



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

---

## Monitoring Study:

# The British Media & Israel's Capital

Author:

Guy Gabriel - AMW adviser

Contact details:

Tel: 07815 747 729

E-mail: [info@arabmediawatch.com](mailto:info@arabmediawatch.com)

Table of contents:

Introduction	2
Findings	3 - 4
Commentary / News Article Breakdown	5 - 6

## Introduction

Jerusalem is mistakenly and frequently mentioned in the British media as the capital of Israel. Under international law, neither the east nor west of the city is considered as such - Tel Aviv is, pending a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. Nonetheless, an analysis of coverage in the mainstream British press reveals that when Israel's capital is mentioned, almost half the time it is referred to as Jerusalem.

Several UN Security Council resolutions have been passed regarding the status of the city, extracts of which can be viewed [here](#) (a background document on the status of East Jerusalem, occupied and illegally annexed by Israel, can be viewed [here](#)).

These resolutions call for no measures to be taken to change the status of Jerusalem until a final settlement is reached between the sides: declaring the city as Israel's capital is an attempt to change this status, and is thus a violation of these resolutions. Accordingly, Costa Rica and El Salvador, the only countries to have had embassies in Jerusalem, moved them to Tel Aviv in August 2006.

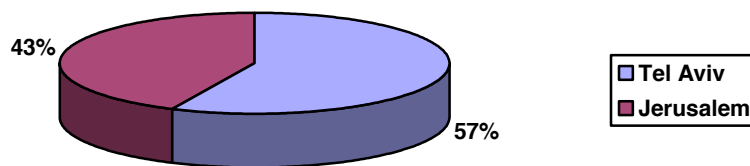
During a three-month period (1 June - 31 August 2008), Arab Media Watch monitored and analysed the national daily British press (excluding the Financial Times and Daily Express) for mentions of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and from these results ascertained the frequency with which each city was identified as Israel's capital.

The study differentiates between news articles and commentaries, and includes both metonymy (e.g. "Jerusalem and Washington are talking seriously about a possible Israeli strike," or "the Americans turned down the request and urged Tel Aviv to hold fire") and direct mentions (e.g. "Tehran claimed its successful launch of nine rockets proved that Iran could hit targets as far away as Israel's capital, Tel Aviv").

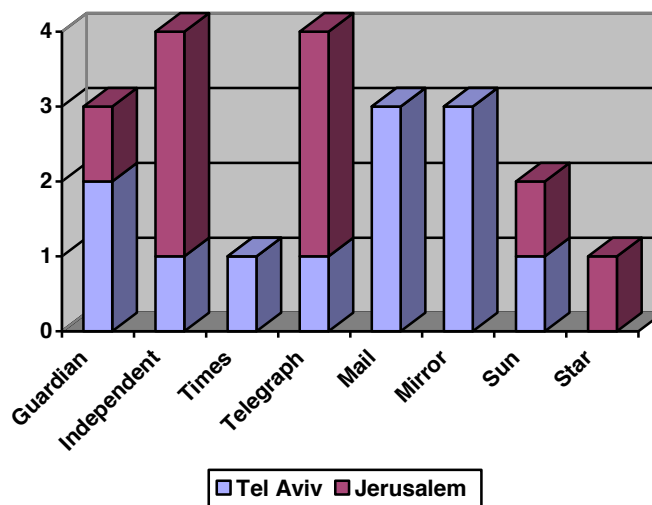
## Findings

- A total of 21 articles were published in eight newspapers that refer to the capital of Israel, whether in commentaries or news articles.
- 12 of the 21 (57%) identify Tel Aviv as the capital, with the remaining nine (43%) identifying it as Jerusalem.
- Of the 21 articles, six are commentaries (29%), and the remaining 15 (71%) are news articles.

Tel Aviv / Jerusalem: Total news items



Tel Aviv / Jerusalem by Newspaper



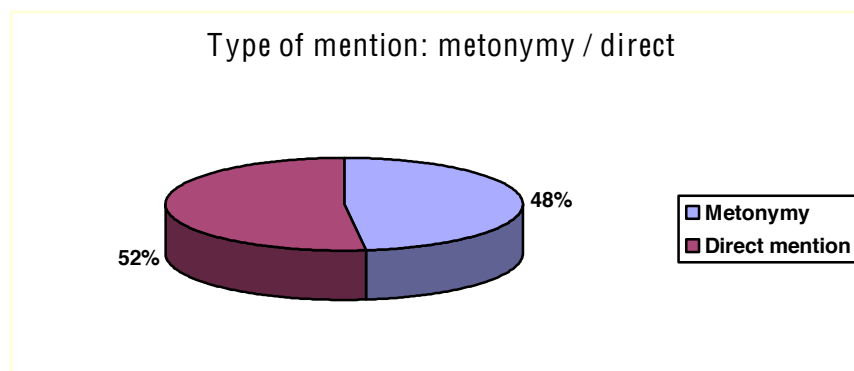
- The Daily Star is the only paper to identify Jerusalem exclusively as Israel's capital.
- The Times, Daily Mail and Daily Mirror identify Tel Aviv exclusively as the capital.
- The Guardian refers to Tel Aviv as the capital more so than Jerusalem (two to one).
- The Independent and Daily Telegraph refer to Jerusalem as the capital more often than Tel Aviv (both three to one).
- The Sun refers to both cities as the capital once each.

