

A critical analysis of the media's role in our perception of who is a terrorist in the Palestinian
Israeli conflict – One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist.

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Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the role of the media in influencing our perception of the Palestinian Israeli conflict and whether it contributes to the notion that Palestinians are terrorists.

To begin with, a brief history of the Palestinian Israeli conflict will be given, based on a number of sources, including, the work of Avi Shlaim, *The Lion of Jordan*. Mr Shlaim is an Israeli Jew, a Fellow of St. Andrew's College and a Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford. In addition, articles from the official United Nations website and entries from the Encyclopedia Britannica will be used. This section will be included to create an historical context for the content of the dissertation.

The dissertation will also explore how we define terrorism, using Professor Boaz Ganor's paper, *Defining Terrorism – Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?* and a paper by Professor Jerome Slater, *Terrorism and the Israeli - Palestinian Conflict*, in addition to a number of other articles on the same subject.

Having discerned the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter, the next section of the dissertation will discuss how we perceive situations, particularly the Palestinian Israeli conflict and what influences our perception. While a number of articles and images will be used to

discuss this section, the main focus of the section will be on chapters 2 and 3 of Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

The dissertation will continue with an examination of the role of the media and how it can control perception, particularly in the case of the Palestinian Israeli conflict. A number of articles, images and books will be used in this section, including Susan Sontag's '*Regarding the Pain of Others*'. The section will also include the role and responsibility of media and how the media has developed over the years, including social media.

Finally, the conclusion will bring together the previous sections to assess the extent the media has control over our perception of the Palestinian Israeli conflict and whether it contributes to our perception of the Palestinian's as terrorists or freedom fighters.

Brief History of the Palestinian Israeli conflict

In November 1947, The United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 181 that called for the partition of Palestine into 2 separate, independent states, one, an Arab state and the other, a Jewish state. It also called for the city of Jerusalem to be a 'separate entity' under the control of the UN. While the Jews welcomed the resolution, seeing it as a legal basis for establishing the state of Israel, the Arab community rejected the resolution and soon after, a war broke out that has lasted for 72 years. (britannica.com n.d.)

The problem that ensued from Resolution 181, dates back long before 1947. The situation had been brewing for many years but to put it into a ‘recent’ historical context, the situation can be examined from the beginning of the 20th century until the present day.

Palestine had been under the control of the Ottoman Empire for 400 years before the Turks finally surrendered their control to the British, in December 1917, just a month after the infamous Balfour Declaration. At that time, Jews fleeing persecution in Europe wanted to establish a national homeland in Palestine, which was then an Arab- and Muslim-majority territory in the Ottoman and later British Empire. (palestinechronicle.com, n.d.). The Balfour declaration supported “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”.

In his book, *The Lion of Jordan*, Jewish Professor, Avi Shlaim states that, “the Balfour Declaration was one of the worst mistakes in British foreign policy in the first half of the twentieth century. It involved a monumental injustice to the Palestinian Arabs and sowed the seeds of a never-ending conflict in the Middle East.” (Shlaim, 2008 p. 8)

In 1922, Palestine, now free of Ottoman rule, came under the British mandate. Between 1922 and 1947, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased, and tensions between Arabs and Jews escalated. The Encyclopedia Britannica states that, “In April 1947, exhausted by World War II and increasingly intent upon withdrawing from the Middle East region, Britain referred the issue of Palestine to the UN.” (britannica.com, n.d.). The United Nations formed a committee with

members from 11 countries, to find the most suitable course of action to deal with the problem.

The committee was called, The UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP).

(Britannica.com, n.d.)

On November 29, 1947, Resolution 181, based on a “modified version of the UNSCOP majority report,” was put before the United Nations General Assembly, for vote. “The fate of the proposal was initially uncertain, but, after a period of intense lobbying by pro-Jewish groups and individuals, the resolution was passed with 33 votes in favour, 13 against, and 10 abstentions.”(britannica.com, n.d.).

