

Guidelines: Bias and Propaganda

Task objective

The objective of the proposed task is to address the complex landscape of media representation and discourse surrounding the Gaza-Israel 2023-2024 war by initiating a collaborative effort aimed at analyzing bias and double standards prevalent in news articles. By curating a multilingual and multicultural corpus of news article headlines and Facebook posts related to the conflict, the task seeks to explore diverse perspectives and narratives from major news outlets globally.

Task description

The task involves collaboratively analyzing bias and double standards in news articles related to the Gaza-Israel 2023-2024 war. Participants will work with a multilingual and multicultural corpus of news article headlines and Facebook posts, annotating them to establish comprehensive annotation guidelines. The aim is to uncover layers of bias and propaganda within news narratives, fostering a deeper understanding of the conflict's discourse. The task emphasizes sound annotation methodology and encourages the development of NLP researchers by providing raw data sources for engagement.

Established categories

Classifications of Bias:

In this paper, for the purpose of annotations, we classified the following:

1. Biased against Palestine
2. Biased against Israel
3. Biased against a third party
4. Unbiased
5. Not applicable

Classifications of Propaganda:

1. Propaganda must be removed: it has a real-world harmful consequence, such as putting an individual or a group of people at risk to their safety and security.
2. Propaganda may be removed: it is in the middle and depends on the context.
3. Propaganda must not be removed: it doesn't have any direct real world harmful consequences.

Detailed category guidelines

We understand the terms 'bias' and 'propaganda' in accordance with the internationally agreed upon definitions. Generally, our Guidelines are based on the work that has been done by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. We focus on the terms 'bias' and 'propaganda' as they are mainly used in our annotation.

Bias: is generally understood as an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.¹ In other words, it is an unreasonable dislike of or preference to, or a strong feeling that makes a person want to act against or in favor, often based on unfair judgment. It is based on prohibited grounds for discrimination, such as language, race, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, sex, etc.²

Propaganda is ideas or statements that are likely to be false or present only one side of an argument or a story - omitting facts -, used for advancing specific political or social agenda, by influencing people's mindset. The content of these ideas or statements is published by media outlets. For example, propaganda can take the forms of exaggeration or minimization, spreading doubts, name calling or labelling or intentional vagueness. All these forms have the common intention to spread false information and downplay facts.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations for the task include:

1. Fair Representation: Ensuring balanced representation of diverse perspectives and avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes or prejudices in the analysis.
2. Respect for Privacy: Safeguarding the privacy of individuals mentioned in the news articles and Facebook posts, especially in sensitive contexts such as conflict zones.
3. Transparency: Maintaining transparency in the annotation process, including the disclosure of any biases or limitations in the data collection and analysis methods.

Training & support

A team of annotators, carefully selected for their expertise, was recruited to participate in the task. The annotation guidelines, meticulously crafted by domain experts, served as the foundation for their work. Prior to annotation, the team underwent thorough training sessions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the guidelines and task objectives. Once the annotation process commenced, spreadsheets containing the data were distributed to the annotators. Throughout this phase, a dedicated supervisor closely monitored the annotations, promptly addressing any issues or misunderstandings that arose. To maintain oversight and facilitate coordination, a committee was established, convening weekly meetings to track progress, address challenges, and make informed decisions regarding the ongoing process. This collaborative approach ensured the integrity and quality of the annotation efforts, contributing to the success of the task. The annotators also were provided with feedback constantly so they can refine their annotation continuously.

¹ ECRI (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance) General Policy Recommendations no.7 §1 b; EU Guidelines on Non-Discrimination in External Action, p.4.

² International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, (adopted 21 December 1965, entered into force 4 January 1969) UNTS vol. 660, p. 195.