



**Arab Media Watch**  
for objective British coverage of Arab issues

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**Arab Media Watch Monitoring Study:**

**BBC Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Arab Media Watch would like to thank the BBC for inviting us to submit our views as part of its impartiality review. In order to contribute in a thorough, accurate and timely manner, we decided to take a 1-month snapshot of coverage, mirroring what the BBC is reviewing by monitoring the following outlets:

<b>Outlet</b>	<b>Monitoring period</b>	<b>Days of coverage</b>
Online:	Oct 15 – Nov 15	29
News 24 8 – 9pm:	Oct 15 – Nov 15	10
BBC 1 10pm news:	Oct 16 – Nov 16	4
BBC 1 6pm news:	Oct 17 – Nov 15	4
Panorama:	Oct 15 – Nov 15	0
Radio 4 Today:	Oct 14 – Nov 15	16
PM programme:	Oct 17 – Nov 15	6
Radio 4 6pm news:	Oct 15 – Nov 15	9
Radio 5 Drive:	Oct 18 – Nov 13	3

We not only compared coverage across the various BBC outlets, but also to Agence France Presse, Aljazeera and Reuters. This is a summary of our findings. Our extensive, individual reports and summaries are available upon request.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

After carefully studying the content of BBC radio, TV and online coverage, and in summarising the content of this report, AMW recommends that the BBC:

- Use a proportionate number of Israeli and Palestinian sources, instead of relying overwhelmingly on Israeli sources in news reports and features.
- Desist from portraying Israel primarily as a peace-seeking victim of and responder to Palestinian, Arab and Muslim aggression through the use of language and pictures.
- Cover Palestinian and Israeli deaths and injuries proportionately, rather than report Israeli casualties far more frequently when there were almost 4 times as many Palestinian deaths in the monitoring period.
- Increase coverage of the conflict, and consider what it chooses to report. A substantial amount of important news during the monitoring period was missed.
- Improve the complaints procedure.
- Locate most reporters in the occupied territories, where the conflict mostly takes place, rather than in West Jerusalem, where they live a comfortable Israeli lifestyle without experiencing Palestinian hardships.
- Stop reporting unchallenged claims, particularly Israeli claims with an unreported Palestinian viewpoint or version of events.
- Desist from using the phrase “a period of relative calm” when Palestinian deaths, injuries and arrests continue, as do settlement and barrier construction.
- Use the term “Jewish-only colonies” to describe settlements, for they constitute a form of colonisation in a world that has outlawed colonialism. Also, consistently stress their illegality because they are built on occupied territory.
- Consider use of the term “militant” when referring to the Palestinian resistance, as they are not all engaged in armed struggle. Groups such as Hamas also work in the fields of education, health, social welfare and politics. Unless Palestinians are killed, injured or arrested while directly engaged in armed combat, they are civilians, not militants.
- Use the term “extra-judicial executions” or “assassinations,” favoured by international and Israeli human rights organisations, rather than “targeted killings” which is favoured by the Israeli military. To describe the killings as “targeted” is inaccurate as many Palestinian bystanders have been killed. The vast majority of these premeditated executions and assassinations are contrary to international law.

- Consistently stress that Israel is militarily occupying Palestinian land, and explain which lands are occupied.
- Explain the Palestinian “intifada”, “struggle” and “cause” as a UN-sanctioned uprising against occupation, oppression, colonisation, dispossession etc.
- Stress when mentioning the Gaza withdrawal that under international law, it remains occupied territory and thus Israel continues to be responsible for its inhabitants’ welfare. Also stress the frequently stated Israeli motivation behind the withdrawal: to consolidate control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- Explain, when mentioning Palestinian refugees or their camps, how long they have been dispossessed, how many there are, their living conditions, where they are originally from, and their legal rights to repatriation, restitution and compensation.
- Give more coverage of Israel’s West Bank barrier. It should be persistently stressed that it is illegal, it should be torn down, and compensation should be paid to affected Palestinians, as determined by the International Court of Justice. The serious economic, humanitarian and environmental impacts on Palestinians should be regularly mentioned.
- Avoid the use of the term “terrorism” to describe Palestinian activity, as there is no internationally accepted definition. If it is used, it should be within quote marks. One can argue that terrorism means the wanton killing of civilians, and in this case both sides are guilty (Israel on a much larger scale).
- Avoid referring to the “Promised Land” as this implies an acceptance of Israeli claims, whereas many people say God promised the land to the Arabs too as Abraham’s children, others believe God would not play estate agent, and others do not believe in God.
- Explain, when mentioning Zionism, that people worldwide consider it a racist ideology espousing the idea of a Jewish state which caused the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the destruction of hundreds of their villages, the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian land, and the second-class status of Israel’s Arab citizens.
- Stress when mentioning the 1967 war that Israel attacked its Arab neighbours first, and that the acquisition of territory through war is illegitimate. Likewise, the 1973 war should be explained as an attempt by Syria and Egypt to regain their captured lands.
- Mention, when referring to Hamas’s stance on Israel, that it accepted the Arab proposal which calls for a full peace with Israel in return for a full withdrawal from occupied territory (Beirut 2002, Algiers 2005). And Israel’s interference in Palestinian parliamentary elections (ie. by insisting Hamas cannot take part) is a violation of the principle of self-determination.
- Instead of solely portraying the Oslo Accords as a momentarily positive peace development, describe the fundamental flaws which led to its collapse.

## **SOURCES:**

This study confirms the findings of previous AMW studies and that of the Glasgow University Media Group: **Israeli sources are predominant over Palestinian sources in BBC coverage.**

### **Online:**

**63% of news items (20 out of 32) had more Israeli sources**, of which 35% (7 items) had from twice to 5 times as many. **Just 25% of news items (8 out of 32) had more Palestinian sources**, of which 38% (3 items) had from twice to 3 times as many. **A quarter of news items had no Palestinian sources, whereas all had Israeli sources.**

Likewise, **58% of features (7 out of 12) had more Israeli sources**, of which 29% (2 items) had from twice to 9 times as many. **Just 25% of features (3 out of 12) had more Palestinian sources**, of which 67% (2 items) had twice as many. **Almost half the features (5 out of 12) had no Palestinian sources, whereas only 1 had no Israeli sources.**

Also, **78% of news items (25 out of 32) and two-thirds of features (8 out of 12) had Israeli sources more prominently placed.**

**Three-quarters of news items (23 out of 32) had more words devoted to Israeli sources**, of which around a quarter (6 items) had from twice to 27 times more words. **Just a quarter of news items (8 out of 32) devoted more words to Palestinian sources**, of which 38% (3 items) had from twice to 3 times more words.

Likewise, **75% of features (9 out of 12) devoted more words to Israeli sources**, of which 22% (2 items) had from 3 to more than 9 times as many words. Of the 25% of features (3 out of 12) with more words devoted to Palestinian sources, 1 feature had more than 3 times as many words.

There was also **an imbalance in terms of pullout quotes, with 15 (60%) from Israelis or pro-Israelis, and 10 (40%) from Palestinians or pro-Palestinians.**

### **Radio 4 6pm news:**

**There were 4 occasions in which Israeli sources were used, compared to just 1 occasion for a Palestinian source.**

## **TERMINOLOGY:**

### **Period of relative calm:**

The attack against settlers on October 16, and the suicide bombing on October 26, were blamed for ending a supposed “period of relative calm” since Israel completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip on September 12. For example, **this phrase was used 4 times Online, 5 times on News 24, and also on the BBC 1 6pm news.**

**It is inaccurate and offensive**, and despite repeated requests to the BBC not to use the phrase, its use continues. In fact, on October 27 correspondent Alan Johnston corrected a BBC presenter who used this term:

“It had been relatively calm in Israel itself, but the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank had been making many, many arrests, several hundred arrests of militants over the recent weeks and a number of militants have been killed ...”

However, even this statement is unsatisfactory because most Palestinians killed in that period were civilians.

Furthermore, we are told of “the first bomb attack in Israel since 28 August”, “the first suicide bombing in two months”, “Wednesday’s death is Israel’s first military fatality in action since the Jewish state pulled out of Gaza,” etc.

This all portrays the Palestinians as breaking the peace and quiet that Israel enjoys, seeks and deserves, when in fact **between August 28 and October 27, 50 Palestinians were killed and 179 injured**, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society:

<http://www.palestinercs.org/Database/Date/df.pl?din=28&moin=08&yin=2005&dout=26&mout=10&yout=2005>

In the same period, just 4 Israelis were killed and 4 wounded in 3 attacks on 2 days in the occupied territories, according to Israel’s Foreign Ministry:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Palestinian+terror+since+2000/Victims%20of%20Palestinian%20Violence%20and%20Terrorism%20since>

Not to mention Israel arresting hundreds of Palestinians, as well as continuing construction of settlements and the barrier.

### **Settlements:**

**This term is used exclusively by the BBC**, but it denotes a benign, even positive activity (ie. settling a land). **An apt term is “Jewish-only colonies,”** which explains that they are reserved solely for Jewish colonisers. “Colonies” is used in French and Spanish.

In fact, UN Special Rapporteur John Dugard – described as the grandfather of international law in South Africa, a former Director of the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law at Cambridge University, and Professor Emeritus of International Law at the University of Leiden – “wonders whether the time has not come for the international community to change its use of language, for settlements do constitute a form of colonization in a world that has outlawed colonialism. The policies of the Western imperial powers were once determined or influenced both at home and abroad by colonial interests. So too with Israel.”

See paragraph 6 of the Report of the Special Rapporteur to the UN Commission on Human Rights, 3 March 2005:

<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/95c495910a99ad3885256fc100678809!OpenDocument>.