Between November 1947 and May 1948, Avi Shlaim writes that the ‘unofficial war’ between the Arabs and the Jews broke out. He continues by stating that the war “ended in triumph for the Jews and tragedy for the Palestinians” (Shlaim, 2008 p.25) As the British mandate came to an end in May, 1948, the state of Israel was born. One year later in May 1949, Israel was accepted as a member state in the United Nations.

The birth of the state of Israel witnessed the exodus of 800,000 Palestinians from Palestine.

Forced out by the triumphant Israelis, they became refugees in surrounding countries. The Palestinians that remained in Palestine, lived in the West Bank, under the control of the Jordanians and the Gaza strip under the control of Egypt, as shown in the map below.

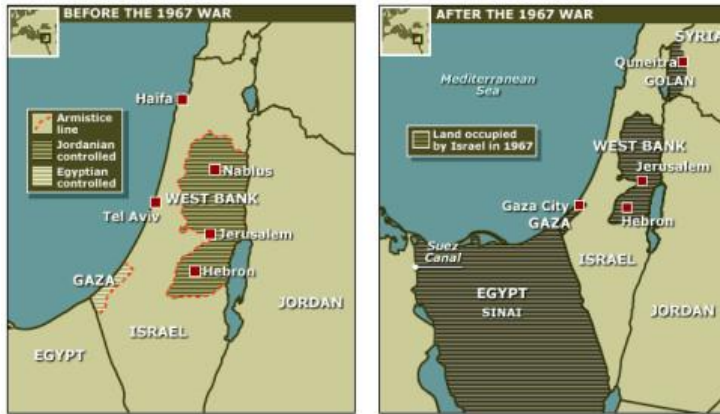


Image 1. (BBC.com)

Less than 20 years later, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war. The war also saw the second exodus of Palestinians when about 500,000 Palestinians left Palestine. In November of the same year, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 242, which “formulated the principles of a just and lasting peace, including an Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the conflict, a just settlement of the refugee problem, and the termination of all claims or states of belligerency.” (un.org, n.d.)

‘War’ between the Palestinians and the Israelis has not ceased in the 72 years since the State of Israel was first established. Many UN resolutions in favour of the Palestinians have been passed by the UN, with many others vetoed or blocked by the U.S.A. While Israel is a full member of the United Nations, the Palestinians have only observer status and are not granted the right to vote. (un.org). Since the 1967 war, ‘Palestine’ – the West Bank and Gaza – has been under Israeli control. Israeli troops control security and Israeli settlers continue to build on Palestinian

land in the West Bank. Under the Israeli occupation the Palestinian people have no rights and are considered by many as terrorists for retaliating against occupation and asking for their freedom..

Who is a terrorist?

In his paper, *Defining Terrorism - Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?*

Professor Boaz Ganor states, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," has become not only a cliché, but also one of the most difficult obstacles in coping with terrorism."

(Ganor, 2010) Ganor points out that for purposes of research, conceptualization and definition are a theoretical issue that scholars use to establish a set of parameters for their intended research. He continues with the point, "However, when dealing with terrorism and guerrilla warfare, implications of defining our terms tend to transcend the boundaries of theoretical discussions. In the struggle against terrorism, the problem of definition is a crucial element in the attempt to coordinate international collaboration, based on the currently accepted rules of traditional warfare." (Ganor, 2010)

Ganor asserts that when referring to terrorists, security experts, politicians and academics use a variety of definitions for terrorism. Some classify terrorism according to the 'mode of operation'

employed by the terrorist group. Others. Stress on the characteristics of terrorism and individual terrorism.

Professor Jerome Slater disagrees with Professor Ganor; Professor Slater, in his article,

Terrorism and the Israeli - Palestinian Conflict (n.d.), states that it is easy to define terrorism,

stating that “there is a generally accepted and objective definition of terrorism (though with minor variations): deliberate attacks, whether by governments or non-governmental groups, on noncombatants (sometimes described as "innocent civilians") as well as their crucial economic and societal institutions and infrastructures, aimed at reaching political, religious or ideological goals” (Slater, n.d.)

