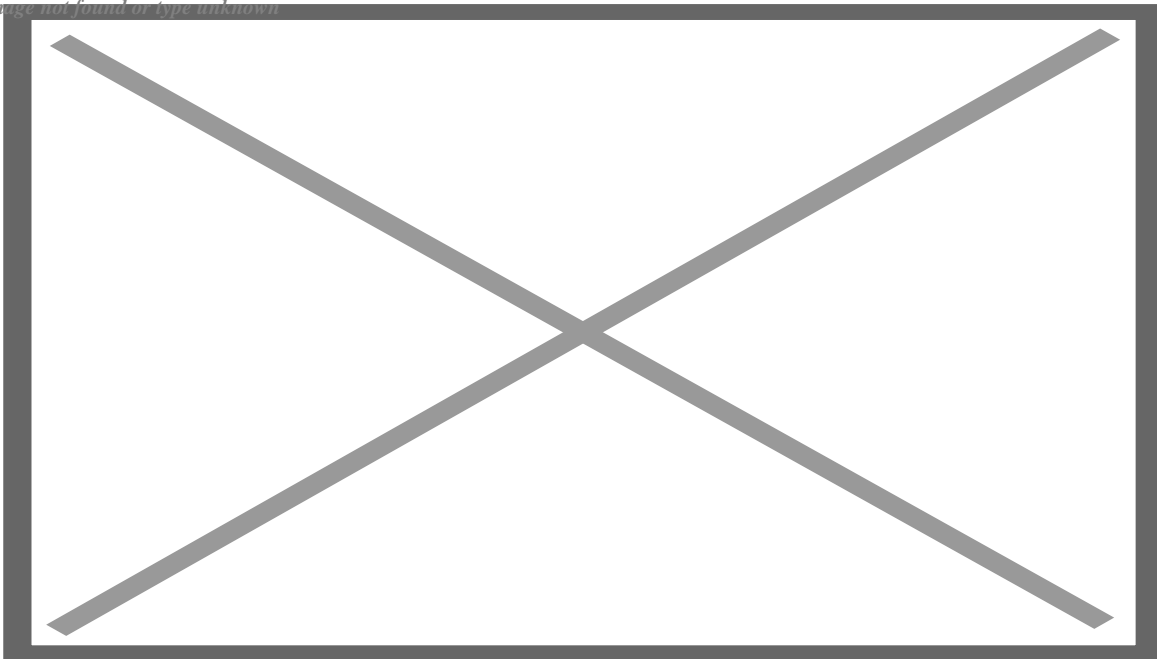# How corporate media helped lay the groundwork for Israel's genocide in Gaza

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New York, December 5 (RHC)-- Gaza has continued to capture news headlines since the Hamas attacks on October 7 and the beginning of Israel's totally disproportionate military response, which has brought the full might of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to bear on Palestinian civilians and children, prompting serious allegations of war crimes and genocide. "We are fighting human animals and we act accordingly," Israel's defense minister, Yoav Gallant, infamously stated.

But, for decades, U.S. corporate media have treated Gaza's inhabitants as nonpersons, and daily life in Gaza as non-news. News media omissions often function as tacit permission for abuses of power. Corporate media didn't create the violent, inhumane conditions in Gaza, but their shameful legacy of narrow, pro-Israel coverage indirectly laid the groundwork for the atrocious human suffering taking place there now.

The corporate media's extended erasure of Gaza and its inhabitants is certainly rooted in the tacit (and sometimes overt) racism that distorts much news coverage of the Middle East in general and Palestine in

particular. For example, Holly Jackson of the University of California, Berkeley, conducted a content analysis of reports published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal, from October 7 to October 22, 2023, and found disproportionate coverage of Israeli deaths compared to Palestinian ones and marked differences in the language used to describe those deaths.

But misleading coverage is also a result of corporate news outlets' relentless, myopic focus on novel, dramatic events rather than long-term, systemic issues. As media critics Robert Hackett and Richard Gruneau noted in The Missing News (2000), for corporate media, "News is about what went wrong today, not what goes wrong every day."

For decades, Project Censored has highlighted slant, marginalization and outright censorship in mainstream U.S. news coverage of Israel and Palestine — in effect, the long-term buildup to what Alan MacLeod has described as a pro-Israel, anti-Palestine "propaganda blitz" by corporate media since October 7.

Corporate media have failed to cover Israel's repression of Palestinian media and the efforts of Canary Mission and other Zionist organizations to stifle free speech and to blacklist advocates of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), while censoring efforts to expose the pervasive influence of pro-Israel lobbying. Historically, U.S. corporate media have failed to adequately cover continuing human rights abuses in Palestine, including the detention of Palestinian children; how private corporations profit from Israeli occupation; and the role of the World Bank in funding the West Bank apartheid wall — not to mention U.S. complicity in providing arms used for war crimes. The violence since October 7 has brought new attention to many of these issues, but when Project Censored originally highlighted these stories, each had been either marginalized or altogether silenced by the establishment press.

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Notably, each of these stories — which were covered by independent journalists and news outlets — addressed ongoing, systemic issues rather than single, discrete events. The Israeli blockade of Gaza, for example, dates back to 2005-2006, and has been permanent since 2007, when Hamas took political control of the strip. But as exemplified by 2014 reporting about Israel restricting food imports to Gaza — effectively using hunger to coerce Palestinians in Gaza to reject Hamas — the daily realities of state violence and ethnic subjugation are not typically deemed newsworthy by U.S. corporate media outlets.

