

MEDIA BIAS

GAZA 2023-24



CENTRE FOR
MEDIA MONITORING

AUTHORED BY **FAISAL HANIF**
EDITED BY **RIZWANA HAMID**

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MEDIA MONITORING

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AUTHORED BY **FAISAL HANIF**
MARCH 2024

ABOUT US

Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) is a project of the Muslim Council of Britain Charitable Foundation and was established in 2018 to monitor the British media on how it reports on Muslims and Islam.

According to the University of Cambridge, mainstream media reporting about Muslim communities is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility towards Muslims in Britain. Sir Alan Moses, the former chair of the newspaper regulator IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation) said the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the British press had been the “most difficult issue” facing the watchdog during his chairmanship and that Muslims are “written about in a way that [newspapers] would simply not write about Jews or Roman Catholics”. CfMM’s own evidence, based on monitoring and analysing hundreds of thousands of online, print and television reports, shows that much of the coverage of Muslims and Islam is negative. Far right tropes which used to live in the dark corners of the web only a decade ago have become mainstream. CfMM engages constructively with editors, journalists, regulators and policy makers through one to one meetings and roundtable discussions to promote fair, accurate and responsible reporting. We produce reports, submit oral and written evidence to parliamentary enquiries and industry consultations, hold Meet the Media events and deliver training to community organisations so they engage proactively with the media and help CfMM change the current negative narrative around Islam and Muslims.

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Founder



Miqdaad is a media spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain and lead strategist for the Centre for Media Monitoring. Prior to CfMM’s launch, Miqdaad was called ‘the man correcting stories about Muslims’ by the BBC given his single-handed campaign correcting false stories about Islam and Muslims in mainstream media.

Rizwana Hamid
Director



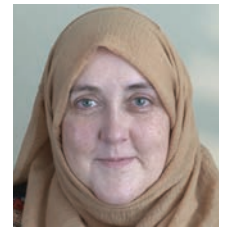
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To all the journalists in Gaza and Palestine covering the ongoing war. Thank you for your courage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents research into UK and select international media coverage in the days after the Hamas attack in southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and the Israel's response thereafter. In light of the challenging task which editors, producers and journalists face in presenting a complex and emotive crisis, we assess the data and empirical evidence to see how the media has lived up to its obligations.

Much of the news coverage of 7 October 2023 refers to Hamas's attacks on Southern Israel as ground zero with guests or commentators who try and explain the 75-year-old occupation of Palestine being accused by some presenters and columnists as justifying the attacks. Ignoring the context and history, especially the recent history of 'occupied' Gaza which has been under an Israeli blockade since 2005, is favourable to an Israeli narrative which has constantly promoted the attacks on Gaza and in the West Bank as a war between light and darkness.¹ Having pro-Israel voices and talking points regularly as the lead items in news reports, even as the death toll in Gaza grew exponentially, has given prominence to Israeli life over that of Palestinians.

Differences in the use of language has also been a regular feature of coverage. The language used appears to often underplay Palestinian deaths, compared to those of Israelis. Harsh and emotive terms rightly used to describe the attacks on 7 October and in relation to the deaths of Israelis, have seldom been used for Palestinian deaths, where more passive language which omits the perpetrator (Israel) and the action (shot, bombed, killed) is used. Palestinians simply die as some headlines would suggest.² Comparisons are made with reporting of similar deaths in Ukraine where readers and viewers are not left with a guessing game as to who caused the death.³

Descriptors such as "Hamas-run" in relation to the Gaza Health Ministry are favoured in the Western media possibly as a mechanism to cast doubt and delegitimise claims coming from Gaza, where international media are denied access. And hateful language used to dehumanise Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims has, on occasion, not been challenged.

Claims made by Israeli politicians, journalists and the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) have been amplified and accepted as truth without verification. Some of these have subsequently been proven to be false yet have not been corrected nor have they been challenged when repeated. This despite the history of Israeli falsehoods even before this current war and as recent as denying responsibility for killing Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022.⁴ Treating the Israeli military as a credible source that does not warrant scepticism and further verification, has been one the glaring failures of journalists and media outlets.

The insistence on "Israel's rights" often to the exclusion of Palestinian rights, has been used to shut down pro-Palestinian voices or to legitimise Israeli claims. Such claims are often without recourse to the fact that Israel is an occupying power which continues land grabs and killings in the West Bank at the same time as it rains down bombs on Gaza. There has been very little reference to the Israeli and Egyptian blockades of Gaza that have turned the territory into what some have called 'an open-air prison'.

1 Jerusalem Post Staff. (2023). Gallant: 'This is a war between light and darkness'. The Jerusalem Post [online] Available at: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-768470>

2 Osman, N (2023). How language used by media outlets downplays Palestinian suffering. Middle East Eye [online] Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/war-gaza-how-media-language-manipulated-justify-killing-palestinians-and-used-dehumanise-them>

3 Rudolph, A. R. (2024). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/rudol9h/status/1756738556649713991>

4 Al Jazeera. (2023). Israel's shifting narratives on the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh. [online] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/6/israels-shifting-narratives-on-the-killing-of-shireen-abu-akleh>



Pro-Palestinian voices and activists have been routinely denounced, misrepresented and targeted by many national media outlets. The right-wing media has been particularly hostile towards pro-Palestinian voices, framing them as supporters of terrorism and antisemites as well as being hostile to British values.

Sometimes the media has taken cues from politicians in smearing pro-Palestinian advocates, such as former Home Secretary Suella Braverman's suggestion that pro-Palestine protestors might attack the Cenotaph in Central London on Armistice Day. Despite knowing that the route for the protest march was not scheduled to go past the war memorial or anywhere close to it, right-wing newspapers chose to suggest that the Cenotaph was a target. The result was to bring far-right "counter protestors" on to the streets to defend Britain's past glories and when almost a hundred of these individuals were arrested, headlines were sometimes written to suggest that the mass arrests were amongst pro-Palestine protesters.

As protests in London and other UK cities have become commonplace since 7 October, official statistics have shown how the arrest rate at these sometimes hundreds of thousand strong marches are lower than those at the Glastonbury music festival held every year.⁵ Yet, the narrative of them being a danger to public safety and the focus on numbers of arrests persists.

Palestinian symbols such as the Palestinian flag are used to illustrate stories on antisemitism and the intersection between Palestine and Islamophobia has been exposed with pro-Palestine support framed as dangerous and akin to a terror threat often because of the large Muslim contingent among it. Furthermore, a historic revisionism of Islam being an antisemitic religion is suggested as the driving force behind the opposition to Israel by editors as well as speakers and columnists.

Researchers in the United States of America have labelled this phenomenon as "presumptively antisemitic" where they have shown how "Islamophobic tropes work to fuel and sustain spurious allegations of antisemitism".⁶



5 Archer, N. N. (2024). Arrest rate at "criminal" Palestine demos lower than Glasto. OpenDemocracy [Online]. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/palestine-gaza-protests-arrests-metropolitan-police-suella-braverman-glastonbury>

6 Rutgers Center for Security, Race and Rights (2023). Presumptively Antisemitic: Islamophobic Tropes in the Palestine-Israel Discourse. [online] Available at: <https://csrr.rutgers.edu/issues/presumptively-antisemitic>

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of UK's media – or that within any country – at a time of war and plausibly genocide according to the International Court of Justice – is to robustly report the news, validate facts and hold those with power to account. Ultimately, the goal is to reliably inform the public of the facts, and share the positions of all concerned, and ideally in a responsible way.

Did the UK's and select international media do this, following the brutal attacks by Hamas on 7 October and the unjustifiable capture of Israeli civilians as hostages?

That's the core question this report seeks to respond to given how prominent this story has been in the past few months. In fact, the attacks by Hamas on 7 October followed by the ongoing invasion and bombardment of Gaza, alongside assaults by Israeli forces in the West Bank has made Israel's war on the Palestinians the main news item across media outlets for many months. A total of 176,627 broadcast news clips (including repeats) were found in the first month of the coverage across 12 news channels both British based and international.⁷ The same search terms across the same channels yielded 2,953 clips in the one month prior showing a 6,000 per cent increase. Online news websites had 25,515 articles compared with 1,790 in the previous month. This was an increase of 1,323 per cent.⁸

One in ten complaints in 2023 to OFCOM, the UK government-approved communications regulator, were about the Israel/Gaza coverage.⁹ Similarly, IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation), which is a voluntary self-regulatory body not recognised under the Royal Charter but charged with ruling on the coverage in print and online newspapers, has faced calls to investigate prominent front page stories which have detailed Israeli claims, subsequently found by a combination of Israeli media, fact checkers and non-mainstream media to have likely been false.¹⁰ Whilst the regurgitating of war propaganda designed to garner sympathy and de-humanise others has found a sympathetic ear from media outlets in the West, the evidence that we have gathered, shows unequivocally that the overall tone of coverage in the Western media has been pro-Israel. This is also a conclusion drawn by journalists and staff at some media corporations who have accused their own outlets of among other things “journalistic malpractice.”¹¹

Some observers have been less charitable and have accused media elites of being complicit in the killings of Palestinians and the failure to hold to account the Israeli aggression against Palestinians.¹² Meanwhile as news coverage has primarily focused on the events of 7 October and what has followed in Gaza, the ongoing killing and displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank has largely gone unnoticed with Israeli incursions reported as targeting “terrorists” becoming an accepted and driving narrative. Meanwhile journalists who have attempted to report and document events in the occupied territory have faced attacks by settlers and restrictions by Israel in what the Committee to Protect Journalists has called a “hostile environment”¹³ Anecdotally many readers and viewers have spotted

7 See methodology for list of TV broadcast channels and search terms

8 See methodology for the full list of online news outlets and search terms

9 Ofcom (2023). That's a wrap: TV's most complained about programmes of 2023 revealed. [online] Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2023/thats-a-wrap-tvs-most-complained-about-programmes-of-2023-revealed>

10 Middle East Eye. (2023). UK press watchdog ‘considering’ complaints into ‘beheaded babies’ reports. [online] Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-beheaded-babies-reports-uk-press-watchdog-considering-complaints>

11 McGreal, C. (2024). CNN staff say network's pro-Israel slant amounts to ‘journalistic malpractice’. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/feb/04/cnn-staff-pro-israel-bias>

12 Jones, O. (2024). The west's complete contempt for the lives of Palestinians will not be forgotten. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/21/palestinian-lives-gaza-politics-media>

13 Jones, K. (2024). Attacks, arrests, threats, censorship: The high risks of reporting the Israel-Gaza war. [online] Committee to Protect Journalists. Available at: <https://cpj.org/2024/02/attacks-arrests-threats-censorship-the-high-risks-of-reporting-the-israel-hamas->

what they suggest is a two-tier pattern in the reporting of the war on Gaza which gives preference to the lives of Israelis over those of Palestinians, almost 30,000 of whom have been killed since 7 October at the time of writing.

This report details some of these examples whilst attempting to provide a statistical insight into aspects of reporting such as the language used to describe both sides. What we've uncovered across six main themes is that the majority of news outlets have chosen to present news from an Israeli perspective with major failures of basic fact checking and verification. Few reporters and news outlets have covered themselves in any glory given what has been allowed to be published and broadcast in the first month's coverage of the war. Over 120 journalists and counting have been killed in Gaza, with some arguing that they have been systematically targeted by Israel. They have been the primary independent window to the outside world detailing what is happening on the ground. Yet, these voices have been mainly absent on the screens of western news broadcasters and the web or print pages of newspapers. There have been exceptions to this, and the forceful response of Palestinian commentators and journalists has been both a voice of opposition to the Israeli claims and a chiding voice towards the media at large for ignoring their suffering and the injustices done to them. Whilst this report mainly focuses on events in the first month following the 7 October attacks, there are examples beyond these dates. They have been selected based on their suitability in exemplifying a particular trend in the news reporting, but they also show that what has been discovered between 7 October and 7 November equally applies to what has followed and at the time of writing what is still taking place. One example of this being the International Court of Justice's ruling that said there was a plausible case for Israel to answer on charges of genocide. Despite this potentially monumental decision UK Newspapers and broadcasters did not prioritise the story when South Africa made its case in a public hearing.¹⁴ Muhammed Shehada, communications chief for the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, which has been documenting some of the atrocities committed by Israeli forces in Gaza, said in a post on X: "I can NOT find the International Court of Justice hearing on CNN, BBC, Channel 4, Fox News, MSNBC, CNBC, CBS, NBC, I24, DW, Sky News, or any mainstream US/EU TV channel... What explains this unprecedented campaign of disinformation by omission?"¹⁵

war

14 TNA Staff (2024). Poor Western media coverage of ICJ Gaza case blasted online. [online] The New Arab. Available at: <https://www.newarab.com/news/poor-western-media-coverage-icj-gaza-case-blasted-online>

15 Ibid.

Research done before this showed how an analysis of the X (Twitter) feeds of ITV, BBC, Channel 4, Guardian and Sky show very few mentions of stories relating directly to allegations of genocide in Gaza. In comparison Al Jazeera English posted claims of Israeli genocide a total of 45 times.¹⁶ One example in our report shows a BBC news anchor challenging a U.N. representative by saying can we be clear genocide “is not what is happening here” (see section on Claims), a statement expected from a spokesperson for an aggressor party and not from a professional journalist. Whilst this report focuses mainly on British based outlets, research from the United States of America has shown major newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post also heavily favouring the Israeli narrative.¹⁷ Our analysis shows the same broad finding whilst also giving over 200 specific examples showing how there is an overwhelming bias against Palestinians and their cause. Media outlets must not be advocates of one cause, yet accuracy and correct framing leaves no room to ignore the context of 75 years of Palestinian suffering. Nor should it allow for the fact that this is fundamentally a conflict of two unequals, namely an occupier (Israel) and an occupied (Palestine) recognised in international law and by a majority of countries and people as well as the historical record. Any other interpretation is not just biased, but false.

Some of these observations in this report are not in any way new. The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM)’s “British Media’s Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)” study showed how amongst other findings extreme revisionist interpretations of history often from non-qualified individuals are constantly favoured instead of more orthodox understandings.¹⁸ This gives many media outlets an opportunity to lay blame on Muslim communities or Islam under the cover of alleged scholarship, with the main allegation being that Palestinians desire to “cleanse the land of Jews.”¹⁹ Historically, reporting on this two-sided conflict between Palestine and Israel has mostly favoured the narrative of the occupier, with any protest or action against Israel framed in large as an attack on world Jewry. The coverage post 7 October has made this fully transparent.



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- 16 Freedman, D. (2023). UK media are suppressing mentions of Israel’s ‘genocide’ in Gaza. [online] Declassified Media Ltd. Available at: <https://www.declassifieduk.org/uk-media-are-suppressing-mentions-of-israels-genocide-in-gaza>
- 17 Johnson, A. and Ali, O. (2024). Coverage of Gaza War in the New York Times and Other Major Newspapers Heavily Favored Israel, Analysis Shows. [online] The Intercept. Available at: <https://theintercept.com/2024/01/09/newspapers-israel-palestine-bias-new-york-times>
- 18 Hanif, F. (2021) British Media’s Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020) <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf>
- 19 Lester, M. (2015). Opinion: Ten years on from Gush Katif and the Arabs still don’t want peace. [online] Available at: <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/opinion-ten-years-on-from-gush-katif-and-the-arabs-still-dont-want-peace>

2. METHODOLOGY

The Centre for Media Monitoring analysed coverage from TV channels and from online media sources between 7 October 2023 and 7 November 2023.

2.1 TV Channels

The following TV channels were analysed: BBC One, BBC Two, BBC News, BBC World News, ITV News, Channel 4 News, Sky News, Channel 5 News, GB News, Talk TV, Al Jazeera English, CNN International and CNBC Europe.

The channels were chosen to give an insight into the British news coverage which is a focus of CfMM's core work as well as how this compared to the international output from both a traditional Western perspective (CNNI and MSNBC) and that of the Global South (Al Jazeera English).

Clips (broadcast for 60 seconds or more in total) were determined through keyword searches using the Critical Mention monitoring tool. The keywords used to filter out all relevant clips were "Israel*" OR "Hamas" OR "Gaza" OR "Palestine" OR "Palestinian*" We believed these five terms and their derivatives were sufficient in delivering any Broadcast TV clip of 60 secs in length or any online news article which focused on Israel's war on Gaza.

A total 176,627 clips (including repeats) of 60 seconds in length were found with the keywords. Repeats were included in statistical analysis. These formed our total sample from which we attempted to draw findings in how the media reported on Israel's war on Gaza in the first month following the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023.

Each section in this report details at its outset how any analysis has been carried out and the keyword determinants to filter clips. Clips for statistical analysis were chosen between 7 October 2023 and 7 November 2023 which allowed us to analyse a breadth of coverage as well as take deep dives into particular areas of media coverage which have become talking points in commentary on how the media has covered this current conflict as well as the Israeli-Palestinian issue historically.

Examples to illustrate certain points have sometimes been referenced and included from beyond 7 November 2023 where relevant.

Evidence has also been taken from print newspapers and radio clips.

2.2 Online Media

Twenty-eight UK online media websites were monitored with the keywords "Israel*" OR "Hamas" OR "Gaza" OR "Palestine" OR "Palestinian*." The list of publications was chosen in line with the 27 analysed online websites (including newswires) in previous CfMM reports plus the New European. A full list of publications can be found below. There was no separation of various news desks which are published on one news site. So, whereas the Mail Online news website hosts articles from Mail Online, Dailymail.com (US), Daily Mail Australia, Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday these were all included under the single banner of Mail Online (www.dailymail.co.uk).

A date range of 7 October 2023 to 7 November 2023 was chosen to be in line with TV broadcast coverage. Keyword searches were run on Meltwater media analysis during the same period. A total of 25,515 news articles were delivered which contained one or more of the keywords.



List of online news websites

- spectator.co.uk
- newstatesman.com
- economist.com
- dailystar.co.uk
- thejc.com
- (Press Association) dailymail.co.uk/wires
- thesun.co.uk
- mirror.co.uk
- telegraph.co.uk
- itv.co.uk
- express.co.uk
- theguardian.com
- (Associated Press) dailymail.co.uk/wires
- dailymail.co.uk
- (AFP) dailymail.co.uk/wires
- (Reuters) dailymail.co.uk/wires
- standard.co.uk
- christiantoday.com
- theguardian.com
- independent.co.uk
- metro.co.uk
- skynews.com
- thetablet.co.uk
- bbc.co.uk
- thetimes.co.uk
- lnews.co.uk
- Jewishnews.co.uk
- theneweuropean.co.uk

Initial examples of issues in news reporting or possible trends in comment pieces and broadcasts were found through monitoring of the TV news channels. Where several (minimum three clips or articles) showed a pattern in reporting such as bias towards one side, omission of information, missing historical context, inconsistent use of language etc., overall patterns were analysed through keyword searches. These trends have been converted into graphs and charts for quantitative analysis to identify recurring media coverage patterns, and some samples were often taken for qualitative analysis to confirm the recurring patterns.

While qualitative findings are self-explanatory, the quantitative findings are macro-level patterns of keywords appearing in long-term news coverage, indicating, for instance, the higher number of news and op-ed pieces noting Israeli casualties in comparison with Palestinian casualties. On the other hand, collocations and word associations were important to show how language was used depending on the identity of the victims (Israeli or Palestinian).

The examples shown in this report are selected for their clarity in demonstrating a particular point or theme and are not to be taken as a personal attack on authors, presenters or journalists. We understand the difficulties journalists face when covering wars and particularly when access is denied as in the case of Gaza by the Israelis, however, we hope that this report will serve as a reference for important discussions within newsrooms, parliament, universities and beyond.

3. LIMITATIONS

The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) acknowledges an element of subjectivity as well as various limitations which may impact some of these findings.

Firstly, the data was collated using the *Critical Mention* and *Meltwater* media monitoring tools. Any limitations of these systems would be limitations of our work. This includes, for example, any TV clips which contain our key terms yet were not picked up by the transcription tool.

For our TV broadcast analysis another limitation is that our sampling was limited to national and international news channels and did not include any regional bulletins on BBC and ITV, for example. This could potentially impact the quantitative findings particularly given the regional protests against the war, those in support of Palestine or Israel as well as localised incidents of Islamophobia and antisemitism or anti-Israeli hatred.

Limitations of the monitoring tool mean we were not able to include live blogs from any of the online news websites, with analysis of BBC and Sky News online news particularly affected given the rolling daily blogs through the first month of coverage containing a significant amount of breaking and updated news.

Our dataset is a snapshot into TV and online news coverage over the period of a month and does not include statistics beyond this where various events may have had a significant impact on news coverage, for example the growing number of casualties among Palestinians. Given the time frame of one month when the words Israel* OR Hamas OR Palestinian* or Palestine or Gaza were used, findings are not totally representative of the entire conflict yet allow for almost all areas of coverage and varying perspectives to be looked at.

The keyword search findings are indicative of significant overall patterns, rather than absolute conclusions about how the terms are used in their specific context. However, this is a useful tool for research news as this can shortlist articles or clips for qualitative research. As an example, articles mentioning a two-state solution can be further investigated to see how the term appears in context, or the mention of genocide for the killing of Israelis and Palestinians can be further explored to identify how the news was framed.

CfMM acknowledges that the interpretation of a journalist is sufficiently challenging or the interpretation of a comment by a panellist is open to being subjective.

Given the large number of examples and material in the report individual or corporate responses to issues have not been sought but may have given further context or clarification to problematic issues.

4. FOREWORD

PETER OBORNE



Peter Osborne is an award-winning Journalist who has worked as the Chief Political Commentator for the Daily Telegraph and currently writes for various publications most notably Middle East Eye. His latest book is The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam.

This devastating report should be debated in parliament, studied in journalism schools, made compulsory reading for newspaper editors, and read by anybody with the faintest interest in the terrible events taking place in Gaza – along with anyone else with an interest in how reporting actually works in contemporary Britain.

The authors prove beyond question that British journalists and broadcasters have used every trick in the book to paint a false story of the war. They've twisted the facts, promoted falsehoods, collaborated with fabrications, lied by omission, and far too often failed to correct their mistakes.

When media deploys emotive language, it is far more likely to be used about Israelis than Palestinians, who in consequence are stripped of their humanity. Israeli victims of Palestinian violence are “killed” while Palestinians mysteriously “die”. Terms such as “atrocities”, “slaughter” and “massacre” are overwhelmingly deployed in connection with attacks against Israelis rather than Palestinians.

Early on in the conflict the Spectator published an article which appeared to call for ethnic cleansing : “Maybe they will finally put an end to this insoluble nightmare, raze Hamas to the ground, or clear all Palestinians from that benighted strip,” wrote Douglas Murray, adding that “it could be a good time to do it.” I never thought I would see such an article in a respectable British publication.

Over the last few years practically all the major human rights organisations - Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, the Israeli group B'Tsalem and the Palestinian Al Haq - have issued long, scrupulously researched reports stating that Israel is an Apartheid state. This is scarcely referred to let alone reported.

And from time to time the British media has descended into chilling Islamophobia. The article in the Daily Express referencing “historic Islamic bloodlust.” A Talk TV guest allowed to claim that the Quran promotes “hatred of the Jews and the killing of the infidel.”

Thoroughly grounded in intensive research and collation of thousands of TV and media reports, this conscientious investigation contains detailed and often horrifying case studies. It names the journalists. It exposes the newspapers and broadcasters. And it does not stop with the obvious targets like GB News, Talk TV, the Daily Express and the Daily Mail. Supposedly more respectable outlets such as the Times the Daily Telegraph - as well as the BBC, Sky and ITV- get exposed as purveyors of Israeli war propaganda.

One useful function of this report is the exposure of interviewers and presenters who allow lies and falsehoods to pass unchallenged. This list of the guilty does not simply include polemical interviewers like Talk TV's Julia Hartley-Brewer who notoriously insulted the respected Palestinian political activist Mustapha Barhgouti.

It also exposes the lazy journalism of senior journalists. Of course, there are exceptions, and the report rightly highlights those who have stood out against the crowd and reported with balance and objectivity. Along those mentioned with respect in the report I would instance Lindsay Hilsun and Matt Frei of Channel Four as well as Mishal Hussein (her exposure of Defence Secretary Grant Schapps' ignorance about genocidal remarks made by senior Israeli politicians was outstanding) and Jeremy Bowen of the BBC.

It also notes the counter-intuitive and highly revealing paradox that mainstream Israeli journalists have been more ready to tell the truth about the war in Gaza than their British equivalents.

In Britain the media misreporting is almost all in one direction. Through the last four months of horror and bloodshed it's been very hard, and often impossible, for Palestinians to get their voices heard. As this report demonstrates Pro-Israel voices get listened to with something like deference.

This poses a special problem when it comes to Israeli official sources. As Zeynep Tufekci has highlighted in the New York Times, Israel "has a long history of making false claims and denying responsibility for atrocities that later proved to be its doing." Yet again and again, as this report shows, the British media has treated Israeli spokespeople with deference while treating Palestinians with indifference or worse.

The account in this report of a how a claim by an Israeli news channel that "40 babies/children were beheaded" in October was run uncritically on the front page of many British newspapers - despite being untrue and unconfirmed by Israeli official sources makes shaming reading for any British journalist with an ounce of tradecraft, integrity or ethical awareness.

Some of the misreporting highlighted in this report stems from ignorance rather than prejudice. About a month after the Israeli invasion of Gaza I visited my friend Mahmoud Muna, a Jerusalem bookseller. He told me how his shop had been just visited by a journalist whose reporting trip to the region was over and wanted something to read about the region for the flight home. He offered recent scholarly works, but the journalist tossed them aside in favour of a basic primer of Israel and Palestine. This was at the end, not the start, of her trip!

The report cites the moment when Sky News' Defence Analyst Philip Ingram accused Palestinians of occupying the West Bank: "We keep forgetting to talk about the West Bank, the area that is **occupied by the Palestinians** inside the area we have as Israel." Mr Ingram, discussing Israeli air strikes on Aleppo Airport, on 25 October 2023, showed a map of the Levant area where the Golan Heights was not differentiated from Israel and there was no explanation that the area was in fact Syrian territory.

When Labour shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves told BBC Today that "Gaza is not occupied by Israel" presenter Nick Robinson allowed this false statement to pass without demur. To be fair to Reeves, she's not the only politician who doesn't know what they are talking about when it comes to Israel and Palestine. Foreign Secretary David Cameron couldn't answer whether Gaza was under occupation or not when he appeared in front of the Foreign Affairs Committee. To be fair to Nick Robinson, he's not the only presenter who's allowed studio guests to spout nonsense about the scope and nature of the Israeli occupation, as this report proves.

One further point: while the eminent journalists and politicians cited above are guilty of ignorance rather than deliberate misrepresentation, the resulting errors and misunderstandings tends to favour Israel.

The British journalists reporting on Gaza are largely well-paid, highly respected and for the most part take no physical risks. As of January 27, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) recorded at least 83 journalists and media workers killed in the region since 7 October.²⁰ Seventy-six of these were Palestinian, 4 were Israeli and 3 were Lebanese. In the West, the unimaginable heroism of Gaza's journalists goes largely unacknowledged.

So, I think we British reporters have a duty to pay attention to the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate which has condemned Western media discourse on Israel's war on Gaza as a "new low for the principles of journalistic integrity".²¹

The Syndicate accused "some Western media organisations" of parroting "Israeli government talking points, failed to challenge or even attempt to verify blatant misinformation and propaganda, and adopted dehumanising and violent language about the Palestinian people."

Palestinian journalists and trade unionists also released a statement in January bemoaning the failure of some in the "global media" to meet basic journalist standards "when covering the ongoing massacre in Gaza".²²

Reading this report, it is hard not to conclude that these very serious and troubling accusations from our heroic Palestinian colleagues against Western media carry great weight.

As Palestinian journalists in Gaza endure unspeakable difficulty, personal tragedies and practical constraint, many Western journalists seem to place little or no emphasis on factual rigour and truth. Western media coverage of the International Court of Justice ruling that Israel should be investigated for Genocide in Gaza fell outside the timeline of this report, but I am hoping that the report's authors will forgive me if I fill in the gap. The London Times, supposedly a paper of record, awarded the ruling on page 42 (p3 of the international section). The only mention in the following day's Sunday Times was an article accusing South Africa of being antisemitic. Both the Daily Mail and the Economist concurred in smearing the ICJ verdict as a 'show trial'. Meanwhile the British media quickly moved on to ample coverage of unevidenced Israeli claims that UNRWA workers had taken part in Hamas' 7 October atrocities.

The ICJ is unlikely to reach a final judgment whether Israel is committing Genocide in Gaza till 2027, though evidence continues to mount. One thing is certain. If the court does find Israel guilty, the British media will have been complicit.

20 Jones, K. (2024). Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war. [online] Committee to Protect Journalists. Available at: <https://cpj.org/2024/01/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/#:~:text=As%20of%20January%2027%2C%202024>

21 Rahman, A. (2024). Thank you Motaz Azaiza, for waking up a world that has long been asleep. Available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240126-thank-you-motaz-azaiza-for-waking-up-a-world-that-has-long-been-asleep>

22 ibid

5. KEY FINDINGS

This CfMM analysis has established 20 statistical insights from the TV News and Online news coverage of Israel's war on Gaza. The statistical insights come under 6 themes which encompass much of the Media's approach in covering the events from 7 October onwards.



Context

- 76% of online articles frame the current war as an “Israel-Hamas war”
- Only 24% of news mentioning Israel or Hamas or Gaza mention the word(s) Palestine/Palestinian, which suggests a lack of context about the Israeli-Palestinian issue.
- Al Jazeera English news channel had more mentions of “occupied territories” than all British and American news channels combined.
- In one month out of over 98,500 mentions of the term Gaza there were only 28 instances of the words “occupied Gaza” on Broadcast TV channels, 14 of which were on Al Jazeera English.

Framing

- Most TV broadcast channels promoted “Israel's right” to defend itself compared with the rights of the Palestinians by a ratio of 5 to 1.
- The insistence on “Israel's right” was found on 1,482 occasions across broadcast channels. A similar search for the right of Palestinians to resist yielded only 278 results.
- CfMM analysis shows that 36% of mentions of the right of Palestinians came from Al Jazeera's English Channel which reports from the perspective of the Global South.
- Right-wing TV channels in Britain had 36% mentions of “Israel's right/s” and only 7% of the rights of Palestinians.
- The label of Israel Hamas War is favoured by Western broadcasters and British based broadcasters with almost twice the number of mentions compared with Israel Gaza War.

Language [TV Broadcast]

- Where emotive language is used, Israelis are about 11 times more likely to be referred to as victims of attacks, compared to Palestinians.
- In broadcast TV clips, 2 out of every 3 emotive terms used were for Israeli deaths. Just 1 in 10 were used for Palestinian deaths.
- Over 70% of the term's atrocities, slaughter and massacre were used in reference to the attacks against Israelis.
- Terms used to describe the deaths of Palestinians are sometimes qualified with phrases such as “what they say is a massacre.”

Language [Online News]

- In online British news outlets emotive terms were found to be four times more prevalent when describing the actions of Hamas against Israeli's compared with descriptions of the killings of Palestinians or civilians in Gaza.
- 68% of emotive terms were used to describe violence towards Israelis on 7 October or on another occasion with 33% found on the Mail Online website alone.

Unverified Claims

- There were 361 TV news clips where the term "beheaded" AND "babies" were found.
- Almost 50% of these were on the two right-wing British channels Talk TV (27%) and GB News (20%) with Sky News accounting for (14%).
- Of the 361 mentions there were 52 which showed any sufficient challenge, rebuttal or questioning of the claims.

Lack of Prominence of Palestinian Voices

- CfMM found that TV reporting of Israeli perspectives was referenced almost three times more (4,311) than Palestinian ones (1,598). In online news it was almost twice as much (2,983 v 1,737).

Misrepresentation of Pro-Palestine Protestors

- GB News and Talk TV accounted for 42% of total references to protestors being pro-Hamas.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

6. ISLAMOPHOBIA



6.1 Insights

- Many prominent media personalities, senior editors and journalists regurgitated Islamophobic tropes about Muslim belief and identity, with the aim of undermining the Palestinian cause and/or Palestinian advocates.
- Some media outlets and commentators have framed the conflict as being Muslims v Jews.
- Muslim opposition to Israel has been framed as anti-Semitic by some publications and commentators.
- There has sometimes been a hierarchy of racism when reporting on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

The approach taken in this section was to highlight varying examples of Islamophobic tropes which have been found through the monitoring of British and some international media outlets. One article on a British newspaper website for example was taken in isolation to show how a variety of Islamophobic tropes were used to argue for mass antisemitic sentiment among the Muslim world to explain opposition to Israel.

Despite the United Nations and the Geneva Convention recognising the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination against Israeli occupation, one of the ways in which the Palestinian struggle has been undermined in the media is through a regurgitation of the trope that the Palestinian fight against Israeli occupation is antisemitic and comes from an ancient hatred of Jews inherently rooted in Islam.²³ This historical revisionism is an entirely false premise on which to base the decades-long conflict between Palestine and Israel. However, these claims of antisemitism are not only directed against Palestinians but Muslims in general. Previous analysis from the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) has shown how two per cent of all articles on online British news sites which mention Muslims and/or Islam focused on antisemitism. Four per cent of all articles rated as ‘Very Biased’ and thus most problematic in the study were focused on antisemitism.²⁴ When the news broke of the 7 October attacks and details emerged of the death toll, editors of two of Britain’s major Jewish newspapers appropriated far-right tropes of “Muslim” or so-called “Islamic antisemitism” and regurgitated them through op-eds and social media posts.

For example, the reaction of Richard Ferrer (Editor of Jewish News) was to describe the Hamas attack in The Express as a **“historic Islamic bloodlust...”** (later changed to “Islamist historic bloodlust.”) “... passed down through the generations **from birth**. An ever-present **cancer**, lurking in the shadows, now stands fully exposed, its medieval ambition shocking to the core – the genocide of the Jewish people.”²⁵

23 Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, available at <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977>

24 Hanif, F. (2021). British Media’s Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020). [online] Available at: <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf> pp.47

25 Ferrer, R. (2023). Regime-change invasion is surely only hours away and with it the end of Hamas. [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1821380/Israel-and-hamas-at-war-israel-music-festival-palestine-surprise-attack>



Image 6.1. Richard Ferrer, The Express, Oct 2023 referring to “historic Islamist bloodlust”.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi said the “bloodlust” claim in Ferrer’s article was **“Akin to the Anti-Semitic blood libel trope”** which historically falsely accuses Jews of murdering and using the blood of Christian children to perform religious rituals.²⁶ Ferrer’s diatribe highlights how Islamophobia is used to undermine Palestinians and their cause. He writes that Palestinians are taught to hate Jews because they are Jews from birth, and that a Palestinian state would persecute other faiths and minorities under **“Allahu Akbar jihadists.”**²⁷ He conveniently overlooks the fact that Palestinian Christians are currently not persecuted by Palestinian Muslims but by Israeli Jews.²⁸ Ferrer then goes on to link the population of Gaza with Hamas which could read as a justification for the massacre of almost 30,000 Palestinian civilians (over 10,000 of whom are children). “The Gaza Strip will never be the same again. A regime-change invasion is surely hours away and, with it, a surely futile attempt to separate Hamas from its citizens. **The cancer is too deeply entwined within the body.**”²⁹

26 Warsi, S. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SayeedaWarsi/status/1711295990320259483>

27 Ferrer, R. (2023) Regime-change invasion is surely only hours away and with it the end of Hamas, Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1821380/Israel-and-hamas-at-war-israel-music-festival-palestine-surprise-attack>

28 Lederman, J. and Pinson, S. (2023). Christians become a target of Israel’s rising far right. [online] NBC News. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-palestinians-christians-attacks-holy-land-jewish-extremists-rcna80441>

29 Ibid

The editor of the Jewish Chronicle Jake Wallis Simons tweeted, “We need to face reality: **much of Muslim culture is in the grip of a death cult that sacralises bloodshed**. Not all, but many **Muslims are brainwashed by it**. That is a big part of the problem”.³⁰ Despite this Wallis Simons was invited as a panellist on the BBC’s Question Time on 12 October 2023, where he denied making the comments in the tweet. When an audience member read out part of the tweet verbatim to Wallis Simons, he denied it, saying “that’s not true”.³¹ The tweet has since been deleted. However, Wallis Simons has become a regular guest, commentator and columnist in many British mainstream media outlets including the BBC, Sky, The Spectator, The Telegraph and Spiked using the platforms to legitimise Israel’s extreme retaliation against Palestinian civilians.



Image 6.2 Jake Wallis Simons on X, Oct 2023. “Much of Muslim Culture is in the grip of a death cult which sacrilises bloodshed”.

6.2 Right wing news outlets and TV channels promote Islamophobic tropes.

In addition to senior editors like Ferrer and Wallis Simons, there was also a flurry of Islamophobic tropes voiced by right wing presenters, guests, columnists and journalists post 7 October.

A search of news clips between 7 October 2023 and 7 November 2023 with the term “Muslim*” gave 3,117 news clips (including repeats) across the 12 TV channels. Forty-two per cent of these clips were from the two right-wing British news channels GB News and Talk TV. The examples below show the heavily anti-Muslim bias of these channels and some examples of where Islamophobic tropes have been regurgitated.

