



20 July 2001

Dear Newsweek,

Thank you for the opportunity to give some feedback. Regrettably, I cannot agree that you "Present the news without bias". I've recently done my own research into the history and politics of the Middle East and found that your coverage to be is *completely biased* (pro-Israel, as if I have to tell you).

Where is your journalistic integrity? If you fail to tell the Palestinian side of the story, you are publishing *propaganda*, not news.

On the following pages, I'll demonstrate the bias I see and I've included three maps that encapsulate Palestinian grievances — loss of their land. It isn't a difficult issue to understand if you report it, so I encourage you to publish them. In recent years Jewish groups have had some success recovering artworks stolen by the Nazis and bank deposits stolen by the Swiss during World War II. Americans and Israelis need to recognize that Palestinians want their houses and land back, especially since some of them have been waiting 53 years!

The Israelis have no more right to be in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Syria's Golan Heights (and until recently, southern Lebanon), than Iraq had to be in Kuwait. Your reports give the impression the Palestinians are trying to take Israeli land when they are actually resisting foreign occupation. While America went to war against Iraq, our tax dollars now support the invader and oppressor. Your coverage of the Middle East avoids these central issues.

On a broader level, if I can't trust you will report this issue accurately, how can I be sure that you will give fair coverage to *any* issue? Unless I see dramatic change in the next few months, I won't be renewing my subscription.

yours sincerely,

Peter Varley

P.S. Canada, America's neighbor and largest trading partner had an election November 27 last year. I didn't see *any* coverage. Shame on you.

An analysis of Newsweek's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the start of the current outbreak of violence in late September last year:

## Look at who you have interviewed

Speaking for the Israelis	Speaking for the Palestinians
10/16/00 Ariel Sharon " <i>The danger we are facing</i> "	
10/23/00 Bibi Netanyahu " <i>Israel is here to stay</i> "	
10/23/00 Ehud Barak " <i>I will never lose hope</i> "	
11/13/00 Shimon Peres " <i>Emotions have grown high</i> "	
1/8/01 Ehud Barak " <i>We also have our dreams</i> "	
1/15/01 Ariel Sharon " <i>If Barak loses, I don't have to honor a deal</i> "	
2/5/01 Shimon Peres " <i>What the future will be</i> "	
3/19/01 Ariel Sharon " <i>I can make peace</i> "	
	4/9/01 Hosni Mubarak * " <i>It is out of control</i> "
7/2/01 Ariel Sharon " <i>This can't go on</i> "	7/2/01 Jibril Rajoub " <i>We cannot stop this</i> "
7/21/01 Ehud Barak, " <i>Separate or die</i> "	

Notice anything? It's rather unbalanced. I'd also point out that Hosni Mubarak is only an interested third party and not a direct participant so it took you *8 months* to get around to interviewing any Palestinian official. It was good that you finally spoke to someone but you show your true colors by giving Ariel Sharon *five times* as much space.

I imagine only a handful of Americans have heard of Jibril Rojoub but then this is hardly surprising since you don't do any profiles on the Palestinian officials, negotiators or academics.

## Look at the questions you ask—and fail to ask

The questions you put to Israeli politicians are too often about the immediate violence and the negotiations but rarely, if ever, about the Israeli actions that are at the root of it. For instance, "Did Arafat use your visit to the Temple Mount as a pretext to start a planned outbreak of violence?" (to Sharon, 16Oct00), or "Can Arafat control the violence?" (to Netanyahu, 23Oct00).

Where are the questions like:

- If protesters are causing trouble in the US, we arrest them and bring them before a court of law. Why do you shoot to kill?
- Israel has admitted to "initiated actions" against its political enemies (*60 Minutes, BBC*). Most non-Israelis would view these as "assassinations", a war crime according to the Hague Convention of 1907. Why shouldn't the Palestinians view them as acts of war?
- How is an attack by military aircraft against unarmed civilian targets such as police stations just retaliation for the work of a suicide bomber who is already dead?
- Why won't you halt all settlement construction in the occupied territories *today*?
- Why won't you abide by UN Resolution 194 and give the right of return to Palestinian displaced in 1948?
- When will you completely and unconditionally withdraw from areas you captured in 1967 and held illegally ever since? Not a single country, not even the US, recognizes your

acquisition of these areas.