Slater goes on to point out that when writing about terrorism, the majority of writers and particularly political leaders in the West, assert that they are emphatically opposed to terrorism, whatever the consequences. However, this is obviously not always true. Governments, including the United States during the Cold War in the 90's, ‘all out’ supported military dictatorships in Latin America that tortured and killed thousands of their own people in the name of anticommunism. Likewise, the United States government failed to criticize the Algerian military dictatorship when it employed terrorist methods on Algerians to wipe out an Islamic ‘terrorist’ movement that at one stage was set to win in democratic elections. (Slater, n.d.)

Slater further points out that such differences are not only made by governments for political reasons. He states that generally, “it is often held that some forms of terrorism are more “understandable” — a vague euphemism, but essentially meaning, less wrong than others.” (Slater, n.d.). He concludes from this that “few people truly believe that all forms of terrorism are equal and always prohibited” (Slater, n.d.) Slater goes on to state that in reality, we take into account, consequences, causes and context before we pass moral judgement about terrorism. He explains that, “The most common distinction is between terrorism on behalf of what we think of as a just cause and that on behalf of an unjust one.” (Slater, n.d.).

Slater’s article also discusses ‘Just Cause’ asserting that to determine ‘just cause’, one must first distinguish, “between terrorism whose purpose is morally indefensible and that whose purpose is justified.” (Slater, n.d.). He goes on to point out that some causes are so obviously just, that according to International law or simple morality, they might merit the use of force to attain them. It is unanimously accepted that self-defense is a just cause for using force, in addition to protecting human rights. Using this argument, Slater states that in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, “the Palestinians have the right (just cause) to freedom, independence, and an end to Israeli occupation and repression”. (Slater, n.d.)

Slater further quotes a number of Israeli sources that have openly stated that Palestinian ‘terrorism’ is a direct consequence of Israel’s occupation and repression. He even quotes Ehud Barak, the ex-Prime Minister of Israel as saying, "If I were a Palestinian, I would join a terrorist

organization." (Slater, n.d.) He uses this and other quotes to conclude that, "insofar as PLO terrorism was designed to end the Israeli occupation rather than the state of Israel itself, its cause was just." (Slater, n.d.)

Perception

Slater's article states that the Palestinians have a 'just cause' in their fight for freedom; a conclusion he reaches after considering all the facts in the situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. However, the way most people perceive who a terrorist is, is dependent on how a situation is presented. If the 'full picture' is presented, we are more able to understand a situation and our perception will be more accurate. If the situation is presented with bias, then our perception of the situation will alter, according to what we are shown. If we take the image below as an example; when presented with the 'whole situation', as seen in the middle section, the situation is easy to understand, however, when presented with only part of the picture, our perception alters drastically. If we look at the scene on the right side of the image, we perceive a soldier being threatened with a rifle, at point blank range, by an enemy or the opposing side. On the left however, we perceive the situation in a different way, as it shows the same soldier being helped by the enemy or opposing side. Obviously, both sides cannot be right; it is only by seeing the whole picture that we can get a clear perception of the situation.

The on-line article, *While you were sleeping – The Fifth Estate – Citizenship Journalism*, explains the above concept stating that in the past, everyone took part in reporting the news,

whether at the marketplace or by telling each other around a campfire The article goes on to state, “Today, corporate media has taken over the telling of the news, by controlling the news sources and reporting methods and use them to advance special interests and/or specific agendas...all designed to change public perception.” (while-you-were-sleeping.com, 2014)



Image 2. (while-you-were-sleeping.com 2014)

In her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, writer Susan Sontag presents how images of atrocities that occur far away, are perceived. She explains how, through mass media, we are able to observe such images in our own homes, but not always with the full context of the situation. Sontag argues, that without the context of the situation, the image will be processed and perceived by the viewer, according to his understanding of the events. (Sontag, 2003)