³⁰ See image below, original tweet deleted

³¹ Jake Wallis Simons on BBC Question Time, BBC 1, 12 October 2023. Details of complaint of appearance and alleged pro-Israel bias of panel available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/complaint/questiontime12octoberpanel>

GB News was one platform where many examples were found. For example, the GB News panellist Leo Kearsse accused **“a lot of Muslims, a lot of woke leftists” of supporting or equivocating with Hamas.**³² Christine Hamilton said in relation to the BBC not labelling Hamas terrorists without attribution, “the fact is that in the Islamic calendar 2023, which is now actually 1444, they are living in the mediaeval age and that is the sort of atrocity that they are committing.”³³ GB News presenter Patrick Christy ratcheted up the trope of the fear to offending Muslims when attacking Gary Lineker and those on the left, saying, “But not Gary. No, not the Luvvies. They don’t mind about offending Brits. They don’t mind about offending Jewish people sometimes. But they’re absolutely terrified of offending elements of the Muslim community.”³⁴ This allegation of Muslims receiving special treatment was also heard from former UKIP leader Nigel Farage who lambasted the police for not taking action against pro-Palestine protestors saying, “now what we had on the streets of London last night were all sorts of the vilest, most racist and basest things, frankly, you could ever hear. And yet there were very, very few arrests. And I’m asking a question, should the police do more? You see if any of you stood outside a **mosque** tonight in central London and shouted out foul abuse about the **Muslim** religion, I think within about half an hour, maybe 20 minutes, you would have your collar felt by the old bill.”³⁵ One example of a push back on GB News came from the radio presenter Matthew Stalden who responded to presenter Beverley Turner by saying, “I also want to say this, and this is very, very important. We are looking at a tiny minority of people who say these horrific things, who go on demonstrations, whipping up hatred. This is not the British Muslim community.”³⁶ One Muslim organisation the Lewisham Islamic Centre pushed back against what they considered being targeted by a GB News journalist pointing out the disproportionate focus he had on Muslims and ethnic minorities, suggesting the TV channel and its staff had a particular prejudice against Muslims.³⁷

Talk TV was also instrumental in driving an anti-Muslim narrative in tandem with its discussions on Israel’s war on Gaza. Certain commentators have attempted to push the line that the opposition to Israel in the Muslim world and among Palestinians is down to an ancient hatred and so called “Qur’anic antisemitism.”³⁸ One of the most prominent examples of this was when Talk TV hosted the writer and historian Rafe-Haydel Mankoo who launched a polemic against Muslims and their beliefs saying: **“For many Muslims hatred of Jews is motivated by RELIGION far more than POLITICS.”** He also said, **“the true roots are to be found in the Koran, which encourages hatred of Jews and the killing of the infidel”** before adding that **“the hatred of Jews infects much of the Muslim world.”**³⁹ There were **no challenges** to any of these points by the host.

32 Leo Kearsse on Headliners, GB NEWS 6 November 2023, 05:42 AM

33 Christine Hamilton on GB News, 11 October 2023: 9:10 PM

34 Patrick Christys on GB News, 11 October 2023, 9:09 PM

35 Nigel Farage on GB News, October 11, 2023, 12:07 PM

36 Ibid

37 Lewisham Mosque (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/LewishamMosque/status/1718223382334918758>

38 Simons, J.W. (2023). Why liberals have ended up cheerleading for jihadism. The Telegraph. [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/10/15/liberal-left-cheerleading-jihadism-hamas-israel-conflict>

39 Heydel-Mankoo, R. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/RafHM/status/1721490643699040339?t=XuTo-vyhs1D11Ex-5rMkkeQ&s=19>

A major talking point around Israel’s war on Gaza was the reaction of the opposition Labour Party and the failure of its leader to call for a ceasefire given the rising death toll of Palestinians in Gaza.⁴⁰ Labour councillors across the country, including many who were Muslim, quit the party in response to the leadership’s stance.⁴¹ Right-wing news channels gave a high level of coverage to this domestic angle. Some commentators known for their anti-Muslim animus were given the opportunity to launch conspiracy theories against Muslims. One of these was the former editor of The Sun, Kelvin MacKenzie who said **“Islam, Muslims, the Muslim voters are organising the Labour Party.”** He further claimed that the Labour party had to **“bow at the knee”** to Muslim voters.⁴² There was **no challenge to this from the GB News presenters.** This trope about the influence of Muslim voters has also been used in the past to link antisemitism within in the Labour Party by columnist Douglas Murray. Writing in The Spectator, the latter said: **“And that, right there, is Labour’s problem: the more Muslims you have, the more antisemitism you have.”**⁴³

A more recent example which falls outside of the time frame of this report occurred on 15 February 2024 when another former editor of The Sun, Trevor Kavanagh, was left **unchallenged** by TalkTV when he said, **“By the very definition of being a Muslim voter, you are going to be anti-Jewish.”**⁴⁴

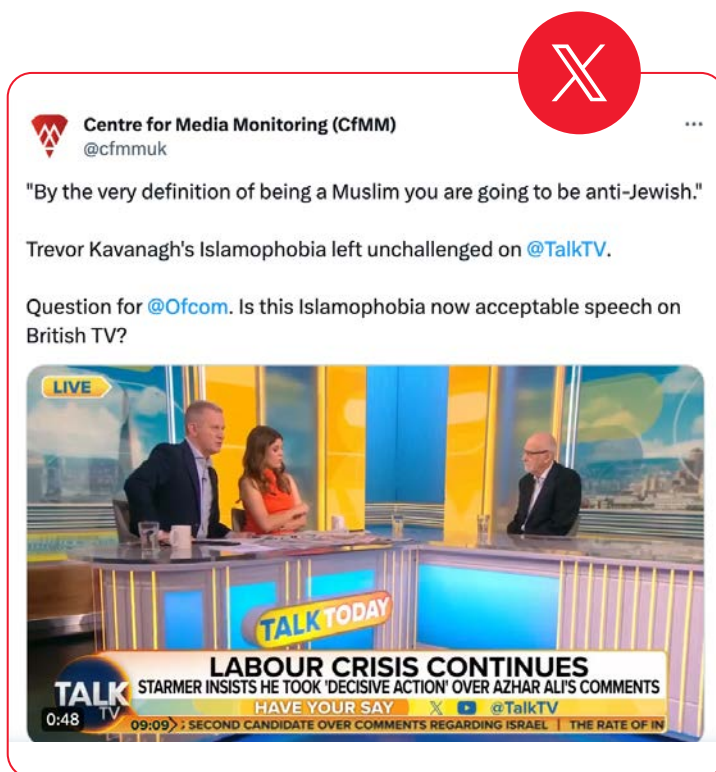


Image 6.2 A CfMM tweet from 15 February 2024. Earlier in 2017, ex-Sun editor Trevor Kavanagh referred to the Muslim community in Britain as “the Muslim problem”

40 Soussi, A. (2023). Labour’s refusal to call for Gaza ceasefire derails UK opposition party. [online] Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/8/labour-leaders-refusal-to-call-for-gaza-ceasefire-derails-opposition-party>

41 Rashid, I. (2023). 11 councillors quit Labour over stance on ceasefire in Gaza - after calling for Sir Keir Starmer to resign. Sky News [online] Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/leader-of-burnley-council-and-11-councillors-resign-from-labour-party-over-starmers-gaza-ceasefire-stance-13001632>

42 Kelvin McKenzie on GB News, 15 Nov 2023, 20:38 PM

43 Murray, D. (2016). Labour’s anti-Semitism problem stems from its grassroots. [online] The Spectator. Available at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/labour-s-anti-semitism-problem-stems-from-its-grassroots>

44 Trevor Kavanagh on Talk TV, 14 February 2024, Centre for Media Monitoring, Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1758113238212808815>

This is the same Trevor Kavanagh who used what some say was Nazi-language about Muslims referring to “The Muslim Problem”.⁴⁵ He was cleared by the press regulator IPSO but the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and the Muslim Council of Britain condemned the ruling. In 2016, Kavanagh wrote a piece in The Sun falsely claiming that “2 in 3 migrants are lying about their age”. The Sun had to correct Kavanagh’s words and publish a correction online.⁴⁶

Talk TV’s most popular show hosted by former Daily Mirror editor Piers Morgan has also been accused of engaging in Islamophobia describing women converting to Islam as wanting **“to be oppressed.”**⁴⁷ He later clarified his position on X, where he stated, “I didn’t call Muslim women oppressed, and you know I didn’t. I asked YOU if you would call them oppressed given the vile ‘feminist filth’ views about women cited by a member of your Islamist group.”⁴⁸ Keswani who was described by fellow analyst and American journalist Emily Austin as a borderline terrorist and asked if she condemned 9/11.⁴⁹ Keswani accused Morgan of allowing, “a racist white woman to play victim and use Islamophobic tropes.”⁵⁰

The columnist Rod Liddle declared his support for Israel and accused the Muslim Council of Britain of not expressing sadness at the events of 7 October as it **“isn’t about the State of Israel: it’s about the Jews.”**⁵¹ The scholar Sarah Eltantawi has questioned this framing saying, “There is precisely zero reference in Zionist polemical literature of the 19th century to so-called “Arab-Islamic antisemitism”.”⁵² Liddle also suggests that Muslims who support Israel “dare not say so in public because of the massed violent fury of their self-appointed spokesmen within the Religion of Peace.”⁵³ He gives no evidence for his generalised and grossly exaggerated claims of “violent fury”.

Online news sites also promoted anti Muslim content. A standout example of vitriolic Islamophobia against Palestinians, pro-Palestine protestors and Muslims, was featured in an op-ed by Moataz Khalil in The Express website. The table below shows the extent to which unsubstantiated points made in the piece ranged from misrepresentation to outright falsehoods as the author claims he was taught to hate Jews in his Mosque in Egypt.⁵⁴

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- 45 Ruddick, G. (2017). Press watchdog clears Sun writer who referred to ‘the Muslim problem’. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/23/press-watchdog-clears-sun-writer-who-referred-to-the-muslim-problem>
- 46 MCB (2017). Trevor Kavanagh’s False Claims About Migrants in the Sun. Muslim Council of Britain [online] Available at: <https://mcb.org.uk/trevor-kavanaghs-false-claims-about-migrants-in-the-sun>
- 47 Piers Morgan on Piers Morgan Uncensored responding to Dr Abdul Wahid, Talk TV, December 13, 2023
- 48 Morgan, P. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/piersmorgan/status/1735294749274210615>
- 49 Nerdeen Keswani & Emily Austin on Piers Morgan Live on Talk TV, 27 November 2023, 20:30 PM
- 50 Ibid
- 51 Liddle, R. (2023). I stand with Israel. [online] The Spectator. Available at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/i-stand-with-israel>
- 52 <https://twitter.com/SEltantawi/status/1729310420677120288> (tweet deleted)
- 53 Liddle, R. (2023). I stand with Israel. [online] The Spectator. Available at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/i-stand-with-israel>
- 54 Khalil, M. (2023). In my mosque we were literally taught how to hate Jews - Moataz Khalil. [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1829831/Palestine-demonstration-anti-Jewish-hate-march-Hamas-killing-jews>

Table 6.1 Fact-check in the op-ed by Moataz Khalil in The Express, October 2023.

Allegation	Counter Allegation
<p><i>I saw it in the statements of the speakers on the platform at those demonstrations organised, it seems, by haters of Israel here in London.</i></p>	<p>Generalisation: The demonstrations are organised by a consortium of groups historically dedicated to fighting occupation, injustice, and currently a ceasefire and the opening of borders for humanitarian aid. To label them “haters of Israel” is inflammatory at best.</p>
<p><i>I saw it over and over right here in London: a gathering of worshippers in the Tube stations, an agreement to pray against the Jews and their killing</i></p>	<p>Generalisation: What the author describes clearly contradicts the hundreds of online videos and descriptions by those who attended the march, including police officers and members of the public who are not Muslim. The marches have been widely documented as being peaceful, with families and the elderly participating. Amongst those protesting has also been many Jewish community members. Some of the protests in tube stations were organised by and attended by Jewish organisations. If he witnessed a handful participating in such actions, it is inaccurate to say this was the norm at the demonstration.</p>
<p><i>I have found the atmosphere of incitement in London since 7 October to be a reflection of that same excessive hatred for everything Jewish.</i></p>	<p>Generalisation: The “hatred for everything Jewish” he speaks of is a generalisation. The fact that many in the UK Jewish community are calling for a ceasefire and have marched in London is evidence of this. The author is conflating criticism of the actions of a state with hatred for a religious community.</p>
<p><i>“Islam is clear! You are vile... Let us rape their women and kill them without mercy!” I was told by a Muslim friend of mine in London, whose name I won’t mention.</i></p>	<p>Misrepresentation: Given Islam forbids rape and is clear about the protection of non-combatants during war, it is unusual for an informed Muslim to make such a claim. Even if s/he did, there should be a caveat acknowledging how unacceptable rape is in Islam.</p>
<p><i>When you compare the opinions stated in the security confessions of Hamas members and the behaviour of many anti-Jewish Muslims here, you will find that they are one and the same.</i></p>	<p>Generalisation: He is creating the impression that being anti-Jewish and akin to Hamas, is widespread within Muslim communities in the UK, without providing any specific evidence. It is a highly defamatory statement.</p>
<p><i>Their shocking behaviour and extremist chants are in line with the Islamic belief that these things are acceptable in war in order to be victorious. Islam is clear and frank about war.</i></p>	<p>Misrepresentation: The shocking behaviour he is citing is not Islamic. Islam is clear and frank about war, and none of what he states is acceptable under Islamic law, as understood by the vast majority of Muslims across the globe.</p>

The Islamic army committed many violations against the Jews in the Battle of Khaybar, to which the chant refers. After the victory in this battle, our master Muhammad, the Messenger of God, married Safiya bint Huyya bin Akhtab al-Nadhariya, a Jewish woman whose husband was killed by his soldiers. The Messenger forcefully married her.

Disputed: Khaybar was a battle fought after the Khaybar tribe violated a treaty they had with the early Muslims. The claim that the Islamic army committed any “violations against the Jews” is not a matter of fact as it is positioned, rather it is an opinion that is untrue and countered by many other historians such as William Montgomery Watt.⁵⁵

The claim that the Prophet forcefully married Safiya, is not a position held by most historians and biographers, who highlight that she had willingly embraced Islam and wanted to marry the Prophet.⁵⁶

That is why we find statements in the confessions of Hamas members that they intended to rape women: it was an essential pillar for them in the battle, just as for the Prophet Muhammad.

Disputed: Rape is forbidden in Islam whether in war or any other time. As such, to claim that Islam is the reason why anybody intended to commit the heinous crime of rape, is not justifiable. If this was the Islamic position, Hamas would not have publicly distanced itself from the allegations of rape (noting that their statement should be treated with the same scepticism as any party in a war).

Frankly, I do not know whether the level of engagement of security experts here in London qualifies them to understand these matters. Maybe the religious beliefs of some of them affects their thinking and security decisions.

Misrepresentation: He implies that any security expert from a Muslim background may not be loyal to the UK and cannot be trusted due to their religious identity, an identity that the author himself shares.

55 Watt, William Montgomery (1956). *Muhammad at Medina*. Oxford University Press, pp.34-36

56 Lings M. (2006). *Muhammad [pbuh]: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. Inner Traditions. (George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp.269

The Daily Express further platformed opinion pieces which have attempted to tarnish Muslims and Muslim communities as a danger. The pro-Israel columnist Angela Epstein who has equated pro-Palestinian protestors as akin to Hamas and wanting to eradicate Jews, questioned the BBC's holding of its weekly Question Time programme in Bradford given the city's large Muslim community.⁵⁷ She implied that Muslims cannot be objective and are a danger. "Given the highly charged times in which we live with incidents of antisemitism spiralling and anti-Israel protests giving horsepower to Jew hatred, is it safe to travel to an area of the country with such a concentrated Muslim population?"⁵⁸

The Daily Telegraph newspaper published an editorial raging at the BBC for its failure to call Hamas terrorists. In doing so the newspaper suggested the Corporation was fearful of Muslims, "antisemitism cannot be ignored for fear it may upset some British Muslims", implying both that Muslims are dangerous and that they are afforded special treatment as a result.⁵⁹

A report on the Mail Online website accused the ex-Rugby star and Muslim convert Sunny Bill Williams of supporting Hamas when he reposted an American Law Professor on X who had posted a social media post about the dichotomy of labelling Ukrainians as freedom fighters and Palestinians defending their families in Gaza as "terrorists."⁶⁰ The image used in the story was of Williams standing in front of the Ka'bah in Makkah the holiest place in Islam according to majority opinion. Using such imagery given the multiple available images of an international sports star was arguably done to link his Muslim identity to the charge of supporting terrorism.



Image 6.3 James Coony, Daily Mail Australia October 2023. Image used of ex-Rugby star links his Muslim identity in an article speaking terrorism.

57 Epstein, A. (2023). BBC screening Question Time from Bradford tonight is a VERY bad idea - Comment. [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/182827/Who-is-on-BBC-question-time-Bradford-Israel-Hamas-Fiona-Bruce>

58 ibid

59 Telegraph View. (2023). The BBC must call terrorism what it is. The Telegraph. [online] 8 Oct. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2023/10/08/bbc-must-call-terrorism-what-it-is>

60 Cooney, J. (2023). Sonny Bill Williams supports Hamas attack on Israel with tweet. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/nrl/article-12608621/Sonny-Bill-Williams-tweet-support-Hamas-attack-Israel-Palestinian.html>

Since 7 October 2023, there has been concern over growing incidents of Islamophobia in the UK. Between 7 October and 7 November, there were a total of 631 mentions of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hate across the news channels being assessed.⁶¹ Yet, arguably the extent to which Islamophobia was covered did not reflect the alarming rise in hate. One film package on BBC Newsnight on the increase of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents on university campuses is evidence of this. The coverage of antisemitism lasted a total of 3 minutes and 30 seconds, whilst the coverage of Islamophobia lasted just under one minute. The package included a sit-down interview with the President of the Union of Jewish Students (UJS), as well as the individual Jewish students affected. In contrast, the report featured a short interview with a Muslim student.

Given that the Newsnight report was framed as a story on ‘rising antisemitism and Islamophobia’, its end-product opened it up to accusations of a hierarchy of racism. Further to this the accompanying online article focused solely on Jewish students feeling “deeply anxious” and failed to mention the similar sentiments felt by Muslim students – placing this detail at the very end of the article.⁶² It should be acknowledged that incidents of antisemitism were reported to have gone up almost six times from 12 in the same period the previous year to 67 in one month following the 7 October attacks.⁶³ Islamophobia at university went up over ten times from 3 to 31.⁶⁴ The contrasting treatment in the film arguably diminishes the experiences of victims of Islamophobia, and thus relegates Muslim students to an afterthought.

6.3 Recommendations

- Opposition to Israeli policies should not be framed as antisemitic.
- Revisionist interpretations of Islamic history and its adherents should be avoided and when they are platformed their rhetoric should be challenged.
- The Palestine-Israel conflict should not be framed as a religious, jihadist or Muslim v Jewish conflict at the expense of legitimate Palestinian demands for a State.
- Islamophobic tropes and the framing of Muslims as a danger or fifth column should not be used within comment pieces.
- There should not be a hierarchy of racism when reporting on hate crimes and abuse.

61 Search terms: "Islamophobia" OR "Islamophobic" OR "anti-Muslim" OR "Islamophobe" OR "hatred of Muslim*"

62 Cowan, M & Kotecha, S. (2023). Jewish students at UK universities ‘deeply anxious’, union warns. BBC News. [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67350003>

63 Ibid

64 Ibid



CONTEXT

7. CONTEXT



7.1 Insights

- Many news outlets have resorted to anchoring events and discussions from a starting point of 7 October.
- In Broadcast, there are 179 mentions of “occupied territories” and only 26 mentions of “occupied Gaza” perpetuating the narrative that Gaza is not under Israeli control.
- Al Jazeera English reporting from the perspective of the Global South had more mentions of “occupied territories” than the mainstream British and some American news channels combined.
- 76% of online articles frame the current war as an “Israel-Hamas war” rather than an Israeli assault on Gaza or “War in Gaza”. This, despite of nearly 2 million displaced Palestinians in Gaza, 30,000 killed, 350,000 homes destroyed and the denial of food, water, electricity and medical aid to Gazan civilians.
- Only 24% of news mentioning Israel or Hamas or Gaza mention the word(s) Palestine/ Palestinian, which indicates a lack of context about the Israeli-Palestinian issue.
- Palestinian perspectives are either dismissed, omitted or minimised.

7.2 What do we mean by context?

The Israeli perspective is that the 7 October attacks were the beginning of the current crisis. The Palestinian perspective is that the 7 October attacks were the latest incident, as part of a long-running war. Our view is that whilst news outlets can (and perhaps should) focus on a specific incident at the time it occurs, when it is part of a broader news story that continues over many weeks and months, it is unreasonable (in particular for broadcasters claiming to be impartial given the more stringent OFCOM rules) to simply take the Israeli perspective, and not provide the relevant context. Whilst no context justifies terrorism, acknowledging the historical context within the overall news coverage is important to ensure that audiences have a fuller understanding of what perhaps led to the attacks on 7 Oct.

The implication that there were no hostilities, occupation or aggression from Israel in the preceding days and weeks, is simply untrue. It is widely claimed that Gaza is the world’s largest open-air prison.⁶⁵ International law has classified Gaza as “occupied” – a view shared by the British government.⁶⁶ It has been under Israeli occupation for decades and was even bombed in the previous two weeks prior to 7 October. Two articles published on 4 October 2023 bear testament to the attacks by Israel on Gaza pre-7 October.

65 Human Rights Watch (2022). Gaza: Israel’s ‘Open-Air Prison’ at 15. [online] Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/14/gaza-israels-open-air-prison-15>

66 GOV.UK. (2024). UK statement on situation in Gaza - 3 January 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-statement-on-situation-in-gaza-3-january-2024>

The Guardian reported that the protestors in the Gaza Strip “received bullet wounds to ankles” with the influx of injuries suggesting deliberate targeting by the Israeli Army.⁶⁷ Similarly, a Reuters article on the same day reported on the economic misery visited upon Gaza by the Israeli-blockade which had made life intolerable in the coastal strip of land for 2.3 million people.⁶⁸

Many news outlets failed to highlight the fact that despite the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza in 2005, various independent human rights bodies including the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam among others have made it clear that Gaza has been under Israeli “occupation.”⁶⁹ This has taken the form of a permanent land, sea and air blockade placed on Gaza by Israel with the supply of goods heavily restricted as well as water and the majority of electricity supplies dependent on Israeli authorities.⁷⁰ A BBC article attempting to explain what is currently happening between Israel and Palestine simply states in reference to the occupation, with no caveat or qualification, that “Israel left Gaza in 2005.”⁷¹

On 10 October, Sky News interviewed the Palestinian artist and general manager of the Freedom Théâtre, Mustafa Sheta. When Sheta attempted to explain the larger context of Israeli occupation, he was swiftly interrupted by the presenter: “but specifically the most recent history, three days ago, do you accept that those actions have made the likelihood of peace lower?” As the interview progressed the interviewer continued to minimise and ignore the context, relegating what Palestinians have suffered historically as an “interpretation”: “With the greatest respect. I understand there is a lot of context, and even if we accept a framing of the history that says perhaps the interpretation you have, that says, that the Palestinian people have been treated appallingly, even if we accept that, I can sit here now and say there is never a justification for the murder of peaceful, innocent people, hundreds of them, can you say that, too?”⁷²

Sheta’s response clarifies that he doesn’t accept the blood of non-combatant Israeli civilians, “For me, I don’t accept any blood for any person who don’t involve in military action against Palestinians. But what happened in Gaza what has happened in the last month, it is not just about 900 killed in Israel, we talk about thousands killed by Israel already in these years. For me, it is action because of all this violence and punishment from Israel. It is not just a yes or no. We are under occupation, and we have

67 McKernan, B. and Balousha, H. (2023). Gaza Strip protesters received bullet wounds to ankles, medics report. The Guardian. [online] 4 Oct. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/04/gaza-strip-protesters-received-bullet-wounds-to-ankles-medics-report>

68 Reuters (2023). Gaza unrest sends message about economic misery under Israeli blockade. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-12593177/Gaza-unrest-sends-message-economic-misery-Israeli-blockade.html>

69 The Gaza Strip | The humanitarian impact of 15 years of blockade - June 2022: At its current operating capacity, the Gaza Power Plant can only produce up to 80 megawatts (MW), supplemented by 120 MW purchased from Israel, meeting about 50% of the electricity demand in Gaza (400-450MW). In 2021, rolling power cuts averaged 11 hours per day. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/mena/documents/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-15-years-blockade-june-2022>

&

“Gaza normally gets its water supplies from a combination of sources, including a pipeline from Israel, desalination plants on the Mediterranean Sea and wells. Those supplies were slashed when Israel cut off water, along with the fuel and electricity that power water and sewage plants, in the wake of the Hamas attacks” found in, Y MADDIE BURAKOFF Updated 2:32 AM GMT+1, October 17, 2023 Gaza’s limited water supply raises concerns for human health, Associated Press available at <https://apnews.com/article/gaza-israel-water-humanitarian-crisis-cfeabcda00fefdd03c2877495c4dcd09>

70 ibid

71 BBC (2023). Israel and Hamas: What’s happening? BBC Newsround. [online] 9 Oct. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news-round/67051424>

72 Wilfred Frost Interview with Mustafa Sheta on Sky News, Oct 10, 2023, 10:40 AM

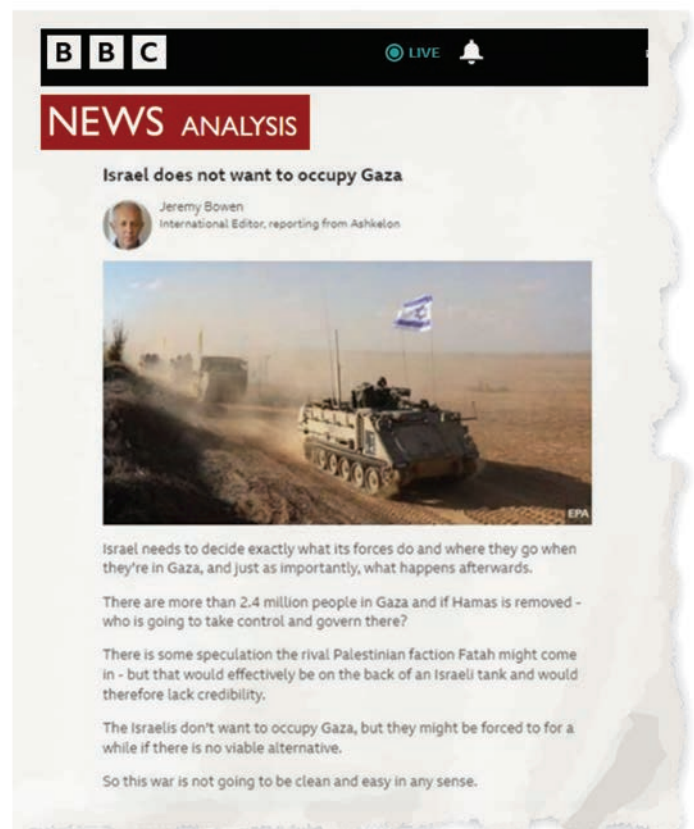
the right to fight Israel and end the occupation.”⁷³ The interviewer again accuses Sheta of justifying the attacks, “It sounds like you are trying to justify it.” Sheta responds by saying, “Not justifying”, and the interview is then terminated with, “On that note we must end the interview there.”⁷⁴

Another occasion where a journalist used the events of 7 October to challenge a Palestinian guest was on the BBC News channel when Muhannad Ayyash, Professor of Sociology at Mount Royal University and Policy Analyst from Al-Shabaka, a Palestinian think tank, was interviewed. Ayyash listed a range of Israeli actions which he said amounted to genocide. **“When you call all Palestinians in the Gaza Strip human animals, children of the darkness and you unleash this indiscriminate bombing of civilians, children, women, hospitals, schools, homes, according to 42% of homes have been destroyed, this is clearly a deliberate attempt to kill as many Palestinians as possible.”**⁷⁵

The presenter challenged Ayyash with Israeli claims saying, “Just to push back on you again we have to remember that this war was triggered by the events of 7 October when 1,400 Israeli’s were killed. Israel has 229 hostages which they have to think about inside Gaza.”⁷⁶ Ayyash responded that starting the clock on 7 October was **“a feeble analysis.”**⁷⁷ This is not to minimize the 7 October attacks or to justify the unjustifiable, rather it is to highlight the importance of not ignoring context, and not merely using the Israeli framing around the start of the conflict.

Many academics, commentators and pro-Palestinian voices have indicated that Israel’s current incursion into Gaza is with the aim of a full-ground occupation of Gaza. On 7 November 2023, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu all but confirmed this when he said Israel was to have “indefinite” control over Gaza after the war.⁷⁸ However, the BBC’s International Editor, Jeremy Bowen was insistent that “Israel does not want to occupy Gaza”.

Image 7.1 BBC News Analysis “Israel does not want to occupy Gaza” by Jeremy Bowen, BBC’s International Editor.



73 ibid

74 ibid

75 Muhannad Ayyash interviewed on BBC One/News on Oct 29, 2023, 5:20 AM

76 Ibid

77 Ibid

78 Srivastava, M. (2023). Israel plans ‘indefinite’ controls over Gaza, says Benjamin Netanyahu. Financial Times. [online] 7 Nov. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/bdd6b3c7-baae-4cc6-81e7-e6b42504d18d>

7.3 Omitting the mention of occupied territories

Mainstream broadcast TV reports have made infrequent mention of Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories, with almost no mention of the fact that the occupation is illegal under international law. Between 7 October and 7 November 2023, there were 179 mentions of “occupied territories” on the British and international news channels. When Al-Jazeera English was added to the search that figure increased to 381 mentions. One news channel reporting from the perspective of the Global South had more mentions of occupied territories than the mainstream British and some American news channels combined.

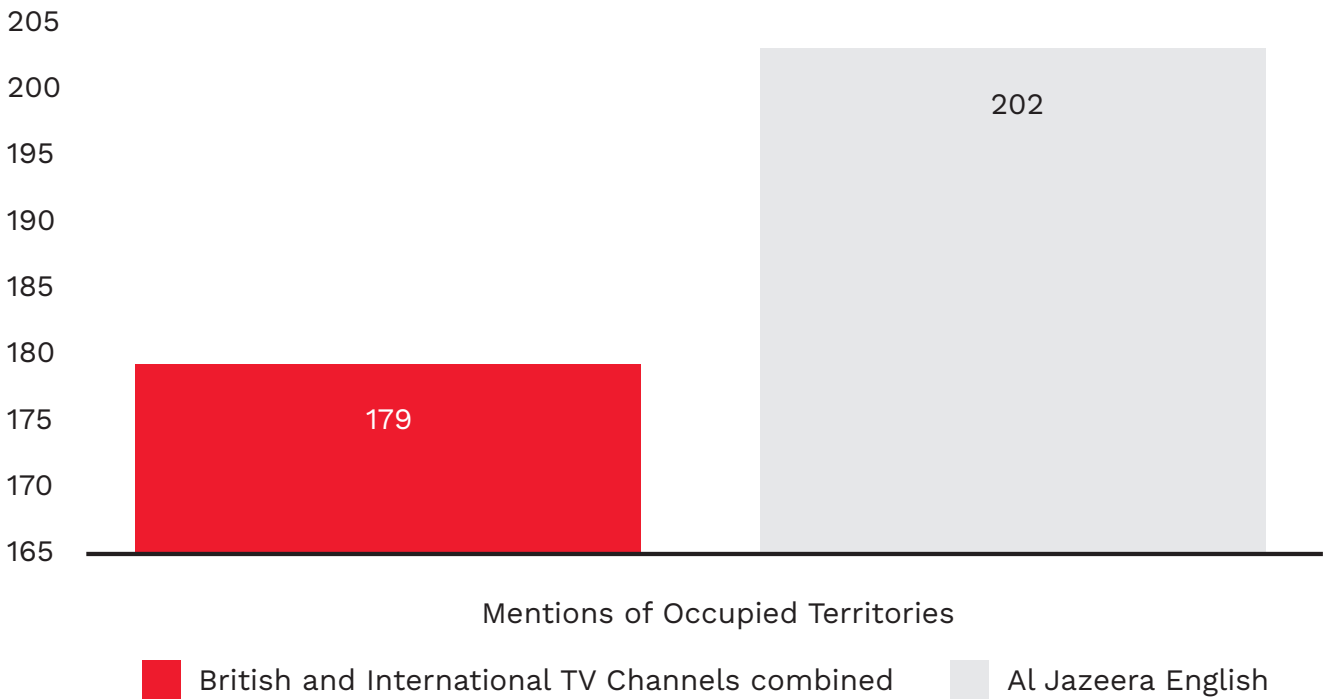


Figure 7.1 Al Jazeera English has more mentions of occupied territories on Broadcast TV than the rest of British and International (British based) channels combined (CfMM analysis).

7.3.1 Sky News Case Study: Not mentioning the occupation.

Whilst not alone in these omissions a list of prominent examples from Sky News show some major omissions and errors made about the Israeli occupation of Palestine. These are listed below:

1. **Describing Ukraine as “occupied” but Palestine as having “more nuanced” challenges** - Commenting on President Biden’s latest comments on Ukraine, Israel and Palestine on 19 October 2023, Sky News’ America correspondent Mark Stone, said, “There was perhaps an awkwardness to his message, wrapping together support for Ukraine with the **much more nuanced challenges** of the Israelis and the Palestinians.”⁷⁹
2. **Falsely stating that the West Bank was occupied by the Palestinians** - Sky News’ Defence Analyst Philip Ingram misspoke as he seemed to accuse Palestinians of occupying the West Bank: “We keep forgetting to talk about the West Bank, the area that is **occupied by the Palestinians** inside the area we have as Israel”⁸⁰
3. **Describing the Golan Heights as part of Israel** - Sky News reporter says: “What happened in the **Golan Heights in the North-East corner of Israel** on the border with Syria.”⁸¹ This implies that the Golan Heights are in Israel despite the international consensus (including the UK, although excluding Israel and United States) that the Golan Heights are in Syria and are illegally occupied by Israel.⁸²
4. **Implying the Golan Heights were part of Israel:** Sky News’ Defence Analyst Philip Ingram, when discussing Israeli air strikes on Aleppo Airport, on 25 October 2023, showed a map of the Levant area where the Golan Heights was not differentiated from Israel and there was no explanation that the area was in fact Syrian territory.⁸³

Between 7 October and 7 November, there were also only 26 mentions of “occupied Gaza” across news channels (including repeats), excluding Al-Jazeera English. Five of these mentions (including repeats) were from the former Palestinian negotiator Mustafa Barghouti when being interviewed.

Examples of news outlets perpetuating the narrative that Gaza is not under Israeli control by not challenging claims that Gaza was not under occupation, include:

On ITV’s Good Morning programme, the right-wing journalist Camilla Tominey was insistent that **“Israel hasn’t occupied Gaza since 2005**. Their argument will be that they withdrew then to ensure a peaceful two-state solution could be achieved over time.”⁸⁴ This was **not challenged** by the presenter.

A news report on ITV Lunchtime News in which the correspondent reporting on the Israeli Ambassador to the USA said, “The Israeli ambassador to Washington has given an interview to CNN, saying Israel would not permanently occupy Gaza after a ground operation.”⁸⁵ There was no clarification from the

79 CfMM (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1715283080900948245>

80 CfMM (2023a) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1715273763342663841>

81 Staniforth, S. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SaulStaniforth/status/1717062419439038743>

82 Reuters. (2019) “U.N. chief clear that Golan status has not changed: spokesman”. March 25, 2019, Reuters available via <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-israel-un-idUSKCN1R623E>

83 Staniforth, S. (2023a) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SaulStaniforth/status/1717190662355931157>

84 Camila Tominey on Good Morning Britain, Oct 16, 2023, 10:7 AM, ITV1

85 ITV Lunchtime News Oct 16, 2023, 1:37 PM on ITV1

reporter that Gaza was under de-facto Israeli occupation currently.

The Labour politician and Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, appeared on the Radio 4's Today programme where she told presenter Nick Robinson: "**Gaza is not occupied by Israel....**" This was **not challenged** by Robinson.⁸⁶

The ex-Muslim activist Yasmine Mohammed said on GB News to presenter Jacob Rees Mogg, "So Gaza has been independent for a while since like 2005, I believe, and they have had since 2015. Uh, I might be getting my dates wrong. They've had the Hamas terrorists as their government. They have been their leaders. So, they have been the ones that have been excuse me, responsible for you know, the unemployment, the dirty water, the electricity that cuts out for hours at a time."⁸⁷ This was **not challenged** by Rees-Mogg.

7.3.2 Talk TV Case Study: Palestinians attempting to explain context bullied and cancelled

One of the clearest example of Palestinian voices being cancelled came on Talk TV where the veteran Palestinian academic Ghada Karmi's interview with presenter James Whale was ended after he accused her of "using it as a platform for propaganda."⁸⁸ Whale accused the author by saying: "so you were quite happy with the way they (Hamas) behaved" when she described the protests in London as an "honest expression of the horror and outrage that all decent people feel at the treatment that Israel is imposing on the Palestinians."

Karmi then attempted to explain the background to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after Whale alleged that it was Hamas who carried out the first act of war. Karmi was repeatedly interrupted by Whale and his co-presenter multiple times, with a question "who actually did it then" implying that Karmi had suggested Hamas did not carry out the 7 October attack which she had never said. Karmi was then compared against a Jewish representative who Whale had on previously with the implication that she approved of the killings in Israel saying: "the Jewish representative who was in here wanted no more innocent people being killed and I hope you don't either?"

Whale further went on to accuse Karmi of justifying the Hamas attack saying, "aren't you embarrassed to say that really it's not their fault that Hamas was driven to it." Karmi did not say this. Whale also dehumanised the Palestinian people by describing people in London marching in support of "people who are fascists and Nazis." Whale's fellow presenter Ash Gould accused Karmi of "justifying" what Hamas did. When Karmi asked why she wasn't being allowed to speak and constantly interrupted Whale said to Karmi: "Give me your answer but don't tell me the history of the situation."