### **Militants:**

**This term is used throughout BBC coverage**, particularly with regard to Israeli killings, injuries or arrests, and groups such as Hamas. However, its use needs more thought.

The BBC regards members of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade etc as militants. However, according to an Amnesty International report entitled “Israel and the Occupied Territories: State Assassinations and Other Unlawful Killings” (21 February 2001):

“Israel is prohibited from attacking civilian and civilian objects. Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza are civilians benefiting from the protection of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Armed Palestinians who directly participate in hostilities - for example by shooting at Israeli soldiers or civilians - lose their protected status for the duration of the attack. Article 51 (3) of Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 explains how civilian status can be temporarily lost. ‘Civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Section, unless and for such time as they take direct part in hostilities.’ Palestinians engaged in armed clashes with Israeli forces are not combatants. They are civilians who lose their protected status for the duration of the armed engagement. They cannot be killed at any time other than while they are firing upon or otherwise posing an immediate threat to Israeli troops or civilians. Because they are not combatants, the fact that they participated in an armed attack at an earlier point cannot justify targeting them for death later on.”

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE150052001?open&of=ENG-ISR>

**Thus throughout the monitoring period, Palestinians killed by Israeli troops were wrongly described by the BBC as militants when they were actually civilians, judging from the circumstances of their deaths (eg. military strikes on cars or dwellings).**

Furthermore, **the BBC exclusively described Palestinian factions as militant, but this only describes 1 aspect of their activities**, which include charities, education, healthcare, politics etc. Hamas has a particularly large social welfare infrastructure. For instance, a building reported by Online to have been attacked by Israeli jets was an Islamic Jihad charity, and an arrested Hamas member was a mayoral candidate.

**The inaccurate use of the term “militant” gives audiences the false impression that killing, injuring, arresting or attacking them is justified.**

#### **Targeted killings:**

This is **an Israeli phrase used by the BBC**, for example twice online on November 8. Why no use of the term “assassination” which is used by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, or “extra-judicial executions” which is favoured by B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories?

Furthermore, **to describe the killings as targeted is inaccurate as many Palestinian bystanders have been killed.**

**The BBC has also consistently failed to describe these extrajudicial executions and assassinations as being contrary to international humanitarian and human rights law.** A 1998 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions states:

“International human rights...are very clear: torture, disappearances and extrajudicial executions can never be justified under any circumstances, not even in time of war.”

#### **Terrorism:**

**This term has been used by the BBC regarding the Palestinians without quote marks**, for example twice online (October 20 and 27), implying an acceptance of Israeli accusations and terminology.

**As there is no internationally accepted definition of terrorism, its use should be avoided.** One can argue that terrorism means the wanton killing of civilians, and in this case both sides are guilty (Israel on a much larger scale), but the BBC never accuses Israel of this.

### **Resistance:**

It is welcome that **this term is used** regarding the Palestinians, albeit **only twice** online (October 24 and November 7), as this is a UN-sanctioned national liberation struggle.

On 22 November 1974, the UN General Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) recognised “the right of the Palestinian people to regain its rights by all means in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”

It also urged “all states and international organizations to extend their support to the Palestinian people in its struggle to restore its rights, in accordance with the Charter,” and reaffirmed the “inalienable rights of the Palestinian people” to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty.

More generally, UN General Assembly resolution 3246 (XXIX) of 29 November 1974 calls on “all states to recognize the right to self-determination and independence of all peoples subject to colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation and to offer them moral, material and other forms of assistance in their struggle to exercise fully their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.”

This resolution also reaffirmed “the legitimacy of the people’s struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle.”

### **Promised Land:**

This term is used twice online without quote marks in relation to God supposedly promising the Holy Land to the Jews (October 19 and November 10). **Its use should be discouraged as it implies an acceptance of Israeli claims**, whereas many people say God promised the land to the Arabs too as children of Abraham, many others believe God would not play estate agent, and many others do not believe in God.

In this regard, see “The Right to Expel: The Bible and Ethnic Cleansing” in Naseer Aruri (ed.) *Palestinian Refugees: the Right of Return* (London, Pluto Press, 2001) by the late Father Michael Prior, a well-known authority on the subject and Professor of Biblical Theology at St Mary's College, University of Surrey.

### **Intifada / Palestinian struggle / cause:**

The “intifada”, as well as the Palestinian “struggle” and “cause,” are mentioned several times in the monitoring period, but with **no explanation as to what this is**: an uprising against Israeli occupation, oppression, colonisation, discrimination and dispossession.

The Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (UNGA resolution 2625, XXV, 24 October 1970) provides that states should refrain from using

“any forcible action” to deprive a people with the right to self-determination (such as the Palestinians) from exercising that right.

In fact, in pursuing this right, the Palestinian people “are entitled to seek and to receive support in accordance with the purposes and principles of the [UN] Charter.”

## **LACK OF CONTEXT:**

This study corroborates others that find a **lack of context in coverage of core issues.**

### **Occupation:**

During the monitoring period, **the only BBC outlets to mention the occupation were News 24 and Online** (it was mentioned once on the Radio 4 Today programme but in a House of Commons debate, not by the BBC itself). However, **on News 24 it was only mentioned twice out of 10 days in which the conflict was reported, 1 of those times by an interviewee (Greg Philo), not by the BBC.**

Furthermore, Online had only 5 news items mentioning the occupation, as opposed to 32 that should have but did not. Likewise, Online had only 5 features mentioning the occupation (1 of them by a Palestinian source, another incorrectly saying the occupation of Gaza is over), as opposed to 10 that should have but did not (one of them saying only that the land is “claimed by Palestinians”). Thus **the occupation is mentioned by the BBC in only 13.5% of Online news items and 27% of features.**

Moreover, **throughout the BBC outlets monitored, there was only 1 occasion in which it was made clear that the Israelis were militarily occupying Palestinian land** (Matthew Price, Online). The other few instances failed to include at least 1 of the following components: that the occupation is military, the Israelis are the occupiers, the Palestinians are the occupied, and which lands are occupied.

The reason these components are so important is because the Glasgow University Media Group found that audiences did not know which lands were occupied, who the occupiers and occupied were, and what was meant by the occupation (many assumed it was much like occupying a bathroom). Only 9% of people knew that the Israelis were the occupiers, while 11% thought the Palestinians were the occupiers!

Many instances during the monitoring period talk of Israel “giving up land,” particularly with reference to Yitzhak Rabin’s “legacy” and Ariel Sharon’s Gaza withdrawal, implying incorrectly that it is giving up its own land. As such, an Online item says Israel giving up land to the Palestinians “has become a defining principle in mainstream Israeli politics.”

There was **no mention that the occupation is entering its 4<sup>th</sup> decade, or that international law and UN Security Council resolutions call on Israel to end it.** Israel’s Supreme Court, in August 2005, ruled by a 10-1 majority that the Gaza Strip is not part of Israel. The UN Security Council and General Assembly have consistently stated that East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip are occupied Palestinian territories. Israel’s annexation of Jerusalem and Syria’s Golan Heights are null and void, according to UN Security Council resolutions 476 (1980) on Jerusalem and 497 (1981) on the Golan Heights.

Also, the International Court of Justice (the principal judicial organ of the UN) confirmed that the right of peoples to self-determination is an obligation *erga omnes* (one of the highest obligations under international law which must be protected at all times), which it previously described in the *East Timor* case as “irreproachable.” Israel’s prolonged and belligerent military occupation interferes with this right.

Israel has no title to East Jerusalem, the West Bank or Gaza Strip because, as the US Army Field Manual (The Law of Land Warfare, Department of the Army, July 1956, paragraph 353) notes:

“... sovereignty of the occupied territory is not vested in the occupying power. Occupation is essentially provisional.”

Rather, sovereignty is in abeyance. But it is ultimately vested in the inhabitants of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip; namely, the indigenous Palestinian population. Only when they have liberated themselves from the yoke of occupation may they create their independent, sovereign and viable state.

#### **Settlements:**

Settlements, or colonies, are another major grievance of Palestinians because they are built on their land. Their locations are strategic: on hilltops, surrounding East Jerusalem, cutting the West Bank in half, on prized agricultural land, on precious water aquifers etc.

This makes them illegal under international law (see article 49 (6) of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War; UN Security Council resolutions 446 (1979), 454 (1979) and 465 (1980); and paragraph 120 of the International Court of Justices’s 2004 advisory opinion and paragraph 9 of US Judge Thomas Buergenthal’s Separate Opinion). The ICJ opinion and the judges’ individual opinions are available at:

<http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/idocket/imwp/imwpframe.htm>

Protocol 1 of 1977 to the Fourth Geneva Convention extends the definition of “grave breaches” to include settlement activity, and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court considers it a war crime.

It is internationally agreed that their presence makes a viable Palestinian state impossible, thus breaching the spirit and letter of UN Security Council resolutions 1359, 1515 and the Road Map; the EU’s 2002 Seville Declaration; and the 2001 Report of the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee (the “Mitchell Report Recommendations”).

Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem says the settlements and their network of exclusive roads control almost half the West Bank. See "Land Grab, Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank," May 2002, B'Tselem. For a summary of the report, visit:

[http://www.btselem.org/English/Publications/Summaries/200205\\_Land\\_Grab.asp](http://www.btselem.org/English/Publications/Summaries/200205_Land_Grab.asp).

