



# ***IN-DEPTH MEDIA ANALYSIS***

**Media Reviewed: The BBC**

**Time Period: January 1 - March 31, 2010**

*Sponsored by anonymous donors in  
Toronto, Canada  
and  
Virginia, USA*

## Executive Summary

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the largest broadcasting organization in the world. It is funded principally by an annual television license fee charged to all United Kingdom households, companies and organizations using equipment capable of receiving television broadcasts. Based on its influence and dependency on public funding, one would expect extremely high standards in terms of objectivity from the BBC. However, our in-depth analysis of articles published on the BBC website during the first quarter of 2010 shows that **the BBC's coverage is filled with an anti-Israel bias that is reflected in both the style and substance of its daily reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** This research demonstrates:

- **Daily coverage tends to focus on Israeli actions deemed as undermining the peace process while Palestinian actions violating peace agreements are either ignored or downplayed.** The issue of Israeli housing construction in Jerusalem gets wide coverage by the BBC while constant and ongoing Palestinian glorification of terror, a major breach of every agreement, is almost ignored.
- **Articles often lead with the Palestinian perspective or bring in partisan, agenda-driven Israeli organizations that take a position critical of the Israeli government for “balance,” representing a small number of Israelis.**
- **Complex historical issues are often presented without proper context.** To say that Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in 1967 without referencing the 3,000 year Jewish history of the city misleads more than it informs.
- **Inaccurate terms are often used for fear of passing judgment on the people and events being described.** The BBC refers to Hamas terrorists as “militants” or “fighters.” Ironically, that is in itself a judgment. Another example is that the term “right wing” is used frequently when referring to the Israeli governing coalition of Benjamin Netanyahu. By using this term (which we have never seen applied by the BBC to even the most extreme Palestinian political parties,) isn't the BBC passing its own judgment? Especially considering the fact that “right wing” is usually used as a pejorative rather than simply descriptive label, it has no place in objective journalism.

This report is part of our continuing series that examines the daily coverage of influential media organizations. A single story that is based on a gross distortion of an event may be easier to identify as biased. **Yet it is the soft but no less corrosive bias that pervades day to day coverage that has a greater impact on the way Israel is perceived by the general public.**

The BBC's own guidelines state:

***Our responsibility is to remain impartial and report in ways that enable our audiences to make their own assessments about who is doing what to whom.***

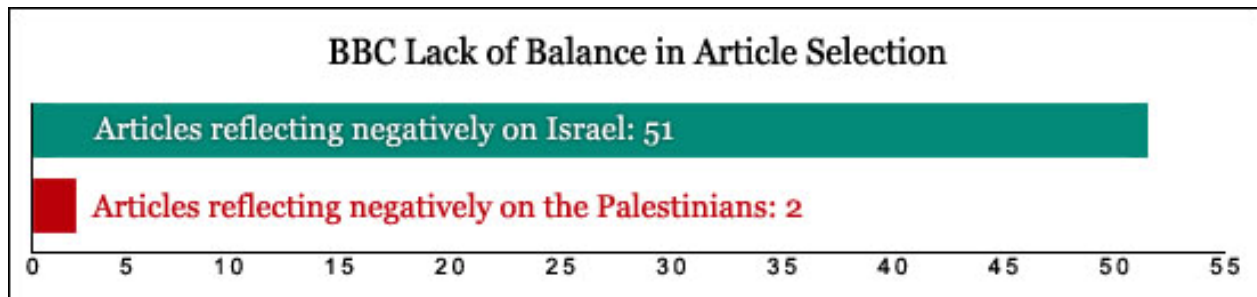
Impartiality demands that events be reported accurately without trying to sway readers to any specific point of view. News articles must not reflect unwittingly the writer's personal viewpoint or expose lack of deep understanding of a subject. Professional journalism demands that inaccurate statements be identified as such even if they are being issued from people in high official positions. Sources that have found to be lacking credibility should not continue to be relied upon. Sadly, on these counts the BBC fails to live up to its own standards of objectivity.

The fifty-seven articles in this study were published on the BBC website from January 1, 2010 until the end of March 2010.

► **I) Lack of Balance in Article Selection:  
Ignoring Palestinian Violations and focusing on Israeli Actions**

*"Palestinians have said negotiations are futile while Israel insists on expanding Jewish settlements on occupied land."*

- BBC: "Dozens Hurt in Jerusalem Clashes," 3/5/2010



During the period under study, the BBC published:

- 27 articles which dealt with Israeli settlements and Jewish housing in Jerusalem
- 12 articles on the difficulties of life for Palestinians due to Israeli measures
- 9 articles concerning Israeli military operations against Palestinians
- 3 articles describing acts of vandalism allegedly perpetrated by Israelis against Palestinians

During the same period, the BBC published:

- 1 article on Palestinian glorification of terrorism
- 1 article detailing corruption within the Palestinian Authority
- 0 articles on Palestinian weapons smuggling into the Gaza Strip

The glorification of terrorism is a direct violation of numerous Palestinian obligations. It is vital that news organizations report on this matter if their readers are to gain a true appreciation of the difficulties of moving the peace process forward. Likewise, weapons smuggling and corruption have a much greater impact on current events than an isolated case of vandalism and have been well documented by numerous outside sources. So the question remains, why is the BBC silent on some items while covering Israeli actions with such minute detail?

## ► II) Lack of Balance within Articles

*"It was like paradise," he says, describing how he planted olive trees with his children and watched them grow over 17 years....much of the land is (now) surrounded by the Jewish settlement of Matityahu. He says that his trees were uprooted when it was built, and now he is too afraid of the settlers to visit.*

- BBC: "Bilin marks five years of West Bank barrier protest," 2/19/2010

Within articles, it appears to be the BBC style to give priority to Palestinians and others expressing a viewpoint critical of Israel, often in self-styled language common to novels, not news.



Eighteen articles highlighted Palestinian quotations or viewpoints without an equal response from those representing Israel's point of view equal in profile, length, tone, or imagery.

Zero articles highlighted Israeli quotations or viewpoints without an equal response from those representing Palestinian views. Even worse, some articles quoted Palestinian sources proven to be unreliable. Even after all the evidence that the Hamas Health Ministry in Gaza manipulated casualty statistics during the war, they were still believed in the case of the "Dead Boy" story that turned out to be wholly untrue.

Please see article analysis for specific details.