Sontag also points out that wars tend to be personal, or ‘local’, remembered mostly by those directly affected by them. Even the images captured in photographs, fade in the minds of most with time. However, she continues by saying, that some wars, including the Palestinian – Israeli war, will remain the focus of the attention of many cameras because they convey the message of a deeper struggle. She states that the Palestinian - Israeli war is of particular interest when remembering the persecution and extermination of the Jews in Europe at the hands of the Nazi’s, the ‘crucial support’ for Israel from the United States of America’ and “the identification of Israel as an apartheid state maintaining a brutal dominion over the land captured by in 1967.”

(Sontag, 2003 p.33)

Sontag reiterates that a photograph’s meaning is understood according to the viewer’s experience and the context of the photograph. If there is no context, the viewer will interpret the image from their own perspective. She argues that imagery of war is open to interpretation and manipulation. (Sontag 2003) Taking this into consideration, an image such as fig. 3 below,



(salem-news.com, 2011)

will cause many Israelis to perceive the child as a threat, since they view Israel as their exclusive right and the Palestinians as having no right to live there. Within such a context, the Palestinians are seen to be aggressors. The image when viewed from the side of the stone throwing child portrays an act of aggression on the part of the Palestinian. The image is not the 'full picture' since the image does not show the Israeli tanks or heavily armed soldiers in front of the child. Since the full image is missing, there is a false context to the image and as such will be processed by Israeli viewers according to their experience, resulting in their perception of the stone thrower as an aggressor and enemy.

Sontag believes that the meaning of a photo is based on interpretation, which may be formed of ignorance. She argues that, images tend to make events seem real, creating in the viewer the basis for empirical truth. However, she goes on to remind the viewer that images are the product of the person capturing the image. (Sontag, 2003)

Sontag's ideas are supported in the online article, '*A Few of the Many Ways We Distort Reality- Thinking we are right in our perceptions may be an illusion,*' by psychology today.com, which argues that if faced with a problem, one of the choices we have is to change our perception of the problem itself, since our perception of the problem, is not always accurate, particularly in situations that are emotionally charged. To explain this point further, the article lists some of the ways perceptions may be inaccurate. The list includes, 'the way attention is focused', pointing

out that if you have an idea in mind, you will be inclined to search out evidence that confirms your idea, ignoring evidence that shows that the idea is not true. This process is known as ‘confirmation bias’². The article suggests that a way to counteract this problem is to check the evidence you are using in order to become objective and avoid bias. Second on the list is that ‘people don’t like uncertainty.’ This prompts them to categorize people and events and ‘learn to associate outcomes with cues when they may not be related.’ (psychology today.com, 2012) The article suggests that ‘mindfulness’ may help in solving this problem. The list also includes the point that your ‘first impression affects your later perceptions and decisions. Therefore, if the first impression is based on bias or is inaccurate, later perceptions will also be affected and may even lead to making decisions that are not based on the reality of the situation. The list continues, including the point that ‘you don’t see all that happens right in front of your eyes.’ This means that major details in a situation are missed out on. To correct this, the article suggests that when you are upset about an interaction or a situation, consider that maybe you don’t have all the facts.” (psychology today.com, 2012) The next point in the article states that ‘it’s really difficult to have the whole truth.’ This point corresponds with the idea related to figure 1 at the beginning of this section. Unless you have the full picture, or all the facts, your perception of the event may be distorted. The last point on the list is, ‘you reconstruct your memories’. This point explains how memories can be prejudiced by situations and interactions that happen after the real event. The words that are used to pose questions about the original event, can actually influence the

memory. The article even states that if the memory is ‘missing’ in part, it will be filled in to make it complete. Even events that happen after the original memory can have an impact on the original memory. (psychologytoday.com, 2012)

When the list is regarded in the context of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, it is easy to see why many Israelis consider Palestinians as terrorists; they have been raised to perceive the Palestinians as their enemy. Such ideas are instilled into them from a young age and distort their ability to see the ‘true picture’.