Another egregious Talk TV example was on 3 January 2024 (which falls outside our analysis period but merits being mentioned) is when Julie Hartley-Brewer interviewed Dr Mustafa Barghouti, Secretary General of the Palestine National Initiative, an organisation that promotes non-violent resistance to Israeli occupation. The interview followed the assassination of the deputy leader of Hamas Saleh Al-

86 Rachel Reeves interviewed by Nick Robinson on BBC Radio 4 Today, October 9 available at <https://twitter.com/jrc1921/status/1711283441944113237>

87 Yasmine Mohammed talking to Jacob Rees Mogg on GB News Oct 24, 2023, 1:17 AM BST.

88 Ghada Karmi interviewed by James Whale and Ash Gould on Talk TV, 29 October 2023 available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEvVWwi2se4>

Arouri.⁸⁹ Hartley-Brewer constantly interrupted Barghouti and is heard goading him with comments such as, **“Maybe you’re not used to women talking, I don’t know.”** and **“Sorry to have been a woman speaking to you.”** Ms. Hartley-Brewer also shouted over Mr Barghouti, at one point saying: **“Oh my God, for the love of God, let me finish a sentence, man!”** as well as trying to interrupt him, rolling her eyes and gesturing to people off the camera in an exasperated fashion. Such outbursts are not only unprofessional but are religiously aggravated and draw on the Islamophobic trope of Muslims being oppressive towards women and not allowing women to speak in public. OFCOM received over 15,000 complaints about the interview and is considering further action against the presenter.⁹⁰ It is important to note that Dr Barghouti himself commented on X that the reporter was “racist”.⁹¹

7.4 Erasing mentions of Palestine and other issues of context

It has been reported that style guides in various newsrooms have sometimes advised journalists to avoid the use of the word “Palestine.” This includes the Associated Press and the BBC.⁹² The BBC editorial guidelines state, **“In day-to-day coverage of the Middle East you should not affix the name ‘Palestine’ to Gaza or the West Bank – rather, it is still an aspiration or an historical entity.”**⁹³ In our analysis of over 25,000 online articles between 7 October and 7 November, the “Israel-Hamas war” was a phrase that dominated all mentions of the terms “Israel”, “ Hamas”, “Gaza” and “Palestine”. One noticeable indicator for a lack of context, was how the term “Palestine” or “Palestinian” was rarely mentioned in the online news. In fact, in 76% of online news articles (18,920) where “Israel”, “ Hamas” or Gaza” were mentioned, there was no mention of “Palestine” or “Palestinian”.

Whilst in the remaining 24%, the term “Palestine” or “Palestinian” was mentioned, we cannot be certain that context was provided in these articles. One of the possible reasons for this lack of a mention of Palestine or Palestinians is

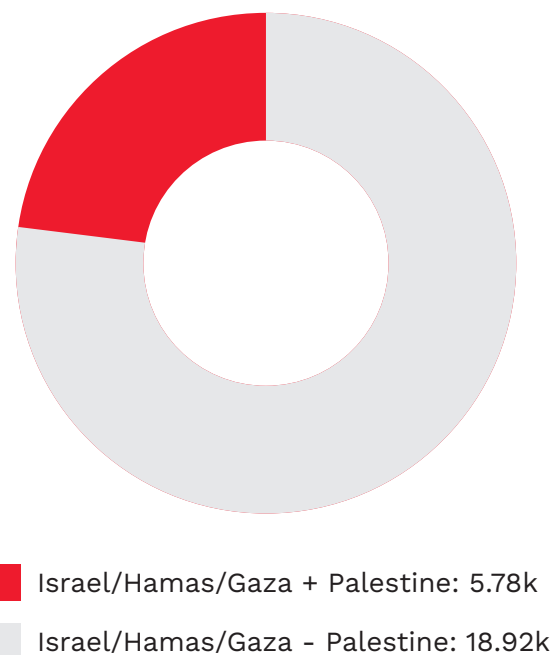


Figure 7.2 Mentions of Palestine in Online News

89 Julia Hartley Brewer interviews Mustafa Barghouti on Talk TV, 5 January 2024 available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjg-b2faf3FQ>

90 Wheeler, O. (2024). TalkTV host slapped with 15,500 Ofcom complaints after screaming at guest. [online] The Mirror. Available at: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/breaking-talktv-host-julia-hartley-31848487>

91 Barghouti, M. (2024). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/MustafaBarghou1/status/1743252142758953000>

92 Mastracci, D. (2023) The Maple. Available at: <https://www.readthemaple.com/western-media-doesnt-want-you-to-read-the-word-palestine>

93 BBC (2022). Israel and the Palestinians. [Online] BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsstyleguide/israel-and-the-palestinians>

the guidelines of newsrooms which sometimes avoid the use of the word Palestine.

When it came to casualties on BBC Online News, even a month after the 7 October attacks, the coverage of the ongoing massacre in Gaza was still prefaced with the events of 7 October, with Israeli casualties often taking precedence over Palestinian deaths.

The example below shows that despite more than 8,700 Palestinian deaths at the time, the article leads with **“More than 1,400 people were killed in attacks by Hamas...”** The Palestinian deaths and the credibility of the statistics are further undermined by attributing them to the “ Hamas-run health ministry” as opposed to simply the Gaza Health Ministry. Not only do the figures tally with those given by the UN and other humanitarian organisations but the Health Ministry had lists of names for the dead. Israeli security services have also since confirmed that the figures released by the Gaza Health Ministry are reliable and accurate.⁹⁴

This sort of reporting and framing has continued post 7 November with a story on the BBC News website stating that the conflict began when “Gaza-based gunmen from Hamas attacked Southern Israel on 7 October.”⁹⁵ Apart from omitting to calling it the **current conflict** to give a context to how long these conflicts have been taking place between Palestine and Israel, the article also fails to mention that the majority of the “14,000 people” killed are civilian. Once again, the figures are attributed to the “ Hamas-run government” compromising their validity in the mind of the reader.



Image 7.2 BBC article: Israeli casualties often taking precedence over Palestinian deaths.

Whilst most news outlets have not provided the context in all circumstances, there have been good examples of journalists and presenters bringing in context and challenging those who have repeated a pro-Israel narrative.

94 Abraham, Y. (2024) Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/yuval_abraham/status/1750123648533324158?t=Cam-MqsgEKkih-3WY2rGzkQ&s=19

95 BBC News. (2023). Actress fired from *Scream 7* over Israel-Gaza posts. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-67494374.amp>

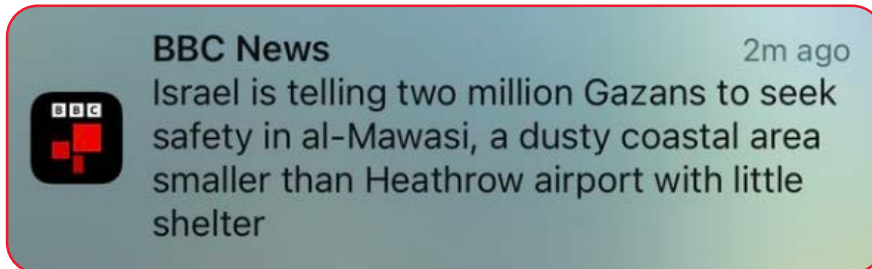


Image 7.3 BBC Online, December 2023 giving good context to small area Gazans being told to move to.

Some of these include:

Marc Lamont Hill presenting for Al Jazeera English's UpFront programme challenged the former Israeli Army General, Yaakov Amidror on the Israeli blockade of Gaza, listing the restrictions the Israelis had on the population of the strip as well as its control by land, air and sea. The former General asked Lamont to admit Israel does not control Gaza to which the presenter replied, "I am not going to admit that Israel does not control Gaza", before ending the interview.⁹⁶

Another good example of context was seen in a BBC News breaking alert seen on X, which told readers not only what the breaking development was, but also educated them on what the news meant for those that were to be affected. This relates to the Israeli order to Gazans to seek safety in AL-Mawasi. The BBC compared the area to the size of Heathrow Airport, a location more familiar to readers to get a sense of where 2 million Gazans were being asked to cram into.

7.5 Recommendations

- Explanation of the historical context is important to inform the audience about the longstanding nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict. For example, the consensus view that Israel has been occupying the West Bank and Gaza prior to 7 October should be included for context.
- Contributors providing a context and history to the Israel-Palestine issue should not be silenced or accused of justifying terrorism.

⁹⁶ Marc Lamont Hill interviews Yaakov Amirdov on Al Jazeera English, 08 December 2023 available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/upfront/2023/12/8/former-israeli-army-general-on-civilian-deaths-in-gaza>

FRAMING

8. FRAMING



8.1 Insights

- The way that many Western media outlets have reported on Israel's invasion of Gaza following the attacks on 7 October demonstrates a pro-Israeli framing of events.
- Most TV broadcast channels promoted "Israel's right" to defend itself compared with the rights of the Palestinians by a ratio of 5 to 1.
- The insistence on "Israel's right" was found on 1,482 occasions across broadcast channels. A similar search for the right of Palestinians to resist yielded only 278 results.
- 36% of mentions of the right of Palestinians came from Al Jazeera's English Channel which reports from the perspective of the Global South.
- Right-wing TV channels in Britain had 36% mentions of "Israel's right/s" and only 7% of the rights of Palestinians.
- The label of Israel Hamas War is favoured by Western broadcasters and British based broadcasters with almost twice the number of mentions compared with Israel Gaza War.

Media framing is the angle or perspective from which a particular story is told. How a newspaper or broadcaster frames a story can help explain the leaning or even the biases which the media outlet or individual journalist holds. When reporting on a conflict or war, framing can tell the reader or viewer which particular side is the preferred actor for that news outlet; in other words, who the good guy is in their eyes. This can be evidenced in various ways from the number of stories published to the number of representatives interviewed from each side of the conflict and even the type of questioning and selection of images shown to audiences. The way that many Western media outlets have reported on Israel's invasion of Gaza following the attacks by Hamas on 7 October, has led to accusations of its pro-Israeli framing of events.

The Israeli perspective is that this is a war on Hamas. The Palestinian perspective is that this is an assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza. Each perspective carries with it many implications on the rationale for the conflict.



Image 8.1 Metro, front page, October 2023 war framed as "Israel-Hamas War".

For many, the evidence shared with the International Court of Justice, highlights example after example where Israeli leadership makes clear that the entirety of Gaza is being targeted. Regardless of which perspective you hold, it is unreasonable for news outlets (in particular those claiming to be impartial) to simply use the Israeli framing.

From our analysis, on broadcast TV the term “Israel-Hamas” war or conflict, was mentioned 2,660 times in the period 7 October to 7 November. This is in contrast to terms such as “Israel-Gaza” war, or “assault on Gaza”, which were mentioned 1,481 times. When Al Jazeera English was removed from the searches these figures stood at 2,619 mentions and 1,350 mentions.⁹⁷

Israel-Hamas war also had a significantly higher presence in online media in comparison with Israel-Gaza war. The following graphic shows how the disparity between the usage of the two phrases which frame the conflict from different perspectives in online media. Between 7 October and 7 November there were almost 6 times as many references to an Israel-Hamas war compared with an Israel-Gaza war.⁹⁸

The following graph shows the two differing ways in which the attack on Gaza has been framed in the online news media. Between 7 October and 7 November there were 4,977 mentions of an Israel-Hamas war against 860 mentions of Israel-Gaza war.

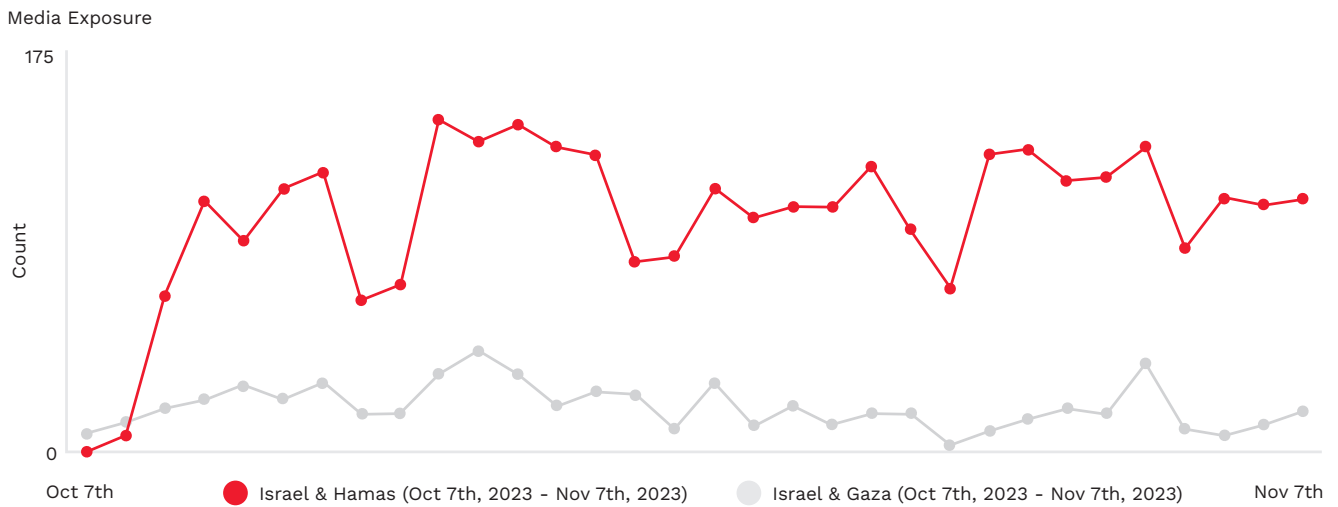


Figure 8.1 In contrast to “Israel-Gaza war”, “Israel-Hamas war” had a significantly higher presence in online media.

97 Search Terms: (“Israel Hamas War” OR “Israel* war on Hamas” OR “Israel* war against Hamas” OR “Israel Hamas conflict” OR “War between Israel and Hamas”) VS (“Israel Gaza War” OR “Israel* war on Gaza” OR “Israel* war against Gaza” OR “Israel Gaza conflict” OR “War between Israel and Gaza”)

98 Search Terms: (“Israel-Hamas War” OR “Israel* war on Hamas” OR “Israel* war against Hamas” OR “Israel-Hamas conflict” OR “War between Israel and Hamas”) VS (“Israel-Gaza War” OR “Israel* war on Gaza” OR “Israel* war against Gaza” OR “Israel- Gaza conflict” OR “War between Israel and Gaza”)

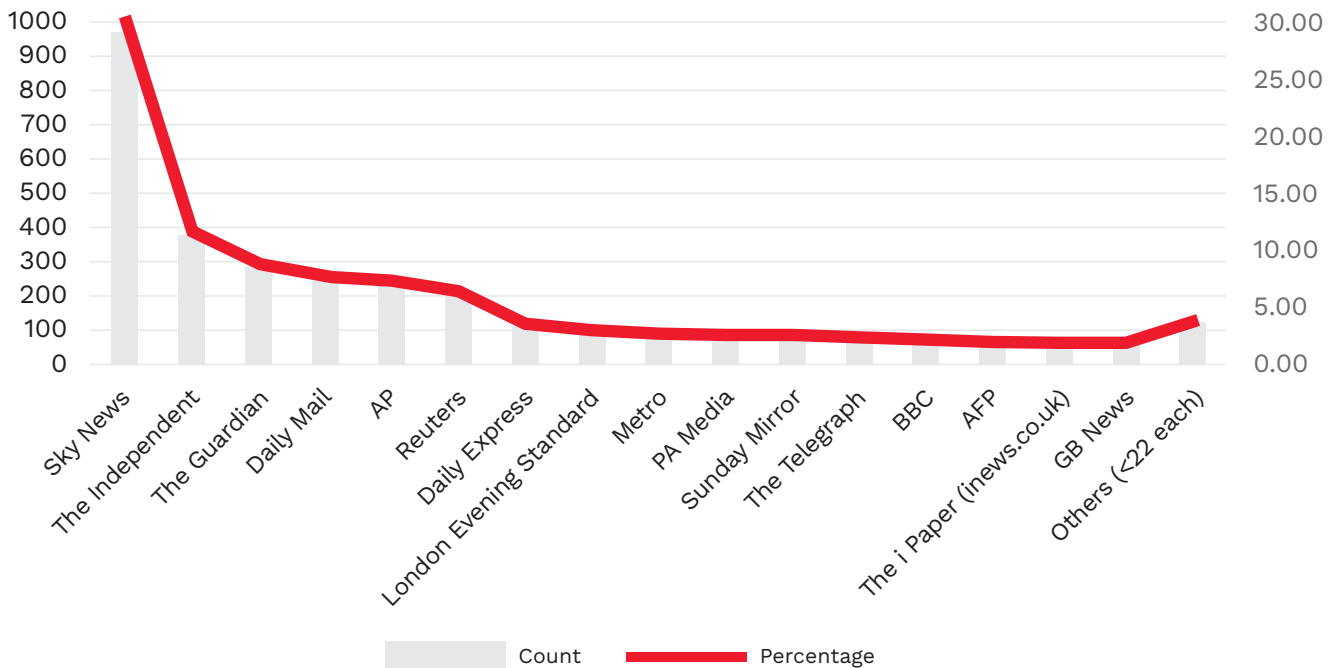


Figure 8.2 Outlets using the term “Israel-Hamas”.

When broken down by outlet it is noticeable that Sky News significantly outnumbered all other outlets in terms of using the “Israel-Hamas” label in its copy.

It is clear that news outlets have been using the “Israel-Hamas” framing set out by Israel, supporting its narrative that it is targeting Hamas alone. An indication of the pro-Israeli position and intolerance for anyone who diverges from the idea of a war on Hamas alone has been seen as recently as 29 January 2024. A BBC News at Ten report referred to “Israel’s war with Gaza” quickly catching the ire of pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian personalities on X who were insistent that it was Israel’s war with Hamas.⁹⁹



Image 8.2 Sky News frames it as “ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR”.

- A. The following example from a BBC news interview with Noura Erakat, an American academic who appeared on the Verify Live programme on 7 November, shows the battle over narrative between a news presenter and how the war is perceived among pro-Palestine supporters. The interview began with the anchor Lucy Grey stating, “Let’s return to Israel’s war on Hamas.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Austin, I. (2024) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/LordIanAustin/status/1752100120290594957?t=GupoYde28YCuHEEw-JGmN1w&s=19>

¹⁰⁰ Noura Erakat interviewed by Lucy Grey on Verified Live, BBC World News, 7 November 2023, 15:19 PM

This statement was made in the context of a month-long Israeli bombing campaign in Gaza in which 10,000 Palestinian civilians were killed at the time. Erakat responds saying that, **“this is not a war, nor is this a war against Hamas, this is a genocidal campaign targeting the Palestinian people,** attacking the conditions of life with the intent to diminish their ability to survive. This is a violation of the genocide convention.”¹⁰¹ The anchor responded with, **“Israel obviously denies your accusation of genocide** and we’ve heard them talk about how Hamas waged war on them, they are responding, and this is their right to protect themselves and try to bring back security to their country and they blame Hamas for, **they blame Hamas for what is going on.**”¹⁰²

- B. Another example which went viral on social media platforms involved the Palestinian journalist Ahmed Alnaouq who lost 21 members of his family in Gaza as a result of Israeli bombardment of their family home.¹⁰³ Alnaouq was interviewed on ITV’s Good Morning Britain in a dialogue which the investigative journalist Richard Curtis has described as “abusive”. Alnaouq described some of the Western media outlets as complicit in giving Israel the cover and atmosphere to commit massacres against Palestinians.¹⁰⁴ Presenter Kate Garraway responded by saying, “Israel’s very clear that this is against Hamas, a terrorist organisation that perpetrated the most horrific atrocities, I can understand why you in the absolute vortex of your grief feel anger, but what can be done for the sake of all those there, because what we don’t want to do is get into a war or words and hate.”¹⁰⁵

8.2 Israel’s right vs Rights of Palestinians

One feature of media coverage has been the willingness of many broadcasters and online news outlets to promote an Israel-first narrative. This is reflected in the repetition of lines from the Israel Project’s “Global Language Dictionary” which was created in 2009 after Israel’s first war on the besieged Gaza Strip to guide Israel’s supporters on how best to speak to the media about the conflict.¹⁰⁶ One of the recommendations found in the playbook is the insistence on “Israel’s right” to defend itself.

It is worth noting that the Palestinian position as laid out by the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, and that of the United Nations Special Rapporteur to the Occupied Palestinian territories, is that international law states: Israel cannot claim the right of ‘self-defence’ under international law because Gaza is a territory which it occupies.¹⁰⁷

101 Ibid

102 ibid

103 Ducourtieux, C (2023). London-based Palestinian journalist Ahmed Alnaouq has lost over 21 family members in Gaza. (2023). Le Monde.fr. [online] 14 Nov. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/11/14/london-based-palestinian-journalist-ahmed-alnaouq-has-lost-21-family-members-in-gaza_6252922_4.html

104 Ahmed Alnaouq on Good Morning Britain on ITV1, 1 November 2023 06:42 AM

105 Ibid

106 Bishara, M. (2014). Israel’s media strategy: What lies beneath. [online] Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/7/16/israels-media-strategy-what-lies-beneath>

107 Al Jazeera. (2023). UN Special Rapporteur: Israel can’t claim ‘right of self-defence’. [online] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2023/11/15/un-special-rapporteur-israel-cant-claim-right-of-self-defence>

This insistence on **“Israel’s right”** was found on **1,482 occasions** across TV broadcast channels (Including repeats).¹⁰⁸ A similar search for **the right of Palestinians to resist yielded just 278 results.**¹⁰⁹ CfMM analysis shows that the channel with the highest percentage of mentions of the rights of the Palestinians was Al Jazeera’s English Channel followed by the BBC. Right-wing news channels in Britain such as **GB News, Talk TV as well as Sky News were found to have 36% of all mentions of “Israel’s right/s” whilst just 7% of the mentions of the rights of Palestinians** were broadcast on these channels.¹¹⁰ It should be noted that most of this was basic reporting of the words of a politician such as Anthony Blinken Secretary of State of the United States of America and Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party, yet other mentions were driven by journalists and anchors to frame a discussion or conversation.

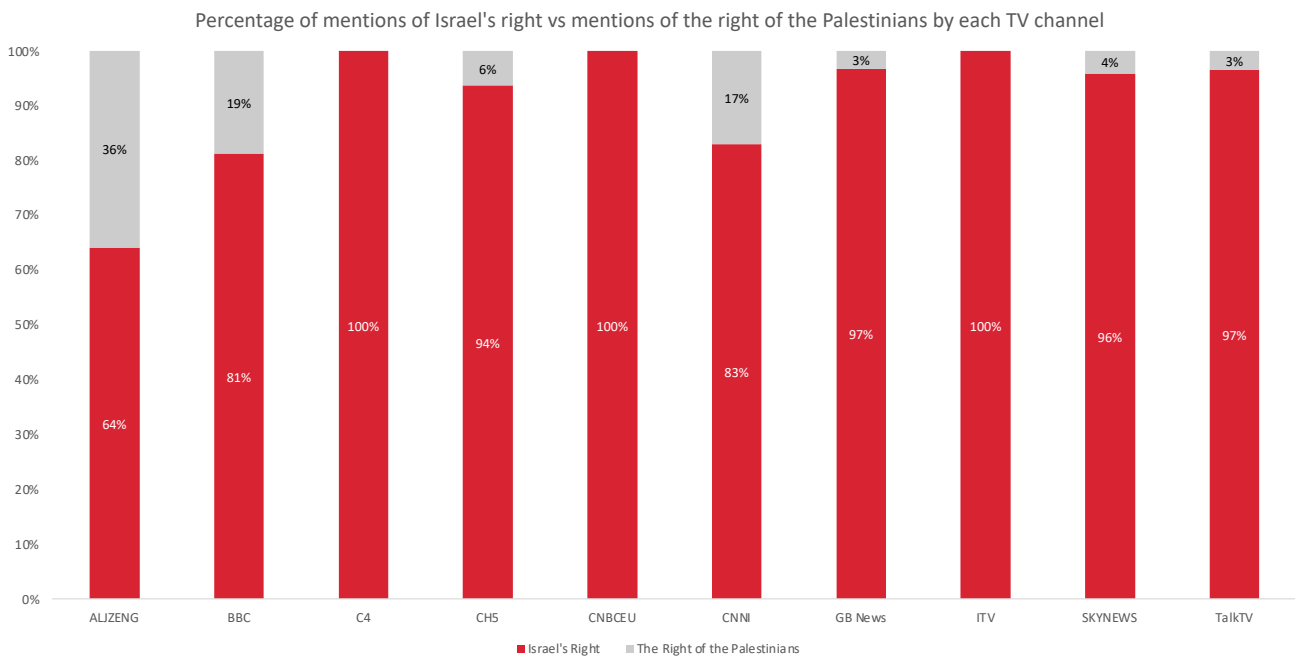


Figure 8.3 Mentions of Israel’s right outweighs Palestinian’s rights in all TV channels.

In online media, **Israel’s right to defend itself was mentioned 963 times.** It was featured or **discussed six times more than the rights of Palestinian people which only got 163 mentions** showing a clear distinction between the priority given to each of them.¹¹¹

108 Search terms: "Israels right" OR "the right of Israel" OR "Israel has a right" OR "Israel has the right"
 109 Search terms: "Palestine’s right/s" OR "the right/s of the Palestinians" OR "Palestinian rights" OR "the right to resist".
 110 Sky News, Talk TV and GB News
 111 ("Israeli right*" or "Israel's right*" or "right* of the Israel*") vs ("Palestinian right*" or "Palestine's right*" or "right* of the Palestin*")

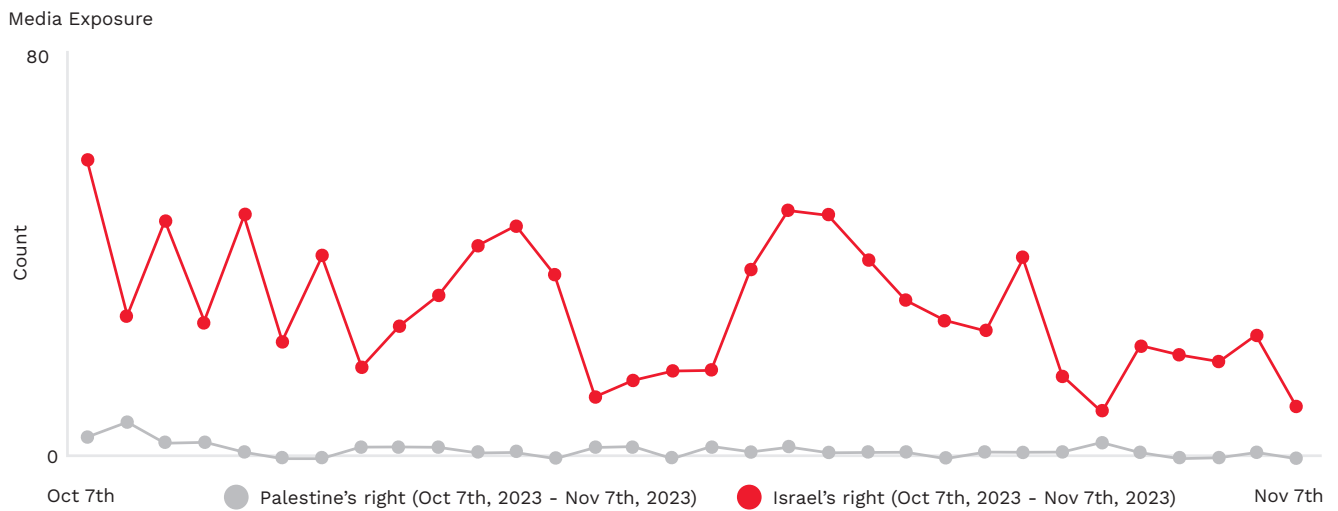


Figure 8.4 In Online media, Israel’s right was mentioned 6 times more than Palestinian rights.

8.3 Examples of journalists forwarding Israel’s right

Below are some of the examples which show how journalists have forwarded the right of Israel or Israelis’ rights in response to or as a challenge to pro-Palestinian guests or other officials.

1. Sky News’ Kay Burley responding to Ben Jamal, the Director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign said, “Israel has a right to defend itself, they are a small country, and they are surrounded, is the Israeli view, on many sides, by those that would do them harm and they have a responsibility to look after their people. They saw murderous actions on the weekend they feel that came from Hamas based in Gaza and they need to go into Gaza in order to neutralise those people.”¹¹²
2. The UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, was asked by Sky News’ Mark Austin, “Yeah, and do you support the right of Israel to hunt down and to capture those responsible for this?”¹¹³
Some guests challenged the narrative by asking if Palestinians also had the same rights.
3. The writer Andrew Fisher asked BBC Presenter Christian Fraser, “We’ve heard Israel has the right to defend itself, does Palestine? Israel has the right to secure borders, does Palestine?”¹¹⁴

112 Kay Burley talking to Ben Jamal on Sky News, Oct 12, 2023, 08:26 AM
 113 Mark Austin asking Francesca Albanese, Sky News, 10 October 2023, 18:46 PM
 114 Andrew Fisher talking to Christian Fraser, BBC News on Oct 09, 2023, 08:01 AM

8.4 Snapshot analysis of newspapers to show how events are framed

Print newspapers have featured Israel's war on Gaza prominently with much front page space dedicated to covering the war. One noticeable feature of this coverage has been the use of imagery which has shown Israeli aggression or Palestinian suffering and headlines which have favoured an Israeli position or narrative. The dehumanisation of Palestinians in this respect starts with the minimisation of their suffering, effectively rendering them invisible despite the huge numbers of those killed whilst focusing solely on the deaths of Israelis. When the devastation which Palestinians have been suffering in Gaza is visualised, it is interesting to note that the images do not always match the headlines, or the lead story being told. Dramatic images can be chosen for maximum visual impact, but when juxtaposed with a headline which favours a particular narrative it can be argued that this is deceiving.

1. **Daily Express misleading usage of imagery:** On the front page of The Daily Express on 10 October 2023, the image shows a picture of Gaza being bombed by the Israelis (which it does explain in the caption), but the headline reads, "Rishi's pledge: 'Terrorism will not prevail,'" which is referring to terrorism from Hamas. The image is very misleading and creates the impression that it is Hamas causing the damage in the image - which is untrue. The bombing was carried out by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).



Image 8.3 Daily Express, front page, 10 October 2023. Misleading imagery.

2. **Express Online misleading usage of imagery:** The Express online website tells the story of a survivor of 7 October attacking the BBC for being a platform for “terrorists”. The image shows a massive explosion from an Israeli bomb in Gaza and is not captioned appropriately, once again easily leading the reader to believe that the explosion has been caused by Hamas and not by Israel.¹¹⁵

3. **The Times misleading use of imagery:** A front-page news story in The Times headlined “Israel Shows Mutilated Babies” was accompanied by an image not of Israeli babies or deaths, but of badly wounded, bloody and crying Palestinian children following an Israeli bombing. Yet, despite the Palestinian deaths and injuries being more recent and more numerous (1,500 at the time) they are mentioned after the Israeli figure of 1,300 quoted in the story.¹¹⁶



Image 8.4 The Express online website tells the story of a survivor of 7 October attacking the BBC for being a platform for “terrorists”.

Image 8.5 The Times, front page, 13 October 2023. Misleading dehumanising image of Palestinian children.

115 Sharp, C. (2023). 'I survived 7 October terrorist attack - the BBC is a propaganda tool for Hamas.' [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1838497/hamas-israel-war-bbc-propaganda>

116 Times Newspaper 13 Oct 2023 Front Page

8.5 Dehumanisation of Palestinians

Insight: Israeli spokespeople have called Palestinians and Gazans “animals”, “human animals”, “inhuman animals” and “barbaric animals” as well as saying they “deserve to be bombed” without challenge.

Whilst the examples above shows some of the disparity between reporting on the lives of Palestinians compared with those of Israelis, there has been within TV broadcast and online news, a dehumanisation of the Palestinians as people. From the outset of the response to the Hamas attacks the language used by the Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant in describing Gazan’s as **“human animals”** was among the first overtly dehumanising words uttered by an Israeli politician towards Palestinians before the world’s media.¹¹⁷ Since then and despite the claims of Israeli officials like Tzipi Hotovely that Palestinians are not dehumanised by Israelis, various Israeli ministers have used incendiary language against Palestinians including statements such as **“the children of Gaza have brought this upon themselves.”**¹¹⁸ Whilst media outlets can and should report these statements by Israeli politicians, they should not be without context, and such language should not be used by the news outlets themselves. However, we see the questioning of the innocence of the people of Gaza across British media outlets on several occasions.

The primary function of pro-Israel voices mentioning the election of Hamas in Gaza is to tie the Gazan population with the actions of Hamas. Yet, as Amani Jamal, the Dean of Princeton School of Public School of International Affairs, pointed out on CNN, “What does it mean that the Palestinians elected Hamas, how much weight should you put on that question?”¹¹⁹ Amani’s response coupled with the polling by the Arab Barometer which measures political and public opinion in the Arab World shows that Hamas did not have mass support, neither in the 2006 election where they polled at 44% (mainly as a backlash at the perceived corruption of the Palestinian Authority) nor in the weeks preceding 7 October where two thirds of people said they had little or no trust and believing there to be widespread corruption in Hamas. The blurring of lines which suggests that the population in Gaza share the responsibility of Hamas’ attacks, by way of an election, was promoted by many media personalities.

117 Yoav Gallant video, Israeli defence minister orders ‘complete siege’ on Gaza, Al Jazeera English, Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2023/10/9/israeli-defence-minister-orders-complete-siege-on-gaza>

118 Shakir, O., Ahmed, Y., Kumar, A. (2023). We Are Seeing Urgent Signs of More Mutual Mass Atrocities to Come in Israel and Gaza. Human Rights Watch. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/20/we-are-seeing-urgent-signs-more-mutual-mass-atrocities-come-israel-and-gaza>

119 Amani Jamal speaks to Fareed Zakariya, Dec 3, 2023 3:38 PM, CNNI : “In 2006 first of all I want to sort of draw the attention of everyone that about fifty percent of the population of Gaza has been born since 2006 so they weren’t even born, so that’s fifty percent who weren’t even born but even when we go back to the day when we sort of dissect that 2006 election what we know is that Hamas won 44% of the popular vote so it was never that they had this landslide victory and we also know from 2006 a lot of that vote was based on combating corruption in the ranks of the Police Authority has succeeded because it had a platform holding the Palestinian Authority accountable for their largesse and their corruption, levels of corruption and their excesses in terms of the way they were governing. So, when we look at it today what do we know from polling data about the level of support Palestinians had for Hamas before the attacks what we know is that in the three to four weeks before 7 October two thirds of the people said they had no trust or little trust in the Hamas governing regime of Gaza and on the West Bank those low levels of trust are even lower. So, across the West Bank and Gaza there was very little support if you may a very little trust in the Hamas government only about a third of Gazan’s said they trusted that Government. More importantly 72% of Palestinians in Gaza said they felt that there was widespread corruption in the ranks of the Hamas government.”



Image 8.6 Screenshot from CNN showing Arab Barometer's polling in Gaza.

Despite the statistics about how Gazans feel about Hamas, there were several mentions of the election of Hamas. Some of these are as follows:

1. In an interview with Mustafa Barghouti the BBC newsreader Samantha Simmonds responded to the senior Palestinian politician after he stated: "We are not oppressing, Israelis are oppressing us, for a very long time." She said: "Israel would say you elected Hamas, which is an organisation committed to the destruction of Israel, and therefore they have to implement security. That is what they would say. But I want to ask you specifically about Hamas' actions today. Do you support them?"¹²⁰
2. Sky News presenter Trevor Phillips referred to the last elections in Gaza saying: "Gaza elected Hamas. And I think it is hard for somebody who has not been there and look people in the face to understand how it could be that there are 2.2 million people who everyone says the majority of whom are not aggressive and do not want to be a part of this, yet they elected what essentially is a terrorist death cult."¹²¹
3. Another example which went viral on social media and also led to an apology to the guest was when Liberal Democrat MP Layla Moran, who has family in Gaza, appeared on ITV Good Morning Britain. Presenter Richard Madeley asked her if she had any "indication" of the Hamas attack on 7 October.¹²² Madeley later apologised to Moran which she accepted.¹²³

¹²⁰ Samantha Simmonds interviews Mustafa Barghouti on BBC News, 07 October 2023, 20:18 PM

¹²¹ Trevor Phillips on Sunday Morning with Trevor Phillips on Sky News, 15 October 2023 8:56 AM

¹²² Richard Madeley on ITV Good Morning Britain interviewing Layla Moran on 17 October 2023

¹²³ PA Media (2023). Layla Moran accepts Richard Madeley's apology after Gaza question. The Guardian. [online] 18 Oct. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/oct/18/layla-moran-richard-madeley-apology-gaza>

Israeli politicians were also given platforms on some stations to use more dehumanising language saying explicitly that **Gazans were “animals”**. They were rarely if ever challenged.

1. One example of this was found on BBC Newsnight when presenter Mark Urban interviewed Palestinian political analyst Nour Odeh. The interview followed one conducted with the Israeli politician Danny Danon who serves in the Israeli Government. Danon responded to a question about the 7,000+ Gazans who had been killed and whether he was concerned about the diminishing support for Israelis as more Palestinians were killed. He responded by including the term **“barbaric animals.”** The presenter did **not challenge** the language.¹²⁴
2. Another instance of dehumanising language was when Dan Gillerman, a former Israeli Ambassador, called Palestinians in Gaza **“human animals”** on BBC Newsnight. He was also invited repeatedly onto Sky News. Gillerman told Sky News reporter Mark Austin that he was puzzled by the concern the world was showing towards the Palestinians before going on to label them as **“inhuman animals”** in the very next sentence. There was **no challenge** or pushback by the presenters to either of these racist and incendiary descriptions.
3. Despite the dehumanising descriptions by Israeli politicians, officials and commentators against Palestinians, a BBC article on dehumanising language published online about both sides using dehumanising language said, “Those observing the current conflict in Israel and Gaza will have heard voices from both sides refer to each other as “animals” and “beasts” in various forms.” No evidence was provided for Palestinians having used such language towards Israelis in the current conflict with plentiful evidence of the opposite being true.¹²⁵

8.5.1 Channel 4 platforms an IDF veteran who called for extermination of Palestinians.

One of the most egregious examples of allowing Israeli officials and others to dehumanise Palestinians came on Channel 4 which interviewed Ezra Yachin, an IDF veteran and member of the notorious ‘Stern Gang’ (“Lohamei Herut Israel Lehi”) and who was involved in the Deir Yassin massacre of Palestinians in 1948.¹²⁶ The Stern Gang also attempted to recruit Nazi Germany against the British in Palestine.¹²⁷ The 95-year-old had been reported as calling for the destruction of Palestinians saying, **“Erase them, their families, mothers and children. These animals can no longer live.”**¹²⁸

Channel 4’s presenter Matt Frei did not include any of this information in the introduction to the interview or during the lengthy interview with Yachin in which he repeated his early call to eliminate Palestinians in a more oblique manner – an opportunity Matt Frei gave him with the first question he asked;¹²⁹

124 Danny Dannon on HARDtalk BBC News, October 10 2023, 4:30 AM -5:01 AM

125 Galer, S.S. (2023). The harm caused by dehumanising language. [online] www.bbc.com. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20231030-the-real-life-harm-caused-by-dehumanising-language>

126 Uddin, R. (2023). Israeli veteran, 95, rallies troops to ‘erase’ Palestinian children. [online] Middle East Eye. Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-veteran-ezra-yachin-soldiers-erase-children>

127 Aderet, O. (2023). Zionist Militia’s Efforts to Recruit Nazis in Fight Against the British Are Revealed. (n.d.). Haaretz. [online] Available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-06-21/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/zionist-military-org-efforts-to-recruit-nazis-in-fight-against-the-british-are-revealed/00000188-d93a-d5fc-ab9d-db7ae0ea0000>

128 Ibid

129 Al Jazeera. (2023). The Deir Yassin massacre: Why it still matters 75 years later. [online] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/9/the-deir-yassin-massacre-why-it-still-matters-75-years-later>

Matt Frei: “Do you think the population is also guilty for Hamas, for the existence of Hamas?”