## ► III) Complex historical issues are often presented without proper context

*"Israel captured the east of the city during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, during which it occupied the West Bank."*

- BBC: "Israeli authorities back 600 new East Jerusalem homes," 2/26/2010

In 1967, Israel responded to a combined Arab attack and ended up controlling what is now referred to as the West Bank. The city of Jerusalem, where Jews had constituted a majority of the population throughout much of history was reunified after a nineteen year division. This context is key to any understanding of the current situation in the Middle East.

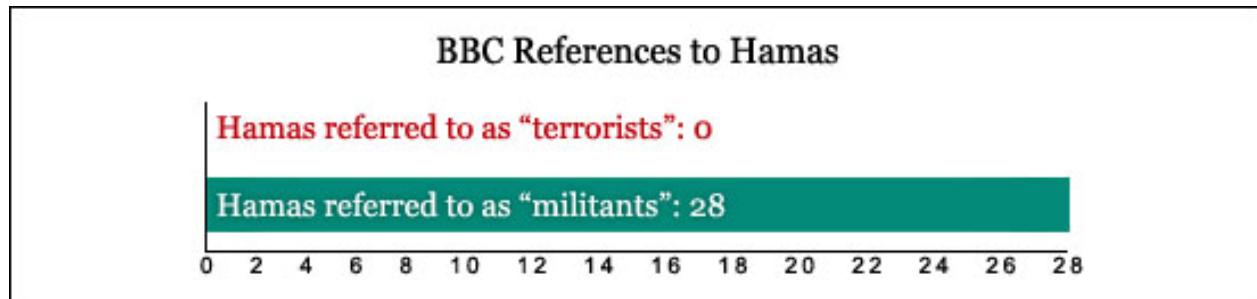
Yet in article after article, phrases such as "the West Bank, won by Israel in the 1967 war" and "East Jerusalem, occupied as a result of the 1967 war" are used. Without providing even the briefest historical context, readers are likely to assume that there is no legitimacy to Israel claims to the united city of Jerusalem or the territories. One would conclude that there was no Jewish historical presence in these areas at all.

► **IV) Inaccurate terms**

**A) “Terrorism”**

*“Designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the US and the EU, it is seen by its (Hamas) supporters as a legitimate fighting force defending Palestinians from military occupation.”*

- BBC: Senior Hamas leader seized in West Bank, 3/14/2010



By saying that Israel, the US, and the EU accuse Hamas of being a terrorist organization, the BBC is making an effort not to label them as one themselves. This seems to fit with their editorial guidelines, which read:

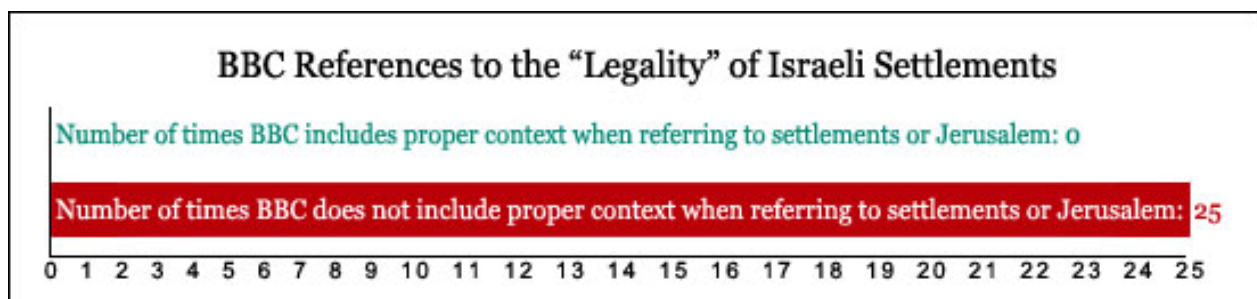
“Our credibility is undermined by the careless use of words which carry emotional or value judgments. The word “terrorist” itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding... We must be careful not to give the impression that we have come to some kind of implicit -and unwarranted - value judgment.”

**But by labeling groups which specifically target civilians – including children – as “militants” or “fighters,” the BBC is making the exact value judgments it claims to want to avoid.** When these terms are used over and over again, they become the “barriers to understanding” that the BBC says it is so concerned about.

**B) The “legality” of Israeli settlements**

*“Nearly half a million Jews live in more than 100 settlements built since Israel’s 1967 occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They are held to be illegal under international law, although Israel disputes this.”*

- Numerous BBC articles



The BBC uses the above formulation in almost every article that mentions Israeli settlements. While many hold the opinion that the settlements are illegal, there are numerous international law experts who dispute this. They maintain that territory captured in a defensive war that had never previously been incorporated into a State should not be considered “occupied” and settlements on such land are not illegal. This is not simply the opinion of the State of Israel as implied by the BBC. So while some “hold” them to be illegal, others “hold” them to be legal. The BBC should not imply that there is no debate except from Israel itself, as to the legality of settlements.

## The Articles

### ► January 1, 2010

#### A year on from the war in Gaza

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_8436000/8436971.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8436000/8436971.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** The BBC starts 2010 coverage of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict with an audio report from BBC Radio 4 assessing what life is like for Palestinians in Gaza. The report is introduced by first giving statistics of how many Palestinians died in the conflict. These statistics were provided by the Palestinians themselves and have been seriously called into question. In the report, the first interview is with the director of a Gazan music school which was allegedly destroyed in the conflict. The second part of the report is an interview with another Palestinian who discusses how hard it is for people to obtain food because of the Israeli blockade.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Statistics and interviews are all from Palestinian sources. No attempt was made to give the context of the conflict or to identify border restrictions as Israeli defensive actions. Focus on damage to a music school (as opposed to, for example, the Hamas Interior Ministry) feeds the concept that Israel was purposely targeting civilian institutions.

### ► January 3, 2010

#### Israeli FM Avigdor Lieberman tells envoys not to grovel

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8438573.stm>



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel's foreign minister spoke to Israeli envoys telling them to defend their country in diplomatic meetings. An accompanying image described him as the leader of a “right-wing” political party. The article refers to Lieberman telling Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to “Go to Hell.”

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The article is less about what Lieberman actually said and more an effort to portray the foreign minister in the harshest possible light. It begs the question why are only Israeli political parties referred to as “right-wing?” We have never seen any similar terms used to describe a Palestinian political party. The quote about Mubarak was indeed blunt, but it is presented here out of context. Lieberman was speaking about Mubarak's refusal to visit Israel and that “If he wants to talk to us, he should come here, and if he doesn't want to come, he can go to hell.” While the words used may have been undiplomatic, the statement was made in response to a specific situation.



