

## Exert 6

(pp. 150-155)

Between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October 2000, there were a series of reports in the press and on television of attacks on Israeli Arabs by Jewish Israelis, in Tel Aviv, Tiberius, Jaffa and Nazareth. Israeli Arabs make up 20 per cent of the population of Israel. (1) Many believe that they are treated as second class citizens within Israel and in the early days of the intifada they had been reported as protesting / rioting in ‘support for their Palestinian cousins’ (BBC1 early evening News, 1 October 2000). On the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2000, the *Guardian* reported an attack on the Arab community in Nazareth as follows:

In Nazareth, in the heart of Israel, hundreds of Jewish extremists attacked an Israeli/Arab neighbourhood overnight. When the police arrived they fired rubber bullets at the local Arabs – not their assailants, killing two men.

*(The Guardian, 10 October 2000)*

On the same day, the *Independent* reported attacks in Tel Aviv and Jaffa: ‘in the seaside community of Bat Yam, just south of Tel Aviv, two Israeli Arabs were stabbed.’ They also reported that ‘in nearby Jaffa, three Arab-owned apartments were burned’ and that some Jews were chanting ‘death to the Arabs’ (*The Independent*, 10 October 2000). On the following day the *Guardian* reported that: ‘mosques and Arab businesses in Tel Aviv were besieged by Jewish mobs in a night of mayhem’, and that ‘on two consecutive nights this week, Jewish mobs attacked the two hundred-year-old Hassan Bek mosque in central Tel Aviv’ and that those who did it were screaming ‘death to Arabs’ (*The Guardian* 11 October 2000). On the same day the *Independent* reported that:

A Jewish mob wrecked one of Israel’s most famous restaurants and tried to kill its Arab waiters by blocking them inside and torching the place...outside a young man gazed happily at the mess. “We want to cut all the Arabs throats; we want to kill them all” he said.

*(The Independent 11 October 2000)*

In all, thirteen Israeli/Arabs were reported to have been killed in these events. *The Guardian* reported that the clashes in Nazareth had been described as a pogrom by an Israeli peace group:

...what is happening in Nazareth today is a pogrom, bearing all the hallmarks which were well known to Jews in tsarist Russia, that is collusion between the racist attackers and police.

(*The Guardian*, 10 October 2000).

The television news reporting of these events was rather muted by comparison. The following references were made within our sample:

Some Israeli civilians are taking matters into their own hands. Last night a Jewish mob attacked a mosque in the city of Tiberius. It seemed to be an act of revenge, following a Palestinian assault on a Jewish holy shrine on the West Bank.

(BBC1 early evening News, 8 October 2000)

Some Israelis are taking it upon themselves to respond. In Tiberius on Saturday night a Jewish mob attacked a mosque and beat up Arabs. It seemed to be an act of revenge following a Palestinian assault on a Jewish shrine on the West Bank. Tonight Jews are again attacking Arabs, in the northern city of Nazareth.

(BBC1 main News, 8 October 2000)

Inside Israel itself Jews have taken to the streets to show their anger. This is a mosque being attacked in Tiberius last night.

(ITV main News, 8 October 2000)

A second Israeli Arab was killed in Nazareth and a Jewish settler died near Nablus in the West Bank.

(BBC1 lunchtime News, 9 October 2000)

As the national mood in Israel darkens, these were the rare scenes in Tel

Aviv, it may be far removed from the West Bank but even here the conflict is spilling out onto the streets. Two Israeli/Arabs were stabbed and Arab homes were set alight as Jews staged running battles with the police.

(ITV lunchtime News, 10 October 2000)

Passions on all sides are still running high. Even in Tel Aviv violence has now hit the streets. These were angry Jews last night looking for Arab victims.

(ITV early evening News, 10 October 2000)

Overnight violence flared again inside Israel. In Acre, Israeli/Arabs clashed with the police.

