

## Children and journalists

Only two headlines out of over 1,100 news articles in the study mention the word “children” related to Gazan children. In a notable exception, the New York Times ran a late-November front-page story on the historic pace of killings of Palestinian women and children, though the headline featured neither group.

Despite Israel’s war on Gaza being perhaps the deadliest war for children — almost entirely Palestinian — in modern history, there is scant mention of the word “children” and related terms in the headlines of articles surveyed by The Intercept.

Meanwhile, more than 6,000 children were reported killed by authorities in Gaza at the time of the truce, with the number topping 10,000 today.

While the war on Gaza has been one of the deadliest in modern history for journalists — overwhelmingly Palestinians — the word “journalists” and its iterations such as “reporters” and “photojournalists” only appear in nine headlines out of over 1,100 articles studied. Roughly 48 Palestinian reporters had been killed by Israeli bombardment at the time of the truce; today, the death toll for Palestinian journalists has topped 100. Only 4 of the 9 articles that contained the words

journalist/reporter were about Arab reporters.

The lack of coverage for the unprecedented killing of children and journalists, groups that typically elicit sympathy from Western media, is conspicuous. By way of comparison, more Palestinian children died in the first week of the Gaza bombing than during the first year of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, yet the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times ran multiple personal, sympathetic stories highlighting the plight of children during the first six weeks of the Ukraine war.

The aforementioned front-page New York Times report and a Washington Post column are rare exceptions to the dearth of coverage about Palestinian children.

As with children, the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times focused on the risks to journalists in the Ukraine war, running several articles detailing the hazards of reporting on the war in the first six weeks after Russia’s invasion. Six journalists were killed in the early days of the Ukraine war, compared to 48 killed in the first six weeks of Israel’s Gaza bombardment.

Asymmetry in how children are covered is qualitative as well as quantitative. On Octo-

ber 13, the Los Angeles Times ran an Associated Press report that said, “The Gaza Health Ministry said Friday that 1,799 people have been killed in the territory, including more than 580 under the age of 18 and 351 women. Hamas’s assault last Saturday killed more than 1,300 people in Israel, including women, children, and young music festivalgoers.” Notice that young Israelis are referred to as children, while young Palestinians are described as people under 18.

During discussions about the prisoner exchanges, this frequent refusal to refer to Palestinians as children was even more stark, with the New York Times referring in one case to “Israeli women and children” being exchanged for “Palestinian women and minors.” (Palestinian children are referred to as “children” later in the report when summarizing a human rights group’s findings.)

A Washington Post report from November 21 announcing the truce deal erased Palestinian women and children altogether: “President Biden said in a statement Tuesday night that a deal to release 50 women and children held hostage by Hamas in Gaza, in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel.” The brief did not mention Palestinian women and children at all.

## Coverage of hate in US

Similarly, when it comes to how the Gaza conflict translates to hate in the US, the major papers paid more attention to antisemitic attacks than to ones against Muslims. Overall, there was a disproportionate focus on racism toward Jewish people, versus racism targeting Muslims, Arabs, or those perceived

as such. During the period of The Intercept’s study, The New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times mentioned antisemitism more than Islamophobia (549 versus 79) — and this was before the “campus antisemitism” meta-controversy that was contrived by Republicans in Congress begin-

ning the week of December 5.

Despite many high-profile instances of both antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism during the survey period, 87 percent of mentions of discrimination were about antisemitism, versus 13 percent of mentions about Islamophobia, inclusive of related terms.

## When major newspapers fail

Overall, Israel’s killings in Gaza are not given proportionate coverage in either scope or emotional weight as the deaths of Israelis on October 7. These killings are mostly presented as arbitrarily high, abstract figures. Nor are the killings described using emotive language like “massacre,” “slaughter,” or “horrific.” Hamas’s killings of Israeli civilians are consistently portrayed as part of the group’s strategy, whereas Palestinian civilian killings are covered almost as if they were a series of one-off mistakes, made thousands of times, despite numerous points of evidence indicating Israel’s intent to harm civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The result is that the three major papers rarely gave Palestinians humanizing coverage. Despite this asymmetry, polls show shifting sympathy toward Palestinians and away from Israel among Democrats, with

massive generational splits driven, in part, by a stark difference in news sources. By and large, young people are being informed of the conflict from TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, and older Americans are getting their news from print media and cable news.

