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- X נסיגה לקווי טרם האו"ם כפאזה
- X הקפאת ההתחלוצות
- X כינוי מאתרים בלתי חוקיים שובנו
- X מאז מארס 2001
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- X בוצע X לא בוצע X בוצע ונלקח

August 2005

Media Monitoring Project: Words Can Kill, Too

Quiet, We're Disengaging!

Israeli Media Coverage of the Tense Ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian Authority following the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction:

On February 8, 2005, at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) declared a ceasefire after more than four years of Intifada. Since the summit, the two sides have exchanged mutual recriminations on intentional and unintentional violations of the understandings that were reached. This report examines how the major Israeli media outlets covered the ceasefire, how they interpreted the actions (both positive and negative) of both sides, and how they dealt with each side's pronouncements concerning violations of the ceasefire by the other side.

The report focuses on a period of 32 days, between April 9 and May 10, 2005, and examines patterns of coverage in six major Israeli media outlets: The newspapers *Ha'aretz*, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv*, and the nightly television news broadcasts on Channels 1, 2 and 10.

In a long and difficult conflict like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, periods of ceasefire and relative calm - such as the interval examined in this report - are no less important than more violent periods. The two sides arrive at a ceasefire when they are exhausted, injured and distrustful. Almost naturally, both sides tend to overlook cases in which they themselves violate the agreements that led to the ceasefire and to see in the other side's violations proof that it intends to resume the circle of violence. Each side tends to see its violations as unintentional and the other side's violations as the direct result of policy. Moreover, in situations like these, decision makers (in our case, Israeli decision makers) are likely to issue declarations that are not meant to strengthen the ceasefire, but rather, to prepare the ground for blaming the other side in the event that the ceasefire ends.

This is why it is important that media outlets, which provide their consumers with information on this unstable state of affairs, provide balanced, reliable and verified information that attempts to independently examine events in the field and critically interpret official pronouncements. As this report shows, the media outlets examined in this report did not perform their duty in this regard.

The first part of the report (Chapters 2 – 5) concerns coverage of Israel's actions and failures to act; the second part concerns coverage of the Palestinian Authority's actions and failures to act. In both parts, this report does not attempt to determine to what extent each side fulfilled its commitments, nor how "justified" its accusations were against the other side. The report, rather, seeks only to examine news coverage of these questions and to scrutinize to what extent the media outlets provided their consumers with information that was checked, investigated and complete with regard to the complex reality of the fragile ceasefire - information that can enable media consumers to attain an informed outlook on the current stage of the conflict.

2. How was violence by the IDF against Palestinians covered?

During the period covered by this investigation, 9 Palestinians were killed by soldiers' fire in six separate incidents and more than 100 Palestinians were injured. In the media outlets that were examined, there appeared 42 items about these incidents. The reports were relatively minor and were minimized by various editorial techniques. Incidents in which Palestinians were injured by IDF soldiers' fire were almost never reported, even when they resulted in serious injuries.

The report examines two main incidents in depth: The killing of two Palestinian youths in Beit Liqiya, on May 4, 2005, and the killing of three Palestinian youths in the Philadelphi corridor, on April 9, 2005 - to which the Palestinians responded by firing mortars. The initial reports on these incidents were all based on the official IDF version of events and they lacked critical examination of this version. After the IDF published its own investigations of the incidents, its most severe findings were played down by all of the media outlets except for *Ha'aretz*. Independent critical perspectives appeared only in opinion columns and in one investigative report that appeared far away from the news pages. None of the media outlets devoted news space to significant questions that arose from these incidents - such as IDF policy on opening fire in the midst of a ceasefire.

3. How were Palestinian reactions to these incidents covered?

In coverage of these incidents, the Palestinians' reactions were suppressed or played down by all of the media outlets. Channel 2, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv* simply ignored most of the reactions. Channel 1 and *Ha'aretz* gave a little more space to the reactions. Where they were reported, Palestinian reactions appeared in the body of news items and were not mentioned in the headlines. This lack of balance is especially pronounced when it is compared to coverage of Israeli reactions to Palestinian actions. For example, Abu Mazen's criticism of Israel after the killing of the three youths appeared only in minor form, within the body of news items. By comparison, the Minister of Defense, Shaul Mofaz's, criticism of the Palestinian firing of mortars in response, appeared in the front page headlines of all of the newspapers and was prominently covered in the television news broadcasts.

4. How was international criticism of Israel covered?

In the weeks after the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings were reached, various international actors criticized Israel and claimed that it was not fulfilling its commitments. Such criticism pointed out that Israel was avoiding cooperating with Abu Mazen, it was not releasing prisoners, and especially, that it was continuing to build in the settlements. Criticism on the latter subject was voiced by the United States President, George W. Bush. This criticism was played down by most of the media outlets and its significance was minimized: Israel and the United States, it was suggested, simply agree to disagree between themselves on the matter of construction in the settlements.

5. How was intra-Israeli criticism covered?

Criticisms of government policy by senior politicians and security officials were similarly confined to the margins. During the period examined, 28 items containing such criticisms appeared, 19 of them in *Ha'aretz*. In the items in *Ha'aretz*, as well as in the few critical items that appeared in the other media outlets, the critiques were minimized through various editorial techniques.

6. How were the Palestinian Authority's actions and failures to act covered?

A. How were Palestinian violations of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings covered?

In most cases where Israeli officials accused the Palestinian Authority of not abiding by its commitments, the media outlets accepted these criticisms without investigating the allegations on their own. In most cases, the media outlets did not enable Palestinian sources to respond to the charges against them. Channel 10 was exceptional in this regard because it regularly aired Palestinian responses. All of the media outlets, including Channel 10, emphasized Palestinian violations in the headlines and confined Palestinian responses to the body of the news items.

B. How were Palestinian actions in keeping with the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings covered?

During the period examined, there were mentions of measures taken by the Palestinian Authority in the spirit of the understandings: Implementation of administrative and security reforms, unification of the security apparatuses, strengthening of the rule of law, disarming of armed organizations, and renewal of security coordination. These items were played down in the newspapers and confined to the margins of the television news broadcasts and more than once they appeared under headlines that emphasized Palestinian violations of the understandings. In addition, these reports sometimes appeared alongside analyses by Israeli security officials that consistently diminished the significance of the actions taken by the Palestinians.

7. Conclusions:

During the period examined, the Israeli media played down Israeli violations of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings and highlighted Palestinian violations. Criticism of Israel, by Palestinian, Israeli and international actors, appeared infrequently and always on the margins of the news. Criticism of Palestinians, by contrast, was covered profusely. In general, policy questions concerning Israeli violations of the ceasefire received secondary attention, as the media coverage mainly focused on the disengagement plan.

These patterns of coverage and editing, which broadly covered each Palestinian attack on Israelis, provided media consumers with a clear and unequivocal situation report: Israel is abiding by its commitments and in the vast majority of cases it is not endangering the ceasefire. The Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, is consistently breaking its commitments and its leader, Abu Mazen, does not want or cannot keep the ceasefire for any length of time. The ceasefire is therefore bound to collapse - and the Palestinians bear exclusive responsibility for this. In this sense, the Israeli media continues to operate according to the prevailing established point of view, which is that the Palestinian Authority is not a "partner". This perspective also forms the basis for the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

1> Introduction

On February 8, 2005, at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) declared a ceasefire between the two sides – after more than four years of Intifada. The agreement included a series of mutual commitments: Israel pledged to refrain from military actions in the territories, to stop its policy of assassinations, and to undertake a series of “confidence building measures,” including the release of prisoners, the transfer of cities to Palestinian security responsibility and the removal of barriers to freedom of movement. The Palestinian Authority, for its part, committed to bring about a cessation of all violent acts against Israelis and to implement governmental and security reforms – among them, unification of the security apparatuses, strengthening the rule of law in areas under its jurisdiction and disarming armed groups. On March 18, following negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian factions, the factions announced, in a joint declaration in Cairo, their acceptance of the ceasefire arrangement, which they conditioned on the fulfillment of the understandings and the release of the Palestinian detainees and prisoners held in Israel.¹ Israel declared that it is not part of this arrangement and is not obligated to its conditions.²

Since the summit, the two sides have exchanged mutual recriminations on intentional and unintentional violations of the understandings. Thus, for example, at his meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on May 1, Prime Minister Sharon said that “the understandings that we reached with Abu Mazen in Sharm are not implemented by the Palestinians and it will be difficult for us to transfer security responsibility for additional cities if he refrains from taking real steps against terror”. In quotes attributed to close associates of the Prime Minister it was said that “this is a complete collapse of the system, total destruction. The man doesn’t do a thing. He doesn’t talk to anybody, nobody trusts him, not his people, not Hamas, not [Islamic] Jihad, not the apparatuses. He doesn’t understand that at this rate he has no time left”.³

The Palestinian side, for its part, likewise declared that Israel is evading its commitments. For example, in an interview in *Yedioth Ahronoth* on April 20, Abu Mazen said, “You killed three children in Rafah for no reason. Then you chased away the Palestinian police in Hebron and you began pursuing the wanted men, contrary to the understandings [...] We agreed on the evacuation of five cities, you left only two and you stopped the negotiations. The committee on prisoners has held only one meeting and prisoners have not been released”.⁴

¹ Concluding statement of the Cairo dialogue, Appendix to “Inquiry and Analysis Series – No. 223”, Middle East Media Research Institute, May 23, 2005. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA22305>

² “Israel is not part of the ceasefire agreement. If there is quiet, and terror ends, then we will be part of that. It must be clear to the new Palestinian leadership that the ceasefire can only be the first stage, and that they must take real steps to dismantle the terrorist organizations and their infrastructure and to advance comprehensive government reforms.” Statement by the Prime Minister in briefing for the press; website of the Prime Minister’s Office, February 22, 2005. <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/EventsDiary/event220205.htm>

³ Ben Caspit, *Ma’ariv*, April 4, 2005, p. 4.

⁴ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, April 20, 2005, p. 4.

The Israeli media focused very little on these aspects of political relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Most news reports dealt with the disengagement plan and its ramifications. But the subject of the ceasefire and each side's perspective on it is of great importance in the circumstances of an ongoing conflict and in building awareness among Israeli media consumers of the political conditions in which they live.

This report seeks to examine how Israeli media outlets covered the ceasefire, actions by both sides during this period - both actions that were consistent with the understandings and actions that violated them - and pronouncements by both sides on the subject. The report focuses on a period of 32 days, between April 9 and May 10, 2005, and examines patterns of coverage in six major Israeli media outlets: The newspapers *Ha'aretz*, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv*, and the nightly television news broadcasts on Channels 1, 2 and 10. The first part of the report concerns coverage of Israel's actions and failures to act; the second part concerns coverage of the Palestinian Authority's actions and failures to act. In both parts, this report does not attempt to determine to what extent each side fulfilled its commitments, nor how "justified" its accusations were against the other side. The report, rather, seeks only to examine news coverage of these questions and to scrutinize to what extent the media outlets provided their consumers with information that was verified, investigated and complete on the complex reality of the fragile ceasefire - information that can enable media consumers to attain an informed outlook on the current stage of the conflict.

2> How was Violence by the IDF against Palestinians Covered?

During the period covered by this investigation, 9 Palestinians were killed by soldiers' fire in six separate incidents⁵ while more than 100 Palestinians were injured in other incidents. It goes without saying that from the Palestinians' point of view each of these incidents was a gross violation of the understandings - just as violence against Israeli soldiers and civilians is perceived by Israelis as a Palestinian violation. In the media outlets that were examined, there were 42 items that mentioned these incidents.

