



Arab Media Watch
for objective British coverage of Arab issues

Monitoring Study:

British Media Coverage of Israeli Settlements

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Introduction

The issue of Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territory has long been a serious obstacle to peace, leaving Palestinians with a fragmented, non-viable, non-contiguous homeland. Despite full knowledge of this, global opposition and international law, Israeli settlements continue to expand, causing deep concern among Palestinians and observers worldwide over their detrimental effects.

Peace Now, an Israeli NGO, reported in August 2008 that the construction of settlements in the occupied West Bank in the first seven months of 2008 has nearly doubled since 2007. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

This Arab Media Watch study contains two parts. The first analyses the way settlements are reported in the British national press (using Lexis Nexis, excluding the Financial Times and Daily Express) during three months: 1 April - 1 July 2008. AMW established five criteria by which to judge news coverage, namely whether articles mention that settlements are:

- illegal
- built on occupied land
- built on Palestinian land
- in contravention of the peace process
- placed in context (eg number of settlements, settlers, effect on residents etc)

The second part is an analysis of how settlements are discussed in commentaries and editorials. One of the most commonly cited concerns in such pieces about settlements is that they are a serious obstacle to peace.

This point is not borne out by how they are reported in news articles. On the whole, news coverage of settlements only partially conveys the full import of their presence in the occupied Palestinian territories; almost half of the relevant articles contain no mention of any of the above criteria, and the majority of criteria occur in just one newspaper - the Guardian.

Furthermore, the majority of newspapers do not mention settlements at all: most of the Sundays do not, and the Daily Mail is the only tabloid to do so.

SECTION 1

Statistical Analysis of News Articles

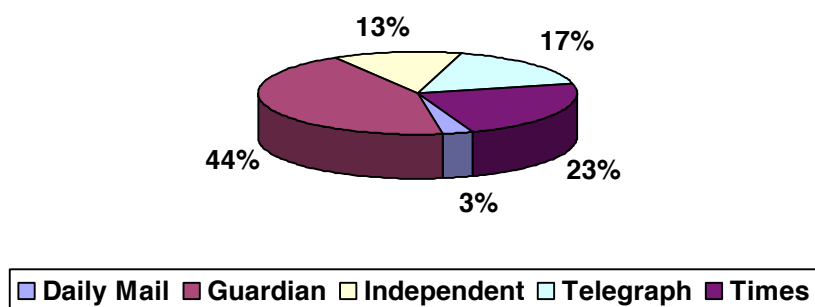
This section contains a summary analysis of the findings, incorporating individual newspaper totals and individual criteria breakdown, followed by individual newspaper breakdowns. The individual newspaper totals are as follows:

Paper	Total Articles	Illegality	Occupation	Palestinian Land	Peace Process	Context
Daily Mail	1	0	0	0	0	0
Guardian	13	3	3	1	4	3
Independent	4	0	1	0	0	0
Telegraph	5	1	2	0	0	1
Times	7	0	2	1	0	2
Total	30	4	8	2	4	6

Newspapers

- Of the 18 newspapers monitored, only five (28%) mention settlements in news articles. The Guardian accounts for almost half the articles, followed by the Times with almost a quarter.

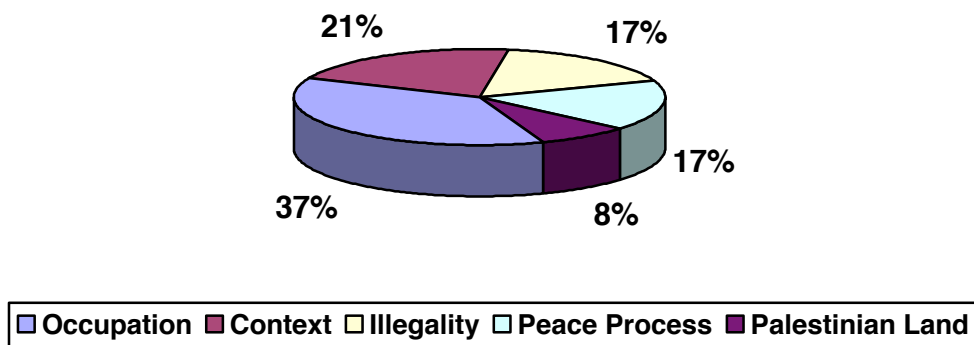
Chart showing distribution of articles (%) by newspaper