The Role of the Media

The role of the media is to present the truth, based on facts, showing the context of the news and without bias. While this sounds very noble, the real situation is far from noble. It is true, as previously stated by Susan Sontag, that ‘the news’ can now be delivered directly to our homes through social media and as it is happening. However, without the full context of the story, previous knowledge will still be used to interpret what is being viewed. When it comes to mainstream news outlets, the situation is very different.

Media

The situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis has been covered by the media for many many years, but has rarely been reported without bias. According to Greg Shupak in his on-line

article, *Why The Media is Pro Israel*, to report truthfully, the conflict would have to show how Israel has ‘violently colonized Palestine, with the support of the U.S. However, the article states, “Instead, media outlets present fables in which both sides are equally to blame.” (Shupak, 2018)

Shupak continues by explaining why Western news outlets offer accounts of the decades long conflict that favour Israel, by stating that the political function of the news outlet must be understood. The article claims that ‘economic forces’ including the need to sell advertising space, govern the actions of news outlets. Shupak goes on to state that in an academic survey carried out in the 90’s, almost 90% of daily newspaper’s editors reported that “advertisers attempted to influence the content of stories appearing in their papers and 90 percent of them had advertisers apply economic pressure to them because of their reporting; 37 percent admit to capitulating to advertiser pressure.” (Shupak, 2018) The findings of this survey were similar to the findings of another academic survey carried out in 2007, which found that there were regular clashes between the “business side and the journalism side of newspaper operations” and that “advertising directors are willing to appease their advertisers, and are also willing to positively respond to advertisers’ requests,” (Shupak, 2018) Shupak also asserts that when examined in the context of commercial media, it is easy to understand why reports about the Palestinian Israeli conflict that are biased towards Israel, are as widespread as they are, since “the outlets covering the Palestinian-

Israeli conflict are embedded in a system of global imperialist capitalism built around US hegemony, of which Israel is an important feature.” (Shupak, 2018) He also states that certain stories that he has examined propose that a select few in the news industry consider that the ‘violent oppression’ of Palestinians and relegating them to refugee status is ‘no great injustice.’ (Shupak, 2018) .

Shupak’s ideas of US media bias towards Israel, are reiterated by Kathryn Shihadeh in her on-line article, *50 Years Bias of Pro Israel in US Media*, which states that in a recent media study of analysis of data reaching back 50 years, it was found that US media outlets have constantly shown bias in favour of Israel when reporting the Palestinian Israeli conflict. The study, the largest of its kind, used 5 influential US newspapers to evaluate the headlines during the period 1967 – 2007, The study began right after the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Using methodology that included Natural Language Processing (NLP), the study showed that news coverage favoured Israel, not least in the number of stories related to Israel and presented Palestinian related news reports with negative connotations, and downplayed major issues that showed the true context of the story. (Shihadeh, 2019)

Shihadeh goes on to point out that the report found other discrepancies too, stating that rather than remaining neutral and basing stories on facts, ideological sentiments were used that reflected bias. She also pointed out that a gross injustice occurs when presenting the voice of the Palestinian people. Palestinians are quoted in news reports 5 times less than Israelis; thus the Israeli perspective of a situation is heard far more than the Palestinian perspective, even when the Palestinians are in the majority. (Shihadeh, 2019)

A further point is made which shows that the newspapers failed to cover, or covered inadequately, certain areas of the conflict. These inadequacies led to reader misconceptions. One of the misconceptions was that of the alleged ongoing ‘peace process’. Shihadeh points out that since 1993, there have been no peace talks. She also points out that the use of the word ‘occupied’ is being used less and less frequently. In addition, the use of brutal force by the Israeli occupiers is ‘becoming normalized’ and the idea that the occupation is illegal has been forgotten as have the Palestinian refugees, who are still waiting for repatriation according to UN Resolution 242. Shihadeh also asserts that the study also showed ‘under reporting’ on topics such as illegal Jewish settlements and the Palestinian’s claim to East Jerusalem as their future capital in a Palestinian State. (Shihadeh, 2019)