With one exception, these reports were minimal and were downplayed through various editing techniques. The reports did not reach the front pages of the newspapers or the opening headlines of the television news broadcasts. Take, for example, the case of two Palestinian youths in Beit Laqiya who were killed by IDF soldiers' fire in a demonstration against the separation barrier, on May 4: The reports of their deaths appeared in a tiny item on page 14 in *Ma'ariv*,⁶ in a small item on page 2 in *Ha'aretz*,⁷ and in a small item on page 3 in *Yedioth Ahronoth*.⁸ The television news editions all pushed the story to the middle of their broadcasts: The 11th minute on "News 10", the 14th minute on "News 2" and the 17th minute on Channel 1's "Mabat". The next day, the media outlets reported on the dismissal of an officer who was involved in the incident, once again in the back pages of the newspapers and in the middle of the news broadcasts. The media outlets reported in similar fashion on the death of an activist in the Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigades on April 14, and on the death of an Islamic Jihad activist on May 2. On the same day, another Palestinian was shot by IDF soldiers. He was wounded and was arrested and died of his injuries three days later in a prison hospital. None of the media outlets reported it.⁹



Ma'ariv, May 5, 2005, p. 14.
Minor report on the killing of Palestinian youths by IDF fire.

⁵ A tenth Palestinian was killed on April 25, 2005 by soldiers' fire but the circumstances of the incident were not clear when they were reported and some are still not clear.

⁶ *Ma'ariv*, May 5, 2005, p. 14.

⁷ *Ha'aretz*, May 5, 2005, p. 5A.

⁸ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, May 5, 2005, p. 3.

⁹ This was also the case when a Palestinian died on April 20 from wounds he sustained from army fire in January.



Ha'aretz, May 5, 2005, p. 2.
Minor report on the killing of
Palestinian youths by IDF fire.



Yedioth Ahronoth, May 5, 2005, p. 3.
Minor report on the killing of
Palestinian youths by IDF fire.
The coverage ignores questions
that need to be asked.



In general, cases where Palestinians were injured by IDF soldiers' fire were not reported at all, even when they involved serious injuries. Thus, for example, it was not reported that on April 27 a female Palestinian was wounded from IDF fire in the Al-Shabra neighborhood in Rafah and that another Palestinian was seriously wounded from IDF fire near Rafah.¹⁰ Only when wounded Palestinians participated in demonstrations where Israeli citizens were also wounded, was there any reporting. The fact that Palestinians were injured never appeared in a newspaper headline or in the lead-in to an item broadcast on the television news.

The only incident that received prominent and broad coverage occurred on April 9, when IDF soldiers killed three unarmed Palestinian youths after they entered the area of the Philadelphi corridor in the Gaza Strip, where the IDF forbade Palestinians to enter.¹¹ In response to their killing, Palestinians fired mortars at Gush Katif and Sderot. As a result of the mortar firing, reports on these incidents appeared in the front pages of two of the three newspapers and in the headlines of all the television news broadcasts.

On Channel 1's "Mabat" news edition on April 9 and in *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz* the next day, there appeared only news reports on the incident. On "News 2", "News 10" and in *Yedioth Ahronoth* considerable and prominent space was also given to commentaries by senior analysts. All of these reports drew a connection between the killing of the youths and the mortar firing and in most of the media outlets the mortar firing was characterized as a response to the killing of the youths. Thus, for example, the sub-headline on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on April 10 read: **"Escalation in the Strip: 30 Mortars Land in Gush Katif after IDF Kills 3 Youths"**. On the same day, a headline in *Ma'ariv* on page 11 read: **"The Quiet is in Danger: IDF Killed 3 Youths in Rafah"**. On April 9, on Channel 2, the headline opening the news broadcast was: **"The Gaza Strip is again heating up today, soldiers in a military post on the Egyptian border tonight shot to death three teenage smugglers that tried to cross the border. The response was quick to come in the form of a salvo of mortars, which has not been seen there for many weeks. In the terror organizations they say, 'the ceasefire has ended'"**.

In some of the commentaries that accompanied the news reports, there appeared to be attempts to diminish the significance of the youths' killing in terms of the overall context of the ceasefire. In *Yedioth Ahronoth*, a commentary by Nahum Barnea appeared on the front page. On "News 2" military affairs correspondent Roni Daniel added commentary to the first item shown on the broadcast. On "News 10" military affairs correspondent Alon Ben-David conversed with the news announcer, Tali Moreno. Here is their exchange:

Moreno: "On the ground, are we beginning to see the first signs of the end of the understandings?"

Ben David: "Look, since the beginning of the week there has been a fairly dramatic increase in violent incidents in Gaza. On Tuesday in Morag, an Israeli was moderately wounded, the next day a soldier took a bullet in his back - only the binoculars in his vest

¹⁰ According to data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

¹¹ The fact that they were unarmed was confirmed by IDF sources.

stopped the bullet, and a Qassam on Sderot. In 95 percent of these incidents the popular committees are responsible... There is some kind of message for Abu Mazen here: 'Don't forget us'. And there is some kind of attempt here to heat up the atmosphere in advance of Sunday [when the religious Jewish organization 'Revava' was supposed to ascend the Temple Mount]. But, overall, these violent incidents point to a weakening of Abu Mazen and the Authority. If we don't see action by the Palestinian Authority, we will see more incidents; there will be wounded and in the end these understandings will collapse ... but, and this is the message that Israel is conveying to Abu Mazen: 'Deploy your policemen quickly'. At the same time, Israel is putting international pressure on him from Cairo to Washington, who tell him 'if you don't act now, these understandings are about to collapse.'"¹²

On Channel 2 the following dialogue took place between the news announcer, Danny Kushmaro, and Roni Daniel:

Kushmaro: "Roni Daniel, our correspondent for military affairs, you join us with last minute updates and pictures of mortar launchings."

[Caption: 25 mortars fired at Gush Katif and IDF posts]

Daniel: "...It's true that we're talking about a day that has heated up, but we need to look at the broader context... Just this week: A civilian in Morag was shot, seriously wounded, there was shooting at a tractor, the shooting of a soldier in the Philadelphi corridor - only with luck he wasn't killed - and on Thursday a Qassam was fired on Sderot. ...That is to say, it's the trend that is worrisome. What is Israel doing in these circumstances? First of all, this evening, very stern warnings to Musa Arafat, telling him: 'Deploy your forces immediately'.Overall, the picture points to some kind of deterioration. The explanations that come from the Palestinian side concern the Temple Mount, and the committees are also signaling a bit to Abu Mazen ... Israel is already trying this evening to enlist international, European and other pressure on Abu Mazen, to tell him sharply and decisively: 'Act quickly, before this ceasefire collapses.'"¹³

In the second paragraph of his commentary, Nahum Barnea wrote:

"The 25 mortars that were launched yesterday give a backwind to the claim that Sharon seeks to place on Bush and Rice's table: Abu Mazen is a total disappointment. There is no sense in investing in him. Two months have passed since the Sharm el-Sheikh conference. During this period the Authority has done nearly nothing to eliminate terror. Quite the opposite: The organizations have grown stronger and they are preparing, unfettered, to resume terrorism. The mortars were fired in response to IDF shooting, which killed three youths that got close to an IDF post in Rafah. But on Thursday a Qassam was fired at Sderot and a day earlier, a mortar, and before that was the Stage club bombing in Tel Aviv, to which Sharon chose not to respond, despite the Shin Bet's

¹² Channel 10, April 9, 2005.

¹³ Channel 2, April 9, 2005.

recommendation to the contrary, and two suicide bombers were caught on their way to an attack.”¹⁴

The message conveyed in these commentaries, which resemble each other a great deal, is clear: The killing of the three youths is pushed to the margins of the commentaries and loses its significance as a violation of Israel’s commitments within the framework of the ceasefire agreement. The commentaries tell a one-sided story of Palestinian violence. The mortar firing after the killing of the youths is presented as part of an independent Palestinian dynamic - unrelated to the killing of the youths. In addition, it should be noted that the list of violent events recounted by all three commentators is incomplete: In those same days there were more than a few cases of Israeli violence against Palestinians. For example, on April 6, three Palestinians were injured in the village of Na’ima as a result of soldiers’ shooting at their vehicle and on April 7 the army shot at Block O in Rafah and wounded one Palestinian.

In various media outlets, the initial reports on the killing of the three youths were mostly based on different accounts provided by sources in the IDF. For some of the details, some reporters also relied on Palestinian sources. The reports focused at length on one question: What were the youths doing in the area? Some media outlets took a firm position: The youths were smugglers. Other media outlets presented various and contrasting versions of events. A senior officer told *Ha’aretz*, for example, that the soldiers fired warning shots and afterwards shot at the youths’ legs, because they feared that they were smugglers or terrorists. None of the media outlets raised the question of whether the soldiers had indeed fired at the youths’ legs - and if they did, why they were killed. It should be noted that Channel 10 broadcast an additional story the next day by Shlomi Eldar which presented accounts by Palestinian eyewitnesses, but these accounts mostly related to the question of what the youths were doing there - whether they were playing soccer or trying to steal the military post’s security cameras. The report did not investigate the actions of the soldiers.

On April 18, a week after the incident, the findings of the military investigation were released. Only *Ha’aretz* published the findings - on its front page. According to Amos Harel’s report in *Ha’aretz*, the officer and the soldiers in the force noticed the youths and shot them at close range in order to kill them - without first shooting in the air and without aiming at their legs. The investigation reveals that the shooting was carried out according to the regulations for opening fire in the Philadelphi corridor, but further on it was written that “in the General Command it was said that the force’s commander demonstrated mistaken judgment. It was possible to see that these were unarmed youths and firing at their legs would have sufficed”. The article’s headline clearly stated: **“The Investigation of the Deaths of the 3 Youths in Rafah: The Soldiers Shot to Kill”**.

Besides this article, the IDF investigation was mentioned in three other articles that appeared far from the news pages: Two items in Part B of *Ha’aretz* and an article by Alex Fishman in the weekend supplement of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on April 15. Fishman, who wrote about the incident based on preliminary findings of the investigation, noted that the rules for opening fire in the area

¹⁴ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, April 10, 2005, p. 1.

state that soldiers may “shoot to injure only if they identify means (a weapon, an incendiary device) and intent”. He added:

“The initial examination smells bad. The youths had not yet crossed the Philadelphi corridor. They were moving from the Rafah area toward the corridor [...] In the initial investigation, the soldiers claimed that they performed the procedure for arresting suspects. How does carrying out this procedure end in the killing of three youths that had not yet crossed the corridor? That’s a big question”.

On April 12, Akiva Eldar wrote in Part B of *Ha’aretz*, under the headline “**Gaza Diary**”:

“Ceasefire or no ceasefire, the new military prosecutor [...] did not find sufficient cause to change the investigation procedures set by his predecessor, Menachem Finkelstein, in cases of killings of unarmed Palestinian civilians [...] It appears that this time as well the sector commander will himself investigate who gave the order to fire, without warning, in order to kill, at youths that did not threaten the well-being of the soldiers”.¹⁵

And in a *Ha’aretz* editorial on April 19, under the headline “**How to Help Abbas**”, it was written:

“The problem that stands out in this incident is not a pinpoint problem, it transcends the question of the procedure that has become established in ‘Philadelphi’ for preventing smuggling [...] and the judgment of the echelons that approve firing [...]. In the balance, hang not only the lives of Palestinian youths whose plight pushed them to take risks to earn a living and those that acted on terrorist missions [...] In this situation, the practical question facing Israel is not what Abbas can do for Israel, but what Israel can do for him. Tightening the procedure for opening fire [...] will be a step in the right direction”.¹⁶

These items offer a different perspective on the incident, a perspective that does not try to minimize its seriousness. Almost always, this perspective appeared far from the front news pages (except, as mentioned above, for one article in *Ha’aretz*). The media outlets did not use the findings of the military investigation to ask necessary questions about the procedures for opening fire, about the commanders’ judgment and about the general performance of the IDF during the ceasefire.

This manner of coverage was repeated in coverage of other incidents. Thus, for example, in the initial newspaper reports on the killing of the two Palestinian youths in Beit Laqiya, on May 4, the reporting relied almost exclusively on the military’s version of events, according to which the soldiers fired at the youths’ legs. This is how Roni Shaked, of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, summarized the incident in his article on page 3, under the headline: “**Two Palestinian Youths Killed by IDF Fire**”: “According to the initial investigation, [...] because the protesters were not deterred, and because of the darkness, the commander of the force shot at the demonstrators’ legs. As a result of the firing, the two youths were hit, one in the chest and one in the pelvis”.¹⁷ How were the

¹⁵ *Ha’aretz*, April 12, 2005, p. B3.