- **January 5, 2010**  
**Israel approves four new buildings in East Jerusalem**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8442209.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8442209.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel has approved the construction of 24 new apartments in Jerusalem. The article references objections from Palestinian leaders and a direct quotation from Palestinian spokesman Saeb Erakat. The area where the homes are being built is referenced to as “what the Palestinians want as the capital of their future state.”

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The article focuses on the construction of 24 homes in a city of over seven hundred thousand people. While Palestinian objections to the construction of these homes are heard throughout the article, no Israelis were quoted. The Palestinian position on the future of Jerusalem is noted without a reference to the Israeli view. The only remark about the complicated history of Jerusalem is that Israel annexed the eastern half in 1967. Thousands of years of Jewish history and the context of Israel's annexation are ignored.

- **January 5, 2010**  
**Gaza militant killed in Israeli air strike**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8442642.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8442642.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** One Palestinian was killed and three injured in an Israeli airstrike on Gaza. An accompanying photo shows a wounded Palestinian being rushed to the hospital.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** All the men were from a Hamas affiliated group called the Popular Resistance Committee. This group fires rockets at schools and other civilian areas of Israel. By definition, such a group should be referred to as “terrorists.” Yet the BBC describes them as “militants.” The photograph showing the wounded Palestinian does nothing to convey to the viewer that the air strike was a legitimate act of self-defense to prevent attacks against Israeli civilians.

- **January 7, 2010**  
**Israel to pay UN compensation of US \$10m**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8446161.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8446161.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel has agreed to pay the United Nations for damage caused during the conflict in Gaza. An accompanying image shows a building described as “being hit by Israeli shells” during the conflict.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The main accusation against Israel from the Gaza conflict is that the Israeli Defense Force specifically targeted civilian facilities during the conflict. Only four paragraphs into the article is it made clear that Israel claims that the buildings were not damaged on purpose. Much of the damage was caused by Hamas munitions stored in civilian areas as the BBC knows from their

footage. The context of the conflict as a defensive operation is not given. The picture reinforces the perception of the conflict as a disproportionate Israeli response. Disputed casualty figures provided by the Palestinians are given priority (although the Israeli figures are then given.)

► **January 8, 2010**  
**Three Palestinians killed in Israeli air strike on Gaza**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8447410.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8447410.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Three Palestinians were killed in a series of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza. A lead image shows a crater of what Palestinians said had been a metal workshop.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Three times, the word “militant” is used instead of the more accurate “terrorist.” (“Gaza militants have fired more than 280 rockets or mortars at Israel.”) Disputed casualty statistics for the conflict provided by Palestinian sources are used again.

► **January 9, 2010**  
**Palestinians downplay Hillary Clinton push for peace**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8449947.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8449947.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Saeb Erekat says that peace talks cannot go forward because Israel is still building settlements. A sidebar accompanying the article contains background information on the issue of settlements. An image shows construction work on what is presumably a settlement.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** A direct quotation from Saeb Erekat is used without a counterpoint from an Israeli official. The context of Israeli control over the disputed territories is left out in favor of “The West Bank and East Jerusalem, which it (Israel) occupied during the 1967 Israeli-Arab war.” The source of the background material on settlements is “Peace Now,” an Israeli political organization whose goal is the dismantling of Israeli settlements. Why does this partisan organization have credibility with the BBC? Is it because their information supports the unstated but apparent BBC view against settlements? If not, wouldn't information from a more neutral source be more appropriate?

Why does the BBC use both a Palestinian spokesman and an anti-settlement organization as their sources for this story without including a response from the Israeli government?



► **January 10, 2010**

**Israel air strike kills Gaza militants**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8450891.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8450891.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Palestinian members of Islamic Jihad were killed in an Israeli air strike.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Once again the BBC uses the words “militants” to describe a terrorist group. They were killed while preparing to launch rockets into Israel. The headline gives no indication that the strike was a defensive act. Israel is clearly the aggressive party in the headline. An accompanying image has the caption “Israel has

destroyed sites in Gaza” with no explanation of what kind of “sites” Israel is targeting.

► **January 18, 2010**

**Israeli settlers arrested in mosque arson investigation**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8465006.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8465006.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Ten Israelis were arrested in connection with an arson attack on a Palestinian mosque. An image shows Palestinians inspecting the damage.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** While the article discusses details of the attack on the mosque including graffiti on the walls, it does not mention that such a crime is virtually unheard of in Israel. Nor does it mention the condemnation of the attack from all segments of the Israeli population. Without a reference to the number of Jewish sites that have been vandalized and even

completely destroyed by Palestinians, the reader would get the false impression that these type of acts are only committed by Israelis against Palestinians.

► **January 20, 2010**

**UN warns Israeli blockade puts Gazans' health at risk**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8469640.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8469640.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** The article details the problems that Palestinians with medical conditions face due to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. A picture accompanying the article shows a distraught Palestinian in a wheelchair.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** This is yet another BBC article published since the Gaza conflict detailing the difficult circumstances of Gazan residents. Most of the article describes the hardships caused by the lengthy security screening for Gazans entering Israel for

medical treatment. It is only towards the end of the article that there is a mention of three patients who were given permission to travel to Israel for medical treatment who were caught

planning terrorist attacks. The text and picture reinforce an image of Israel as being insensitive to the needs of Palestinian civilians.

► **January 21, 2010**

**Netanyahu demands future Israeli presence in West Bank**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8471580.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8471580.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calls on the Palestinians to resume peace negotiations and says that Israel will need to hold on to the Jordan River Valley to prevent smuggling of weapons and attacks on Israel from the east.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The headline uses the word “demands” to characterize a statement by the Israeli Prime Minister that has been a long standing Israeli principle. The article could have noted the intense weapon smuggling that occurs under the Egyptian border with Gaza to make Netanyahu's statement appear more understandable. The article could have also mentioned that the Jordan River Valley is very sparsely populated and has never been a major Palestinian population center.

The one quotation that is highlighted in a pull out box is from Saeb Erekat saying that Netanyahu was looking for “dictation rather than negotiations.” The BBC seems to accept the Palestinian position that it is Israel that is preventing negotiations. One wonders what language the BBC would use should Israel refuse to negotiate until its demands were met.

► **January 21, 2010**

**Palestinian graves found damaged after settlers visit**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8472193.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8472193.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israeli police are investigating damage to two Palestinian gravestones. A picture of a damaged grave accompanies the article.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The headline implies that the settlers damaged the graves. Yet no evidence is given. While unacceptable, the incident was relatively small when compared to the destruction of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues by Palestinians. However, the article does not allude to any comparable Palestinian attacks.