(BBC1 lunchtime News, 11 October 2000)

On the following day, two Israeli soldiers were reported on TV news to have been killed by a crowd of Palestinians. According to these reports, four Israeli soldiers in a civilian car were arrested by Palestinian police in Ramallah. The Israelis stated that, they were simply reservists who had taken a wrong turning into the town. The Palestinians believed them to be part of the Israeli undercover units. A crowd gathered outside the police station where they were being held. Some of these Palestinians gained access to the station, where two of the soldiers were then killed and the body of one of these was thrown from a window. The other two soldiers who had survived were later handed over to the Israeli authorities.

There are three points to be made about the TV news coverage of these events. The first is that the deaths of the two Israeli soldiers receive over five times as much coverage as that of the thirteen Arabs who had been killed in 'mob' violence. Second, the deaths of the Israeli soldiers are highlighted in the coverage, receiving headlines such as 'Swift retaliation after Israeli soldiers are lynched.' (ITV early evening News, 12 October 2000, quoted above). Third, there is a very clear difference in the language used to describe the two sets of events. For example the headline, 'lynch-mob' is not used in relation to the Arab deaths. We can see these very sharp differences in the structure and tone of coverage if we consider the following accounts from our sample,

of the deaths of the Israeli soldiers. In this BBC News from the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2000, a ‘frenzied mob’ is reported as ‘baying for their blood’:

*A frenzied mob* of Palestinians besieging the police station in Ramallah. It was here that several Israeli soldiers had been arrested by Palestinian police and the mob were *baying for their blood*. Eventually they burst into the police station surging through the gates and clambering into the windows. Israel says the soldiers inside were just reservists who lost their way. The Palestinians insist they were members of a plain-clothes undercover unit. Whatever the truth, two of them were about to die. With cameras filming from the outside, young Palestinians could be seen in this window *savagely beating and stabbing soldiers to death*. Victory signs to indicate the deed had been done. *The frenzied crowd could hardly contain their glee*, especially when one of the bodies was thrown down to them from the window. Israel was outraged and promised vengeance. It was almost immediate. Just after noon prayers, Israeli helicopter gun-ships swarmed over Ramallah. People ran for their lives for they knew what was coming. They had incurred the wrath of Israel.

From a nearby rooftop we watched wave after wave of rockets rain down on Ramallah. First target the police station where the soldiers had been *so barbarically killed*.

(BBC1 main News, 12 October 2000 – our italics)

There are a number of words which were used specifically to describe the deaths of the Israeli soldiers, such as ‘atrocious’, ‘murder’, and as we have seen ‘lynch-mob’ and ‘barbarically killed’. None of these were used in our samples for Arab/Palestinian deaths. The following examples are all from the first day on which the deaths of the two soldiers were reported:

The [Israeli] attack is precise and repeated. Rocket after rocket slams into the police station destroying the very rooms where the *murders* took place... Israel said it would take drastic action and it has, for the brutal *murder* of its soldiers this morning it has now traded a direct assault on the heart of the

Palestinian city... The Israelis are saying these are symbolic, if you like, pinprick attacks against, first of all the scene of this morning's *atrocities*.

(BBC1 early evening News, 12 October 2000 – our italics)

Palestinian police seized four Israeli soldiers and took them to a police station, but two were apparently *lynched by a mob*.

(ITV lunchtime News 12 October 2000 – our italics)

This was the trigger [for Israeli attacks]. The *murder* of two Israeli soldiers inside a Palestinian police station in Ramallah. The Palestinian security forces could not keep a *lynch-mob* of their own people at bay. In a first floor room the soldiers were beaten and stabbed to death. Their bodies were later dumped out of this window.

(ITV early evening News, 12 October 2000 – our italics)

There is also some discussion of the implications of the killings and a journalist refers to the Israeli view that they are a justification to 'abandon restraint':

On Monday night Ehud Barak had withdrawn his ultimatum and threat of a crackdown but clearly he felt that the brutal killing of the two soldiers here was a step too far – *justification for abandoning restraint*.

