



Media Reporting on Palestine

2021
Special Report
Toolkit

Media Reporting on Palestine

May 2021
Special Report & Toolkit

Authors: Rizwana Hamid & Amanda Morris

Media Monitoring: Maira Khan & Haseeb Qureshi

This report is published under a Creative Commons license:
Attribution: <http://creativecommons.org>

For commercial use, please contact: admin@cfmm.org.uk
For any additional enquiries, please contact: admin@cfmm.org.uk



Contents

Introduction	4
Timeline of Events: April – May 2021	6
How the Media Can Skew the Narrative	7
1. Justifying the actions of the Israeli police/military/settler groups by presenting them as legally valid	7
2. Equalising the two sides through vocabulary that implies a power symmetry	11
3. Removing the actor from the narrative through the use of passive sentence structures or alternative identifier	15
4. Skewed focus on Palestine as the aggressor, with Israel acting in 'self-defence', or framing Israeli military action as a 'retaliation'.	18
5. Referring to 'Palestinian militants' or 'Palestinian Islamist militants', which essentialises all Palestinians as violent aggressors.	22
6. Using religious terminology and imagery to frame the violence as religiously motivated or justified	23
7. Removal of Palestine/Palestinian as an identifier	25
8. Presenting criticism of Israel, criticism of Zionism, or support for Palestine as being inherently anti-Semitic.	27
9. Undue Prominence or Insufficient Challenge to Views in Broadcast Interviews	29
10. Sources	32
Examples of Balanced Coverage	33
1. Broadcast Coverage	33
2. Print Coverage	37
How to Complain: Step by Step	39
1. Complaints to print/online newspapers	39
2. Complaints to broadcasters (including online articles)	40
Recommendations	41
Conclusion	43

Introduction

Media coverage of the current violence in Jerusalem and Gaza gained momentum on 23rd April 2021, when Israeli nationalists marching through Jerusalem chanting “death to Arabs” were met by Palestinian protestors at the Damascus Gate, in what would become the first of many flashpoints in the ensuing weeks.

Media coverage during this period has been quite problematic. There have been examples of balanced coverage and some outstanding reporting in both print and broadcast media, which we have highlighted later in this report. However, given that much of what we observed in the course of our media monitoring skewed the public’s understanding of what was happening in Jerusalem, Gaza and other parts of Palestine, we have produced this report which focuses on some of the most recurring narratives with examples from both online print and broadcast media.

In early May, reports started emerging of Israeli settlers attacking Palestinian families in attempts to forcibly remove them from their homes in Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. A pro-settler organization called Nahalat Shimon is using a 1970 law to argue that the owners of the land before 1948 were Jewish families, and so the current Palestinian landowners should give their properties to Israeli Jewish settlers. Restitution laws in Israel don’t give any legal rights to Palestinians to reclaim property taken by Jewish families in the late 1940s in what became the state of Israel.

The ongoing court case in the Israeli Supreme Court has been deemed illegal according to international law, and a UN body described the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes as a possible war crime. Despite this, most sections of the media have used the term “evictions”, as opposed to the more accurate descriptors of illegal settlements, forced removals, expulsions, occupations or disposessions. The story is framed as a property or legal dispute and not as an ongoing campaign by Jewish settlers to ethnically cleanse Jerusalem of Palestinians.

Between 7th May 2021 (when the media began reporting on Palestinians protesting to stop the Supreme Court ruling on the Sheikh Jarrah case) and 20th May (when the ceasefire was announced), there were 62,400 online print articles and 7,997 television broadcast clips reporting on these events.¹ The spike in coverage (rising exponentially from a few mentions to hundreds of articles and broadcast clips daily) occurred between the 9th and 10th of May 2021, when Israeli police stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque as tens of thousands of Muslim worshippers prayed on the 27th Night of Ramadan, Laylat ul-Qadr (the Night of Decree).²

Despite Israeli police firing tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades which injured hundreds of worshippers, and Palestinians defending themselves with rocks and stones, the majority of the media used labels such as “clashes”, “conflict”, “scuffles” or “skirmishes” to describe the Al-Aqsa attacks and subsequent violence. These terms have not only become a euphemism for Israeli aggressions, but also imply a power symmetry between the two sides. Shifting the blame away from Israel and its forces’ acts of violence can also be seen through the use of language used in the media, especially passive sentence structures which remove the actor from the narrative.

One Agence France Presse (AFP) headline in particular is a good example of the kind of language used by many journalists and headline writers, containing a number of faux pas in just one headline: “Hundreds wounded in Jerusalem clashes”. Apart from using the term “clashes”, the headline also fails to clarify that the hundreds who were “wounded” were Palestinians, or that they were “wounded” by the Israeli police. Given that only eight out of ten people read beyond the headline, the danger of ambiguity or omission of facts or details is self-evident.

¹ Key word search included: Palestine, Palestinian, Palestinians, Jerusalem, Evictions, Al-Aqsa, Israel, Israeli, Israelis, Hamas, Militants, Rockets, Airstrikes, Gaza, West Bank, Lod, Ramallah, IDF, Netanyahu, Nakba, Likud, Yesh Atid, Sheikh Jarrah, Damascus Gate, Jaffa Gate, Temple Mount, Acre & Ashkelon

² <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/laylat-al-qadr>

In an article for the Middle East Eye, “Al-Aqsa attacks: How the media gives Israel a free pass”, Centre for Media Monitoring’s analyst Faisal Hanif says Israeli aggression is, “mostly reported as a response to Palestinian violence or impending violence. In 21 separate headlines on wire-agency stories where Israeli soldiers had shot and killed Palestinian protesters, the role of the offensive actor (Israel) was diminished or omitted”. He goes on: “Some examples include a Palestinian teen who was ‘killed in clashes’, a Palestinian who ‘dies from wounds in border unrest’, and an ‘exchange of fire on Gaza border’ which kills a Palestinian. Reprisals by Palestinians are more emphatically described, where the Palestinian actor ‘stabs’ and ‘kills’; the knife doesn’t take on a life of its own, like ‘Israeli gunfire’.”

This style of writing is not new. Centre for Media Monitoring’s analysis on the reporting of Palestinians in Gaza between 2018-2019, found 182 occasions where the main reason behind conditions faced by Palestinians was either obscured or omitted. News agencies (AFP, Reuters and Associated Press) accounted for the majority of these articles (143). Given the leading role news agencies play in foreign news coverage and the frequency with which broadcasters and newspapers use their stories (sometimes verbatim), it is incumbent on news wires and to report accurately.

In the words of Emily Wilder, a Jewish journalist who advocates for Palestinian rights, and who was dismissed from her job at Associated Press (AP) on 21st May 2021 (just 16 days after taking up the job) for some of her social media posts: “‘Objectivity’ feels fickle when the basic terms we use to report news implicitly stake a claim”, she wrote, “Using ‘Israel’ but never ‘Palestine,’ or ‘war’ but not ‘siege and occupation’ are political choices — yet media make those exact choices all the time without being flagged as biased”.

To date the IDF bombardment of Gaza has killed at least 248 Palestinians, including 65 children. On the Israeli side, 13 people, including two children, have been killed. Neither the technology, weaponry nor fatalities are equal. Yet, language such as “Palestinian militants” essentialises all Palestinians as violent aggressors. This skewed focus on Palestinians as the aggressors, with Israel acting in “self-defence”, or framing Israeli military action as a “retaliation” not only equalises the two sides but also justifies the disproportionate military response used by the IDF. World leaders exacerbate this narrative through their repeated declarations of Israel having the right to defend itself.

This toolkit, and the examples of problematic reporting contained in it, are by no means exhaustive. This is an initial response to many complaints we have received from the public and their growing frustration with the media’s skewed coverage of events, as well as our own observations of the reporting being problematic very early on.

Our aim is to:

1. Establish an accurate timeline of events which has led to this latest violence.
2. Explain the main media narratives that are skewing public perception of the issue.
3. Outline how to complain to media outlets about any such coverage.
4. Make recommendations to media outlets for more balanced language, imagery and reporting.

We encourage all members of the public to familiarise themselves with these issues and to submit complaints as and when such reporting is encountered.

April 2021
 Sheikh Jarrah neighb
 Jerusalem
 Palestinian families attacked by
 settler organisations in latest
 escalation in long running
 attempts to force the
 Palestinians from their homes.³

April 23rd
Israeli nationalists marching
through Jerusalem chanting
"death to Arabs" met by
Palestinian protestors at
Damascus Gate.

May 9-10
Jerusalem
 Annual Jerusalem Day marches⁵
 coincide with 27th Night of Ramadan⁶.
 Israeli authorities re-route Jerusalem Day
 parade to avoid conflict.
 Palestinians continued to protest
 "evictions". Israeli police raid Al Aqsa
 leaving over 300 injured.
 Supreme court delays "evictions".

Hamas spokesman issues ultimatum to the Israeli authorities to cease action and withdraw from the mosque by 6 pm. IDF reinforces its Gaza Division in anticipation of escalations.

May 15-16
Gaza

IDF destroys tower block housing foreign media outlets including the Associated Press and Al Jazeera Network after issuing a 1-hour warning. IDF alleges Hamas has bases in the building – a claim denied vehemently by AP & Al Jazeera. The building's collapse is broadcast live.

West Bank- Nakba Day marches⁷ take place in the West Bank. Israeli forces kill two Palestinian protesters and injure 450 others. Globally Protests held in major cities worldwide. ☹

May 16-20
Gaza
Israel destroys 3 tower blocks.
Israel and Hamas agree to
ceasefire
Israeli attacks on worshippers
at Al-Aqsa mosque continue

May 5-7
Knesset
Netanyahu fails to form a new Israeli government. President Rivlin instructs Yesh Atid party leader Yair Lapid to form a government.
West Bank-16 y.o. Palestinian Saeed Oudeh is killed by the IDF - Palestinians begin protesting to stop the Supreme Court deciding on the Sheikh Jarrah "eviction" case.⁴

May 11-14
Various Cities
 Protest erupts out in Lydd, Acre, and Ramla, areas with mixed populations. State of emergency declared in Lod. Continued retaliatory attacks from within Gaza and military response by IDF into residential areas within camp.

IDF drops over 450 bombs in 35 minutes onto various targets in Gaza, which it claims were Hamas tunnels, and other strategic sites. Protest continues in Acre and Lod.

May 23rd :
Gaza
 Since the attacks on Gaza began⁶: Death toll to date: 248 in Gaza (incl. 15 alleged Hamas members, 66 children), Injured: 1900 Palestinians (610 children), 200 Israelis.

72,000 displaced from their homes within Gaza. 450 buildings destroyed including 6 hospitals and 9 primary care health centres.

How the Media Can Skew the Narrative

There are many ways in which the mainstream media is skewing the narrative over the violence in Jerusalem and Gaza. Below are some examples in both print and broadcast, and an outline of practical steps we can all take to tackle this.