► **January 25, 2010**  
**Benjamin Netanyahu: Israel will never quit settlements**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8478022.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8478022.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** At a tree planting ceremony, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli would not leave certain areas.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Netanyahu was visiting the Gush Etzion settlement block when he spoke. This is a small area that was populated by Jews before the founding of the State of Israel. In Israel's War of Independence, the land was conquered by the Arabs who slaughtered the inhabitants and burned down the Jewish villages.

In 1967, after the area was retaken by the IDF, Israelis returned to rebuild the destroyed towns. It is an area for which there is a consensus within Israel and even such an outspoken Israeli critic as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter as stated that he does not see it as on the negotiating table. Yet the headline and article seems to imply that Netanyahu was referring to all Israeli settlements when he spoke. This reinforces the image that Netanyahu is a hard-liner who does not want peace.

► **January 27, 2010**  
**UN impatient as blockade stalls Gaza building**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8479223.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8479223.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel is preventing building materials from getting through to Gaza creating a severe housing shortage. Five pictures depict the problem.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** There is no disputing that the steps Israel has taken to prevent Hamas from rearming are impacting civilians in Gaza. Yet shouldn't such an article also focus on Hamas, which still smuggles weapons into the strip and supports rocket attacks on Israel? A single pull-out quotation by a Palestinian civilian highlights the suffering but not the wider reasons for it. The article concludes with:

*"There is no sign that the struggle between Hamas and Israel will be eased any time soon. As long as that is the case, there seems little prospect of Gaza's borders opening. And that will leave Gazans mired in lives of privation and shortages."*

Yet the wording is inaccurate. There is no equal "struggle" between two sides. The goal of Hamas is the destruction of Israel. Israel prevents certain items from entering Gaza if these items can be used to build tunnels, bunkers, and arms depots. This is the reason for the misery of Gaza. Why doesn't the BBC make that clear?

► **January 28, 2010**

**Rabbi suspected in West Bank mosque arson released**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8482700.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8482700.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** A rabbi who was detained in connection with an incident of vandalism at a Palestinian mosque was released. A picture of the mosque accompanies the article.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The BBC returns to the same case of arson it had previously reported. Once again no mention is made of anti-Jewish vandalism or the fact that this act had been condemned across the political spectrum in Israel. The new development was that a

suspect was released for lack of evidence. The focus was once again on the act, something that has already been reported.

► **January 29, 2010**

**Goldstone report: Israel and Palestinians respond to UN**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8487301.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8487301.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel and the Palestinian Authority have both announced they are conducting investigations into allegations raised in the Goldstone report that the two sides had committed war crimes.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Despite the article's lead in which it states that both sides had responded to the Goldstone report, almost the entire article relates charges against Israel. One accompanying picture shows a wounded Palestinian child and a second shows

Palestinian civilians outside a destroyed home. At the end of the article, a short section mentions Palestinian denials that they had committed any war crimes. There is no mention of the specific war crimes of which the Palestinians have been accused.

► **February 1, 2010**

**Israel disciplines officers over Gaza**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8490646.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8490646.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** According to the BBC, Israel has disciplined two high ranking army officers for “endangering life by firing white phosphorous munitions.”

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The BBC got the story wrong. The two officers were disciplined for the firing of artillery shells close to a civilian area. The report did not find that they had allowed the use of white phosphorous.

In fact, as reported by the New York Times:



*"Their punishment had nothing to do with white phosphorous," said Capt. Barak Raz, an Israeli Army spokesman, "but with the firing of artillery shells in a built-up area."*

If the New York Times took the time to make sure the facts it reported were accurate, why didn't the BBC?

► **February 2, 2010**

**Gaza's fishermen look to farms, not the sea**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8492896.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8492896.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Due to the Israeli blockade of Gaza, Palestinian fisherman can no longer catch fish at sea. Some are building fish farms.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** This story is another that focuses on the hardships to Palestinians caused by the Israeli blockade. It is based on numerous interviews with 4 Palestinians and includes four pictures. While it is most likely an accurate and useful look

at how the conflict is affecting Palestinian lives, it again takes the Israeli measures out of context and simply offers a short explanation by Israel that the restrictions are to prevent smuggling. For more balance, there should have been an interview with someone from the Israeli side giving more detail about maritime weapons smuggling and attempted attacks from the sea.

► **February 5, 2010**

**Archeology and the struggle for Jerusalem**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8480304.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8480304.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israelis and Palestinians each make claims to the Old City of Jerusalem. Palestinians say that Israeli historical claims are just political efforts to expel them.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The Palestinian claim sounds more authentic because it is made by a Palestinian resident of the area. The article refers to other Palestinian residents whose families have been

there for "generations" and mentions a girls' school. On the other hand, the Israeli claim is made by a tour guide who uses the Bible as his source. The article points out that most of the Jewish visitors to the area live abroad, as opposed to inside the contested area itself. No Israeli residents are interviewed and there is no reference to the destruction of the Jewish quarter in 1948.

We are informed that Israel has only "occupied" the area since the 1967 war. No mention is made of the fact that over 3,000 years, the only time Jews did not live in Jerusalem was when the city was conquered by the Jordanians in 1948.



► **February 5, 2010**

**Gaza: UN chief Ban Ki-moon rules evidence 'incomplete'**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8499655.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8499655.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Both Israel and Hamas deny that they committed war crimes in the Gaza conflict.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Even though this article was about accusations against both Israel and the Palestinians, the picture accompanying the article is of Palestinians outside a destroyed home. The casualty figures used are the ones that were compiled by the Palestinians and are in dispute. Hamas is referred to as a “militant Islamist group” rather than a terrorist organization.

► **February 10, 2010**

**Israeli planes 'strike Gaza's disused airport'**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8507876.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8507876.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel has launched an airstrike against an abandoned airport in Gaza.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The headline does not make clear that the Israeli strike was in response to a Palestinian rocket attack on Israel (although the article does.)

► **February 11, 2010**

**Israeli soldier's alleged killer 'was tired of life'**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8510257.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8510257.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** A Palestinian who stabbed an Israeli army officer to death may have been suicidal.

**ANALYSIS:** Instead of focusing on the actual act of terrorism, the article takes the angle that the terrorist was suicidal as a way of explaining his actions. Despite the fact that there were numerous witnesses, the killer is referred to as “alleged” and “accused.” The picture accompanying the article is of the soldier's overturned jeep with the caption “Sgt Maj Khatib's 4x4 army vehicle flipped over as he lost consciousness.” The fact that the soldier lost consciousness because he had been stabbed in the chest is missing from the description.