(ITV early evening News, 12 October 2000 – our italics)

Some might question the uncritical use of the word 'restraint' – since as the previous bulletin had noted 'the violence has left about one hundred people, mainly Palestinians dead' (ITV lunchtime News, 12 October 2000). It is also noteworthy that while the Israeli attacks after the killing of the soldiers are consistently referred to as a 'retaliation' and 'a response', the same links are not made to Palestinian actions. In other words, the killing of the soldiers is not routinely described as a response to the large number of Palestinian deaths. In analysing such points we are not seeking to justify or legitimize any killings in the conflict. But as we will see, such linkages in the structure of coverage are very important in how viewers understand the origins and causes of violence.

The language of ‘lynching’, ‘brutal murder’, and ‘slaughter’ continues over the days which follow:

This is the Ramallah police station where two Israeli soldiers were *brutally murdered*.

(BBC1 lunchtime News, 13 October 2000 – our italics)

Today they buried one of the Israeli soldiers who was beaten and stabbed to death by a mob of Palestinians and whose *murder* triggered a wave of Israeli reprisals.

(BBC1 late News, 13 October 2000 – our italics)

On this BBC bulletin we are then given details of the personal and tragic circumstances of the victim. We are told that ‘he married his sweetheart only last week. She is expecting his baby.’ The Palestinians are then said to ‘show no sign or remorse’:

In Ramallah Palestinians have been marching past the police station where the two soldiers died such horrific deaths. It has now been reduced to a pile of rubble by Israeli gun-ships. But these Palestinians show no sign of remorse. Instead they chant Islamic revolutionary slogans and protest about the Israeli attacks on their town.

(BBC1 late News, 13 October 2000)

On the same day ITV news describes the deaths of the soldiers using words such as ‘brutal slaying’ and ‘slaughter’ (ITV lunchtime News, 13 October 2000). A later bulletin also notes that:

It was here yesterday with the mob violence that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict reached its lowest moment, exposing a raw and brutal enmity.

(ITV late News, 13 October 2000)

It is perhaps significant that the ‘lowest moment’ in the conflict is seen as with the mob violence which killed Israeli soldiers rather than with the killings of Israeli Arabs or

with other Palestinian deaths. People on both sides of the conflict suffered terrible fates, but there were some clear differences in the manner in which these were described on the news.

### Endnotes

1. The *Independent* described their position in Israeli society as follows: 'Israel's one million Arabs form a fifth of the population. They are waiters and factory workers, a cheap labour pool that served a growing consumer society, slogging on, despite civil rights violations and prejudice.'  
(11 December 2000)

(pp.182-186)

### Sample Three

#### Coverage of Casualties, March 2002

This sample ran from the 2<sup>nd</sup> until the 9<sup>th</sup> of March and included a total of 21 bulletins (ITV: 11 and BBC1: 10). This was a period of relatively high casualties on both sides. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2002 the BBC reported that, 'for the Palestinians it's already the bloodiest week of this conflict: 140 dead, one tenth of the casualties since the uprising began' (BBC1 late News, 9 March 2002). Israeli deaths were just under one third of this number. When we analysed the text of the news bulletins, we found that there was actually more coverage of Israeli deaths and casualties than of Palestinians (120.25 lines covering Israeli deaths and casualties compared to 46 lines covering Palestinian deaths and casualties).  
(1) We can see this pattern in the following examples. The first is headlined as a story about Israeli 'hitting back' at the Palestinians:

Headline: Avenging their dead, Israel hits back against the Palestinians. The West Bank under attack. Tanks and warplanes hit Palestinian targets.  
(BBC1 late News, 3 March 2002)

The story which follows then focuses very largely on the casualties of the Israeli side. There was a sharp contrast between the non-specific language of 'tanks and warplanes hit Palestinian targets' and the very detailed account given of Israeli deaths and injuries. The report goes on as follows:

Good evening, Israel's prime minister Ariel Sharon is facing mounting pressure to stop the escalation of violence in the conflict with the Palestinians. More than twenty Israelis have been killed in the past twenty-four hours. Israel has retaliated with a renewed offensive against Palestinian targets. Tonight the Israeli security cabinet is holding an emergency meeting to discuss its strategy.

