

Middle East Media Stereotypes

Professor David Bensoussan
Fellow, Canadian Institute of Jewish Research

The plethora of articles which are written on the Middle East conflict is disproportionate relative to all other conflicts all over the world. *The Economist* noted that there were more journalists dispatched to Israel to all of Asia and Africa combined. This anomaly on its own merits an analysis, however, the purpose here is to highlight certain assertions and certain media stereotypes regarding the Israel-Arab conflict.

1. On the international scene

United Nations resolutions: The General Assembly resolutions (which are not Security Council resolutions) are adopted with the automatic majority vote and complicity of the Arab-Moslem states and anti-Israel resolutions are never-ending at the UN. Through these automatic block votes, the UN agenda is high jacked, made a mockery of and distorted. In contrast, the genocide in Darfur was never debated while Sudan was elected to spearhead the UN committee responsible for humanitarian causes! Similarly, Syria, responsible for countless civilian deaths, was elected to spearhead the UN committee responsible for safeguarding human rights!

West Bank settlements: The truth is that nothing is illegal about the settlements. The final recognized and secure borders are to be discussed and agreed-upon once final peace negotiations are undertaken (Security Council Resolution 242 [1967]). It should be noted here that when Egypt and Jordan signed peace agreements with Israel, territorial agreements were signed to the satisfaction of all the parties involved. Given the present realities on the ground, it is integral that such negotiations take place as soon as possible.

Occupation: This term is used only when discussing the Israeli presence in the West Bank while it is completely ignored to describe the occupation

of the Palestinians by the Hamas dictatorship or by the corrupt Palestinian Authority.

The two-state solution: How can anyone logically advance a “two-state solution” when the Palestinian media celebrates suicide attacks which are in fact crimes against humanity?

2. The media bias

The media have totally ignored the progress of the positive steps initiated by Israelis and Palestinians towards collaboration on a daily life basis. The easy news story involves bringing to the fore the sensationalistic images that reinforce the stereotypes of unequal adversaries. The media wants to maintain its neutrality by granting equal importance to both parties: On one side is an open democracy, Israel and the other side is a terrorizing dictatorship, Hamas. What credence can be given to the statements of those who use their own children as human shields?

The media are so caught up in scrutinizing Israel’s actions that they omit to condemn Hamas as well as the Arab states that themselves do not condemn Hamas publicly. The media conveniently omits to compare the speeches given by Hamas to the foreign press with the heinous speeches they make while in front of their own citizens.

3. Reporting on the present conflict

“Poor Gazans”: the Israeli army and citizens have withdrawn from Gaza since 2005. Gaza is free of any Israeli presence and can, in view of its geographic position, ensure a decent standard of living to its citizens. The assertion that the inhabitants of Gaza are suffering and to be pitied rings hollow when we know that Hamas squanders astronomical sums of international funds donated to help the citizens in order to pour hundreds of thousands of tons of concrete to build tunnels as well as to purchase more and more deadly rockets. The citizens of Gaza are victims of Hamas tyranny on a daily basis placing them in a state of misery and desperation.

Casualty reports: Israel has built shelters to protect its children whereas Hamas uses children to protect its shelters full of rockets. Hamas deliberately fires rockets on Israeli citizens obliging millions to run and hole up for cover. The media nevertheless bemoans the low number of

losses of human life in Israel. How can this kind of reasoning hold water? Criticizing the imbalance in casualties, implying that more Israelis should die, is pure hypocrisy.

Allegations of massacres: Israel is continuously bombarded with allegations of massacres even before the facts have been verified. Claiming that massacres occurred when in fact they did not, is an insult to people's intelligence. A high percentage of Hamas rockets fall short of Israel and land in Gaza, doing considerable damage there. Ignoring the massacres committed by Hamas on its own people is nothing short of criminal.

On the Opinion of People Interviewed in Gaza: When the people of Gaza will be able to freely speak their minds without fear of being assassinated by Hamas (which is already summarily executing citizens without trial and accusing some Gazans of being "collaborators"), then the media will be able to report honestly about the opinion of Gaza's; not before.

Arab outrage: Hamas has no respect for human life. They are dedicated to the destruction of Israel and openly proclaim that martyrdom is preferable to human life. Where is the outrage in the Arab world itself demanding that Hamas stop this insanity?

3. Other media gems

"Iran is a peace loving country": "Peaceful" Shiite Iran, the main backer and supplier of rockets to Hamas, regularly gathers tens of thousands of people in Teheran during Friday's mosque services to scream "Death to America!" Iran and its Lebanese puppet terrorists, the Hezbollah, have nothing to do in Syria but contribute to support and uphold the actions of their partner in crime, the murderer, Hafez Al Assad (over the last four years, the number of Syrian deaths approaches 200 000—where is the notion of proportionality of coverage of this conflict by the media when compared to that of the Israel-Palestinian conflict?).

To conclude

Note the utter insensitivity of the media to Putin's killing of more than 200 000 Chechens, Saddam Hussein's 150 000 Kurdish victims, one million Iraqis and Iranians in the Iran-Iraq war, the massacre of one to two million Christians in Sudan, 100 000 Lebanese during the civil war, more

than 300 000 in Darfur, 25 000 inhabitants of Hama killed by Syria's Hafez Al Assad, 20 000 Palestinians killed in Jordan during Black September, 200 000 victims of the civil war in Algeria, almost 200 000 deaths in Syria to date and daily suicide-attacks and murders between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, and so on, and so forth.

Yet the media spends most of its time scrutinizing Israel, the country which takes extraordinary measures to minimize civilian casualties in a war initiated against it by a genocidal enemy. The media acts as if it was not worth reporting massacres committed by Arabs to other Arabs in the Middle East, as if their lives were so worthless so were their deaths.