Yachin: “Most of them, I don’t say all of them, most of them.”

Matt Frei: “Does that mean they are a fair target for the IDF?”

Yachin: “We don’t want to kill every Palestinian. We want our enemy not to exist, not to be alive, because they don’t have the right to live. But if they take a shield, the women and children, we are not responsible for their life.”

The conclusion of the interview allowed Yachin the chance to further dehumanise the people of Gaza and Palestinians:

Yachin: “We fought, maybe they call this a terrorist, for the love of our people. We fought. They terrorise for the hate of our people, not for the love of themselves. For the hate of our people.”

Frei: Thank you very much.

Matt Frei did **not challenge** this statement.

8.5.2 Case Study: Far-right Israeli Ambassador to UK left unchallenged in many interviews.

The Israeli Ambassador for Britain, Tzipi Hotovely is an ultra-nationalist politician and has been described by many as a far-right politician who was appointed to the UK in 2020. Many in the British Jewish community have also criticised her appointment given her hardline views. Examples of these are as following;

1. Rejecting Palestinian statehood and supporting a Greater Israel spanning over the entire land of Palestine
 - **In 2015 Hotovely said; “This land is ours. All of it is ours. We did not come here to apologise for that.”¹³⁰**
 - **In 2015 Hotovely said: “between the sea and the Jordan River, there needs to be one state, only the state of Israel.”¹³¹**
2. **Hotovely has repeated that “from the river to the sea” is a genocidal chant when used by pro-Palestine protesters.¹³²**
3. **She called the Nakba an Arab lie on her first event with the Board of Deputies of British Jews.¹³³**

130 Press, A. (2015). Israel’s new deputy foreign minister: ‘This land is ours. All of it is ours’. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/22/israels-new-deputy-foreign-minister-this-land-is-ours-all-of-it-is-ours>

131 Eichner, I. (2015). Deputy foreign minister Hotovely tells world: Don’t be afraid of me. Ynetnews. [Online] <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4657913,00.html>

132 UnHerd Staff (2023). Israeli Ambassador debates ‘From the River to the Sea’. [online] UnHerd. Available at: <https://unherd.com/newsroom/israeli-ambassador-debates-from-the-river-to-the-sea>

133 Middle East Eye (2023). Israeli ambassador calls Nakba an ‘Arab lie’. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHYBklCUdiw>

4. She also claimed there was no “humanitarian crisis” in Gaza 10 days after the Israeli blockade in the current invasion of the Strip.¹³⁴

Despite this history of supremacist views and anti-Palestinian racism, **Hotovely was platformed or referenced a total of 44 times by broadcasters** between 7 October 2023 and 7 November 2023. None of Hotovely’s previous comments or her position of denying the right of a Palestinian State was referenced, nor were her far-right credentials. Despite her views, GB News gave Hotovely one of its honorary titles: the Greatest Britain at the behest of Lady Colin Campbell.¹³⁵ Hotovely has gone on to reject the idea of a two-state solution in an interview with Sky News on 14 December 2023.¹³⁶

Hotovely made a variety of claims on British news channels often repeating the debunked fabrications of beheaded babies and other unevidenced claims. Some of the other inaccurate claims made by Hotovely and left unchallenged on British News channels are listed below. They are not a complete list but highlight the extent to which this one individual has not been held to scrutiny by British journalists;

1. BBC Newsnight, 11 October 2023: “It is so clear when children are brutally executed in front of their parents, just yesterday we exposed and it was published by the BBC that 40 bodies of babies, their heads were cut off“. She went on to say: “We have seen the bodies of those babies and children and actually this is evidence-based.” Neither the Israeli government nor the Israeli Defence Force had verified this at the time and yet Hotovely was **not challenged**. We look at this false claim in greater detail in our section on Claims 10.1.1.
2. Channel 4 News, 9 October 2023: Hotovely repeatedly stated Gaza was not occupied by Israel since 2005. But she was **not challenged**.
3. BBC Breakfast, 8 October 2023: Hotovely made a number of false claims without being challenged by the presenters. She said:
 - a. **“All this time Israel was giving credit to the Palestinians.”** She was not challenged despite the mass number of killings of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank since the 2008 blockade of Gaza. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs has documented 6,780 Palestinian fatalities since 2008 and before 7 October.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Bir, B. (2023). There is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza: Israeli ambassador to Britain. [online] Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/there-is-no-humanitarian-crisis-in-gaza-israeli-ambassador-to-britain/3022248>

¹³⁵ Lady Colin Campbell on GB News on Nov 03, 2023, 04:52 AM

¹³⁶ Sky News. (2023). Israel-Hamas war: Ambassador says Israel will not accept two-state solution. [online] Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/israel-hamas-war-ambassador-says-israel-will-not-accept-two-state-solution-13029909>

¹³⁷ OCHA (2023). Data on casualties. [online] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory. Available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>

The following statistics and image from the UN OCHA show that “the credit to the Palestinians” involved the murder of almost 7,000 civilians since the occupation of Gaza.

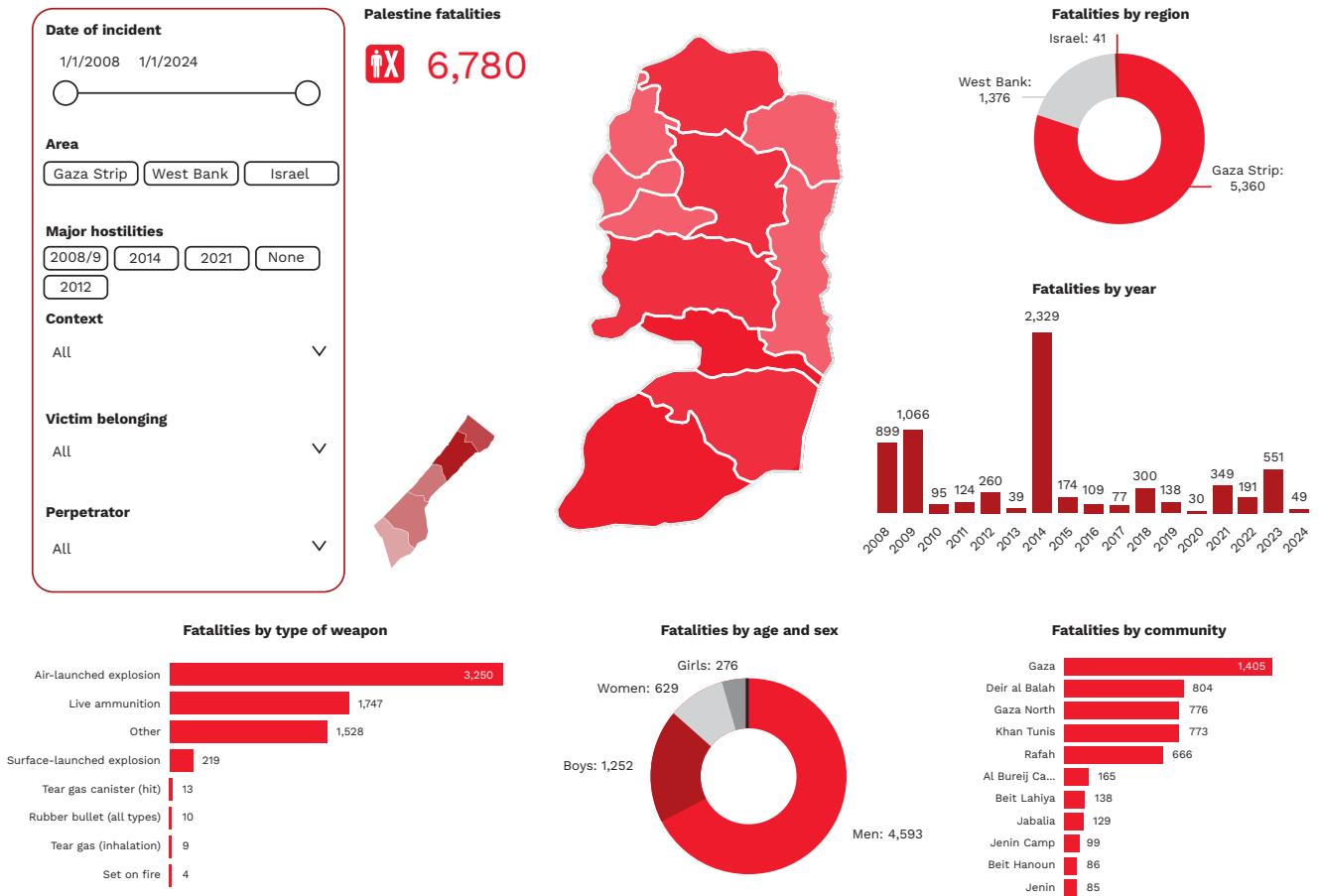


Image 8.7 Screenshot from UN OCHA

b. “The majority of people in the West Bank support Hamas.” She was **not challenged** on this point. It has been reported that the support for Hamas in the West Bank has increased with a December poll showing 44% of people in the West Bank supporting Hamas.¹³⁸ However, this cannot be divorced from the context of the fact that over 350 Palestinians having been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces and settlers since 7 October as well as facing constant harassment.¹³⁹ This context was not raised as a challenge to the Ambassador’s framing of the wider Palestinian population.

c. “As we go deeply into the Gaza Strip, we realise every second house has this entrance into a terror city.” “Think about it as a ghost city turning into a terror city.”¹⁴⁰ None of these points were challenged.

d. “Go south we have shelters.”¹⁴¹ “We are not targeting civilians in the South.”¹⁴² Gazans, UN agencies, medical professionals and journalists have all reported on how Palestinian civilians have been attacked in the so-called safe zones in the South.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the U.N. has stated that it was “not possible” to create a safe zone in the South of Gaza. She was **not challenged**.¹⁴⁴ Henry Mace who is the Chief features writer for the Financial Times Newspaper posted to his followers on X how BBC Radio 4 Today did not challenge Israeli attacks against the UN and claim that there is a safe zone in Gaza where civilians can go, despite him finding the opposite to be true according to Martin Griffiths of the UN.¹⁴⁵

138 Laub, K. (2023). Palestinian poll shows a rise in Hamas support and close to 90% wanting US-backed Abbas to resign. AP News [online] Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-palestinians-opinion-poll-wartime-views-a0baade915619cd070b-5393844bc4514>

139 Asi, Y. (2024). The Occupied West Bank Since October 7: Movement Restrictions and Collective Punishment. [online] Arab Center Washington DC. Available at: <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-occupied-west-bank-since-october-7-movement-restrictions-and-collective-punishment>

140 Tzipi Hotovely on Breakfast with Kay Burley on Sky News, 14 November 2023

141 Tzipi Hotovely on Kay Burley Live, 16 October 2023 7:38 AM

142 Tzipi Hotovely on BBC News, 29 October 2023, 19:17 PM

143 Ahmed, K. (2023). Airstrikes leave no safe place for Palestinians in southern Gaza. The Guardian. [online] 3 Dec. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/03/airstrikes-leave-no-safe-place-for-palestinians-in-southern-gaza>

144 Donmez, BB. (2023). So-called safe zones declared by Israel risk becoming zones of disease in Gaza: UNICEF. Anadolu Ajansı [online] Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/so-called-safe-zones-declared-by-israel-risk-becoming-zones-of-disease-in-gaza-unicef/3073688>

145 Mance, H. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/henrymance/status/1736678915974758610>

Martin Griffith is a British diplomat who currently serves as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the United Nations.

Sky News reporter Mark Stone did produce a separate report on the south of Gaza challenging the Israeli narrative that it was a safe area, something his report showed was not true.¹⁴⁶

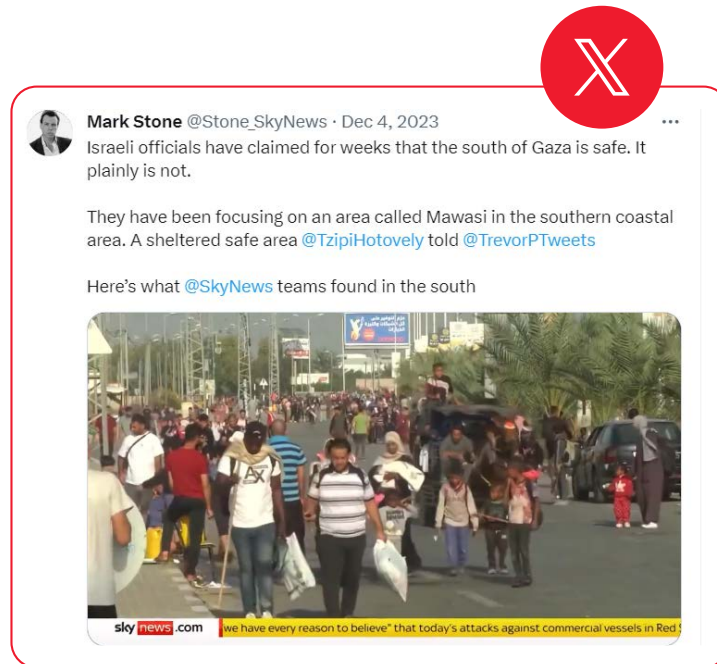


Image 8.7 Mark Stone on X, December 2023 showing South of Gaza not safe.

8.6 Recommendations

- Reporting of events should be balanced and not favour a particular narrative.
- The lives of Israeli civilians should not be prioritised over the lives of Palestinian civilians, especially once the Palestinian deaths outnumber Israeli deaths.
- News outlets should avoid using Israeli framing of the conflict as the “Israel-Hamas” conflict, and should use more accurate phrasing, such as “Israel-Gaza” conflict.
- Media outlets should not prioritise Israel’s right to defend itself over the rights of Palestinians to self-determination and to legally resist occupation under international law.
- Israeli spokespeople should not be left unchallenged by journalists when they use racist and dehumanising language about Palestinians.
- Imagery should reflect what is being said in the headline and article in order to avoid misleading audiences.

146 Stone, M. (2023) Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/Stone_SkyNews/status/1394731857099452419

LANGUAGE

9. LANGUAGE



9.1 Insight [TV Broadcasters]

- Where emotive language is used, Israelis are about 11 times more likely to be referred to as victims of attacks, compared to Palestinians.
- In broadcast TV clips, 2 out of every 3 emotive terms used were for Israeli deaths. Just 1 in 10 were used for Palestinian deaths.
- Over 70% of the term's atrocities, slaughter and massacre were used in reference to the attacks against Israelis.
- Terms used to describe the deaths of Palestinians are sometimes qualified with phrases such as "what they say is a massacre."

9.1 Insight [Online News]

- In online British news outlets emotive terms were found to be four times more prevalent when describing the actions of Hamas against Israeli's compared with descriptions of the killings of Palestinians or civilians in Gaza.
- 68% of emotive terms were used to describe violence towards Israelis on 7 October or on another occasion with 33% found on the Mail Online website alone.

9.2 Methodology (broadcast)

The use of language has been a major battleground in how media outlets have been judged to have covered events from 7 October onwards. Anecdotal examples show how different terms have been used for actors and their deaths depending on who they are. The use of passive language to describe Palestinian dead vs Israeli killed is something which has been found in previous research as well as in the current conflict. A 2011 study conducted by the Glasgow Media Group on the news broadcasts of the BBC, the differences in the language used by journalists for Israelis and Palestinians was documented.¹⁴⁷ The study found that the BBC used terms such as "atrocities", "brutal murder", "mass murder", "brutal cold-blooded murder", "lynching" and "massacre" to describe the deaths of Israelis, and that the word "terrorist" was often associated with Palestinians.¹⁴⁸ Studies during the current Israeli war on Gaza have showed a similar pattern with researchers Jan Lietava and Dana Najjar showing how BBC coverage used words such as murder(ed) 101 times in reference to Israeli's and just once for Palestinians. Similarly, the word slaughter(ed) was used exclusively for Israelis, whilst humanising terms such as grandfather/grandmother, husband, son, grandson were used far more frequently for Israeli victims.¹⁴⁹ The UK based investigative platform declassified analysed the front pages of Washington Post, New York Times, Guardian, Times, and BBC – showing how they reduce

147 Glasgow Media Group (2011). War and Conflict. [online] Available at: <https://www.glasgowmediagroup.org/downloads/17-war-and-conflict>

148 Ibid

149 Chalabi, M. (2023). Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/MonaChalabi/status/1740767114754232703/photo/2>
The full dataset can be accessed here: github.com/liet-git/bbc-bias

Palestinians to numbers and cover Israel in ways reflecting their governments' priorities.¹⁵⁰ U.S. based investigative platform the Intercept also looked at the coverage of Israel's war on Gaza in The New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times which they found showed a consistent bias against Palestinians. One of their findings was how these newspapers which heavily shape public perception in the United States disproportionately emphasised Israeli deaths in the conflict; using emotive language to describe the killings of Israelis, but not Palestinians.¹⁵¹

To investigate broadcast media's use of language around the Israel-Gaza War, CfMM analysed news coverage surrounding the following emotive search terms: **atrocitiy, atrocities, barbaric, barbarism, butcher, butchered, butchering, horrific, horrifying, massacre, massacres, massacring, massacred, murderous, slaughter, slaughtered, slaughtering.** The terms included those cited in an email and letter by BBC journalists regarding the Corporation's inconsistent use of language, as well as similar words which have been noted after viewing news footage. The terms were used to search across broadcast channels between 7 October and 7 November on all the TV channels being assessed in this report. The **terms (including repeats) were used on a total of 20,374 occasions.**¹⁵²

In our selected analysis of terms from across the TV landscape there was a clear statistical bias in favour of Israel and Israeli victims when describing the attacks on them using the emotive adjectives above. The random sample analysis indicates that in broadcasts where emotive language is used, **Israelis are about 11 times as likely to be referred to as victims of attacks, compared to Palestinians.**

The following graph shows this disparity where mentions of attacks on Israelis are compared against the mentions of attacks on Palestinians. The four collocates analysed are shown as well as how frequently they appeared among the corpus of broadcast news clip transcriptions which were analysed. "The" is the most popular collocate and thus has position (1). **On 91 occasions emotive terms were used to describe attacks on Israelis. The corresponding figure for terms used to describe attacks on Palestinians was 8.**

150 Shabibi, C.L.N. (2023). Analysis: How the UK and US media dehumanise Palestinians. [online] Declassified Media Ltd. Available at: <https://www.declassifieduk.org/analysis-how-the-uk-and-us-media-dehumanise-palestinians>

151 Johnson, A. and Ali, O. (2024). Coverage of Gaza War in the New York Times and Other Major Newspapers Heavily Favored Israel, Analysis Shows. [online] The Intercept. Available at: <https://theintercept.com/2024/01/09/newspapers-israel-palestine-bias-new-york-times>

152 See Appendix A for table showing frequency of terms.

Comparison of mentions of attacks against Israelis vs attacks against Palestinians.

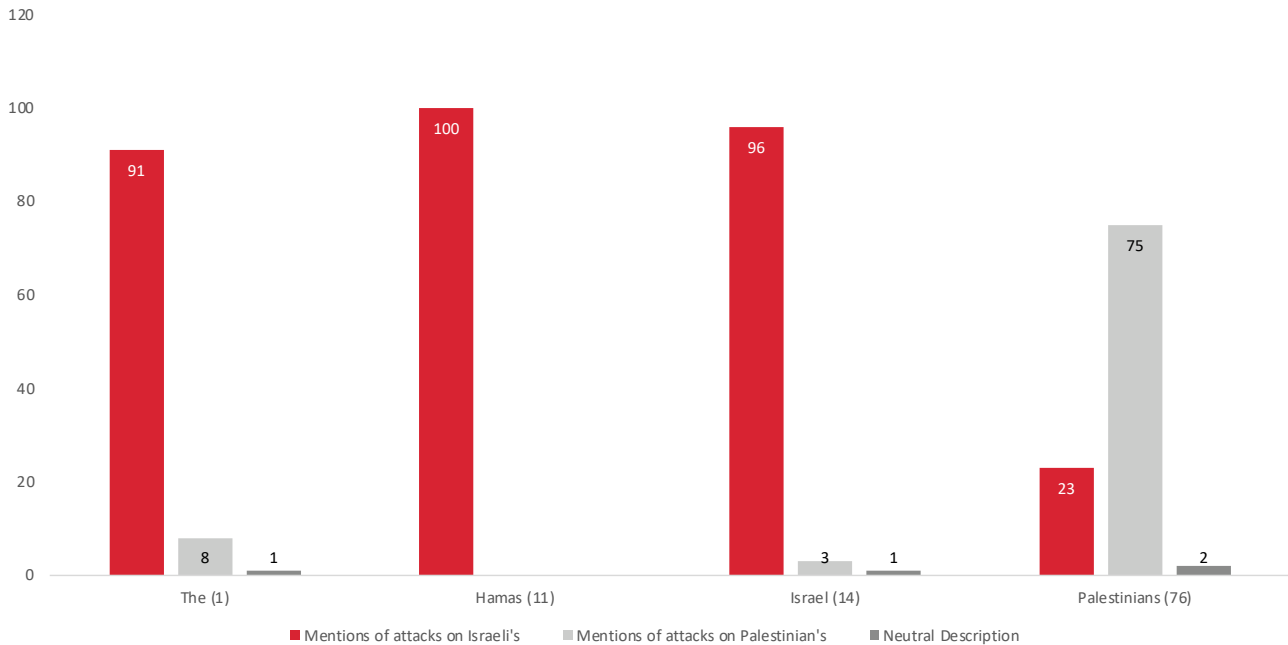


Figure 9.1 Comparison of mentions of attacks against Israelis vs attacks against Palestinians.

CfMM analysis (see below) also shows that **two out of every three emotive terms used in TV broadcasts were used in conjunction with the 7 October attacks or deaths of Israelis. Just one in ten were used in conjunction with the deaths of Palestinians or the bombardment of Gaza.**¹⁵³ Sometimes attacks against Israelis were mentioned in a more definitive manner (without any qualification) by news reporters and described as such by commentators. (See below). The claims of some BBC journalists (see below) that words such as *“massacre”, “atrocities“* and *“slaughter“* on broadcast TV are selectively used depending on the identity of perpetrator/victims are borne out by our analysis.

9.3 Journalists and activists question inconsistencies in language

Journalists at the BBC have raised the issue of language and the terms used to describe the attacks against Israeli civilians and military personal on 7 October. In a letter sent to the Al Jazeera English Channel, eight anonymous BBC staff stated that words such as *“massacre”* and *“atrocities”*; *“have been reserved only for Hamas, framing the group as the only instigator and perpetrator of violence in the region. This is inaccurate but aligns with the BBC’s overall coverage”*.¹⁵⁴ The Times reported how BBC journalists have allegedly been crying at work over the Corporation’s *“dehumanizing of*

153 Based on a random sample of 100 occasions for each word where the words *“atrocities”, “massacre”* and *“slaughter”* were used.

154 Safdar, A. (2023). As Israel pounds Gaza, BBC journalists accuse broadcaster of bias. [online] Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/23/as-israel-pounds-gaza-bbc-journalists-accuse-broadcaster-of-bias>.

Palestinians.”¹⁵⁵ Rami Ruhayem, a BBC correspondent based in Beirut, said that he had **“the gravest possible concerns”** about the output as he **accused his employer (the BBC) of valuing Israeli lives more highly than Palestinians’**.¹⁵⁶ In an email sent to Tim Davie, Rami stated, **“Words like ‘massacre’, ‘slaughter’, and ‘atrocities’ are being used—prominently in reference to actions by Hamas, but hardly, if at all, in reference to actions by Israel.”**¹⁵⁷ He added; “When the BBC uses such language selectively, with the standard of selection being the identity of the perpetrators/victims, the BBC is making a statement—albeit implicit. **It implies that the lives of one group of people are more valuable than the lives of another.**”¹⁵⁸

In recent days and outside of the dates of analysis for this report, a pertinent example of the selectiveness of language was broadcast on ITV’s Good Morning. The former Conservative MP Lord Ed Vaizey became irate at the Daily Mirror journalist Kevin Maguire, accusing Maguire of using “emotive language.” Maguire said Israel would find it more difficult to confront Hamas after “slaughtering so many.”¹⁵⁹ Vaizey defended Israel saying, “The idea they are going to Gaza to slaughter people is nonsense.” Vaizey had no issue with Maguire describing the killing of Israelis as “barbaric” and attempted to expand further on why he thought the word slaughter wasn’t appropriate to describe Israeli killing of Gazans before the presenter took the conversation in a different direction.

The journalist Mariam Barghouti based in Ramallah in the West Bank was involved in a heated exchange with Sky News presenter Mark Austin who claimed, “when dozens of Palestinians are killed, we call it a slaughter.”¹⁶⁰ Barghouti interrupted this by repeating the word, “thousands” to clarify how many Palestinians were being killed. Barghouti later told the Al Jazeera English programme, The Listening Post that the framing and language being used by journalists was not just “vicious” but a pro-genocidal position being encouraged by editors and policy makers.¹⁶¹

9.4 Analysis of terms featured on TV broadcasts

Across the TV news outlets in our scope, we analysed the usage of the “emotive” terms outlined above.¹⁶² Care needs to be taken when deriving conclusions from this data. The BBC’s significantly greater usage of these terms is likely due to its wider coverage across its multi-channel operation and its 24-hour news channel. However, from this set of data, we conducted two analyses on these “emotive” terms and show that they are most frequently used with Hamas as the actor and Israel as the party on receiving end.

155 AF Media Correspondent (2024). BBC staff ‘crying at work’ over Israel-Gaza coverage. www.thetimes.co.uk. [online]. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bbc-staff-crying-at-work-in-divide-over-israel-gaza-coverage-l5g2bk0nf>

156 ibid

157 Jadaliya (2023). Turmoil at the BBC: ‘Gravest Possible Concerns’ at Its Gaza Coverage. [online] Jadaliyya - جدلية. Available at: <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/45466>

158 ibid

159 Ed Vaizey and Kevin Maguire on Good Morning Britain, , ITV1, Nov 27, 2023, 06:41 AM

160 Mark Austin interviews Mariam Barghouti on Sky News

161 Mariam Barghouti on The Listening Post, 10 December 2023, Al Jazeera English available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p535nBSjEc4>

162 See Table 2 in Appendix A for number of clips found on each broadcaster.

9.4.1 How Israel, Hamas and Palestinians are discussed around these emotive terms.

The approach used, was to look at a series of randomly sampled instances of the “emotive” search terms and analyse the type of language used. The aim was to establish if there is any truth to the claims made that the language being used favoured Israelis as opposed to Palestinians. We analysed 100 instances across each of the following 4 collocates:

- **“The” as the most frequently used collocate.**
- **“Hamas” as the first party in the conflict in the collocate table.**
- **“Israel” as the second party in the conflict in the collocate table.**
- **“Palestinians” and “Gaza” (despite them not being in the top 20 collocates) given their importance in the conflict.**

“The”: An analysis of randomly sampled 100 instances of the top collocate (*the*), collocating with the emotive search terms, showed an overwhelming bias towards Israelis as victims. **Israelis are about 11 times as likely to be referred to as victims of attacks, compared to Palestinians.** There were:

- **91 occasions where the collocate referred to attacks on Israelis.**
- **8 instances which referred to attacks on Palestinians.**
- **1 mention of atrocities referred to an entirely different issue not related to the conflict.**

“HAMAS”: The first identifier of a specific group, people or nation among the collocates was Hamas. An analysis of 100 random mentions of Hamas when it collocates with the emotive search terms shows:

- **100 occasions where Hamas was referenced as the attacking party.**

“ISRAEL”: The next most frequent identifier of a particular group, people or nation is *Israel*. An analysis of 100 random mentions of *Israel* when it collocates with the emotive search terms shows:

- **96 mentions of Israel being attacked.**
- **3 mentions of Israel carrying out attacks on Gaza or Palestinians.**
- **1 neutral description.**

“PALESTINIANS”: An analysis of 100 random mentions of the term *Palestinians* which is ranked as the 76th most frequent collocate showed that:

- **39 were mentions of what is happening against Palestinians in Gaza i.e. where Palestinians were rightly explained as the victims .**
- **28 of the mentions of the terms above occurred with qualifiers e.g. “what the Palestinians are calling a massacre”.**
- **8 referred to historical killings against Palestinians.**
- **23 of the mentions of the terms referred to the deaths of Israelis.**

The conclusion from the analysis is that in the usage of these emotive terms, it is Israeli deaths that are privileged above those of Palestinians.

9.4.2 Analysis of specific “emotive” terms – “atrocities”, “massacres” and “slaughter”

The terms mentioned in BBC journalist Rami Ruhayem’s letter namely “atrocities”, “slaughter” and “massacre” were assessed to establish if there was any clear bias in favour of one side or the other when describing their actions or what was perpetrated upon them.

“ATROCITIES”: An analysis of 100 random mentions of the term atrocities showed that:

- **73 references were to the attacks against Israel on 7 October or attacks by Hamas.**
- **6 references were to atrocities against Palestinians or those in Gaza.**
- **23 were either irrelevant to the conflict or had an unclear referent.**

“MASSACRE”: An analysis of 100 random mentions of the term *massacre* showed that:

- **77 references were to the attacks against Israel on 7 October or attacks by Hamas.**
- **13 references to massacre against Palestinians or those in Gaza.**
- **10 were either irrelevant to the conflict or had an unclear referent.**

“SLAUGHTER”: An analysis of 100 random mentions of the term *slaughter* showed that:

- **69 references were to the attacks against Israel on 7 October or attacks by Hamas.**
- **14 references to massacre against Palestinians or those in Gaza.**
- **18 were either irrelevant to the conflict or had an unclear referent.**

The conclusion from the analysis is that it is Israeli deaths which are overwhelmingly described using very emotive terms with over 70% of the three emotive terms (atrocities, massacre, slaughter) used exclusively for this purpose.

9.5 Use of terms in Online news

A different approach was taken in analysing online news coverage as that used to assess broadcast TV. This was because of the limitations of the online monitoring tool in delivering entire article scripts.

The same terms from the TV broadcast section were used in keyword searches to determine their frequencies close to two named identifiers in the conflict: Israel and Palestine/Gaza (one term yields very few results). The use of these adjectives was charted using Meltwater news analysis, by looking at how closely these terms are placed in connection with acts of violence in Israel and Palestine (Palestine and Gaza combined).¹⁶³

¹⁶³ atrocity or atrocities or barbaric or barbarism or butcher or butchered or butchering or horrific or horrifying or massacre or massacres or massacring or massacred or murderous or slaughter or slaughtered or slaughtering

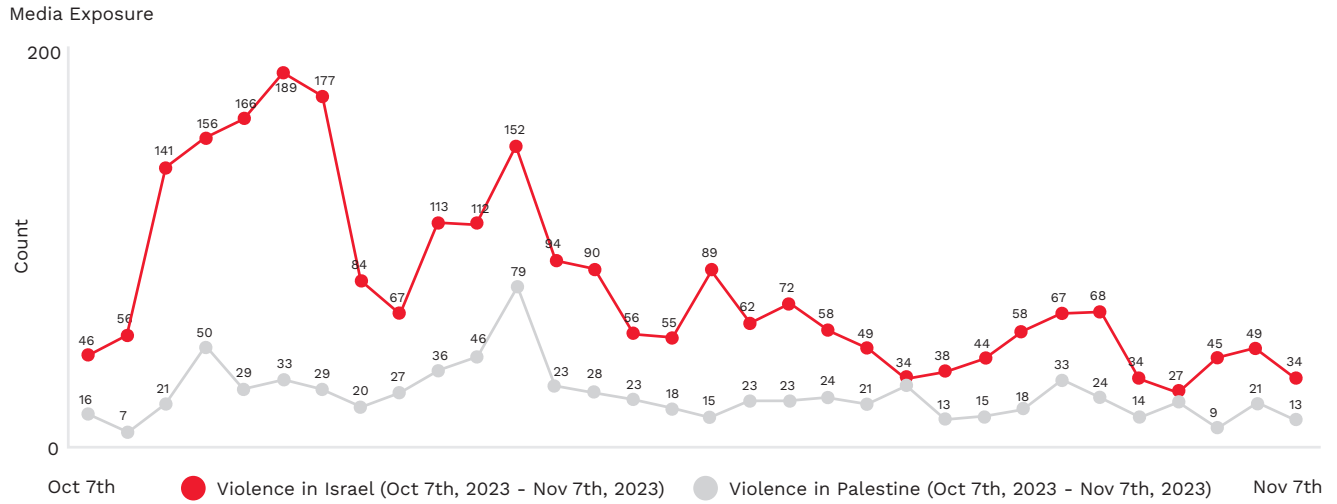


Figure 9.2 Online mentions of violence-relevant terms in the context of Israel and (Gaza or Palestine)

The graph primarily shows: a comparison between the frequencies of the chosen keywords (e.g., massacre, slaughter) near Israel (blue) or Palestine/Gaza (green). There is a very **high frequency (3.2 times) of these keywords in the Israeli context (2,582) in contrast to the Palestinian context (813)**, which suggests that these keywords might have been used more frequently to describe the violence in Israel rather than in Palestine/Gaza. This is indicative of a substantial language-related bias.

We sorted the results by outlets and some outlets were using these keywords more frequently than others.

Outlets	Percentage
Mail Online	23%
The Independent	7%
Daily Express	7%
Sky News	7%
The Telegraph	7%
The Guardian	6%
London Evening Standard	4%
Reuters	4%
BBC	4%
The i Paper (inews.co.uk)	4%
Sunday Mirror	3%
Jewish News	3%
Jewish Chronicle	3%
PA	3%
GB News	2%
ITV	2%
The Sun	2%
Total	100%

Table 9.1 Percentage of keywords by outlets all articles between 7 October – 7 November

However, it was not entirely clear how the keywords were actually used in context. Mentions in the Israeli context could be about violence in Palestine, or on the contrary, mentions in the Palestinian context per se could still be about the Hamas attack in Israel, as a reference to the 7 October attacks. Hence, a cross-section from both sides was further examined to confirm or reject the bias. We attempted to look further into how these terms are used in their context by taking a sample of articles from both sides.

The first 10 article samples were chosen from four dates (7 October, October 18, October 28, November 6) to ensure a good spread of the Israel and Palestine context result feeds, making 40 articles on each side and 80 in total.¹⁶⁴ There were repetitions of samples due to the publication of the same wire articles across several outlets, and it also shows that wire agencies significantly influenced the copy of news outlets.¹⁶⁵ The objective was to weigh whether these mentions were about Israel or Palestine to cross-examine the validity of the contrast shown in the graph.