Journalist [in Israel]: Behind the barbed wire, the dead lined up in a row. Ten Israelis killed this morning at this lonely checkpoint. Seven of them soldiers. A Palestinian

sniper shot them one by one. And just a few hours later this – burying last night's victims. Nine Israelis killed in a suicide bombing. This is the final farewell for an entire family. Here they were in life, Shlomo and Nechmad and their daughters Larin and Sheraz. Ambulances full of young victims last night. 'Even-ing the score' Palestinian militants said, after Israel's push into refugee camps killed more than twenty. So revenge was taken on babies like Shimon. Today his grandmother Hannah was at his bedside. She wants tougher action against the Palestinians.

(BBC1 late News, 3 March 2002)

As we have seen above, the deaths of children tend to be treated with special sympathy. On the following day, the BBC reported on an Israeli attack:

Among the dead, a doctor in his ambulance and five children killed after school. Three taken from this family leaving Hafaz behind – today he lost his mother, his sister and his two brothers. 'Poor children', their Aunt Najah told us, 'What were they guilty of' she wants to know. Here on the right, the children's father, a militant called Hussein Abu Quik. Israeli security sources say he was the target but he's alive, clutching this photo of a family that's gone.

(BBC1 late News 4 March 2002)

On ITV news, the report is introduced as follows:

Israeli missiles destroy a Palestinian security building in Bethlehem tonight causing explosions that could be heard in Jerusalem six miles away. But what has angered the Palestinians more, is the death of five children, among sixteen Palestinians killed on the West Bank today.

(ITV late News 4 March 2002)

But overall, there is a continued emphasis on Israeli deaths and injuries, both in terms of the amount of coverage which they receive and the consistently detailed accounts which are given of them.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2002 it was reported that more than forty Palestinians died when Israel launched raids by land, sea and air on the West Bank and Gaza (BBC News 24, 19:00, 8 March 2002). On the BBC main news that night, the headline was: 'More than forty dead in the Middle East on the intifada's bloodiest day'. The news item then initially mentions the casualties on both sides:

The bloody violence in the Middle East reached a new level of intensity today. More than fifty people have been killed in less than thirty-six hours, making this the worst day since the start of the Palestinian intifada seventeen months ago. The total number stands

at more than 1300. The killing accelerated last May with the Palestinians suffering the highest casualties, but the number of Israeli civilians dead has been rising too (bar graph on screen showing number of deaths).

The item then continues with a report from a journalist in the Middle East, which focuses very largely on Israeli casualties:

Journalist: The bloodiest day yet began with nineteen year-old Mohammed Farhad. He's dead now but death came only after he had killed five young Israelis and injured many more. It was mayhem, Farhad acted alone, infiltrating a Jewish settlement before using his assault rifle and grenade to maximum effect. The victims were religious students, young men being groomed to become officers in the Israeli army. Most of the casualties were hit as they sat together during Bible studies. Today the Jewish settlers who live on this occupied Palestinian land were retracing the steps of the attacker. After cutting the perimeter wire, he raced up the sandbank. At the top there was nothing between him and the settlement school. The killing only stopped when he too was gunned down. It is this kind of incident which incenses Israeli public opinion and guarantees a massive and bloody response. Standing here amid all of this, international diplomacy seems frankly irrelevant. The violence on the ground has reached a new level of intensity and in many ways, it feels that it's beyond the control of the politicians. And so the Israelis are determined to continue their crushing assault against the Palestinians. This is the West Bank city of Tulkarm, the population of some twenty thousand is under a second day of Israeli military occupation. The fighting here and in the Gaza Strip means that today alone the Palestinians are counting by their dead by the dozen. The deadliest twenty-four hours in all these months of conflict.

The report then goes on to give the Israeli rationale for their actions:

Journalist: Tonight there is no question about the Israelis' ability to inflict pain. They continue to insist that this is their war against terrorism, that they are rounding up extremists. But the bitter experience here is that even all of this cannot stop the Palestinian attacks, which have provoked such furious retaliation.

(BBC1 late News, 8 March 2002)

Here again we see that it is the Palestinians who 'attack' and the Israelis who 'retaliate'. The Israeli intention is given as being to round up 'extremists' and the only criticism of this strategy is whether it will work to stop Palestinian attacks.