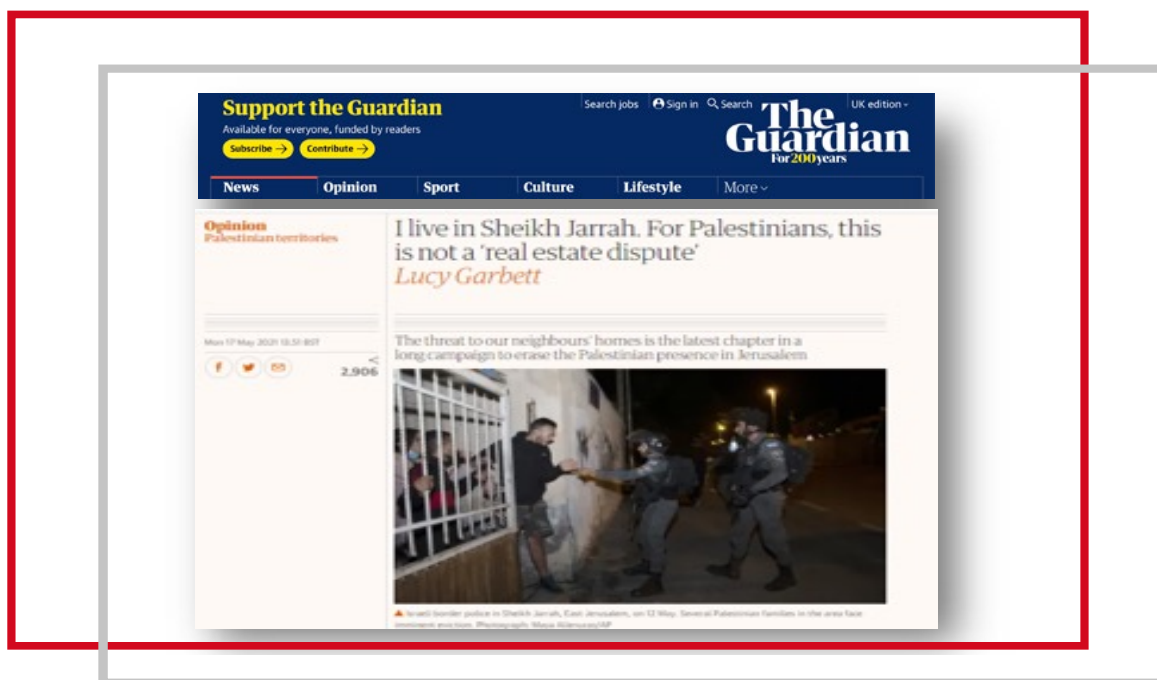
Note that the guidelines and rules on print vis a vis broadcast are quite different. Please read the relevant section before taking action, and if you have any questions, let us know!

The following examples show various ways in which the mainstream media narratives can skew the public's understanding of what is happening in Palestine. This list is not exhaustive but contains perhaps the most common issues we have found in our analysis of UK media output, both in print and broadcast.

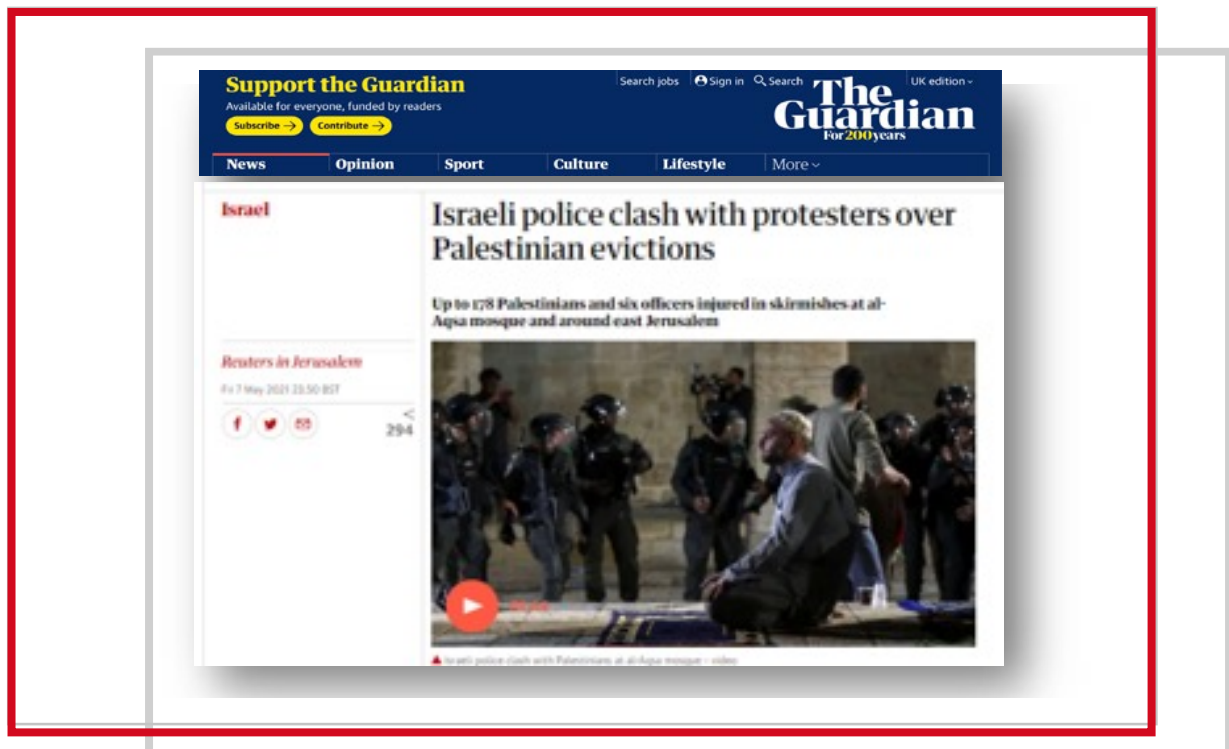
It is important to note that the standards for accuracy and impartiality are not the same for print media as they are for broadcast media. Print media bias is condoned by the Editor's Code, whereas broadcast media, especially news broadcasts, are required to demonstrate due impartiality and avoid undue prominence of views.

1. Justifying the actions of the Israeli police/military/settler groups by presenting them as legally valid:

- a. Evictions: the ongoing court case in the Israeli Supreme Court to expel Palestinian residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem have been deemed illegal according to international law, yet the media uses terms like 'eviction' and 'real estate dispute' to imply there is a legal basis to the forced displacement attempts by various settler organisations.



Lucy Garbett, whose family lives in Sheikh Jarrah, explains why this is not a "real estate dispute"
Guardian 17 May 2021



Guardian 7th May 2021 "Palestinian evictions"



Jewish Chronicle May 9th 2021 "These evictions are illegal and must stop immediately."

- b. In broadcast media, almost 50% of analysed clips between 7th – 10th May used the term “eviction” or a derivative to describe the illegal settlement plans in Sheikh Jarrah.



"Israel's Supreme Court has delayed a court hearing set for tomorrow on the planned evictions of Palestinians in Jerusalem, after some of the worst unrest seen in years in the city."
Channel 4 News 9 May 2021 06:15PM

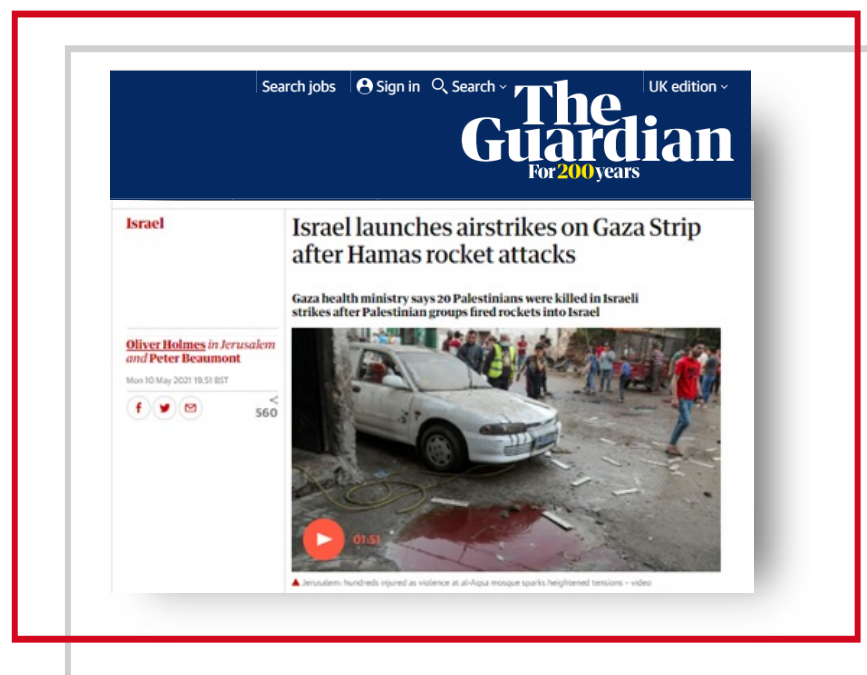


"The US has called for de-escalation in east Jerusalem, and warned against carrying out a threatened eviction of Palestinian families that has sent tensions soaring..."
BBC News, BBC News, 07/05/2021, 11:01PM

c. Portraying Israeli violence as justified because it is in response to Hamas aggressions. This narrative ignores the preceding weeks of violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank which saw Israeli police raiding the Al Aqsa mosque and injuring hundreds of Palestinians who were protesting about being forcibly removed from their homes.



Mail Online 12 May 2021



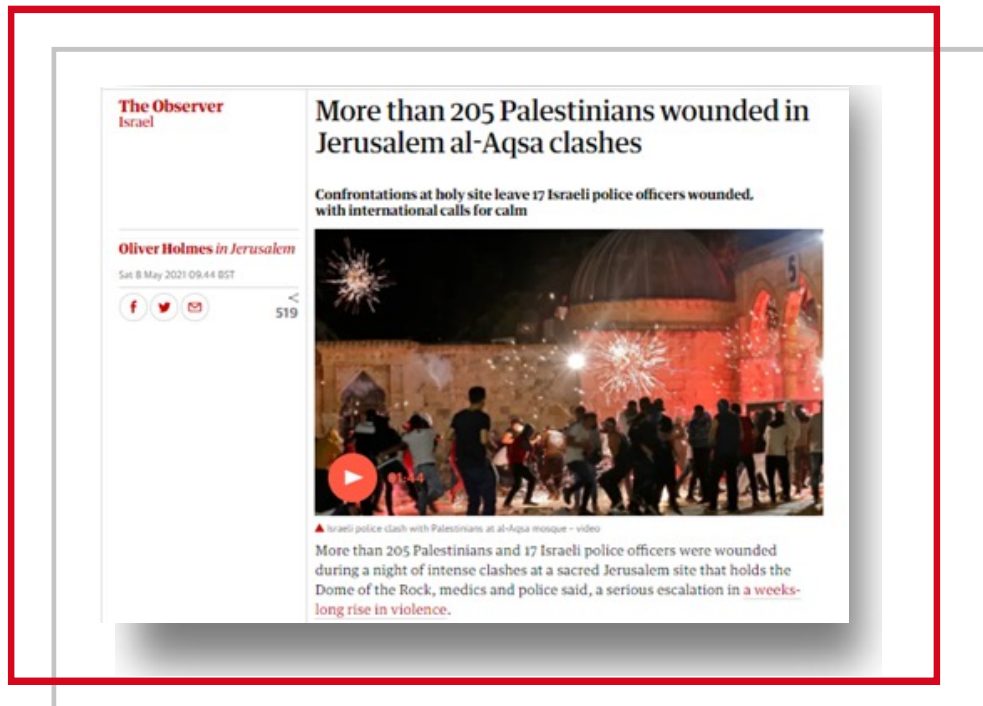
The Guardian 10 May 2021

Recommendations

1. Avoid use of the term “evictions” when referring to illegal settler organisation activities.
2. Avoid any language which implies equal power.
3. Avoid justification of violence without context.

2. Equalising the two sides through vocabulary that implies a power symmetry:

a. Referring to the violence as 'clashes', 'chaos', 'conflict' and so on.