Biased coverage in major newspapers and mainstream television news is impacting general perceptions of the war and directing viewers toward a warped view of the conflict. This has led to pro-Israel pundits and politicians blaming pro-Palestinian views on social media “misinformation”.

Analysis of both print media and cable news, however, makes it clear that, if any cohort of media consumers is getting a slanted picture, it’s those who get their news from established mass media in the US.

*The article first appeared on The Intercept.*



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.



## CNN has ‘systemic, institutional’ pro-Israel bias: *Staffers*



By Shannon Thaler  
Reporter

### PERSPECTIVE

CNN is facing backlash from some of its own staffers who allege there is “a systemic and institutional bias within the network toward Israel,” according to a report. CNN’s daily news coverage of the Israel-Hamas war is guided by a strict set of directives that include restrictions on quoting Hamas and other Palestinian perspectives, according to UK news outlet The Guardian.

Meanwhile, staffers gripe that statements from the Israeli cabinet are taken at face value, according to the outlet, which cited accounts from six CNN newsrooms in the US and abroad, as well as internal memos and emails.

“We fundamentally reject the notion that our coverage of the aftermath of the October 7 attacks has been anything other than fair,” a CNN spokesperson said in a statement to The Post. “We have vigorously pursued voices from Gaza and the Palestinian perspective, in addition to Israeli voices, throughout the last four months, including from Hamas.”

However, CNN sources told The Guardian that the network hasn’t conducted any interviews with Hamas since October, adding that the network does not have a ban on such interviews.

“It is not journalism to say we won’t talk to someone because we don’t like what they do. CNN has talked to plenty of terrorists and America’s enemies over the years. We’ve interviewed Muammar Gaddafi. We’ve even interviewed Osama bin Laden,” one CNN staffer said.

In another example of the reported guardrails, CNN’s so-called Jerusalem bureau reviews every story the network broadcasts on live television and reports on its website on the Israel-Gaza war.

CNN’s Jerusalem bureau is subject to the same rules followed by the Israel Defense Forces’ Military Censor unit, The Intercept reported.

This IDF unit’s rules — which dictate subjects that are off-limits for news organizations and include information about captives and weapons captured by fighters in Gaza — have long guided CNN’s coverage under a long-standing policy at the Warner Bros. Discovery-owned network, according to The Intercept.

“Ultimately, CNN’s coverage of the Israel-Gaza war amounts to journalistic malpractice,” One unidentified CNN staffer told The Guardian.

Other staffers told the outlet that some journalists have avoided reporting on current events in the West Bank because they believe CNN will not allow them to tell the whole story.

Additional reporters believe senior editors are purposefully not assigning them to write stories on the war, The Guardian reported.

“It is clear that some who don’t belong are covering the war and some who do belong aren’t,” a CNN insider told the outlet.

CNN’s journalists also pointed a finger at its editor-in-chief and CEO Mark Thompson’s “tone,” which they say has something to do with the network’s pro-Israel skew.

Thompson — a veteran news executive who began at CNN on October 9 after leaving his post as chief of The New York Times — had been accused of bowing to pressure from the Israeli cabinet while serving as the director-general of the BBC more than a decade ago, when he yanked one of the British broadcasting giant’s most prominent correspondents from her post in Jerusalem in 2005, according to The Guardian.

He emailed his CNN workforce a two-page memo obtained by The Guardian that instructed reporters to note the historical context of Hamas’ attack by continuing “always to remind our audiences of the immediate cause of this current conflict, namely the Hamas attack and mass murder and kidnap of civilians”.

One staffer said in response to Thompson’s memo, according to The Guardian: “How else are editors going to read that other than as an instruction that no matter what the Israelis do, Hamas is ultimately to blame? Every action by Israel — dropping massive bombs that wipe out entire streets, its obliteration of whole families — the coverage ends up massaged to create a ‘they had it coming’ narrative.”

*The full article first appeared on the New York Post.*