¹⁶ *Ha’aretz*, April 19, 2005, p. B1.

¹⁷ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, May 6, 2005, p. 11.

youths killed by shots fired “at the demonstrators’ legs”? How did a clash between an IDF force that was equipped with means for dispersing demonstrations and rock-throwing youths end with the firing of live ammunition? None of the media outlets looked into these questions.

Two days after the incident, all of the media outlets published the findings of the military investigation, which led to the dismissal of the officer who shot the youths. In *Ha’aretz*, it was written: “The investigation points to problems in the ranges from which the officer fired, which are contrary to regulations, and his firing at boulders, which the officer characterized as an ‘attack barrier’. Such firing is forbidden by IDF orders due to previous incidents in which Palestinians were killed [...] The investigation does not rule out the officer’s cause for using live fire, given the threat that he sensed”.¹⁸ In *Ma’ariv* it was written that “From the investigation it comes out [...] that the officer apparently carried out the firing in violation of the regulations for opening fire and that he was not faced with a real mortal danger”.¹⁹ The headlines in both papers told of the officer’s dismissal.

In this case, too, most of the media outlets limited themselves to reporting information that they received from the IDF and did not carry out independent examinations of the incident. Only *Ha’aretz*, about two weeks later, on May 20, published a front page independent investigative report of the incident by Arnon Regular and Amos Harel. The article’s headline was: **“The Killing of the Palestinian Youths in Beit Laqiya: A Series of Mistakes by the Army or a Planned Ambush?”** Beside a diagram depicting the incident, was written:

“The first stage: The IDF force that arrived to secure a bulldozer parking lot decides to disperse a gathering of approximately 150 Palestinians in a nearby soccer field, out of concern that they will try to damage the bulldozers. The second stage: On the outskirts of the village soldiers fire live rounds at a group of youths that escaped from the field. The IDF claims: The security force was under duress. The Palestinians claim: This was another force, in a deep, planned ambush”.

This article points, once again, to the fact that the initial reporting of the incident was partial: In none of the media outlets - after the incident and after the officer’s dismissal - was the sequence of events described from the point of view of Palestinian eyewitnesses. The article in *Ha’aretz* shows that testimonies from Palestinian eyewitnesses undermined the army’s initial version of events, which was later refuted in the investigation. The fact that these testimonies did not appear in the initial media reports stems from the fact that not a single journalist went to the village to investigate the accounts of the many eyewitnesses there.

¹⁸ *Ha’aretz*, May 6, 2005, p. A4.

¹⁹ *Ma’ariv*, May 6, 2005, bottom of p. 2.

3> How Were Palestinian Reactions to These Events Covered?

On the evening of April 9, a few hours after the killing of the youths, Abu Mazen made an official statement in which he condemned the incident and asserted that it was a violation of the calming agreement with Israel. Reports of the statement in the media outlets were marginal, where they appeared at all. In *Ha'aretz* it was mentioned in the fourth paragraph of an article about events in the Gaza Strip that appeared in the newspaper's front page. *Ma'ariv* did not present any information about the statement. *Yedioth Ahronoth* was the only newspaper that published the condemnation in a headline and the paper devoted a small box to the subject on page 4, under the headline: **"Abu Mazen Condemns: We Won't Accept Such Killing of Children"**.

Channel 1 presented Abu Mazen's statement on the evening in which it was made, at the end of the report on the incident itself during the Saturday evening news program "Ro'im Olam". "Abu Mazen condemns the incident," it was said during the broadcast, "and he defined it – a purposeful violation of the calming agreement with Israel". Channel 2 and Channel 10 did not report on Abu Mazen's official statement. The marginal treatment of Abu Mazen's statement of condemnation especially stands out when it is compared to the broad coverage given to the reactions by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense to the mortar firing that took place after the killing of the youths. The Minister of Defense, Shaul Mofaz, spoke with Abu Mazen the next day and portions of the conversation were reported to the press by an official Israeli source. The Prime Minister, on his plane en route to the United States, spoke with some of the reporters that accompanied him and also referred to the mortar firing.

Mofaz's words to Abu Mazen appeared on April 11 in a sub-headline on the front page of *Ha'aretz*: **"Mofaz Demanded of Abu Mazen that He Prevent Further Firing"**. On the same day, *Ma'ariv* quoted Mofaz in a sub-headline on the front page: **"Mofaz to Abu Mazen: This Cannot Continue"**. *Yedioth Ahronoth* quoted Mofaz in the newspaper's banner headline: **"Mofaz to Abu Mazen: Act before It's Too Late"**. On "News 10" information about the conversation between Abu Mazen and Mofaz came during the broadcast and it was mentioned by Alon Ben-David. Channel 2 and Channel 1 did not mention the conversation, possibly because the information arrived too late. The three channels did report, however, Sharon's criticism of Abu Mazen, about which he planned to inform President Bush. In its coverage of the issue, Channel 2 also mentioned Sharon's criticism of the mortar firing.

In all of the media reports on Mofaz's conversation with Abu Mazen, Abu Mazen's responses to the claims made against him were not presented.²⁰ *Ma'ariv* referred to the issue in an article on page 5, under the headline: **"Mofaz Scolded Abu Mazen: 'It's Impossible to Continue like this'"**: "According to security sources Mofaz told Abu Mazen [...] that he must send more security forces to the area where the bombs are launched. The sources did not say what Abu Mazen's response was".²¹

²⁰ Abu Mazen's response was mentioned briefly in an article by Alex Fishman in the *Yedioth Ahronoth* weekend supplement of May 6, 2005.

²¹ *Ma'ariv*, April 11, 2005, p. 5.

The television news broadcasts gave emphasis to Sharon's statements. On April 10, Sharon's response to the mortar firing was presented at the opening of the Channel 1 news: "Sharon on a plane to the United States: 'This is a blatant violation of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings'".

This mode of reporting was not unique to this incident. In other incidents in which Palestinians were killed and official Palestinian sources responded to the killing, the response was minimized in various ways. In most cases, the response was not printed or broadcast at all. In the other cases, except for one, the statement appeared in the body of the news items and was not mentioned in the newspaper headlines or by the announcer in the studio. In only one case, *Yedioth Ahronoth* mentioned Abu Mazen's response to the killing of the three youths in the Philadelphi corridor. In any event, whether or not the Palestinian criticism was presented in the media, the official Israeli response was emphasized much more. Thus for example, in a story on the killing of an Islamic Jihad activist north of Tulkarm that was broadcast on "News 10" on May 2, there was a broad discussion of the operation from the military's point of view. Afterwards, Abu Mazen's criticism was presented: "This is unacceptable aggression. After all, the Israeli army left Tulkarm and Israelis are forbidden from returning there". But right after that the correspondent said, "In the IDF, the response to these claims is that the wanted men escaped from the Palestinian jail a week and a half ago and did not leave the IDF with any other option". Following this, Brigadier-General Gadi Eisencott, the Ayosh Division commander, was shown saying, "The operation in Tulkarm was carried out in the territory of the Authority, after the Authority did not realize its responsibilities and did not arrest those terrorists that it knew about thoroughly". That was the bottom line of the story: Though the Palestinian response was broadcast, it was immediately nullified by Eisencott.

The pattern of ignoring statements by Palestinian spokespersons was also evident when Palestinians expressed general criticism of Israel's policies during the ceasefire. On April 19, Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen granted a series of interviews to all of the main Israeli media outlets at his office in the Muqata in Ramallah, in which he criticized Israeli policy since the Sharm summit. The interviews appeared in the three newspapers and the television news broadcasts. Four of the interviews that appeared quoted Abu Mazen's criticisms of Israel. Here is what appeared in an article by Roni Shaked on page 4 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*:

"'But you,' complained Abu Mazen, 'killed three children in Rafah for no reason. Then you chased away the Palestinian police in Hebron and you began pursuing the wanted men, contrary to the understandings [...] We agreed on the evacuation of five cities, you left only two and you stopped the negotiations. The committee on prisoners has held only one meeting and prisoners have not been released'".²²

The article's headline was **"Abu Mazen: 'The Evacuation Will Take Place under Calm Security'"** and the front-page headline that referred to the article was **"Abu Mazen: 'We Won't Open Fire during the Evacuation, We will Act in a Civilized Manner'"**. This headline does not reflect Abu Mazen's criticism, but rather emphasizes his promises to fulfill his commitments.

²² *Yedioth Ahronoth*, April 20, 2005, p. 4.

On April 19, Channel 2 reported the interview in a similar way. The headline at the beginning of the broadcast was: **"Abu Mazen, in an interview to Ehud Ya'ari, asks to postpone the disengagement"**. In the report itself, Abu Mazen said:

"We absorbed [in the security apparatuses] those who live in the cities that Israel left: Jericho and Tulkarm. We are preparing—there are committees that are working day and night to appoint them—to organize them and absorb them. But the problem is that the occupation is complicating this action. Israel must leave these cities so that they can all be absorbed in the apparatuses where we position them in their cities."

In an interview broadcast on Channel 10, none of Abu Mazen's criticisms of Israel were presented and the questions posed by reporter Zvi Yehezkeili mainly dealt with the subject of the disengagement and Israeli-Palestinian coordination. *Ma'ariv* went further and chose to ignore—almost entirely—the interview with Abu Mazen. A tiny item about the interview appeared on page 18 of the news pages under the headline: **"Abu Mazen: We Will Take Care of Ticking Bombs"** and just two paragraphs were dedicated to the subject. The modest coverage of the interview did not mention any of Abu Mazen's criticisms of Israel, neither in the headline nor in the text.

By contrast, Channel 1, in turning to the interview, did give some attention to Abu Mazen's criticism of Israel: "The Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen, calls on Israel to coordinate the withdrawal from Gaza with him. In a meeting in Ramallah with Israeli reporters Abu Mazen again declares that the Authority controls what is occurring in the territories. According to him, the recent shooting and attacks from Gaza are the result of Israeli conduct. Our correspondent Ohad Hemu was in the Muqata."

Ha'aretz, for its part, dedicated its main headline on April 20 to the interview with Abu Mazen. The headline read: **"Abu Mazen: 'The Government of Israel Incites against Me'"**. Other criticisms of Israeli policy appeared in the body of the article by Arnon Regular, on page 5, and did not appear in the headline:

"[T]he guiding principle needs to be reciprocity," he said. "The killing of three children in Rafah, in cold blood; the killing of a wanted man in Balata camp and the arrest of two wanted men in Nablus and Ramallah—are contrary to the understandings [...] It was agreed that five areas in the West Bank would be handed over to us, and this has not been done. The checkpoints have remained in place..."

On April 15, on the evening news program "Friday Studio", Channel 2 broadcast an interview that correspondent Yoram Binur conducted with Muhammad Dahlan, a Minister in the Palestinian Authority. Dahlan referred to the disengagement and to actions carried out by the Authority and he criticized Israel's policy toward the Palestinian Authority. Among other things, he said: "That's right, the Authority is weak and the Authority is destroyed. But Mr. Sharon needs to ask himself who caused the Authority's destruction. It wasn't our planes". Later on he said: "You [Israel] have not arrested anyone whose hands are filthy with Palestinian blood and whoever you have arrested, you released". In response to another question he said, "When the Hamas movement attacked Israel and Israel responded by attacking the Authority, Hamas benefited twice". The

headline leading into the interview was: **"Muhammad Dahlan promises, in an interview with Friday Studio, that the Palestinian Authority will make every effort to prevent firing at the IDF and the settlers during the disengagement from the Strip"**. Before the interview was broadcast, the anchor, Aharon Barnea, linked the interview to correspondent Udi Segal's preceding report on the Bush-Sharon summit:

Barnea: "Udi, we saw in your story the effort that the Prime Minister made to place the burden of responsibility on Abu Mazen. It goes without saying that in the Palestinian Authority this is seen as Israel's media spin. Yoram Binur, our correspondent in the territories, met this week with Muhammad Dahlan, a Palestinian Minister who is especially angry".