The Guardian 10 May 2021



PA Media (in Mail Online) 10 May 2021

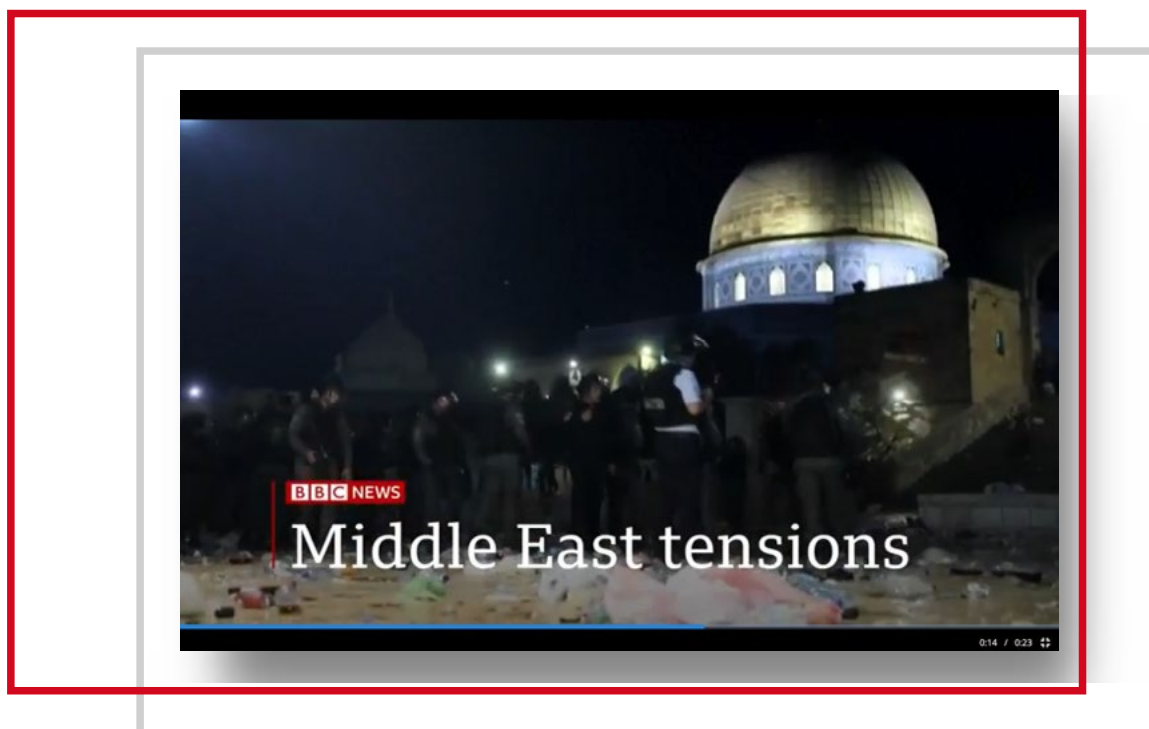


The Daily Express 10 May 2021

b. Two-thirds of broadcast clips analysed between 7th-10th May “clash” or a derivative, across headlines, news segments and interviews with guests. Other terms that have been used to describe the attacks from Israeli forces have been “skirmishes”, “violent confrontations” and “disturbances”.



“Nearly 200 Palestinians are injured as clashes with Israeli police escalate.”
Channel 4 News, Channel 4, 09/05/2021, 6:15PM



“It comes as at least 50 Palestinians have been injured in clashes with Israeli police at the al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem.”
BBC News, BBC 1, 08/05/2021, 12:30AM

c. Politicians referring to 'all sides', urging end to Hamas actions but supporting Israeli 'self-defence' as though there is a balance of power.



AFP (in Mail Online) 10 May 2021

d. Skewed headlines which give the impression of equal numbers of casualties and fatalities on both sides.

- i. Headline and copy in this example both lead with three Israelis being killed, even though at least 28 Palestinians were killed by Israeli strikes.



The Jewish News 11 May 2021

- ii. Headline fails to mention that fourteen out of the ‘fifteen kids’ massacred were Palestinians killed by Israeli air strikes



The Sun, 12 May 2021

- iii. Headline gives the impression that there were casualties on both sides when in fact Israeli airstrikes killed all 42 Palestinians, including 10 children.



iNews, 17 May 2021

Recommendations

1. Ensure clarity in reporting numbers of fatalities/injuries on each side.
2. Ensure clarity in reporting on who caused the deaths.

3. Removing the actor from the narrative through the use of passive sentence structures or alternative identifiers

- a. Palestinians "died" but Israelis "were killed."



Palestinian casualties "died" while Israeli casualties were "killed".
BBC News, BBC News, 18/05/2021, 2:36PM

- b. ' Hamas rockets', 'tensions', 'Palestinians hurt in clashes'



Reuters (in Mail Online) 10 May 2021



PA Media (in Mail Online) 10 May 2021

- c. Sky article says '22 killed' but doesn't say by whom, only mentions " Hamas fire rockets" which lays the blame for the deaths on Hamas.



Sky News Online 11 May 2021

- d. No mention of either actor, only referring to locations. No mention of the 31 people killed being Palestinian.



Metro, 11 May 2021

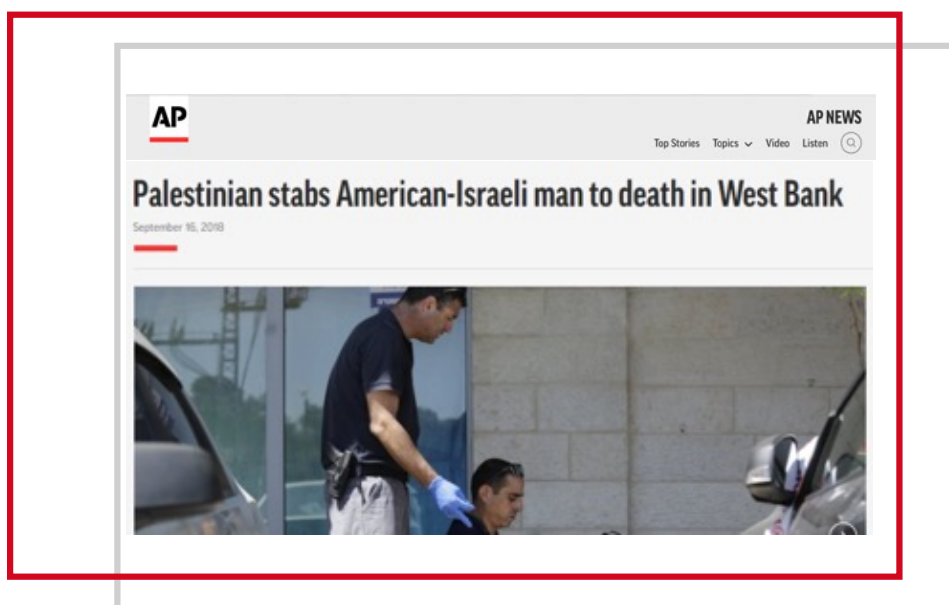


BBC Online, 11 May 2021

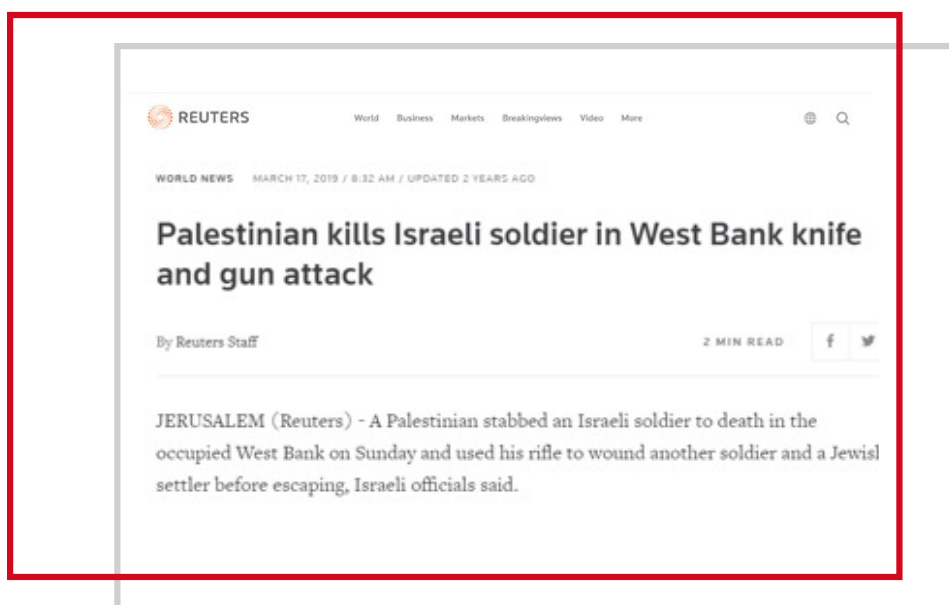


Reuters (in Mail Online), 13 May 2021

e. Acts or reprisals by Palestinians are more emphatically described and assigned to the actor.



AP News, 16 September 2018



Reuters, 17 March 2019

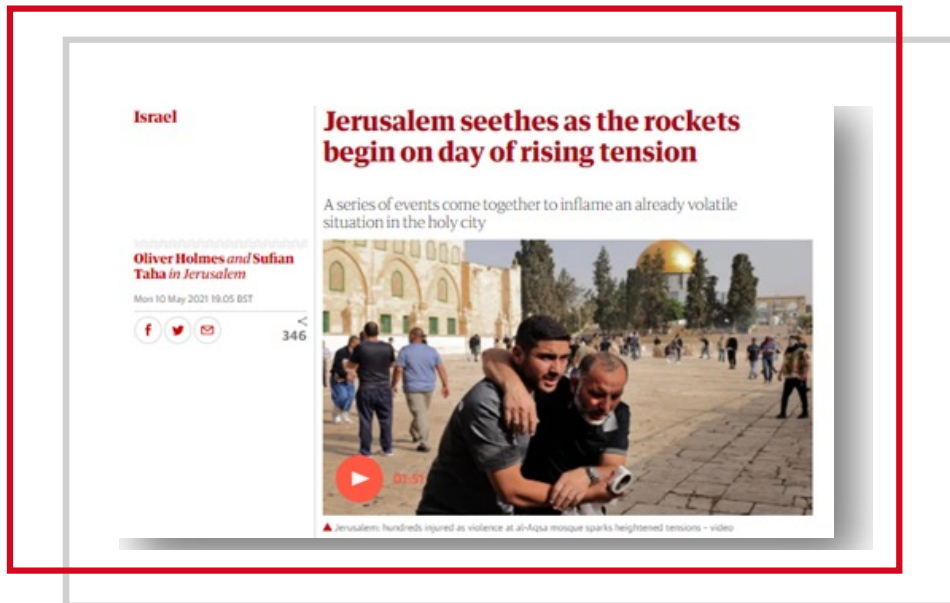
Recommendations:

1. Ensure consistency in describing casualties as being "killed", not "died".
2. Avoid use of the passive voice when describing events.
3. In headlines, mention who did the action, rather than only where it happened, to avoid ambiguity.
4. Ensure fairness and balance when reporting acts of violence.

4. Skewed focus on Palestine as the aggressor, with Israel acting in 'self-defence', or framing Israeli military action as a 'retaliation'.

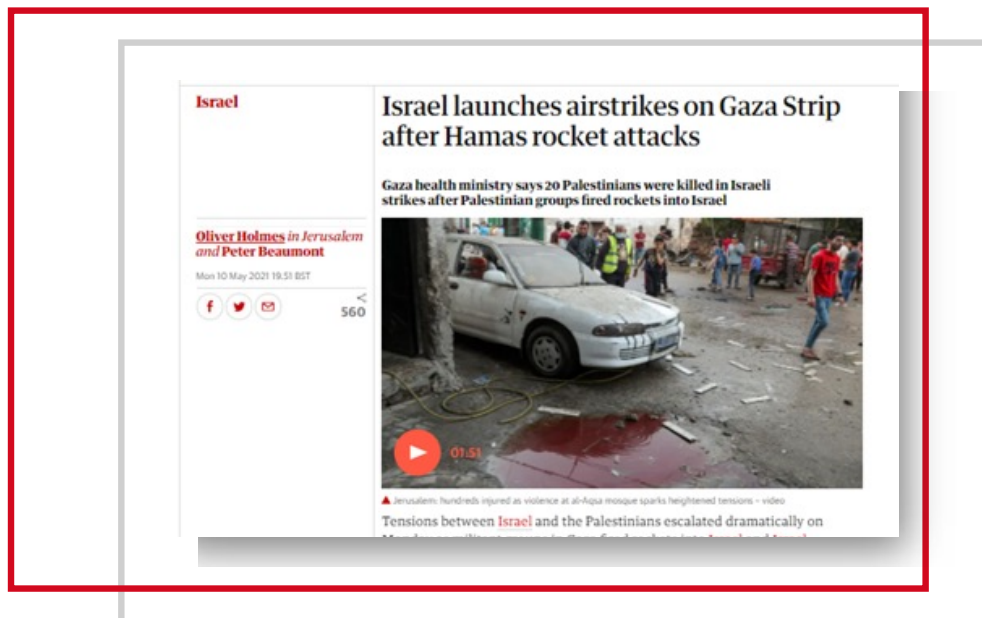
This narrative both equalises the two sides and justifies the disproportionate military response by the IDF.