For the full report (PDF document), visit:

[http://www.btselem.org/Download/200205\\_Land\\_Grab\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.btselem.org/Download/200205_Land_Grab_Eng.pdf)

Moreover, the separation in applicable law and court jurisdiction between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the occupied territories is a form of legal apartheid. Article 2 of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1974 prohibits dividing a population on racial lines for administrative purposes.

On October 19, major media outlets reported Israeli security sources revealing a plan to permanently ban Palestinians from using major roads in the West Bank. Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat said:

"If they go ahead (and make the road system permanent), it is the official introduction of an apartheid system."

For further reading, see B'Tselem's report "Forbidden Roads: Israel's Discriminatory Road Regime in the West Bank" (Jerusalem: August 2004). The full report is at:

[http://www.btselem.org/download/200408\\_Forbidden\\_Roads\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.btselem.org/download/200408_Forbidden_Roads_Eng.pdf)

Apart from 2 out of 6 Online features about settlements mentioning their illegality, none of these facts were mentioned in any BBC coverage of settlements during the monitoring period. This would have been very relevant regarding the October 16 attack on settlers in the West Bank. In fact, of the 9 Online news items referring to settlements, and the several mentions of settlements on News 24, none mentioned these facts.

On top of this **lack of vital background knowledge on this issue**, an Online feature managed to report on the "natural growth" of settlements, which is a myth. The Israeli watchdog Peace Now says there are thousands of empty settlement dwellings, and settlement population growth is mainly due to government economic incentives.

Bear in mind that the Glasgow University Media Group study showed a woeful lack of public knowledge regarding settlements. In fact, there were more people who thought the settlers were Palestinian than those who knew they were Israeli!

### **Refugees:**

**Apart from 1 Online news item (out of 7 relevant news items) and 1 feature (out of 6), there was no background detail on Palestinian refugees, such as why they are**

dispossessed, how long for, how many there are, the conditions in which they live, and their legal rights to repatriation, restitution and compensation which are anchored in 4 separate bodies of international law: the law of nationality as applied upon state succession; humanitarian law; human rights law; and refugee law.

The right of return exists in these 4 bodies of law for all factual cases of involuntary displacement, regardless of the circumstances of displacement. Accordingly, the right of return prohibits any type of deliberate governmental policy designed to block the voluntary return of persons to their homes or origin, including “peaceful” obstructions deliberately barring return after a temporary departure.

See Gail J. Boling, “The 1948 Palestinian Refugees and the Individual Right of Return: An International Law Analysis” (Bethlehem: Badil Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights 2001) available at:

[http://www.badil.org/Publications/Legal\\_Papers/RoR48.pdf](http://www.badil.org/Publications/Legal_Papers/RoR48.pdf)

Such background detail on Palestinian refugee displacement and their legal right to return would have been particularly useful during the monitoring period because of Israeli attacks against refugee camps, because some 80% of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (the subject of much news) are refugees, and because the Glasgow University Media Group study found deep public ignorance about the issue (eg. the belief that they came from Afghanistan).

In fact, **the only mention of their right to return to their homes, villages, towns and cities is in an Online item talking of Israelis being “fearful” of this.**

#### **Barrier:**

Despite Israel’s continuing construction of its barrier on Palestinian land, **the only BBC outlet to mention the barrier was Online, with just 2 news items.** However, even these made **no mention of the International Court of Justice’s opinion** that it is illegal, should be torn down, and compensation should be paid to affected Palestinians. **No mention either of the serious economic and humanitarian hardships it is imposing on Palestinians.**

Instead, the 2 Online items tell us of Israelis’ “love” for the barrier, that “Palestinians see [it] as a land grab,” and that “Israel says its...barrier is needed to stop suicide attacks.”

No mention that **the appropriation of Palestinian land is a fact, not an opinion**, and that Israel has yet to explain why it cannot ensure its citizens’ security by building the barrier on its internationally recognised border. Israeli and international human rights groups have poured scorn on the security reasons given to justify its route, highlighting that it encompasses major settlement blocs, East Jerusalem and water aquifers.

### **Zionism:**

**Zionism is mentioned numerous times** in relation to Iran's comments about wiping Israel off the map (eg. 11 times Online), but **with no mention of what it is**: a racist ideology espousing the idea of a Jewish state which caused the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the destruction of hundreds of their villages, the occupation and colonisation of their land, and the second-class status of Israel's Arab citizens.

What we get instead, for instance, is a feature by Bridget Kendall talking of "the prospect of a new wave of Palestinian attacks that might 'sweep Israel away'," and whether "Palestinians could find a way to co-exist with Israel."

### **Gaza withdrawal:**

Israel's Gaza withdrawal is **portrayed almost unanimously as a positive step**, with phrases such as "hopes for a return to peacemaking in the wake of Israel's withdrawal", "there had been optimism following Israel's pullout", "initial optimism after the Israeli pullout", "many...admire Ariel Sharon for...getting out of the Gaza Strip", "it could yet prove a significant step towards a wider peace deal" etc.

However, **there is a general failure to mention that Gaza is still technically occupied** because Israel (despite the recent deal regarding the Rafah crossing, which Israel still gets to monitor via cameras) controls all access into and out of Gaza (and therefore controls the territorial, sea and air space). The closest we get to this in the monitoring period is an Online item saying:

"Palestinians argued that the Israeli occupation of Gaza would not end until it relinquished exclusive control of the territory's land and sea borders and its airspace."

However this is not just a Palestinian viewpoint, but one shared by international lawyers and human rights organisations. For instance, Human Rights Watch states:

"The disengagement plan provides that Israel is going to maintain the right to re-enter the territory at will, continue to control the borders, the air space, the sea, and all movement of people into and out of Gaza. These are all the characteristics of military control, and if Israel remains in effective military control in Gaza, then it remains an occupying power under law. The only thing that you can really call this is a plan to withdraw Jewish settlers...The Israeli government's plan to remove troops and Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip would not end Israel's occupation of the territory...As an occupying power, Israel will retain responsibility for the welfare of Gaza's civilian population...under international law, the test for determining whether an occupation exists is effective control by a hostile army, not the positioning of troops...Whether the Israeli army is inside Gaza or

redeployed around its periphery and restricting entrance and exit, it remains in control.”

In fact, even an Israeli government study concludes:

“We must be aware that the disengagement does not necessarily exempt Israel from responsibility in the evacuated territories.”

Moreover, the World Bank states:

“The Plan’s assertion that Israel is no longer responsible for the population of Gaza will not resonate. Nor would donors appreciate the implication that they must bear the humanitarian consequences of this style of disengagement.”

The legal test is who has overall authority in Gaza. Since the Israeli army reserves the exclusive right to re-enter the territory whenever it sees fit, it would seem that Israel is the real authority at the end of the day.

According to the authoritative and updated *Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005) produced by the Ministry of Defence for “members of the UK’s Armed Forces and officials within the Ministry of Defence and other departments of Her Majesty’s Government,” the test for determining whether territory is occupied is whether it is “actually placed under the authority of external military forces,” and that occupation exists where that authority exercises effective control over territory.

This would apply where occupying troops operate indirectly through “an existing or newly appointed indigenous government” such as the Palestinian Authority, and even if the control is only temporary; for it is not necessary for Israel to keep troops permanently stationed throughout the Gaza Strip for it to be occupied.

The fact is that troops are available to enforce authority in the area, and the Strip is surrounded and effectively cut off. This is sufficient to determine that Israel exercises effective control. Even a temporarily successful rebellion in part of the area under occupation does not necessarily terminate the occupation, so long as the occupying power takes steps to deal with the rebellion and re-establish its authority, or the area in question is surrounded and cut off.

See the British Manual of Armed Conflict, paragraphs 11.2, 11.3, 11.3.1, 11.3.2 and 11.7.1.

The disengagement plan violates the Oslo Accords which view East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip as 1 territorial unit to be preserved until final-status negotiations. The plan also violates the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination. It is for them

to determine their own destiny, not Israel. The Gaza Strip is not in itself a self-determination unit. According to Article IV of the 1993 Declaration of Principles:

“The two sides view the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period.”

Israel is required by law to withdraw not only from Gaza but also the West Bank. Article XXX1.7 of the 1995 Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza provides:

“Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.”

**Four Online items claim incorrectly that the occupation of Gaza is now over, and of the 38 Online items regarding the withdrawal, only 5 (13%) refer to Israel’s continued control.**

**BBC optimism seems misplaced when one considers the economic implications of this continued control on Palestinians.** According to the World Bank:

“Israel’s Disengagement Plan will have very little impact on the Palestinian economy and Palestinian livelihoods, since it only proposes a limited easing of closure. Indeed, were it accompanied by the sealing of Gaza’s borders to labor and trade or by terminating supplies of water and electricity to Gaza, disengagement would create worse hardship than is seen today...As long as the web of Palestinian economic transactions remains shredded by closures, investors will stay away, and short-term gains will not be sustainable...Disengagement will remove internal movement restrictions in Gaza and in part of the northern West Bank, but Palestinian economic recovery depends on a radical easing of internal closures throughout the West Bank, the opening of Palestinian external borders to commodity trade, and sustaining a reasonable flow of Palestinian labor into Israel.”

Human Rights Watch adds:

“Israel will continue to wield overwhelming power over the territory’s economy and its access to trade.”