## Endnotes

1. The breakdown of these figures was: BBC1 – Israelis 61.25 and Palestinians 21.25, and ITV – Israelis 59 and Palestinians 24.75.

(pp. 231-236)

## Beliefs About Casualties

We asked the participants: ‘Which side has had the most casualties? Is it a lot more Israelis, a few more Israelis, about the same for each, a few more Palestinians or a lot more Palestinians?’ In the period of our analysis the Palestinians had a casualty rate which was in fact much higher than that of the Israelis, (with a ratio of 2-3 to 1 in terms of deaths). Yet, if we look at the sample of British students from 2002, just 35 per cent knew that the Palestinians had significantly more casualties, while 43 per cent stated that there were more Israeli casualties or that the figures were the same for each side. (For the German students, the figures were respectively 24 per cent and 51 per cent and for the US students, 18 per cent and 47 per cent).

In the focus groups we found that 42 per cent of the participants believed either that Israel had the most casualties or that the numbers were about equal. The key factor in the first of these beliefs appeared to be the extensive coverage of attacks on Israelis and in particular of suicide bombings:

I couldn’t remember any figures, but then I thought it was the one, I remembered it was the suicide bombers. They are the ones who go in and take maybe a whole busload and I thought it would be more Israelis. I don’t remember anything showing me the amount of Palestinians who have been killed – I don’t remember that, but when it’s something about Israelis being killed that has more effect on me – maybe there’s more publicity about that.

(Middle-class female, Paisley)

Because of the indiscriminate attacks – it seems like there’s been more Palestinian attacks.

(Middle-class male, St Albans)

The view of Israeli casualties was also linked to the perception about the Palestinians as being 'more hostile':

Moderator: Who thought that the Israelis had the most casualties, what made you think that?

Male Speaker: I just assumed the Palestinians were hurting [them] and they had a bigger army and they were trying to wade in there to Israel...

Moderator: What are the images in your head that gave you that idea then?

Male Speaker: Just seeing people in Israel getting shot in the streets and getting thrown out windows and things like that. It seemed as if it was the Palestinians that were taking over.

(Low income group, Glasgow)

Female Speaker: I thought the Palestinians were being quite hostile and that was basically the only theory behind it. I heard the word Palestinian more on the news, I think, I assumed.

(Student group, Glasgow)

Some people stated simply that they had seen more coverage of Israeli casualties: 'I thought I'd heard more about Israeli casualties on the news' (Female student, Glasgow). The following speaker believed the casualties were about equal but commented that:

Usually the images you see are wounded Israelis. They show Palestinians but not as often or as powerfully.

(Male student, Glasgow)

Another student commented on how she had ‘picked up’ her view that most casualties were Israeli:

It must have been something I picked up from watching the news – you are surrounded by the media and you’re not consciously taking it in but you do take it in and get a perspective.

(Female student, Glasgow)

There was another key factor in the formation of belief which related to the manner in which news accounts were structured. The presentation of violence as a constant sequence of attacks by each side had led some people to believe that casualties would be about equal. A participant from a group of elderly people commented that he thought the casualties were the same because ‘first of all it would be some of the Israelis being killed then it would be the Arabs being killed’. A student also noted that ‘you hear stories about Israel bombing camps and stories about suicide bombers in Israel’ and this had led him to believe that the casualties were ‘roughly the same’. The phrase ‘tit for tat’ which had been used on the news was used by some participants in explaining their beliefs:

Moderator: Why did you see [casualties] as even?

Female Speaker: Because usually it is a case of you go in and shoot somebody and then the next thing somebody else is dead on the other side – it is usually a tit for tat.

(Low income group, Glasgow)

It’s always portrayed as tit for tat – I believed that the numbers are about level.

