

2024 ELECTION

CNN bans conservative guest for telling Muslim journalist 'I hope your beeper doesn't go off'

Ryan Girdusky clashed with British American journalist Mehdi Hasan on Monday night.



— British American journalist Mehdi Hasan, left, and Ryan Girdusky on CNN on Monday night. CNN

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By Patrick Smith

CNN has banned a conservative commentator from appearing on the network again after he told a Muslim journalist "I hope your beeper doesn't go off," an apparent reference to the spate of [exploding pagers in Lebanon](#) that killed members of the Hezbollah militant group last month.

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Ryan Girdusky made the comment during a heated debate with Mehdi Hasan, a prominent British American broadcaster and an outspoken critic of Israel's war in Gaza, on "CNN Newsnight" with host Abby Phillip.

The guests were discussing the [racist jokes](#) made by comedian Tony Hinchcliffe, which overshadowed former President Donald Trump's rally at New York's Madison Square Garden on Sunday and [continued to make headlines](#) two days later.

As the debate turned fractious, Girdusky and Hasan sparred over whether the latter had been labeled an antisemite. "I'm a supporter of the Palestinians. I'm used to it," Hasan said.

Girdusky replied: "Well I hope your beeper doesn't go off."

Hasan responded: "Did you just say I should die? You just said I should be killed."

When Phillip called out the comment, Girdusky apologized, claiming he heard Hasan say he supported Hamas. After a commercial break, both Girdusky and Hasan had left the roundtable discussion.

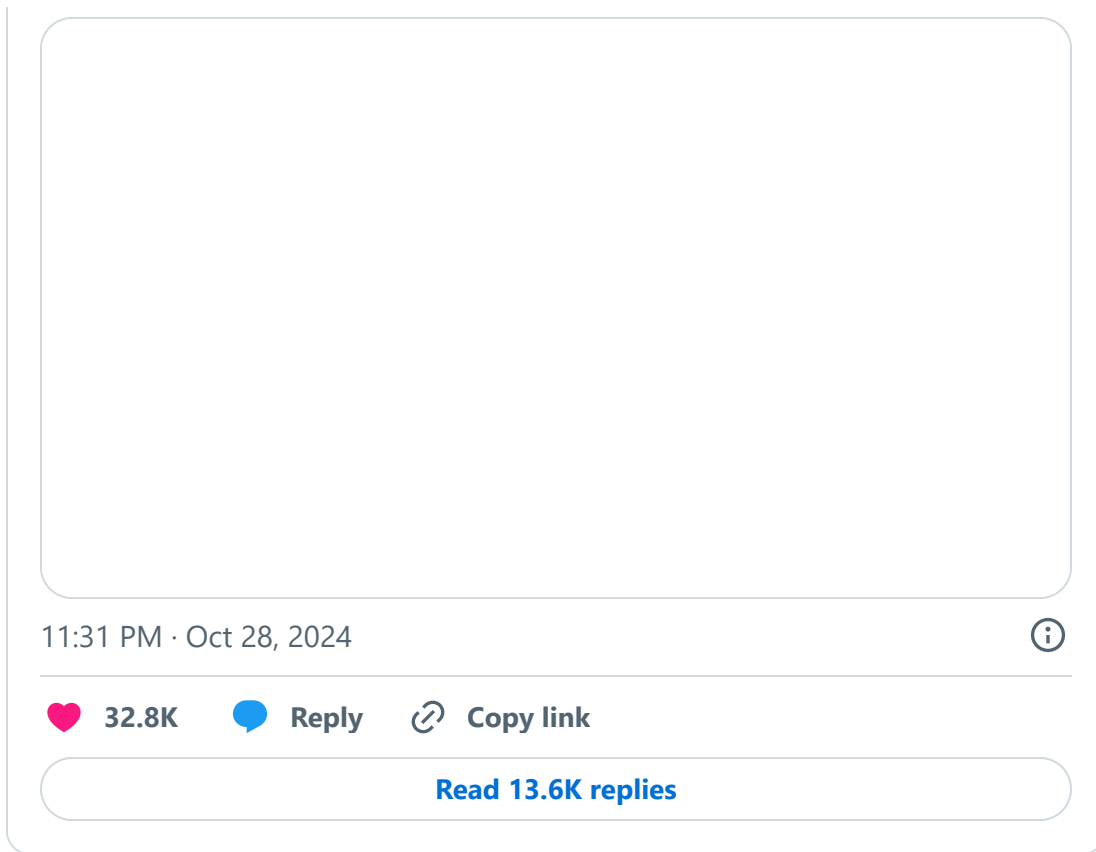
"There is zero room for racism or bigotry at CNN or on our air," the network said in a statement Phillip shared on social media. "We aim to foster thoughtful conversations and debate between people who profoundly disagree with each other in order to explore important issues and promote mutual understanding," it said.

"But we will not allow guests to be demeaned or for the line of civility to be crossed. Ryan Girdusky will not be welcomed back at our network."

Abby D. Phillip  @abbydphillip · [Follow](#)

Sharing [@CNN](#)'s statement and a quick message from me about what happened on tonight's show.

I take this very seriously and want to again apologize to [@mehdirhasan](#) and I hope he'll join us another time.



Phillip added in her own video that the network had not asked Hasan to leave the debate and that he was welcome to return in the future. Hasan was an anchor on MSNBC, which shares a parent company with NBC News, from 2021 to January.

Girdusky appeared indignant on social media afterward and said on X, "apparently you can't go on CNN if you make a joke."



Hasan and Girdusky did not immediately respond to overnight requests for comment.



Patrick Smith

Patrick Smith is a London-based editor and reporter for NBC News Digital.