Immediately after the interview was broadcast, Roni Daniel, the military correspondent seated in the studio, added his commentary, which dismissed Dahlan's comments as nonsense.

"I heard here an interview with a person, and I noted here before me, that he promised flowers when the IDF withdraws. I hope that nobody, I believe that no one in the IDF, buys these things. In general, it's about time that they stop whining and start doing what they need to do. They committed themselves to one army, one law, one Authority. All the captures and the thwarted attacks have nothing to do with the Palestinian Authority. By the way, some of the people that fired the mortars are people in Musa Arafat's organizations. The picture is not as he paints it; they had better get to work instead of talking so much".

Channel 2 here presents a complicated example. On the one hand, the interviews with Abu Mazen and Dahlan that were broadcast by the channel are exceptional examples of prominent coverage given to the positions of the other side. On the other hand, the remarks by Roni Daniel, who did not even attempt to present his remarks as a report of the IDF position, shroud the report in analysis that negates its significance.

Channel 10, on April 11, provided a rare example of an attempt to understand the Palestinian perspective, without immediately dismissing it, as Roni Daniel did in the previous example. In the context of a report on the meeting between Sharon and Bush, Arab affairs commentator Zvi Yehezkeli presented data from the Palestinian Authority on violations of the Sharm understandings by Israel:

"Notice the data that Abu Mazen sent President Bush before his meeting with Sharon. The Palestinians speak of 3,374 Israeli violations since the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, in a total of two months: 15 Palestinians killed, 77 wounded. Among the violations, they also speak of arrests, attacks by settlers, even arrests of Palestinian Authority people at the various checkpoints..."

This is, of course, an exception. On other occasions, expressions by Palestinian sources that included criticism of Israel were hardly ever covered. When the media did publicize them, it was almost always within a much broader story that dealt with other subjects and in all of these

incidents the criticisms did not make it to the headlines. Thus, for example, on April 26, *Ha'aretz* reported on page 3 what Abu Mazen said at a joint press conference with the Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Ala: "Abu Mazen blamed Israel at the press conference for 'dragging its feet' in withdrawing from Palestinian cities, releasing prisoners and ending construction in the settlements." The article's headline was: **"Abu Mazen: Hamas Movement will not be Able to Carry Weapons after the Elections"**. On May 8, *Ma'ariv* printed on page 7 that "the Palestinian Foreign Minister, Nasser al-Kidwa, said that the Authority sent urgent messages to representatives of the Quartet and the U.N. Secretary-General, in which it charges Israel with ignoring the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings. In the Authority it was noted that Israel is not releasing prisoners and is not pulling out of Palestinian cities." The report appeared under the headline: **"Abu Mazen Calls on Sharon: 'Let's Meet'"** and the banner headline read: **"Disappointment in the Authority over Political Freeze since the Sharm Conference"**. On May 9, an item on page 13 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* noted that "Sufian Abu Zaideh warned that not releasing the prisoners seriously harms the peace process and Abu Mazen's standing". The headline of the article was: **"Israel: We will not Release More Palestinian Prisoners"**.

Ma'ariv, April 20, 2005, p. 18:

A tiny item on the interview that Abu Mazen granted to the Israeli media. There is no mention of Abu Mazen's criticism of Israeli policy. The headline reads: "Abu Mazen: We Will Take Care of Ticking Bombs".



The item enlarged.



The April 20 headline in the front-page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* also ignores Abu Mazen's criticism of Israeli policy:

Main headline:

"Sharon: The Looting will Begin the Moment We Leave Gaza"

Circled sub-headline

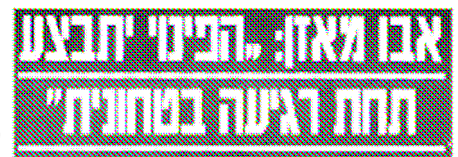
(referral to article on p. 4):

"Abu Mazen: We Will Not Open Fire during the Evacuation, We Will Act in a Civilized Manner"



Headline of item on page 4:

"Abu Mazen: 'The Evacuation Will Take Place under Calm Security'"



Yedioth Ahronoth, April 20, 2005, the criticism appears in the text of the article on page 4.

"But you," complained Abu Mazen, "killed three children in Rafah for no reason. Then you chased away the Palestinian police in Hebron and you began pursuing the wanted men, contrary to the understandings. The government in Israel promised me that the wanted men would not be pursued. Because of you we've lost our trust".

Without stopping for air he continues to recount in succession his claims against Israel: "We agreed on the evacuation of five cities, you left only two and you stopped the negotiations. The committee on prisoners has held only one meeting and prisoners have not been released. I don't know the reason for your behavior. How can we create cooperation this way?"

"Give us time," Abu Mazen pleaded, "Help me. If you don't help us, we will be destroyed and the failure will be your fault. You tell me, 'Act', but you need to help me act".

"אבל אתם," מתלונן אבו מאזן, "הרגתם שלושה ילדים ברפיח ללא כל סיבה. אחריכך גירשתם את השוטרים הפלשתינים בחברון והתחלתם לרדוף אחר מבוקשים בניגוד להבנות. הממשלה בישראל הבטיחה לי שהמבוקשים לא יהיו נרדפים. בגללכם איבדנו את האמון שלנו".

מבלי לקחת אוויר הוא ממשיך למנות ברצף את טענותיו נגד ישראל: "הסכמנו על פינוי חמש ערים, יצאתם רק משתיים והפסקתם את המשאומות. הוועדה לענייני אסירים קיימה רק ישיבה אחת, ואסירים לא שוחררו. אני לא יודע מה הסיבות להתנהגות שלכם. איך אפשר ליצור כך שיתוף פעולה?"

"תנו לנו זמן," התחנן אבו מאזן. "תסייעו לי. אם לא תעזרו לנו, אנחנו ניהרס, והכישלון יהיה באשמתכם. אתם אומרים לי 'תפעל', אתם צריכים לסייע לי לפעול".

Ha'aretz, by contrast, presents a headline that is critical, but does not include the concrete criticisms of Israeli policy voiced by Abu Mazen that appear in the text.

Headline:

"Abu Mazen: Government of Israel Incites Against Me"



Ha'aretz, April 20, 2005,
headline of article on page 5:
"Palestinian Authority Chairman:
Government of Israel Incites against Me in the Media"

יו"ר הרשות הפלשתינית: ממשלת ישראל מסיתה נגדי בתקשורת

"We will be happy to see the Israelis celebrating and enjoying themselves on the rooftops - but the guiding principal needs to be reciprocity", he said. "The killing of three children in Rafah, in cold blood; the killing of a wanted man in Balata camp and the arrest of two wanted men in Nablus and Ramallah - are contrary to the understandings. Any information leads to an Israeli invasion of one of the cities, we are portrayed as liars and lose our legitimacy (in our street - A.R.). It was agreed that five areas in the West Bank would be handed over to us, and this has not been done. The checkpoints have remained in place, the committee on prisoners, which was supposed to discuss the release of 400 people, according to new criteria, met only once. We will not accept the dictation of policy by the stronger side or the continuation of the settlements".

Ha'aretz, April 20, 2005, text of an article by Arnon Regular, p. 5.

"נשמח לראות את הישראלים חוגגים ומבלים בתג - אבל העי" קרון המוביל צריך להיות הרדיות", אמר. "הריגת שלושה ילדים ברפיח, בדם קר; הריגת מבוקש במחנה בלאטה ומעצר שני מבוקשים בשכם ורמאללה - מנוגדים להבנות. כל מידע מוביל לפלישה ישראלית לאחת הערים, אנחנו מוצגים כשקרנים ומאבדים את הלגיטימציה (ברר חוב שלנו, א"ר). הוסכם שתמישה אזורים בגדה יימסרו לירדן, וזה לא נעשה. המחסומים נותרו במקומם, ועדת האסירים, שהי" תה אמורה לדון בשחרור 400 איש, לפי קריטריונים חדשים, התכנסה פעם אחת בלבד. לא נקבל מדיניות של הכתבת תנאים על ידי הצד החזק, והמשך ההתנחלות".

Another example of how criticism of Israeli policy by senior Palestinian officials is downplayed:

ישראל: לא נשחרר עוד אסירים פלשתינים

פרטיביים של הרשות נגד הטרור. הישראלים טענו כי מאחר שבשבוע האחרון יש הורדות במצב הביטחוני, ואין שום פעילות של הרשות – לא ישראל או אסירים.

הפלשתינים טענו כי שירותי הביטחון הישראליים אינם מעריכים מספיק את הצעדים שנקטו עד כה הפלשתינים, כמו מעצר של חוליית חמאס בשבוע שעבר. הישראלים הגיבו שמדובר בגנרל "קסאם" שהרשות מזהרה לשחרר.

סופיאן אבו זיידה הזהיר כי אישחרור האסירים פוגע קשות בתהליך השלום ובמעמדו של אבו מאזן.

איתמר אייכנר

ישראל הודיעה אמש לפלשתינים כי היא מקיפה את שחרורם של 400 אסירים ביטחוניים עקב ההורדות הביטחוניות בימים האחרונים. את ההודעה מסרה שרת המשפטים, ציפי לבני, במהלך ישיבה של ועדת השרים המשותפת לשחרור אסירים. בפגישה השתתפו השרים גרין, עזראובנימין בן-אליעזר, מנכ"ל משרד המשפטים, אהרון אברמוביץ', נציב שב"ס, יעקב גנות, השר הפלשתיני לענייני אסירים, סופיאן אבו זיידה, וחבר המועצה המחוקקת, פארס כדורה. הצר הישראלי הבהיר כי בפסגת שארם א' שית' נוצרה ויקה הרוקה בין שחרור אסירים לצעדים אחרים.

Yedioth Ahronoth, May 9, 2005, p. 13.

Article headline:

"Israel: We Will Not Release More Palestinian Prisoners"

Circled sentence:

"Sufian Abu Zaideh warned that not releasing the prisoners seriously harms the peace process and Abu Mazen's standing".

“Israeli Gestures” after the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit?

This report does not examine Israel's other obligations, such as its commitment to release prisoners and ease the conditions of the Palestinians in various ways, because during the period examined there were virtually no reports on this subject in the media. The subject received broad coverage earlier, during the month of February, around the time of the Sharm el-Sheikh conference. During that period, Keshev published two short reports that examined the subject: “The Palestinian Prisoner Release Issue in the Israeli Print Media” (February 2005) and “Israeli ‘Gestures’: How Were Israel's Steps Covered?” (March 2005). The full reports are available online at Keshev's website: www.keshev.org.il. The reports show that in most cases the media outlets chose to emphasize a clear message in their headlines: Israel is coming towards the Palestinians. The media inflated Israel's generosity in two principal ways:

1. Israeli, international and Palestinian positions that argued that Israel's steps were insufficient received marginal exposure. Positions that held that these were indeed “generous gestures” were emphasized. Thus, for example, in an article that appeared in *Ha'aretz* on February 14 on page 2 it was written: “Toward the end of last week the Palestinian institutions that deal with prisoners began to get a first impression, not a full one, of the nature of the list of prisoners to be released. As many expected, they were mainly prisoners that received short sentences during the current Intifada, and whose release dates were near or very near [...] From a preliminary analysis by the prisoners, based on a partial list, and information gathered from different detention facilities, 70 percent of those released are supposed to be released anyway next month or in two months [...]”. The main headline of the newspaper that day was: “Israel Will Release 500 Prisoners and Administrative Detainees; Sharon: This Gesture Could Help the Authority Establish Its Rule”.

2. The media also emphasized the risks that Israel is taking by its “gestures”. This pattern of coverage appeared, for example, in the February 22 edition of *Ma'ariv*, which devoted a quarter of its front page to a picture of a freed prisoner, holding a pistol, with a caption above that read: “Free and Threatening”. Below the picture was written: “500 Palestinian prisoners were released yesterday in the framework of the Sharm understandings”. In an article inside the paper, a very different picture was given, which contradicted the impression conveyed on the front page: “The prisoners [disembarked] quietly, without nationalist songs, without fiery slogans, as if the new atmosphere also penetrated into the prison and back out again”.