Criteria

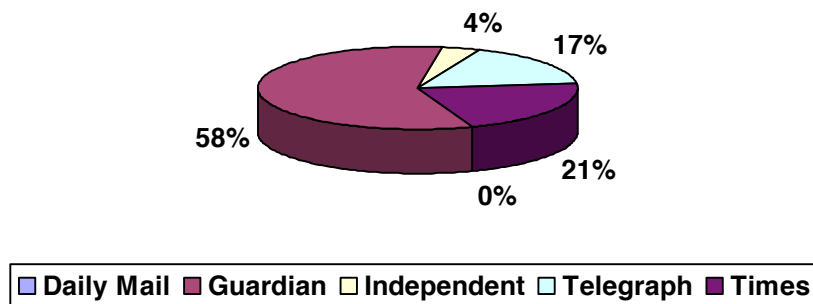
- Of the 30 articles, 14 (47%) do not mention any of the criteria.
- The most frequently mentioned criteria is 'occupation,' though it is only brought up in 30% of articles.
- The least frequently mentioned criteria is 'Palestinian land,' brought up in just 7% of articles, and only by the Times and Guardian.

Chart showing most commonly mentioned criteria (%)



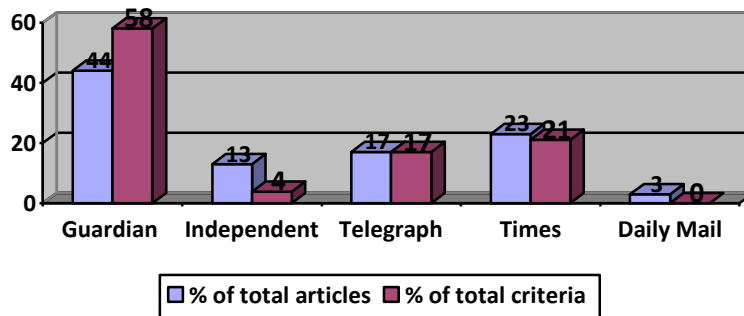
- Of the 30 total articles and 24 total mentions of the criteria, the Guardian accounts for 13 (44%) and 14 (58%) respectively, of which contravention of the peace process is most frequently mentioned (four times).
- The Guardian is the only newspaper to include all the criteria in its coverage, and the only one to refer to settlements violating the peace process, though all such references are from just one journalist, Rory McCarthy.

Chart showing distribution of mentions (%) by newspaper



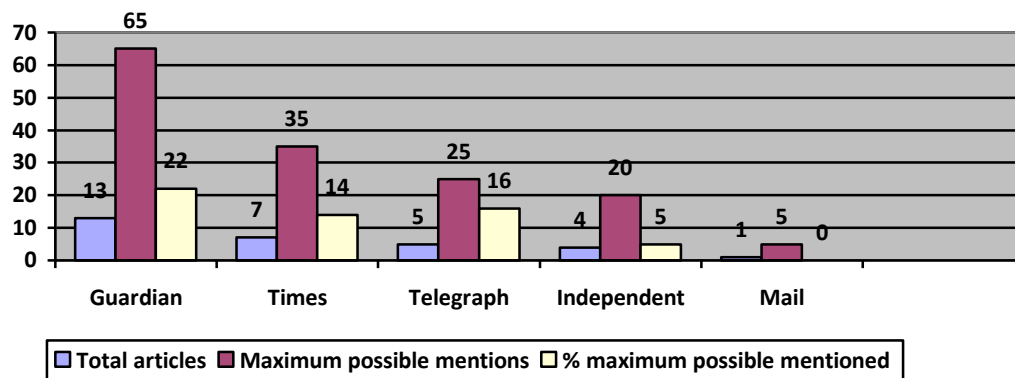
- The Daily Mail does not mention any of the criteria in its one article. Next least is the Independent, with just one mention ('occupation') in four articles.
- The Daily Telegraph does not refer to settlements being on Palestinian land, and the Times does not refer to their illegality. Neither newspaper mentions their detriment to the peace process.