**How can the BBC portray the withdrawal as positive when Ariel Sharon and others in his government have consistently said this will allow Israel to strengthen its hold on the West Bank and East Jerusalem? The only time this is mentioned during the monitoring period is in 1 Online item.**

If there is any doubt as to Israel's intentions, consider the following:

“In the unilateral plan, there is no Palestinian state...When you fence areas and communities in the West Bank, you end a lot of their dreams...My plan is tough on the Palestinians. A mortal blow...this entire package that is called the Palestinian state will disappear from our agenda for an unlimited period of time. Settlement is a serious programme that will continue and develop. We will build as much as we need.” – **Ariel Sharon**

“The significance of the plan is the freezing of the peace process...It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that is necessary so there will not be a political process with the Palestinians...When you freeze [the peace] process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and you prevent a discussion on the [Palestinian] refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda.” – **Dov Weisglass, chief advisor to Sharon**

“[The] formula for the parameters of the unilateral solution are: To maximize the number of Jews; minimize the number of Palestinians; not to withdraw to the 1967 border and not to divide Jerusalem.” - **Ehud Olmert, former deputy Israeli prime minister**

“We must take advantage of the exceptional situation that has presented itself to strengthen the settlement blocs.” - **Limor Livnat, Israeli education minister**

“The goal of the disengagement plan is to perpetuate Israeli control in most of the West Bank, and to repel any internal or external pressure for a different political solution. Sharon is consistently trying to realize his vision: Israeli control over the eastern and western slopes of the West Bank, and maintaining traffic corridors along its length and breadth. The Palestinians will be left with seven enclaves connected by special highways for their use. The disengagement plan will facilitate the realization of this vision, at a bargain price from his point of view: He is giving up the Gaza Strip, where 37 percent of the Palestinians live, but whose area is only 1.25 percent of the Land of Israel. Anyone touring the West Bank will have no doubts regarding the hidden agenda of the disengagement plan. Building in the settlements...is proceeding at full speed. About 4,000 housing units are now under construction. When they are populated, the number of settlers in the West Bank will grow by approximately 10 percent.” - **Ephraim Sneh MK, Chair of the Knesset Subcommittee on Defense and Planning**

**It is also never made clear that Gaza was not Israel's to begin with, so withdrawing from it is not a concession but a legal obligation (UN Security Council resolutions 242**

and 338 are binding upon Israel and the international community, stressing the “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war”).

**Instead, audiences are told of the “controversy” surrounding the withdrawal. In fact, the BBC 1 6pm news and Radio 5 Live tell audiences nothing about the ongoing hardships in Gaza.**

**1967 and 1973 wars:**

**These wars are mentioned Online without any background information**, namely that Israel attacked its Arab neighbours in 1967 (quadrupling in size by capturing the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria), and that in 1973 Egypt and Syria attempted to regain their lost lands. Consider the following as evidence:

“To claim that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our borders were capable of threatening Israel’s existence not only insults the intelligence of anyone capable of analysing this kind of situation, but is an insult to the Zahal [the Israeli army].” – **Israeli General Matitahu Peled**, *Maariv*, March 1972

“I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent into Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it.” – **Yitzhak Rabin**, *Le Monde*, February 1968

“We had a choice...We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.” – **former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin**

Furthermore, former Commander of the Air Force General Ezer Weizmann said there was “no threat of destruction,” but the attack was justified so that Israel could “exist according to the scale, spirit and quality she now embodies” (*Ha’aretz*, March 1972).

The Kellogg-Briand Pact and the UN Charter outlawed the use of war as an instrument of national policy. It can only legitimately be used in self-defence or with UN Security Council authorisation. UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 call for a full Israeli withdrawal, not an Arab withdrawal, from occupied territories.

**Hamas:**

Hamas is **described as still formally committed to Israel’s destruction** (3 times Online). There is **no mention, however, that it accepted the Arab peace proposal** which calls for a full peace with Israel in return for a full withdrawal from occupied territory.

The late spokesman Ismail Abu Shanab said in April 2002, before he was assassinated, that Hamas would “cease all military activities” if Israel agreed to the plan. “That would

be satisfactory for all Palestinian military groups to stop and build our state, to be busy in our own affairs, and have good neighborhood with Israelis,” he said, adding that he spoke for his entire organisation.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2002/04/28/MN222422.DTL>

Furthermore, **when reporting Israel’s insistence that Hamas cannot take part in Palestinian parliamentary elections, the BBC fails to mention that this interference is a violation of the principle of self-determination**, which provides that peoples shall freely determine their political status and pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have *freely* chosen.

### **Oslo Accords:**

The Accords are reported by the BBC in the context of Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination. **They are portrayed exclusively as a good thing**, a nostalgic time of peaceful promise.

There is **no detail of its fundamental drawbacks** which ultimately led to its collapse by postponing final-status issues and ensuring that negotiations took place outside the framework of international law. This allowed Israel to continue building settlements in the occupied territories.

In 1999, Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem published a study comparing the human rights situation before and after the Accords, noting that the closure (when Israel shuts off the West Bank and Gaza from Israel completely) is the most encompassing violation of the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, affecting almost every person in many areas of daily life. The report concluded:

“From this perspective, the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories has deteriorated substantially since the signing of the Oslo Accords.”

See “Oslo: Before and After: The Status of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories,” B’Tselem (Jerusalem: May 1999), which is available at:

[http://www.btselem.org/Download/199905\\_Oslo\\_Before\\_and\\_After\\_Eng.doc](http://www.btselem.org/Download/199905_Oslo_Before_and_After_Eng.doc).

Before Oslo, the Palestinian people only suffered from 1 authority (Israel) violating their human rights. During Oslo, they suffered from 2 authorities (Israel and the Palestinian Authority) violating their human rights.

Online says the Accords “led to mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel,” but does not clarify that Israel did not recognise a Palestinian state. **The Accords are also said to be “based on a ‘land for peace’ principle,” without mentioning the fact that the land in question is Palestinian, not Israeli.**

## **PORTRAYALS:**

**The BBC tends to portray Israel as a peace-seeking victim of and responder to Palestinian, Arab and Muslim aggression.**

### **Online:**

It was interesting to see how Online portrayed Palestinians and Israelis through pictures, of which there are more of Israelis than Palestinians.

**Around half the pictures concerning Israel are of Israelis suffering** - whether dead, wounded, helping their wounded or mourning - **as opposed to about a third for Palestinians, even though there were almost 4 times as many Palestinian deaths** during the monitoring period. Furthermore, **half the pictures of suffering Palestinians are from 1 “in pictures” item**, and **most of the mourning Palestinians are angry**, whereas the Israelis are crying.

**The next most common depiction of Palestinians is as militants. Of 8 such pictures, 6 were irrelevant to their articles**, for instance: the killing of an Islamic Jihad leader (when a picture of him would have been more relevant); Hamas saying it will participate in elections; Israel warning against Hamas participating in elections; Israel attacking the Gaza Strip; a Palestinian funeral being held; and Israeli troops killing 3 Palestinians (when the Palestinian dead or mourners would have been more relevant).

**Other irrelevant, inappropriate pictures were used**, for instance: a map when 4 Palestinians were killed; a map and picture of a damaged building when 5 Palestinians were wounded; 2 maps and a picture of wreckage when 8 Palestinians were killed; a map when 2 Palestinians were killed; a picture of Israeli troops arresting an “alleged militant” for an article about a Palestinian boy being shot dead; and a benign picture of an Israeli jet for an article about the UN condemning the humanitarian consequences of causing sonic booms over Gaza. **These should have been opportunities for human pictures.**

**Although 36 Palestinians were killed and 53 injured during the monitoring period, there are no pictures of the wounded, and only 3 pictures with 1 dead Palestinian each.**

**The only depiction of settlements is 2 pictures of pristine buildings, and 1 of a smiling female settler.**

**Online mainly portrayed Israel as responding to Palestinian aggression, ignoring serious Israeli provocations leading up to Palestinian attacks** (refer also to the section on “period of relative calm”).

**Besides 8 occasions where Online reports US and Israeli accusations of the Palestinian Authority not doing enough to stop violence, with no Palestinian viewpoint, consider the following 46 examples in just 1 month:**

“The shootings have broken a period of relative calm in the region since Israeli troops completed their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip on 12 September, says the BBC's Ian Pannel in Jerusalem.” – October 16

“Israeli military officials said that Abu Ghanim was killed when Israeli troops spotted an armed Palestinian during a routine patrol.” – October 16

“Israel has re-imposed a series of restrictions on Palestinians travelling through the West Bank following the killing of three Jewish settlers.” – October 17

“The attacks ended a lull in violence following Israel's Gaza withdrawal.” – October 17

“Large numbers of Israeli troops were sent to the area to hunt down the attackers.” – October 17

“The talks come amid worsening relations between Israel and the Palestinians after an attack on West Bank settlers.” – October 20

“Tensions have increased in the West Bank since the killing of three Jewish settlers in a drive-by attack at a hitchhiking post near the Gush Etzion settlement on Sunday.” – October 21

“In response, Israel re-imposed a series of restrictions on Palestinians travelling through the West Bank.” – October 21

“An Israeli army spokesman said the Palestinians were shot and killed only after the vehicle had come under fire.” – October 21

“Israel denied it was foot-dragging, saying it had legitimate security concerns that needed to be addressed.” – October 24

“Israel responded with fresh air strikes on Palestinian targets in Gaza earlier on Tuesday.” – October 25

“The Israeli shelling came hours after Palestinian militants fired a rocket into the southern Israeli town of Sderot.” – October 26

“Israel responded with air strikes on targets in Gaza, wounding five people and damaging two buildings.” – October 26

“The military said it launched the air strike to prevent further attacks by Palestinian militants.” – October 26

“Israel said it had to address security fears before easing access to Gaza.” – October 26

“Wednesday's attack in Hadera was the first bomb attack in Israel since 28 August...” – October 27

“There has been relative calm since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in August.” – October 27 (twice)