Shihadeh’s article also quotes Greg Shupak’s article – *The Wrong Story: Palestine, Israel and the Media*, which puts forward Operation Protective Edge as an example of Israeli hostility in Gaza in 2014, when the precursor of the violence, the blockade of Gaza, was mentioned just

once in the New York Times in all its reports on the conflict. The omission of this point did not allow the readers to get the true context of the story. Shihadeh also quotes Glasgow University researchers Greg Philo and Mike Berry, who researched British media coverage of the Palestinian Israeli conflict which led to their discovery that the BBC failed to give enough context to the situation, which results in an incomplete picture that is misleading.

A further on-line article, by Alasdair Soussi, *Why the media fails to cover Palestine with accuracy and empathy*, discusses the position from the point of view of the British press, stating that when reporting the situation in Gaza, the British media, “does not always succeed in telling Palestine's contemporary story with accuracy and empathy.” (Soussi, 2019)

Soussi continues by quoting Sarah Helm, who was a foreign correspondent for the Independent newspaper in the UK, based in Jerusalem in the 1990's as saying, that there was always pressure when reporting news related to Palestine or Israel, from the ‘intense Israeli media lobby’ including the Israeli political lobby, that were present at every level. Helm also said that her editor would be pressured by the London based Israeli lobby to know what the foreign correspondents were doing in the field, resulting in newspapers being pressured by the Israeli lobby, which over time led to readers not having a clue as to what Palestine is. Helm asserted that, “Everyone is terrified of putting a foot wrong and being accused of being anti-Semitic that they daren't even ask the necessary questions.” (Soussi, 2019)

Soussi also cites the example of David Cronin, who had worked as a freelancer for the British newspaper the Guardian, as writing in 2015 of his frustrations with the Electronic Intifada newspaper. After writing about the atrocities carried out by Israel against the Palestinians, he was advised by an editor to keep away from the conflict completely. (Soussi, 2019) Soussi also points out that because of space constraints and time, UK media reports pay little attention to the context or history of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, thereby creating in the reader, misconceptions of the real situation.

Soussi continues by relating two further sources; the first, the former Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, Ilan Baruch, who believes that Israel has dominated Western media during the last 70 years. Baruch states that "Israel was brilliantly successful in offering a narrative to the western hemisphere that was embraced with little or no objective judgement." The second is Sir Vincent Fean, who was a British consul-general in Jerusalem and believes that 'reporting fatigue' is part of the reason that there is poor media coverage on the Palestinian Israeli conflict. He believes that the deep rooted and complex struggle over Gaza has reduced the interest of Western media. He also believes that the bloodier crises that exist in the Middle East, have taken away some of the oxygen from the Palestine Israel issue. (Soussi. 2019)

Fean's belief supports the idea of Susan Sontag in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

Sontag believes that people have a morbid fascination with images of suffering, while not always

sympathizing with the victims. Sontag believes that people are more likely to sympathize with people of their own race or nationality. She also points out that the constant viewing of images that present graphic details of suffering, will contribute to the de-sensitizing of the viewer.

(Sontag, 2003)

An additional on-line article, *ROLE OF MEDIA IN PEACE, CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE-DISCUSSED BY INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SEMINAR*, based on information received from a UN information officer, presents the details of the seminar, which was held in Cairo in 2005. During the seminar, which discussed the ‘role of the media in peace and conflict between Israel and Palestine, a number of speakers presented their opening remarks. The ‘Director of the News and Media Division of the United Nations Department of Information’, Ahmad Fawzi, stated that the role of the media was to uphold the truth, supported by facts and without being censored. This view was reiterated by Pierre Luc Brassard, the correspondent for Radio Canada in Cairo. However, Gideon Levy of Ha’aretz of Israel asserted that people don’t always want to hear the truth. He had been trying to tell Israelis news that ‘they didn’t want to hear and to present them with images they didn’t want to see see.’ He believes that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is one of the cruelest of occupations, but that most Israelis don’t want to know about it. (un.org, 2005) Levy also stated that many journalists actually ‘told the truth’; however, it wasn’t the whole truth. He believes this is a betrayal, stating that Israeli readers are manipulated into thinking of Palestinians as terrorists and not human. This point, he believes, is