- If you won't withdraw from the occupied territories, why have you resisted an international monitoring force? Are you concerned it might be impartial?
- When will you stop collective punishment such as bulldozing Palestinian houses and orchards?
- In the years since the Oslo accords were signed, Jewish settlements have expanded by 50% (*The Economist*). Why should the Palestinians trust you when you continue to take their land?
- Instead of you and the Palestinians arguing over Jerusalem, why not place it under international control as the UN originally intended?
- Is the Israeli military using depleted-uranium weapons against the Palestinians?
- and so on ...

When you interview the Israeli politicians, you rarely challenge some of the ridiculous things they say, particularly Sharon. For instance, you ask him, "*Should there be a Palestinian state?*" to which he replies "*As long as it is reached by agreement, not a unilateral act ...*" (16 Oct 00). Was your reporter unaware that Israel was not created by agreement but by a unilateral act?

Or, "*They're (the Palestinians) manufacturing weapons?*" to which he answers "*Yes, mortars ...*" (2 Jul 01). Well Israel produces far more than just mortars. The US government also gives and sells all sorts of military hardware to Israel. It appears Sharon resents an enemy that offers any resistance with what little they can muster against tanks and fighter jets.

Or again, "*The United States is hoping you will turn over the tax payments to the Palestinian Authority*" to which he says, "*We shouldn't look at Arafat as someone who cannot pay his wages. They have property worth over a billion dollars all over the world.*" (19 Mar 01). So what? If the Israelis promised to collect taxes on behalf of the PA, not handing them over is equivalent to theft. Are they attempting to bankrupt the PA?

You ask Barak (3 Jul 01) about the failed Camp David talks and he says, "*Ninety to 91 percent [of the West Bank] would be transferred to the Palestinians ...*". Surely a good journalist would have pointed no country in the world recognizes an Israeli right to any of it.

I suggest that you could do worthwhile stories on:

- The role political contributions by pro-Israel groups (\$6.1 million in the last election according to the Center for Responsive Politics) have in influencing US policy toward Israel. Just why is Israel the largest recipient of American foreign aid when it is not a populous, third-world country?
- Whether Israel has made inappropriate use of the military equipment it gets from the US. Use of American made jets, helicopters and tanks against unarmed civilian targets appears to contravene the Arms Export Control Act.
- Human rights in Israel and the occupied territories. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch can provide plenty of material. How about an update on **Mordechai Vanunu**, the man who dared to tell the truth that Israel has a nuclear weapons program. Iraq keeps getting hammered for trying to build "weapons of mass destruction". What about Israel?

- It's mentioned above but assassinations by Israel deserve a full story. Amnesty says "*The use of state assassinations by Israel against Palestinian suspects is undermining the rule of law and fuelling the cycle of violence in the region*".
- A really interesting subject would be the reason for the pro-Israel bias in the American media. I know one of your competitors, US News and World Report is owned by Mort Zuckerman who is apparently Jewish (though he failed to disclose this in a piece he wrote a few weeks ago) but what of the rest of the media. What a coup it would be to expose your competitors!

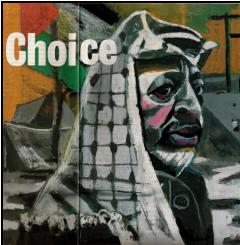
## **Look at the images you publish—and those you don't**

Compare these images from 23 Oct 00:

Palestinians	Israelis
	

While I chose these three to emphasize the point, it is true that most of your photos of Palestinians are in scenes of violence and chaos, while those of Israelis are of smiling and thoughtful politicians. You give your readers the impression that Palestinians are a violent and blood-thirsty people while Israeli Jews are educated and reasonable.