“Israeli PM Ariel Sharon has vowed ‘wide-ranging and ceaseless’ operations against Palestinian militants after the first suicide bombing in two months.” – October 27

The killing of 8 Palestinians and injuring of 15 “came after Islamic Jihad said it was behind Wednesday's suicide bomb attack in Hadera that killed five Israelis.” – October 28

“Israel has promised ‘wide-ranging and ceaseless’ operations after the suicide bombing in Hadera.” – October 28

“Israel has launched missile strikes on Gaza, killing eight Palestinians, hours after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon vowed to retaliate for a suicide bombing.” – October 28

“Israel later fired missiles into an area which the army said was used by militants to launch rockets.” – October 28

“Israel's military said it had carried out an attack on ‘a vehicle carrying a senior Islamic Jihad terrorist who was responsible for several murderous terrorist attacks’.” – October 28

“On Thursday [Sharon] vowed ‘wide-ranging and ceaseless’ operations against Palestinian militants in response to the Hadera bombing.” – October 28

“Israel fired artillery shells into open ground in the Gaza Strip on Saturday after a rocket hit southern Israel, the Israeli military has said.” – October 29

“The raids come after Wednesday's suicide bomb attack in Hadera that killed five Israelis.” – October 29

“The shootings took place in Qabatiya, the home town of a suicide bomber who killed five Israelis on Wednesday.” – October 31

“The Israeli military said its troops opened fire on three militants planting a bomb, killing one.” – October 31

“Nine Palestinians died in Israeli air strikes on Thursday and Friday which the army said were targeting Palestinian militants.” – October 31

“Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz has said Israel’s strikes were aimed at wiping out Islamic Jihad’s ability to carry out suicide bombings.” – October 31

“Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon vowed ‘wide-ranging and ceaseless’ operations against Palestinian militants following the attack.” – November 1

“Israel said it had to address security fears before easing access to Gaza.” – November 1

“Wednesday’s death is Israel’s first military fatality in action since the Jewish state pulled out of Gaza” – November 2

The killing of 2 Palestinians “followed a suicide bomb attack by Islamic Jihad in northern Israel last week.” – November 2

“Correspondents say that recent bloodshed has reduced hopes for a return to peacemaking in the wake of Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in September.” – November 2

“Israel says it will continue its strikes until militants are disarmed.” – November 2

“He is in a critical condition after being shot in the body and head while throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers in the West Bank town of Jenin.” – November 3

“Israeli police confirmed that he had been arrested, but said that he had assaulted a border policeman.” – November 4

“Israel says its 600km (370 mile) barrier is needed to stop suicide attacks.” – November 4

Sharon “said security restrictions in the West Bank would continue, as would Israel’s policy of - as he put it - intercepting members of Hamas.” – November 7

Israel resumed its assassination policy “after six Israelis were killed in a suicide bombing claimed by Islamic Jihad”. – November 8

“Mr Haluz said what Israel calls targeted killings was the most effective weapon to fight Palestinian militants.” – November 8

“For weeks, agreement had been blocked by the Palestinians' demand for full control of the crossings and Israeli security concerns.” – November 15

“Iman al-Hams was shot close to an Israeli watchtower in the southern Gaza town of Rafah when soldiers suspected her of planting a bomb.” – November 15

“Captain R's lawyers, Yoav Meni and Elad Eisenberg, said the practice of ‘verifying the kill’ was often employed by the IDF to eliminate immediate threats.” – November 15

“No explosives or weapon were found on Iman's body, but the Israeli military claimed that she might also have been attempting to draw Israeli soldiers to her in order to allow Palestinian snipers to shoot at the soldiers.” – November 15

#### **Radio 4 Today programme:**

**It is interesting to see how Palestine and Israel are linked with other issues.** For example, an item on George Galloway's alleged embezzlement in the Iraq “oil-for-food” programme made a point that his estranged wife is Palestinian, though her nationality had no bearing on the issue.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's cancelled trip to Iran over its comment about Israel is reported 3 times on November 5, each time juxtaposed with US forces launching attacks supposedly against Al Qaeda in Iraq near the Syrian border. It seems almost as if Iran, Al Qaeda and Syria are lined up against the US, Israel and the UN.

Still on the subject of Iran's comment, on November 11 UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's condemnation precedes a report covering the first anniversary of Yasser Arafat's death.

There is more PR for Israel with the big story of Gordon Brown returning to the UK from Tel Aviv to cast his vote in the Terror Bill. The intertwining of these events just seemed opportunistic, but it is done again when the murder of a Hamas member is followed up with a piece in which an “Israeli expert” is invited to London to speak at a conference on how to deal with terrorism on public transport.

And on the Amman bombings, the correspondent describes the current state of Jordanians' mindset as being “disillusioned” and “confused”, saying: “To get around this confusion they have in their minds was, ‘oh well, you know Israelis are behind it,’ some sort of conspiracy theory.” The correspondent is able to piece his flavoured speculation without a single Jordanian voice, nor any hard corroborating evidence.

## News 24:

**News 24 portrayed Israel as responding to Palestinian aggression 18 times**, giving the impression that Israel's actions are justified. **Palestinians were described as responding just twice.** Following are examples of Israel responding and Palestinians provoking:

“Do we know the motive for this, because things have been relatively quiet there, haven't they, since Israel pulled out?” – October 16

“The Israeli authorities have responded by saying essentially two things. Firstly, this is an indication of the dangers of relaxing control in these areas because it allows freer movement for the militants. Secondly, they say it is an indication that the Palestinian Authority needs to clamp down on the militants and to take further action, and the events that took place today are an indication that so far they are unable to do this.” – October 16

“The measures come a day after Palestinian gunmen killed three Israelis outside a Jewish settlement in the West Bank.” – October 17

“A suicide attack in Israel kills five and ends months of relative calm.” – October 26

“Israel's streets have been relatively calm in recent months.” – October 26

“There have been fewer attacks like this in Israel recently, but now Israel is deciding how to respond.” – October 26

“There had been optimism following Israel's pullout from Gaza. Tonight, that optimism has been dented.” – October 26

“The raid of course coming shortly after Ariel Sharon, the Israeli prime minister, warned that there would be a strong response to that suicide bombing that you might remember yesterday in Hadera that killed five people.” – October 27

“Israel is saying that this was absolutely a targeted response here.” – October 27

“The attack yesterday in Hadera, that came after a period of relative calm.” – October 27

“The Israelis say they had been responding to increased militant activity.” – October 27

“The raid follows a Palestinian suicide attack in the Israeli town of Hadera which killed five people.” – October 27

“The attack was a response to yesterday’s suicide bombing in north Israel in which five Israelis died.” – October 27

“Israel strikes back after yesterday’s suicide bombing.” – October 27

“The two raids followed a suicide bombing earlier this week in which five Israelis died.” – October 28

“Initial optimism after the Israeli pullout from Gaza seven weeks ago is rapidly fading.” – October 28

“On Thursday Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon ordered a broad offensive against militants after a suicide bomber attack killed five people in Hadera.” – October 30

“Israel withdrew from Gaza two months ago but maintained control of its borders for security reasons, it said.” – November 15

Following are the 2 examples of Palestinians portrayed as responding:

“Just this week it buried a senior commander who had been killed by Israeli forces. After his death, Islamic Jihad promised to take revenge.” – October 26

“People here expected that there may well have been some kind of a response from Islamic Jihad, and that did seem to come yesterday in Hadera.” – October 27

#### **Radio 4 6pm news:**

Similarly, **the 1 Palestinian reported killed is said to be in retaliation for the suicide bombing. No Palestinian justification is given for any Israeli deaths or injuries.**

#### **PM programme:**

Generally, **items selected by PM showed a pattern of Israeli victimhood or benevolence, and Muslim/Palestinian aggression.** The reported items were:

October 26 – suicide bomb in Israel

October 28 – Iranian president says Israel should be “wiped off the map”

November 9 – Louise Ellman MP, spokeswoman for Friends of Israel, criticises a poem which describes Hitler’s perspective of the Holocaust.

November 10 – report of terror attacks in Amman states this may be due to Jordanian support for Israel

November 14 – negotiations on opening of Gaza-Egypt border

November 15 – agreement on opening of Gaza-Egypt border

### **BBC 1 6pm news:**

**The same is true of the BBC 1 6pm news.** During the monitoring period, the news items reported are the suicide bombing in Israel (October 26), Iran calling for Israel to be “wiped off the map” (October 28), Gordon Brown visiting Ramallah (November 10) and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin (November 11), which portrayed Israelis as seeking peace. Only the Brown item does not follow the trend of portraying Israel as victim or peace-seeker.

### **Radio 5 Drive:**

**Radio 5 Drive follows this trend of portrayals**, for instance reporting Iran’s comment several times, and claiming that the only 3 Palestinian deaths it reported were militants thought to have been involved in an attack on Israel some months before, thus using an unsubstantiated Israeli justification.

### **Rabin/Arafat/Peres:**

The monitoring period witnessed the anniversaries of the death of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, and **BBC coverage shows differences in the way each is portrayed.**

**Rabin is portrayed exclusively as a peace-seeker**, not as the army chief of staff who oversaw Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem in 1967, or the defence minister who ordered troops to “break their bones” during first intifada, or who in 1948 led a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Palestine. An Online item describes him as advocating “a compromise deal with the Palestinians,” but nothing he proposed belonged to Israel in the first place, so giving back to Palestinians what is theirs can hardly be described as a compromise.

