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Eytan Gilboa & Lilac Sigán

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The *New York Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war: errors, omissions, and poor editorial supervision

Eytan Gilboa  and Lilac Sigan 

School of Communication, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

ABSTRACT

This article presents serious errors, corrections and omissions in the *New York Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza from October 2023 to June 2024. The *Times* was selected for investigation since it is one of the most influential newspapers in the world. Errors were identified by external sources, corrections were late, vague and evasive. Omissions created false context and reporting, and lacked transparency. Among the explored case studies and issues: Al-Ahli Hospital explosion, civilian casualties, misquoting Israeli leaders, employing questionable journalists, and internal newsroom testimonials. The findings reveal misleading repeated errors, inadequate corrections, significant omissions, and poor editorial supervision.

KEYWORDS *New York Times*; Israel; Hamas; Israel-Hamas war; Gaza; errors; corrections; media bias

Media framing of wars and military operations can significantly influence leaders, legislators, international organisations and public opinion. Liberal democracies are sensitive to casualties, especially civilians, and damage to buildings and infrastructure. Coverage of war in general, and of casualties in particular, may determine the outcome of warfare almost as much as victories on the battlefield. States and organisations invest considerable resources in information warfare designed to cultivate support among the media and public opinion. Media coverage by both traditional and digital outlets is critical to the understanding of the background and development of violent events. It is the main source of information about casualties and damage. States have the right to defend themselves against aggression, but proportionality in responding to aggression is elusive, especially in cases of brutal attacks by terrorist states and organisations.

On 7 October 2023, the Palestinian terror organisation Hamas massacred some 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and abducted about 240 people

CONTACT Eytan Gilboa  eytan.gilboa@biu.ac.il  School of Communication, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan 5290002, Israel

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including babies, children, women and elderly persons. This was the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Hamas terrorists raped, mutilated and dismembered bodies, and abused the hostages they kidnapped and imprisoned in tunnels under Gaza. Israel retaliated immediately with a massive attack on Hamas bases, terrorists, and tunnels. The war expanded on 8 October, when other Iranian proxies in the Middle East attacked Israel as well: Hezbollah from Lebanon, Shiite militias from Iraq and Syria, and the Houthis from Yemen. In April, Iran itself massively attacked Israel.

This article presents serious errors, corrections and omissions in the *New York Times's* (hereafter the *Times*) coverage of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The *Times* was selected for the investigation because it is considered 'a newspaper of record', one of the most influential and most reliable papers in the world. It influences both policymakers and public opinion. Readers expect the *Times* to provide accurate, comprehensive, fair and bias-free reporting. Accuracy of coverage could be determined via identification of errors and corrections and their analysis. Between 7 October 2023, and 7 June 2024, the *Times* admitted 72 errors in its coverage of the war, 48 of them about Israel. For the purpose of this study, it was sufficient to select the most serious errors that affected policymakers and public opinion.

Errors were identified by external sources, not by the *the Times* itself. Corrections were late, vague and sometimes evasive. Omissions created false context and reporting. The article is organised around several major case studies and issues: the Al-Ahli Hospital explosion, reports on civilian casualties, misquoting Israeli leaders, employing questionable journalists, and testimonials from inside the newsroom. The findings reveal serious and repeated errors, inadequate corrections, significant omissions, and poor editorial supervision. The findings raise questions about the credibility of the *Times* coverage of Israel.

The Al-Ahli hospital explosion

On 17 October 2023, the *Times* published this lead headline on its website: 'Israeli airstrike killed 500 at a Gaza hospital, Palestinians say'.¹ The report was massively distributed, caused riots across the Middle East, and forced King Abdullah of Jordan to cancel a critical summit in Amman with President Joe Biden, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.² The headline was totally false: it was a failed rocket, not an Israeli bomb, fired by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), not by the Israeli Air Force (IAF), which fell on the parking lot of the Ahli hospital, not on the hospital itself, killing 50–100 Palestinians, not 500, and the Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health was the source, not 'Palestinians'. A total of five errors in one headline.