Chart showing % total articles and total mentions by newspaper



- The Guardian was the only newspaper that expressed a greater value in percentage of total criteria than percentage of total articles. In other words, a greater number of criteria appeared in its articles than in all the other newspapers combined.
- Excepting the Daily Mail, whose one article contained none of the criteria, the Independent fared least well, accounting for 13% of total articles but just 4% of total criteria.

Expressed as a percentage of maximum possible mentions (based on the premise that an article can mention all five criteria), the newspaper breakdown is as follows:



- Overall, just 16% of total possible mentions appeared. All newspapers fell way short of a maximum 100%. The Guardian fared best, followed by the Telegraph, Times, Independent and Mail.

Journalist Breakdowns

Twelve writers wrote articles that mentioned settlements during the monitoring period. The relevant journalists and newspapers are:

Guardian	Independent	Telegraph	Times	Daily Mail
<i>Rory McCarthy</i>	<i>Donald Macintyre</i>	<i>Carolynne Wheeler</i>	<i>James Hider</i>	<i>Anon</i>
<i>Ian Black</i>	<i>Eric Silver</i>	<i>Tim Butcher</i>		
<i>Toni O'Loughlin</i>		<i>David Blair</i>		
<i>Rachel Shabi</i>		<i>Joshua Mitnick</i>		

- Eight of the 12 journalists (66%) who mention settlements also mention one or more of the criteria; one-third do not. The tally of the eight journalists' number of articles and mentions of any criteria is as follows:

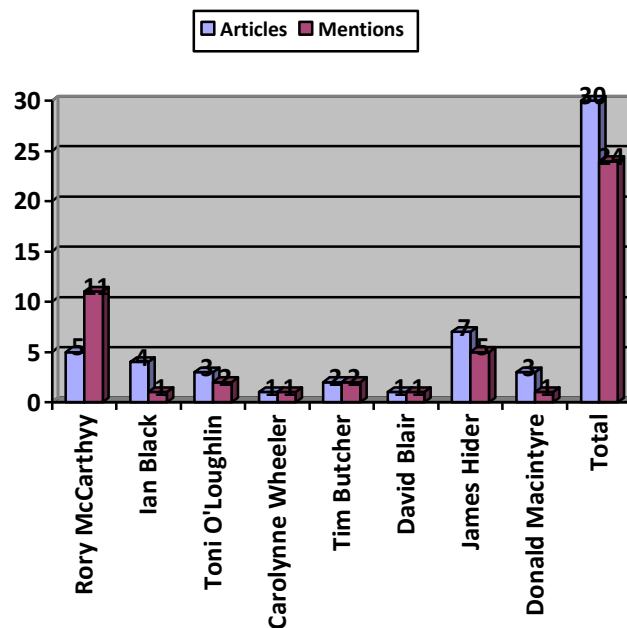


Table showing journalists who mention any of the criteria, and which:

Journalist	Illegality	Occupation	Palestinian Land	Peace Process	Context	Total
Rory McCarthy	2	3	0	4	2	11
Ian Black	1	0	0	0	0	1
Toni O'Loughlin	0	0	1	0	1	2
Carolynne Wheeler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Tim Butcher	0	2	0	0	0	2
David Blair	0	0	0	0	1	1
James Hider	0	2	1	0	2	5
Donald Macintyre	0	1	0	0	0	1
	4	8	2	4	6	24

Of the 12 journalists, half wrote only one article. A third of the journalists - Carolynne Wheeler and David Blair (both Daily Telegraph), Ian Black (Guardian) and Donald Macintyre (Independent) - mention just one criteria each.

Another third - Rachel Shabi (Guardian), Eric Silver (Independent), Joshua Mitnick (Telegraph), and the one (anonymous) article in the Daily Mail - do not mention any of the criteria.

Table showing articles and criteria mentioned by individual journalists:

Journalist	Total no. articles	% of total articles	No. articles with criteria	No. articles without criteria	% of total criteria
Rory McCarthy	5	18	4	1	47
Ian Black	4	13	1	3	4
Toni O'Loughlin	3	10	2	1	8
Rachel Shabi	1	3	0	1	0
Carolynne Wheeler	1	3	1	0	4
Tim Butcher	2	7	2	0	8
David Blair	1	3	1	0	4
Joshua Mitnick	1	3	0	1	0
James Hider	7	24	4	3	21
Donald Macintyre	3	10	1	2	4
Eric Silver	1	3	0	1	0
Anon (Daily Mail)	1	3	0	1	0
Total	30	100	16	14	100

- The Guardian's Rory McCarthy fares the best out of the journalists, responsible for 47% of total criteria mentions in 18% of total articles. Only one of his five (20%) contain none of the criteria. McCarthy is the only journalist to have more criteria mentions than published articles. He also mentions four of the five criteria (the exception being 'Palestinian land'), more than any other journalist.