On the other hand, **coverage of Arafat is not so shiny, with references to unchallenged Israeli accusations of him being “an obstacle to peace.”** No mention of the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, or of Palestinian accusations that he was poisoned by Israel. No reference to the fact that he was besieged in his battered compound for years by Israeli troops, unable to leave and without even basic necessities.

An Online feature says that Shimon Peres, currently Israel's deputy prime minister, "was the pipe-dreamer who unwittingly helped touch off this decade's violence by choosing to waltz with Yasser Arafat." More glowing coverage of another Israeli politician with a dark military and political past, as the feature adds that Peres "stubbornly envisioned" a "peaceful and prosperous Middle East."

## **LACK OF COVERAGE:**

**With the exception of BBC Online**, and to a lesser extent the Radio 4 Today programme, **there was a general lack of coverage**, as evidenced by the figures at the beginning of this report, and the fact that there was relevant news everyday that was not reported.

Following are tables of deaths and injuries on both sides, as well as arrests of Palestinians, which the BBC did and did not report.

**Deaths, injuries and arrests** (figures from BBC, AFP and Aljazeera):

	Pal deaths reported		Named/aged		Pal deaths unreported
Online:	22	(61%)	8	(36%)	14
News 24 8 – 9pm:	10	(28%)	0		26
BBC 1 10pm news:	8	(22%)	0		28
BBC 1 6pm news:	1	(3%)			34
PM programme:	1	(3%)			35
Radio 4 6pm news:	1	(3%)	0		35
Radio 5 Drive:	3	(8%)			33
Radio 4 Today:	8	(22%)	1	(13%)	28

	Pal injuries reported		Named/aged		Pal injuries unreported
Online:	20	(38%)	0		33
News 24 8 – 9pm:	15	(28%)	0		38
BBC 1 10pm news:	0		0		53
BBC 1 6pm news:	0		0		53
PM programme:	0		0		53
Radio 4 6pm news:	0		0		53
Radio 5 Drive:	0		0		53
Radio 4 Today	15	(28%)	0		38

	Pal arrests reported		Named/aged		Pal arrests unreported
Online:	41	(26%)	1	(2%, Israeli citizen)	at least 119
News 24 8 – 9pm:	0		0		at least 160
BBC 1 10pm news:	0		0		at least 161
BBC 1 6pm news:	0		0		at least 154
PM programme:	0		0		at least 159
Radio 4 6pm news:	0		0		at least 160
Radio 5 Drive:	0		0		at least 159
Radio 4 Today	0		0		at least 160

	Israel dead reported		Named/aged		Israel dead unreported
Online:	9	(90%)	3	(33%)	1
News 24 8 – 9pm:	8	(80%)	0		2
BBC 1 10pm news:	5	(50%)	0		5
PM programme:	5	(50%)	0		5
Radio 4 6pm news:	8	(80%)	0		2
Radio 4 Today:	5	(50%)	0		5

	Israel injured reported		Named/aged		Israel injured unreported
Online:	36	(61%)	0		23
News 24 8 – 9pm:	34	(58%)	0		25
BBC 1 10pm news:	20	(34%)	0		39
PM programme:	28	(47%)	0		31
Radio 4 6pm news:	“dozens”		0		
Radio 4 Today:	20	(34%)	0		39

As is clearly evident from the figures, **Israeli deaths (50-90%) and injuries (34–61%) are reported with more frequency by all the monitored BBC news outlets than Palestinian deaths (3-61%) and injuries (0-38%), even though there were almost 4 times as many Palestinian deaths.**

Online did the best in this regard, with 61% of Palestinian deaths (the only outlet which reported a majority i.e. above 50%), 38% of injuries and 26% of arrests, but these figures fall well short of Online's coverage of Israeli deaths (90%) and injuries (61%).

**The BBC 1 6pm news, the PM programme and Radio 4 6pm news failed to mention 97% of Palestinian deaths and 100% of the 53 injuries. The BBC 10pm news and Radio 5 Drive did only slightly better, with the former failing to mention 78% of Palestinian deaths and the latter 92%. Neither of them mentioned that any Palestinians had been injured (when 53 had been).**

**The arrests of at least 160 Palestinians were not reported at all by any of the major news broadcasters apart from Online, and the only person arrested who was named was an Israeli citizen.**

Figures for the names and ages of those killed and injured were similar for Israelis and Palestinians, but there were more Palestinian casualties.

**Regarding Online, 18% of reported Palestinian deaths (4 out of 22), 25% of reported Palestinian injuries (5 out of 20) and 46% of reported arrests of Palestinians (19 out of 41) were not the subject of the article in which they were mentioned.**

**Fatality and injury figures for both sides used to be included in Online articles, but now they are provided separately, and are not very easy to navigate. Plus, figures are taken from Israeli organisation B'Tselem, while figures from Palestinian organisations are higher.**

**As well as News 24 reporting 80% of Israeli deaths and 58% of Israeli injuries as opposed to 28% of Palestinian deaths and 28% of Palestinian injuries, it devoted almost 5 times more time to Israeli deaths and injuries (405 seconds, as opposed to 85 seconds for Palestinian deaths and injuries).** Furthermore, correspondent Alan Johnston mentions Israel “making many, many arrests” in passing whilst addressing a question asked by the presenter regarding the suicide bombing in Hadera on October 27. This is the only time arrests are mentioned during the monitoring period, and no specific instances are reported.

**The same is true of the BBC 1 10pm news.** On top of reporting just 22% of Palestinian deaths and no injuries or arrests (as opposed to 50% of Israeli deaths and 34% of injuries), it gave less than a minute to the 8 Palestinian deaths it reported (7 of them were reported at the end of the news broadcast, and the other was reported days after it happened in a report about the suicide bombing). In contrast, it covered the suicide bombing (which was deemed headline news) in significant detail, even though there were more killed in the Israeli attack than the suicide bombing.

**There was also considerably more emphasis on Israeli deaths and injuries than Palestinian on the Radio 4 6pm news.** On top of reporting 80% of Israeli deaths and “dozens” of injuries (as opposed to 3% of Palestinian deaths and no injuries or arrests), it failed to state that 3 of the Israelis killed in 1 attack (around a third of the total) were settlers, or that they were illegally on occupied Palestinian territory.

**The only Palestinian death reported by the PM programme was mentioned briefly days after it occurred, in a report that was mainly about the suicide bomb in Israel.**

**The same is true of the BBC 1 6pm news,** in which the only Palestinian death reported by the PM programme was mentioned briefly days after it occurred, in a report about the suicide bomb.

The 3 Palestinian deaths reported by Radio 5 Drive were mentioned only briefly on October 28 and November 1.

**Iran’s comments:**

**Though Iran’s comment (October 27) about “wiping Israel off the map” was widely reported, there was a curious and total failure to report Iran’s accusation of Israel “suppressing the Palestinian nation.”**

Furthermore, **the statement by Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz that “I don't think that a Palestinian state will see the light of day in the coming years” is not**

mentioned at all by the BBC apart from Online, in passing, at the very end of one article and the 8<sup>th</sup> paragraph of another. How is wiping one country off the map worse than keeping another country off it?

**Rabin/Arafat:**

**In the same week we had the anniversaries of the death of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, both important and popular leaders among their respective peoples. However, there was a considerable imbalance in the amount of coverage the BBC gave each event.**

For instance, the BBC 1 6pm news and News 24 reported Rabin's anniversary (6 minutes on News 24) but not Arafat's. BBC Online had 7 items on Rabin, but just 3 on Arafat. Likewise, the website devoted 2,763 words to Rabin, but 7 times fewer words (413) to Arafat.

**Missed news:**

**Following is a list of news items BBC Online did not report** (as compared with AFP and Aljazeera). **As it had by far the most coverage, one can imagine how much more the other outlets missed out:**

#### **Arab peace efforts**

October 15 - The Palestinian Authority says it foiled last month 17 attempts to mount attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip. It also "found 75 explosive devices, confiscated 15 Qassam rockets," and "foiled seven attempts to smuggle arms to Rafah."

October 16 - Jordan's King Abdullah II pledges support to efforts by the Palestinian leadership to spread its control over the Gaza Strip and resume peace talks with Israel.

October 18 - Egypt's ambassador to Israel plays down fears that a truce agreement among the Palestinian factions brokered in Cairo is on the brink of collapse.

October 19 - The foreign ministers of Russia and Egypt call for "more active" assistance to the Palestinians.

October 20 - George Bush does not second Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's call for an immediate resumption of talks under the Road Map.

October 20 - "We hope that during the three years that President Bush remains in office, we will find a resolution with the Israeli side with his support," says Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Shaath.

October 23 - The PA says it is looking to incorporate the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade into the official security services.

October 27 - Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak urges Israel to take moves to strengthen Abbas and renew dialogue with him as soon as possible.

October 29 - PA spokesman Nabil Abu Rdainah urges the US “to work with the Israeli side for a ceasefire and to halt Israeli air strikes immediately in order to maintain the calm.”

October 31 - Interior Ministry spokesman Tawfiq Abu Khussa says Palestinian security forces are working daily to stop rocket attacks but that “continued Israeli attacks are complicating the situation.”

October 31 - The head of an umbrella grouping of Palestinian factions announces that all groups decide to return to a de facto truce and urge the international community to stop Israeli aggression.

October 31 - A statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council’s secretariat urges “the international community, the quartet and the UN Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities and intervene immediately to halt the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.”

November 3 - Hamas leader Mahmud Zahar says his movement will only renew an informal truce at the year-end if Israel stops all aggression, assassinations and confiscation of Palestinian land, and releases Palestinian prisoners.

November 3 - Abbas demands an end to clashes and appeals for calm.