A few hours after the incident, Israel denied the report and produced a recorded conversation between PIJ fighters who admitted the failed launching that caused the explosion. In subsequent updates, however, the *Times* placed the denial in a smaller headline underneath the original one, cueing that the former was more reliable.³ Three days later, long after other media outlets corrected their initial false reports about the explosion, the *Times* published a small correction:

An article on Wednesday about hundreds of people killed in a blast at a hospital complex in Gaza described incorrectly a video filmed by a woman at the hospital after the blast. The hospital itself was not ruined; its parking lot was damaged most heavily in the blast.⁴

This was a ridiculous attempt to offer a marginal correction for a substantial error that caused a major setback to US policy. The *Times* attributed the error to a vague video and failed to identify PIJ as the cause of the explosion, Hamas as the source of the false information, and the true casualty count.

Five days after the incident, the paper finally admitted the error. It happened only after President Biden called the headline ‘irresponsible’ and ‘raged against the *Times* in a private White House meeting, after the paper amplified a Hamas claim that an Israeli airstrike was behind the October 17 bombing’.⁵ The editor’s note said that ‘*early versions of the coverage – and the prominence it received in a headline, news alert and social media channels – relied too heavily on claims by Hamas and did not make clear that those claims could not immediately be verified*’, and admitted that it ‘*left readers with an incorrect impression*’.⁶ The note was accompanied by a 20-minute internal podcast interview with the *Times* Executive Editor Joe Kahn, in which he elaborated on the error and the ‘need to reflect’ because ‘the earliest versions of a really big breaking news story that take over the top of the site just need that extra degree of scrutiny’.⁷

The *Times*’s false report was heavily criticised for the absurdity of being ‘too quick to promote Hamas’s claims’,⁸ and also for believing a terrorist organisation with a proven record of lies: ‘One might perhaps think it prudent to keep one’s powder dry when a terrorist organisation claims its enemy did something bad’.⁹ Others criticised the ‘mindless amplification of terrorist propaganda’ by ‘ascrib[ing] these details to Palestinian authorities’,¹⁰ as well as failing to disclose that the source of information was ‘the same Hamas whose officials continue to claim that they didn’t kill any civilians on October 7 despite broadcasting and livestreaming the slaughter themselves’.¹¹

The *Times* was also criticised for ‘clinging to the narrative that the Israeli military was behind the slaughter and downplaying evidence supplied by Israeli authorities’ and for giving Hamas ‘higher billing and more credence than the claims of on-the-record Israeli military personnel offering tangible

evidence to back up their assertions'.¹² In addition, there was harsh criticism over the 'huge real-world consequences' and the *Times* ignoring the disastrous ramifications of the report for Biden's policy.¹³

Civilian casualties in Gaza

Gaza casualty figures were a major issue during the war, which influenced Biden who said, 'you can't have another 30,000 Palestinians dead as a consequence of going after Hamas'.¹⁴ Vice President Kamala Harris also voiced 'serious concerns' over Gaza casualties.¹⁵ This inspired critical statements from other leaders, even those who have supported Israel's right to self-defence. British PM Rishi Sunak said, 'too many civilians were killed'.¹⁶ PM Pedro Sanchez of Spain 'denounced indiscriminate killing'.¹⁷ The death toll aroused many discussions at the UN Security Council and affected decisions by the UN international courts in The Hague.

American media often cited casualty numbers provided by Hamas without disclosing the source or questioning the data, especially the percentage of women and children. Moreover, Hamas never distinguished between combatants and civilians, or between casualties of Israel Defence Forces (IDF) fire and Hamas or PIJ failed rockets and is known to use civilians as human shields. Following the Ahli fiasco, one would have expected more scrutiny of any information circulated by Hamas or its controlled ministries. At the *Times*, this was not the case.