164 Randomly appearing in the Meltwater feed results

165 Randomly appearing in the Meltwater feed results

Table 9.2 Keywords in context. Highlighted ones actually refer to the opposite context (e.g. found in Palestinian context but referring to Israeli context)

Date	Israeli context results	Outlet	Palestinian context results	Outlet
Oct 7	horrific attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians (BBC)	BBC	Israeli forces struck a high-rise tower in Gaza (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	horrific attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians (London Evening Standard)	London Evening Standard	perpetrated by Palestinian terrorists (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	barbaric assault on Israel and its citizens (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph	Gaza Strip Hamas's murderous (The Guardian)	The Guardian
	atrocities against the Israeli people (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	horrific scenes, including Palestinian groups celebrating (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	day of unprecedented massacres of Israeli civilians (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph	Palestinian militants slaughtering innocent civilians (Daily Express)	Daily Express
	attacks in Israel, calling them "horrific" (The Guardian)	The Guardian	Hamas's murderous attack (The Guardian)	The Guardian
	Israeli civilians are butchered (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph	'horrific' attacks by Palestinian militants (Metro)	Metro
	massacre in one Israeli community (BBC)	BBC	Israel's massacre in Gaza (Jewish News)	Jewish News
	horrific impact on Israeli civilians (The Guardian)	The Guardian	"horrific" attacks by Palestinian militants (London Evening Standard)	London Evening Standard
	unequivocally condemns the horrific attacks (Sky News)	Sky News	"horrific" attacks by Palestinian militants from the Gaza Strip (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail

Date	Israeli context results	Outlet	Palestinian context results	Outlet
Oct 18	horrific events in Israel (The New European)	The New European	Israeli families to slaughter indiscriminately (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	Israeli families to slaughter (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	bombing of the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza as an "atrocious" (London Evening Standard)	London Evening Standard
	planned massacre in Israel (The Guardian)	The Guardian	Hamas terrorists who broke out of Gaza and went on a murderous (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	horrific attack on Israel (Daily Express)	Daily Express	scenes at the hospital last night were horrifying. The people of Gaza (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	murderous onslaught on Israel (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph	ignore the slaughter in Gaza (The Guardian)	The Guardian
	Israelis were slaughtered (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	Netanyahu said "barbaric terrorists" in Gaza (Daily Express)	Daily Express
	Israel is plunging headfirst into slaughter (The Guardian)	The Guardian	Ahli Arab Hospital yesterday has brought the massacre in Gaza (Sky News)	Sky News
	massacres carried out by Israel (Sky News)	Sky News	described as "massacres" in Gaza (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	accused Israel of causing a 'massacre.' (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	ongoing massacre of Palestinians (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph
	barbaric acts of terrorism in Israel (London Evening Standard)	London Evening Standard	what happened in Gaza, that atrocity (Sunday Mirror)	Sunday Mirror

Date	Israeli context results	Outlet	Palestinian context results	Outlet
Oct 28	Gaza Strip are facing a war of genocide and massacres committed by the Israeli (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	Hamas terrorist attack on Israeli settlements near Gaza (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	Hamas terrorists massacred (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	slaughtered 1,400 Israelis three weeks ago in a barbaric (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	slaughtered 1,400 Israelis (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	behind the massacre unfolding in Gaza (BBC)	BBC
	terrorist group which massacred 1,400 civilians (Daily Express)	Daily Express	massacre taking place in Gaza (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph
	military response to Hamas’s atrocities (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph	justify the horrific attacks by Hamas (iNews)	iNews
	massacre in Israel as Hamas (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	Palestinians slaughtered in their thousands (The Guardian)	The Guardian
	Hamas stormed Israel and slaughtered 1,400 people (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph	Gaza, stop the massacre (Metro)	Metro
	Hamas’s massacre of about 1,400 Israelis (The Guardian)	The Guardian	Since the Oct 7 atrocities (The Telegraph)	The Telegraph
	Hamas massacre of more than 1,400 (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	After Hamas’s atrocities (The Guardian)	The Guardian
	Hamas terrorist atrocity in Israel (Jewish News)	Jewish News	the situation in Gaza is horrific (Daily Express)	Daily Express

Date	Israeli context results	Outlet	Palestinian context results	Outlet
Nov 6	massacring of Israeli civilians (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	Israel's retaliation for the October massacre, scores of Palestinians have been killed (London Evening Standard)	London Evening Standard
	Israel and slaughtered 1,400 people (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	protests against the massacre of Gaza (Daily Express)	Daily Express
	massacres in Israel (Sky News)	Sky News	horrific attacks on civilians in Gaza (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	atrocities against Israel (The Economist)	The Economist	butchered hundreds of people. Israel says 1,400 (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail
	Hamas's murderous assault (The Guardian)	The Guardian	toll on civilians in Gaza has been horrifying (The Guardian)	The Guardian
	butchered hundreds of people (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	massacre going on in Gaza (The Morning Star)	The Morning Star
	massacre of 1,400 Israeli citizens (iNews)	iNews	killing thousands of children in Gaza, committing atrocities (iNews)	iNews
	Hamas conducted its murderous rampage (The Guardian)	The Guardian	situation in Gaza as "horrifying" (The Independent)	The Independent
	Israelis after the massacres that they have endured (BBC)	BBC	horrific scenes more than 10,000 Palestinians (The Economist)	The Economist
	stormed into Israel and slaughtered 1,400 people (Daily Mail)	Daily Mail	this horrific conflict in Gaza (Sky News)	Sky News

As it appears from the sample, 59 of 80 (72%) mentions were true to their context: keywords in the Israeli context indicated violence in Israel and this was the same for Palestine. However, 17 out of 40 (43%) mentions of keywords in the Palestinian context referred to the violence in Israel whilst only 4 out of 40 (10%) mentions on the Israeli side refer to the violence in Palestine.

Regardless of which side the samples were on, **54 of the 80 samples (68%) described violence in Israel, while 26 (32%) described violence in Gaza.** This confirms that the graph showing a striking contrast between the association of keywords with the Israeli context and Palestinian context is highly likely to be accurate.

Furthermore, from our sample, **nearly half of the mentions on the Palestinian side (43%) were still referring to Israel and this indicates that the keywords may be least associated with Palestine and have been used very frequently to describe the violence in Israel. This confirms the presence was biased in how violence in Israel and Palestine was described using these keywords.**

One example to show how this disparity in describing violence on both sides has continued is found on the BBC news website on 16 January 2024 in the following screenshot where the emotive term “brutal” is reserved for the attack on Israelis. The Israeli attack on Gaza which has killed over 25,000 Palestinians is described merely as a “response.”



Image 9.1 A BBC news associated “brutal attack” with Israelis but termed Israeli military action only ‘response’.

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9.6 Disparity in reporting Palestinian Casualties v Israeli Casualties



Insights

- Israeli lives are prioritised over Palestinian lives.
- Despite Palestinian casualties numbering in their thousands, the 1,200 Israeli deaths still led headlines and lead paragraphs one month after 7 October.
- Israelis are described as having been “killed” whilst Palestinians are often described as just having “died” with no mention of the killers.

In the aftermath of 7 October, the disproportionate number of Palestinians killed by Israel has constantly been undermined by most media outlets by treating the killing of Israeli and Palestinian civilians differently.¹⁶⁷ The coverage of Palestinian casualties has not been consistent with the magnitude of the escalating war, carnage and killings of civilians in Gaza. The work of Marc Owen Jones in documenting the reporting of the **Daily Mail newspapers front page’s shows how there is a lack of prominent mention of Palestinian lives lost.** The front pages of the Daily Mail newspaper from **9-27 October 2023** (a period of 14 days) **do not contain a single mention of the over 5000+ Palestinians killed** (the estimated total by 27 October). Yet, the **Mail dedicates at least six front page mentions of total number of Israelis killed.** The only real mention of Palestinian deaths relates to the Al Ahli hospital bombing.¹⁶⁸

167 Quadri, S. (2023). British citizen Jake Marlowe ‘missing after Hamas attack on Israeli music festival’. [online] Evening Standard. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/british-citizen-jack-marlowe-israel-hamas-attack-embassy-uk-b1112098.html>

168 Jones, M.O. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/marcowenjones/status/1717075805103181966>



Image 9.2 Mark Owen Jones on X, 25 October 2023: Daily Mail front pages from 7 October onwards only mention Israeli deaths.

The following chart for online news articles shows how despite the mounting death toll in Gaza, the killings of Israeli civilians and military personnel on 7 October had been mentioned more often than the (larger) number of Palestinian civilians killed by Israel, almost every single day.

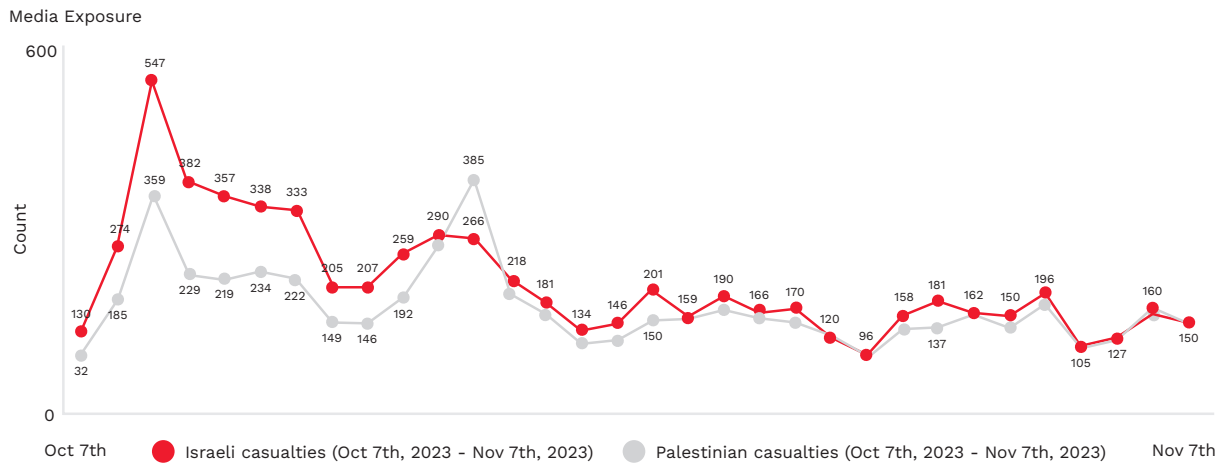


Figure 9.3 Palestinian death tolls were under-reported while Israeli casualties on 7 October continued to have sustained mentions.

Many readers of online news websites have pointed out the discrepancy in how deaths are described on both sides of the conflict with Israelis described as having been “killed” whilst Palestinians just “die” or “died.” In such circumstances the role of the offensive actor is diminished or omitted. Prominent examples from early coverage in the conflict shows the disparity in the way the casualties on both sides were described.

It should be noted that there is an argument that the descriptions are merely journalistic synonyms to avoid repetition and that this type of phraseology was used for both sides. Yet, some examples are undeniable in showing not only a discrepancy in the descriptions but how one side (Israel) is believed and there is suspicion or denial about the death toll or suffering of Palestinians.

We specifically looked at how only one term (verb) ‘kill’ was associated with the Israeli side and the Palestinian side by placing this keyword in all possible combinations with Israel and Palestine.¹⁶⁹ Phrases such as **”Palestinians were killed” were found occurring 665 times while there were 1,195 mentions (55% more) in reference to ”Israelis killed”.**

As shown in the graph, articles reporting on Israeli civilians being killed were highest shortly in the days just after 7 October. However, in the weeks that followed, **killings of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank mounted after the Israeli bombardment and invasion, yet the reporting of “killings”, did not reflect this disparity, with Israeli deaths reported as much and sometimes more than those of Palestinians.**

169 (“Israel* civilian* kill*” or “Israel* civilian* were kill*” or “Israeli* civilian* kill*” or “Israeli* kill*” OR “Israel* were kill*” OR “Israeli* kill*” OR “kill* Israel* civilian*” OR “kill* in Israel”) VS (“Palestin* civilian* kill*” or “Palestin* civilian* were kill*” or “Palestin* civilian* kill*” or “Palestin* kill*” OR “Palestin* were kill*” OR “Palestin* kill*” or “kill* Palestin* civilian*” OR “kill* in Palestin”)

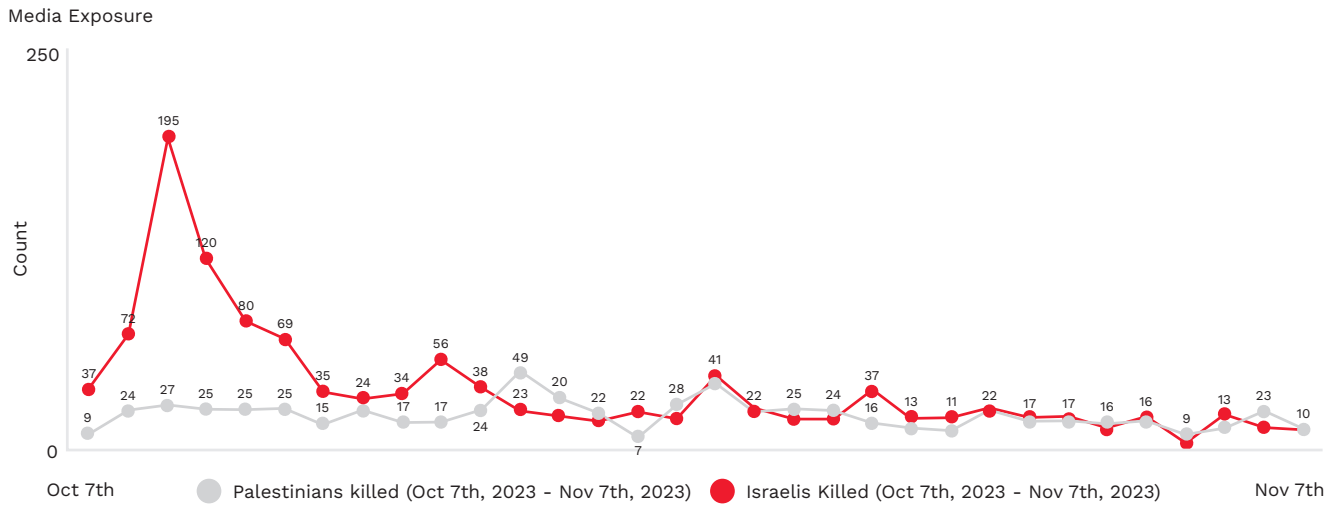
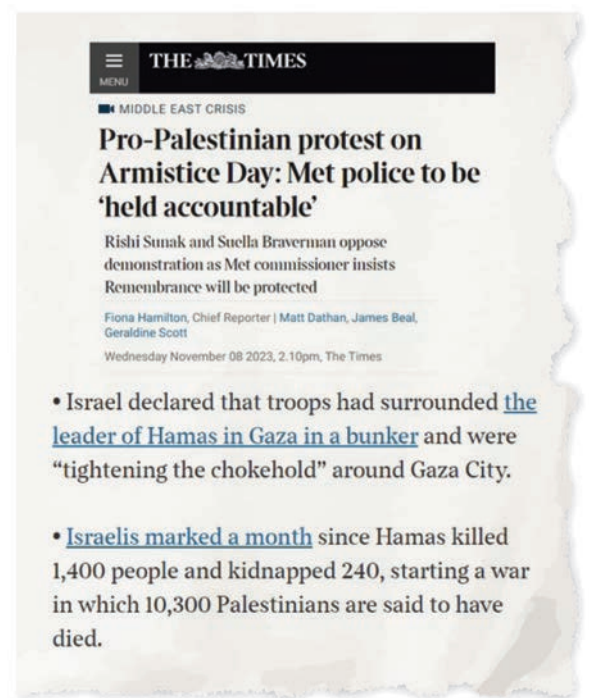


Figure 9.4 ‘Killings’ in Israel had 55% higher mentions than killings in Palestine.

One notable example of this is found in the Times newspaper one month on from 7 October where it stated, “Israelis marked a month since Hamas killed 1,400 people and kidnapped 240, starting a war in which **10,300 Palestinians are said to have died.**”¹⁷⁰ The words “are said to have died” is not definitive and questions the actual number of deaths. Arguably this is the correct journalistic approach without the ability to absolutely verify a number, yet this same approach is not taken to question the number of Israelis killed which has subsequently been revised down to approximately 1,200.¹⁷¹

Image 9.3 The Times on 8 November 2023: Israelis were “killed” and Palestinians were “said to have died”.



170 Scott, F.H., Matt Dathan, James Beal, Geraldine (2023). Pro-Palestinian protest on Armistice Day: Met police to be ‘held accountable’. www.thetimes.co.uk. [online]. Available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pro-palestine-protest-ban-met-police-restrictions-8w39lhprc

171 Al Jazeera (2023). Israel revises down toll from October 7 attack to ‘around 1,200’. [online] Al Jazeera. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/10/israel-revises-death-toll-from-october-7-hamas-attack-to-1200-people

Many articles passively reported on Palestinian casualties. In an overall good feature, a 650-word long BBC story titled **“Israel Gaza: Father loses 11 family members in one blast”** narrates harrowing details of the accounts without mentioning Israeli bombing or mentioning Israel’s role in effectively murdering an entire family.¹⁷² There is not one single mention of the word Israel in the body of the text.

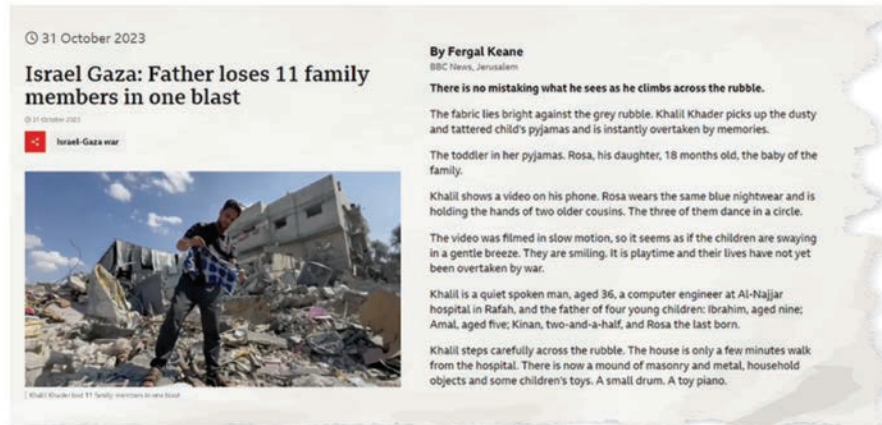


Image 9.4 BBC Online, Fergal Keane, 31 October 2023: No mention of Israeli war action in this ‘humanised’ article.

1. The discrepancy in valuing the lives of those on the Israeli side in comparison to Palestinian lives is also seen in online news such as the headline from the Associated Press. The death toll as a result of Israeli bombs at this point was over 15,000 dead Palestinians. Yet, there is no reference to them in this headline which focuses on the Israeli hostages amid falling bombs on Gaza.
2. It has been documented that the vast majority of journalists killed by Israeli bombs have been Palestinians within Gaza. Yet despite the deaths being almost exclusively Palestinian an article in the Guardian on the killings of journalists effectively two sided the issue despite the killing having been done primarily by one side, (Israel). Despite this huge disparity and the allegations that journalists and



Image 9.5 AP, December 2023, no mention of 15,000 Palestinians killed due to Israeli bombings.

172 Keane, F. (2023). Israel Gaza: Father loses 11 family members in one blast. (2023). BBC News. [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67277205>

their families in Gaza have been systematically targeted by the Israelis, details of how many Palestinian journalists had been killed up until that point is only found in the 11th paragraph of the article: **“The overwhelming majority of the dead appear to be Palestinian journalists killed in Israeli airstrikes.... 50 were Palestinians, four Israelis and three Lebanese.”**¹⁷³

The relegating of vital information for a reader is also found when journalists have embedded themselves with the IDF under strict limitations including being forbidden to speak to Palestinians. In an article on the BBC News website, mention of the restrictions imposed by the IDF were found only in the 15th paragraph despite it compromising the reporter’s ability to find out what was taking place in Gaza from the Palestinians themselves.¹⁷⁴ It read: **“Our visit was tightly controlled; we had very limited time on the ground and were not able to speak to doctors or patients there.”**

3. Another article on the BBC News website which privileged an Israeli perspective was the accusation against Palestinian freelance journalists who the Israelis claimed had prior knowledge of the Hamas attacks on 7 October.¹⁷⁵ The accusations endangered the lives of the journalists as Israeli ministers such as Danny Danon were quoted as saying that this now made them legitimate targets.¹⁷⁶ The claims made by the Israeli media advocacy group Honest Reporting were later found to be unsubstantiated with its executive director admitting that the group had no evidence to back up that suggestion.¹⁷⁷ Despite this, the BBC headlined its story with the denial of the media groups who employed some of the photojournalists who had been falsely accused. The fact that this was a false allegation which had been “debunked” was found only in the third paragraph of the copy.¹⁷⁸

Whilst broadcast clips were not analysed on the same basis as online articles due to the limitations of the monitoring tool, examples of the disparity were found.

4. One notable example is the Sky News’ FYI programme which is targeted at young people and has children hosting it. The child presenter reads; “Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel on 7 October. It was the deadliest attack on the Jewish community since World War 2, killing well over a thousand, most of them ordinary people not soldiers. Israel retaliated with airstrikes into Gaza which have led to even more civilians losing their lives.”¹⁷⁹

173 Sullivan, M. (2023). The Israel-Hamas war is deadly for journalists. Lives are being lost, and truth. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/28/journalists-killed-israel-hamas-war>

174 Williamson, L. (2023). BBC goes inside Al-Shifa hospital with the Israeli army. BBC News. [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67436154>

175 BBC (2023). News outlets deny Israeli claim that freelance journalists knew of Hamas attack. BBC [Online] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67375667>

176 Ibid

177 Bauder, D. (2023). Media watchdog says it was just ‘raising questions’ with insinuations about photographers and Hamas. AP News [online] Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-photographers-attack-200be1ba47361f1c1fc113cdaeb65d04>

178 BBC (2023). News outlets deny Israeli claim that freelance journalists knew of Hamas attack. BBC News. [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67375667>

179 FYI, Sky News, 22 October 2023, 11:00 AM available at Staniforth, S. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SaulStaniforth/status/1716032434431578403>

This introduction makes a distinction between the dead on both sides with **Israelis** said to have been **“killed”** whilst **civilians in Gaza were “losing their lives.”** It is further not made clear which civilians lost their lives; the word Palestinians is not mentioned. This broadcast went out on 22 October when it was estimated that over 4,000 Palestinian civilians in Gaza had been killed by Israeli forces.

Another news clip from Sky News which clearly showed this disparity was broadcast on 21 October 2023 where the presenter introduced the segment by stating, “Now it has been two weeks since Hamas first launched its attack on Israel it saw 1,400 people killed. Since then, Palestinian officials say that more than 4,000 people have died in Gaza.¹⁸⁰ Presenter Sarah Washington was challenged by a Palestinian human rights activist and Gaza native, Yara Eid. Eid said, “As a journalist you have the moral responsibility to report on what’s happening. **Palestinians don’t just die they are killed.**”¹⁸¹

The discrepancy between the description of the dead on both sides also extended into social media following breaking news stories being posted on the X platform from two of Britain’s biggest broadcasters. The posts show the discrepancy in how the deaths of Palestinians are described in comparison with the deaths of Israelis.



Image 9.6 Sky News Breaking News, 7 October. Posted on X.

180 Samantha Washington, Sky News, October 21, 2023, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-tcY_9V3bI

181 Ibid

BBC News (World) @BBCWorld

More than 500 people have died in Gaza after Israel launched massive retaliatory air strikes, according to Gaza's health ministry

More than 700 people have been killed in Israel since Hamas launched its attacks on Saturday

Follow the latest

12:19 PM · Oct 9, 2023 · 24.9M Views

Image 9.7 BBC News World, X, October 2023, 500 “died” in Gaza, 700 “killed” in Israel.

182

Further examples from online news media are as follows:

5. On 18 October, instead of saying that Israel was denying Palestinians water in Gaza, The Guardian stated that **Palestinians** are beginning to **“dehydrate to death”** as Israel continued to “pound the Palestinian territory...”¹⁸³
6. On 8 November. The Times noted the killing of 1,400 people in a war **“in which 10,300 Palestinians are said to have died”**. No mention of who has done the killing and the words **“said to have died”** undermines the information completely.¹⁸⁴
7. Many reports doubted Palestinian casualty figures, such as a photo caption in the Express on 25 October, about 18 days after the war broke.¹⁸⁵ It said, **“5,000 have reportedly died in Gaza.”**



Image 9.8 Express, October 2023, photo caption doubts casualties.

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- 183 McKernan, B. (2023). Fears grow people are dehydrating to death in Gaza as clean water runs out. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/17/fears-grow-people-are-dehydrating-to-death-in-gaza-as-clean-water-runs-out>
- 184 Hamilton, F, Dathan, M., Beal, J., Scott, G. (2023). Pro-Palestinian protest on Armistice Day: Met police to be 'held accountable'. www.thetimes.co.uk. [online] 12 Dec. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pro-palestine-protest-ban-met-police-restrictions-8w39lhprc>
- 185 Bradley, C. (2023). Israel-Hamas war to 'explode' as Israel warned Gaza invasion 'will be ugly'. [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1827926/israel-hamas-war-explode-gaza-invasion>

MailOnline

How Israel's tanks swooped on Gaza in lightning raid on Hamas

By ELIZABETH HAIGH [✉](#)
PUBLISHED: 11:00, 27 October 2023 | UPDATED: 11:00, 27 October 2023



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Israel has bombarded the densely populated Gaza Strip following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israeli communities. Israel says Hamas killed some 1,400 people including children, and took more than 200 hostages, some of them infants and older adults. The US State Department said Washington knows that a significant number of people have died in Gaza but does not have independent confirmation of numbers, and it does not trust figures released by Hamas. The Israeli military has also said Hamas figures cannot be trusted, but has not provided its own assessment. Hamas spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra rejected statements questioning the figures. The ministry on Thursday published a 212-page document which it said contains the names of all the victims who have been identified and their ID numbers.

Image 9.9 MailOnline, 27 October 2023: Photo caption shows discrepancies in how two sides are reported.

8. A major example, is found on the Mail Online website where a photo caption closely reflects the findings showing a bias in language while describing violence: **“Israel has bombarded the densely populated Gaza Strip** following the Oct. 7 Hamas **attack** on Israeli communities. Israel says **Hamas killed** some 1,400 people including **children**, and took more than 200 hostages, some of them infants and older adults. The US State Department said Washington knows that **a significant number of people** have **died in Gaza** but does not have independent confirmation of numbers, and it **does not trust figures released by Hamas**. The Israeli military has also said Hamas figures cannot be trusted but has not provided its own assessment. Hamas spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra rejected statements questioning the figures. The ministry on Thursday published a 212-page document which it said contains the names of all the victims who have been identified and their ID numbers.”¹⁸⁶

Violence in Israel	Violence in Gaza
Hamas attack (unauthorised violence)	Israel bombarded (authorised violence)
Hamas killed some 1400 people (choice of verb)	a significant number of people have died in Gaza (choice of verb)
some 1,400 people including children (humanised)	densely populated Gaza Strip (dehumanised)
some 1,400 people including children , and took more than 200 hostages , some of them infants and older adults (detail)	does not have independent confirmation of numbers (people as numbers)

Table 9.4 A comparison of how violence in Israel and violence in Gaza were described.

9.7 Recommendations

- Israeli lives should not be prioritised over Palestinian lives. If the number of Palestinians ‘killed’ is greater than Israelis ‘killed’ then the larger number should lead the headline or story.
- When Palestinians are killed, the perpetrators should be identified, and the role of the offensive actor should not be diminished or omitted.

186 Haigh, E. (2023). How Israel’s tanks swooped on Gaza in lightning raid on Hamas. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/galleries/article-12679577/How-Israelis-tanks-swooped-Gaza-lightning-raid-Hamas.html>



CLAIMS

10. CLAIMS



10.1 Insights

- Outlets have repeated and amplified Israeli claims without fact checking or verification. Once amplified there has been no clarification or correction when they have subsequently been found to be untrue.
- Non-mainstream investigative journalists and platforms have often done the work of mainstream journalists to debunk false stories.
- Some mainstream media outlets still allow Israeli voices to repeat untruths without challenge even when they have been proved to be false.
- Despite senior analysts, academics and journalists having stated the ideological differences between ISIS and Hamas, Israeli spokespeople are still unchallenged when they claim that “Hamas is ISIS”.
- The Israeli connections and interests of some Western “experts” are not shared with readers and viewers when given a platform.

10.2 Amplifying unverified Israeli claims

During any war, there will be claims made by both parties, some of which will be propaganda and likely proven to be false, with the ‘fog of war’ cited as part of war which journalists have to navigate among the competing claims of both sides. It is not straightforward to determine how to report on these topics:

- Should news outlets relay claims with their sources, without any verification or challenge? What happens when they are debunked as false?
- Should news outlets not relay claims until they are independently verified? What happens when it is not possible to independently verify claims?
- How should news outlets treat an actor in the story who has repeatedly been found to have lied or fabricated evidence in the past?

This last question is important with regards to Israel. The New York Times reported how Israel **“has a long history of making false claims and denying responsibility for atrocities that later proved to be its doing.”**¹⁸⁷ Some major examples of false Israeli claims in the past decade are as follows.¹⁸⁸

- Lying about the murder of two Palestinian teenagers during West Bank protest - May 2014
- Doctoring video to falsely claim medic murdered by Israeli sniper was human shield - June 2018
- Lying about the killing of Ahmad Erekat at West Bank military checkpoint - June 2020
- Lying about bombing of media offices in Gaza - May 2021
- Lying about the murder of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh - May 2022

As such, ensuring appropriate scepticism to Israeli claims and prefixing their claims accordingly appears to be the only reasonable journalistic option. Yet, some of the claims made by Israeli personnel during the current invasion of Gaza have not been challenged and even when evidence has proved to be wrong or absurd there has been little in the way of making this clear.

Regardless of the choice taken, it is clear that relaying sources without verification or challenge and not retracting the story later when proven to be false, is not the right approach. Yet one of the main features of the media coverage of Israel’s current war against Palestinians has been the acceptance of Israeli claims, without any verification.

The brutality of 7 October is well documented. However, several alarming cases of alleged brutality by Hamas attackers on 7 October 2023 have been headlined or presented as fact, when in fact they were not true. Yet, journalists, commentators and media outlets have continued to repeat the original claims whilst Israeli politicians and representatives have also continually regurgitated what appears to have been propaganda to justify the ongoing killings of Palestinians in Gaza.

This section will look at six of these claims and how they have been repeated in the mainstream British news outlets as well as how the credibility of witnesses has not stopped the publication of claims, nor the fact that fabricated or questionable evidence and claims have either been published without clarification or on occasions not mentioned at all. These examples are by no means a full list of fabrications or misrepresentations by Israel and its officials/supporters, but they highlight how false Israeli propaganda has been amplified by British media outlets and how a lack of scrutiny has allowed for propagation of questionable or false claims.

187 Tufekci, Z. (2023). Opinion | Past Lies About War in the Middle East Are Getting in the Way of the Truth Today. The New York Times. [online]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/31/opinion/columnists/israel-gaza-hamas-misinformation.html>

188 Evidence taken from Institute for Middle Eastern Understanding Fact Sheet: Israel’s History of Spreading Disinformation available at <https://imeu.org/article/fact-sheet-israels-history-of-spreading-disinformation>

10.2.1 Claim 1: ‘Babies were beheaded.’



Insights

- There were 361 TV news clips where the term “beheaded” AND “babies” were found.
- Almost 50% of these were on the two right-wing British channels Talk TV (27%) and GB News (20%) with Sky News accounting for (14%).
- Of the 361 mentions there were 52 which showed any sufficient challenge, rebuttal or questioning of the claims.

One of the stories which emerged early after the 7 October attacks was the alleged discovery of the bodies of 40 babies who were said to have been beheaded by Hamas. The original story came from the Tel Aviv-based news channel i24 when its reporter Nicole Zedek visited the Kfar Aza kibbutz near the Gaza border. She initially said: **“Soldiers told me they believe 40, babies, children were killed.”**¹⁸⁹ As the day progressed the information morphed from “believe” to a categorical 40 babies being beheaded. This very specific claim went viral.

No Israeli officials had confirmed the claim then or since.¹⁹⁰ Despite this, the story was amplified by the Israeli Prime Minister and the US President Biden who claimed he had seen images but later retracted this.¹⁹¹ The following day The Express, The Daily Mail, The Times, The Independent, and The Metro ran front page stories amplifying the Israeli claims calling it among other things “A Holocaust pure and simple”.¹⁹² IPSO, the newspaper regulator, received numerous complaints about these front-page stories. An outcome to the complaints is still pending.

189 i24NEWS English (2023) Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/i24NEWS_EN/status/1711697093151056355

190 Sky News. (2023). What we actually know about the viral report of beheaded babies in Israel. [online] Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/its-important-to-separate-the-facts-from-speculation-what-we-actually-know-about-the-viral-report-of-beheaded-babies-in-israel-12982329>

191 Al Jazeera (2023). White House walks back Biden’s claim he saw children beheaded by Hamas. [online] Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/12/white-house-walks-back-bidens-claim-he-saw-children-beheaded-by-hamas>

192 Akkad, D. (2023). UK press watchdog ‘considering’ complaints into ‘beheaded babies’ reports. Middle East Eye [online] Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-beheaded-babies-reports-uk-press-watchdog-considering-complaints>



Image 10.1 Daily Express, Metro, October 2023, sensationalist frontpage headlines of unverified news.



Image 10.2 Independent, October 2023, more unverified claims on frontpage headlines.



Image 10.3 Daily Mail, October 2023, highest use of adjectives to describe killings in Israel.

Some of the newspapers and broadcasters did say they could not verify the claim but still decided to give the story a prominent place in their coverage. Sky and BBC News initially reported that they could not verify the story, and the IDF also told Sky News that “it cannot confirm that 40 babies were beheaded at Kfar Aza.”¹⁹³ The Jewish Chronicle which also ran the story, said that “The JC has been unable to independently confirm these reports.”¹⁹⁴ Despite this, one commentator, Louise Perry, writing in The Telegraph wrote that “Israel shouldn’t have to prove that Hamas slaughtered babies.”¹⁹⁵

Some journalists did take their peers to task over this. In a tweet, Sky’s senior correspondent, Dominic Waghorn pointed out that this story about babies being beheaded had “not been corroborated by officials but it has been reported as fact around the world by experienced **journalists who should know better**”.¹⁹⁶ The Guardian’s Middle East Correspondent, Bethan McKernan, had similar concerns and said that she was “**horrified by the headlines**” in yesterday’s UK front pages. She went on to say

193 Anna Botting on Sky News Press Review, October 11 2023, 10:43 PM, clip available at: <https://twitter.com/jacksonhinklle/status/1712041238432555041>

194 Percival, R. (2023). Hamas terrorists ‘murdered 40 babies’ including beheadings, says report. [online] www.thejc.com. Available at: <https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/hamas-terrorists-murdered-40-babies-including-beheadings-says-report-geojar5a>

195 Perry, L. (2023). Israel shouldn’t have had to prove that Hamas slaughtered babies. The Telegraph. [online] 13 Oct. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/13/israel-shouldnt-have-to-prove-that-hamas-slaughtered-babies>

196 Waghorn, D. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/DominicWaghorn/status/1711989119818076459>



Image 10.4 The Times, October 2023, unsubstantiated claims in headlines do not match accompanying image.

that the claim is “unverified and totally irresponsible”¹⁹⁷ Marc Owen Jones, a Qatar based researcher, found how the unconfirmed report had at least 44 million impressions, 300,000 likes, and over 100,000 reposts within about 24 hours on X.¹⁹⁸

Despite the unverified claims, the overwhelming majority were not corrected or clarified with any preface. The two examples below show how the presenters and commentators pushed back against anyone questioning the veracity of the story instead of acknowledging that the stories had not been independently verified.

1. GB News anchor Patrick Christys speaking to former BBC Head of religion Aqeel Ahmed said, **“I just find it really interesting that you’ve got quite exercised there about this idea that maybe we maybe people babies had not been beheaded. I mean, the Israeli Defence Force have come out and said that they have.”**¹⁹⁹

197 Beth Mckernan later deleted this tweet screenshot available at <https://twitter.com/cquilty52/status/1712102921985196234/photo/1> & <https://twitter.com/cquilty52/status/1712102921985196234/photo/2>

198 Solmaz, M. and Calli, E. (2023). Despite refutations from Israeli military, headlines that Hamas ‘beheaded babies’ persist. [online] Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/despite-refutations-from-israeli-military-headlines-that-hamas-beheaded-babies-persist/3016167>

199 Patrick Christys on GB News, 11 October 16:31 PM

2. On Sky News, Nimco Ali, a former government adviser, speaking to journalist Rachel Shabi said: **“You cannot even have a logical conversation about 40 babies being beheaded.”** Rachel Shabi replied: **“It’s not verified”** to which Nimco Ali responded: **“See this is what I mean.”**²⁰⁰

The narrative of Hamas’ fighters attacking babies has gone beyond the initial 40 babies’ myth with some suggesting that babies had been cut from the wombs of pregnant women, kids beheaded and most notoriously a baby found in an oven giving rise to the burned babies narrative. To date none of these claims have been verified.

Unfortunately, the context was not provided by the vast majority of British news outlets. It was left to some Israeli journalists who on occasions have been more scrupulous than their British counterparts in challenging the claims and highlighting that they have either been fabricated or have dubious origins. In December 2023 the Israeli newspaper Haaretz debunked many of the most horrifying claims including the “40 babies beheaded” and a “baby found in an oven” calling them “false testimonies.”²⁰¹

- i. We found 361 news clips where the term “beheaded” AND “babies” were found. This includes repeats.
- ii. Almost 50% of these were on the two right-wing British channels Talk TV (27%) and GB News (20%) with Sky News accounting for (14%).
- iii. Of the 361 mentions there were only 52 challenges or rebuttals to what have proved to be false claims.

Many went unchallenged and on occasions were used as a polemic against pro-Palestine guests to accuse them of defending people who committed such horrors. Some of the mentions were broadcasts of speeches given by Israeli officials such as Benjamin Netanyahu who consistently regurgitated these claims. One example of this was on GB News where the activist Barnaby Raine located the starting point of the conflict as 1948 but was interrupted by host and Conservative MP Jacob Rees Mogg who said, “this started on the 7th of October with the murder of 1,300 people and babies being beheaded.”²⁰² A GB News panel discussion saw the host malign pro-Palestinian protestors with: “And of course, there’s been no condemnation from these same people about what happened on the 7th of October. I don’t need to remind everyone watching and listening that babies have been beheaded, women raped, dead bodies paraded on the back of pickup trucks.”²⁰³

The narrative of beheaded babies was also used by Israeli officials to forward the propaganda of Hamas being worse than ISIS such as on the BBC, where Israel politician said: “Hamas is worse than ISIS, not only because they beheaded babies, burned babies, but they also backed by a state terror entity.”²⁰⁴ Sometimes commentators were challenged on their claim of beheaded babies. One example was right wing commentator, Carole Malone who when challenged by a caller on the Jeremy Vine Show on Channel 5 about there being no evidence for the claim that Hamas had beheaded babies and disembowelled them, Malone replied forcefully: “yes they have.”²⁰⁵

200 Sunday Morning with Trevor Phillips on Sky News, 15 October 2023, 09:33 AM

201 Hasson, N. & Rozovsky, L. (2019). Hamas Committed Documented Atrocities. But a Few False Stories Feed the Deniers. Haaretz. [online] Available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-12-04/ty-article-magazine/.premium/hamas-committed-documented-atrocities-but-a-few-false-stories-feed-the-deniers/0000018c-34f3-da74-afce-b5f8e24f0000>

202 Jacob Rees Mogg, on GB News, 7 Nov 2023, 1:12 AM

203 Mark Dolan on GB News, 7 Nov 2023, 1:12 AM

204 Israeli minister on BBC NEEU, 1 November 2023 12:26 PM

205 Carole Malone on Jeremy Vine, Channel 5, 25 October 2023 10:09 AM

10.2.2 Claim 2: Publishing unverified claim of ‘Burned Baby’

Another claim which gained some prominence on broadcast channels and within online and print news copy was Eli Beer’s claim that he or his workers “saw a little baby in an oven. They put them in, these bastards put these babies in an oven and put on the oven.”²⁰⁶ Beer made the claim in a donors’ conference by the Republican Jewish Coalitions’ Annual Leadership Summit in Las Vegas on 28 October 2023. Following this the Daily Mail newspaper stated that multiple infants had been found burned - a story which gained traction on social media.²⁰⁷

Eli Beer is the head of an organisation called United Hatzalah’s which was found by an Israeli court of law to have waged a campaign of false statements against a rival organisation.²⁰⁸ Some of the defamation costs had to be paid through Beer’s own pocket. Despite this casting a shadow of doubt over the witness’s credibility, media sources still reported Eli Beer’s claims without verification. Readers and viewers should have been made aware of Eli Beer’s reputation as it is an important piece of context, and his claims should have been taken with extreme caution.