- a. Headlines which ignore the violence preceding by Israeli settlers police in Jerusalem which led to Hamas firing the rockets.



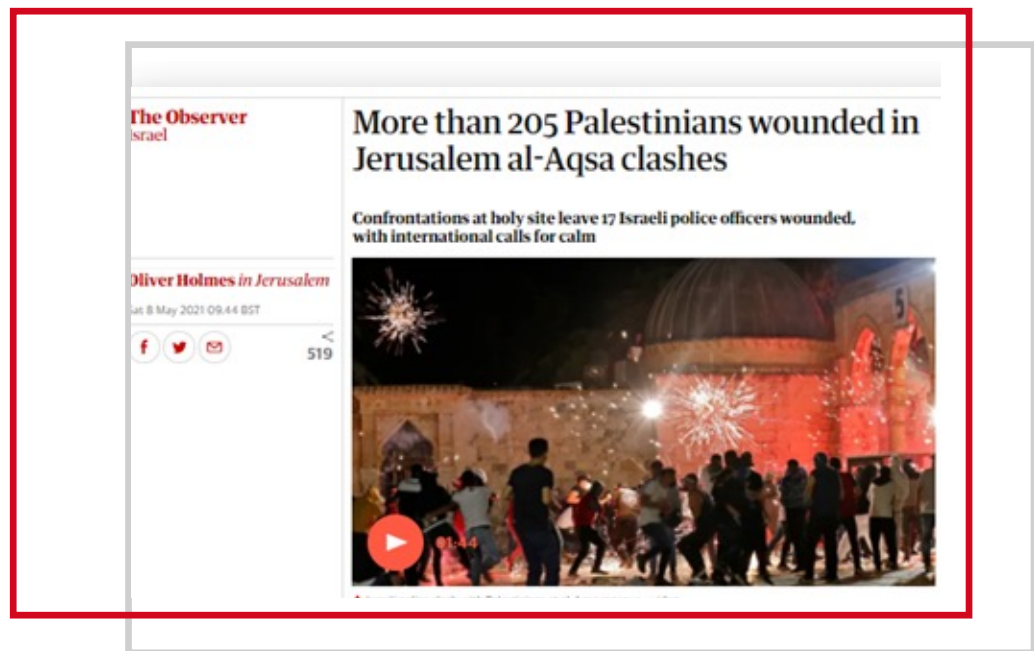
Guardian, 10 May 2021

- b. Justification for Israeli airstrikes as coming 'after Hamas rocket attacks.'



Guardian, 10 May 2021

c. The image in this example from The Observer focuses on Palestinians as opposed to the Israeli police, framing the violence as emanating from Palestinians.



The Times, 8 May 2021

d. Equating Hamas' and Islamic Jihad's rockets to Israel's military power and defence systems



The Times, 13 May 2021

e. References to the intifada conjure up images of Palestinian violence and essentially act as fearmongering, once again framing Palestinians as violent aggressors.

i. "Tiktok Intifada: the role of new media in old conflicts"



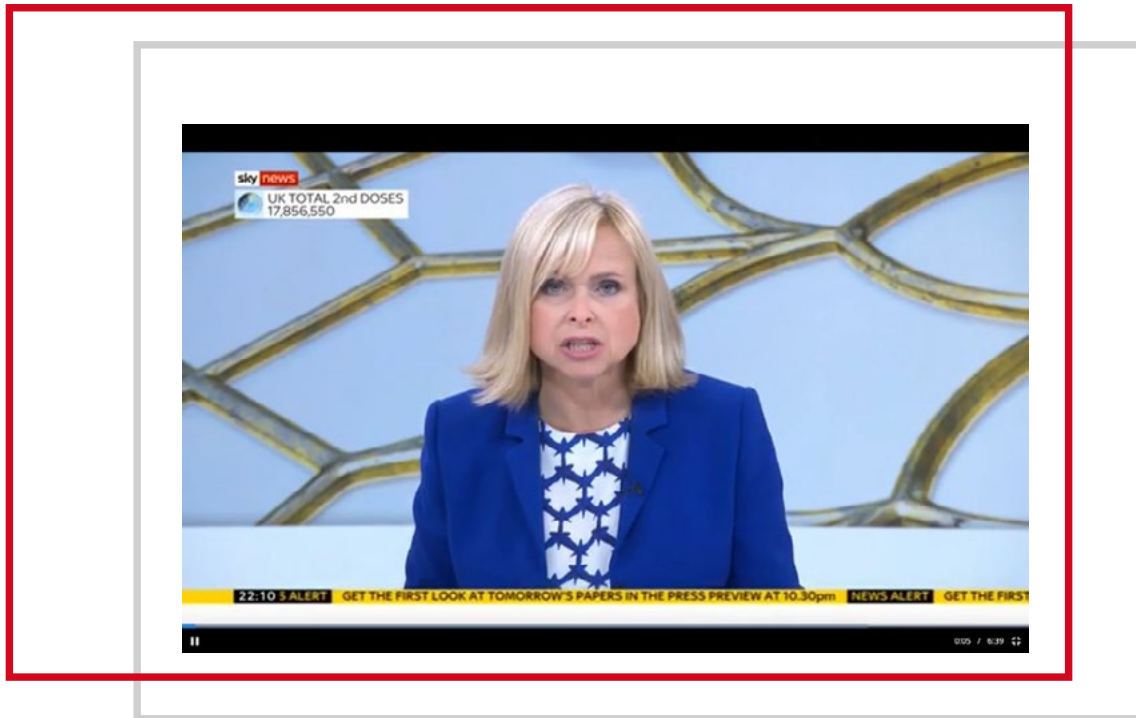
Spectator Magazine, 22 May 2021

ii. Sky News reported that "some people are talking about the potential of a third intifada – a third Palestinian uprising in response to what the Palestinians see as an Israeli aggression. I don't think we are there but we are getting very close."



Sky News at Ten, Sky News, 09/05/2021, 10:19PM

- iii. References to the intifada were repeated in another Sky report: “Some are predicting that the escalating violence could be the birth of a third so-called “intifada” - or uprising - by Palestinians.”



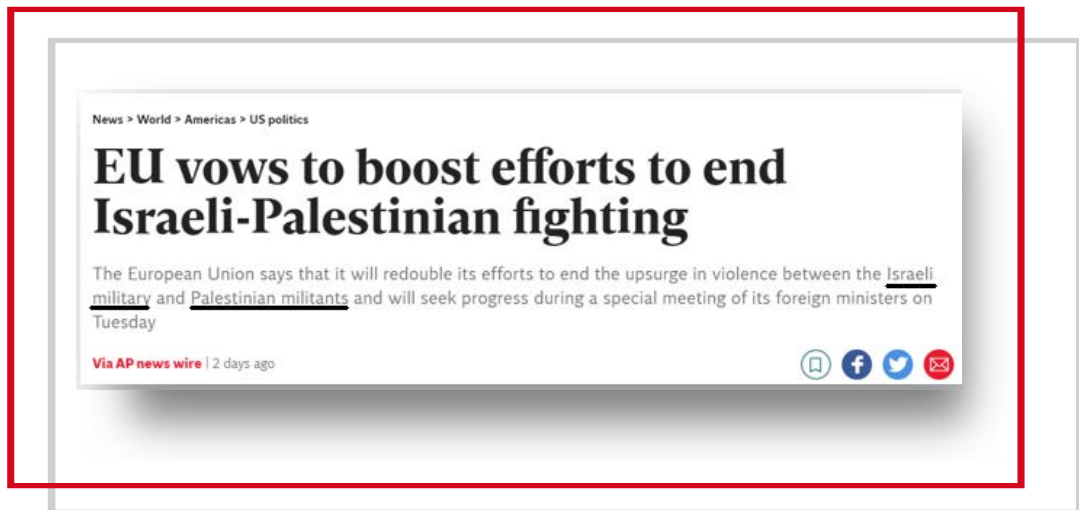
Sky News at Ten, Sky News, 10/05/2021, 10:10PM

Recommendations:

1. Give full context to events, including preceding events that have led to violence.
2. Avoid implying that responsibility for the violence rests on only one side.

5. Referring to 'Palestinian militants' or 'Palestinian Islamist militants', which essentialises all Palestinians as violent aggressors.

a. Contrasting the 'Israeli military' as legitimate with 'Palestinian militants' as illegitimate.



Independent, 17 May 2021

b. Referring to Hamas as 'Islamist militant group which has controlled Gaza since 2007', disregarding that they won a popular vote in 2006. Refers to East Jerusalem as an area 'controlled by Hamas' rival Fatah,' implying that it is of no concern to Hamas, and that Fatah is the legitimate side.



Express, 17 May 2021

Recommendations:

1. Avoid referring to Palestinians as "militants", or using the term "Palestinian militants", instead refer to the specific military body, e.g. Al-Qassam, Al-Jihad al-Islami, and use the term "combatant".
2. Avoid the term "militant" or "Islamist" when referring to democratically elected political parties.
3. Differentiate between Hamas the political party, and their military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigade, especially when using the terms "militant" or "terrorist", as per UN definitions.

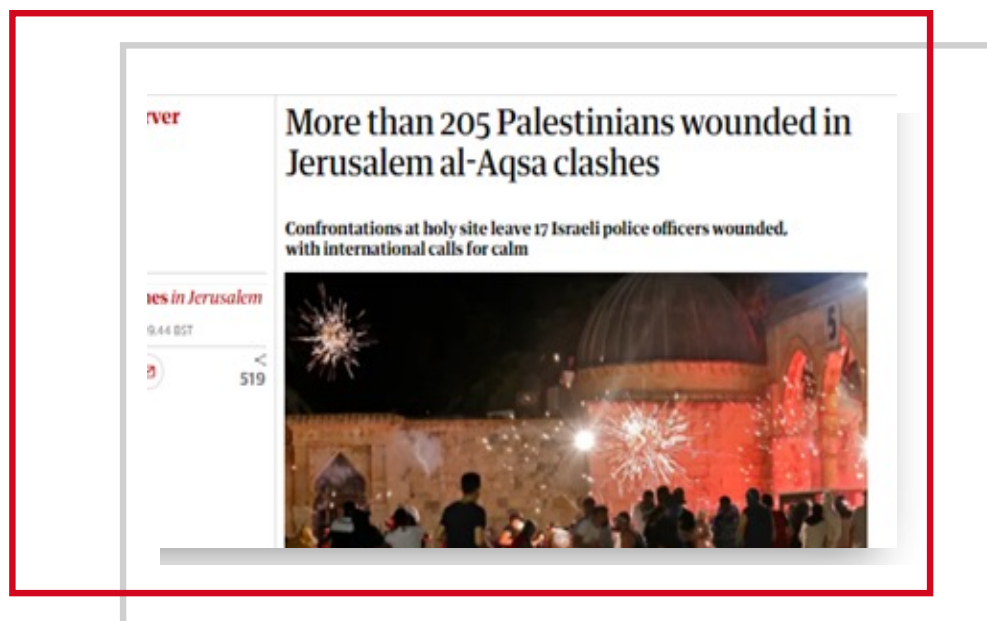
6. Using religious terminology and imagery to frame the violence as religiously motivated or justified:

- a. Image of the Dome of the Rock, perhaps the most iconic building in the Al-Aqsa compound. Use of this image forms a link for the reader between the mosque and the violence.



AFP (in Mail Online) 10 May 2021

- b. Images of protesters being attacked within the compound of Al-Aqsa mosque serve to link the identifiably Islamic site with the violence. The headline fails to clarify how the 205 Palestinians were wounded and by whom.