Look at this comparison:

Arafat	Peres and Sharon
	

As far as I can tell, this is the only picture of Arafat you've published since the start of the recent troubles and yet it is dark and sinister. You do have more nice photos of prominent Israelis though. It's a shame because the accompanying article was actually very good, starting by telling the story of some Palestinian refugees still waiting for the chance to go home.

You need to be more neutral in your captions too. The one for this photo (30Oct00): says "As Clinton's ceasefire collapses, a Palestinian **rioter** is shot in the head by Israeli soldiers in Ramallah."



You appear to be saying that since he is a rioter, he deserved what he got. Using "protester" would have been a better choice.

You published this photo (23Oct00) and show us graphic details of the lynching of two Israeli soldiers:



yet you completely ignored the death of 12-year-old Mohammed Aldura:



These photos were taken from French TV moments before and after the boy was killed and the father was shot. If you show the lynching, why not this? The Israeli army claims the father and son were caught in "crossfire". How can you be in crossfire when you are against a wall? Were is your investigation of the claimed Israeli innocence?

While the photos of Mohammed caused outrage around the world and you failed to mention it, you did find space for "*In Israel, rage grows over the killing of two teenagers*" (21 May 01). Don't let the world forget that the death toll amongst the Palestinians is about **4 times** that of the Israelis.

There was a short article in 9 Jul 01 called "Wanted: A Week of 'Quiet'" which said some interesting things including, "*Piles of earth and stones bulldozed by the Israeli Army still block the entrances to his and other Arab villages, making travel through the West Bank an ordeal; Khuffash hasn't been able to get to work in weeks. Armed Jewish settlers prowl the roads, hurling rocks through the windshields of Palestinian buses*". Surely this demands more, much more, than a photo of a grieving mother. Something like this ...



*"Ms Sobhiya Al-Amour (50) facing an Israeli bulldozer. This bulldozer had destroyed two Palestinian houses. In the picture it is digging up her field of olive trees. Thousands of olive trees were uprooted since the beginning of the Intifada as a collective punishment to the Palestinians."*

There is apparently a wider story here that there is routine discrimination in the approval of building applications. Some of the Palestinian houses are bulldozed because they have been constructed without proper approvals. However, Palestinian applications are usually rejected, or if approved, only after a very long delay while applications by Israeli Jews are handled quickly and almost always approved. It appears to be a deliberate policy to stifle economic development amongst Palestinians while "settlers" i.e. occupiers are given a free hand.

Actually, the still wider story is racial discrimination in many aspects of life for Palestinians, much as it was for blacks in Apartheid South Africa. Difficulty in gaining building approvals is just one aspect. Water use, the subject of two critical U.N. reports is another. Buried in a story "We've been kidnapped" (11 Jun 01) with this disturbing photo:



were the illuminating words, "*Busloads of settlers, escorted by military jeeps, raced from the settlement down their side of the highway—a reminder of the privileged status of the hated occupiers*". Segregation in America once forced separate washrooms and swimming pools for blacks but Israel sees to it that the "settlers" in the territory they have taken get their own roads too. Please, more detail and photos.

What of the curfews that the Israeli army imposes from time-to-time? They only apply to Palestinians allowing Jewish settlers to go about damaging Palestinian property.

Israel has used American-made tanks, jet fighters and helicopter gunships against civilian targets such as Police stations. Where are your photos of such abuses, both the military hardware in the

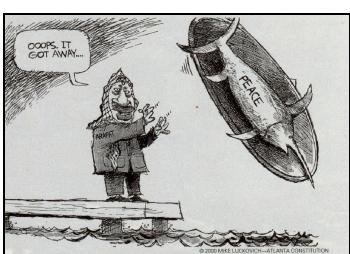
act of terror, and the human carnage and physical damage that results?