Like the violence that's made headlines since October 7, the erasure of Palestinians by establishment news outlets in the United States is nothing new. To assess how U.S. news readers have been "encouraged to think about Palestinians," historian Maha Nassar, the author of Brothers Apart: Palestinian Citizens of Israel and the Arab World, examined 50 years of editorials, staff columns and guest opinion pieces published by The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Republic and The Nation. Nassar found that the most prominent U.S. news outlets "hosted thousands of opinion pieces on Israel-Palestine over 50 years," but "hardly any were actually written by Palestinians." For example, less than 2 percent of the 2,490 opinion pieces that The New York Times published from 1970 to 2019 were authored by Palestinians. As a result, Nassar observed, "readers' views were shaped by columnists whose copious opinion pieces about Palestinians ranged from the annoyingly condescending to the outright racist."

From the opinion section to headline news reports, Western news outlets have failed to adhere to basic journalistic standards in covering the violence in Gaza and the West Bank since October 7. News reports marred by egregious examples of mistranslation and failures to convey the context of events exemplify this failure. "Terms such as 'unprovoked attack' often ignore prior events," the Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association cautions in its media guide for newsrooms that seek to provide accurate and critical coverage of Israel and Palestine.

"Take note of when reporters tell you the latest violence 'started,'" Peter Hart of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting advised back in 2012, "They're picking a starting point for a reason." Nevertheless, corporate news outlets continue to present timelines that position Israel as responding to Palestinian violence. This conventional frame reinforces biased distinctions between "worthy" and "unworthy" victims.

Corporate news outlets tend to ignore or provide only intermittent and superficial coverage of news about journalism itself. Coverage of violence in Gaza since October 7 has unfortunately followed this pattern. The corporate press have not adequately covered the killing of reporters in Gaza and the West Bank. Nevertheless, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reports that Israel's war on Gaza has taken a "severe toll" on journalists. As of November 30, preliminary investigations by CPJ documented at least 57 journalists and media workers among those killed since the current phase of conflict erupted on October 7. Another 11 journalists were reported injured, three reported missing, and 19 reported arrested. The CPJ report duly noted that the IDF informed Reuters and AFP that it "cannot guarantee" the safety of their journalists operating in Gaza.

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U.S.-based journalists have faced different threats. Alan MacLeod reported that CNN, The Hill and the Associated Press have all fired staff members for crossing red lines by advocating for a free Palestine or characterizing Israel as an apartheid state. As Truthout reported, MSNBC dropped Mehdi Hasan's show after he stood out as one of the only news anchors on a major broadcast outlet to publicly oppose Israel's brutality. Previously, Truthout reported, Israel had considered barring Al Jazeera journalists from covering Israel's war on Palestinians. Condemnation by press freedom advocates appears to have forestalled this aim, but Israel has throttled the flow of information about events in Gaza in other, more sweeping ways.

On October 13, the nonprofit organization Access Now reported that Israel was imposing an internet blackout on the Gaza Strip, which the global digital rights organization called out as "an attack on human rights." As a result of the "near-complete blackout" of all communications, "access to information has become scarce, directly impacting the capacity to document atrocities perpetrated on the ground," Access Now reported.

On October 27, as Israel prepared for a ground invasion of Gaza, Access Now issued a joint statement with the Arab Alliance for Digital Rights calling for an "immediate reversal" of the ongoing "total communications blackout." The statement noted that Israeli airstrikes had targeted telecommunication installations, "destroying two of the three main lines for mobile communication" and "leaving 11 internet service providers operating in Gaza now completely shut down due to infrastructural damage." As Project Censored has previously reported, based on past work by Global Access and other digital rights organizations, internet shutdowns often provide cover for atrocities.

Although establishment press outlets, including The Washington Post and The New York Times, have covered Israel's communications blackout of Gaza, there have been two basic problems with this reporting. First, there was a lag of nearly two weeks between the first alarms sounded by digital rights groups and the newspapers' coverage. Second, and perhaps more damning, is that even that tardy coverage has used language that diminishes the blackout's consequences. The Washington Post's October 30 report, for example, ran with a headline saying that internet disruptions "caused problems in Gaza over the weekend." As if the issue were interrupted Netflix streams, rather than access to emergency services and trustworthy information.

While Biden administration officials claim the U.S. is "unable to exert significant influence" on Israel, even as the U.S. simultaneously maneuvers to undertake a next round of arms deals with Israel "in complete secrecy" without congressional oversight, the American public continues to be left in the dark — not only about the extent and balance of violence in Gaza, but also the United States' role in "supporting a military that experts say has been committing war crimes in Gaza and beyond."

As Israel's assault on Gaza escalates without respect for international law, this is grim, deadly business. Though it may seem inconsequential, bolstering support for truly independent news outlets that provide diverse, critical and trustworthy reporting in the public interest has never been more important or, potentially, consequential. Compared with corporate news outlets, independent news outlets — including Truthout, where you're reading this article — not only employ more inclusive definitions of who and what count as "newsworthy," they also act as powerful checks on the official narratives and atrocity propaganda peddled, with disturbing regularity, by their corporate counterparts.

https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/341273-how-corporate-media-helped-lay-the-groundwork-for-israels-genocide-in-gaza

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