The Times, 8 May 2021

- c. Many broadcasters reinforced the “Islam vs Judaism” debate surrounding Palestine, especially regarding the displacement of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah. Nearly two thirds of the 90 broadcast clips analysed between the 7th and 10th May refer to Palestinians’ religion, mentioning Al-Aqsa or Ramadan, and in some cases explicitly referring to Palestinians as Muslim. This narrative ignores the existence and persecution by Israel of Palestinian Christians and others.
- i. This report references “Jewish worshippers” and “Islam”: “This evening, the wail of an air raid siren persuaded Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall to flee and run for cover.” “Some protesters used the al-Aqsa Mosque itself as a base from which to throw stones at the Israeli police, who responded with stun grenades. This is the third holiest site in Islam.”



ITV Evening News, ITV 1, 10/05/2021, 6:38PM

- ii. This Channel 4 report speaks of “the holiest night in Ramadan” and goes on to say, “thousands gathered to pray, marking Laylat al-Qadr - the Night of Destiny - at al-Aqsa mosque.” It then states that the mosque, and by extension Islam is, “a frequent pressure-point in the anatomy of a city where the most sacred sites are claimed and disputed”.



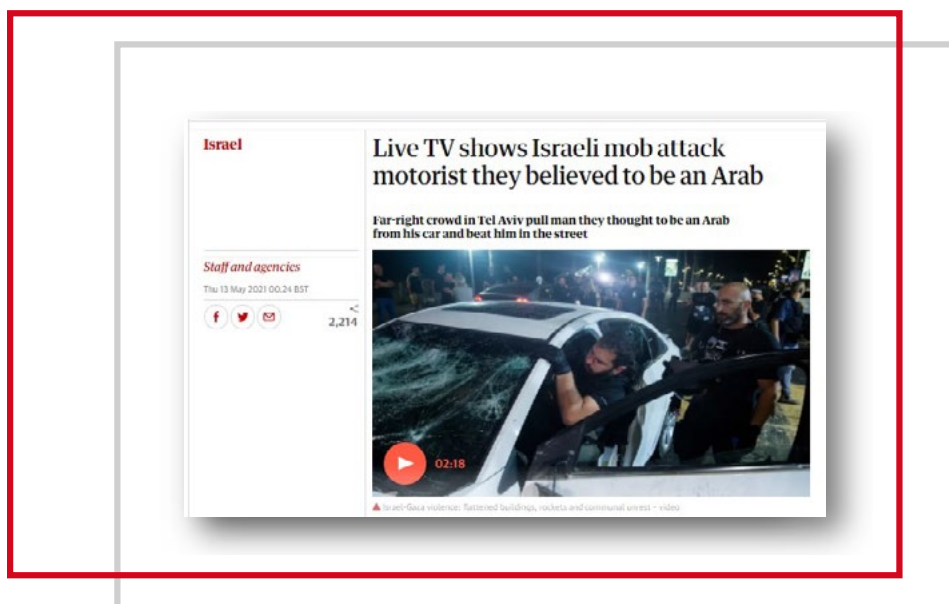
Channel 4 News, Channel 4, 09/05/2021, 6:15PM

Recommendations:

1. Jerusalem is of religious significance to all Abrahamic faiths, but journalists must avoid:
 - Portraying the history of Israel vs Palestine as other than settler colonialism.
 - Implying that any religion is the motivation for the violence.
 - Implying that any religion condones the violence.

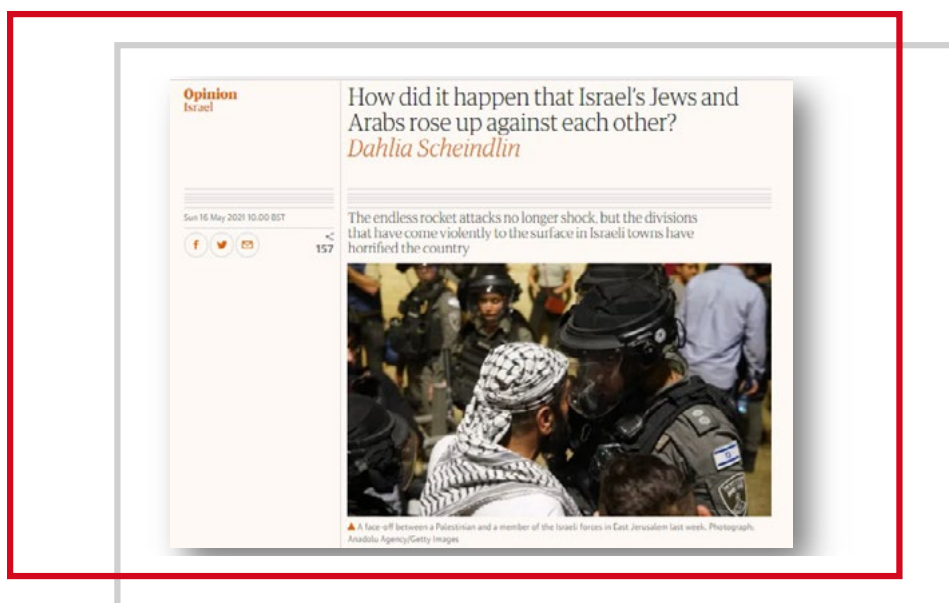
7. Removal of Palestine/Palestinian as an identifier

- a. Referring to Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship as 'Israeli Arabs' or 'Arab Israelis' is a tactic used to erase their Palestinian identity, and to present Israel as a political entity separate from Palestine and the Palestinian people.



Guardian, 13 May 2021

- b. Referring to 'Israel's Jews and Arabs' implies that Palestinians who hold Israeli nationality enjoy equal rights to Israeli Jews, which is simply not the case. This is a narrative that is often used in the 'Israel is a democracy' argument.



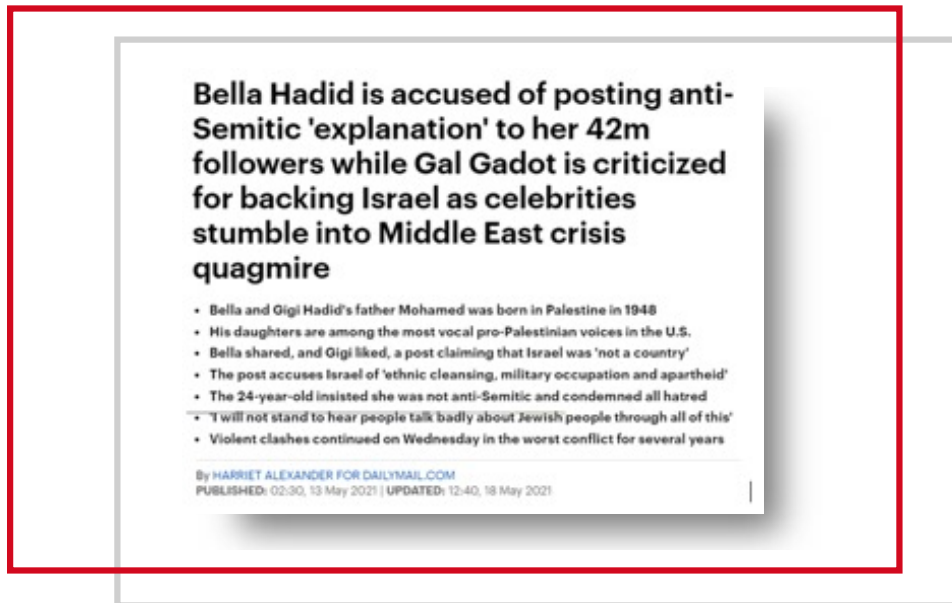
Guardian, 16 May 2021

Recommendations:

1. Avoid use of the term "Israeli Arab" or "Arab Israeli" or similar; instead use "Palestinians with Israeli citizenship" or "Palestinians within Israel".

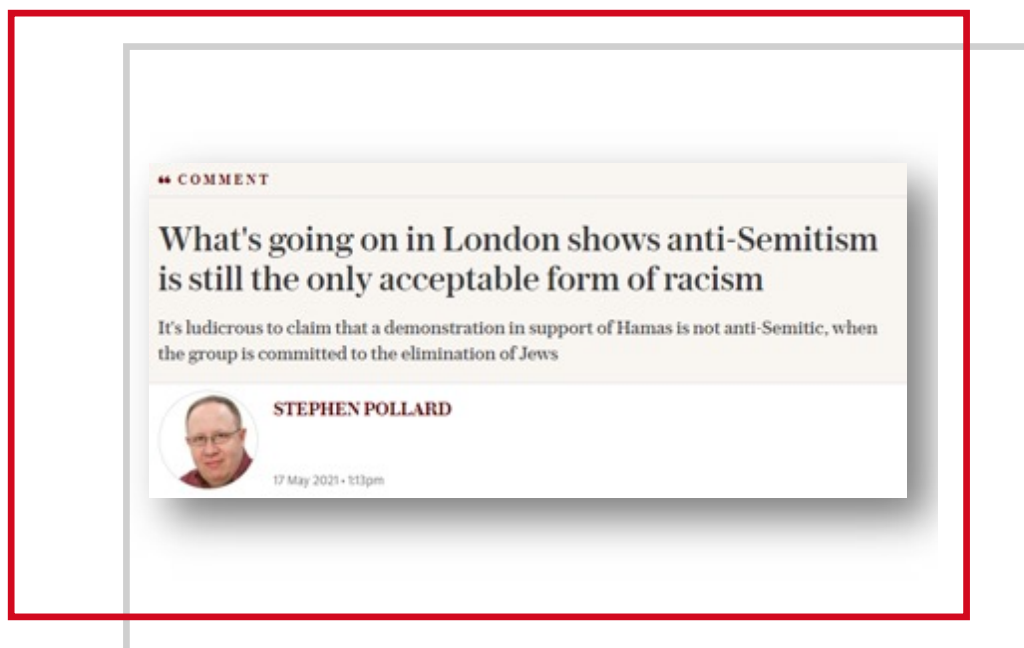
8. Presenting criticism of Israel, criticism of Zionism, or support for Palestine as being inherently anti-Semitic.

- a. Celebrities who support Palestine and call out Israeli aggressions and illegal actions are labelled 'anti-Semitic'.



Daily Mail, 13 May 2021

- b. Claiming that pro-Palestine supporters are "in support of Hamas" or are "anti-Semitic".
Claiming that any anti-Semitism shown by an individual means that the whole is guilty of this.



Daily Telegraph, 17 May 2021

c. Labelling all pro-Palestine supporters as anti-Semitic based on the actions of a few.