(Male student, Glasgow)

The strong influence of TV imagery is very apparent. In the following exchange the first speaker says that there are more Palestinian casualties but thinks there is not much difference between those of the two sides and cites the frequency of attacks on Israelis. The second speaker believed that there were five thousand Israeli casualties and one thousand Palestinians and then directly relates this to what she has seen on television:

First Speaker: I would have thought more Palestinians within the past two years. I wouldn't have thought it was that many more. There's been quite a lot of attacks that have involved a lot of Israelis – you know big groups, buses, restaurants and so on, so I would imagine there's not that much difference...

Second Speaker: Well basically on the news coverage they do always seem to make the Palestinian out to be the ones who are the suicide bombers, so it's like, I would imagine it's going to be more casualties on the Israeli side, but it is purely from television, that's where I'm getting my info from, that's how it's been portrayed to me on television.

(Low income female group, London)

In the group of teachers from Paisley, it was thought that the news did feature more Israeli casualties, but they used logic to deduce that there would be more Palestinian casualties. They focused on the imbalances in weaponry and differences in the manner in which casualties were inflicted:

First Speaker (Male): Mine was the Palestinians suffer more casualties at all levels of severity. The nature, the way the casualties are inflicted is different. They, the big news story of suicide bomber usually happens to the Israelis and Jews in Tel Aviv. Whereas the kind of reprisals and shootings of the military actions against people in the West Bank is ongoing all the time virtually.

Moderator: So what was your view about how many were on each side?

First Speaker (Male): I think the Palestinians suffered most casualties. I'm not

entirely certain about that...the impression the news gives you is there is higher Jewish casualties.

Moderator: The impression the news gives you is there are higher Jewish casualties?

Second Speaker (male): It certainly seems to get mentioned more – any Jewish casualties...

Moderator: Is that...

Third Speaker (Male): You hear more of the Israeli atrocities.

Fourth Speaker (Female): Again by virtue of the nature of the Palestinians, I always seem to see them throwing stones, with Israelis with weapons and from that I would assume.  
(Teachers' group, Paisley)

One of this group mentioned the 'brutality' of Israeli retaliation as a factor in his belief, but the most common reason given for seeing most casualties as Palestinian was simply the disparity in the military capacity of the two sides:

Images of tanks pounding Palestine – it just seemed to make more sense...mainly just from that one image – that if they're using heavy artillery, then it is probably going to cause more casualties.

(Male student group, Glasgow)

They show that the Palestinians are young boys with sticks and stones trying to fight the Israelis with their guns and tanks. If that's all they've got to fight with, presumably they are killed more often than someone with a gun.

(Middle-class female group, Paisley)

They are much less armed, one side is fighting with stones... Yasser Arafat headquarters - the Israelis were just like crushing everything.

(Low income male group, London)

Very few people in the groups cited any specific information from TV news on relative casualty figures. Some people had information from alternative sources, such as newspapers, leaflets and documentaries and the internet. But an important factor seemed to be the logical deductions which were made. These were sometimes extended to take in other areas such as care of the wounded – the assumption here was that the Israelis had more funds and therefore more of their people would survive:

The Israelis have more money and they can take better care of people who are injured.

(Low income male group, London)

When you do see something like the suicide bombers and what happens in Israel because of that, Israeli casualties, I'm always amazed at the number of ambulances and the support system that's rushing to deal with that crisis, and whenever you see the other end of it, the Palestinian casualties they are there on their own with nothing. I get the feeling there isn't the back-up system in Palestine to deal with those casualties that there is in Israel.

(Middle-class female group, London)

There were some people in the groups who had connections with Israel either through friends or through having stayed there. Two of these stated that most casualties were Palestinian but at the same time said that there was more 'fuss' made about these casualties on the TV news or that Palestinian deaths were treated with more sympathy. It may be that they simply watched different bulletins from those in our samples, but their view is not supported by the material which we analysed. An alternative explanation might be that they were sympathetic to Israel and that coverage of Palestinian casualties in some way upset or contradicted their preferred view. They were comparatively well informed about events in the conflict and any sympathies which they had did not affect their judgements about the number of casualties. Interestingly as we have seen above, viewers who were informed by the TV news and had apparently no great interest in the area were more likely to believe that the casualties were about equal or that most had been sustained by Israel.