► **February 14, 2010**

**Sex claim investigated as Palestinian aide suspended**

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8515291.stm>

**SYNOPSIS:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has suspended his chief of staff while an inquiry is held into allegations that he solicited sex from a job applicant.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** This is a rare article that examines corruption within the Palestinian Authority. With serious charges against one of the highest ranking Palestinian Authority officials, one would imagine that the BBC would publish numerous follow-up articles. However, at least through the end of March the BBC did not write anything further about this case.

► **February 15, 2010**

**Israeli settlers disobey the order to stop building**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8516223.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8516223.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Twenty-nine Israeli settlements are continuing construction despite a government-ordered freeze.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The focus of the article is on a small minority of settlements in which there have been violations of the government-ordered settlement freeze rather than on the overwhelming majority which are complying with the freeze. In addition, the caption on the accompanying image – “Settlers have continued to build in defiance of a government order” implies that **all** settlers are ignoring the ban. The article uses the Israeli organization Peace Now as a source, rather than interviewing someone representing the government or the settlements.

► **February 17, 2010**

**Israel makes life very hard for Palestinians, says ICRC**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8519921.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8519921.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** The International Committee of the Red Cross claims that Israel is making life very difficult for Palestinians. Travel restrictions and settler violence are taking their toll on Palestinian society.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The article fails to give any balance or context. The reasons for travel restrictions – to stop terrorist attacks – are not given. Nor is it made clear that instances of settler violence against Palestinians are very rare. From the article, one could only assume that facing settler attacks was part of daily life for Palestinians. There is no evidence that this is the case. The article simply accepts and reports on the ICRC accusations. The image that accompanies the article is of Palestinians shepherds going through a gate in a fence with the caption “Israeli troops control many Palestinians' access to land.” The BBC could have balanced the ICRC accusations with an Israeli response to accurately cover the issue.

► **February 19, 2010**

**Bilin marks five years of West Bank barrier protest**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8523221.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8523221.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** A weekly protest against the Israeli separation fence continues despite the death of one of the protestors.



**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The lead of the article seems to romanticize the protests. “Despite the barrages of Israeli tear gas, sound grenades, foul-smelling spray and sometimes bullets - rubber coated and occasionally live fire - the protesters at the Palestinian village of Bilin keep going back for more.” The documented reality is that almost every week, the “protestors” attack the soldiers and attempt to dismantle the security fence.

An account of a Palestinian who was killed at one of the protests dismisses the IDF claim that the protestors were attacking the soldiers. It says “there is no obvious stone-throwing taking place in video footage of the incident, which can be seen on YouTube.” It is difficult to figure out exactly what is happening in the grainy YouTube clip that was uploaded by a pro-Palestinian group. Furthermore, the clip shows a tiny segment of time in one place and can hardly be cited as authoritative evidence. Yet it is good enough for the BBC.

The article tells the story of a Palestinian from the village.

“It was like paradise,” he says, describing how he planted olive trees with his children and watched them grow over 17 years....much of the land is (now) surrounded by the Jewish settlement of Matityahu. He says that his trees were uprooted when it was built, and now he is too afraid of the settlers to visit.

The BBC offers no evidence to corroborate the man's story. Even if true, there are equally compelling narratives of Israelis whose lives have been affected by the conflict and whose stories have been ignored.

## ► February 21, 2010

### Israel adds West Bank shrines to heritage list

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8527532.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8527532.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Israel announced that it is adding the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem to its list of national heritage sites.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** A section of the article bears the subheading “Violation” which is taken from a longer quotation from a Palestinian spokesman. Nowhere in the article is there a mention of how that act is a “violation” or what agreement exactly it is violating. By using one side's language as a title, the article sways opinions against the move.

The article fails to mention that another site – Joseph's Tomb in Nablus – was given to the Palestinians who then vandalized the site and prohibited Jews from worshipping there. This would be relevant as a way of explaining to the reader why Israel wants to protect these holy sites.

► **February 22, 2010**

**In pictures: Life in the shadow of Israeli settlements**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8518436.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8518436.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** A series of images depict terrible conditions for Palestinians living in the disputed territories. All images are from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** These pictures – which are all provided without any context – create the impression that Israel is deliberately keeping all Palestinians in poverty. The pictures are emotional and create an extremely negative portrayal of Israel. They also imply that all Palestinians are living in dire poverty without mentioning that the standard of living and per capita income among Palestinians in the territories is actually higher than that of people living in almost every one of the surrounding Arab nations.

► **February 22, 2010**

**Riots over Israel Claim to West Bank heritage sites**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8528231.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8528231.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Riots broke out after Israel added the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem to its list of national heritage sites.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Two pictures accompany this article. The first shows Israeli soldiers firing at what we are told are Palestinians. Yet with no Palestinians injured and one Israeli soldier wounded, it is clear that minimal force was used. This picture creates an impression that the Israeli military reaction was excessive. Why no pictures of the Palestinians attacking the soldiers? Instead, the second picture is of a group of Palestinians in prayer in Hebron. Once again, the image is one of Palestinians engaged in peaceful protest against Israeli military aggression. While no quotations justifying the Israeli position are used, the article cites as an authority Palestinian Mufti Sheikh Muhammad Hussein who makes the following biased and untruthful statement:

*"The occupation has devoted all of its efforts to steal Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, Hebron and Palestinian cities to change their Arab and Islamic character to prove the country is Jewish."*

A picture of Rachel's Tomb uses a caption claiming that Palestinians are denied access to the Tomb. Nowhere in the article is it mentioned that there has been virtually no known Islamic connection to the site until the year 2000.

► **February 26, 2010**

**Israeli authorities back 600 new East Jerusalem homes**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8538791.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8538791.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** An Israeli planning committee approved the building of homes in an area that is over the Green Line.





**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Once again, quotations from a Palestinian leader and a left-wing Israeli organization are used to skew the article against the official Israeli position. The article refers to the housing plan – which will not begin for several years – as a “scheme.” The word “violation” is taken from a Palestinian quotation and used as the title of a section of the article.



**March 1, 2010**

**ME anger at Israeli 'escalations'**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8543120.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8543120.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** Examples of reporting in the Middle East on Israel's decision to list two sites as National Heritage sites.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** While the Arab media outlets invariably write with an anti-Israel bias, the BBC had complete control over the headline and accompanying picture. Both represent a bias. The headline maintains that the Israeli move was an “escalation” while that word was taken from one of the Arab editorials. The image showing heavily armed Israeli soldiers battling “protestors” also reinforces the “Israel as the aggressor” view.