On 25 November 2023, the *Times* published a long article by Lauren Leatherby, which claimed that the rate of killing of civilians in Gaza by Israel was almost unprecedented in this century, even when compared to the war between Russia and Ukraine.¹⁸ This argument was patently false, and there was no reference to the source of information. The blogger David Lisovtsev quickly pointed out that in Mariupol alone Russia killed more civilians than the number claimed by Hamas in the current Gaza war.¹⁹ Leatherby and her editors could have known the claim was false since the *Times* itself published a report on mass civilian casualties in Mariupol alone.²⁰ The *Times* admitted the error by erasing the paragraph that described the false comparison to Ukraine from its website, but without disclosing the error or the correction. Syndicated versions of this article, such as in the *Irish Times*, still appear with the original error.²¹

On 22 December 2023, a headline in the *Times* international edition informed that 'Gaza Deaths Surpass Any Arab Loss in Wars in Past 40 Years'.²² This was an absurd claim. Other wars in Arab countries, such as those in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, have each caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people, each at least a tenfold higher than the reported deaths in Gaza. Six days later, after being mocked online,²³ the *Times* issued this correction:

A headline with an article on December 22 about fatalities in Gaza reaching nearly 20,000 referred incorrectly to the historical significance of the Arab death toll of the Israel-Hamas war. The total is the heaviest loss on the Arab side in any war with Israel in 40 years, not in any war involving Arab countries in that time frame.²⁴

Several studies analysed Hamas's own casualty figures, especially of women and children, and utterly doubted them. One study presented 'statistically impossible results that cast serious doubt on all other aspects of the Gazan death counts'.²⁵ Another explained that 'starting in early November ... hospitals in northern Gaza began to shut down or evacuate during the Israeli ground invasion, spurring the Ministry of Health to introduce a new, undefined methodology for counting fatalities: media reports,' which 'account for the majority of fatalities'.²⁶ Another study suggested that the 'majority (of the casualties) may be Hamas fighters', and that when examined statistically, the numbers presented daily by Hamas-controlled Gazan Health Ministry are 'poorly fabricated' because they 'increase with almost metronomical linearity'.²⁷

The *Times* failed to mention any of these studies. John Spencer, recognised as one of the world's foremost experts in urban warfare, repeatedly showed that 'Israel has taken more measures to avoid needless civilian harm than virtually any other nation that's fought an urban war'.²⁸ He also showed that 'The UN, EU, and other sources estimate that civilians usually account for 80% to 90% of casualties, or a 1:9 ratio (to combatants) in modern war', and that Israel holds 'a ratio of roughly 1 combatant to 1.5 civilians'.²⁹ The *Times* systemically omitted Spencer's analysis of casualties in Gaza, although it does appear to view him as a credible source and has quoted him on other warfare issues.

Even Hamas, through the Gaza Health Ministry, finally admitted to incomplete data about one-third of its reported casualties. It said that they were not reported by doctors or hospitals but by 'media sources' or 'unclear individuals'.³⁰ The *Times* omitted this initial report. It addressed the issue a week later after the UN released a similar admission.³¹ In its report, the *Times* said, 'The change came because the United Nations switched to citing a more conservative source for its numbers – the Gazan Ministry of Health – rather than using Gaza's Government Media Office, as it had in recent weeks'. The report acknowledged that 'Both offices are part of the Hamas-run government in the enclave', but did not raise any doubts about their credibility. The only criticism that questioned the numbers was short comments by Israeli officials, placed after an elaborate description of the Hamas data as credible.

The *Times* reporting didn't suggest that the general casualty numbers might be problematic and significantly lower.³² On the contrary – it praised the ministry's credibility and suggested the numbers may be much higher.