Beer’s response to being challenged on the claims by Israeli newspaper, The Jerusalem Post, was: “A lot of people don’t believe the Holocaust happened.”²⁰⁹ Israeli journalist Isha Cohen confirmed that the so-called babies burnt in an oven story was false after he tried to gain confirmation of the story from the IDF and other organisations on the ground in Israel. Cohen has also erased a story he published alleging babies had been hung on clothesline given to him by an IDF officer.²¹⁰



Image 10.5 Israeli journalist Isha Cohen confirmed that the so-called babies burnt in an oven story was false.

206 Sudilovsky, J. (2023). Controversy surrounds reports of Israeli baby found burned alive in oven. The Jerusalem Post [online] Available at: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-772181>

207 Jewers, C. (2023). Hamas killers ‘roasted babies in an oven.’ [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12703453/Hamas-killers-roasted-babies-oven.html>

208 Magen David Adom UK (2021). United Hatzalah Ordered By Israeli District Court To Pay 250,000 Shekels For A Coordinated Plan To Defame And Libel Magen David Adom. [online] Available at: <https://mdauk.org/unitedhatzalahjudgement>

209 Sudilovsky, J. (2023). Controversy surrounds reports of Israeli baby found burned alive in oven. The Jerusalem Post [online] Available at: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-772181>

210 Cohen, D. (2023). Israeli Journalist Retracts ‘Babies Hung on a Clothesline’ October 7 Atrocity Propaganda. [online] www.uncaptured.media. Available at: <https://www.uncaptured.media/p/israeli-journalist-retracts-babies>

The Daily Telegraph also featured prominently on its front-page no less an emotive verbatim post from the Israeli state’s official X (Twitter) account which warned readers of a distressing image they were posting of a dead baby burned and charred, claiming it was evidence of Hamas’ brutality and war crimes. The Telegraph tells its readers that it’s giving them the choice of whether they wish to view the image. However, on The Telegraph’s X account it says; “The official Twitter account of the Israeli state has posted a distressing image which appears to show a baby murdered by Hamas terrorists.”²¹¹ The newspaper effectively admitted on X that it had not independently verified the veracity of the image it showed on the inside page of its edition but chose to accept the Israeli narrative as strong enough to lead its front-page coverage. To date no independent source has been able to verify if the baby shown in the image was the victim of Hamas’s 7 October attack. The question still remains. Should a newspaper repeat an Israeli state claim without independent verification, especially given how many times the Israeli state has been found to have lied?

On Broadcast TV we found a total of 29 occasions where the mention of “burning babies” or “babies being burned” was found.²¹² There were no challenges to these claims which were on occasions pushed by Israeli officials such as Mark Regev who said in a Sky News interview when asked about the evidence that Hamas were using medical facilities and ambulances , “They are the people who burn babies alive.”²¹³ The activist journalist Charlie Peters when reporting from Israel on the back of alleged evidence presented by Benjamin Netanyahu’s office of pictures showing burned babies said that: “there have been reports about how people were killed in their homes, slaughtered in beds, babies killed and babies burnt and very troublingly, the Prime Minister’s office has taken the decision in the last hour to actually release some of those images online, to really put it to bed for once for and all, that this really did happen.”²¹⁴ These images have never been independently verified.



Image 10.6 The Daily Telegraph, 12 October 2023: Unverified Israeli claim shared on X featured prominently on this front page

211 The Telegraph (2023). Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/Telegraph/status/1712784321524748371>

212 Search terms: (“burning babies” OR “babies burning”, OR “burned baby” OR “baby in oven” OR “babies burnt” OR “burned babies” OR “burning babies alive” OR “baby burnt”

213 Mark Regev on Kay Burley at Breakfast, Sky News Nov 6, 2023 8:50 AM

214 Charlie Peters on GB News, Oct 12, 2023 4:13 PM

10.2.3 Claim 3: ‘Pregnant woman stabbed, and foetus ripped out.’

Alongside the claim of beheaded babies was the claim that Hamas fighters cut open a pregnant woman’s womb and ripped out the foetus killing the mother and unborn child. The origin of the claim on social media was reported to have come from a pro-Israeli account from India where right-wing propagandists have flooded social media with pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian posts. A pro BJP journalist Aditya Raj Kaul, posted on X that a pregnant woman was dissected by Hamas, killing the unborn child. The post was viewed over 10 million times and liked over 32,000 times, including a retweet from pro-Israel propagandist and American media personality Ben Shapiro, who disseminated it to his large following.²¹⁵ Despite this there has been no verified evidence to substantiate the claim that Hamas cut open a pregnant Israeli woman’s womb to kill her unborn child.²¹⁶ The source of the information was said to be from a member of ZAKA, a volunteer search and rescue organisation that worked at the scene of the attacks and provided testimonies to the media. After the Israeli Newspaper Haaretz cross-referenced some of the claims with available evidence, ZAKA admitted that some of its members may have “misinterpreted” what they saw and that they were not professional pathologists.²¹⁷ The volunteer who claimed to have seen the body of a shot pregnant woman in Be’eri with her stomach ripped open and the foetus attached to her stomach also claimed that he saw 20 burned bodies of teenagers in Kfar Aza and 20 others in Be’eri.²¹⁸ British news websites such as The Sun headlined the claims and have not provided any subsequent clarification that these allegations remain unproven and are most likely fabricated or misinterpreted.



Image 10.7 Haaretz on 31 January 2024 reveals that Zaka may have “misinterpreted” regarding those killed on 7 October.

215 Chakraborty, A. & Wong, Y. (2023). India’s Digital Footprint on the Israel-Gaza War. The Diplomat [online] Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/indias-digital-footprint-on-the-israel-gaza-war>

216 Ibrahim, N. (2023). Were Israeli Babies Beheaded by Hamas Militants During Attack on Kfar Aza? [online] Snopes. Available at: <https://www.snopes.com/news/2023/10/12/40-israeli-babies-beheaded-by-hamas>

217 Middle East Eye. (2023). Israeli personnel gave false information about 7 October attack crimes - report. [online] Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-personnel-false-information-7-october-attack>

218 קשה מספיק האמת קשה במציאות. טבח חמאס גרר הפצת סיפורי זוועות שלא כולם קרו במציאות. (2023) [online] Available at: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2023-12-03/ty-article-magazine/.premium/0000018c-2036-d21c-abae-76be-08fe0000?ts=1701608901038>



Image 10.8 The Sun, 12 October 2023: Unverified claims repeated of babies taken out of pregnant woman's womb.

219

Furthermore, despite these fabricated/misinterpreted views from ZAKA, they are still being used as a source for stories by the BBC and The Guardian, which some have accused of publishing unverified "atrocities propaganda."²²⁰

219 Cleave, I. (2023). Hamas 'sliced baby out of pregnant Israeli's womb' as bodies of 20 children found. The Sun [online] Available at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/24382664/hamas-baby-children-bodies-burned>

220 Litvin, Y. (2023). The Anatomy of Zionist Genocide. [online] Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/12/21/the-anatomy-of-zionist-genocide>



Image 10.9 The BBC correspondent admitted that it could not be independently verified.

221



Image 10.10 The Guardian also used these unverified sources.

Despite the work of Haaretz in debunking some of the claims of Zaka volunteers their testimonies and alleged witness statements have continued to be used. One online report on the BBC website quoted a Zaka volunteer describing signs of torture and mutilation and a foetus ripped from its mother's womb, which the BBC correspondent admitted could not be independently verified and had been questioned by Israeli media yet still chose to include in the coverage two months on from the Hamas attacks of 7 October.²²²

Meanwhile TV broadcasts aired 12 clips where guests or presenters repeated this claim. Only on one occasion when the Rachel Riley made the claim on BBC News did the anchor state that: **“This is unverified, we haven’t seen these videos.”**²²³ Most of these clips were on Talk TV where presenter Julia Hartley Brewer repeatedly made the claim as did the comedian Leo Kears on GB News.²²⁴ Israeli politician Ayelet Shaked who had previously said Palestinian mothers who gave birth to snakes should be killed, also repeated the claim on BBC but was not challenged.²²⁵ On Nigel Farage’s show on GB News, Palestinian or “far left” supporters questioning the narratives such as “mothers who were killed and had their foetuses ripped out of bodies” were labelled as **“Islamofascist.”**²²⁶

The events of 7 October are slowly being documented and there is an ongoing process of separating fact from fiction as well as possible misinterpretation. This should be reported without fear or favour. However, unverified and fabricated claims from those who have also engaged in propaganda, should be treated with scepticism and not relayed as fact. Being accurate and verifying news should not be controversial and does not diminish the events of 7 October, even if this is exactly what some have been accused of, when voicing their scepticism.

222 Williamson, L. (2023). Israel Gaza: Hamas raped and mutilated women on 7 October, BBC hears. BBC News. [online] 5 Dec. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67629181>

223 Rachel Riley on BBC Newsnight Oct 24, 2023 11:12 PM

224 Julia Hartley Brewer on Talk TV Oct 24, 2023 2:25 PM & Leo Kears on GB News Oct 28, 2023 11:42 PM

225 Ayelet Shaked on BBC News, Oct 26, 2023 6:40 PM

226 Unknown guest on Nigel Farage Show on GB News Oct 16, 2023 7:31 PM

10.2.4 Claim 4: “Terrorist List” as proof of hostages being held under Rantisi Hospital

Many of Israel’s claims of only targeting Hamas bases have been proven to be false, especially given the civilian casualty figures, and extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure, hospitals and UN premises.²²⁷ A prominent example of this was the claim by the IDF that they had uncovered Hamas tunnels under the Rantisi Hospital.

One piece of so-called “evidence” which was shown and explained on camera by IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari, claimed that they had found a “terrorist list” in Arabic, and that this was proof of Hamas having a rota for guarding Israeli hostages under the Al-Rantisi Children’s hospital in Gaza.²²⁸ The claim was widely mocked and derided on social media and was clearly a fake. The A4 sheet of paper which was stuck to a basement wall contained no names and was in fact a calendar of the days of the week in Arabic. An ITV News report and accompanying article placed this vital detail at the end of the piece, acknowledging that it was **“in fact days of the week, written in Arabic.”**²²⁹ Most of the article did not make mention of the fact that labelling this a terrorist list was in fact a clear fabrication and effectively invalidated the claims being made by the IDF. A report by the Reuters newswire on Hagari’s claim omitted the mention of the fake list instead reporting that the “Israeli military says it found signs hostages were held in Gaza hospital”.²³⁰ It is not clear why this vital information which raises the question of credibility of the IDF claims, was omitted. Given that it seemed a clear cut case of attempted propoganda by the IDF it raises the question of why any of the claims in this segment were taken seriously and broadcast or given any column inches.

10.2.5 Claim 5: ‘Instructions on how to make chemical weapons.’

During the current conflict there have been claims made from Israeli officials in particular which have proven to be unverifiable given the lack of access journalists have had to the sites of the 7 October attacks and Gaza and the West Bank. This has given Israeli officials the opportunity to produce questionable evidence to justify the ongoing massacre of Gazans. This raises the question of whether such unverified and fabricated claims should be amplified in the first place given the almost impossible task of independent verification and the risk of platforming false information. One such example was during an exclusive interview by Sky News’ Middle East Correspondent, Alistair Bunkall with Israeli President Isaac Herzog who claimed: “Some of the Hamas fighters who covered the 7 October attack were carrying instructions on how to make chemical weapons.” Despite the anchor stating that: “Sky is unable to independently verify those claims”, the Channel still went on to publish an online article and broadcast an entire news report containing Bunkall’s interview, leading with the President’s claims despite the dubious evidence produced.²³¹ The A4 document was presented on screen by Herzog, and showed what was later found to be “an amateur biography of World Trade

227 For more information on debunking of Israeli claims both previously and in the ongoing attack on Gaza see the Institute for Middle East Understanding. IMEU (2023). Fact Sheet: Israel’s History of Spreading Disinformation | IMEU. [online] imeu.org. Available at: <https://imeu.org/article/fact-sheet-israels-history-of-spreading-disinformation>.

228 Little, L. (2023). IDF shows alleged footage of Hamas tunnels under children’s hospital, but is it accurate? [online] ITV News. Available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-11-14/idf-shows-alleged-hamas-tunnels-under-childrens-hospital-is-it-accurate>.

229 ibid

230 Reuters (2023) Israeli military says it found signs hostages were held in Gaza ... Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-military-says-it-found-signs-hostages-were-held-gaza-hospital-2023-11-13>

231 Sky News (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SkyNews/status/1716176823862587814>

Center attacker Ramzi Yousef and contains no instructions on how to develop chemical weapons.”²³²

Given the inability of Sky News to verify the claims, it raises the question why it still reported and broadcasted this without first fact-checking it. Bunkall did analyse the President’s claims saying we at Sky News could not verify the claims that instructions for bomb making were found on the body of fighters in Kibbutz Beri in Southern Israel. He also alluded to the context of war and how propaganda is an element of war without accusing Herzog of presenting false information.²³³ It can be argued that Bunkall who gained a possible exclusive treated the story with enough doubt and scepticism given the inability of journalists to independently verify the claims. However, it also raises the question as to if a mainstream and reputable news broadcaster like Sky News should have raised a greater challenge to the claims or broadcast them at all. Britain’s right wing online media including The Express, The Telegraph, The Sun and the Mail Online all produced unchallenging articles promoting Herzog’s claims.²³⁴



Image 10.11 Sky News, October 2023, Israeli President Herzog’s unverified claims around chemical weapons.

- 232 MacDonald, A. (2023). ‘Chemical weapons manual’ shown by Israeli president is biography of a bomber. [online] Middle East Eye. Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-chemical-weapons-manual-biography-bomber>
- 233 Sky’s Alistair Bunkall analyses Israeli President’s ‘ Hamas chemical weapons guide’ claims 23 October 2023 on Sky News, 22:33 PM available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNJgylkJKvI>
- 234 Hoare, C. (2023). Hamas terrorist found with al-Qaeda instructions to make chemical weapon. [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1826800/hamas-terrorist-al-qaeda-gaza-chemical-weapon>

Millward, D. (2023). Hamas had instructions on creating chemical weapons, claims Israel’s president. The Telegraph. [online] 23 Oct. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/23/hamas-had-instructions-on-creating-chemical-weapons>

Parker, N. (2023). Hamas terrorists were ‘carrying chemical weapons manual’, says Israeli President. The Sun [online] Available at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/24499406/hamas-chemical-weapons-manual-israel-president-footage>

Salvoni, E. (2023). Hamas carried chemical weapons instructions, Israel’s President claims. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12661299/Hamas-fighters-carrying-instructions-make-chemical-weapons-launched-horrifying-Kibbutz-massacre-Israels-President-Isaac-Herzog-claims.html>

10.2.6 Claim 6: IDF false information minimised/omitted in Al –Ahli Hospital bombing

Another instance of the war propaganda as well as conflicting claims and counter claims was seen in the reporting of the Al Ahli hospital bombing which became subject to much speculation given the conflicting claims from both sides as to who carried out the attack on the hospital. The attack on 17 October 2023 created significant coverage across the world. Initially news outlets believed that it was more likely that Israel had carried out the strike. Later the majority believed the evidence presented by Israel that the perpetrators were more likely to be Hamas, and this view was supported by Western intelligence agencies.

Audio recordings purported to be of two Hamas operatives were released as evidence from the Israeli side. From a journalist’s perspective, one would assume that any claim and any evidence – especially given Israel’s history of fabricating claims – would be challenged. However, this was not the case for some news outlets. For example, Sky News broadcasted the recording released by the Israeli military that purported to be a discussion between two Hamas operatives claiming that one of the rockets fired by Islamic Jihad had hit the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza.²³⁵ The origin of the recording and the fact that it fitted neatly with the Israeli claims was not challenged.

A Channel 4 News report by Alex Thomson was a textbook example of how journalists and news channels can verify evidence presented in the ‘fog of war.’ The report featured a segment of the recording, where it said Arabic language experts had examined the tape and raised questions about the tone and language. The experts stated that the two voices had been recorded independently and then edited together in a digital audio workstation. They said: **“we can say that the level of manipulation required to edit these two voices together disqualifies it as a source of credible evidence....** this recording does not meet the standard required for evidence and should not be used by the media without the clear caveat that it has been digitally manipulated.”²³⁶

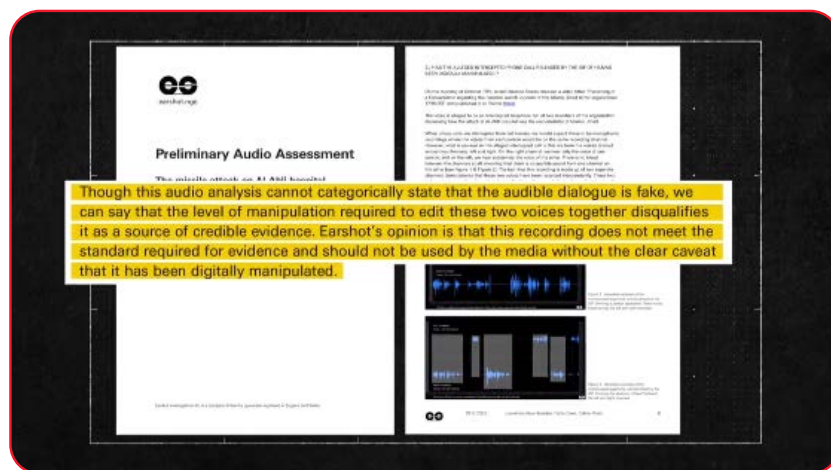


Image 10.12 Channel 4 News, October 2023, Alex Thompson exposes doctored audio recordings.

235 Sky News. (2023). Israel-Hamas war: IDF releases audio claiming to be conversation between Hamas militants about hospital explosion. [online] Available at: <https://news.sky.com/video/israel-hamas-war-idf-releases-audio-claiming-to-be-conversation-between-hamas-militants-about-hospital-explosion-12986860>

236 Alex Thomson report on the attack on the Al Ahli Hospital, Channel 4 News, 18 Oct 2023 available at <https://www.channel4.com/news/who-was-behind-the-gaza-hospital-blast-visual-investigation>

In contrast to this, BBC Verify which aims at fact checking claims, alleged that the most likely cause of the Al Ahli hospital bombing was a rocket from inside of Gaza. Whilst this may or may not be the right conclusion, the basis for this decision was a series of security experts all of whom happened to be from think tanks aligned with military apparatuses in the West, one of which has a Mossad Chief on its board.²³⁷ It is unclear whether this can be considered truly independent. The failure to disclose the various interests which certain commentators or experts have, is important in such controversial cases. Another example of this is found in a BBC Newsnight segment which failed to disclose that an interviewee on one of its episodes had links to the Israeli Army. Richard Kemp who has a history of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestine rhetoric on social media and mainstream media, is the head of a charity funded by the Israeli Defence Forces. Newsnight introduced him as “former officer and terrorism expert who sat on the government’s Joint Intelligence Committee.” Research from the London based charity “Action on Armed Violence” (AOAV) found at least 80 articles in UK and international media outlets which have cited Kemp’s opinion on Israel’s war on Gaza since 7 October with none making it clear that he heads the UK Friends of the Association for the wellbeing of Israel’s Soldiers (UK-AWIS).²³⁸

10.3 Case Study: BBC insist on unverified Israeli claims in response to Palestinian interviewees.

The former Palestinian negotiator Mustafa Barghouti has been interviewed on several occasions on BBC News following Israeli air strikes in which Palestinian civilians were killed. We can see in the following examples how BBC journalists have responded to Palestinian guests with Israeli claims and justifications as a form of challenge.

1. One interview with the correspondent Anna Forster based in Southern Israel followed the Israeli bombing of the Jabaliya refugee camp where over 50 Palestinian civilians were killed. Barghouti detailed the civilian deaths as well as the disproportionate killing of Palestinian civilians. Forster countered this with an insistence “they did kill a senior Hamas operative in a civilian area.” She then went further to say, “ Hamas are putting their infrastructure and their operatives inside civilian areas.”²³⁹ This is an Israeli claim and not the job of the journalist to repeat it as fact and without any evidence.
2. In another interview Barghouti detailed Israeli “war crimes” following the bombardment of civilians in the South of Gaza (a supposed safe zone according to Israel), as well as several hospitals. The BBC anchor insisted that “they (Israel) have asked people to move south.”²⁴⁰ This despite mounting evidence even via independent UN sources that Palestinian civilians were being targeted and killed in the so-called “safe zones“.
3. Another occasion on which a BBC presenter said that a genocide was not taking place in Gaza was on Newsnight during an interview with Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Territories. Presenter Kirsty Wark categorically stated as fact: **“Can we just be clear genocide is not what is happening here.”**²⁴¹ Wark’s intervention, which came 23 days after the 7 October attacks, did not anticipate the International Criminal Court ruling made on 28 January 2024 which ordered Israel to “take all measures within its power” to halt acts that

237 McEvoy, J. (2023) Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/jmcevoy_2/status/1715796785090752741

238 Taylor, R., & Overton, I. (2023). BBC failed to declare interviewee’s links to Israeli Army. openDemocracy. [Online] Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/bbc-newsnight-failed-declare-richard-kemp-link-idf-israel-army-gaza-palestine>

239 Anna Forster interviewing Mustafa Barghouti, Nov 1, 2023, 09:20 AM, BBC News

240 Mustafa Barghouti, Oct 27, 2023, 21:27 PM, BBC News

241 Kirsty Wark to Francesca Albanese on Newsnight BBC2, Oct 30, 2023, 10.52 PM

contribute to genocide, to allow sufficient humanitarian aid into Gaza, to end the suffering among Palestinian civilians, and to prevent and punish the public statements of incitement made by senior Israeli officials.²⁴² The South African government, which brought the case against Israel along with the Palestinians, as well as many countries which backed the South African proposal consider Israeli actions as amounting to genocide. Journalists should refrain from making such declarations which effectively side with the Israeli narrative.


Whilst putting the other side of the argument in the absence of an opposition voice is often one way of achieving balance, in the case of Palestine/Israel it has often been to push the Israeli line whilst casting doubt on Pro-Palestinian voices.



10.4 Recommendations

- Where it is impossible to verify claims independently (the optimal option), news outlets should be sceptical of claims from either party, especially when Israel and the IDF have been proven to share false claims.
- When reporting on Israeli claims in Gaza Israel's history of false claims should be referenced with a caveat that the claims have not been verified by an independent source and have previously been found to have been false.
- Where a claim has been reported or amplified and subsequently proven to be false or doubtful, media outlets should clarify this on all its platforms and in subsequent related news reports.
- Experts and commentators who have Israeli connections and interests should be introduced to audiences as such for context.

²⁴² Amnesty International (2024). Israel must comply with key ICJ ruling ordering it do all in its power to prevent genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. [online] Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/01/israel-must-comply-with-key-icj-ruling-ordering-it-do-all-in-its-power-to-prevent-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza>



UNDERMINING PALESTINIAN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

11. UNDERMINING PALESTINIAN SOURCES OF INFORMATION



11.1 Insights

- Israeli sources and claims are believed and relied on more than Palestinian ones.
- The caveat of “ Hamas run ” health ministry has become a staple of most media outlets reporting and news channels repeatedly undermining the credibility of the Gaza health ministry and number of deaths in Gaza.
- CfMM found that TV reporting of Israeli perspectives was referenced almost three times more (4,311) than Palestinian ones. (1,598) In online news it was almost twice as much (2,983 v 1,737).
- Pro-Palestinian voices attempting to give a context to the war are either silenced or accused of supporting Hamas and the 7 October attacks.
- Pro-Palestinian voices are asked to condemn the 7 October attacks as a ticket to enter discussions. Pro-Israeli voices are not asked to condemn Israel’s attacks on Gaza.

Since 7 October, many media outlets have been more willing to accept information from Israeli sources as fact with greater scepticism on Palestinian claims. So willing are journalists and media outlets to believe Israeli claims without verifying them that they have made serious journalistic errors due to a lack of due diligence as seen above. Below we look at some of the ways in which Palestinian sources have been discredited or questioned.

11.2 Questioning and scepticism of Palestinian death figures

When it comes to casualties, figures released by the Health Ministry in Gaza are mostly qualified by saying that the ministry is Hamas-run implying that the source is unreliable and cannot be trusted. This, despite the fact that the United Nations and leading humanitarian agencies say the casualty numbers coming from the Ministry of Health in Gaza are accurate. An explainer and analysis piece from Isabel Debre of the Associated Press has said that the Palestinian Health Ministry has “come close” or “been consistent” with the numbers given in previous death counts following Israeli bombings of Gaza. This includes the United Nations’ counts done retrospectively as well as Israeli counts coming “close” to the Health Ministry of Gaza figures.²⁴³

More recently, on 25 January 2024, an Israeli Journalist Yuval Abraham, working for 972 Magazine, quoted Israeli intelligence sources who “secretly surveilled officials in Gaza’s Health Ministry to check if their data on the number of civilians killed in Gaza is ‘reliable;” and said: “The army found the numbers are reliable and now regularly uses them internally in intelligence briefings.”²⁴⁴

243 Debre, I. (2023). EXPLAINER: What is Gaza’s Ministry of Health and how does it calculate the war’s death toll? - ABC News. [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20231108181323/https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/explainer-gaza-ministry-health-calculate-wars-death-toll-104374157>

244 Abraham, Y. (2024a) Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/yuval_abraham/status/1750123648533324158?t=Cam-MqsgEKkih-3WY2rGzkQ&s=19

Despite this there has been an active campaign to force media outlets to describe the health ministry as **“ Hamas run.”** On 20 October, an article from the BBC Verify on the topic of **“How the dead are counted in Gaza”** also reported how health ministry figures have held up to scrutiny in past Israeli aggression. A later version of the article inserted the words “ Hamas run” health ministry as a result of pressure from pro-Israel supporters and lobby groups.²⁴⁵ The pressure from these lobby groups is indicative of the purpose behind affixing Hamas run so as to cast doubt on figures and claims.

“Health Ministry”



BBC

NEWS

How the dead are counted in Gaza

16 November 2023

By BBC Verify team
BBC News

In any warzone, counting the dead is a challenge. Gaza is no different.

As battles there intensify, the chaotic situation - with bombardment by Israeli forces, on-the-ground fighting, communications blackouts, fuel shortages and crumbling infrastructure - makes getting accurate information on the numbers of people who have died extremely demanding.

And Palestinian officials have said there are now "significant difficulties" in obtaining updated information because of the interruption of communications in the Gaza Strip.

The health ministry is Gaza's official source for death numbers - which it updates regularly. On Monday evening, it said 11,240 people had been killed, including 4,630 children, since the Hamas attacks on Israel on 7 October which prompted the current war.

“ Hamas-run health ministry”



BBC

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The Hamas-run health ministry is Gaza's official source for death numbers - which it updates regularly. On Monday evening, it said 11,240 people had been killed, including 4,630 children, since the Hamas attacks on Israel on 7 October which prompted the current war.

Image 11.1 BBC, November 2023, changed description of Palestinian health ministry to “ Hamas-run” on same day

245 Sela, H. (2023). BBC's fact check department roots for Hamas casualty figures. [online] CAMERA UK. Available at: <https://camera-uk.org/2023/11/20/bbcs-fact-check-department-roots-for-hamas-casualty-figures>

US President Joe Biden cast doubt on Gaza's death figures going against international humanitarian agencies who consider the health ministry's figures to be broadly accurate and historically reliable. Later, Biden is reported to have privately apologised to a group of Muslim Americans for casting "excessive scepticism" over the number of Palestinian deaths and vowed to "do better."²⁴⁶

Conversely, when Israeli sources are claiming a number of killings by Hamas, on the whole, these statistics are stated by media outlets and journalists as definitive without any caveats such as "estimated" or that it is an "Israeli claim" or even "Israel says/said/alleged." One of the major examples of this is a BBC Online news headline which reads "More than 25,000 now killed in Gaza since Israel offensive began, Hamas-run health ministry says."²⁴⁷ The same article reads, "Israel began its offensive following the 7 October attack in which Hamas fighters killed 1,300 people in southern Israel and took more than 240 hostage."²⁴⁸

In a similar light the Israeli claims are not affixed with the fact that the country is recognised by international law as an occupying force, described by human rights groups as an apartheid state or that it is governed by an ultra-conservative Government including far right members who have used genocidal language about Palestinians and have sworn not to allow for the establishment of a Palestinian State.²⁴⁹

Another example of this contrast between how the two sides are presented is found in a Sky News analysis from journalist Alistair Bunkell following the revelation by the Israeli ambassador to the UK Tzipi Hotovely that; "For sure the rise of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and their desire to attack Israel was certainly one of those reasons (why the two-state solution failed)". He then says; "Palestinian's though will say that the Israelis are to blame, and they will point to the fact that the number of Settlements, Israeli Settlements have quadrupled since 1993."²⁵⁰ The rise of Hamas here is given as a definitive whereas the huge rise in number of settlements is caveated with what the Palestinian's say.

This disparity between how the Ministry of Health in Gaza is referred to was not only found within BBC coverage but across other channels including Sky News. For example, on 2 November 2023 when reporting on the number of people killed in Gaza surpassing 9,000, Sky News' ongoing blog referred to "Hamas-led health ministry" for the first time.

246 Epstein, R. J., & Green, E. L. (2024). In private remarks to Arab Americans, Biden aide expresses regrets on Gaza. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/09/us/politics/biden-aide-israel-regret.html>

247 Lowen, M. (2024). More than 25,000 Now Killed in Gaza since Israel Offensive began, Hamas-run Health Ministry Says. *BBC News*. [online] 21 Jan. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68050172>

248 Ibid

249 Guyer, J. (2023). Israel's new right-wing government is even more extreme than protests would have you think. [online] *Vox*. Available at: <https://www.vox.com/world/2023/1/20/23561464/israel-new-right-wing-government-extreme-protests-netanyahu-biden-ben-gvir>

Sky News. (2023). Israel-Hamas war: Ambassador says Israel will not accept two-state solution. [online] Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/israel-hamas-war-ambassador-says-israel-will-not-accept-two-state-solution-13029909>

250 Alistair Bunkell on Sky News, December 13, 2023, 19:04

11.3 Introducing the label of Hamas-led health ministry.

The initial reporting from Sky News referred to the health ministry as Gaza or Palestinian. The first labelling of the health ministry as Hamas-led or Hamas run is found on 17 October 2023 on the Sky News Live Blog following the attack on the Al Ahli Hospital. It is unclear why Sky News took this editorial decision at this point.



Image 11.2 Sky News, 17 October 2023, editorial change referring to “Hamas-led health ministry”.

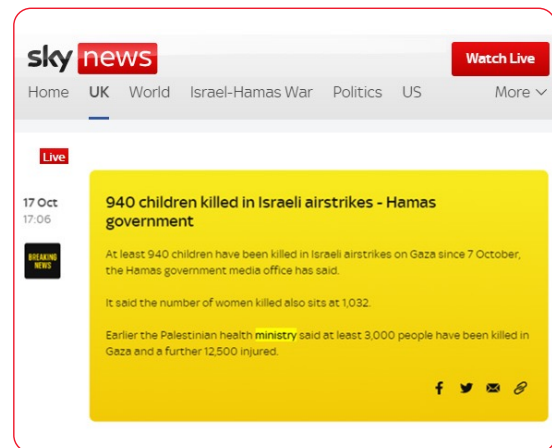


Image 11.4 The last mention of the health ministry without the Hamas qualifier

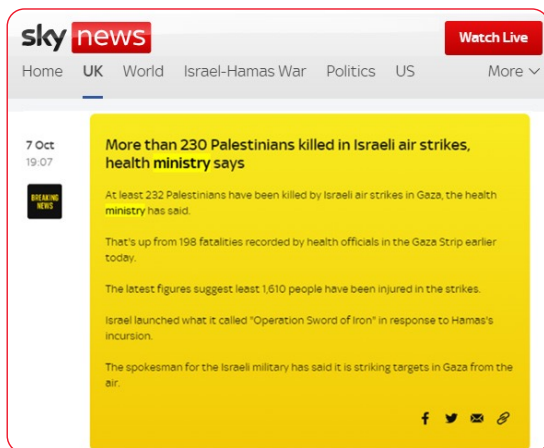


Image 11.3 The first mention of the Gaza Health Ministry.

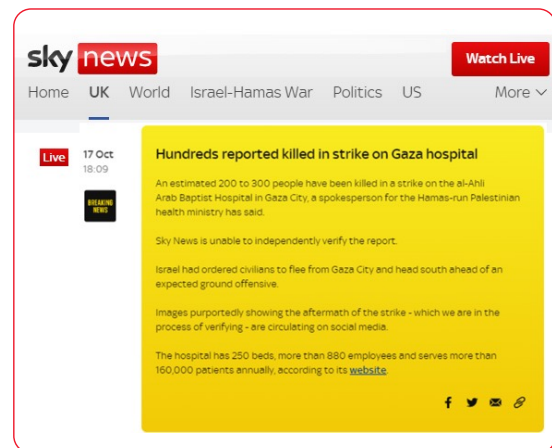


Image 11.5 The first mention of the health ministry with the Hamas qualifier coincided with the bombing of the Al Ahli Hospital which became a matter of dispute.

The bombing of the Al Ahli Hospital on October 17 2023 was initially reported on by Sky News by stressing that: **“The numbers that are being published by what I should stress is the Hamas-run Health Ministry estimate between 2 to 3 hundred dead”**, suggesting a questioning about the reliability of the source.²⁵¹ Author and writer David Zewig who investigated the widely reported claim that 500 people had been killed following the Al Ahli attacks, found how a translation of Ashraf Al-Qidra, the Ministry of Health spokesperson, statement found him saying there had been 500 “victims” following the bombing. Two different Arab translators told Zewig that the translation of Al-Qidra’s words could not be “deaths.”²⁵² This mistranslation, copied by many new agencies and reported across the globe, arguably allowed doubt to be cast on figures given by the Gaza health authorities.

The caveat of “Hamas run” health ministry has become a staple of certain news station’s reporting and the examples seen below are indicative of how news channels repeatedly undermined the credibility of the health ministry and number of deaths in Gaza.

1. When the figure of 10,000 Palestinian civilians being killed was announced, Sky News was interviewing a regional spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and questioned the legitimacy of the figures with the anchor Jayne Secker saying: “As we’ve been talking to you, we’ve got some figures that have come through from Reuters, from the Gaza Health Ministry, which of course we know is controlled by Hamas. But it is saying that they believe over 10,000 Palestinians have now been killed, including 4,104 children. When you see these figures coming via Hamas, are you able to put them into any perspective of how realistic do you think they are?”²⁵³
2. Whilst discussing the death toll in Gaza, Sky News’ Military Analyst, Philip Ingram, said that the “Gaza Ministry of Health is Hamas” and as such the death toll was “exaggerated” for the purposes of Hamas and the international aid agencies wanting people to “donate more money to them”. In the same segment he said civilians are dying because “Hamas is using them as human shields” - an Israeli instigated claim. He followed this up by accepting the Israeli claim; “I do know that the Israelis are trying to do everything they can to reduce those numbers, because they know this is not good for them politically on the international stage.”²⁵⁴
3. A GB news segment involving Jacob Rees Mogg and the activist Barnaby Raine saw the Conservative MP and presenter state that the casualty figures from Gaza were “exaggerated” for Hamas’ “own propaganda purposes.”²⁵⁵

251 Mark Austin speaking with Alistair Bunkell on Sky News 17 October 2023 available at <https://twitter.com/SaulStaniforth/status/1714333485303730421>

252 Zweig, D. (2023). Did the Entire Media Industry Misquote a Hamas Spokesperson? [online] www.silentlunch.net. Available at: <https://www.silentlunch.net/p/did-the-entire-media-industry-misquote>

253 Sky News Today with Jayne Secker, Nov 6, 2023, 12:50 PM

254 Philip Ingram, Sky News at One, Oct 25, 2023, 1:51 PM, SKYNEWS, see appendix C for full transcript.

255 Sky News Analyst Philip Ingram speaking about the Gaza Health Ministry as Hamas and accusing Hamas of inflating numbers of dead people (Sky News at 1: October 25, 2023, 1:51 PM)

Philip Ingram: We found the international aid agencies are quoting those figures as if they were gospel truth. It suits international aid agencies to have large numbers, because that means they will have people donate more money to them.

Presenter (Kamali Melbourne): Huge numbers are still dying, but you think they may be inflated?

Philip Ingram: I think they will be inflated by quite a lot. There are civilians dying in this, because Hamas are using them as human shields in many ways and that is absolutely horrible. I do know that Israelis are taking every care they can to reduce those numbers, because they know this is not good for them politically.

11.4 How reporting on the Palestinian Health ministry changed in Online News

An analysis of online news coverage shows that until 17 October the preferred description for most news outlets was the “Palestinian Health Ministry” when quoting figures or reading information released from health authorities in Gaza.

The bombing of the Al Ahli hospital on 18 Oct which is still very much disputed and involved likely fabricated evidence released by Israel as shown above by Channel 4’s Alex Thomson, saw a dramatic rise in mentions of the “ Hamas run health ministry.” When assessed in the period 7 October - 7 November and overall mentions in UK online media, there were 2,135 mentions of Gaza/Palestinian health ministry, with at least 1,503 mentions (70%) attributed to Hamas in various ways.²⁵⁶

The following Graph shows this remarkable change of tact by the UK media which favoured an Israeli narrative seeking to destroy the credibility of the death figures coming out of Gaza and from Palestinian sources.