**March 3, 2010**

**Newly unveiled East Jerusalem plan put on hold**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8546276.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8546276.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** A plan to demolish illegally built homes and develop an area near Jerusalem's Old City has been put on hold.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The area is referred to as “Arab East Jerusalem” which immediately undermines legitimate Israeli claims to the area. By referring to the plan as a “scheme,” the BBC makes the proposal seem illegitimate and sinister. The lone pull out quote from a Palestinian completely distorts and reverses the historical record:

*“It's our forefathers' land, Arab land, Muslim land, I refuse to give up this land.”*



**March 5, 2010**

**Dozens Hurt in Jerusalem Clashes**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8552569.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8552569.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** Rioting in Jerusalem has left dozens hurt.





BIAS ANALYSIS: This article ends with the common language of:

*"Palestinians have said negotiations are futile while Israel insists on expanding Jewish settlements on occupied land."*

Nowhere do we hear the Israeli position on negotiations. Why does the BBC not end articles with something like?

*"Israelis say negotiations are futile while the PA insists on glorifying terrorists."*

Thousands of years of the centrality of the Temple Mount in Jewish history are reduced to:

*"The Jerusalem complex is known to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif and to Jews as Temple Mount, and has long been contested."*

► **March 8, 2010**  
**Israel 'risking peace talks' with West Bank building**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8555300.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8555300.stm)



SYNOPSIS: Israel has authorized the construction of 112 apartments in the settlement of Beitar Illit as an exception to the construction moratorium.

BIAS ANALYSIS: The construction of 112 previously authorized apartments in a city of 35,000 did not violate any agreement and in itself should not be represented as a significant issue. Yet, by quoting both Palestinian and anti-settlement Israeli organizations, the BBC gives the story more coverage than it deserves. The headline that this move "risks"

peace talks makes it seem like Israel is the party against the talks.

► **March 9, 2010**  
**Israel announces East Jerusalem homes as Biden visits**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8558819.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8558819.stm)

SYNOPSIS: An Israeli planning committee has approved the planning of 1,600 new apartments in a Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem located over the 1948 "Green Line."

BIAS ANALYSIS: The BBC writes:

*"Close to 500,000 Jews live in more than 100 settlements built since Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem."*

This implies that the Jewish claims to these areas began in 1967. That ignores thousands of years of Jewish history and accepts, without question, the Palestinian perspective.

► **March 10, 2010****Joe Biden steps up pressure on Israel over E Jerusalem**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8560082.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8560082.stm)

SYNOPSIS: U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has come out strongly against the announced plans for 1,600 new homes in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo.

BIAS ANALYSIS: It is critical that influential news services like the BBC present the whole picture on this issue. Yet, by using language like: "Ramat Shlomo is referred to as a settlement", when in fact, it is a Jewish built up neighborhood just a few meters from the 1948 Green Line. No Palestinians will be displaced by the housing. Simply referring to it as a "settlement" or located in "Occupied East Jerusalem" uses the language of one side of the conflict and oversimplifies and distorts the reality on the ground.

► **March 11, 2010****Peace talks 'difficult' for Abbas amid settlement row**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8561441.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8561441.stm)

SYNOPSIS: Palestinians say that the Israeli decision to build 1,600 homes in Ramat Shlomo must be canceled for peace talks to move forward.

BIAS ANALYSIS: Most of the article is based on direct quotations from Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat. No Israelis are quoted directly about the issue.

► **March 12, 2010****UN humanitarian chief criticises Israel over Gaza**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8563569.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8563569.stm)

SYNOPSIS: The head of the United Nations Mission in Gaza says that Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip is unjust and should be lifted.

BIAS ANALYSIS: The article has a focus that reflects poorly on Israel. It gives hardly any context as to the Israeli reasons for the blockade. No Israeli is interviewed to give a response.

► **March 12, 2010****Israeli troops charged over use of boy as human shield**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8563726.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8563726.stm)

SYNOPSIS: The Israeli military has charged two of its soldiers with endangering the life of a Palestinian boy during Israel's offensive against Hamas in Gaza.



**BIAS ANALYSIS:** With one isolated incident like this compared to thousands of examples of Hamas using civilians as human shields, one has to question the BBC's decision to run this as a major story without reference to the accusations against Hamas. We are not saying that the BBC should ignore Israeli misdeeds. However, they should give the same amount of attention to such incidents when they occur on the Palestinian side.

► **March 12, 2010**  
**Clinton rebukes Israel over East Jerusalem homes**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8565455.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8565455.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has sharply rebuked Israel over its recent decision to build new settlements in East Jerusalem.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Ramat Shlomo is referred to as an "East Jerusalem Settlement." A map accompanying the story listed several controversial areas including:

Sheikh Jarrah: Several Palestinian families evicted in past 18 months to make way for Jewish settlers after court ruled in ownership dispute.

The caption should have mentioned that they were being evicted for not paying any rent since 1948.

► **March 14, 2010**  
**Senior Hamas leader seized in West Bank - Israeli army**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8566628.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8566628.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** A leading member of the Palestinian of Hamas has been arrested in the West Bank, Israel's army says.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Even though the man featured in the article was responsible for the deaths over over 70 civilians, the BBC still refuses to label him a terrorist. The BBC actually says:

*"Designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the US and the EU, it is seen by its supporters as a legitimate fighting force defending Palestinians from military occupation."*

By definition, supporters of any organization – even one that commits terrorism – see legitimacy in their cause. The picture of Uda wearing a tuxedo creates a positive impression of someone who is in reality a mass-murderer.

► **March 14, 2010**

**Obama aide condemns 'destructive' Israeli homes plan**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8566992.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8566992.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** Israel's announcement of plans to build 1,600 homes for Jews in East Jerusalem was "destructive" to peace efforts, a top aide to Barack Obama says.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The same out-of-context statements about Jerusalem and settlements are repeated here. A sub-heading simply bears the word "affront."

► **March 15, 2010**

**Israel closes villages of Bilin and Nilin to protests**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8568355.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8568355.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** The Israel Defense Forces have barred Israelis and foreigners from two West Bank villages, the scene of protests against Israel's "separation wall".

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** A picture accompanying the article shows a Palestinian with a flag amid tear gas. It gives a romantic and heroic image of what are, in reality, extremely violent protests. The caption is: "Protesters say the demonstrations are peaceful but the IDF disagrees." The violence of the "protests" should be

a fact that any journalist can easily confirm. The way the caption is written, the protestors views are given more weight.