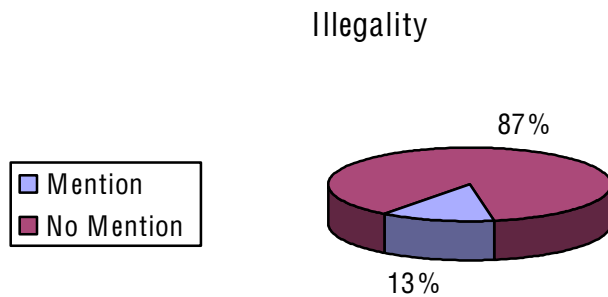
- James Hider (the only journalist writing in the Times) arguably fares second-best, responsible for 21% of total criteria mentions in 24% of total articles. Three of his seven articles (43%) contain none of the criteria, and he mentions three out of five of them (not illegality or the peace process) - the largest number after McCarthy. Hider wrote the largest number of relevant articles during the monitoring period.

- It may be noteworthy that both of Tim Butcher's articles, and the one each by Carolynne Wheeler and David Blair (all Telegraph) mention at least one criteria, but the number of articles they published is too small to suggest a trend.

Criteria Breakdowns

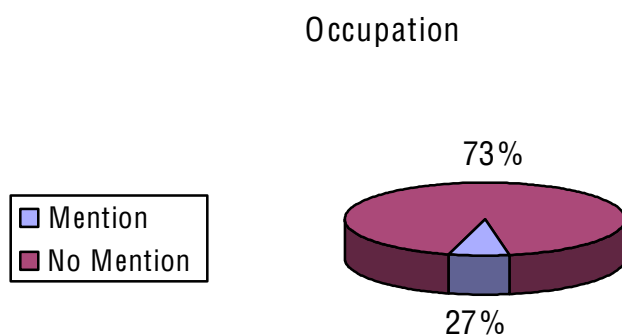
Illegality

In the 30 articles, there are just four mentions of the illegal status of the settlements, three of which come from sources, not from the journalists themselves. Only one describes settlements as illegal under international law (Rory McCarthy, Guardian, 15 April 2008), but none refer to the Geneva Conventions, the International Court of Justice advisory ruling, or various UN Security Council resolutions.



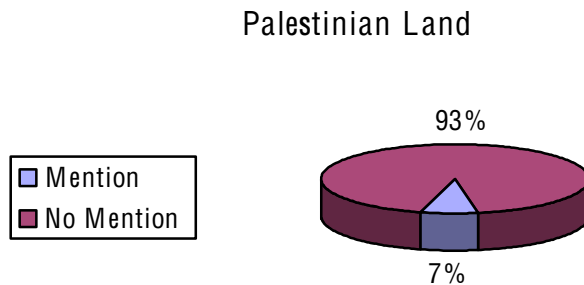
Occupation

In the 30 articles, there are eight mentions of settlements being on occupied land. For the most part, this is in the form of the "occupied West Bank" or the "occupied territories." On one occasion, it is expressed as "the Israeli-occupied West Bank" (Rory McCarthy, Guardian, 15 April 2008).



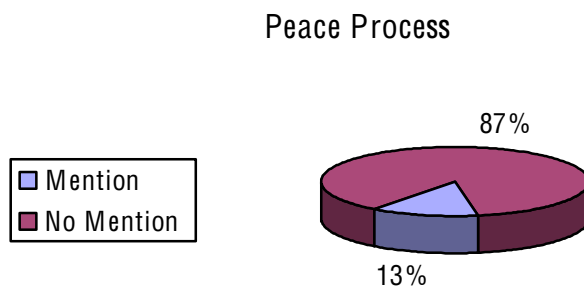
Palestinian Land

In the 30 articles, there are just two mentions of settlements being on Palestinian land: by Toni O'Loughlin in the Guardian and James Hider in the Times.