“the biggest crime of the Israeli media” (un.org, 2005) Levy declared that the Israeli media only ever wrote about the violence of the Palestinians and never showed the human side of Palestinian society since this contradicts the message put forward by the Israeli occupiers. Levy also declared that the same media always portrays the Israelis as ‘the ultimate victim’. (un.org, 2005)

The example of how the media dealt with the story of Menachem Begin is one of the best examples to show how the media can control our perception of events. Elected as the 6th Prime Minister for Israel, Menachem Begin was once the leader of a Zionist group called the Irgun. In the 1940’s, the Irgun was considered as a terrorist group and Menachim Begin was on the U.K.’s ‘most wanted’ list of terrorists, with a 10,000 Pound reward for his capture - dead or alive. Before becoming Prime Minister, Begin had been refused entry into Britain who considered him a ‘security risk’. When he was elected as Prime Minister in 1977, the media ‘white washed’ his image and ‘forgot’ about his notorious past. (haaretz.com, 2011)

Conclusion

To understand the Palestinian Israeli conflict one has to return to history to discover the roots of this ‘most cruel’ of conflicts. To understand the media’s role in propagating the belief that the Palestinians are the cause of the conflict, one must first understand how the media presents the information and who controls what the media presents. Through this dissertation, the points mentioned have been covered and the conclusion is within its pages.

The Palestinians are an oppressed people living under occupation, with many of them being denied their basic rights, as in Gaza. Avi Shlaim states that the Palestinians were served a great injustice through the Balfour declaration and that the 1967 war, which saw the Israeli's occupy the West Bank and Gaza was a tragedy for the Palestinian people.

Concerning whether the Palestinians should be defined as terrorists or freedom fighters; according to Professor Jerome Slater, the Palestinians have a 'just cause'. They are a people under occupation, fighting for their right to exist and as such, they should not be considered as terrorists. Ex-Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, said that if he was a Palestinian, he would join a 'terrorist organization' showing that he considers the Palestinians to be oppressed. They are people that have lived under occupation for more than seven decades as the world looks on and remains, to the most part, silent. Numerous UN resolutions in favour of the Palestinians have been ignored, with even more vetoed by the United States, the greatest supporter of Israel.

The perception of the Palestinians as terrorists is due to ignorance and the lack of context for the situation. Many people judge the situation based on biased reports or reports that omit key factors in the situation. All of this leads them to the mistaken belief that the Palestinians are the perpetrators of violence and the aggressors in the conflict. At the very least, people are led to

believe that the Palestinians and Israelis are equal in the conflict, not understanding that one side is the occupier and the other the occupied.

Western media has a major role in perpetuating the idea that Palestinians are terrorists. The majority of mainstream news outlets are controlled by their fear of being accused of anti-Semitism if they show any favour towards the Palestinians. Some news outlets avoid reporting the situation at all, with others reporting a very one sided version of the story. The majority of Western media outlets fail to give the context of the story and omit main details that would give the story credence. Gideon Levy believes that Israeli media presents the Palestinians as terrorists and not human. He believes that the majority of people in Israel don't want to hear anything different. To be presented with the truth and to have to face the reality of the situation would be too much for their conscience to handle.

It is easier for the Israelis and many others, to believe that the Palestinians are the cause of the Palestinian Israeli conflict; to think otherwise would involve questioning what is the real reason the Palestinians have lived under oppression for the past seven decades and under occupation for the past 52.

To conclude, the Palestinians are not terrorists; they are a people fighting for their freedom. The notion that they are terrorists is a myth created by Israeli occupiers and propagated by the western media.

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