► **March 15, 2010**

**EU's Ashton chides Israel over Jerusalem settler plan**

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8568206.stm>



**SYNOPSIS:** EU foreign policy chief Baroness Catherine Ashton has said Israel's decision to build new housing in disputed areas of Jerusalem endangers peace talks.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The article repeatedly uses the words "settler homes" misleadingly portraying the planned apartments for ultra orthodox Jews. The housing plan cannot be accurately described as a "settler plan." The article concludes with "Jewish settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law" indicating that this is an accepted fact. In reality, there is a debate over their legality.

Once again, the BBC has chosen to use a word with negative connotations, i.e. "settler." Where is the sensitivity by which the BBC carefully picks words to describe Hamas in a neutral light?



► **March 16, 2010**

**US envoy George Mitchell postpones Israel visit**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8569548.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8569548.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** As the headline indicates, US envoy George Mitchell is putting off a visit to Israel. The bulk of the article deals with Palestinian anger over Jewish housing in Jerusalem and the re-dedication of a synagogue in Jerusalem's Old City.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** A section of the article bears the subheading "Day of Rage" and begins with:

*"Tensions in East Jerusalem have risen in recent days with the settlements issue and the re-dedication of a synagogue in Jerusalem's Old City, which Palestinians have condemned as provocative."*

This is very problematic. First, "tensions" is a misleading term. It is not really "tensions" that have risen, it is Palestinian rioting. Secondly, the Palestinian claim that rededicating a synagogue is "provocative" is absurd. Why does the BBC report it as if it is a reasonable charge?

► **March 16, 2010**

**Jerusalem's flickering tinder-box**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8571399.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8571399.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** An article about Palestinian and Israeli attitudes toward the current situation. Palestinians are angry over the opening of a rebuilt synagogue.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The article begins with a quotation from a Palestinian:

*"They are igniting the whole situation," says Amran Dari, 55, as he cranes his neck to see past the line of Israeli soldiers to the clashes beyond.*

A picture of the Temple Mount bears the caption: "The al-Aqsa mosque is Islam's third holiest site" without any mention to the area also being Judaism's holiest site. There is only one pull out quotation, and it is from a Palestinian:

*"If you shut a cat in a room, what will happen? It will fight to get out."*  
- Rida Zamamiri, 25

Instead of being highlighted, the accusation should be challenged. Just how does this man believe he is being trapped somewhere? Jewish perspectives given later seem to be challenged. When the article quotes a Jewish student saying that Jerusalem should not be divided, there is an editorial comment that this is not an opinion all Israelis share. Poll after poll has actually shown that on this issue, there is very close to a consensus within Israel. All the reader is told, however, is that currently the "Palestinian fear that this opinion has the *political* upper hand."



- **March 18, 2010**  
**US President Barack Obama denies crisis with Israel**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8573760.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8573760.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** President Obama denies that there is a crisis in relations with Israel. The first part of the article details why there might be a crisis between the U.S. and Israel. The majority of the article concerns Prime Minister Netanyahu's brother-in-law, Hagai Ben Artzi, who referred to Obama as “anti-Semitic.”

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** It is very curious as to why the BBC devoted so much of an article to the opinion of the husband of the Israeli Prime Minister's sister. He holds no position in the Israeli government and there is no evidence that the Prime Minister shares his perspective. In fact, as the article points out, the Prime Minister rejected the charge that President Obama is anti-Semitic. Therefore it seems odd that more than half the article concerns Mr. Ben Artzi's opinion – including a lengthy direct quotation. Does the BBC like to publish quotations from relatives of other world leaders? We found no evidence of that.

- **March 18, 2010**  
**US imposes sanctions on Hamas bank and TV station**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8574989.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8574989.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** The US Treasury has imposed sanctions against two companies it says are closely linked to the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas. One is Hamas television.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The article mentions that:

*“Al-Aqsa television has been accused of broadcasting programs aimed at indoctrinating children to become armed fighters and suicide bombers.”*

Yet, the BBC fails to give any examples which would support the charge. In fact, children's programming on Al-Aqsa television that glorifies terrorism has been extremely well documented. Without any examples, the charge appears weak when it is worded “...has been accused of...” Credibility is further eroded when the article says:

*Although designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the US and the EU, it is seen by its supporters as a legitimate fighting force defending Palestinians from a brutal military occupation.*

Obviously the “supporters” of any organization believe in its legitimacy. Here too, the BBC could have given a few examples to show that the charge that Hamas is a terrorist organization is well documented.

► **March 18, 2010****Rocket fire from Gaza kills man in southern Israel**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8574138.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8574138.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** Two Palestinian terrorist groups claim to have fired a rocket from Gaza that killed a person in a kibbutz in southern Israel.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** The trend that we reported on during the Gaza conflict in which BBC headlines covering attacks on Israelis are left vague continues here. According to the headline, it was “rocket fire” that was the culprit that left a man in Israel dead. When an Israeli military attack results in the death of a Palestinian, the headline is almost always clearer and more direct. The headline most often says “Israeli army kills” or similar wording. (See “Fresh Israeli air strikes wound 11 in Gaza Strip” from March 20 below.)

The article also adds that:

*Over the same period (since the Gaza war), 88 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed in a mixture of Israeli military operations and border clashes, according to the United Nations.*

Yet the article is again failing to report the whole story by omitting the circumstances of these deaths. Most of these were killed while engaging in or preparing offensive terror actions against Israelis. From the article’s description, it sounds like there were 88 civilians killed by an overly aggressive Israeli military without justification.

► **March 19, 2010****Middle East Quartet urges Israeli settlement freeze**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8575723.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8575723.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** The international Quartet of Middle East peace mediators urged Israel to freeze all settlement activity. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says that pressure on Israel is paying off. George Mitchell will travel to the region. The article also describes a Palestinian rocket attack and an Israeli military response.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Just as with the BBC headlines, notice the style that the following is written in:

*And a rocket was fired into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip. It caused no injuries, but came a day after a rocket attack killed a Thai agricultural worker when it hit an Israeli kibbutz.*

*Israeli aircraft attacked up to six targets in Gaza overnight but there were no reports of any serious casualties.*

The sentence describing the Palestinian attacks refer to a “rocket” as the subject. In fact, there is no mention of who actually fired the rocket. Yet the next sentence clearly identifies that “Israeli” aircraft were involved in the response. Why does the BBC feel the need to identify the subject of an attack only when that subject is the Israeli military?