Expressed in tabular form, the tallies for each newspaper are as follows:

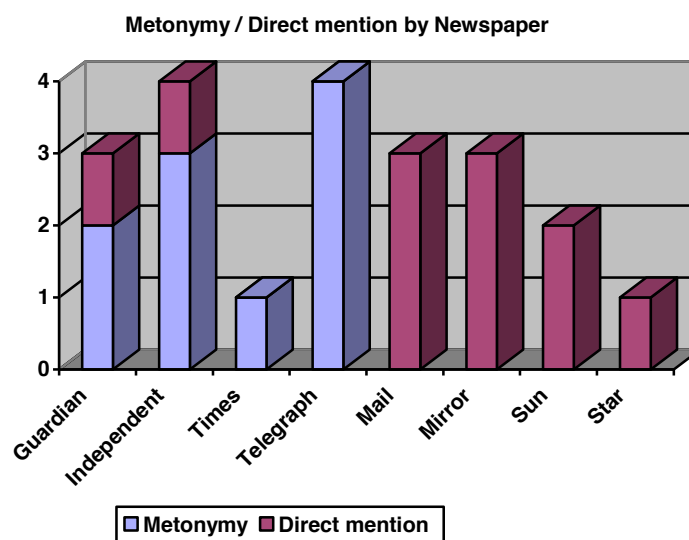
Newspaper	Total	Tel Aviv	Jerusalem	News Article	Commentary
Guardian	3	2	1	0	3
Independent	4	1	3	3	1
Times	1	1	0	1	0
Telegraph	4	1	3	2	2
Daily Mail	3	3	0	3	0
Mirror	3	3	0	3	0
Sun	2	1	1	2	0
Star	1	0	1	1	0
Total	21	12	9	15	6

### *Type of mention: metonymy or direct mention*

Of the total 21 articles, 10 (48%) are metonymy, all of which appear in broadsheets (the Guardian, Independent, Times and Daily Telegraph).



The remaining 11 (52%) are direct mentions, nine of which (82%) appear in tabloids (Mail, Mirror, Sun and Star). The remaining two direct mentions appear in the Guardian and Independent.

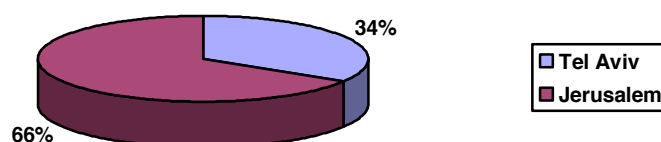


## Commentary / News Article Breakdown

### *Commentaries*

Of the 21 total items, six commentaries refer to either Tel Aviv or Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Of these, four (66%) refer to Jerusalem as the capital, and five (83%) are metonymy.

Tel Aviv / Jerusalem: Commentaries



The commentators who refer to Jerusalem as the capital (all by metonymy) are:

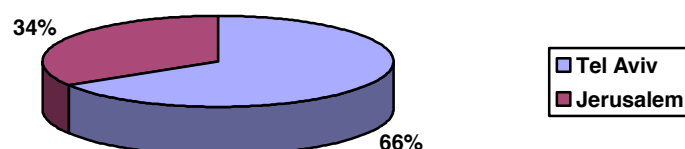
- The Telegraph's leader writer
- Max Hastings in the Guardian
- The Independent's leader writer
- The Telegraph's executive foreign editor Con Coughlin

The commentators who refer to Tel Aviv as the capital are Martin Woollacott and Adam LeBor, both in the Guardian. The former does so by metonymy, the latter by direct mention.

### *News Articles*

Fifteen of the 21 items (71%) that refer to either Tel Aviv or Jerusalem as Israel's capital are news articles. Ten (66%) refer to Tel Aviv as the capital, and the remaining five (34%) refer to Jerusalem.

Tel Aviv / Jerusalem: News articles



Of the five that refer to Jerusalem as the capital, two are metonymy (Rupert Cornwell in the Independent and Josh Mitnick in the Telegraph), and three are direct mentions (Cahal Milmo in the Independent, and anonymous articles in the Sun and Star).

Of the 10 news items that refer to Tel Aviv as the capital, seven are metonymy:

- An anonymous article in the Mirror
- Daniel Martin and two anonymous articles in the Mail
- Independent Middle East correspondent Donald Macintyre
- Telegraph international business editor Ambrose Evans-Pritchard
- Times deputy political editor Francis Elliott and Middle East correspondent James Hider (one article)

And three are direct mentions:

- Mirror foreign editor Mark Ellis
- Sun deputy political editor Graeme Wilson
- Mirror security correspondent Chris Hughes