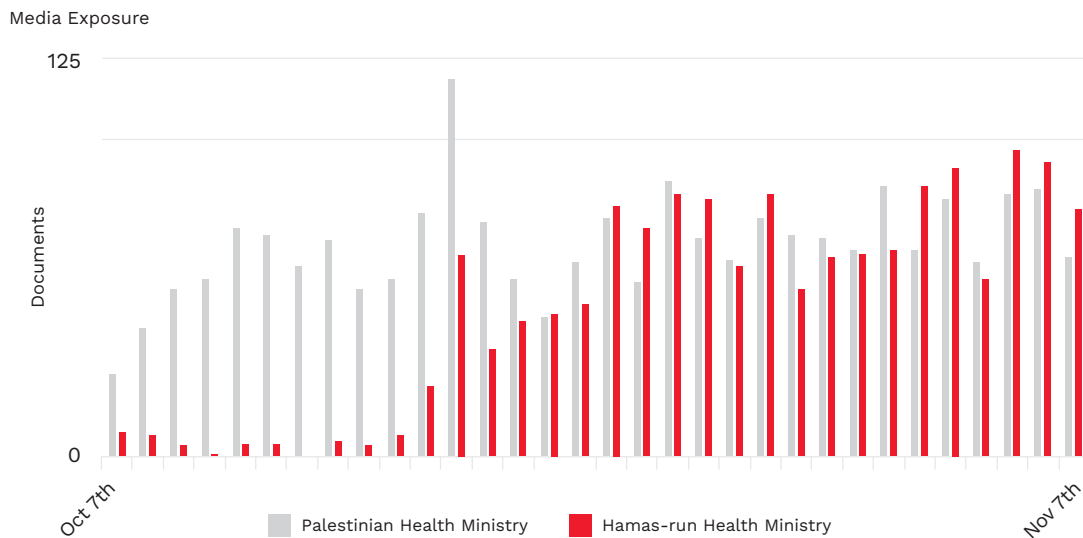


Figure 11.1 The online media adoption of Hamas-run health ministry began all on a sudden.

256 Search Terms used: (Palestin* or Gaza*) near ("health ministry" or "ministry of health")
 Attribution: (Hamas-run or Hamas-led or Hamas-controlled or Hamas) near ("health ministry" or "ministry of health")

The examples below from online news outlets show how different outlets adopted the use of “ Hamas-run health ministry” in latter coverages instead of “Palestinian Health Ministry” in the initial coverage.

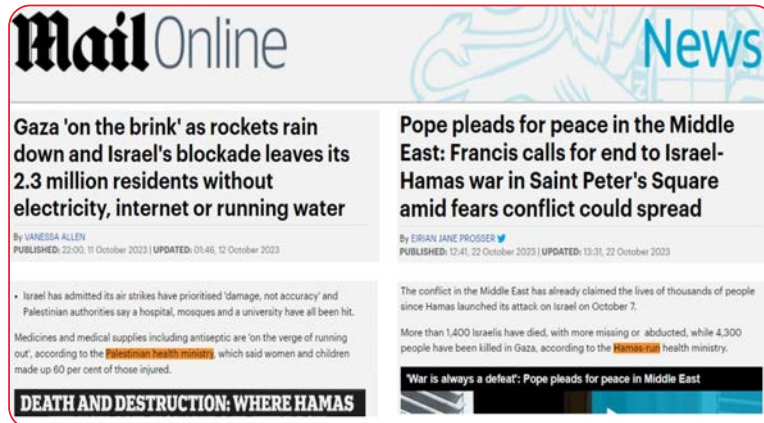


Image 11.6 MailOnline, 11 October 2023, switches to using “ Hamas-run health ministry”.

257

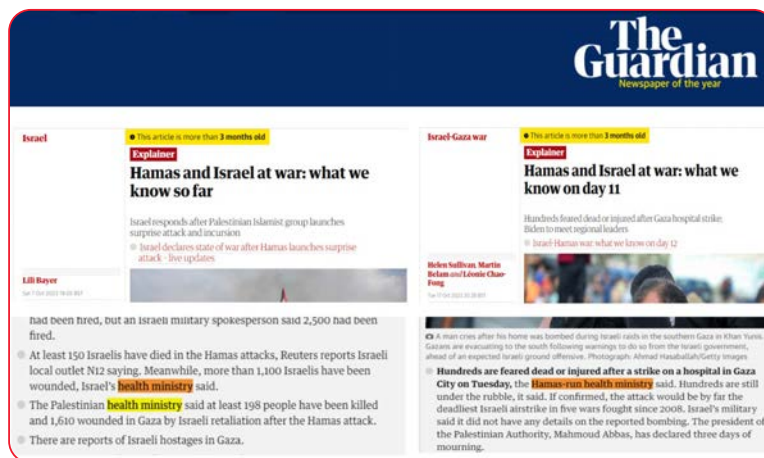


Image 11.7 The Guardian, 17 October 2023, changed its description of health ministry after 11 days.

258

257 Prosser, E.J. (2023). Pope pleads for peace in the Middle East. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12658925/Pope-pleads-peace-Middle-East-Francis-calls-end-Israel-Hamas-war-Saint-Peters-Square-amid-fears-conflict-spread.html>

Allen, V. (2023). Gaza ‘on the brink’ as rockets rain down. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12620749/Gaza-brink-rockets-rain-Israels-blockade-leaves-2-3-million-residents-without-electricity-internet-running-water.html>

258 Sullivan, H., Belam, M. and Chao-Fong, L. (2023). Hamas and Israel at war: what we know on day 11. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/17/hamas-and-israel-at-war-what-we-know-on-day-11>

Bayer, L. (2023). Hamas and Israel at war: what we know so far. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/07/hamas-and-israel-at-war-what-we-know-so-far>

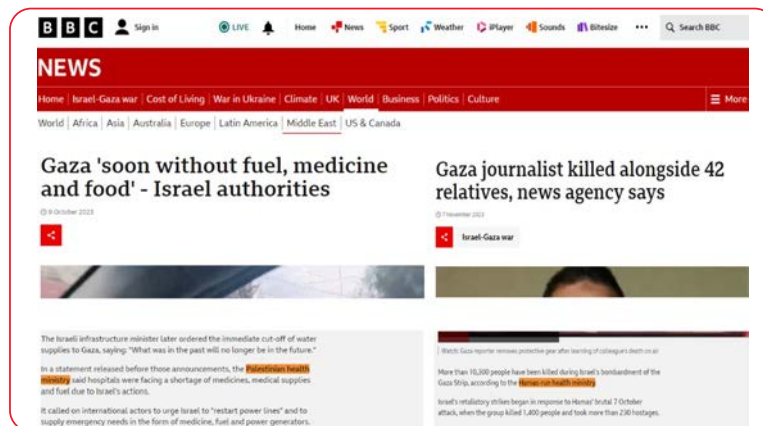


Image 11.8 BBC, 7 November 2023, amongst first to change description of Palestinian health ministry.

259

11.5 Lack of Prominence of Palestinian voices

Israeli voices or perspectives have been favoured over Palestinian ones by 3:1 in TV Broadcasts. There has been a huge disparity between the number of pro-Palestinian voices given airtime compared to Pro-Israeli voices. Between 7 October and 7 November 2023, Israeli viewpoints were referenced on 4,311 compared with 1,598 occasions referencing Palestinian viewpoints. Similarly, online news outlets have been using significantly more Israeli sources than Palestinian sources during the same one-month period. Israeli spokespeople and military sources were used almost twice as much (2,983) than Palestinian sources (1,737) times.

The graphics below show the disparity between Israeli representation and Palestinian representation based on keyword searches across broadcast TV and online news. A varied list of keyword search terms was used to determine the number of mentions of Israeli representatives or viewpoints vs Palestinian representatives or viewpoints.²⁶⁰ (Full list in Appendix B).

259 BBC (2023). Gaza journalist killed alongside 42 relatives, news agency says. BBC News. [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67350709>

260 See appendix B for full list of keywords.

Broadcast TV

One example on broadcast TV where viewpoints that can be considered pro-Israeli were forwarded by the journalist as well as the guest was Lucy Grey’s interview with Shashank Joshi, the Defence Editor of the Economist, who has written articles such as **“Why Israel must fight on.”**²⁶¹ In contrast to the interview which directly preceded this one, when the Palestinian-American lawyer Noura Erakat was constantly interrupted and challenged, Joshi was not interrupted once in his explanations of what Israel was doing in Gaza and what it hopes to achieve. Two out of four of Lucy Grey’s questions to Joshi led with Israel’s claims without any challenges and without any reference to the Gazan civilians killed:

- a. “The idea is to wipe out Hamas completely that was what Israel has said is the aim, I suppose it will be hard to measure whether that has been achieved won’t it?”²⁶²
- b. “They (Israel) also say they want to target Hamas infrastructure don’t they, in terms of that side of things we know we’ve heard so much about these huge networks of tunnels that there are in Gaza, how is it done on that front and in terms of the HQ that’s supposed to be in Gaza City isn’t it of Hamas?”²⁶³

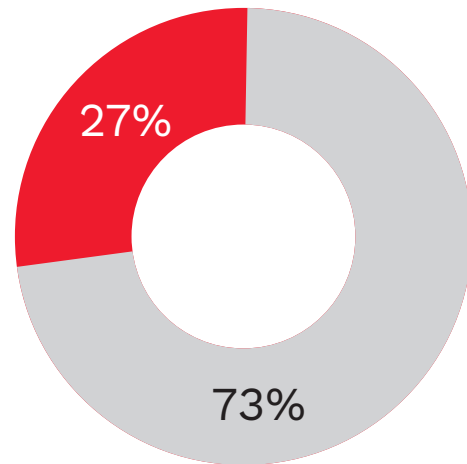
Following the interview with Joshi, Grey interviewed the legal scholar Noura Erakat and challenged her with what can be considered pro Israeli talking points some of which are as following;

“Israel would argue it’s telling people to leave...”

“They (Israel) are saying Hamas is hiding under hospitals and using its people...”

When challenged on whether the above had been verified the anchor said: “I’m just telling you what Israel would argue against what you are saying.”²⁶⁴

Mentions of parties from either side of the conflict



■ Palestine Says ■ Israel Says

Figure 11.2 A range of keywords describing Israeli and Palestinian news sources were compared.

261 The Economist. (2023). Why Israel must fight on. [online] Available at: <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2023/11/02/why-israel-must-fight-on>

262 Noura Erakat interviewed by Lucy Grey on Verified Live, BBC World News, 7 November 2023, 3:19 PM

263 Shashank Joshi interviewed by Lucy Grey on Verified Live, BBC World News, 7 November 2023, 3:19 PM

264 Noura Erakat interviewed by Lucy Grey on Verified Live, BBC World News, 7 November 2023, 3:19 PM

An example of good journalism where Israeli claims were challenged in relation to the Al Shifa Hospital was seen on Al Jazeera English where the journalist Marc Lamont Hill demanded that David Friedman, the former Ambassador to the United States provide independent evidence that showed what he claimed was “proven with certainty” that the headquarters of Hamas was under the Al Shifa Hospital. Friedman compared Lamont’s questioning and demanding independent evidence of engaging in “holocaust denying idea.”²⁶⁵ Lamont responded by saying, “everybody that challenges you is not doing Holocaust denial.”²⁶⁶ Additionally, the Sky News correspondent Mark Stone also informed viewers how contrary to the Israeli claims, independent observers had described Al Shifa as a “death zone.”²⁶⁷

A particularly noticeable trend which can be seen in examples below is that when Palestinian guests attempted to infuse context into the debate or discussion, some were silenced or accused of attempting to justify the 7 October attacks. Others were repeatedly asked by presenters and fellow interviewees to condemn the attacks by Hamas as a ticket to enter the discussions in the first place. This tactic is often used on Muslims following terror attacks whereby Muslims who have had nothing to do with the actions of an individual or group are asked to first condemn them before entering discussions. It is widely understood that to assume British Muslims are in any way responsible for the actions of terrorists abroad, and as such, must condemn them (or to assume British Jews are responsible for the actions of Israel), is racist and unjustifiable.

Below are some examples which illustrate this point.

1. One of the early examples involved Tayyab Ali the Director of the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians who appeared on Newsnight and was interviewed by Kirsty Wark. When Ali attempted to provide a context to the historical plight of Palestinians and the injustices they have repeatedly suffered, he was interrupted with “do you condemn what Hamas did.” The Labour MP, Margaret Hodge who was also a guest on the show then repeatedly asked Ali if he condemned the 7 October attacks.²⁶⁸
2. The Guardian columnist Owen Jones was confronted by Labour MP Margaret Hodge on Sky News on 10 October when, in reference to the Israeli response to Hamas’ attacks, he attempted to explain that it was “illegal under international law to impose collective punishment on a



Image 11.9: Mark Stone, Sky News, November 2023, independent observers describe Shifa as a “desperate death zone”.

265 Marc Lamont Hill interviews David Friedman on Upfront. Al Jazeera. (2023). Israel-Gaza war: What are the limits to the principle of self-defence? [online] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/upfront/2023/11/10/israel-gaza-war-what-are-the-limits-to-the-principle-of-self-defence>

266 Ibid

267 Stone, M. (2023). Twitter. https://twitter.com/Stone_SkyNews/status/1726093456672743711

268 Tayyab Ali and Margaret Hodge on Newsnight, Oct 09, 2023, 11:15 PM, BBC2

people”.²⁶⁹ Hodge asked Jones “do you condemn it?“, meaning the Hamas attack despite him having done so at the beginning of his speech. When Jones spoke about “Gaza’s children” and how “96 per cent of those who have died in the last 15 years are Palestinians” and “ending the occupation”, Hodge accused Jones of having an obsession around Palestine: “Your obsession, the obsession with so many people, the issue around Palestine, it’s been an obsession forever.”

3. Dr Abdelfattah Abusrour, the director of Alrowwad, an artistic enterprise in the West Bank, was interviewed on Sky News by Kamali Melbourne on 23 October. Abusrour detailed the brutality of the Israeli occupation and its impact on Palestinian children who are “killed.” Abusrour clearly said: “nobody can be with killing innocent people, no human, decent human being can be claiming it’s right to defend and kill innocent people, this is terrorism and we should label it as terrorism but it concerns everybody not when the oppressed are responding to the violence of an oppression that has been going for 75 years unfortunately.”²⁷⁰ Abusrour also added: “You label it an Israel-Hamas War while it is an Israeli occupation against Palestinian people, and the oppressed are the Palestinian people.” Melbourne responded by first regurgitating an Israeli line of justification: “As you know the Israelis say that they are only going after Hamas and as you know the international community has tried to make it very, very, clear that in whatever response comes from the IDF that only Hamas is targeted, and innocent life is spared.” (At this point the death toll in Gaza was more than 5,000). Melbourne then followed up this point by asking Abusrour: “You seem to be suggesting than anything can be done to overthrow the oppression. I want you to carry on that line of argument are you saying that the attack on 7th October was justified? The killing of children and the kidnapping of people, people that are still being held?”
4. On occasions Palestinian voices were also misrepresented. One of the most prominent of these examples is the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, Husam Zomlot, who conducted an interview with Sky News on the Kay Burley Live show. She repeatedly falsely accused him of saying that “the Israelis had it coming.” However, this assertion by Ms. Burley stands in direct contrast to Mr. Zomlot’s actual statements, where he expressed that “the loss of civilian lives is tragic on all sides” and emphasised that “Israel knew this was coming their way,” highlighting the consistent warnings issued by Palestinians regarding their treatment by Israeli forces that went unheeded. The media regulator OFCOM received 1,500 complaints. Sky published a clarification saying it accepted the Ambassador did not say what had been claimed and “it gave a potentially misleading representation of Dr Zumlot’s views.”²⁷¹
5. There were examples where guests from either side of the divide were interviewed in the same segment yet treated differently in what was expected of them. An ITV News interview on 9 October which also covered a pro-Israel protest showed a stark difference in scrutiny between how pro-Israel interviewees were questioned and what is demanded of pro-Palestinians. The report shows two contrasting demonstrations in London - one Pro-Israel and one Pro-Palestine. The pro-Israel protest had an interview with Marie van der Zyl of the Board of Deputies for British Jews and focused on the worrying rise in anti-Semitism in London, with no questions asked about Israeli bombardments of Gaza. The coverage of the pro-Palestine protests involved an interview with organizer Ismail Patel of Friends of Al Aqsa. Patel stated that the UK Government should remain impartial and bring the two sides together so there is

269 Margaret Hodge and Owen Jones on Sky News, 10 October 2023

270 Dr Abdelfattah Abusrour interviewed by Kamali Melbourne on Sky News, 23 October 2023

271 Husam Zamlot interviewed by Kay Burley on Sky News, 10 October 2023 & Clarification on Sky News 21 October 2023 available at <https://twitter.com/hzomlot/status/1715674875983999462>

a peaceful negotiation and end to the violence. The reporter followed this with the question; “Do you condemn what Hamas did?”²⁷²

- 6. Another example of the disparity in how guests were treated was seen on BBC Politics Live programme when Ben Jamal of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign was interviewed and shown a screenshot of two protestors who had images of paragliders on their backs. Jamal’s was repeatedly asked by the presenter Jo Coburn to condemn this.²⁷³ The previous guest Mark Gardner, a representative of the Community Security Trust which is a Jewish charity that provides security and safety as well as training to Jewish organisations and places to worship, was not put under the same pressure to condemn the actions of the Israeli Govt in Gaza.

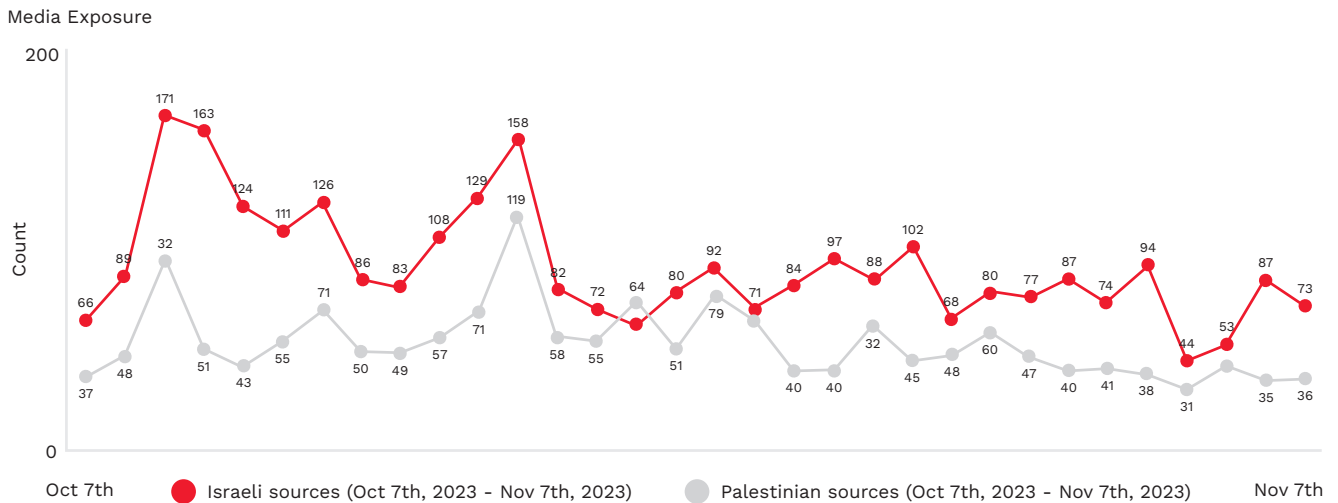


Figure 11.3 The numbers of news sourcing keywords (e.g., report/reported, say/said, informs/informed) were identified with Israeli and Palestinian sides, officials and sources (e.g. Israeli spokesperson, Palestinian health ministry). See Appendix B

Online Outlets

Whilst looking at the overall trend online, the figure above shows a clear numeric bias towards Israeli guests and viewpoints when we looked at examples of the manner in which Palestinian guests or pro-Palestinian voices were referenced and attributed.

272 Ismail Patel and Marie van der Zyl interviewed on ITV News, Oct 9, 2023 6:10 PM
 273 Ben Jamal on BBC Politics Live 16 October 2023, BBC 2

An example of this in online news was seen in a BBC Online news report written by Lucy Williamson which basically listed ten Israeli claims (see below),²⁷⁴ Williamson, embedded with the IDF, went into another hospital in Gaza - Al Shifa. She only mentioned the restrictions imposed by the IDF on her reporting in the 15th paragraph of the article where she writes **“our visit was tightly controlled; we had very limited time on the ground and were not able to speak to doctors or patients there.”**²⁷⁵ Given these strict conditions and restrictions imposed on journalists, important journalistic questions should be raised including the control and access to information as well as the legitimacy of claims being made. There is also no context given as to the history and very recent history of misleading and false claims made by the IDF which is very relevant here given the list of claims being made and the alleged evidence being shown. Without this premise, the broadcast and journalistic standards are compromised.

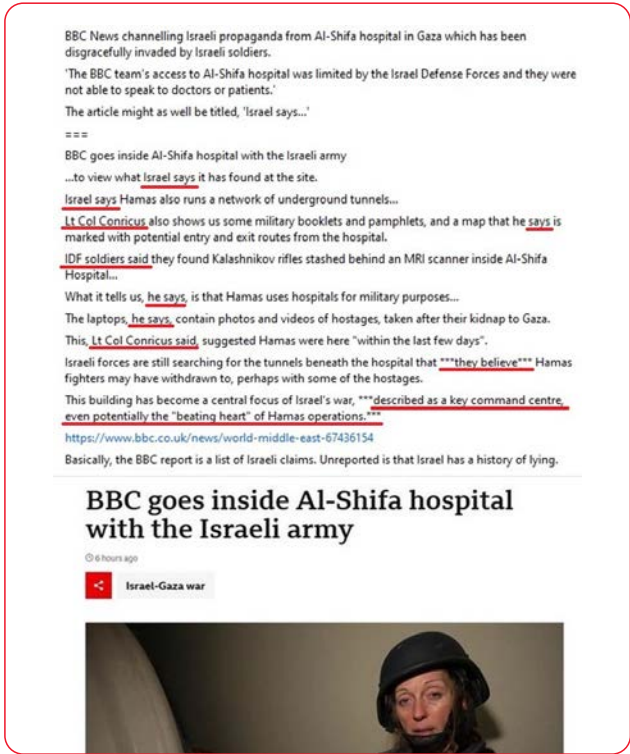


Image 11.10 Lucy Williamson, BBC, November 2023, repeats 10 Israeli claims without verification. (Image Credit: Media Lens).

276

11.6 Recommendations

1. Avoid the term “ Hamas-run ” when referring to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. Refer to it as the Ministry of Health in Gaza, the Gaza Health Ministry or the Palestinian Health Ministry as the UN does.
2. If the Gazan Health Ministry is going to be prefaced with “ Hamas run ”, then:
 - a. The caveat that the figures have been verified previously, should be provided to ensure the full context is provided.
 - b. Context should also be provided when discussing Israeli claims e.g. caveat that many of Israeli claims have been proven false.

274 Williamson, L. (2023). BBC goes inside Al-Shifa hospital with the Israeli army. (2023). BBC News [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67436154>

275 Ibid

276 Media Lens (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/medialens/status/1725192347799949623>

MISREPRESENTATION OF PRO-PALESTINE PROTESTORS

12. MISREPRESENTATION OF PRO-PALESTINE PROTESTORS



12.1 Insights

- Pro-Palestine protestors have been framed as violent, pro-Hamas terrorist supporters, and anti-Semites who are a danger to Jews.
- GB News and Talk TV accounted for 42% of total references to protestors being pro-Hamas.
- The chant “From the river to the sea” was mentioned a total of 590 times across TV broadcast channels

The immediate onset of Israeli bombardment of Gaza after 7 October, and the ongoing mass killing of Palestinians has given rise to mass protests and rallies on the streets of countries across the globe as well as on university campuses. The framing and coverage of these protests has seen media outlets refer to them as pro-Hamas rallies and even pro-Isis rallies. Protestors and organisers have been accused of supporting terrorism as well as being antisemitic and everything from their chants to banners and clothing have been subject to micro analysis for evidence of hate speech, antisemitism or the glorification of terrorism. This has subsequently been used to tarnish the entire movement and protests.

12.2 BBC forced to clarify description of marchers as Pro-Hamas

One major example of the tarnishing of the entire pro-Palestine protest movement in London occurred on two separate occasions when two BBC newsreaders said that people protesting in London for Palestine were “backing Hamas.” **After a complaint from CfMM, the BBC offered an on-air clarification saying the description was “Misleading” but did NOT APOLOGISE** even though BBC Newswatch incorrectly claimed that they did.²⁷⁷ “Before we go, earlier on BBC News, we reported on some of the pro-Palestinian demonstrations at the weekend. We spoke about several demonstrations across Britain during which people voiced their backing for Hamas. We accept that this was poorly phrased and was a misleading description of the pro-Palestinian demonstrations.”²⁷⁸

Whilst the BBC did not apologise for the above egregious error, the BBC did apologise when it made an error on 15 November in a report about Israeli forces entering Gaza’s main hospital. BBC news misquoted a Reuters’ report by saying that medical teams and speakers were being targeted when they should have said IDF forces included medical teams and Arabic speakers for this operation. The BBC said: “We apologise for this error which fell below our usual editorial standards.”²⁷⁹ They should have also used similar language and apologised when they accused pro-Palestine marchers of backing Hamas.

277 Samira Ahmed on BBC Newswatch on BBC iplayer 20 October 2023 available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001rp-nq/newswatch-20102023>

278 BBC News Oct 16, 2023, 5:56 PM, BBCNEWS (BBC News)

279 Parker, F. (2023). Board of Deputies ‘appalled’ by BBC newsreader’s claim that IDF is targeting medics. The Telegraph. [online] 15 Nov. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/15/bbc-apologises-newsreader-claims-idf-targeting-medics-gaza>

12.3 Calling pro-Palestine protests pro-Hamas

On 13 October, BBC Newsnight hosted a discussion between the academic Mona Siddiqui and the columnist Hadley Freeman. Freeman ended the discussion with the words “an instinctive feeling among the left in this country that Israel is bad and therefore they come out more pro-Palestinian and that means pro Hamas in the situation.”²⁸⁰ This was just one prominent example of where there was a deliberate conflation between those who support the people of Palestine and Hamas. Another example was seen and heard on GB News where iNews journalist Benjamin Butterworth accused pro-Palestinian protestors of “giving an alibi to evil by using the language of peace and justice”, words which were uttered alongside the image below of two young hijab wearing girls at a protest.



Image 12.1: GB News, October 2023, image of young hijabi girls whilst Benjamin Butterworth frames protests as “evil”.

Right wing news channels in the UK were the most fervent in trying to link protestors with Hamas. GB News and Talk TV accounted for 42% of the total references to protestors being pro-Hamas. This figure rises to 64% when international channels are excluded.²⁸¹ On GB News, the former UKIP leader and right-wing politician turned presenter, Nigel Farage, accused pro-Palestine protestors in Germany of being “pro-Hamas”.²⁸² Talk TV presenter Kevin Sullivan when describing the pro-Palestine protests of 21 October claimed to be an eyewitness saying; “many were clearly or some were clearly supporting Hamas and others were chanting Jihad, Jihad.”²⁸³

One way in which the variable approaches of reporting the demonstrations can be seen is by comparing an international channel such as Al Jazeera English and a British right wing broadcaster, Talk TV. The

280 Hadley Freeman on BBC Newsnight, BBC2, 13 October 2023

281 Search Terms used: pro Hamas, Hamas supporting, supporting Hamas, Hamas supporters, backing Hamas.

282 “Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor, went to Israel and came back to Berlin only to find that Jewish people had had star of David’s on their doors. There were huge pro-Palestinian pro-Hamas, frankly, demonstrations taking place in Berlin and other German cities.

283 Kevin Sullivan on Talk TV, Oct 23, 2023, 4:09 PM: “I saw it myself, I saw coppers and they’re smiling which isn’t really good enough because to shout Jihad has to break the law and to support Hamas is against the law. Why aren’t the police enforcing the law particularly after Home Secretary Suella Braverman had told them they better do it, they better be fair and balanced in the way they police these protests because if they keep favouring the Palestine side it will smack suspiciously of antisemitism.”

screen shots below show their different descriptions of the same march. Talk TV alongside other right wing channels presented it as a march in favour of “TERROR ON OUR STREETS” whilst Al Jazeera labelled them as “SOLIDARITY PROTESTS”.



Image 12.2 TalkTV, October 2023, frame protests as “TERROR ON OUR STREETS”.



Image 12.3 Al Jazeera English, October 2023, frames them as “SOLIDARITY PROTESTS”

It is important to acknowledge that some journalists and presenters made it clear that being pro-Palestine was not the same as being pro-Hamas. Below are some examples.

1. The BBC correspondent Lyse Dohet responded to a viewer’s question on the difference between being pro-Hamas and pro-Palestine by saying: “they’re very different, to be pro-Palestine or to be pro-Hamas. But you can be pro-Hamas and pro-Palestine, but it’s not necessary that if you’re pro-Palestine, you’re pro-Hamas. In fact, you could be very anti-Hamas.”²⁸⁴

284 Lyse Doucet on Global News Podcast: The Conflict Special, BBC World News, 22 October 2023, 2:39 PM

2. GB News presenter Darren Grimes reading the email of a viewer by the name of Sherry says: “There’s a clear difference between people protesting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and actively supporting Hamas. It’s very dangerous to paint everyone out marching in London today with the same brush.”²⁸⁵
3. Political Journalist Rob Merrick on Talk TV said: “It’s wrong to say most people on these marches are supporters of Hamas that’s simply not the case, there’s a difference between campaigners for a Palestinian homeland and Hamas.”²⁸⁶

12.4 Painting pro-Palestinian protestors as antisemites- and a danger to Jews

Another egregious way in which pro-Palestinian marchers were framed was the media’s weaponising of anti-Semitism to cast protestors as antisemites and a danger to Jews. Attacks which frame those who are anti-Israel as being antisemitic have long been an aim of pro-Israel advocates with an influential report published in 2010 calling London in particular a “Mecca of delegitimization.”²⁸⁷ The comments of the then Home Secretary Suella Braverman who described the protests as “hate marchers” added fuel to the fire and so an increased demand by media outlets and commentators for the police to enforce robust action.²⁸⁸ Below are several examples of how protestors have been marked out as antisemites and by extension, as a danger to Jews.

1. Pro-Palestine protestors were accused of being antisemites due to their opposition to Israel or for intimidating Jews by protesting. By perpetuating this idea, media outlets effectively erased the reality of Jewish individuals and organisations participating and being in support of the pro-Palestine. The BBC Politics Live presenter Jo Coburn said a sit in protest at Liverpool Street train station in London was intimidating to the “Jewish community maybe as a whole.” She did not mention that the protest had been co-organised by Jewish groups who had a large banner at the Station reading ‘Jews Against Genocide.’²⁸⁹ Nor was this banner included in the BBC Politics Live shot of the station when showing protestors.

285 Darren Grimes on Saturday Five, GB News Oct 21, 2023, 07:25 PM

286 Rob Merrick on Talk TV, 21 Oct 2023, 07:49 AM

287 Paul, R. (2010). Britain is the ‘hub of hate,’ claims TA think tank report. The Jerusalem Post [online] Available at: <https://www.jpost.com/jewish-world/jewish-news/britain-is-the-hub-of-hate-claims-ta-think-tank-report>

288 Kevin Sullivan on Talk TV, Oct 23, 2023, 4:09 PM: Why aren't the police enforcing the law particularly after Home Secretary Suella Braverman had told them they better do it, they better be fair and balanced in the way they police these protests because if they keep favouring the Palestine side it will smack suspiciously of antisemitism.”

Kevin Sullivan claimed on his ‘What Just Happened’ programme, that he doesn’t conflate supporting Palestinian civilians with supporting Hamas.

This followed a monologue where Sullivan accused pro-Palestine supporters of “holding hands with anti-Semites”;

“This is not a great time to wave the Palestinian flag and rail against the Jewish State”.

“Go right ahead, hold hands with the anti-Semites who don’t so much love Palestine as they hate Israel’s existence.”

289 Jo Coburn on BBC Politics Live, BBC2, 1 November 2023 available at <https://twitter.com/SaulStaniforth/status/1719702576944341242>



Image 12.4 Mohammad Sajal, X, November 2023, a video showing Jewish pro-Palestine protestors countering antisemitism claims.

2. On Sky News Sophy Ridge said: “Some Jewish viewers tonight might be thinking I don’t feel safe in London, my children don’t feel safe going to school, we have thousands of people talking about Jihad.” It is not clear where the figure of thousands has come from or how it can be substantiated? If the presenter is referring to the demonstration by members of Hizb-ut Tahrir which was filmed on the sidelines of the pro-Palestine march on 21 October, pictorial evidence of this particular demonstration does not show “thousands” of people and the word “Jihad” is said by one speaker.²⁹⁰
3. GB News press reviewer and pro-Israel comedian Lewis Schaffer reviewed the Daily Express front page for 4 Nov 2023 which had the headline: “Hate Marches are Affront to British Values” and equated the chant of “free Palestine” with “free Palestine from the Jews.” When asked by presenter who’s marching? he replied: “it’s the people supporting Hamas.” When presenter Andrew Doyle attempted to clarify that protestors would say they are pro-Palestine, Schaffer responded with “I think the net-effect is the exact same thing.” Doyle agreed with Schaffer saying: “if you are for the people of Palestine the first thing you should do is condemn Hamas.”²⁹¹

290 Sophy Ridge on Politics Hub on Sky News 23 October 2023, <https://twitter.com/SaulStaniforth/status/1716522277238456409>

291 Lewis Schaffer on GB News, 04 November 2023

Another way in which antisemitism has been tied alongside the pro-Palestine movement is by portraying it through imagery and linking Palestinian flags and symbols to stories and headlines on antisemitism. A prominent example of this was found on The Guardian news website. In an article about rising reports of antisemitism, the accompanying image (below left) was of a pro-Palestine protest in London with people flying the Palestinian flag. The underlying suggestion is that the protesters were somehow linked to or responsible for the rising Semitism. **Following complaints, including by CfMM, this image was later changed to a more appropriate one showing the Israeli flag.**²⁹²

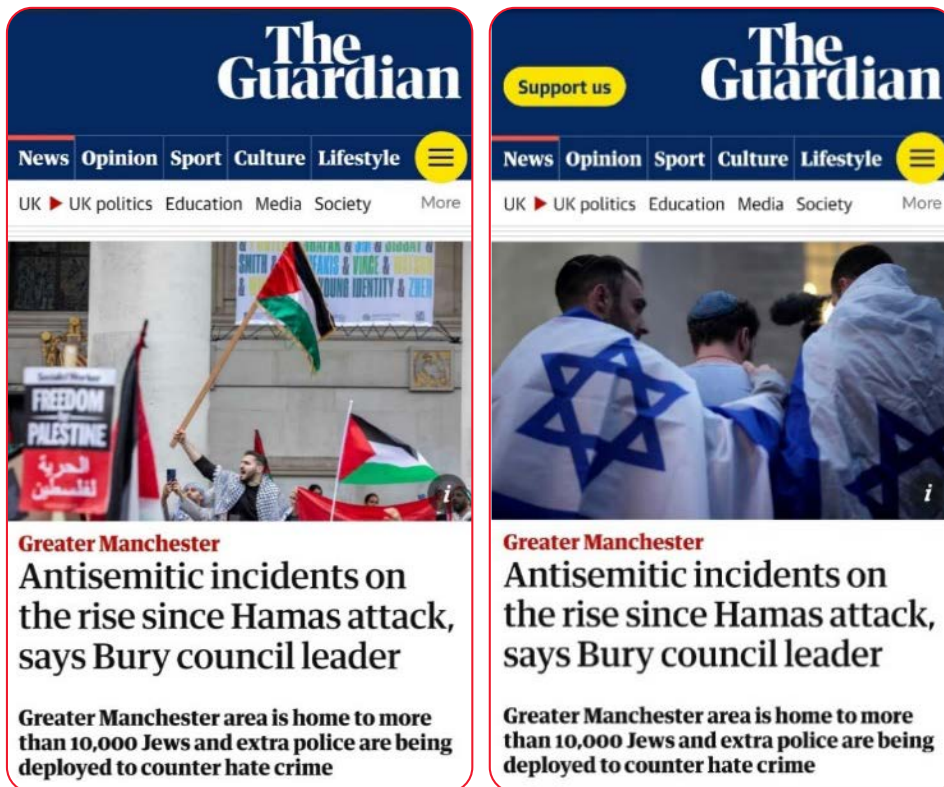


Image 12.5 The Guardian, 15 October 2023, following complaints, including by CfMM, image changed to more appropriate one.

292 Pidd, H. (2023). Antisemitic incidents on the rise since Hamas attack, says Bury council leader. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/15/antisemitic-incidents-on-the-rise-since-hamas-attack-says-bury-council-leader>

Other news outlets particularly right-wing news sites also headlined antisemitism alongside images of pro-Palestine protestors. Most notably in the Jewish Chronicle, The Express and The Telegraph as can be seen below. Conflating Pro-Palestine protests and Palestinian flags with rising antisemitism through imagery has continued beyond our analysis period.

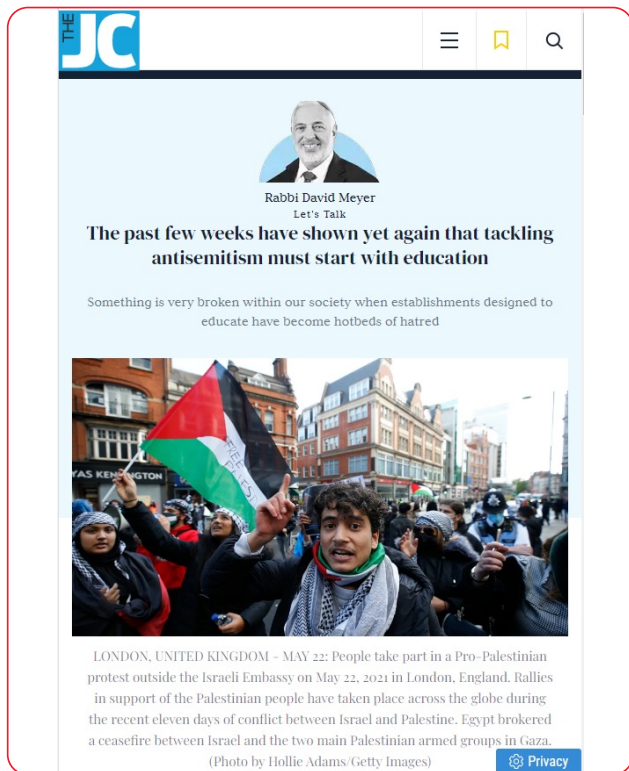


Image 12.6 Jewish Chronicle, 2 November 2023, imagery conflating rising antisemitism through pro-Palestine protests and flags.

