

Facts and Figures – Quarter 2 2008

Please see below Just Journalism's analysis of the volume, scope and positioning of Israel-related coverage in the media from April to June 2008.

Over the course of the second quarter of 2008, a broad range of issues were covered in reporting of Israel. The main areas of focus were:

- Israel's 60th anniversary (see Just Journalism's report at www.justjournalism.com/special-reports)
- the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, followed by the current truce
- escalating tensions between Israel and Iran
- internal political problems faced by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Press

- Just Journalism monitored a total of **822 editions** from **21 publications** from April to June 2008 – 9 daily and 8 Sunday national newspapers, 1 regional and 3 weekly.
- Of these editions **52% contained coverage** of Israel – so, on average each publication featured Israel stories every other day.
- Within those editions containing coverage, we identified **849 articles** substantially referring to Israel.
- The Independent had the highest frequency of coverage, with **87%** of all editions containing coverage of Israel, equivalent to coverage almost every day, followed by the **Financial Times (85%)**, and **The Guardian** and **The Times (both 79%)**.

BBC News website

- Just Journalism monitored a total of **206 items about Israel on the BBC News website**.
- Of the items published, 55 were authored pieces, **38%** of which cast Israel in a largely **negative** light. **Sixty per cent were neutral** and **only 2% were positive**. In these articles, Israel was often depicted as chiefly to blame for the continuation of the conflict with the Palestinians, with an emphasis on the role of settlement activity not matched by discussion of Palestinian terrorism.

BBC Radio

- We monitored **312 BBC Radio 4 broadcasts** from 6 programmes throughout the second quarter – The Today Programme, The World at One, PM, The World Tonight, The World This Weekend and Sunday.
- **29%** contained substantial coverage of Israel.

Comment and Editorial

- Just over one fifth of the comment pieces focused on Israel's 60th anniversary. Other prominent themes in the editorial coverage included American foreign policy in the region, policy towards Iran and the situation in Gaza.
- The comment and editorial pieces are, by definition, more of a publication's opinion and so these articles were assessed according to their positive, negative or neutral attitude towards Israel.
- There were a total of **119 comment and editorial pieces** with substantial or minor mentions of Israel during Quarter 2 2008. The items monitored appeared in the daily broadsheets, the Sunday broadsheets and the weekly current affairs magazines. Overall, these were **nearly twice as negative as they were positive** with 31% of articles taking a negative position compared to 17% positive.
- Editorial coverage in **The Guardian** and **The Independent** constituted **48% of all the editorial coverage** monitored in the newspapers, with 29 and 28 articles respectively.

Comment and Editorial Continued

- There were marked divergences in the nature of the editorial coverage across media outlets. The **New Statesman contained the highest proportion of negative comment** of all the print media outlets, with 70% of items negatively positioned and 10% positive. **The Independent contained the highest proportion of negative comment among the broadsheet newspapers**, with 50% of its items negatively positioned and 11% positive. **In The Guardian, 45% of its comment pieces adopted a negative stance** while only **3% were positive**.
- In marked contrast, **The Times, The Daily Telegraph and The Economist contained no negative editorial coverage**. The Times contained the highest proportion of positive comment of all the print media outlets, with 50% of its items positively positioned and the remaining 50% neutral. In the Daily Telegraph, 40% of comment pieces adopted a positive stance while 60% were neutral. All the editorial coverage of The Economist was neutrally positioned.

Journalistic breaches

Over the course of the second quarter of 2008 Just Journalism identified **28 pieces of coverage** which breached journalistic standards. Breaches occurred in print, broadcast and online media. (For further details on journalistic principles, please see: <http://www.justjournalism.com/journalistic-principles>)

The table below illustrates the spread of coverage containing breaches across the outlets.

Number of breaching articles by outlet:	
The Independent	6
The Guardian	4
Financial Times	3
BBC News website	3
The Times	2
Daily Mirror	2
BBC Radio 4	2
The Daily Telegraph	1
Daily Mail	1
Evening Standard	1
The Observer	1
The Sunday Times	1
New Statesman	1
Total	28

As the table demonstrates, **The Independent contained the highest frequency of breaches, followed by The Guardian**.

As there were 68 editions of The Independent containing coverage of Israel, this is the equivalent of nearly one in ten editions containing a breach.

There were **43 breaches overall**, which fell under the categories of factual accuracy, contributors, balance and impartiality.

Number of breaches by type:	
Factual accuracy	
Lack of context by exclusion of relevant information and facts	16
Factual error	9
Distortion of information	7
Misrepresentation of facts	4
Inaccurate weighing of facts and information	4
Contributors	
Lack of rigorous testing of contributors	2
Balance	
Imbalance of views	2
Impartiality	
Presentation of opinion as fact	1
Total	43

The most common shortcomings were under the category of **factual accuracy**, within which lack of context by exclusion of relevant information and facts occurred most frequently. For example, two articles in The Guardian and one in the Financial Times, published respectively on **June 9 2008**, **June 21 2008**, and **June 7 2008**, omitted to mention Iran's specific threats against Israel, while discussing the prospect of an Israeli attack on Iran. All the coverage containing journalistic breaches can be viewed on the Just Journalism website (www.justjournalism.com) using the advanced search facility.

Disclaimer: Just Journalism does not endorse the views and opinions presented in the articles above.