These patterns of coverage and others presented media consumers in Israel with a picture of reality according to which Israel is going above and beyond in order to help Abu Mazen establish his rule. This one-sided picture contrasts with the more complex reality that comes out of the reports that were shunted to the margins.

4> How was International Criticism of Israel Covered?

During the period examined, various international sources, including United States President George W. Bush, Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights voiced criticism of Israel's conduct. This section focuses on criticism by President Bush.

Three principal subjects were up for discussion at the Bush-Sharon meeting: The continuation of the political process, Abu Mazen's performance, and expansion of the settlements and the illegal outposts. The controversy over the issue of the settlements was presented on the front page of *Ma'ariv*, on April 12, as a minor matter. The main headline on the front page concerned the disengagement plan. The banner headline read: **"Bush to Sharon: Disengagement's Success will Affect the Future of the Process"**. The main headline was: **"It All Depends on Gaza"**. The controversy was presented in the sub-headlines in the front pages: **"The Meeting at the Ranch was Full of Smiles; Bush Gave Sharon Cowboy Boots and Received in Return a Hamsa for Good Luck; But Differences of Opinion Emerged at the Press Conference; President Bush Again Emphasized: Construction in the Territories Must Cease."**

On the same page, there appeared an analysis by Ben Caspit under the headline **"American Test"**. Caspit pointed out that the United States will do everything it can so that the disengagement will succeed, which is why the issue of construction in the settlements is not material right now: "The message that emerges from the President is clear and precise: Three things about us interest the United States right now: The disengagement, the disengagement and the disengagement". Gil Tamari, Washington correspondent for Channel 10, gave a similar commentary on the April 11 broadcast:

"These differences of opinion [on the settlements] certainly stand out, but beyond that, the meeting was relaxed and the expected points were raised. There is an agreement not to agree on the matter of the settlements but the larger development is the disengagement, to which the Americans give their full backing. That was actually the Americans' goal and that was why they invited Sharon to the ranch, in this environment, with all the little gestures, in order to show that the United States stands a hundred percent behind Sharon as he moves toward the disengagement..."

The April 12 edition of *Yedioth Ahronoth* also treated the controversy with dismissal. The front page headlines read: **"Texas Summit: Bush and Sharon Put Aside Their Differences of Opinion"** (banner headline); **"Vast American Aid for Development of the Negev and Galilee"** (main headline). Criticism of the settlements was presented in a sub-headline which came across as meaningless: **"He Resolutely Demanded: 'Don't Expand the Settlements', but Said Nothing when Sharon Declared that Israel will Preserve the Settlement Blocs"**. Bush's criticism on the matter of the settlements was mentioned only in the text of articles and in the opinion columns.

The Channel 2 news broadcast on April 11 opened with Ehud Ya'ari's proclamation that "The main headline, I think, is this: Bush again signed his letter to Sharon[on the matter of the settlement blocs] and said – Israeli population blocs need to be taken into consideration when coming to a permanent arrangement". At a later point in the broadcast, there was partial reference to the controversy between Israel and the United States on this subject.

The main message that emerges from this pattern of coverage is clear: There is a disagreement between Israel and the United States on the matter of the settlements, but it is secondary in its importance right now. The two sides agreed between themselves not to agree on this topic until after the disengagement. This message diminishes the significance of Bush's criticism of Israel over construction in the settlements.

The main headline on the front page of *Ha'aretz* on April 12, on the other hand, presented the disagreement as much more significant: **"Bush-Sharon Meeting: Disagreement on the Settlement and the Continuation of Negotiations"**, and also in the sub-headline: **"Bush: 'Israel is Obligated by the Road Map not to Expand the Settlements'"**; **"Sharon: Settlement Blocs will Remain under Our Control"**; **"Israel: There Were No Disagreements"**.

Channel 1 also did not avoid emphasizing the controversy:

Haim Yavin: "Summit at the Ranch in Texas, President Bush repeats his position that Israel will not return to the '67 borders, but differences of opinion reemerged between the men. Bush again presses the Prime Minister not to expand the settlements and not to take steps that are contrary to the program in the Road Map. He expresses explicit support for Abu Mazen".²³

Commentator Oded Granot added: "There is a large gap, as much as Israeli spokespersons try to conceal it, there is a large gap between how Bush sees the settlement matter and how Israel sees it". Granot's comment points to a key dimension of the coverage: Sharon and his people are interested in concealing the differences of opinion, for obvious reasons. The other media outlets, aside from *Ha'aretz*, and Channel 1, provided the leaders with what they requested, and thus, they kept essential information about Israel's international status from their viewers and their readers. It should be noted that none of the media outlets - including *Ha'aretz* and Channel 1 - used the opportunity to raise questions about the effect of settlement construction on the future of the political process.

²³ Channel 1, April 11, 2005.

5> How Was Intra-Israeli Criticism Covered?

During the period examined, 28 items appeared in the media outlets which contained criticism of Israeli policy by senior Israeli sources in the security and political establishments, as well as by reporters and commentators. Nineteen of these items appeared in *Ha'aretz*. The few remaining examples appeared in the other outlets.²⁴ The analysis below pertains to the way that intra-Israeli criticism was presented in *Ha'aretz*.

Out of 19 items that referred to intra-Israeli criticism, eight appeared in the news pages and 11 appeared in Part B, eight of them in opinion pieces and three in editorials. In five of the items that appeared in the news pages the criticism did not make it to the headlines. Four of the items appeared in the back pages and were small.

One example that integrates these patterns appeared on May 2 in an article that reported on MK Yosef "Tommy" Lapid's criticism of the Prime Minister in a meeting between them: "In the meeting, Lapid expressed concern that Israel is not formulating a political program for after the implementation of the disengagement plan. [...] Lapid said that the government should help Abu Mazen more in order to strengthen his standing". The headline of the article was: **"Sharon: Israel Will Release More Security Prisoners"**. The article itself was small and appeared on page 14A.

On April 28, Arnon Regular listed, on page 4, the obligations that each side had kept, or had not kept: "An examination of the first-stage obligations in the Road Map reveals that the Israelis and the Palestinians are fully abiding only by those obligations that are convenient for them to carry out. The truly difficult tasks are carried out only partly." A table within the article presented data according to which Israel had partly fulfilled two out of five obligations required of it and the Palestinians had fulfilled or partly fulfilled seven out of eight obligations. The headline of the article was: **"Abu Mazen Has Reduced the Violence, but in Israel they are Displeased with the Means"**.

In commentary articles, *Ha'aretz* brought forth, among other things, criticism by senior officials in the Israeli security establishment - criticisms that were not mentioned in the news pages. Thus, for example, Amos Harel reported on April 22, about discussions held within the security establishment on strengthening Abu Mazen's position:

"In the IDF and the National Security Council, over the past few weeks discussions have taken place around the question: What does Israel need to do to strengthen his rule? The military recommendation is made up of a combination of additional gestures and continued pressure to abide by his commitments. In terms of gestures, they speak of

²⁴ MK Dalia Itzik spoke of the need to further ease conditions on Abu Mazen (Channel 10, May 4, 2005); "After the Sharm Understandings 500 Prisoners Were Released and since then, 400 have been Arrested" (*Ma'ariv*, headline of small item on page 6, May 3, 2005); An item in which there appeared criticism by MK Yossi Sarid (which was downplayed) of Israel's relations with Abu Mazen (Channel 1, April 11, 2005); "Ariel University Offers: Dorms in an Illegal Outpost" (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, headline of article on page 3, May 5, 2005); In a few other cases intra-Israeli criticism appeared on other subjects. In this regard, two extended items stand out: "What Are Palestinian Children Doing in an Israeli Military Jail?" (Channel 10, April 28, 2005); "The child Muhammad al-Dura, who was killed in his father's arms in a crossfire, became, as is remembered, one of the symbols of the Intifada. The father charges that Israel is harassing him and is not letting him leave for Egypt for medical treatment." (Channel 2, April 28, 2005).

6> How were the Palestinian Authority's Actions and Failures to Act Covered?

This chapter examines how the Israeli media covered the Palestinian side after the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. The first part of the chapter refers to coverage of cases where the Palestinians violated the terms of the Sharm understandings; the second part refers to coverage of Palestinian actions that were consistent with the understandings.

A. Coverage of Palestinian Violations of the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings

Following the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, there was a significant decline in the number of Israeli casualties resulting from Palestinian violence.²⁷ Acts of violence, however, continued and were covered by the Israeli media. In 27 of the 32 days examined, violent acts by Palestinians were reported by at least one media outlet. While these reports included analyses by Israeli sources on the Palestinian Authority's performance in preventing violence, the analyses were highly critical and skeptical - on the order of Abu Mazen is not doing, is not trying and is not making an effort. In most cases the media outlets presented these criticisms as stated, without attempting to verify them and without letting Palestinian sources respond. On this account, Channel 10 stands out because it consistently allowed Palestinians to present their views and hedged the official Israeli stance. Nevertheless, in most cases, presentation of the Palestinian viewpoint only appeared in the body of the story, sometimes after a transition away from the studio or after a headline had already appeared emphasizing Israeli criticisms, which weakened the later points of disagreement that appeared.

An examination of all of the media items (news items, analyses and commentaries) where analyses of the PA's performance appear reveals the following picture:

	Total number of items in which criticism of the PA appeared	Of total items: Items where criticism of the PA appears in headlines	Of total items: Items including a Palestinian response (or other hedge of the Israeli position)
<i>Ma'ariv</i>	9	8	4
<i>Yedioth Ahronoth</i>	7	5	1
<i>Ha'aretz</i>	9	6	1
Channel 1	12	1	3
Channel 2	11	3	0
Channel 10	8	5	6

In most cases where a Palestinian response (or other hedge) of the Israeli criticism appeared, the headline emphasized the message criticizing the Palestinian Authority and minimized the disagreement with that position.

²⁷ According to figures from the IDF Spokesperson, in February and March 2005, the number of attacks by Palestinians declined (126 in February, 133 in March, compared with 405 attacks in January). In particular, there was a decline in mortar attacks and small arms firing. In March, no Israelis were killed in terror attacks and the number of injuries declined considerably: 11 injured, compared with 60 injured in February and 54 in January (announcement by IDF spokesperson, May 5, 2005).

As stated previously, all of the media outlets tended to analyze violent acts by Palestinians as part of a clear and consistent pattern: The Palestinians are doing - or failing to do - everything that could lead to the end of the ceasefire. The example below demonstrates how various media outlets covered one major event.

On April 18, Palestinian snipers shot a soldier and a civilian who were building a protective wall in the Philadelphia corridor. The soldier was moderately wounded and the civilian was lightly wounded. On Channel 1, the headline of the “Mabat” news broadcast that evening stated: **“Soldier and Civilian Wounded by Sniper Fire in Philadelphi Corridor”**. In introducing the report, anchor Yigal Ravid said “A civilian and a soldier were wounded this afternoon by sniper fire in the Philadelphi corridor. This occurs at the height of a dispute over the future of the corridor and adds to a chain of worrisome terror events”. In the report itself, military affairs correspondent Yoav Limor stated:

“It’s become almost a routine. The Palestinians fire daily at IDF forces and outposts in the Gaza Strip... Today’s attack only raises the level of frustration in the IDF over the powerlessness of the Palestinian security forces. In the past week there was a 300 percent increase in the number of attacks in the Strip and in the IDF they are now demanding that the political echelon pressure Abu Mazen before the current wave of attacks takes lives.”

