

Media Guidelines for Covering the War in Israel



Media from the United States and around the world are covering the war unfolding in Israel, which started with the massacre of more than 1,400* civilians and kidnapping of over 230* people by the Gaza-based terrorist organization Hamas. The resulting war has the world's attention now focused on the region. The news media has a responsibility to cover these events fairly and in context, which is why ADL has developed the following guidelines. As with any conflict with a long and difficult history, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is complicated and freighted with nuance; with that in mind, it's essential that the news media does not fall into certain traps.

Here are some of the guidelines ADL recommends for reporters, producers and editors assigned to cover the unfolding situation in Israel.



1. Hamas are “Terrorists”

Hamas is not comprised of militants, combatants, freedom fighters, the resistance, or soldiers. They are a terrorist group in league with ISIS, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Hezbollah. Please see our [resource](#) on Hamas.



2. No False Equivalencies

There are no “both sides” to this story. Using terms like “both sides” or “reciprocal” does not provide justice for the civilian victims of unnecessary violence and makes a false equivalency to the horrors that are occurring in Israel. Hamas launched a terrorist operation with the sole intention of indiscriminately killing innocent civilians and non-combatants, committing war-crimes in the process. Any reporting on the war should make clear that Israel's response is a legitimate military action in response to this massacre and to prevent future acts of terror, and that the Israeli Army does everything it can to limit and prevent civilian casualties.

* As of Oct 31.



3. Label Your Commentators

Make sure you accurately label commentators on your shows so viewers can be aware of their background and potential bias. While there is a time for debates on policies, consumers of news should know that they are listening to someone's point of view, who in many cases, are far from neutral observers.



4. There is No Justification for Slaughtering Civilians

After Hamas launched a war against Israel on Oct. 7, some commentators sought to contextualize Hamas' massacre as linked to alleged Israeli wrongdoing and almost explaining their massacre as a result of Israeli action. However, the horrific and unspeakable acts of violence that occurred on Oct. 7 are not justifiable nor can these horrific acts be acknowledged as a response to past conflicts. Assigning sole blame for the conflict to Israel or Jewish people, without acknowledging or reporting on the long history of rejecting Israel's right to exist, decades of security threats including Palestinian terrorism, can feed into anti-Jewish tropes.

Please see our [resource](#) that explores historical and contemporary developments, issues and challenges regarding Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the pursuit of peace.



5. Cover Protests Accurately

Reporters may be asked to cover rallies in support of Israel and/or pro-Hamas demonstrations. When doing so, please remember that Hamas is a terrorist group recognized by the State Department and European Union, and slogans and speeches supporting their actions serve to justify and excuse Hamas brutality and crimes. Pro-Israel rallies in the next few days will be attended by many who are grieving the loss of life. As a result, please do not present these events as protests representing two sides of the same political issue or presenting false equivalencies.



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