



Gaza war coverage in major newspapers heavily favors Israel

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Researchers

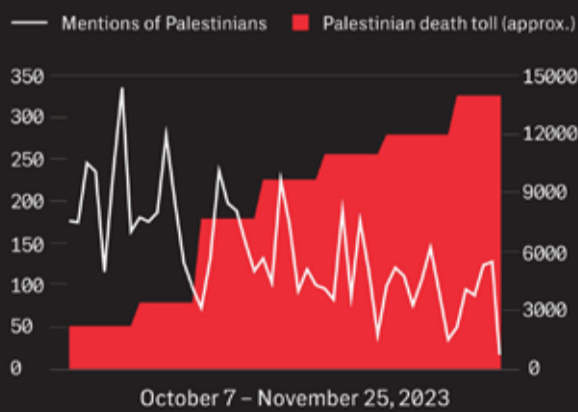
ANALYSIS

The New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times's coverage of Israel's war on Gaza showed a consistent bias against Palestinians, according to an Intercept analysis of major media coverage. The print media outlets, which play an influential role in shaping US views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, paid little attention to the unprecedented impact of Israel's siege and bombing campaign on both children and journalists in the Gaza Strip. Major US newspapers disproportionately emphasized Israeli deaths in the conflict; used emotive language to describe the killings of Israelis, but not Palestinians; and offered lopsided coverage of antisemitic acts in the US, while largely ignoring anti-Muslim racism in the wake of October 7. Pro-Palestinian activists have accused major publications of pro-Israel bias, with the New York Times seeing protests at its headquarters in Manhattan for its coverage of Gaza -- an accusation supported by our analysis.

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Disproportionate Coverage

Mentions of Palestinians declined as the death toll mounted.



'Slaughter' of Israelis, Not Palestinians

The terms "slaughter," "massacre," and "horrific" were disproportionately used to describe Israeli deaths.

	LAT	NYT	WAPO	TOTAL
Use of the word 'slaughter' in relation to Israelis and Palestinians killed	22 / 0	22 / 1	16 / 0	60 / 1
Use of the word 'horrific' in relation to Israelis and Palestinians killed	9 / 1	11 / 1	18 / 2	38 / 4
Use of the word 'massacre' in relation to Israelis and Palestinians killed	34 / 1	53 / 1	33 / 2	120 / 4

THE INTERCEPT

The open-source analysis focuses on the first six weeks of the conflict, from the October 7 Hamas-led attacks that killed 1,139 Israelis and foreign workers to November 24, the beginning of the weeklong "humanitarian truce" agreed to by both parties to facilitate hostage exchanges. During this period, 14,800 Palestinians, including more than 6,000 children, were killed by Israel's bombardment of Gaza. Today, the Palestinian death toll is over 27,000. The Intercept collected more than 1,000 articles from the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times about Israel's war on Gaza and tallied up the usages of certain key terms and the context in which they were used. The tallies reveal a gross imbalance in the

way Israelis and pro-Israel figures are covered versus Palestinians and pro-Palestinian voices — with usages that favor Israeli narratives over Palestinian ones. This anti-Palestinian bias in print media tracks with a similar survey of US cable news that the authors conducted two months ago for The Column that found an even wider disparity. The stakes for this routine devaluing of Palestinian lives couldn't be higher: As the death toll in Gaza mounts, entire cities are leveled and rendered uninhabitable for years, and whole family lines are wiped out, the US government has enormous influence as Israel's primary patron and weapons supplier. The media's presentation of the conflict means there are fewer

political downsides to lockstep support for Israel. Coverage from the first six weeks of the war paints a bleak picture of the Palestinian side, according to the analysis, one that stands to make humanizing Palestinians — and therefore arousing US sympathies — more difficult. To obtain this data, we searched for all articles that contained relevant words (such as "Palestinian," "Gaza," "Israeli," etc.) on all three news websites. We then parsed through every sentence in each article and tallied the count of certain terms. For this analysis, we omitted all editorial pieces and letters to the editor. Our survey of the coverage of the Gaza war in these three media outlets has four key findings.

Lopsided coverage of deaths

In the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times, the words "Israeli" or "Israel" appear more than "Palestinian" or vari-

ations thereof, even as Palestinian deaths far outpaced Israeli deaths. For every two Palestinian deaths, Palestinians are mentioned once.

For every Israeli death, Israelis are mentioned eight times — or a rate 16 times more per death than that of Palestinians.

'Slaughter' of Israelis, not Palestinians

Highly emotive terms for the killing of civilians like "slaughter," "massacre," and "horrific" were reserved almost exclusively for Israelis who were killed by Palestinians, rather than the other way around. (When the terms appeared in quotes rather than the editorial voice of the publication, they were omitted from the analysis.) The term "slaughter" was used by editors and reporters to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 60 to 1, and "massacre" was used to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 120 to 2. "Horrific" was used to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians, 38 to 4. One typical headline from the New York Times, in a mid-November story about the October 7 attack, reads, "They Ran Into a Bomb Shelter for Safety. Instead, They Were Slaughtered." Compare this with the Times's most sympathetic profile of Palestinian deaths in Gaza from November 18: "The War Turns Gaza Into a 'Graveyard' for Children." Here "graveyard" is a quote from the United Na-

tions and the killing itself is in passive voice. In its own editorial voice, the Times story on deaths in Gaza uses no emotive terms comparable to the ones in its story about the October 7 attack. The Washington Post employed "massacre" several times in its reporting to describe October 7. "President Biden faces growing pressure from lawmakers in both parties to punish Iran after Hamas's massacre," one report from the Post says. A November 13 story from the paper about how Israel's siege and bombing had killed 1 in 200 Palestinians does not use the word "massacre" or "slaughter" once. The Palestinian dead have simply been "killed" or "died" — often in the passive voice.

Pro-Palestinian protesters holding banners and Palestinian flags gather outside the New York Times building to protest the newspaper's coverage of the Gaza war on November 9, 2023, in New York City, the US. ● FATI H AKTAS / ANADOLU

