased coverage.

In an investigation conducted by CBS parent Paramount Pictures, it was determined, according to a memo provided to the *Free Press*, “that some of the concerns raised (by Samra) constituted missed opportunities as to news coverage,” but did not substantiate any company policy violations.

The results of the investigation also said station managers would be “more transparent and flexible in scheduling and assigning stories, as well as providing clarity as to why pitches are or are not approved.” However, according to the lawsuit, from that point forward Samra was permitted to cover only a “handful” of war-related stories and continued to be falsely accused of violating policies.

As Ghannam told the *Post*, after the investigation confirmed Samra’s concerns about disparities in coverage, “CBS News Detroit could have taken the opportunity to do the right thing to listen to their staff to improve their coverage and balance out their reporting. Instead, they fired Mr. Samra.”

Speaking at a press conference in Detroit to promote his lawsuit on Monday, Samra said that there are many stories that need to be told and he is going to continue to tell them. He recounted a conversation with a young man who said he had lost 300 relatives in Gaza over the past five months, “These are the stories that need to be shared.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)