Channel 2 presented things in a similar way: An increase in the number of clashes initiated by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the powerlessness of the Palestinian Authority, and the threat to the continuation of the ceasefire. Anchor Gadi Sukenik turned to military correspondent Roni Daniel with these words: “Meanwhile, a soldier and a civilian were injured today by shots fired by a Palestinian sniper in the Philadelphi corridor in the southern Gaza Strip. In the IDF they point to a sharp increase in the number of clashes in the Strip and to a real threat to the continuation of the ceasefire.” At that point Roni Daniel asserted, “...The point isn’t just this incident, despite its seriousness. It’s the overall trend that is worrisome. In the past week there has been a dramatic rise, of 300 percent or more, in violations of the ceasefire and the Palestinian Authority is not doing a thing”.²⁸

Channel 10 also presented only the official stance of the IDF, in contrast to its conduct during most of the period examined. The headline at the start of the news broadcast was: **“Soldier and Civilian Injured by Shooting in the Philadelphi Corridor”**. Anchor Ya’akov Eilon transitioned to the report by military correspondent Alon Ben David by saying, “Senior officers in the IDF warn that the ceasefire with the Palestinians is on the verge of collapse. Today two Israelis were wounded in the Philadelphi corridor”. In his report, Ben David went on to say:

Gaza is heating up and not because of the heat wave. The IDF speaks of an increase of 300 percent in the number of attacks this past week ... The IDF today talks about the continuing powerlessness of the Palestinian Authority, which is not exercising its authority in the southern part of the Strip ... Jamal Abu Samdana is head of the organization and the man behind most of the incidents and Abu Mazen does not dare contend with him ... The IDF says it is taking care to continue to keep the calm but they also say that it’s time to take sanctions against Abu Mazen, in the hope of spurring him to take action before the ceasefire completely collapses”.²⁹

²⁸ Channel 2, April 18, 2005.

²⁹ Channel 10, April 18, 2005.

In *Ha'aretz*, a headline on page 2 of the April 19 edition stated: **"Soldier and Civilian Wounded by Sniper Fire in the Philadelphi Corridor"**. Inside the article was written: "Military sources told *Ha'aretz* that international pressure needs to be placed on Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), so that he will impose order in the Strip. According to them, the situation in the last few days reflects the Palestinian security forces' loss of control over what is happening, and from now on it could lead to a rapid worsening of the situation".

On the same day, an article on the subject appeared in *Yedioth Ahronoth* on page 11. The item's main headline stated: **"IDF Warns: 'The Calm before the Explosion'"**. The sub-headline said **"Sharp Increase in the Number of Incidents," Says IDF, "This Can't Continue"**. In the body of the article was written:

"In the IDF they say this is a veritable erosion of the ceasefire because the Palestinian Authority is doing less to prevent attacks and they warn of a possible explosion of the calm. There is a dramatic increase in the number of incidents, along with inactivity by the Palestinian Authority, which doesn't do a thing to step them. 'The ceasefire is fragile,' sources in the army warn".

Ma'ariv, in this case, provided an exceptional example of discrepancies between article content and headlines.³⁰ The banner headline on page 8 on that day stated: **"More Than 100 Percent Increase in the Number of Attacks in the Strip"**. The regular headline on the page stated: **"Quiet Remains on Paper"**. The sub-headline added: **"IDF not Allowed to Operate in Palestinian Territory, but Someone Needs to Act There"**. But toward the end of the article it was stated:

"Military sources say that until yesterday's incident, none of the senior Israeli officials noticed a sharp increase in shooting incidents nor did they act to stop the trend [...] 100 mortar shells were fired on settlements in the Strip in less than two days, but in the IDF they regard the shooting as a one-time incident that has ended".

The meaning of the discrepancy between article and headline needs to be explained: If there were sources in the IDF that believed that the aforementioned events were not a sign of the "collapse of the ceasefire", and if no one in the IDF noticed the trend of an increase in the number of attacks until the shooting incident, then how was it possible to determine that the "Quiet Remains [Only] on Paper"? Here too, as in cases shown previously, the text of the *Ma'ariv* article demonstrated that there is a rift between the viewpoints of different military officials and, at the very least, a gap between the official Israeli position and the impressions of some military officials.

On other occasions when media outlets reported acts of violence by Palestinians they tended to adopt the established Israeli position and to emphasize it. They usually did so without independently confirming that it was correct or engaging official Palestinian sources. For example, on the Channel 2 news broadcast on April 10, this is how Arab affairs correspondent Ehud Ya'ari and military affairs correspondent Roni Daniel explained why the IDF did not respond to Qassam rocket fire:

³⁰ In contrast to the other media outlets, the report on the shooting incident in *Ma'ariv* appeared separately from the IDF analyses presented above. The report on the incident appeared on page 9, in an item under the headline **"They Built a Wall [to Protect] Against Shooting and Were Wounded by Snipers' Fire"**.

Roni Daniel: "It seems to me that what we saw here over the past 24 hours strengthens more than ever a simple fact: As long as the Palestinian Authority does not actually stop the organizations, confiscate their weapons, prevent the manufacture of Qassam rockets and mortar shells, each time one of these organizations thinks, for some reason or another, to violate the truce, it will do so. We saw this over the past 24 hours here in the Gaza Strip."

[Anchor] Yonit Levi: "Ehud, why can't Abu Mazen stop the shooting? Is he not trying?"

Ehud Ya'ari: "... We are holding talks with Abu Mazen's authority, but what we saw now in the Gaza Strip is the second authority—the coalition of Hamas and the other terror organizations that follow in its path—which has actually seized control over security policy from Abu Mazen, and determines when to shoot, how much, why and where. ...This is a situation in which one authority is becoming weakened and the second authority, the terrorist one, is becoming stronger, to our chagrin".

Was the ability of the organizations to violate the ceasefire at will really a "simple fact", as Daniel claimed? Have the organizations really seized from Abu Mazen the ability to manage policy independently? The discussion did not introduce positions besides those of the commentators and Palestinian sources were not asked to give their response.

On the same day, the main headline of the "Mabat" news broadcast on Channel 1 stated: **"In the Past 24 Hours More than 100 Mortars and Qassam Rockets Have Fallen on Gush Katif Settlements. Sharon, on a Plane to the United States: This Is a Clear Violation of the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings"**. A similar message was conveyed in Amir Bar-Shalom's report later in the broadcast: "In talks that [IDF officers] held with Musa Arafat and his people the Palestinians confessed that they have lost control over the southern Strip and that Abu Mazen's policy of exercising restraint and not confronting the factions has failed.... The main reason for frustration in the IDF is the balance of deterrence that the terror organizations have created opposite the powerlessness of the Authority, which has not done a thing since the last salvo on Gush Katif at the end of January". But later, in a discussion in the studio between news anchor Haim Yavin and Arab affairs commentator Oded Granot, Granot presented a calmer and more balanced perspective:

Haim Yavin: "Oded, let's see what we had: More than 100 mortars and Qassams on Gush Katif in response to the killing, which was controversial, let us say, of the three Palestinian youths. It looks like the end of the calm. It looks like Abu Mazen is losing control over the southern front, his Gaza front".

Oded Granot: "Haim, sometimes memory is short. Let's put it this way. This event in Gaza does not cancel the calm, it does not cancel the Cairo Agreement – and it's not me saying it, the factions say this, the organizations say this, Hamas and the Jihad, they say: 'As far as we are concerned, the agreement exists, but we reserve for ourselves the freedom to respond every time the IDF does some sort of action' ... And they are not just saying this now. They said this at the Cairo Agreement... In this respect, Haim, nothing has changed."

These words from Granot were brought in at the end of the discussion of the subject, after the main headline, Amir Bar-Shalom's report and Haim Yavin's statements all conveyed an opposite message.

Ma'ariv, April 19, 2005, p. 8. Comparison of headline and article texts:

עלייה של יותר מ-100 אחוז במספר הפיגועים ברצועת עזה

השקט נותר על הנייר



פציעתם של חייל ואזרח מידי צלף היא רק אחת מתוך 22 תקריות אש שאירעו בשבוע האחרון ברצועה ■ רובן הסתיימו ללא נפגעים, לכן מעטים הבחינו כי הרגיעה עומדת בפני קריסה ■ אבל הנתונים מצביעים על הכפלה בכמות האירועים ■ גורם צבאי: "צה"ל אינו רשאי לפעול בתוך השטח הפלשתיני, אבל מישור צריך לפעול שם"

Banner headline: "More Than 100 Percent Increase in the Number of Attacks in the Strip"

Main headline: "Quiet Remains on Paper"

Sub-headlines:

The wounding of a soldier and civilian by sniper fire is just one of 22 firing incidents that occurred in the past week in the Strip ■ Most of them ended without injuries, that's why few noticed that the calm was on the verge of collapse ■ But the figures point to a doubling in the number of events ■ Military source: 'IDF not Allowed to Operate in Palestinian Territory, but Someone Needs to Act There'.

גורמים צבאיים אומרים כי עד לאירוע אתמול לא הבחין איש מהגורמים הישראליים הבכירים בעלייה החדה בתקריות האש ולא פעל לעצור את המגמה.

"Military sources say that until yesterday's incident, none of the senior Israeli officials noticed the sharp increase in shooting incidents nor did they act to stop the trend"

From the article text

יותר מ-100 פצצות מרגמה נורו על יישובי הרצועה בבתוך פחות מיממים, אך בצה"ל מתייחסים לירי כאל אירוע חד-פעמי שהסתיים, ואשר נועד ליצור מאזן אימה מול ישראל.

"More than 100 mortars were fired on settlements in the Strip in less than two days, but in the IDF they regard the shooting as a one-time incident that has ended and which was meant to create a balance of terror opposite Israel."

From the article text

B. How were Palestinian Actions in Keeping with the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings Covered?

During the period examined, there appeared in the media some mentions of measures taken by the Palestinian Authority in the spirit of the understandings, including implementation of administrative and security reforms, unification of the security apparatuses, strengthening of the rule of law, disarming of armed organizations, and renewal of security coordination. Some pronouncements referring to these steps were also mentioned.³¹ During the period examined a total of 69 items appeared that mentioned these subjects. An examination of these items reveals, once again, that the media outlets used patterns of editing that minimized the importance of these steps and which highlighted negative analyses of Abu Mazen's performance.

In some cases, items on this subject were placed in the back pages of the news section and filled up little space in those pages. Thus, for example, an article was published in *Ha'aretz* on May 3, under the headline **"Palestinian Security Forces Arrested a Hamas Cell that Sought to Fire Qassam Rockets in the Northern Gaza Strip"**, but the article appeared on page 12A.

In other cases, the reports only appeared in commentaries or in the weekend supplements. Thus, for example, Akiva Eldar wrote on April 12, in Part B of *Ha'aretz*:

"The head of research in military intelligence, Brigadier-General Yossi Kuperwasser, told members of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the Palestinian Authority Chairman is making efforts to stop the firing at Israeli targets and that the ceasefire has not 'collapsed' as Sharon's political spokespeople say... The two did not say that the Palestinians reported last week four injuries among their security forces, including a seriously wounded officer, in actions taken to prevent mortar firing".

The sub-headline in the commentary read: **"As Sharon Traveled to Bush with Claims that Abu Mazen 'Is Not Lifting a Finger against Terror' and that the Ceasefire has 'Collapsed' the IDF Told the Knesset the Exact Opposite"**. On April 15, an article by Ofer Shelach was published on page 25 of the *Yedioth Ahronoth* weekend supplement. In it was written: "In the past two months 19 tunnels have been revealed in this sector [Gaza], 10 of them by the Palestinians. This is a more than everything the IDF accomplished in years of operations with many casualties on both sides".

³¹ Items referring to coordination of the disengagement were not checked because they were not directly related to the Sharm understandings and concerned a future development.

A different “story”, about Palestinians abiding by their commitments, can be found on the inside pages, in the margins of the supplements and in commentary pieces:

“On the other hand, when a picture of one of the tunnels is projected on the screen, the divisional engineering officer notes that the opening of the tunnel is located in a house in which the IDF sat for weeks during one of its big operations, without finding a thing. In the past two and a half months, 19 tunnels have been revealed in this sector, 10 of them by the Palestinians. This is a more than everything the IDF accomplished in years of operations with many casualties on both sides.”

מצד שני, כשמקרינים על המסך תמונה של אחת המנהרות, מזכיר קצין ההנדסה האוגרתי שפתחה של המנהרה נמצא בחור בית, שצה"ל ישב בו במשך שבועיים במהלך אחד המבצעים הגדולים שלו ולא מצא דבר. בחודשים וחצי האחרונים נחשפו 19 מנהרות בגזרה הזו, עשר מהן על ידי הפלסטינים. זו כמות גדולה מכל מה שהשיג צה"ל בשנים של מבצעים עתירי נפגעים משני הצדדים.