November 6 - Only 1 in 5 Qassam rockets fired by Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip reaches Israeli territory, Israeli military sources say.

November 9 - Zahar says he does not rule out future negotiations between Hamas and Israel.

November 9 - Zahar calls on Israel to withdraw from the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem for its own “dignity” and “to give the Palestinians a chance to live as human beings.”

November 12 - Arab foreign ministers insist progress on reform is difficult, if not impossible, without a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

November 13 - Palestinian security forces foil 48 attempted attacks against Israel last in October because “100% effort” is being made, according to Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei.

### **Travel restrictions**

October 16 - Israel says it will ban private Palestinian cars from intercity roads in the West Bank and encircle Palestinian towns and villages.

October 16 - The Israeli army seals off the West Bank village of Kufr Kalil.

October 17 - Israeli restrictions in the West Bank are condemned by Palestinian officials, including Qorei and Planning Minister Ghassan Khatib. Even former Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin, who heads the Meretz political party, condemns his government's actions.

October 19 - Israel considers a permanent ban on Palestinians using major roads in the West Bank, drawing Palestinian condemnation of the idea as a form of apartheid.

October 20 - Abbas says Israeli travel restrictions have "turned the lives of Palestinians into hardship, suffering, humiliation."

October 23 - Qorei warns Israel that its restrictions on West Bank roads are undermining the peace process after he is stopped for 45 minutes at a checkpoint.

November 1 - The PA appeals to the international community to force Israel to stop carving up the West Bank into enclosures, enclaves and Bantustans.

November 1 - The Israeli army installs a major checkpoint at the Zaatra Junction, south of Nablus, which Palestinians say effectively cut off the northern parts of the West Bank from the rest of the occupied region. The Israeli army says the new checkpoint, which has an infrastructure befitting a border crossing, is part of a "central command plan for reshaping the area."

November 1 - Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* quotes an unnamed "diplomatic source" as saying new checkpoints are part of a big picture of creating three enclaves in the West Bank. If true, any prospective Palestinian entity on the West Bank would be made up of disconnected enclaves or Bantustans, surrounded by Israeli settlements.

### **Settlements**

October 16 - Heavily armed settlers storm the Palestinian village of Bait Furik, attack a house and destroy a car. They attack the village despite the Israeli military presence and a checkpoint manned by the army at the entrance to the village.

October 16 - Settlers set ablaze 300 dunams (75 acres) of olive groves and wheat fields belonging to Palestinian farmers from Salem village.

October 26 - Six new settlements are being set up in the West Bank.

October 31 - Ariel Sharon vows to develop Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Golan Heights.

October 31 - “We are asking the international community to pressure Israel to stop all violations, aggression and settlement activity,” says Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat. “Final status negotiations are the only way. Peace and settlement activity are incompatible.”

November 4 - Plans to build a settlement in Arab East Jerusalem win initial authorisation from a city council committee.

November 9 - A senior aide to Israel’s defence minister resigns after coming under heavy criticism in an official report that accused him of working to further the process of “legalising” outposts on occupied Palestinian territory by connecting them to the electricity grid, the water mains or sewage system.

November 13 - Palestinian Foreign Minister Nasser al-Qidwa warns there is no chance for peace unless Israel halts settlement activity.

November 14 - New Labour leader Amir Peretz proposes a law that encourages Jewish settlers to leave the West Bank.

### **Palestinian state**

October 20 - Bush rejects calls for a timetable for Middle East peace, and says a Palestinian state might not come about before he leaves office in January 2009.

October 21 - Hamas slams Bush for dropping any concept of a fixed timetable for the creation of a Palestinian state.

October 21 - Abbas says an independent Palestinian state can be ready by the end of Bush’s term in January 2009.

October 23 - The Palestinian information minister says Bush's refusal to designate a timetable for the creation of a Palestinian state is generating uncertainty over the fate of the peace process known as the “road map.”

November 15 - Abbas says a Palestinian state is “inevitable” despite Israeli intransigence and attempts to divide up and control Palestinian land.

### **Palestinian elections**

October 18 - 12 Palestinian political factions sign a code of conduct to guide them through legislative elections.

October 19 - Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom says his country “will do everything to try to prevent Hamas from participating” in Palestinian legislative polls.

October 21 - Abbas says he convinced the US to accept the participation of Hamas in Palestinian elections.

### **Israeli rejection of peace efforts**

October 17 - Israel’s decision to freeze contacts with the PA is condemned by Palestinian officials, including Qorei and Khatib. Even former Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin, who heads the Meretz political party, condemns his government’s actions.

October 23 - Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres rejects a call by Abbas for an alternative negotiation channel, similar to the secret talks that led to the Oslo peace accords.

October 29 - Peres criticises his country's failure to hold talks with Palestinian leaders.

October 31 - An Israeli official says any declaration of a ceasefire by fighters is “an agreement that does not concern Israel” and a “domestic Palestinian matter.”

October 31 - Sharon says there will be no peace until Palestinian militants are disarmed.

October 31 - Israel vows to continue its offensive against militants.

November 1 - Hamas says Israel “started a war” with its killing of Hamas and Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades commanders.

November 1 - PA officials accuse Israel of seeking to kill the US-backed road map peace plan.

November 10 - Abbas questions Israel’s desire for peace.

November 10 - US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says she will press Israel to make new peace gestures.

November 11 - Erekat accuses Israel of attempting to bypass the peace process by being unilateralist.

November 12 - Bill Clinton warns Israelis against unilateralism regarding the Palestinians.

November 12 - Qorei says Israel is no longer a partner for peace.

## **Protests**

October 18 - An IDF spokesman admits to *Haaretz* that undercover Israeli troops disguised as Palestinians had thrown stones at Israeli soldiers during the weekly protest demonstrations against the barrier in the West Bank village of Bil'in on various occasions.

October 23 - The Israeli security forces begin to fire tightly packed mini-bean bags at protestors demonstrating against the West Bank barrier, injuring demonstrators and being possibly fatal, *Haaretz* reports.

October 29 - Hundreds of protestors demonstrate in Berlin against Israel's occupation of Jerusalem.

## **Gaza Strip**

October 19 - Gaza Strip farmers renovate more than two-thirds of the greenhouses left behind after Israel's withdrawal, creating jobs for some 2,500 agricultural workers. Farmers also plant some 1,502 dunams (15 hectares) of export-quality crops.

October 20 - The PA denies a claim by Israel's military intelligence chief that an Al-Qaeda cell has infiltrated the Gaza Strip through breaches in the territory's border with Egypt.

October 29 - Israeli warplanes create sonic booms over the Gaza Strip.

November 1 - Khatib says Israeli demands concerning the Rafah crossing are making it "difficult to be optimistic".

November 1 - Commenting on the Rafah-crossing deal, Nigel Roberts, World Bank director for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, says "what's really important in terms of economic stability and growth is the crossings with Israel, that's what matters the most. That's where virtually all the freight gets transacted at the moment."

November 2 - Israeli forces fire artillery at the Gaza Strip.

November 7 - Palestinian Cabinet Minister Muhammad Dahlan accuses Israel of trying to maintain a presence in Gaza despite its withdrawal.

November 11 - Israeli gunners shell north Gaza.

November 13 - Israel's top law officer OKs the air force's use of sonic booms over the Gaza Strip, despite objections from human rights groups.

November 13 - Palestinians call for an urgent deal to reopen the Gaza-Egypt border.

November 15 - Hamas says the deal on Gaza border crossings is a “violation of Palestinian sovereignty” because of its control by “guardian countries.”

### **Barrier**

October 20 - Abbas criticises Israel’s construction of the barrier.

October 31 - Sharon vows to continue building the West Bank barrier “with all our energy.”

November 13 - Al-Qidwa warns there is no chance for peace unless Israel halts barrier construction.

### **Prisoners**

October 20 - Abbas urges the release of Palestinian prisoners.

October 31 - Israel says it will step up its arrest activities.

### **Jerusalem**

October 21 - A group of around 70 ultranationalist Israelis claim to have prayed at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem’s Old City, despite the site being off-limits to Israeli Jews, the *Maariv* daily reports. The group say Israeli police turned a blind eye.

October 28 - Israeli police use water cannon and sound grenades to disperse hundreds of Palestinians trying to head towards prayers at the al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem.

November 8 - Israeli authorities demolish a Palestinian house in East Jerusalem with all its furniture inside, and its occupants and neighbours are beaten.

November 12 - Qorei sharply criticises its policies in annexed East Jerusalem.

### **Funerals**

October 31 - Thousands of Palestinians attend the funeral of the latest Palestinians killed by Israeli troops.

November 6 - Thousands attend the funeral in Jenin of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy shot dead by Israeli troops.

### **Palestinian condemnation of Israeli killings**

October 31 - The PA condemns Israel’s latest killings.

November 8 - Abu Rudeina condemns Israel's assassinations policy and calls on the US to pressure Israel to stop.

### **Invasions**

November 12 - Israeli troops invade Jenin.

### **Palestinian economy**

November 10 - Gordon Brown discusses ways to regenerate the battered Palestinian economy.

November 13 - Dahlan accuses Israel of "suffocating" the Palestinian economy.

### **Land appropriation**

November 15 - The governor of Bethlehem accuses Israel of appropriating hundreds of hectares of Palestinian land around his West Bank town to enlarge the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem by erecting a new crossing. At least 8 Palestinian homes are marooned on the Israeli side.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCESS:**

There are problems with the complaints process which put people off using it. Firstly, often **one will take time to write a considered, rational, factual complaint, only to receive a generic response that does not actually deal with it:**

“The BBC appreciates the comments you have made...may I assure you that the BBC is committed to impartiality and we are careful how this is maintained...I recognise your concerns and assure you that they have been registered on our daily log.”