RICHARD LITTLEJOHN: How long before drive-by shouting turns into a drive-by shooting? Anti-Semitism, like Covid, comes in waves... this is the Palestinian variant

By RICHARD LITTLEJOHN FOR THE DAILY MAIL
PUBLISHED: 22:00, 17 May 2021 | UPDATED: 22:10, 17 May 2021

Daily Mail, 17 May 2021

COMMENT

In the UK, toxic politics have poisoned discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Whenever there are clashes in the Middle East, the UK becomes a hotbed of anti-Semitic invective or worse

TELEGRAPH VIEW

17 May 2021 • 8:00pm

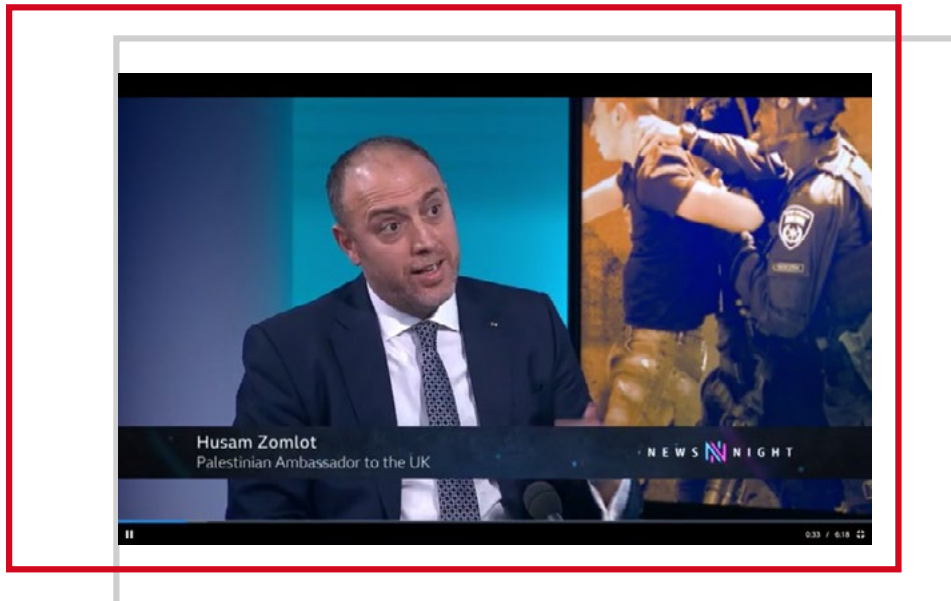
The Telegraph, 17 May 2021

Recommendations:

1. While it is true that some who hold anti-Semitic views will use Israeli aggressions as an excuse to justify their hate, journalists must avoid labelling valid criticism of the actions of the state of Israel and its agencies as being on par with hatred of Jewish people or the Jewish faith.
2. Media outlets must not use the smear of anti-Semitism to shut down the voices of Palestinians and their supporters.

9. Undue Prominence or Insufficient Challenge to Views in Broadcast Interviews

- a. Twenty-four interviews have been analysed featuring both Palestinian and Israeli spokespeople. In many interviews with Palestinian representatives, retaliation by Hamas is taken as the starting point to the violence, attempts are made to create divisions between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas concerning the current events, and Palestinians are asked to defend or condemn Hamas' actions without giving the context of what preceded these attacks. By labelling Hamas "militant" or "radical", it further creates a narrative of legitimacy on the part of the Israeli forces.
- i. "The Israelis think that Hamas are a radical group and they use the holy times to incite violence. Was Hamas right to respond with rocket fire?"



Newsnight, BBC 2, 10/05/2021, 11:16PM

- ii. "Why is Hamas firing rockets at Jerusalem? Is it not fanning the flames?"



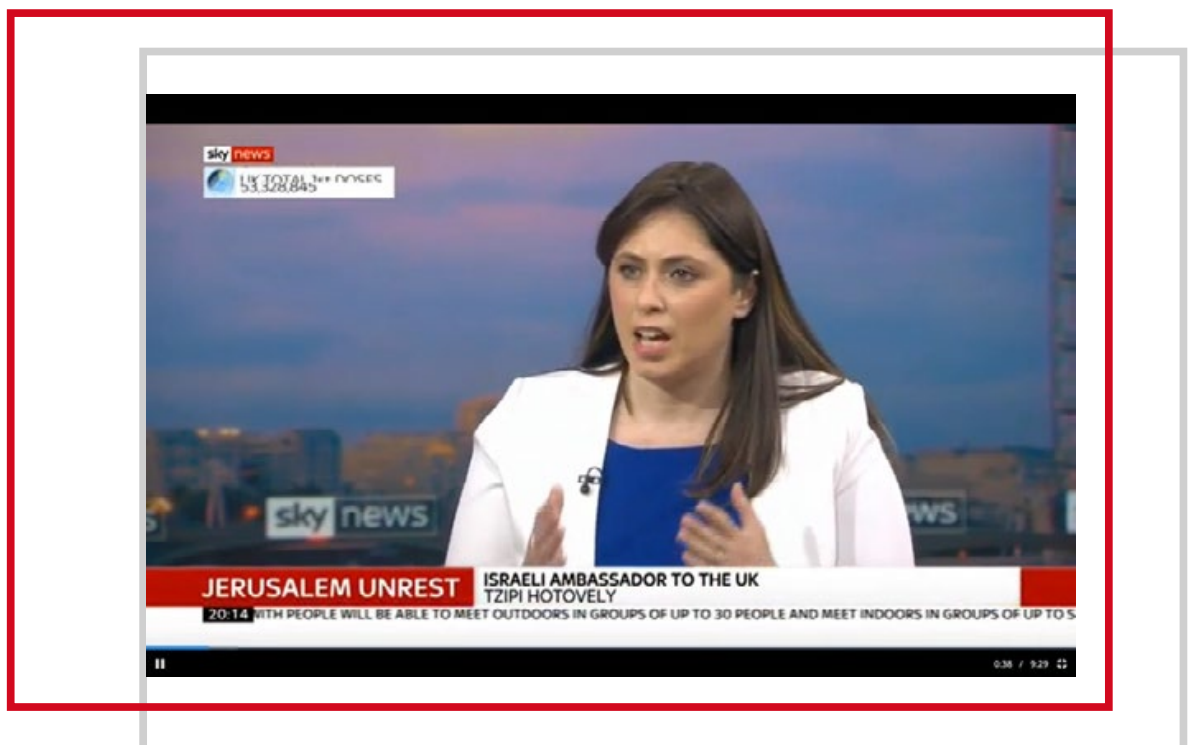
Sky News Tonight, Sky News, 10/05/2021, 7:35PM

b. Both BBC and Sky News have platformed Tzipi Hotovely, the Israeli Ambassador who is a self-proclaimed “religious right-winger” and has a history of racist attitudes. She has referred to the 1948 displacement of 700,000 Palestinians as “a strong and popular Arab lie... they have made up a story called the Nakba.” The Israeli newspaper Haaretz has called her “an unabashed Islamophobe and religious fundamentalist who denies the existence of the Palestinian people and supports annexation of the entire West Bank and Jewish control of Temple Mount.” The Sky News interview does challenge Israeli actions towards Palestinians, but does not challenge Hotovely’s claims which portray Palestinians as radicals and provocateurs or her denial of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah.

- i. In a Sky News interview, Tzipi Hotovely doesn’t clearly answer the ethnic cleansing question or the question regarding settlements in Sheikh Jarrah - and the interviewer doesn’t challenge her sufficiently:

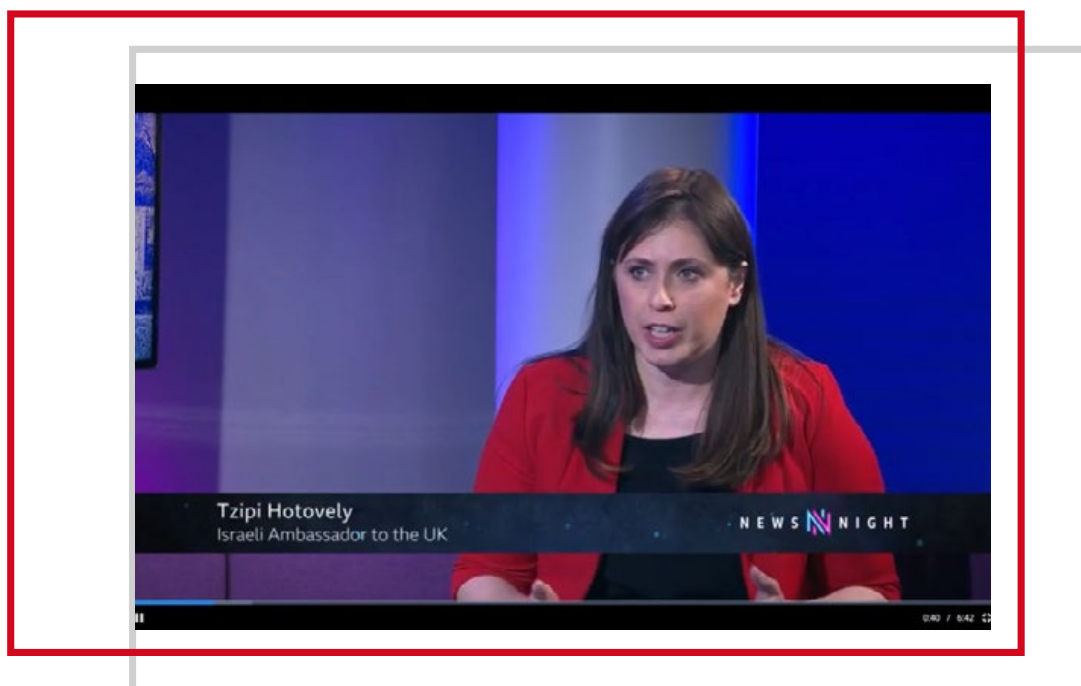
Interviewer: We spoke to the Palestinian ambassador to the UK a short time ago, he says it's ethnic cleansing that's been going on in Jerusalem, demolishing homes, evicting Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and elsewhere, ethnic cleansing. He says that is the provocation that has led to today.

Tzipi Hotovely: I have never heard anything that is more disconnected to the reality. I am sure you have been to Jerusalem. Walk in a Jerusalem neighbourhood. It's all mixed. Arabs and Jews can live together. And you can see more and more Arabs living everywhere and Jews of course they can live everywhere in Jerusalem. This is our capital city and we have been connected to the city for 3000 years. No one can tell us where to live and where not to live in Jerusalem. We do that according to what we believe is a real unity between Arabs and Jews. The provocateurs are the ones that need to explain to people why they are using violence time after time.



Sky News Tonight, Sky News, 10/05/2021, 8:13PM

- ii. On BBC Newsnight, despite Emily Maitlis conducting an otherwise robust interview, Tzipi Hotovely goes unchallenged when she claims that the Palestinian Ambassador was lying, that Palestinians are “abusing the holy site” and committing crimes of violence against innocent Israelis, and that Hamas only wants to remove the State of Israel from the map. The viewer once again is not given a sequence of events to show Israeli aggressions that preceded Hamas’ retaliations, nor does Maitlis remind Hotovely of Hamas’ acceptance of the 1967 borders in their 2017 Charter.¹⁰



BBC Newsnight, BBC 2, 10/05/2021, 11:22 PM.

Recommendations:

1. All interviewees must be robustly challenged on any claims made.
2. Palestinian Authority spokespeople should not be asked to answer for the actions of Hamas.
3. Hamas spokespeople should be given a platform to respond to allegations.

¹⁰<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-2017-document-full>

10. Sources

11. Accuracy is the most important aspect of good journalism: a value shared unanimously by leading media platforms and facilitated by a number of established mechanisms. These include systems of factchecking as well as rigorous efforts to determine the reliability of sources. During the reporting of current events in Palestine and Israel, we have noted a tendency to take what Israel says at face value without substantiating or verifying claims. The words “alleged” or “claimed” are often omitted.
- i. On 11 May 2021, shortly after Israel launched airstrikes on Gaza, a spokesman for Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu posted a video of “conclusive evidence” of Hamas firing rockets at residential areas and committing a “war crime”. An AFP Fact Check shows that this evidence is not only “inconclusive” but also “false”.¹¹ AFP found the same footage has been circulating online since at least June 2018, and says: “While it's not clear when and where the original footage was taken, it can be found in old YouTube videos claiming it was filmed in Iraq or Syria.”
 - ii. An AP article featured in First Post headlined, “Israeli military accused of using media to ‘trick’ Hamas, create fear about on-ground invasion”, reports that, “after midnight on 14th May the Israeli military put out an ominous statement to the media: ‘IDF air and ground troops are currently attacking in the Gaza Strip’”. Some reporters were even told outright that the incursion had begun. However, the military issued a “clarification” a few hours later that there were no Israeli troops inside Gaza. According to AP: “But by then, several major news outlets had erroneously reported the ground offensive was under way. While the army attempted to play down the incident as a misunderstanding, well-placed Israeli military commentators said the media had been used as part of an elaborate ruse to lure Hamas militants into a deadly trap that may have killed dozens of fighters.”¹²
12. It is important to rely on independent sources such as the UN rather than Israel which has a history of propaganda which cannot be relied upon.
- i. Sky News' Mark Austin uses such sources to highlight how Israel is not allowing fuel necessary for the hospitals or water supply into Gaza.¹³

Recommendations:

1. All claims must be substantiated and verified by independent sources.
2. Claims which cannot be verified must be qualified with the caveat “alleged” or “claimed”.