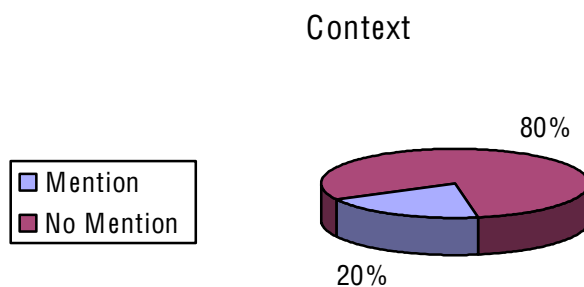
Peace Process

In the 30 articles, there are just four mentions of settlements contravening the peace process. All references are to the US Roadmap, and are from the same journalist, Rory McCarthy (Guardian).



Context

Of the 30 articles, there are just six inclusions of context, including the number of settlements and settlers in the occupied territories, and information on fragmentation of the territories and its bearing on the Palestinians.



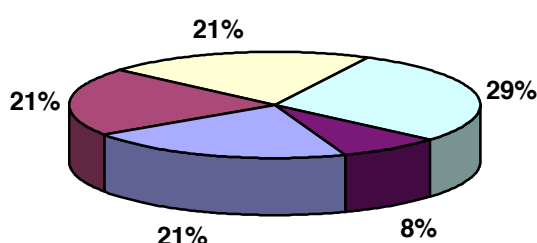
Newspaper Breakdowns

The Guardian

Of the 30 total news articles and 24 total mentions of the criteria, the Guardian accounts for 13 (44%) and 14 (58%) respectively, of which contravention of the peace process is most frequently mentioned (four times), and settlement construction on Palestinian land is the least frequently mentioned (once). Illegality, occupation and context are all mentioned an equal number of times: three.

Of the 13 articles, six did not mention any of the criteria. The Guardian is the only paper to include all the criteria in its coverage, and to refer to settlements violating the peace process, though all such references are from one journalist, Rory McCarthy.

Chart showing most commonly mentioned criteria (%) in the Guardian



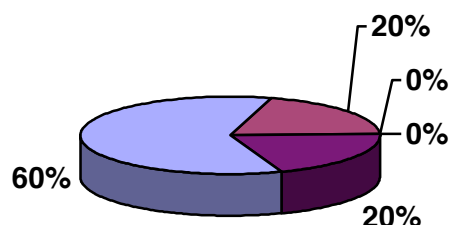
■ Occupation ■ Context ■ Illegality ■ Peace Process ■ Palestinian Land

The Times

Of the 30 total news articles and 24 total mentions of the criteria, the Times accounts for seven (23%) and five (21%) respectively. Settlement construction on occupied land is the most frequently mentioned criteria (three times), followed by Palestinian land and context, which are mentioned once each.

The newspaper makes no reference to illegality or contravention of the peace process. Of the seven articles, three (43%) made no mention of any of the criteria.

Chart showing most commonly mentioned criteria (%) in the Times



■ Occupation ■ Context ■ Illegality ■ Peace Process ■ Palestinian Land

Daily Mail

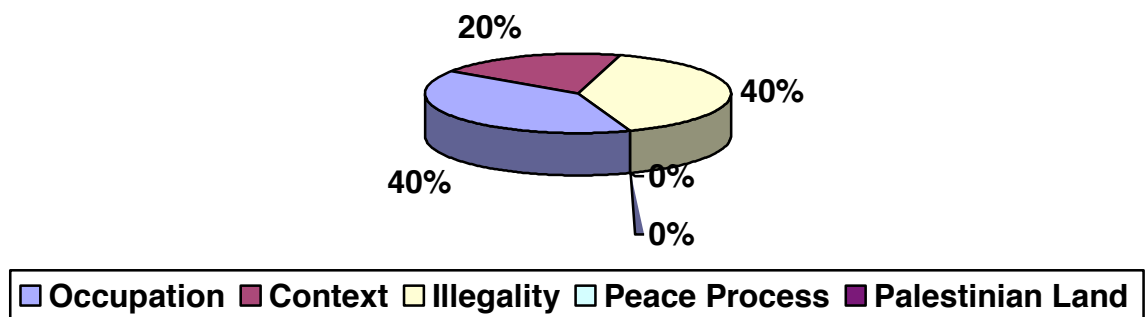
The Daily Mail published just one news article during the monitoring period that mentioned settlements, and it contained none of the criteria.