Secondly, **AMW has been told by individuals of incidents where there is a small error in their initial complaint, so the BBC points out the error and does not answer the other parts of the complaint satisfactorily.**

Thirdly, **when errors are corrected, they often reappear.** One regular example, in our experience, is the total number of settlers. The BBC often gives a figure of 200,000, ignoring the 200,000 settlers in East Jerusalem. When we point this out, the BBC acknowledges the error, corrects it to 400,000, only for it to reappear.

Fourthly, our experience is that **when one makes a complaint brief (eg. about a particular part of a programme), we are told that the rest of it is fair. Likewise, when the complaint involves an entire programme, we are told that the wider picture is fair, or that other such programmes provide balance. When one writes with further information to support the original complaint, or to highlight wider bias, we are told the BBC cannot deal with long queries or in-depth studies because of its duty to the licence payer.** Eventually, the cost and time of answering queries is cited as a reason for not answering them at all.

The pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli lobbies inevitably generate a great deal of work for the BBC complaints section. However, **if the BBC used a framework of international law and British Foreign and Commonwealth Office positions, applying this equally to both parties, then this would be impartial.**

Instead, **currently the BBC seems to judge impartiality as trying not to offend either lobby. As the pro-Israel lobby is better organised and has more influence due to a variety of factors, they are in a better position to pressure the BBC.**

## **CORRESPONDENTS' LOCATION:**

**The vast majority of BBC correspondents covering the conflict are based in West Jerusalem**, with a few recently in the Gaza Strip. Since the removal of Barbara Plett, **there are no correspondents in the West Bank**. This has been confirmed by our monitoring, and by contacts with BBC officials and reporters.

Even when Plett was based in the West Bank, there were still far too few correspondents in the occupied territories (especially vis-à-vis the numbers living in Israel), but to have a situation now whereby there is not a single correspondent in the West Bank is baffling.

In fact, **there should be more BBC correspondents spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza than in Israel because, for the most part, this is where the story is**. Also, it is difficult for journalists to move within those areas due to travel restrictions imposed by the Israeli military, and these difficulties could be avoided if they were based there. There are no such travel restrictions in Israel.

How can one cover the conflict effectively when one is not in the middle of it (bear in mind that the vast majority of conflict-related activity on the ground happens in the occupied territories, in particular the West Bank, not Israel)? **How can a correspondent truly appreciate the hardships Palestinians face under occupation, when they do not experience it themselves?** Travelling from Israel to the scene of a news story in the West Bank is wholly unsatisfactory, because the reporter only gets a snapshot of what has happened, not the prelude or aftermath.

Instead, **correspondents live among and like Israelis, and may well relate to them more and feel detached from what is happening in the occupied territories**. The fact that Plett lived among and like Palestinians showed in her coverage, as it was more in-depth, contextual and informative.

## **UNCHALLENGED CLAIMS:**

**BBC coverage is replete with unchallenged claims, particularly Israeli claims with an unreported Palestinian viewpoint or version of events.** This section deals with unchallenged claims in Online coverage, but it is indicative of the other monitored outlets. There are at least 34 unchallenged claims in this 1-month monitoring period.

For instance, **there are 8 occasions where Online reports US and Israeli accusations of the Palestinian Authority not doing enough to stop violence** - October 16, 17, 20, 21, 27 (twice), November 2 and 7 - **with no Palestinian viewpoint.** There is significant evidence that the PA is acting against militants, sometimes by force (particularly in the Gaza Strip), something acknowledged by the US and Israel. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has been a longtime, vocal critic of armed Palestinian resistance. There is no mention of Israeli attacks against PA infrastructures and civilians, Israeli control over most of the Palestinian territories (and overall security responsibility as an Occupying Power), Palestinian fears of civil war if disarmament is carried out by force rather than negotiation, and a people's legally recognised right to resist foreign occupation.

**There are 9 occasions in which the Israeli version of events is used concerning the killing of Palestinians, while there is a differing Palestinian version of events which goes unreported.**

**There are 4 occasions in which Online allows Israeli sources to misrepresent the status of Jerusalem.** There are 2 occasions on November 9 when former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Jerusalem is "our capital," and 2 occasions on November 11 when an Israeli source talks of the city's "unity."

No mention that East Jerusalem is considered by the international community and under international law to be occupied Palestinian territory, whose annexation by Israel has never been recognised. In fact, President George H.W. Bush, as US Ambassador to the UN, supported Security Council resolution 298 (1971) which confirmed "in the clearest possible terms that all legislative and administrative actions taken by Israel to change the status of the City of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties, transfer of populations and legislation aimed at the incorporation of the occupied section, are totally invalid and cannot change that status."

Furthermore, even West Jerusalem is not considered by the international community to be Israel's capital. As such, embassies are based in Tel Aviv.

**Following is a list of unchallenged claims online with an unreported Palestinian version or viewpoint:**

October 16 – Israelis say an Islamic Jihad leader is killed in a "shootout," but Palestinian witnesses say he is killed while driving.

October 17 – Israelis say Hamas is involved in the attack on settlers, but Hamas says it is committed to the ceasefire.

October 17 – the article says the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claims responsibility for the settler attack, but the group denies this.

October 17 – Israelis say an Islamic Jihad leader is killed in a “shootout,” but Palestinian witnesses say he is killed while driving.

October 19 – the article says there is “nothing to prevent infiltrators or arms smugglers walking, swimming or taking a boat across the [Gaza] border,” but this is untrue as Israel controls and patrols Gaza’s seaspace.

October 21 – the article talks of “lawlessness in towns and cities handed back to Palestinian police control by Israel earlier this year,” but there is no mention of Israel’s role in this in terms of attacking Palestinian Authority infrastructures.

October 21 – Israelis say a Palestinian is killed while throwing a firebomb, but Palestinians say he was throwing stones.

October 25 – Israelis say an Islamic Jihad leader is killed in a “shootout,” but his house was surrounded by Israeli troops, so it was not like he was looking for trouble.

October 25 – the article says Israeli missiles “responded” to Islamic Jihad rockets by damaging a Fatah building, but there is no mention that the two groups are totally unrelated.

October 25 – the article reports that “Israel had blamed Saadi for masterminding recent bomb attacks that had killed several people,” and “the Israelis say that the buildings [attacked] were both linked to what they called terrorist activity.” No attempt to get Palestinian responses to these allegations.

October 26 – the article mentions Israel damaging two buildings in response to Islamic Jihad firing rockets into Israel, and “to prevent further attacks by Palestinian militants.” No mention that one of the buildings housed a charity, and the other belonged to Fatah, which has no connection to Islamic Jihad.

October 28 – the article says “Israel later fired missiles into an area which the army said was used by militants to launch rockets.” No attempt at a Palestinian response to this allegation.

October 28 – the article says “Israel’s military said it had carried out an attack on “a vehicle carrying a senior Islamic Jihad terrorist who was responsible for several murderous terrorist attacks’.” No attempt at an Islamic Jihad response to this allegation.

October 28 – the article says “Luay Saadi [was] a man whom the Israelis accused of masterminding suicide attacks.” No attempt at a response from Islamic Jihad, the organisation he belonged to.

October 29 – the article reports Israel saying it attacked the Gaza Strip because a rocket landed in Israel, but there is no confirmation from Palestinians.

October 29 – the article takes Israel’s claim that it hit open land at face value, but Aljazeera reports Palestinian witnesses and security forces saying several bombs fell near homes and police stations.

October 31 – the article says “nine Palestinians died in Israeli air strikes on Thursday and Friday which the army said were targeting Palestinian militants,” and “Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz has said Israel’s strikes were aimed at wiping out Islamic Jihad’s ability to carry out suicide bombings.” However, Israel’s strikes killed women and children, targeted other Palestinian factions such as Fatah, and damaged civilian infrastructure such as electricity, roads and sewage.

November 1 – the article says Israeli soldiers killed 3 Islamic Jihad members “in a shootout,” but the house they were in was surrounded by Israeli troops, so it was not like he was looking for trouble either.

November 3 – the article says a boy was shot while throwing “rocks” at Israeli soldiers.

November 3 – the article says Israel “has also continued to carry out air raids against what it says are militant targets,” but there is no mention of targets hit that have not been militant, such as civilians, a charity, power lines, roads and sewage.

November 4 – the article says “Israel says its 600km (370 mile) barrier is needed to stop suicide attacks,” but there is no counter to this spurious argument. After all, Israel has yet to provide a good reason why its security can’t be guaranteed by building the barrier on its internationally recognized border.

November 4 – the article has an Israeli source talking of “a Jewish, democratic, independent state,” but there is no mention of the hypocrisy and incompatibility of having a theocracy claiming to be democratic. Israel’s electoral law, contained on the Knesset website, states that for an Arab party to be allowed to run in elections, it has to accept Israel as a Jewish state, rather than a state of its citizens. How is this democratic?

November 8 – the article says Israel resumed its assassination policy “after six Israelis were killed in a suicide bombing claimed by Islamic Jihad,” but the assassination policy preceded the bombing. The BBC itself reported Islamic Jihad saying it was acting to avenge one of its leaders who was assassinated days beforehand.

November 8 – the article claims a boy was shot while throwing stones at Israeli soldiers, but other respected news outlets do not report this.

November 9 – the article mentions the “natural growth” of settlements, but Israeli watchdog Peace Now says there are thousands of empty settlement dwellings, and settlement population growth is mainly due to government economic incentives.