293

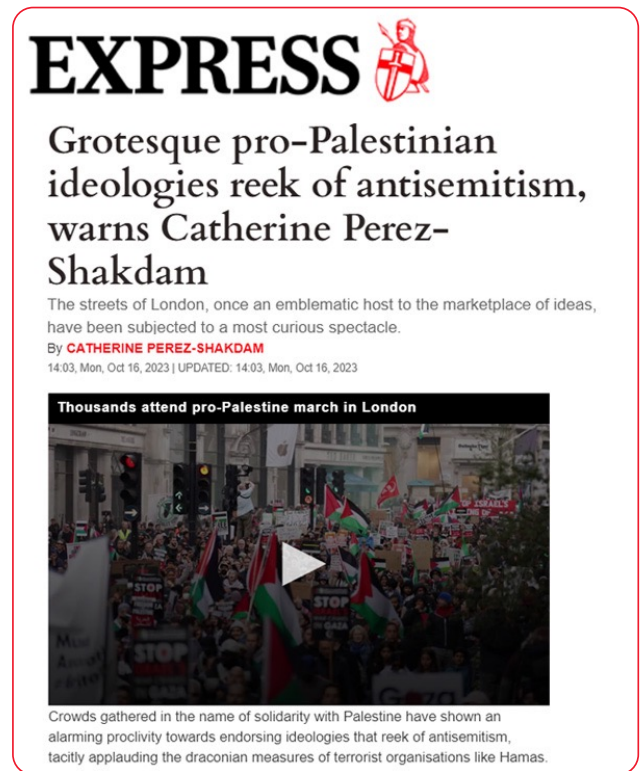


Image 12.7 Express, October 2023, choice of words to describe pro-Palestine protestors degrading.

294

293 Meyer, R.D. (2023). The past few weeks have shown yet again that tackling antisemitism must start with education. [online] www.thejc.com. Available at: <https://www.thejc.com/lets-talk/the-past-few-weeks-have-shown-yet-again-that-tackling-antisemitism-must-start-with-education-diq7293>

294 Perez-Shakdam, C. (2023). Grotesque pro-Palestinian ideologies often reek of antisemitism. [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1824325/propalestinian-ideologies-antisemitism-israel-comment>

The Daily Telegraph



COMMENT

Weak Britain has failed to crush anti-Semitism, having succumbed to Hamas manipulation

We stand by as protestors demand genocide and revisionists insist that Israel can only do evil



JAKE WALLIS SIMONS

When my children were born, I knew that when they were old enough I had to take them to Auschwitz. We are finally going in the New Year, but the times have radically changed. What does remembrance mean now that the old trauma is once again upon us? The

Image 12.8 Jake Wallis Simons, The Daily Telegraph, December 2023, protests associated with Hamas.

295

The linking of the Palestinian flag with violence and protests has gone beyond the right-wing media and been used to illustrate stories on far-right violence against police, particularly at the Cenotaph in London following the intervention of the then Home Secretary, Suella Braverman. A tweet by the London Evening Standard promoting an article on the fact that far right protestors had fought with the police, used an image of a mass pro-Palestinian rally outside of the Houses of Parliament. The same news outlet also published a guide on how pro-Palestinian protestors should march without scaring Jews.



296



297

Image 12.9 Evening Standard, 11 November 2023, published guide on how pro-Palestine protestors should march without scaring Jews.

296 Hamdi, S. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SALHACHIMI/status/1723321838980210759>

297 The Standard (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/EveningStandard/status/1723311853265178829>

Despite the relentless attacks on the BBC by right-wing and Jewish news outlets as well as by the state of Israel itself, following comments made by Israeli President, Isaac Herzog, The Guardian illustrated an article on BBC staff suffering distress with an image of a young pro-Palestine supporter.²⁹⁸



Image 12.10 The Guardian, October 2023, uses image of young pro-Palestinian protestor in story about BBC staff's mental health due to war.

12.5 Labelling Palestinian protestors as terror threats and opposed to British Values

In online media, there are clear examples of how commentators have exploited the Israel-Gaza war to promote their pre-existing ideology against multiculturalism and, in particular, to attack Muslims more broadly. Several right-wing hardliners started arguing that immigration and multiculturalism (Muslims and Palestinians) posed a threat to the war spilling into Britain and Europe. These kinds of arguments surfaced more when sporadic incidents of hate speech came to light on fringe rallies. Gaby Hinsliff points out in The Guardian how the British hard-right is exploiting the Israel-Gaza war to claim a failure of multiculturalism.²⁹⁹

298 The New Arab Staff. (2023). Israel President Herzog attacks BBC coverage of Gaza in rant. [online] The New Arab. Available at: <https://www.newarab.com/news/israel-president-herzog-attacks-bbc-coverage-gaza-rant>

299 Hinsliff, G. (2023). The British hard right will exploit this war to claim multiculturalism has failed. They are wrong. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/17/dont-listen-to-those-saying-multiculturalism-has-failed-britain-needs-it-more-than-ever>

Below are other examples of how this narrative was presented in the media:

1. The use of a composite image in The Telegraph comprising of incoming refugees, a displeased Angela Merkel and pro-Palestinian protests showed an apprehension of the Israel-Gaza conflict having possible repercussions beyond its own borders.³⁰⁰



Image 12.11 The Daily Telegraph, October 2023, pro-Palestine protests associated with threat of immigration to Europe.

2. Another comment piece in The Telegraph mentioned “mass illegal migration” more explicitly as “a terror threat.”³⁰¹ Paul Stott of the think tank Policy Exchange wrote “Now, with Hamas having killed 1,300 people in Israel, the UK suddenly notices there are large numbers of Hamas supporters in this country, and Jewish schools are closing out of fear. Who could have guessed it?”³⁰²

300 Crisp, J., Butcher, B., Squires, N., Samuel, H., Barnes, J. and Badcock, J. (2023). How mass migration could spread the Israel-Hamas war – and what Europe is doing about it. The Telegraph. [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/21/mass-migration-borders-israel-hamas-conflict-europe>

301 Stott, P. (2023). The facts are now clear: mass illegal migration is a terror threat. The Telegraph. [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/17/brussels-terror-attack-illegal-migration-threat>

302 Ibid

3. Similarly, The Telegraph hosted Nick Timothy the former advisor to Theresa May who considered the current demonstrations of conflicts as an apt case of civilisational conflict between progressive and regressive ideologies. Timothy goes on to blame the Muslims at large. “Many of the protesters, including those chanting the most violent threats, were Muslims, moved to rally by their feelings about the ummah, or global Muslim population. Research shows that British Muslims are more likely to hold antisemitic views than the population at large.”³⁰³



Image 12.12 Nick Timothy, The Daily Telegraph, October 2023, extreme right wing ideologies about civilisation conflict used to frame protests as uncivilised.

303 Timothy, N. (2023). Civilisational conflict defines our age. It mustn't play out on our streets. The Telegraph. [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/15/civilisational-conflict-defines-our-age>

4. A column on The Daily Express website by British author and journalist Leo McKinstry sympathised with Home Secretary Suella Braverman’s comment about the failure of multiculturalism by blaming it onto the Muslims communities, “... separate communities have developed in Britain, especially in the Muslim population. The failure to promote British values can be seen in sharia courts, the misogynistic reluctance to tackle grooming gangs and the erosion of free speech.”³⁰⁴ Much of this language echoes far right tropes about Muslims and Islam.

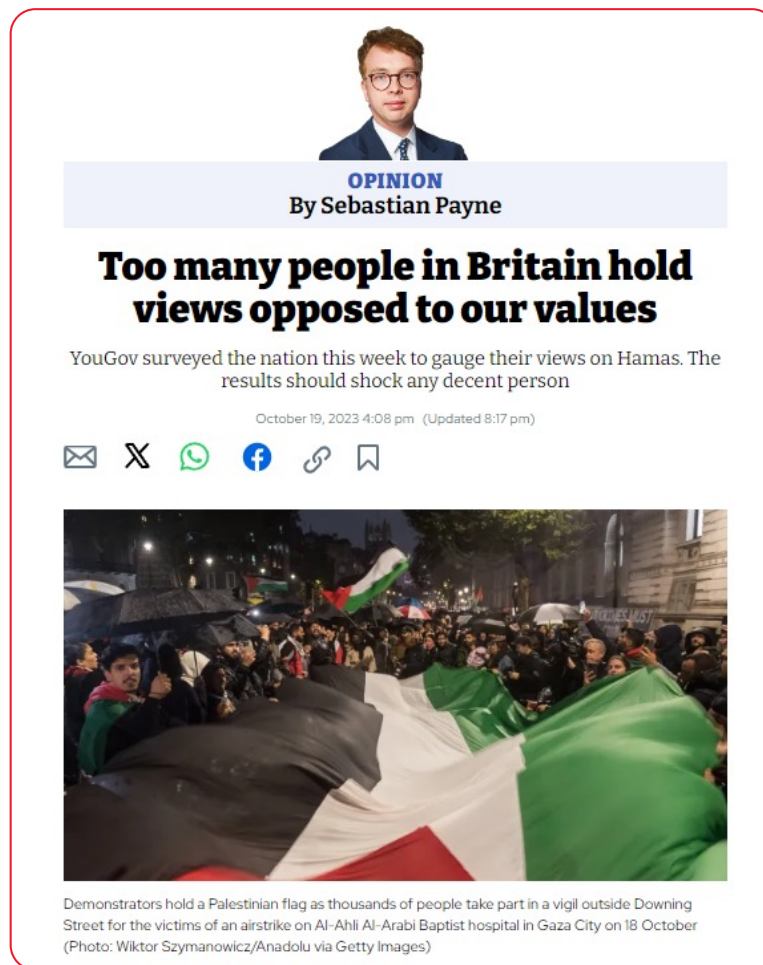


Image 12.13 Leo McKinstry, Express, October 2023, pro-Palestine protests considered depraved and a shame to Britain.

304 McKinstry, L. (2023). Moral depravity of pro-Palestinian marches shames our once proud nation. [online] The Express. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/1824335/pro-palestine-protest-israel-hamas>

It wasn't just the right-wing news outlets who adopted this framing.

5. iNews hosted a column by the former Financial Times journalist Sebastian Payne who used it to accuse pro-Palestine protestors of having views opposed to **“our values.”** Payne cited Lousie Casey in pointing fingers at Muslim communities who he said had **“worrying levels of exclusion.”**³⁰⁵



The image shows a screenshot of an opinion article on the iNews website. At the top, there is a portrait of Sebastian Payne, a man with glasses and a suit. Below the portrait, the word "OPINION" is written in blue, followed by "By Sebastian Payne" in black. The main headline is "Too many people in Britain hold views opposed to our values" in a large, bold, black font. Below the headline, a sub-headline reads: "YouGov surveyed the nation this week to gauge their views on Hamas. The results should shock any decent person". The date and time are listed as "October 19, 2023 4:08 pm (Updated 8:17 pm)". Below the text are several social media sharing icons: an envelope, a cross, WhatsApp, Facebook, a link icon, and a bookmark icon. At the bottom of the article preview is a photograph of a large crowd of people at night, many holding up Palestinian flags (black, white, and green with a red triangle at the bottom). Below the photo, a caption reads: "Demonstrators hold a Palestinian flag as thousands of people take part in a vigil outside Downing Street for the victims of an airstrike on Al-Ahli Al-Arabi Baptist hospital in Gaza City on 18 October (Photo: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Anadolu via Getty Images)".

Image 12.14 Sebastian Payne, iNews, October 2023, claiming pro-Palestine protestors having views opposing “our values”.

305 Payne, S. (2023). Too many people in Britain hold views opposed to our values. [online] inews.co.uk. Available at: <https://inews.co.uk/opinion/integration-in-the-uk-is-failing-and-we-are-now-seeing-the-consequences-2698838>

12.6 Viewing Pro-Palestine protestors as violent.

The right-wing print media has actively targeted and printed unverified claims about pro-Palestine supporters as being violent and wanting to eradicate Jews.

1. The Daily Mail front page on 7 November 2023, claimed that a poppy seller, Jim Henderson was “punched by protestors” at Waverley Station in Edinburgh. However, the British Transport Police say there was “insufficient evidence” after an “extensive review of CCTV coverage.”³⁰⁶ Despite this being nothing more than an allegation, the Daily Mail ran this as a front-page story.



Image 12.15 The Daily Mail made an allegation a cover story, front page from 7 November 2023.

306 Ungood-Thomas, J. (2023). UK police dismiss ‘misleading’ media reports of attacks on poppy sellers. The Observer. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/11/police-misleading-reports-attacks-on-poppy-sellers>

2. Similarly, three front-pages in the Daily Mail, The Sun and the Metro on the following day saw a warning that there was a potential for fighting at the Cenotaph during a planned Pro-Palestine march. This, even though the march had a planned route agreed by the police which went nowhere near the monument. Right-wing newspapers expressed anger at pro-Palestinian marches and wanted them cancelled.



Image 12.16 Daily Mail, The Sun, The Metro, November 2023, trying to link Cenotaph and anti British values to pro-Palestine protestors.

3. Another unsubstantiated claim was found on the BBC news website where a Jewish man claimed to have been the victim of antisemitic abuse after a pro-Palestinian demonstration.³⁰⁷ He claimed that two women at the protest ripped off his Yarmulke (cap) and attempted to provoke him with it. His claims were enough to warrant a BBC online news piece. The individual making the claims has a history of attacking pro-Palestinian Jewish women online and accused an MP of repeating Hamas lines.³⁰⁸

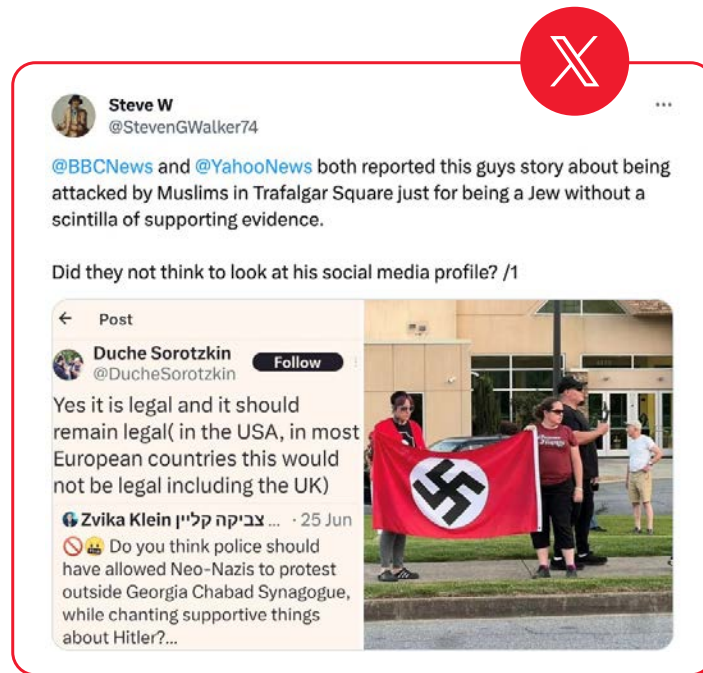


Image 12.17 Steve W, X, November 2023 giving background to man behind unsubstantiated claim about an antisemitic attack.

4. Another notorious claim which was accepted and published as fact in the Mail Online was the claim that protestors at a rally in Sydney, Australia shouted, “Gas the Jews.” This led to Australian politicians calling for those at the protests to be deported.³⁰⁹ Right-wing news channel presenters also referenced the chants in reference to the holocaust and were said to be shocked at the events.³¹⁰ The Telegraph website headlined this claim in a story.³¹¹ The Guardian also repeated this as fact in its reporting on the Australian protests.³¹² The claims

307 BBC (2023). Man subjected to antisemitic abuse after pro-Palestinian protest. BBC News. [online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-67328715>

308 Walker, S. (2023) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/StevenGWalker74/status/1721690523348423083>

309 Chain, B. (2023). Calls for ‘gas the Jews’ protesters to be deported. [online] Mail Online. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12621537/Peter-Dutton-deport-protesters-Palestine-Jews.html>

310 CfMM (2023a) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1734947025207091474>

CfMM (2023a) Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1734947028176654702>

311 Telegraph Foreign Staff. (2023). Pro-Palestine protesters chant ‘Gas the Jews’ outside Sydney Opera House. The Telegraph. [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/10/pro-palestine-protest-sydney-opera-house-hamas-attacks/>

312 Gillespie, E. (2023). Antisemitic chants to be treated as a hate crime under tough new Queensland laws. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/12/queensland-laws-antisemitic-chants-hate-crime>

were made on the back of edited videos from the Australian Jewish Association (AJA), but investigative journalists have found how further emerging evidence from sources other than the Group casts major doubts on the claims.³¹³ In February of 2024 Australian police confirmed that an independent analysis showed that the phrase “Gas the Jews“ was not used at the pro-Palestinian protest in October as had been widely reported.³¹⁴ Despite all of this, there was no due diligence on the part of the media outlets to question whether the chants were real. Furthermore, the investigative journalist Antoinette Lattouf said she was targeted by media channels in Australia as well as Jewish organisations for questioning the authenticity of the Australian Jewish Association edited and distributed recording.³¹⁵

12.7 Case Study: Misinterpreting the chant “From the River to the Sea”

One of the major contentions coming out of the mass support for Palestinians is the chant “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” A total of 590 mentions across TV broadcast channels were found between 7 October and 7 November 2023. The spike in coverage came around the weekends of 29 October and 5 November where protests were held in London and other UK cities in support of Palestinians.

Pro-Israeli journalists, Israeli officials and commentators have referenced the quote as a “call for genocide of the Jews.” and or the “annihilation of Israel.” The chant has also been described as antisemitic, but Palestinians would argue that it is calling for the existence of and liberation of Palestine and not the annihilation of Israel. The interpretation of the phrase is dependent on whether one sees it as centring Palestinian aspirations or disparaging Israelis.³¹⁶ A joint poll saw showed how only a small minority of Palestinians saw “expulsion” as a solution to the conflict – 15% — the same percentage of Israelis who viewed this as the only solution.³¹⁷ This shows that the majority on both sides of the conflict when talking about “river to the sea” and freedom are likely doing it for equal rights and to live in dignity, meaning from the Palestinian perspective to be free of Israeli military control and oppression.

Maha Nasser an Associate Professor in the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies has written a history of the phrase and says that to link it exclusively to Hamas and suggest that it is a call for the eradication of Israel or genocide of the Jews as some have suggested yet another means by which to silence Palestinian perspectives.”³¹⁸

313 Wilson, A.L., Cam (2023). Viral footage showed protesters chanting ‘gas the Jews’. Nobody can verify it. [online] Crikey. Available at: <https://www.crikey.com.au/2023/12/13/viral-footage-gas-the-jews-police-factcheckers-unverified>

314 Hannam, P. (2024). NSW police say analysis shows pro-Palestine chant in viral Sydney Opera House video was ‘where’s the Jews?’ The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/feb/02/sydney-opera-house-palestine-protest-nsw-police-antisemitic-chant-no-evidence>

315 Lattouf, A. (2024) Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/antoinette_news/status/1753186897424494911

316 Nassar, M. (2018). Opinion | ‘From The River To The Sea’ Doesn’t Mean What You Think It Means. [online] The Forward. Available at: <https://forward.com/opinion/415250/from-the-river-to-the-sea-doesnt-mean-what-you-think-it-means>

317 Palestinian-Israeli Pulse. (2017). Palestinian-Israeli Pulse | PCPSR. [online] Available at: <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/696>

318 Nassar, M. (2018). Opinion | ‘From The River To The Sea’ Doesn’t Mean What You Think It Means. [online] The Forward. Available at: <https://forward.com/opinion/415250/from-the-river-to-the-sea-doesnt-mean-what-you-think-it-means>

He adds that, “citing only Hamas leaders’ use of the phrase, while disregarding the liberationist context in which other Palestinians understand it, shows a disturbing level of ignorance about Palestinians’ views at best, and a deliberate attempt to smear their legitimate aspirations at worst.”³¹⁹ In relation to the idea that it calls for the “mass annihilation of Jewish Israelis” this is “rooted in deeply racist and Islamophobic assumptions is; ”about who the Palestinians are and what they want.”³²⁰

An example of the shifting interpretation of the phrase was found on the website of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) which is a human rights advocacy group mainly focused on combatting Anti-Semitism. Its explainer for the “From the River to the Sea” phrase on its website changed on 26 October 2023 where an earlier version introduced the chant as a “slogan commonly feature in pro-Palestinian campaigns and chanted at demonstrations.” This changed on 26 October 2023 to “an antisemitic slogan commonly featured in anti-Israel campaigns and chanted at demonstrations.”

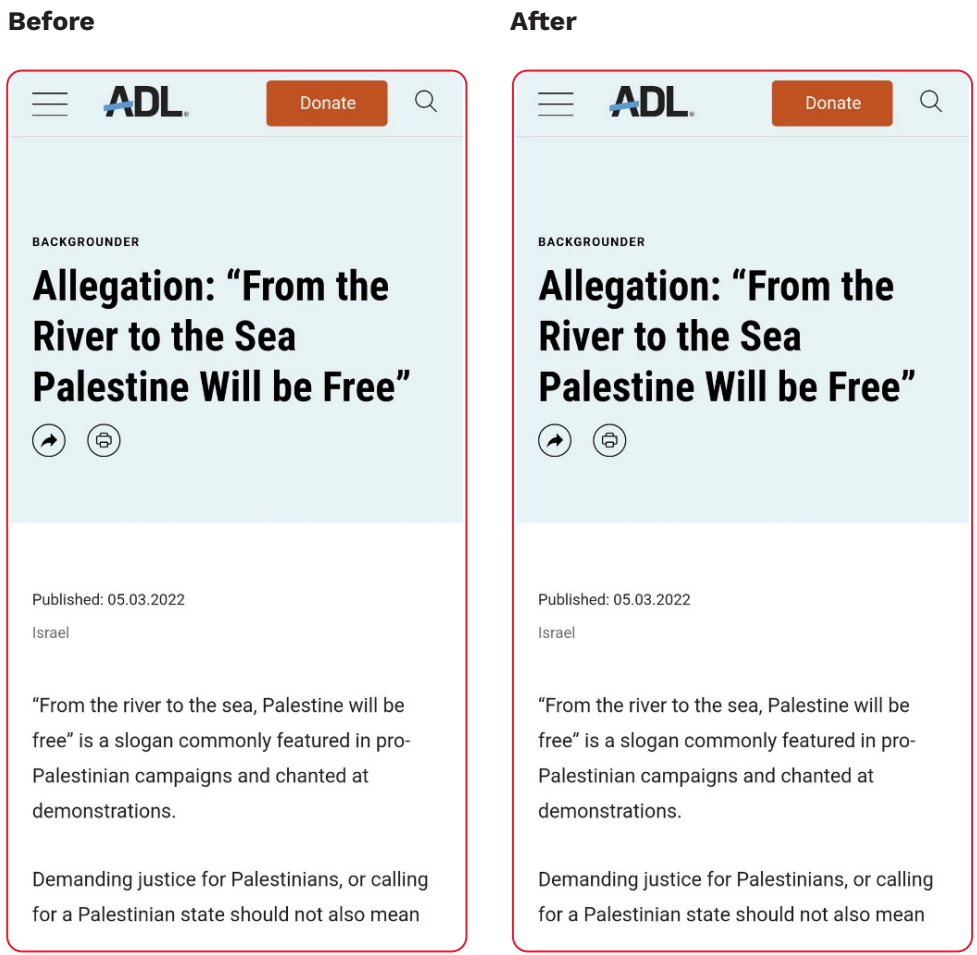


Image 12.18 ADL Explainer of “From the River to the Sea” before October 26, 2023, and After October 2023

319 Ibid

320 Ibid

Below are some examples of where the phrase was used to tar pro-Palestinian supporters and was not challenged by journalists.

1. One of the most high-profile examples of misrepresenting this phrase was on BBC Politics Live. Following pro-Palestine protests on 16 October 2023 in London, BBC Politics Live hosted Mark Gardner, a Community Security Trust representative, who attempted to compare the protests held by Jewish people in Britain and pro-Palestine protests as a contrast between those who “want peace” and those who don’t. “No one” according to him on pro-Palestinian marches was calling for peace. “The demonstrations last weekend where jubilation at what had occurred. The mood on the demonstrations will change as what goes on in Gaza and Israel changes in the coming weeks, but nobody on those demonstrations is calling for a peaceful solution. Nobody is calling for a two-state solution. They chant free Palestine. They chant from the river to the sea, Palestine must be free. They do not mean a state in which Jews and Muslims and Christians have equal rights. We know what Hamas did at the weekend, there is no doubt.”³²¹ There was no challenge to this claim.
2. On 19 October 2023, on ITV’s Late Debate programme, Bob Blackman, the Conservative MP for Harrow, said; “we have got another protest on Saturday of people, you know, shouting and singing, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”. The reality of that means the elimination of the state of Israel. Now, no action is being taken about that, which is clear antisemitism and anti-Jewish hatred.” The presenter did **not challenge** this allegation.
3. On 17 October 2023, on GB News, the Conservative MP Jacob Rees Mogg commenting on a pro-Palestine march said: “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free with the genocidal chant from some of those who marched across the United Kingdom in support of the Palestinian terror group Hamas.”
4. On 30 October 2023, Channel 4 news presenter Krishnan Guru Murthy interviewing Ben Jamal of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign asked the following question of the chant: “The phrase, from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free. If you use that phrase, do you accept it as antisemitic because it implies the eradication of Israel.” Whilst it is reasonable to ask a question, the phrasing implies an acceptance of the claim that the phrase necessarily means the eradication of Israel.
5. On October 11, 2023, BBC Newsnight’s presenter Mark Urban interviewed the far-right Israeli Ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely who said: “we understand from the river to the sea what that slogan means. She was not challenged, despite having used the phrase herself to describe Israel’s” historic claim” .³²²

321 Mark Gardner on Politics Live, Oct 16, 2023, 12:36 PM, BBC2

322 The Telegraph. (2015). World should recognise Israel’s historic claim to land from river to sea, minister says. [online] Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/11624355/World-should-recognise-Israelis-historic-claim-to-land-from-river-to-sea-minister-says.html>

On the odd occasion journalists like Michael Walker have been given the opportunity to explain what the chant means. Speaking on GB News, he said: “So from the river to the sea, there are three different territories where Palestinian people live. There is the West Bank, there is Gaza, and there is Israel. There are Palestinian citizens of Israel. Now B’Tselem, human rights group, human Rights Watch sorry, Amnesty International, they say that every single person who is a Palestinian living in that territory be they in Gaza, be they in the West Bank, be they in Israel proper, are living under apartheid. Now, if you want all of those people to no longer be living under apartheid, I think it is somewhat reasonable to say from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free. Now, some people chanting that do they want the Jews out of the Middle East potentially.”³²³



12.8 Recommendations

- Pro-Palestinian protestors have a right to advocate for Palestinians and should not be framed as extremist and anti-British or anti-Western for doing so.
- The weaponisation of anti-Semitism by outlets and commentators to tarnish individuals or any entire movement should cease.
- There should be more robust challenge of those who seek to tarnish or misrepresent pro-Palestinian protestors.

13. CONCLUSION

This report outlines some of the main themes found in the media coverage of Israel's war on Gaza and gives recommendations as to how things can be improved.

One of the main ways in which there can be more balanced coverage is through accurate framing namely that in this ongoing war there is an Occupier (Israel) and an Occupied (Palestinians). The claims of all sides should be treated with some scepticism and only amplified or regurgitated if proven to be verified by independent journalists.

In the main Palestinians should be reported on as human beings with full unalienable rights as enjoyed by all peoples. This also necessitates how those rights have been curtailed in a forever war against them that has its origins many decades before 7 October 2023.

Context is important for those under occupation and there should be no demand placed on them to first affirm the rights of their occupier. Similarly, those supporting the Palestinian cause have a right to do so and the weaponisation of antisemitism and other harmful labels against those who are pro-Palestinian should cease.

There should also be more robust challenging of Israeli officials and claims, given the long history of fabrications and denials which have subsequently been proven to be false. It should be made clear to viewers and readers how Israel has fabricated evidence previously, and the previous controversial claims about Israeli politicians should be used to hold those politicians and their supporters to account.

Networks and news outlets should resist the lobbying of pro-Israel groups who target individual journalists and newsrooms as a whole. There is a duty to be fair and impartial and Israeli claims should not be given preference or be seen as more legitimate than those of the Palestinians. The examples given in this report are not exhaustive nor do they represent the totality of the examples which could fall into one of the themes. However, the failure of journalists and news organisations are transparent through these examples and others subsequent to the analysis done here.

It is also important that journalists and broadcasters cover the Palestinian issue in its totality and give adequate coverage to events in the West Bank where land grabs and the murder of Palestinians has become routine even whilst tens of thousands of Gazans have been murdered.

The events of 7 October 2023 require independent journalistic scrutiny given the various claims and narratives at play. The stories of Israeli victims and hostages are important as are establishing if other claims of horrific crimes can be substantiated. Claims in themselves should not be amplified unless they are found to be fact. News outlets should not allow themselves to become a tool of war, which so far some of them have.

The Palestinians have by dictate of international law the right to defend themselves from occupation and people around the world have the right to support the Palestinian cause. The media should cease in targeting these individuals or organisations as sympathisers or supporters of terrorism which is nothing more than a doubling of Israeli state and lobby propaganda.

Similarly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not an excuse for Islamophobia and ahistorical narratives of Islam or Muslim belief to be peddled. When challenged on these claims there should be swift action taken to correct the record. In the days after the Hamas attacks the Institute for Strategic Dialogue recorded a 422 per cent increase in Islamophobia online. News outlets should not contribute to this.

It should be recognised that covering such a polarising conflict is at times a thankless endeavor and journalists should be protected from harassment and constant threats against them. This goes for Palestinian journalists as well as those in the West. A greater solidarity with those who have been targeted or killed, not only in Israel, but also in Gaza needs to be a focal point of media coverage. Accuracy in reporting their deaths and those of their kith and kin would be the best tribute to their courage.

Faisal Hanif,

March 2024



14. RECOMMENDATIONS



Context

1. Explanation of the historical context is important to inform the audience about the longstanding nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict. For example, the consensus view that Israel has been occupying the West Bank and Gaza prior to 7 October should be included for context.
2. Contributors providing a context and history to the Israel-Palestine issue should not be seen accused of justifying terrorism.

Framing

1. The lives of Israeli civilians should not be prioritised over the lives of Palestinian civilians, especially once the Palestinian deaths outnumber Israeli deaths.
2. News outlets should avoid using Israeli framing of the conflict as the “Israel-Hamas” conflict, and should use more neutral phrasing, such as “Israel-Gaza” conflict.
3. Media outlets should not prioritise Israel’s ‘right to defend’ over the right of Palestinians to self-determination and to legally resist occupation under international law.
4. Israeli spokespeople should not be left unchallenged by journalists when they use racist and dehumanising language about Palestinians.
5. Imagery should reflect what is being said in the headline and article in order to avoid misleading audiences.

Language

1. Israeli lives should not be prioritised over Palestinian lives. If the number of Palestinians ‘killed’ is greater than Israelis ‘killed’ then the larger number should lead the headline or story.
2. When Palestinians are killed, the perpetrators should be identified, and the role of the offensive actor should not be diminished or omitted.

Claims

1. Where it is impossible to verify claims independently (the optimal option), news outlets should be sceptical of claims from either party, especially when Israel and the IDF have been proven to share false claims.
2. When reporting on Israeli claims in Gaza Israel's history of false claims should be referenced with a caveat that the claims have not been verified by an independent source and have previously been found to have been false.
3. Where a claim has been reported or amplified and subsequently proven to be false or doubtful, media outlets should clarify this on all its platforms and in subsequent related news reports.
4. Experts and commentators who have Israeli connections and interests should be introduced to audiences as such for context.

Undermining Sources

1. Avoid the term " Hamas-run " when referring to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. Refer to it as the Ministry of Health in Gaza, the Gaza Health Ministry or the Palestinian Health Ministry as the UN does.
2. If the Gazan Health Ministry is going to be prefaced with " Hamas run ", then: The caveat that the figures have been verified previously, should be provided to ensure the full context is provided.
3. Context should also be provided when discussing Israeli claims e.g. caveat that many of Israeli claims in the past have been proven false or that the Israeli government is a right-wing government with far-right members.

Misrepresentation of pro-Palestinian protestors

1. Pro-Palestinian protestors have a right to advocate for Palestinians and should not be framed as extremist and anti-British or anti-Western for doing so.
2. The weaponisation of anti-Semitism by outlets and commentators to tarnish individuals or any entire movement should cease.
3. There should be more robust challenge of those who seek to tarnish or misrepresent pro-Palestinian protestors.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A

Word	Freq
atrocities	3055
atrocity	853
barbaric	1189
barbarism	143
butcher	388
butchered	356
butchering	160
horrific	5042
horrifying	867
massacre	3950
massacred	617
massacres	1111
massacring	135
murderous	565
slaughter	873
slaughtered	892
slaughtering	178

Table 1: Frequency of terms used to in Analysis of Language, Chapter 10.

Channels	Number of Mentions	Percentage
Al-Jazeera English	2163	13%
BBC	5028	30%
Channel 4	234	1%
Channel 5	203	1%
CNBC EU	323	2%
CNN International	2289	14%
GB News	2154	13%
ITV	489	3%
Sky News	1681	10%
Talk TV	2173	13%
Total	16,737	100%

Table 2: Number of clips which include one or more of the terms on each TV broadcaster

324

15. APPENDICES

Rank	Term	Collocating frequency
1	the	14457
2	and	6860
3	of	7223
4	in	4301
5	that	4520
6	to	4435
7	on	2109
8	we	2087
9	i	1791
10	a	4549
11	Hamas	2506
12	people	2046
13	by	1669
14	Israel	1915
15	this	2815
16	you	1382
17	attack	1029
18	committed	991
19	but	931
20	October	1179

Table 3: Most frequent collocates in the corpus (list of broadcast clip transcriptions)

15.2 Appendix B

Keywords used to determine number of representatives or viewpoints for Israel vs number of representatives or viewpoints for Palestinians.

Keywords for Israel

“IDF said” OR “Israel said” OR “Israeli said” OR “Israeli army said” OR “Israels army said” OR “Israeli ambassador said” OR “Israeli Spokesman said” OR “Israeli Spokeswoman said” OR “Israeli spokesperson said” OR “Israeli military says” OR “Israel Defense Forces spokesman” OR “The Israel Defense Forces estimates” OR “IDF Spokesman said” OR “IDF Spokeswoman said” OR “IDF spokesperson” OR “said Israel” OR “said an Israeli spokesperson” OR “said the IDF” OR “said an IDF spokesperson” OR “say Israel” OR “say the Israeli military” OR “say the Israelis” OR “according to Israel” OR “according to the Israelis” OR “according to the IDF” OR “according to Israeli Army” OR “according to the Israeli military” OR “according to Israel’s government” OR “according to the Israeli Government” OR “Israeli Prime minister’s office confirmed” OR “IDF confirmed” OR “the Israelis confirmed” OR “Israel confirmed” OR “spokesperson from the Israeli Prime minister’s office confirmed” OR “spokesman from the Israeli Prime minister’s office confirmed” OR “spokesman from the Israeli Prime ministers says” OR “spokesman from the Israeli Prime minister’s office said”

Keywords for Palestinians

“ Hamas said” OR “ Hamas Spokesman said” OR “ PLO said” OR “ PLO say” OR “ Palestine said” OR “ Palestinians said” OR “ Palestinian ambassador said” OR “ say the Palestinians” OR “ residents of Gaza said” OR “ woman from Gaza said” OR “ man from Gaza said” OR “ said the Palestinians” OR “ say the PLO” or “ Fatah said” OR “ Fatah says” OR “ said a spokesperson from Fatah” OR “ say Fatah” OR “ say the Palestinian red crescent” OR “ the Gaza health ministry said” OR “ according to the Gaza health ministry” OR “ Gaza health ministry spokesperson” OR “ Gaza health ministry” OR “ The Palestine Red Crescent Society said” OR “ the head of the Palestine Red Crescent Society said” OR “ the head of the Palestine Red Crescent Society says” OR “ The Palestine Red Crescent Society says” OR “ according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society” OR “ Hamas confirmed” OR “ PLO confirmed” OR “ Palestinians confirmed” OR “ Gaza Health ministry confirmed” OR “ Palestinian ambassador confirmed” OR “ Fatah confirmed” OR “ Palestine Red Crescent Society confirmed”

Limitation

Individuals who were cited by name in both broadcast TV and online news have not been included or accounted for unless the following terms above were a part of their introduction. The search has intended to be an inclusive and as broad as possible, but it is possible that official organisations and positions from both sides have not been included.



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“THIS DEVASTATING REPORT SHOULD BE DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT, STUDIED IN JOURNALISM SCHOOLS, MADE COMPULSORY READING FOR NEWSPAPER EDITORS, AND READ BY ANYBODY WITH THE FAINTEST INTEREST IN THE TERRIBLE EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN GAZA – ALONG WITH ANYONE ELSE WITH AN INTEREST IN HOW REPORTING ACTUALLY WORKS IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN. READING THIS REPORT, IT IS HARD NOT TO CONCLUDE THAT TROUBLING ACCUSATIONS FROM OUR HEROIC PALESTINIAN COLLEAGUES AGAINST WESTERN MEDIA CARRY GREAT WEIGHT.”

PETER OBORNE
AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