Daily Telegraph

Out of the 30 total news articles and 24 total mentions of the criteria, the Telegraph accounts for five (17%) and four (17%) respectively. Occupation is the most frequently mentioned criteria (twice), followed by illegality and context (once each). Palestinian land and the peace process are not mentioned at all.

Four of the five articles (80%) contain mention of any of the criteria. This is a higher figure than any of the other newspapers.

Chart showing most commonly mentioned criteria (%) in the Telegraph



The Independent

Of the 30 total news articles and 24 total mentions of the criteria, the Independent accounts for four (13%) and one (4%) respectively. Settlement construction on occupied territory is the only criteria mentioned, in only one of its four articles.

Settlements in the News

During the monitoring period, settlements were frequently in the news, primarily for two reasons. Firstly, announcements were made by the Israeli Housing Ministry regarding the construction of more than 1,000 houses. Secondly, several major world leaders condemned settlements and the obstacle they present to peace.

A thousand new settlement homes in East Jerusalem were announced in June, while in April, the Israeli Housing Ministry invited tenders for the construction of 100 homes in West Bank settlements. In July, a plan was announced which allows for 20 settlement homes to be built in the occupied territories. The BBC reported the international response:

"A US official said the expansion was not helpful to the peace process while UK Foreign Minister David Miliband expressed dismay at the reports. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said he was 'deeply concerned' at the plan."

Other leaders condemned settlement activity in Palestine. The BBC reported in July that British Prime Minister Gordon Brown "had criticised the Israeli government's policy of continuing to build settlements," while French President Nicolas Sarkozy said in a speech to the Israeli Knesset (Parliament):

"There can be no peace without stopping settlement."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned in July that settlement building is having a "negative effect" on peace efforts, and in May she described settlement activity as "problematic."

Palestinian leaders also condemned settlement activity following the announcement of further construction. Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, said:

"We firmly condemn the continuation of settlements. Such a decision sabotages the peace process and the negotiations."

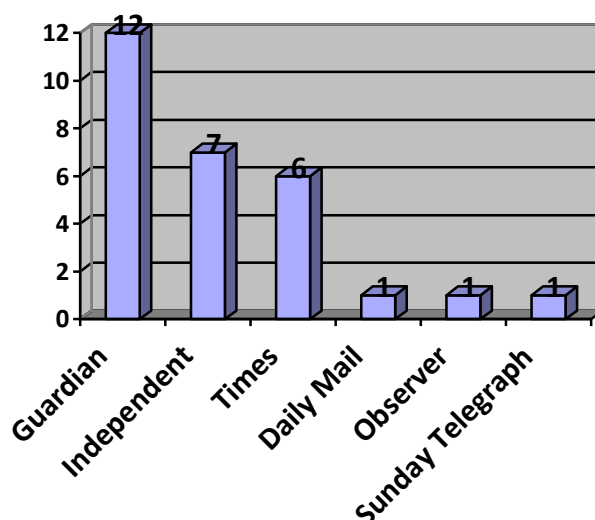
Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, ahead of a meeting with US President George Bush, called settlements "the main obstacle to peace."

Settlements were also in the news because video footage of settlers beating up Palestinians in the West Bank came to light, and Palestinian villagers are suing two Canadian construction companies over their involvement in building a settlement in the occupied territory.

SECTION 2

Commentaries & Editorial

Settlements are mentioned in commentaries and editorials roughly as frequently (or infrequently) as in news articles. There are 28 of the former published in six newspapers (just a third of those monitored). Almost half are in the Guardian alone. Three newspapers - the Guardian, Independent and Times - account for almost 90% of relevant pieces (43%, 25% and 21% respectively).



None offer any defence for the existence of settlements, and often very condemnatory language is used. A characteristic recognised by many commentators is that settlements present a significant obstacle to peace.

Daily Mail

In the Mail's only mention of settlements (17 June 2008), Max Hastings writes:

"At the weekend, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice belatedly criticised Israel's new settlements on Palestinian territory as 'unhelpful' to peace."