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/AFPFactCheck/status/1395225975139430402>

¹² <https://www.firstpost.com/world/israeli-military-accused-of-using-media-to-trick-hamas-create-fear-about-on-ground-invasion-9624571.html>

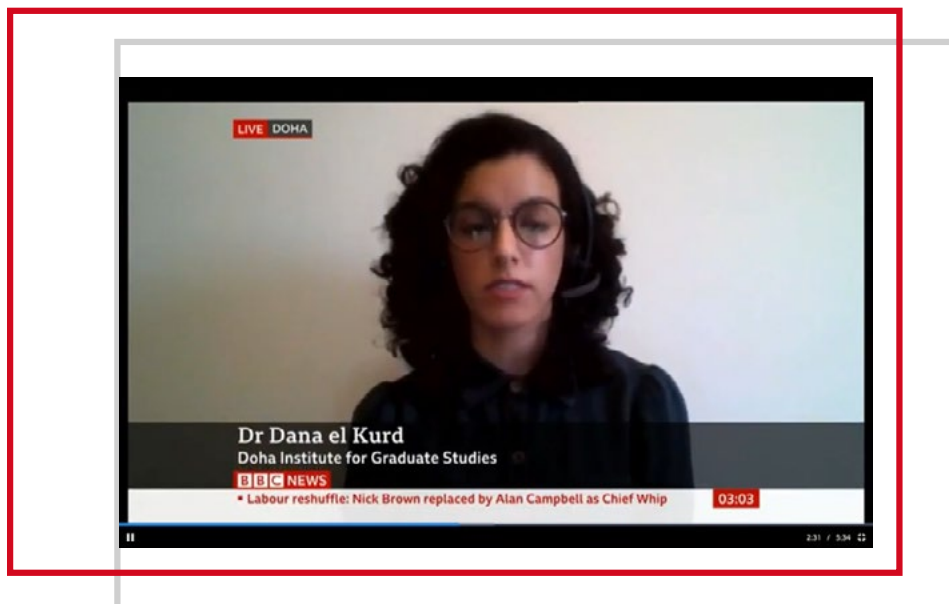
¹³ <https://twitter.com/migdaad/status/1394724456493367305?s=19>

Examples of Balanced Coverage

We must give credit where due and commend those journalists and outlets who strive for balanced, impartial coverage, both in print and in broadcast. The following are just a few examples:

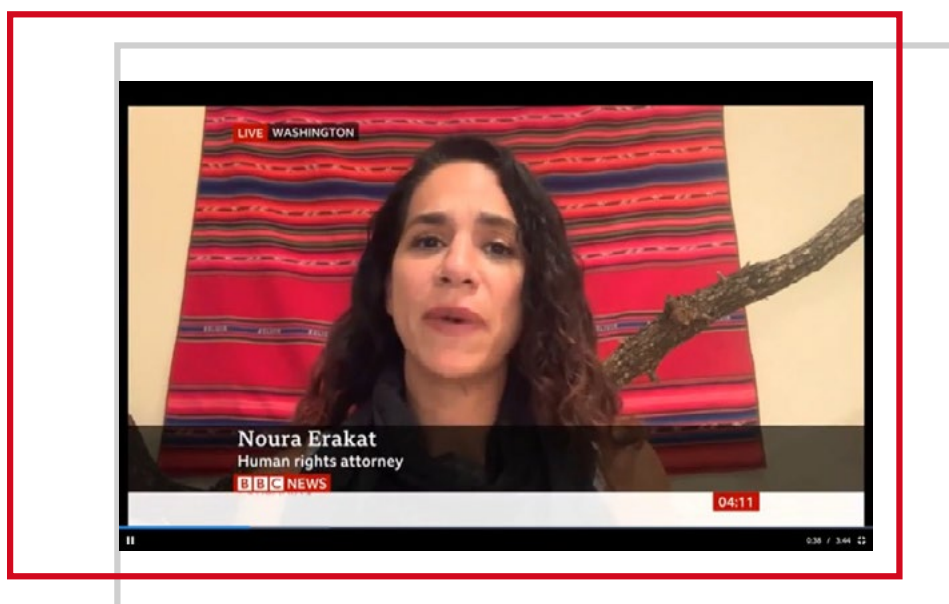
1. Broadcast Coverage

a. BBC news carried an interview with Dana El Kurd, Assistant Professor at Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Despite a hostile line of questioning, El Kurd is given a platform and is able to make poignant points, including that Jerusalem day is a clear provocation for Palestinians. She highlights the level of dispossession experienced by Palestinians, and states that de-escalation efforts are done more so for further suppression of Palestinians, rather than to protect them from further violence.



BBC News, 10 May 2021, 3:00 AM

b. BBC News interviews human rights lawyer Noura Erakat. Despite the BBC referring to what was happening in Jerusalem as 'skirmishes' and 'clashes', Erakat off the bat explains the inaccuracy of the terms. A very factually accurate account of the Sheikh Jarrah forced removals, and viewed through a non-religious, human rights lens. Erakat highlights the wider foreign transgressions made by the US regarding moving the embassy to Jerusalem, and the level of oppression of Palestinians.



BBC News, 10 May 2021, 4:10 AM

c. Interview with Husam Zomlot, Palestinian Ambassador to the UK. Zomlot mentions ethnic cleansing by Israelis, which he notes is a war crime which demonstrates the level of the colonial expansion project. Reporting from Jerusalem, Mark Stone explains factually the distinction between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, noting that Zomlot is a representative of the former.



Sky News, 10 May 2021, 4:15 PM

- d. Sky News' Middle East Correspondent, Mark Stone has overall done an excellent job in trying to present events in a balanced and measured way.
- i. In this report he highlights the overhanded approach of the Israeli police: "For no logical reason Israeli police are moving in and in a very blunt way controlling as they say the crowds -a crowd that doesn't as far as we have seen need any control. These are families, lots of young people, young boys here too who at the end of their Ramadan fast are gathering here. we've seen over the course of the evening water cannon filled with a rancid skunk as it's known is sprayed at people, sprayed a little earlier on at young boys gathered at the wall."
 - ii. He continues in another report: "I saw a lot more instances of entirely unnecessary, provocative behaviour by Israeli police/military today. At Damascus Gate (stun grenades thrown at peaceful Palestinian group), in Sheikh Jarrah (skunk water fired on Palestinian homes) & Bethlehem (volleys of tear gas)."¹⁴



Sky News at Ten, Sky News, 09/05/2021, 10:19PM

¹⁴ https://twitter.com/Stone_SkyNews/status/1394731857099452419?s=19

iii. In a tweet on 18th May he speaks of the Israeli police pushing around an accredited CNN news correspondent and his crew. "It happened to us all this week. Today I walked past a policeman. I smiled and said hello. 'F*ck Off' he said." ¹⁵



e. On BBC Newsnight, Husam Zomlot, Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, and Tzipi Hotovely, Israeli Ambassador to the UK, are interviewed separately by Emily Maitlis. Maitlis grills both with equal scrutiny, pushing back against claims made by each contributor to ensure a fair representation of each viewpoint.

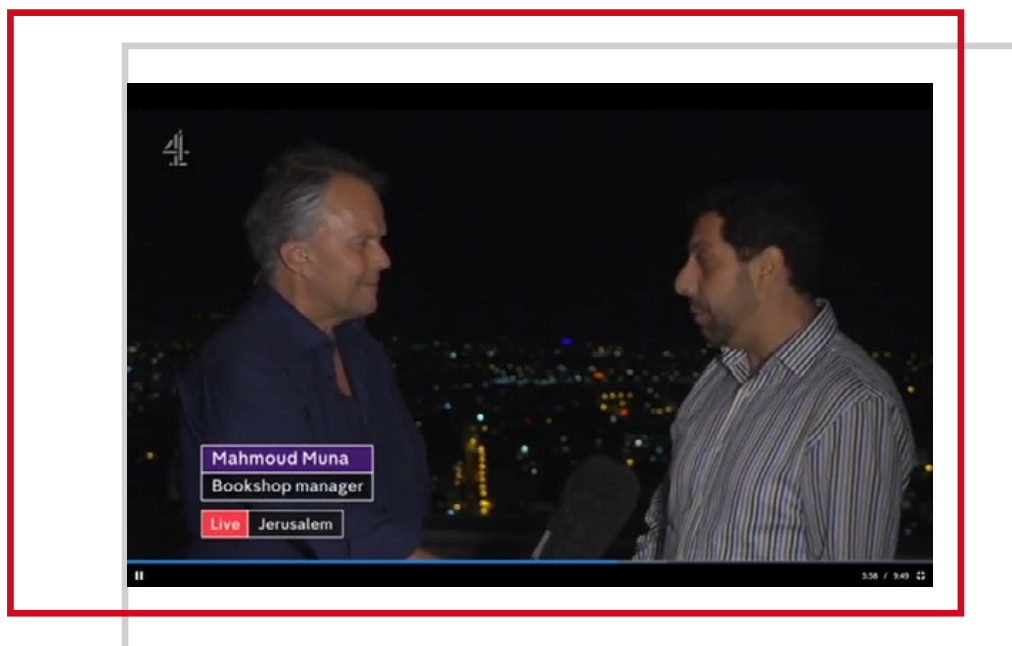


BBC Newsnight, 10 May 2021, 11:15 PM:

¹⁵ https://twitter.com/Stone_SkyNews/status/1394733367778709506?s=19

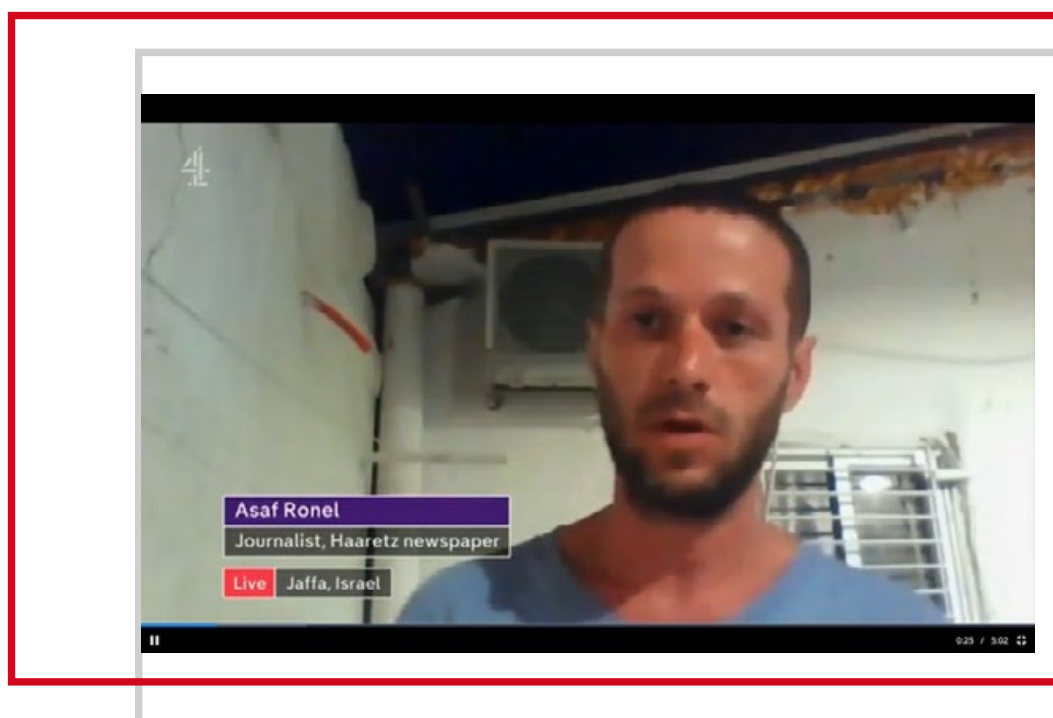
f. Channel 4 report on events in Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank, showing how the violence has im-pacted the Palestinians in comparison with the Israelis, and giving a platform to Palestinian voices, and to Israeli voices critical of the actions of the state.

i. Palestinian Mahmoud Muna refers to “Palestinian citizens of Israel” (cf. “Arab Israelis”).