Photo courtesy of ARU  
The ruin of 'Adnan family house. (Beit Sahour)

Damage after Israeli shelling of Bethlehem.

As you know, the whole point of political cartoons is to capture an idea in a single image. This one represents one view of the outcome of the Camp David summit last year.



For balance, why didn't you find one, or commission one that shows the opposite view—that Israel has come nowhere close to offering back what it has taken?

## **Another time, another place**

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### **Presenting Jews as victims**

It is completely true that millions of Jews suffered and died in the Holocaust. However, that was in Europe over half a century ago and has no real bearing on what is happening today in the Middle East—except that by being continually reminded about it, we are made to believe that the Jews are still the victims.

They were victims then; they are not now. In fact, they are now the oppressors. While Palestinian suffering *right now* is largely ignored, we've been reminded at least three times since September of the Holocaust:

- 8 Oct 01 "Dancing on old graves - A controversial disco sparks a tense Holocaust debate"



- 23 Oct 00, My Turn, "It was the last time we were together"



- 19 Feb 01 "Dark questions for IBM" about the book "IBM and the Holocaust"

Was it really a coincidence that a few weeks after the current cycle of violence started, you had a Holocaust survivor recount her story? If you were at all interested in presenting a balanced view, you would either have not run the piece at all given recent events, or the following week, found a Palestinian who fled in 1948 and had them tell their story of waiting all these years to go home. Someone from the Sabra or Shatila refugee camp would have been good. You will of course recall these camps are where the massacres took place, for which the current Israeli Prime Minister was found indirectly responsible. If not in My Turn, make it a story.

### **Different rules for different people**

Though "A final mission" appeared on 11 Sep 00, a few weeks before the start of the current violence, it is interesting to note how you describe the actions of some Jews who attempted (and probably succeeded) to poison thousands of Germans in the immediate aftermath of the war. While resistance by Palestinians is termed "terrorism", vengeance by Jews against Nazis was described in heroic terms: "*Their mere existence was their victory... More than anything, they left the legend of their struggle, a wake to look back at history and say 'Here there was a fight'*". How can you apply such different standards?

### **Equal treatment**

While I've been pleased you have given a paragraph or two about the discussion in Congress about the Turkish genocide against Armenians, if you are going to cover new developments in past genocides (and I think you should), then cover them all in roughly equal detail. The suffering of the Jews is *not unique*, despite what you and they would have us believe.

The recent Armenian settlement with New York Life was ignored. There are moves in Cambodia to finally bring to trial some of the Khmer Rouge. No coverage.

There has been outrage amongst Japan's neighbors about a new school textbook that overlooks or rationalizes Japanese atrocities during WWII. If you covered the publishing of a book about IBM's possible role in the Holocaust, how could you ignore the Japanese book? The Japanese refusal to face up to their own history as the Germans have does affect America—many Japanese regard themselves as victims of the American aggression since the US dropped the atomic bomb on them.

What has happened to the perpetrators of the violence in Rwanda? After Soeharto was swept from power in Indonesia, did anything new come to light about the massacres that accompanied

his rise to power in 1965?

In the decade since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there must have been discoveries about Stalin's genocide by artificial famine against Ukrainians in the 1930s, a killing *on the same scale* as the Jewish Holocaust. I certainly haven't noticed anything in the 6 years I've subscribed to your magazine. Given that so few have heard of the Ukrainian genocide, I see your responsibility to report it to us as even greater; every American already knows about the Holocaust.