Sunday Telegraph

The Sunday Telegraph published one relevant commentary during the monitoring period (4 May 2008), in which MP Bob Marshall-Andrews imagines how Gordon Brown could possibly turn around his fortunes:

"Summon the Israeli ambassador who will be told that unless there is an immediate, verifiable programme for dismantling the illegal settlements on the West Bank, Britain will press the UN for a programme of economic sanctions against his country."

Observer

Sam Kiley interviews Avishai Margalit (20 April 2008), described as a Zionist intellectual and former paratrooper, who is a professor of philosophy at Princeton and the Hebrew University. Margalit states:

"...while everyone sane recognises that we're going to have to get out of the West Bank and establish an independent Palestinian state, Israel is still building settlements on West Bank land taken from Palestinians, sowing the seeds of yet more hatred and violence."

Kiley writes:

"Israel's security barrier has eroded West Bank territory, where land has also been lost to Jewish settlements that are illegal under international law."

The Times

Six commentaries and editorial note the importance of settlements to the peace process. An editorial assesses the chances of success for peace following the Annapolis conference (23 April 2008). It notes that an important factor is "meaningful negotiations on the future of illegal settlements," but "instead, the building of new settlements has continued."

Bronwen Maddox mentions settlements three times during the monitoring period, in contexts that reveal their centrality to peace prospects. In a critique of current peacemaking efforts, she highlights a lack of "any sign by Israel for compromising on West Bank settlement expansion, and any account by the US of how it will respond" (2 May 2008).

Maddox raises a different angle in a later article (26 June 2008), noting the relationship of settlements with Israeli domestic politics. She says that "despite vocal objections by the US," Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert "conceded the building of more settlement houses in the West Bank" in an effort "to keep his staggering coalition upright."

An editorial took the same theme, suggesting that to prove Olmert is serious about peace, "he must jettison his other ploy to regain support at home: encouraging expanded West Bank settlements" (19 June 2008).

Maddox reports comments made by Tony Blair, writing that he described some of Israel's settlements as "illegal under Israeli law, never mind international law" (6 June 2008).

An obituary of Josef Lapid, former Israeli Justice Minister, notes how following the success of his Shinui (Change) party in 2003 elections, he suggested that "as part of a peace settlement Israel should withdraw from most settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" (3 June 2008).

Guardian

The Guardian published the greatest number of opinion pieces: 12. It is useful to analyse them under three headings: those that imply the significance and import of settlements, those that state them clearly, and those in reported speech.

Implied import

Occasionally, when the significance of settlements is conveyed implicitly, the context is their relationship with a final-status agreement.

Sami Abdel Shafi refers to "Israel's settlement expansion" and its relationship with "a final agreement on borders" without specifying further what that signifies (3 May 2008).

Similarly, Middle East editor Ian Black writes about the hope "between the first and second intifadas...of reaching a two-state solution" if "the dragon's teeth of Jewish settlement could be de-fanged," without explaining what 'de-fanging' the dragon's teeth means (6 May 2008).

Ahmad Samih Khalidi writes that "the prospects of a final resolution of the conflict based on the two-state solution are fading as it comes up against settlement realities," without explaining why (12 May 2008).

Jeff Halper likewise relates settlements to "a just peace," without clarifying more exactly the relationship, writing that "Israel has eliminated the two-state solution by its massive construction of settlements" (27 May 2008).

Benny Morris writes a reflective piece imagining Zionist founder Theodor Herzl's reactions to aspects of Israel today, such as its "settlement enterprise in the West Bank (and Golan Heights)," but does not expand on what that is (16 May 2008).

Stated import

Some writers state much more explicitly the significance and import of settlements. Although not consistently, attributes mentioned in this category include the occupation of Palestine and the illegality of settlements - albeit without specifying under which instruments or authorities.

Jimmy Carter (8 May 2008) writes:

"Israel has occupied and colonised the Palestinian West Bank...Some Israeli religious factions claim...that 205 settlements of some 500,000 people are necessary for 'security'."

Ian Jack (17 May 2008) is less explicit about occupation, but writes:

"Throughout the West Bank...Jewish settlements march east into Palestinian territory in acts of illegal conquest..."

