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The media is twisting the knife into Israel over the 'lone wolf intifada'

Nearly five months have passed since the "Lone Wolves Intifada" began in Israel, characterised by near-daily stabbings, stonings and car-rammings. Palestinian terrorists have succeeded in killing nearly thirty Israelis and injuring countless others. As Israelis have confronted this violent upsurge, however, parts of the international media have been rubbing salt into the knife wounds. On too many occasions, headlines have appeared to totally ignore the acts of terrorism themselves, leading instead with the deaths of the terrorists neutralised in the course of committing these crimes – while presenting them, acontextually, as innocents rather than attempted murderers.

The false impression given to the reader is that Israel's security forces are arbitrarily and summarily executing Palestinians – instead of taking necessary action in self-defence to stop terrorist atrocities in real time. This is pernicious and defamatory. It is also poor journalism. In the name of professionalism and basic decency, it must stop.

On the night of 3 October 2015, in Jerusalem's Old City, a Palestinian terrorist stabbed four Israelis (including a two-year old infant), killing two. He then opened fire at police officers, and was shot dead in response. The BBC then ran the galling headline "Palestinian shot dead after Jerusalem attack kills two", neglecting to indicate that the same Palestinian, and not the disembodied "Jerusalem attack", had in fact killed two. After subsequent complaints, the headline was finally changed to the more accurate "Jerusalem: Palestinian kills two Israelis in Old City".

"The incident sparked a persistent trend both in knives as a weapon of choice and in extremely poorly judged newspaper headlines"

The incident sparked a persistent trend both in knives as a weapon of choice and in extremely poorly judged newspaper headlines – though neither is new.

Sometimes, the neutralisation of the attackers – presented as civilians – is presented as the story, rather than the attack itself. When Palestinian terrorists stabbed two Israeli women in a mini-market, and were shot before they could stab more, The Guardian ran: "Two Palestinians shot dead after knife attack in West Bank shop". Aggressor and victim are often inverted: when four Palestinians attempted to stab Israelis in separate incidents, and were stopped with lethal force, USA Today ran "Israelis kill 4 Palestinians as violence surges". And sometimes, headlines draw false moral equivalence between terrorist and victim: the Irish Times ran the scandalous "3 Palestinians, 1 Israeli Die in West Bank Incidents", when the "three Palestinians" had stabbed Israelis, and were killed committing terrorist attacks, and the "one Israeli" woman had had been killed in a terrorist attack.

Embarrassingly, on some occasions, even the Arab media produced more accurate headlines than their Western counterparts. Whereas Al Arabiya reported accurately that "Palestinian girl, 13, shot dead after trying to stab Israeli guard", the New York Times ran the laconically deceitful "Palestinian Girl, 13, Shot Dead by Israeli Guard". Readers could reasonably assume that the guard had executed an innocent girl in cold blood,

instead of defending his own life when an assailant ran at him with a lethal weapon after ignoring calls to stop. Just a week ago, two Palestinians opened fire on Israeli soldiers and were killed in return fire; another lunged at a border police officer with a knife, and was killed trying. The Guardian abased itself with the headline "Three Palestinian Teenagers Shot Dead on West Bank". Even Al Jazeera had the basic decency to add, perfunctorily, the words "after alleged attacks".

The framing of foiled Palestinian terror attacks as instances of malicious Israeli executions has been so ludicrous as to be practically blood-libellous. The straw that broke the camel's back, provoking the Knesset to summon the foreign press corps for a discussion, was a CBS headline reading, "3 Palestinians killed as daily violence grinds on". The three Palestinians in question had just killed a 19-year-old border policewoman and wounded another, and were shot by police before they could perpetrate a bigger attack with the knives, explosives and firearms they carried.

Israelis look at the high terror alert in Europe and the US, and wonder why the world doesn't "get" it. We wonder whether editors are so craven for click-bait, and know that dead Palestinians sell, that they are willing to sacrifice their integrity. And we also suspect, with good reason, that we are witnessing conscious and subconscious attempts to force the story to fit a preconceived narrative of "bad" Israelis versus "good" Palestinians, even when the facts beg to tell another story entirely.

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The result is increasing disillusionment in Israel with Western states as reasonable actors, or unbiased mediators, when these are the fallacious and arguably malicious impressions that their publics are fed against Israel. Moreover, as illustrated by the recent antisemitism scandal engulfing Oxford, hatred towards Israel is liable to spill over into unambiguous hostility towards Jews: grossly misleading headlines of this nature, which create an unjustly negative image of Israel, recklessly nourish the campaign to demonise the Jewish state, thereby threatening to perpetuate this dynamic of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish animosity.

It has been difficult enough in Israel to endure this seemingly unending spate of attacks by knife-wielding Palestinian terrorists. We could really do quite well without newspaper editors twisting the knife as well.

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