Ofer Shelach, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, April 15, 2004, weekend supplement, p. 25.

Akiva Eldar, personal column, *Ha'aretz*, April 12, 2005, Part B, p.3

Sub-headline: As Sharon Traveled to Bush with Claims that Abu Mazen 'Is Not Lifting a Finger against Terror' and that the Ceasefire has 'Collapsed' the IDF Told the Knesset the Exact Opposite



At nearly the same time that someone in the Prime Minister's entourage briefed reporters that Sharon is planning to tell President Bush that Abu Mazen “is not lifting a finger against terrorism” and that the ceasefire had “collapsed”, the head of research in military security, Yossi Kuperwasser told members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the Palestinian Authority Chairman is making an effort to stop the shooting at Israeli targets and that the ceasefire has not “collapsed”, as Sharon's political spokespersons had said. The Defense Minister, Shaul Mofaz, said something about giving Abu Mazen another chance. The two did not relate that the Palestinians reported four wounded over the weekend, one of them a seriously wounded officer, among their security forces, during actions taken to prevent mortar firing.

These two articles, and others that are presented below, present dramatic information on Palestinian efforts to keep their commitments – efforts that in fact bore fruit. Minimizing these materials consequentially influences readers' abilities to understand the complex reality that exists.

In many cases, similar information appeared in news articles whose headlines, however, emphasized Palestinian violations of the Sharm understandings. Thus, for example, the following report appeared in the last paragraph of an article on page 4 of the May 6 edition of *Yedioth Ahronoth*: “Intelligence sources yesterday reported that Abu Mazen sent emissaries to the wanted men in Tulkarm and Jericho, in order to collect their weapons”. The headline of the article was: “Qassam Falls on Sderot: IDF: From Now On We Will Respond”. The sub-headline added, “Senior Officials in the IDF: ‘The Ceasefire is Collapsing, the Optimism has Disappeared’”.

Another example appeared in *Ma'ariv* on May 3. In the last line of an article on page 3 was written: "In the evening the Palestinian Authority arrested Hamas activists that tried to fire another Qassam". The headline of the item was: **"Terrorists Received Orders from Syria"**. The front page headline of the same edition was **"Sharon: Abu Mazen Is Strengthening Terror"**.

In a report from the Channel 10 studio on April 24, announcer Efi Triegeer told about the discovery of a tunnel and its closure by the Palestinians:

"The Palestinians demand that Israel give up control over the border crossings from Egypt to Gaza. The Palestinian Minister Muhammad Dahlan said today that this is the only way to prove that Israel intends to completely withdraw from the Strip. In Israel, the demand is rejected out of concern that it would allow weapons to be smuggled through tunnels, like the one discovered today in Rafah. The tunnel that was discovered by the Palestinian police was sealed a short time later."

The announcer's words, as can be seen, focus on the weapons smuggling. The significance of a tunnel discovery and its sealing by the Palestinian police is presented in an offhand manner, on the margins of things, and is not emphasized in its own right.

From time to time, an important fact that is central to this report appeared in the media's coverage: The Israeli security establishment was, and still is, divided in its opinion of Abu Mazen's performance. The security establishment is of course interested in presenting a unified position, but revealing internal differences of opinion is one of the media's most important functions in a democratic country. Thus, for example, on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on April 11, Alex Fishman pointed out in a commentary that "it has been a long time since evaluation and intelligence bodies in Israel have been so temperamental and divided over the issue: Who are you, Abu Mazen? This gray man, lacking in charisma, succeeded in perplexing the intelligence compass".

But this is the exception that proves the rule. In the vast majority of cases, even when reporters brought forth various opinions from the security establishment, the media highlighted only the negative assessments. Thus, for example, *Ma'ariv*, on April 27, published a two-page headline under the heading **"Disagreement over Ra'is"**. But the headline presented only one side of the disagreement: **"Abu Mazen's 100 Days Test: In the Israeli Government, it's already understood that he lacks the necessary leadership, but they are keeping fingers crossed that he will make it through the disengagement; In the IDF they are disappointed in him and claim that he acts against terror only when the sword is put to his neck..."**. Three commentaries appeared under this headline. Two of them presented in their last paragraphs analyses from the security establishment which seem like polar opposites:

"There are also security officials that mainly emphasize the Palestinian Authority Chairman's achievements: 'He completely changed public opinion in the Palestinian street against attacks. He brought about a very significant calming. It could be that his approach of calming by dialogue and not by civil war will turn out to be the right thing'".

"Abu Mazen has a few advantages ... Second, the fact [is] that no one disputes that his intentions are good and that his expressions are consistent".³²

³² *Ma'ariv*, April 27, 2005, pp. 4-5.

In contrast to the other media outlets, *Ha'aretz* attempted to tell a more complicated story, even if that more complex narrative remained in most cases in the text of the articles and did not make it into the headlines. For example, an item on May 9, presented two conflicting analyses in the security establishment of Abu Mazen's efforts—a relatively positive assessment by the director of military intelligence, Major-General Aharon Ze'evi (Farkash), and a negative assessment by Brigadier-General Yossi Kuperwasser, head of research in military intelligence. In this case, neither assessment received a headline. The headline was: **" Hamas Achievement in Parliament Elections Will Make Disengagement Much More Difficult "**.³³ It should be noted that while negative assessments occasionally made it to the headlines in *Ha'aretz*, positive assessments did not appear in headlines even once. In at least one case, *Ha'aretz* wrote a headline that tried to present a complex picture: On April 28, in an article on page 4, it was written that " 'Abu Mazen's leadership is a crisis leadership that executes only when all else has failed and the sword is placed to its neck' , said a senior officer in the Central Command two weeks ago [...] The officer was asked [...] how he explains the fact that senior intelligence officers and other Israeli officials actually credit Abu Mazen with preventing about half of the attacks ". The article thus reported on two contrasting opinions, but the headline, which was shown in a previous chapter, stated: **" Abu Mazen Has Reduced the Violence, but in Israel they are Displeased with the Means "**.

In *Ha'aretz*, 20 items appeared that mentioned Palestinian actions in keeping with the Sharm understandings and 17 of them exhibited at least one of the editing patterns mentioned above. On the other hand, *Ha'aretz* was the only media outlet that consistently covered the steps that the Palestinian Authority took that were in the spirit of the Sharm understandings. In certain cases—it should be noted—*Ha'aretz* also published news reports of a different sort, in relatively prominent places and which the security establishment did not automatically hedge. A few examples: **" A Woman from Ashdod and an IDF Soldier that Entered the Authority Were Returned to Israel "**.³⁴ **" Contacts with the Authority for a Meeting between Abu Mazen and Sharon "**; **" Peres and Abu Ala Discussed Coordination of the Disengagement "**.³⁵ **" Abu Mazen: Hamas Will Not Be Able to Carry Weapons after the Elections "**.³⁶

In *Yedioth Ahronoth* there appeared only six items mentioning steps that the Palestinian Authority had taken in accordance with the Sharm understandings. Five of the items exhibited at least one of the editing patterns mentioned above—minimization of the item through its placement or selection of a headline that actually emphasized Palestinian violations of the understandings. The headline of a sixth item, from April 20, did not emphasize the Palestinian Authority's actions, but rather, positive statements by Abu Mazen, which were presented above: **" Abu Mazen: The Disengagement Will Take Place Under Calm Security "**. In *Ma'ariv* there were 13 items mentioning this subject and 12 of them exhibited at least one of the editing patterns described above. The one exception was a headline that appeared on May 8, on page 7: **" Abu Mazen Calls on Sharon: ' Let's Meet ' "**.

³³ *Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2004, p. 8A.

³⁴ *Ha'aretz*, April 17, 2005, top of p. 3.

³⁵ *Ha'aretz*, April 22, 2005, p. 2.

³⁶ *Ha'aretz*, April 26, 2005, top of p. 3.

On Channel 2 eight items appeared that mentioned steps taken by the Palestinian Authority in the spirit of the Sharm understandings. Five of the items exhibited at least one of the aforementioned editing patterns. In three instances, Channel 2 reported these steps prominently, mentioning them at the beginning of the broadcast. On April 18, for example, at the beginning of the broadcast, anchor Gadi Sukenik said, "Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen reveals that his people recently prevented a series of attacks in Israel. He recommends not postponing the disengagement and destroying the settlers' homes. Our commentator, Ehud Ya'ari, here in the studio – you spoke with Abu Mazen. Let's see the report that you prepared". On April 24, announcer Yifat Zamir's report from the studio was accompanied by pictures of Palestinian security forces:

"Following changes in the security forces by Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen, Colonel Ala Husni was appointed head of internal security, a designation that gives him authority over the blue police, the preventative security forces and also gives him the title of police commissioner. Abu Mazen recently dismissed nearly one thousand officers over the age of 60 as part of the reforms that he promised to carry out in the security forces. This morning the Palestinian police uncovered a tunnel that was dug in Rafah toward the Egyptian border [a picture of the tunnel appears in the background]. Our correspondent, Suleiman e-Shafi, reports that since the Sharm understandings the Palestinian police have stepped up their efforts to uncover tunnels."

During the period examined, Channel 10 aired ten items depicting positive steps by the Palestinian Authority. All of these were minimized in some way or another.

Channel 1, on the other hand, gave fairer coverage to the positive steps taken by the Palestinians. During the period examined, Channel 1 broadcast 12 reports on these types of actions. In five cases they were mentioned in the headlines of the news edition or in the lead-ins to the reports on the subject. Thus, for example, the headline at the beginning of the April 27 edition stated: **"On Mabat, tonight, unique documentation of wanted men from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs organization that joined the Palestinian security forces"**. Haim Yavin's opening comments were: "In the security establishment there is talk about the possibility of transferring a third city, Qalqilya, to the Palestinians next week already. The condition is the disarming of wanted men. Our correspondent Ohad Hemu brings the story of the wanted men from Tulkarem—those who set down their weapons and joined the Palestinian security forces". In two other cases, commentaries by Oded Granot were broadcast that presented a more complex picture of what was transpiring in the Palestinian Authority. For example, at the beginning of the Friday night news broadcast on April 22, Granot said: "Abu Mazen is with his face toward Washington. On Sunday, two days from now, he plans to announce the replacement of all of the security elites. Finally, a changing of all the heads of the security forces. This is a step that the Americans very much requested and the Authority also tells Israel: This week we uncovered two tunnels. One was a horrific tunnel leading to Kfar Darom".

Learned Analyses:

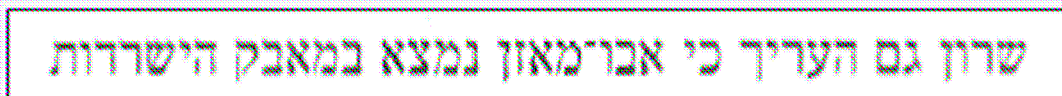
Abu Mazen Will Not Survive Atop the Palestinian Leadership

Here is one egregious example of an editing pattern that builds up a negative image of the Palestinian side, even when the contents of the article provide no basis for it. On April 13, the banner headline on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* declared:



"PM: Abu Mazen Will Not Survive Atop the Palestinian Leadership"

The article's sub-headline on page 4 was already less adamant:



"Sharon also estimated that Abu Mazen was in a struggle to survive"

Within the article, by contrast, was written:

"Sharon also referred to the Palestinian arena and said that the Palestinian Authority Chairman, Abu Mazen, is at the height of a struggle for survival. 'In the coming period it will be possible to estimate Abu Mazen's chances for survival atop the Palestinian leadership'. Nevertheless, Sharon was cautious not to take an adamant stance on the issue".