The *Times* repeated the manipulated Hamas casualty numbers almost daily throughout the war, usually without noting that Hamas failed to differentiate between combatants and civilians, so as to make the civilian toll seem much higher than it was.³³ It did not doubt these numbers in a dedicated opinion piece either, though there were 27 opinion pieces dealing with Gaza casualties. Estimates of killed Hamas combatants were available regularly through Israeli officials and amounted to about at least one third of Hamas's reported casualties, but this was only reported once at the beginning of the war and later received only one more vague headline along the entire first eight months of the war.³⁴

Misquoting Israeli leaders

Backed by Iran, South Africa accused Israel of committing Genocide in Gaza at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.³⁵ The White House called the lawsuit 'meritless, counterproductive, and completely without any basis in fact whatsoever'.³⁶ The House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman told President Biden to formally intervene to 'protect the Convention from South Africa's efforts to debase its significance, render hollow the meaning of Genocide, and permit its use as a political tool by malign actors'. The case was cynical: had Israel wanted to commit Genocide, it wouldn't have prepared humanitarian shelters and asked hundreds of thousands of Gazans to leave the war zones to designated safe zones. The evidence for Israel's alleged genocidal intentions was ostensibly statements made by Israeli leaders, not actions. The *Times* repeated the quotes several times. Yet Rozenberg found that the original citations in the *Times* were false due to wrong translations and references.³⁷

According to Rozenberg, on 10 October 2023, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant spoke in Hebrew to soldiers who repelled the Hamas attack, still traumatised by the massacre. He said: 'Gaza will not return to what it was before. *There will be no Hamas*. We will eliminate it all'. The *Times* omitted the reference to Hamas, completely changing the meaning. Likewise, Netanyahu's statement included a biblical quote, 'a straightforward reference to a surprise attack on the innocent' but was misattributed to another 'biblical story with a completely different meaning in another book of the Bible'. The correct reference 'is explicitly cited in the official translation of [Netanyahu's] speech'. The South African prosecutors failed to check the citations and seriously misled the ICJ. The *Times* also failed to check the original quotes and repeated them several times to 'prove' intentions of Genocide by Israeli leaders. Moreover, Gilboa argued that if intentions to commit Genocide constitute evidence, Iran should have been charged a long time ago at the ICJ, as their political and military leaders have consistently

promised to destroy Israel since the 1979 establishment of the Islamic Republic.³⁸

Megan K. Stack wrote two op-ed pieces misquoting both Gallant and Netanyahu. The *Times* published the first on 30 October 2023, titled '*There Must be a Ceasefire in Gaza*'.³⁹ She argued that 'If we are to believe the Israeli political and military leadership's own words – and I think we should – the assault on Gaza was driven, first, by straightforward vengeance'. She based her argument on Gallant's false quote and misled both her editors and readers. On 12 January 2024, she repeated the same distortion in an op-ed titled '*Don't Turn Away from the Charges of Genocide against Israel*'.⁴⁰ She argued that the South African legal suit against Israel should not be considered 'meritless' as US officials said it was, because it is 'crammed with evidence', and that '*by speaking openly about destroying Gaza and dispersing its residents, Israeli leaders have publicized what has, in other cases of Genocide, been hidden or denied*'. She also misquoted Netanyahu who, according to her, allegedly said, 'Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and suckling'. As Rozenberg found, Netanyahu's speech did not use these words or refer to the biblical book they were taken from.

The *Times* issued a correction for Stack's first op-ed only on 22 January 2024, after Rozenberg's article was published: '*An earlier version of this article omitted part of a quotation from Yoav Gallant. He said, 'Gaza won't return to what it was before. There will be no Hamas. We will eliminate everything'. He did not say, 'Gaza won't return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything'*'. On 24 January 2024, the *Times* issued another correction for Gallant's quote in the second op-ed, but Netanyahu's supposed quote remained mis-referenced and uncorrected.