Channel 4 News, 18 May 2021, 7:20 PM.

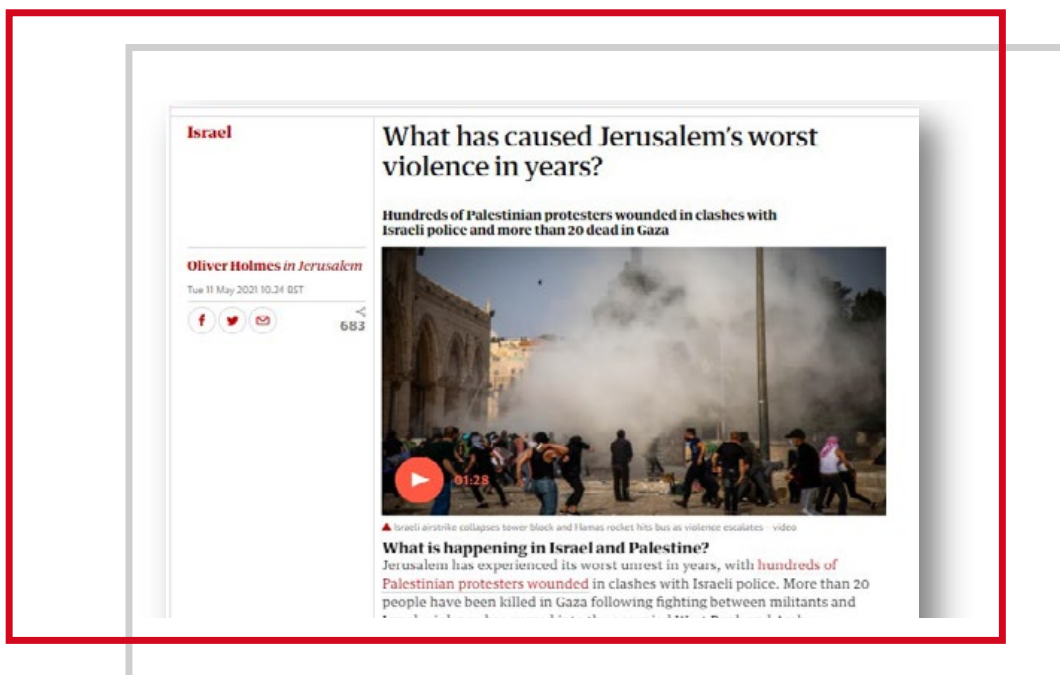
ii. Asaf Ronel, a journalist from the Israeli newspaper Haaretz speaks about the situation in Jaffa: “The feeling here is Palestinian Jaffa is under attack in what seems like an organised attack by the Israel police joining hands with the far-right mob ... the Palestinians are organising to defend themselves on the streets of Jaffa and the police is using excessive force...”



Channel 4 News, 18 May 2021, 7:20 PM.

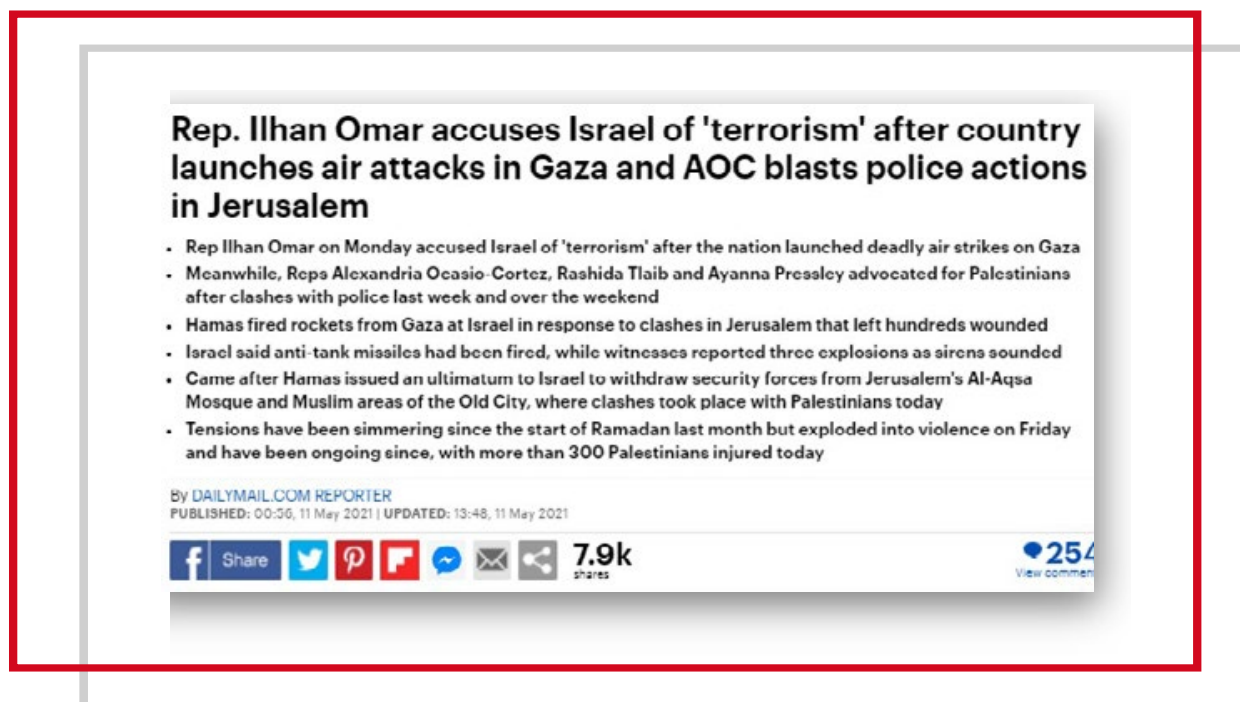
2. Print Coverage

- a. A balanced piece detailing the background on events which have led to the current violence in Jerusalem.



The Guardian, 11 May 2021

- b. This article features pro-Palestinian voices, and includes a breakdown of events to date, including Hamas' ultimatum to Israel to withdraw from al Aqsa mosque and Palestinian areas in Jerusalem.



Daily Mail, 11 May 2021

- c. Good contextual piece by Donald Macintyre, which includes reference to Hamas' readiness to accept an Egyptian-backed ceasefire which the Israeli government rejected.



Independent, 13 May 2021

How to Complain: Step by Step

1. Complaints to print/online newspapers:

- a. Look up the publication's complaints or corrections email on their website. Some have online forms to fill in, please use those.
- b. Include the link to the article in your complaint.
- c. Stick to facts and accuracy. Newspapers are allowed to be biased, but they must be accurate. Be specific in your complaint, explain in detail what is inaccurate and why. Cite the Editors Code Clause 1: Accuracy (see below) and explain how they have breached that code.
- d. Avoid speculating on the intentions of the writers. Sticking to facts is more effective.
- e. When you receive a confirmation email from the paper, please forward it to admin@cfmm.org.uk

WHAT THE EDITORS' CODE SAYS: CLAUSE 1 ACCURACY

- The press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.
- A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and — where appropriate — an apology published. In cases involving IPSO, due prominence should be as required by the regulator.
- A fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for.
- The press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.
- A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.

2. Complaints to broadcasters (including online articles):

- a. Look up the broadcaster's complaints email on their website. Some have online forms to fill in, please use those.
- b. In your complaint, include the programme's full information (name of programme, presenter, time, date) or the link to the article.
- c. News programmes are required to be impartial and unbiased (unlike newspapers). Be specific and factual in your complaint, avoid emotive language. Cite the OFCOM Broadcaster's Code (see below) and explain how they have breached that code.
- d. Avoid speculating on the intentions of the broadcaster or journalist. Sticking to facts is more effective.
- e. When you receive a confirmation email for your complaint, please forward it to admin@cfmm.org.uk

WHAT THE BROADCASTERS' CODE SAYS

SECTION 5 Due Impartiality and Due Accuracy and Undue Prominence of Views and Opinions

5.1 News, in whatever form, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality.

5.4 Programmes in the services...must exclude all expressions of the views and opinions of the person providing the service on matters of political and industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy (unless that person is speaking in a legislative forum or in a court of law).

5.5 Due impartiality on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy must be preserved on the part of any person providing a service...This may be achieved within a programme or over a series of programmes taken as a whole.

5.7 Views and facts must not be misrepresented. Views must also be presented with due weight over appropriate timeframes.

5.11 In addition to the rules above, due impartiality must be preserved on matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy by the person providing a service...in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes.

5.12 In dealing with matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes. Views and facts must not be misrepresented.

Recommendations

Narrative 1

1. Avoid use of the term “evictions” when referring to illegal settler organisation activities.
2. Avoid any language which implies equal power.
3. Avoid justification of violence without context.

Narrative 2

1. Ensure clarity in reporting numbers of fatalities/injuries on each side.
2. Ensure clarity in reporting on who caused the deaths.

Narrative 3

1. Ensure consistency in describing casualties as being “killed”, not “died”.
2. Avoid use of the passive voice when describing events.
3. In headlines, mention who did the action, rather than only where it happened, to avoid ambiguity.
4. Ensure fairness and balance when reporting acts of violence.

Narrative 4

1. Give full context to events, including preceding events that have led to violence.
2. Avoid implying that responsibility for the violence rests on only one side.

Narrative 5

1. Avoid referring to Palestinians as “militants”, or using the term “Palestinian militants”, instead refer to the specific military body, e.g. Al-Qassam, Al-Jihad al-Islami, and use the term “combatant”.
2. Avoid the term “militant” or “Islamist” when referring to democratically elected political parties.
3. Differentiate between Hamas the political party, and their military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigade, especially when using the terms “militant” or “terrorist”, as per UN definitions.

Narrative 6

1. Jerusalem is of religious significance to all Abrahamic faiths, but journalists must avoid:
 - i. Portraying the history of Israel vs Palestine as other than settler colonialism.
 - ii. Implying that any religion is the motivation for the violence.
 - iii. Implying that any religion condones the violence.

Narrative 7

1. Avoid use of the term “Israeli Arab” or “Arab Israeli” or similar; instead use “Palestinians with Israeli citizenship” or “Palestinians within Israel”.

Narrative 8

1. While it is true that some who hold anti-Semitic views will use Israeli aggressions as an excuse to justify their hate, journalists must avoid labelling valid criticism of the actions of the state of Israel and its agencies as being on par with hatred of Jewish people or the Jewish faith.
2. Media outlets must not use the smear of anti-Semitism to shut down the voices of Palestinians and their supporters.

Narrative 9

1. In broadcast interviews, all interviewees must be robustly challenged on any claims made.
2. Palestinian Authority spokespeople should not be asked to answer for the actions of Hamas.
3. Hamas spokespeople should be given a platform to respond to allegations.

Narrative 10

1. All claims must be substantiated and verified by independent sources.
2. Claims which cannot be verified must be qualified with the caveat “alleged” or “claimed”.

Conclusion

This report outlines many of the main ways in which the media can impact public understanding of the violence occurring in Jerusalem and Gaza currently in May 2021. Unfortunately, these events are not an isolated occurrence, but have a long history, and it is our hope that the information presented herein will be relevant and useful for any potential future events as well. The examples given are not exhaustive, but were chosen as they are the most common and are widely used to influence public opinion.

It is our aim that the explanations and recommendations above will help grassroots activists and community members to challenge problematic media narratives, whether that is through making effective complaints via established channels and regulatory bodies, through social media campaigns, or through contributing the media reports as community representatives.



 admin@cfmm.org.uk

  [@cfmmuk](https://www.instagram.com/cfmmuk)

 [@centre.media.monitoring](https://www.facebook.com/centre.media.monitoring)

 www.cfmm.org.uk