► **March 20, 2010**

**Fresh Israeli air strikes wound 11 in Gaza Strip**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8577492.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8577492.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** The article deals with an Israeli airstrike against Gaza, and the Quartet's demand that Israel freeze all settlement activity.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Besides the direct headline, which is inconsistent with the BBC's style in reporting Palestinian attacks, the accompanying image is of a wounded Palestinian being loaded onto an ambulance. Yet a few days earlier, there were no pictures available of the rocket attack that left an Israeli dead. With images of that attack all over the Israeli press, the BBC cannot say that they could not find a picture of the attack. Why is one side's attack reported more graphically than the other?

► **March 21, 2010**

**UN chief Ban Ki-moon demands Israel settlements halt**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8577633.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8577633.stm)



**SYNOPSIS:** The U.N. Secretary General visited the region and declared that all settlement activity is illegal. The article also mentions two Israeli attacks.

**BIAS ANALYSIS:** Both accounts of the Israeli attacks begin with information from Palestinian sources and only later mention the Israeli position that the attacks were defensive and in response to Palestinian attacks. These are listed under the heading “Israeli Strikes” which again omits the context and implies that the strikes were without justification.

An accompanying picture shows a Palestinian on a stretcher and bears the caption “At least 11 Palestinians were injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza's airport.” Buried within the article is the fact that the airport has not been used for many years. The caption and picture made it appear that Israel had bombed a civilian airport.

► **March 22, 2010**

**B'tselem says live bullets may have killed Palestinians**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8580150.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8580150.stm)

**SYNOPSIS:** An Israeli human rights group is calling for an investigation into the shooting deaths of two Palestinians. The military claims that the Palestinians had attacked Israeli soldiers and that only rubber bullets were used in response.



BIAS ANALYSIS: Where the facts are in question, it is entirely appropriate to take statements from witnesses, medical experts, and anyone else who has first hand knowledge of the incident. However, the use of a quotation from Palestinian President Abbas that casts sweeping accusations at Israel rather than reference the specific incident is inappropriate.

Yet that is what the BBC did when it included the following:

*"The Israeli escalation and the killing of Palestinians on a daily basis is the actual response of the Israeli government to the Palestinians, the Arabs and to American peace efforts, and an answer to the Quartet's statement."*

► **March 24, 2010**  
**Netanyahu holds talks with Obama amid settlement row**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8583589.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8583589.stm)



SYNOPSIS: Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has held talks with U.S. President Obama. The U.S. is insisting that Israel freeze construction of Jewish housing in parts of Jerusalem.

BIAS ANALYSIS: Despite what the Palestinians say, a freeze on Israeli construction in the city never been a precondition to previous negotiations. Ongoing plans to build in Ramat Shlomo do not represent a change in Israeli policy. However, the BBC fails to place the Palestinian's "outrage" into context by simply reporting:

*The Palestinian Authority is furious at Israel's insistence on building on occupied territory. It sees it as a serious stumbling block to the resumption of talks, which have been stalled for more than a year.*

Without further explanation, the BBC appears to be accepting the Palestinian's boycotting of the talks as a reasonable measure.

► **March 26, 2010**  
**Israeli troops killed in Gaza border clashes**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8589529.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8589529.stm)

SYNOPSIS: Two Israeli soldiers were killed by Hamas terrorists along the border with Gaza. Another two were wounded in a possible Hamas kidnapping attempt.

BIAS ANALYSIS: Here again we see the special style that the BBC uses for headlines describing Palestinian attacks. The headline was not "Terrorists kill..." but rather "Israeli troops killed..." As we have pointed out before, headlines for articles about Israeli military attacks are much clearer in identifying the attackers.

Once again, terrorists are referred to as “militants” and then in the lead paragraph as “fighters.” Undoubtedly, the BBC would not have referred to IRA terrorists as “fighters.” An accompanying raw video footage shows Israeli aircraft firing on Palestinians. The Palestinians are crawling in the streets and then being rushed away in ambulances.

How is this video pertinent to a story about the ambush of Israeli ground soldiers?

▶ **March 27, 2010**  
**Israeli tanks 'enter Gaza' after deadly clashes**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8590362.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8590362.stm)

SYNOPSIS: A follow up story notes that it is Hamas’s armed wing that took credit for the attack in which two Israeli soldiers were killed.

BIAS ANALYSIS: Even the armed wing of Hamas is referred to as “militants” by the BBC. The story concerns the ambush and killing of the Israeli soldiers, yet the headline refers to a very brief Israeli incursion into Gaza that resulted in no casualties. The headline – which describes an Israeli offensive military action - does not really fit the story.

▶ **March 31, 2010**  
**Gaza youth 'shot dead' in border incident**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8594707.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8594707.stm)

SYNOPSIS: Acting on information from the Hamas-run Palestinian Health Ministry, the BBC reports that a Palestinian teenager has been shot dead close to southern Gaza's border. A quotation from Hamas says that the boy “was left bleeding for hours” before paramedics were able to get Israeli permission to evacuate him.

BIAS ANALYSIS: Although the article does later point out that the reports may not be accurate, it is worrisome that anything Hamas says is still being taken seriously. Not only were the Hamas accusations reported, but the graphic quotation about the boy’s death comes far before suggestions that there may be some inaccuracy in the report. A week later, (after the period of our study ended on March 31, 2010) the boy was found alive and well.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The BBC's coverage of Israel is filled with an anti-Israel bias that is reflected in both the style and substance of its daily reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- The BBC must report on Palestinian violations of signed agreements with the same volume, detail, and scope as is currently devoted to Israeli actions. Beyond failure to condemn, the glorification of terrorism by the Palestinian Authority is a major impediment to the peace process, and the BBC has an obligation to inform its readers when violations occur.
- The weight and coverage ascribed to Israeli voices, from the full spectrum and official sources, must be employed in addition to the usual narrow selection of agenda serving voices. Where charges are leveled against Israeli actions, an Israeli response must be included.
- Complex historical issues must be presented within their proper context. References to the results of the 1967 war must be prefaced by information explaining the initiation of that war. (e.g: "Jerusalem, which Israel reunited after half the city was conquered by the Jordanian legion in 1948.")
- The BBC must use terms that reflect accuracy rather fear offending sensibilities. (e.g: " Hamas terrorists fire rockets at Israeli kindergarten.")

HonestReporting readers and others who follow the BBC can encourage the BBC to adopt these recommendations. Write to the BBC by following the instructions on the following page: <http://backspin.typepad.com/backspin/2008/06/idiots-guide-to.html>