Daniel Barenboim writes (14 May 2008):

"We wanted to own land that had never belonged to Jews and build settlements there."

Ahdaf Soueif writes with the implication that land is occupied (22 May 2008):

"60% of Silwan has been taken over by settlers and the remaining villagers are fighting to stay on their land."

The law is mentioned in parentheses, as Soueif refers to "the (illegal) settlement of Ma'ale Adumim."

Reported speech

There are a few occasions when attributes of settlements are expressed in reported speech within the piece.

An editorial (16 May 2008) quotes Salam Fayyad:

"I direct my speech...to the people of Israel, to say, 'How can you?' How can you celebrate [the 60th anniversary of Israel when] the Palestinian people are suffering from your settlements and the crimes of your settlers...?"

In an interview with David Oddie (10 June 2008), a drama lecturer active in Palestine, he notes:

"When I first went to the West Bank, I was traumatised to see settlements bristling with wires and guns..."

In a slightly different context, in a book review of the Orwell Prize-winning "Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape" by Raja Shehadeh, reviewer Aimee Shalan describes how, "undeterred by checkpoints, road blocks and Israeli settlements," the author "bravely upholds his right to what is known in Arab tradition as sarha - to roam without restraint where the spirit takes you" (14 June 2008).

Independent

The Independent published seven commentaries mentioning settlements - the largest number after the Guardian - several of which draw on the writers' recent travels to Israel / Palestine.

Mario Vargas Llosa takes a specific example of a settlement, writing about a trip he took to Hebron, which he calls "the image of desolation and pain" (19 April 2008):

"I'm talking of the H-2 sector, the oldest part of this ancient city, which is under Israeli military control and where some 500 colonos - settlers - live in four settlements...To protect these settlers, the zone bristles with barriers, camps and military posts, and is overrun by Israeli patrols."

Vargas Llosa describes the behaviour of settlers:

"I have a video of the hair-raising scene of children from Tel Rumeida settlement stoning and kicking Arab schoolchildren and their teachers who, to protect themselves, returned home in groups instead of individually."

The author points out his first-hand experience:

"No one told me this: I saw it with my own eyes and heard with my own ears from the victims themselves."

Howard Jacobson (10 May 2008) likewise writes about the behaviour of settlers, writing of a recent trip to Israel:

"I saw with my own eyes the brutality of which a country that's been at war every hour of its life is capable...I talked to settlers whose language was so abhorrent I'd have pulled their settlements apart with my bare hands."

Johann Hari (28 April 2008) also writes about a recent trip to Palestine:

"Across the occupied West Bank, raw untreated sewage is pumped every day out of the Jewish settlements, along large metal pipes, straight onto Palestinian land...This is no freak: a 2004 report by Friends of the Earth found that only six per cent of Israeli settlements adequately treat their sewage."

The following week (8 May 2008), Hari describes the barrage of abuse he received for his 28 April article.

"Last week, I wrote an article that described how untreated sewage was being pumped from illegal Israeli settlements on to Palestinian land, contaminating their reservoirs."

He describes the response:

"Some of the most high profile 'pro-Israel' writers and media monitoring groups - including Honest Reporting and Camera - said I am (sic) anti-Jewish bigot akin to Joseph Goebbels and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad...Vast numbers of e-mails came flooding in calling for me to be sacked."

Robert Fisk, like many in the op-ed pages of the British press, notes the centrality of settlements to prospects for peace, pouring scorn on American efforts towards peacemaking in the Middle East (7 June 2008). He quotes Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice: "The goal (of peace) itself will endure beyond the current US leadership," and rejoins:

"And the siege of Gaza will endure beyond the current US leadership. And the Israeli wall. And the illegal Israeli settlement building."

The other mentions of settlements have a US theme. Adrian Hamilton writes that liberal members of the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), following a speech by George Bush, "had hoped for some gesture of pressure by the US president on their Prime Minister to offer concessions to the Palestinians, if only to stop the expansion of settlements," but were left "aghast" when the gesture was not made (22 May 2008).

Victoria Clark says presidential candidate John McCain, if elected, would "continue...to countenance the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank..." (29 May 2008). She refers to "a donation of half-a-million dollars to an illegal Israeli settlement."