שרון התייחס גם לוידה הפלסטינית ואמר כי יו"ר הרשות הפלסטינית, אבו מאזן, נמצא בעיצומו של מאבק הישרדות. "בתקופה הקרובה ניתן יהיה להעריך את הסיכויים להישרדותו של אבו מאזן בראשות ההנהגה הפלסטינית". עם זאת נזהר שרון מלקבוע עמדה נחרצת בסוגיה זו. הכבירים שעיטם נפגש אומ' גם אמרו כי הם מודעים היטב לחולשותיו של אבו מאזן, אבל ציינו כי "אמריקה רואה באבו מאזן את המנהיג הפלסטיני היחיד שמסוגל להנהיג עכשיו את העם הפלסטיני".

It is hard to imagine a greater discrepancy than the one between Sharon's evasion of taking a clear stand on Abu Mazen's fate—which is described in the article—and the adamant assertion that is made in his name in the headline.

“Extraordinary Cooperation”

The IDF magazine, *Bamahane*, actually published an item that tells a completely different story of Palestinian efforts to cooperate with Israel. The item did not appear in any other media outlet:

The Palestinians Returned 150 Stolen Vehicles

By Shahar Fisher and Ran Lior, *Bamahane* reporters

“The Palestinian police in Jericho returned approximately 150 stolen vehicles to Israel over the past two weeks. A senior source in the sector said: ‘This is extraordinary cooperation. Until the moment that security responsibility over the city was transferred, no vehicles that were stolen from Israeli territory had been returned [...]’

“According to a senior officer, this step demonstrates the seriousness of the Palestinian policemen there. ‘In each of our requests, the Palestinian police have been 100 percent successful. They fulfill everything demanded of them and it is not possible to come to them with any complaints’.

“A week ago, intelligence information reached the DCO about a large shipment of stolen air conditioners making its way to the village of Uja, near Jericho. Representatives of the military administration passed the information on to the Palestinian police and they arrested the thieves within just 20 minutes. These days an investigation is proceeding against them and if it turns out that this was indeed stolen property, it will be returned to Israel.”

From the website of the IDF Spokesperson, April 22, 2005

7> Conclusions

In a long and difficult conflict like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, periods of ceasefire and relative calm—like the one examined in this report—are no less important than more violent periods. The two sides arrive at a ceasefire when they are exhausted, injured and distrustful. Almost naturally, both sides tend to overlook cases in which they themselves violate the agreements that led to the ceasefire and to see in the other side's violations proof that it intends to resume the circle of violence. Each side tends to see its violations as unintentional and the other side's violations as the direct result of policy. Moreover, in situations like these, decision makers (in our case, Israeli decision makers) are likely to issue declarations that are not meant to strengthen the ceasefire, but rather, to prepare the ground for blaming the other side in the event that the ceasefire ends.

This is why it is important that media outlets, which provide their consumers with information on this unstable state of affairs, provide balanced, reliable and checked information that attempts to independently examine events in the field and critically interpret official pronouncements. As this report shows, the media outlets examined in this report did not perform their duty in this regard.

During the period that was examined, the media outlets minimized Israeli violations of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings. In most cases, violent harm to Palestinians by the IDF was not covered at all and, when it was, it was covered uncritically. Criticism of Israel by Palestinian, Israeli and international sources, rarely appeared in the reporting and when it did it was always on the margins of the news.

By contrast, when Palestinians violated the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings, all of the media outlets reported broadly on the matter and it appeared in the main headlines. Expansive coverage was given to criticisms by security officials and various commentators without giving Palestinians an opportunity to respond to the charges against them. Cases where the Palestinian Authority fulfilled its commitments, for example, by uncovering tunnels, were reported, if at all, only on the margins of the news.

These patterns of coverage and editing, which were accompanied by broad coverage of violence by Palestinians against Israelis, provided media consumers with a clear and unambiguous picture: Israel is abiding by its commitments and in the vast majority of cases it is not endangering the ceasefire. The Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, consistently breaks its promises, and its leader, Abu Mazen, does not want or cannot keep the ceasefire for any length of time. The ceasefire is therefore bound to collapse and the Palestinians bear exclusive responsibility for this. This situation report does not encourage—to say the least—the development of trust that might make possible a return to negotiations. In this sense, the Israeli media continues to operate according to the prevailing established point of view, which asserts that the Palestinian Authority is not a “partner”. This perspective also forms the basis of the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

8> Annex: Methodology and Theoretical Background

Various studies of media consumption identify two main factors in reading and viewing that influence how consumers process news information:

Item Placement: Studies show that the placement of a news item—in the pages of a newspaper or in the course of a news broadcast—sends a clear message to readers and viewers about the relative importance of the item. The closer an item is to the front pages or the beginning of a broadcast, the greater its degree of importance. Placement also signifies if the item is a “hard” or “soft” item. In “hard” news, readers look for presentation of “dry” facts on important events from the past day. This kind of news is supposed to appear in the front news pages of newspapers and at the beginning of news broadcasts. “Soft” news items, by contrast, appear in the back pages or in the later parts of a broadcast, and are meant to provide readers and viewers with more piquant items that have a human interest side to them.³⁷ In practice, this distinction cannot be taken for granted and more often an item is perceived as “hard” or “soft” only on the basis of its placement in the newspaper. The exact same item that appears in the back pages or in the weekend supplement as a “soft” item could appear in the news pages as a “hard” item. Therefore, the editorial decision on where to place an item dramatically influences how it is perceived.

The Headline: Headlines also have a decisive influence on the way that news consumers interpret the news. Modern newspaper readers are “headline consumers”: “For the modern news reader, reading the headline of a certain item, replaces reading the item itself.”³⁸ In the information-flooded world in which we live, this is logical behavior: Newspaper headlines promise readers maximal exposure to relevant information with minimal cognitive effort.³⁹ In addition, the headline also offers an interpretive framework for those who do read the entire article. But this rests on the implicit assumption that the headline indeed reflects what is written in the article. As we have seen, quite often this is not the case.

In television news broadcasts the lead headlines are the ones that open the news edition. Next in importance are the words spoken by news anchors before a report is broadcast. In these moments, the anchor’s news personality and the dynamics between the anchor and the commentators and reporters, play a decisive role.

These patterns highlight the importance of editing. Reporters deliver the text of their news reports to the paper or deliver their reports filmed for television without headlines and before knowing

³⁷ Gaye Tuchman “Making News by Doing Work: Reutilizing the Unexpected,” *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (1973), pp. 110-131.

³⁸ Itzhak Roeh and Nir Raphael, “Reporting the Intifada in the Israeli Press: How Mainstream Ideology Overrides ‘Quality’ and ‘Melodrama’.” In Akiba Cohen and Gabi Wolfsfeld (eds.), *Framing the Intifada: People and the Media*. Norwood, N.J. Ablex Publications, 1993, pp. 176-191.

³⁹ Daniel Dor, “On Newspaper Headlines as Relevance Optimizers.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 35, 2003, pp. 695-721.

where they will be placed. The rest of the decisions are made by the editors. A close examination of all the news items by themselves - the total information gathered by the reporters - before editing, reveals that the items accumulate to form a complex and varied factual picture that looks nothing like the picture that appears in the headlines. Our method of investigation focuses on the discrepancies that are created between the materials that the reporters gather (the materials to which they had access) and those same materials after they have been edited and framed. These are the important parameters:⁴⁰

1. Positioning: Where is each news item located? Is it on the front page, the first few news pages, the back news pages, the culture and entertainment section, the daily or weekly supplement, the beginning of the broadcast or the end of the broadcast? Where are the items that generally support the official Israeli viewpoint positioned? Where are the items with the opposite view?
2. Graphic saliency: Where is each news item located on its page? How much space does it occupy in comparison to the other items on the page? How salient is its headline? Does it also have a sub-headline? Is it accompanied by a photograph? How salient are items that support the official position and how salient are items that do not support it?
3. Front page reference: Is the news item mentioned on the first page or at the beginning of the news broadcast? What types of news items consistently get mentioned on the front page? What types are never mentioned?
4. Headline selection: Which pieces of information are consistently picked out from the texts and promoted to the headlines? Which are picked out for the sub-headlines? What type of information never appears in the headlines?
5. Headline-text factual correspondence: To what extent do the factual components in the headline reflect what is said in the body of the item? In what circumstances do the contents of the headlines not reflect the information in the body of the item?
6. Rhetorical contribution of the headlines: To what extent do the headlines make a rhetorical contribution (hyperbole, melodrama, etc...) to what is said in the item? In what type of items do such rhetorical contributions appear?
7. Lexical selection of headlines: What key semantic mechanisms (metaphors, names and grammatical constructs) are selected for the headlines? Do they also appear in the text of the item? In what types of items do they appear?
8. Formulation of agency: How does the syntactic formulation of the headlines (distinction between active and passive voice, etc...) contribute to the assignment of agency,

⁴⁰ Daniel Dor, *Intifada Hits the Headlines: How the Israeli Press Misreported the Outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 6-11.

responsibility and guilt in negative events? What syntactic formulations appear in what types of items?

9. Epistemic framing: How does the formulation of the headline determine the epistemic status of the information in the text as a fact, a claim, a prediction, an assumption or a lie? To what extent does this framing reflect what is said in the article? What types of items are consistently framed as facts, claims, predictions, assumptions or lies?
10. Visual semiotics: How do the visuals surrounding the news items (the photographs, the headline's colors, and so on) contribute to the emotional and ideological framing of the item?

In addition, the analysis examines where contradictions appear between different items on the same subject that appear in different news outlets. Ultimately, this research methodology makes it possible to break down the one-sided perspective that appears in the headlines and to reveal an alternative narrative of events, one that is based on the reports of the reporters themselves.

KESHEV Publications

- “Channel Two’s Virtual Reality: Coverage of Events around the Sharbaty Family Home in Hebron” (April 2005).
- “A Dog’s Life: Whose Blood is Worth More – That of Palestinian Civilians or a ‘Jewish’ Dog?” (March 2005).
- “‘Israeli Gestures’: How were Israel’s Steps Covered?” (February 2005).
- “Bush: Territorial Contiguity for the Palestinian State” (February 2005).
- “The Prisoner Release Issue in the Israeli Print Media” (February 2005).
- “When Thy Enemy Falls: Israeli Media Coverage of the Death of Arafat” (January 2005).
- “Behind Defensive Shield: The Israeli Media and the Re-occupation of the West Bank” (May 2003).
- “Incitement is Hazardous to Life: Words Can Kill, Too” – Keshev Memorandum on the Sixth Anniversary of the Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (November 2001).
- “State-backed Discrimination: Pirate Radio Broadcasts, 1998-2001” (June 2001).
- “Jewish Media or Israeli Media? An Evaluation of the Coverage of the Violent Clashes between Arab Citizens and the Police in October 2000” (March 2001).
- “Targeting the Temple Mount: A Current Look at Threats to the Temple Mount by Extremist and Messianic Groups” (January 2001).
- “A State Held Hostage by Extremists – Mapping Groups that Endanger Democracy” (October 2000).
- “Shuvu Banim – Portrait of Dangerous Messianism” (November 1999).
- “A Look at the News: News Coverage on Two Television Channels in Israel (January 1999).
- “Pirate Radio in Israel: Alternative Media or a Danger to Democracy?” (April 1998).

KESHEV—The Center for Protection of Democracy in Israel was established by a group of jurists, academics and concerned citizens following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in order to defend and promote democratic values in Israel.

KESHEV researches and methodically collects information on trends that de-legitimize democratic institutions, organizations that maintain anti-democratic ideologies or practices, ideologically-based incitement and violence and the conduct of the media in Israel. The material is collected and analyzed for publication in studies, reports and information sheets.

At the beginning of 2005, **KESHEV** launched a long-term project called “Media Monitoring: Words Can Kill, Too”. The goal of this project, which is carried out in partnership between **KESHEV** and the Palestinian organization MIFTAH, is to change patterns of discourse and coverage in the media in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which express prejudices, incitement and defamation, bias, de-legitimization and de-humanization of the other side. All of KESHEV’s reports appear on the organization’s website: www.keshev.org.il.

KESHEV is not affiliated with any political party and its activities are supported by contributions alone. The organization’s major sources of support include the New Israel Fund, the European Union and the Foundation for Middle East Peace.



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