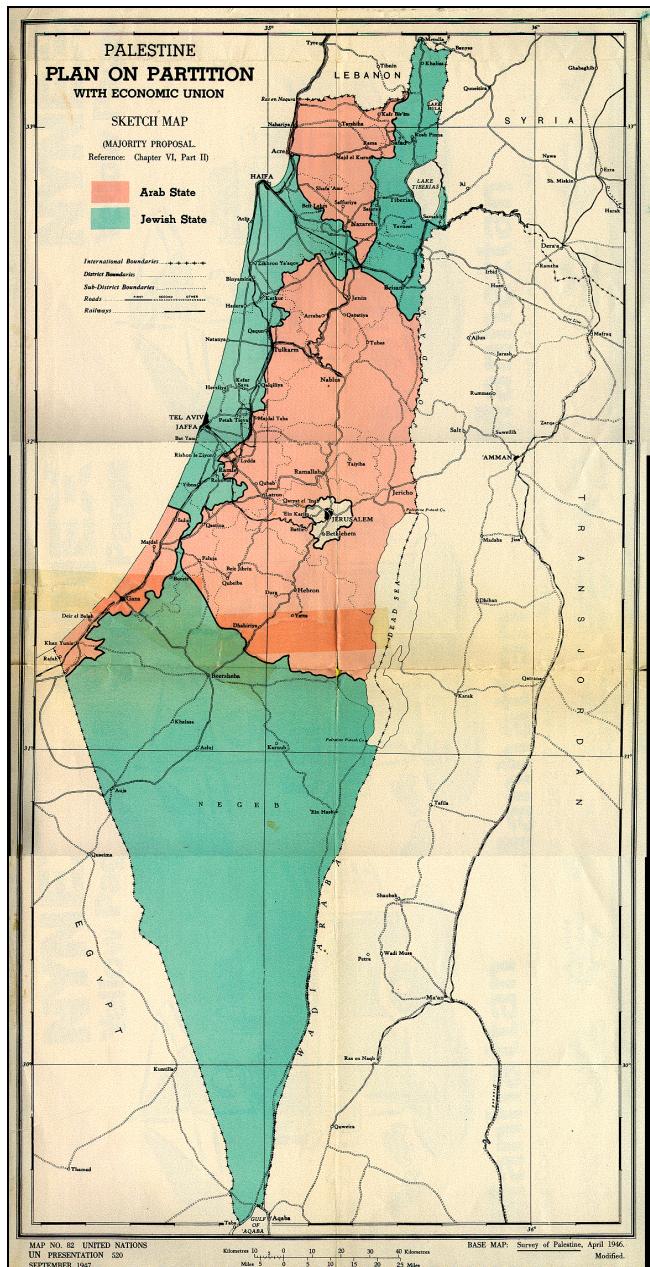
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If you've read this far, thank you. I didn't think you'd believe me unless I gave a comprehensive analysis. I hope you are now convinced and will do something about it.

## What the Israelis were allocated under the 1947 UN Partition plan (green)

Following 400 years of rule by the Ottoman Turks, the British took control of the area after the WWI with the intention that it would eventually be self-governing. The British withdrew after WWII leaving the UN in charge and they devised a plan to split the Palestinian Mandate into Jewish and Arab areas of roughly equal size. Note that Jerusalem is under *international* control and that crossing points mean that no area under Arab or Jewish control is completely isolated from any of the others.

(<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal/maps/M0082c.gif>)



## What the Israelis took in 1948 and became modern Israel (cream)

Israel unilaterally declared its independence and after a war with its Arab neighbors, the ceasefire lines became the borders of modern Israel. Note that it is a lot larger than what they were allocated and the West Bank and Gaza Strip are now separated. The Arabs in the Israeli areas have yet to be compensated for the loss of the homes and land and have no right of return.

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/is.html>)



# Israeli settlements in the remaining Arab areas captured in 1967

After capturing Arab land, the Israelis have had a government-sponsored program to put Jewish "settlers" on it. "Occupiers" would be a better word since they come with military protection. The Palestinians cannot take Israeli proclamations of peace seriously when settlements have expanded 50% since the Oslo accords were signed (from *The Economist*)? What is left for them? (<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal/maps/m3070r17.gif>)