Stack was not alone in misquoting Israeli leaders. On 5 January 2024, the *Times* published an op-ed by Michelle Goldberg titled '*America Must Face Up to Israel's Extremism*'.⁴¹ She argued that Biden was naive for ignoring Netanyahu's ambitions to displace Gaza's population: 'As Israeli news outlets have reported, Netanyahu said this week that the government is considering a scenario of surrender and deportation of residents of the Gaza Strip'. Rozenberg pointed out that in this case as well, Netanyahu's statement was mistranslated. On 23 January, the *Times* published this correction: '*January 5 column, relying on a report in the English-language version of Haaretz, included a quotation from Benjamin Netanyahu that had been taken out of context. Referring to Hamas leadership, he said the Israeli government is considering a "scenario of surrender and deportation". The quotation did not refer to all Gaza residents*'. Screenshots of these misquotes are still circulated on social media, misleading readers.

Employing questionable journalists

On 20 October 2023, the *New York Post* revealed that the *Times* rehired the Gazan photojournalist Soliman Hijji, who was exposed in August 2022 for posting antisemitic material on the social media.⁴² The *Times* then fired Hijji, but following the 7 October massacre, Hijji suddenly contributed to 13 articles about the Israel-Hamas war, including the false report on the explosion at the Ahli hospital.⁴³ The *Times* responded to the *Post*'s exposure:

We reviewed problematic social media posts by Mr. Hijji when they first came to light in 2022 and took a variety of actions to ensure he understood our concerns and could adhere to our standards if he wished to do freelance work for us in the future.

Despite this comment, after the *Post*'s exposure, the *Times* didn't publish any more contributions from Hijji, implicitly admitting the error of rehiring him. Yet the *Time*'s readers were never exposed to his background and antisemitic opinions.

On 8 November 2023, Honest Reporting published a report about photojournalists who breached the Israeli Gaza border on 7 October, accompanying Hamas terrorists, and then sold photos of the atrocities to leading media outlets.⁴⁴ The report noted that the names of the photographers, which appear as credits on those leading media outlets, 'have been removed from some of the photos on AP's database'. It also raised several professional and ethical questions. Since 2007, Gaza has been ruled by Hamas, a ruthless Islamist theocracy that never respected human rights, including freedom of the press. The question was whether these were indeed legitimate photojournalists, or infiltrators working for Hamas.

AP and CNN cut ties with their photojournalists in question after this investigation,⁴⁵ but the *Times* firmly denied the allegations about its freelance photographer, Yousef Masoud.⁴⁶ In a dedicated article, the *Times* said it had 'reviewed Mr. Masoud's work' and 'editors at The *Times* determined that the first photo he transmitted to the AP ... was taken more than 90 minutes after the attack began. Mr. Masoud told his editors ... that he was woken at home in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, by the sound of rocket fire, shortly after 5:30 A.M. on Saturday morning (and) later made his way to the border'. His statement was false. Hamas began launching rockets at 6:30 A.M. not 5:30 A.M.⁴⁷ On 12 November 2023, after being publicly challenged on this fact, the *Times* issued a correction:

An earlier version of this article, based on information from an editor at The *Times*, misstated when Yousef Masoud woke to the sound of rocket fire. It was shortly after 6:30 A.M., not 5:30 A.M.

The *Times*'s claim that the first photo Masoud transmitted to AP was taken more than 90 minutes after the attack began, was also misleading. The AP

image database showed metadata confirming that the photo was created at 6:41 am, 11 minutes and not 90 minutes after the attack had started.⁴⁸ The evidence did not match the *Times's* claims and phrasing the correction as if it was a mere typo is also misleading. The *Times* issued a separate statement that supported the photojournalist and denounced the report, stressing its 'defense of freelance photojournalists working in conflict areas, whose jobs often require them to rush into danger to provide first-hand witness accounts and to document important news. This is the essential role of a free press in wartime'.⁴⁹ The statement did not address the fact that neither the Hamas-ruled Gaza nor the PLO-controlled West Bank allows free press. Masoud and other photojournalists in Gaza had no way of performing as free press.

On 24 February 2024, the *Times* published yet another statement on the issue in response to the Israel's New York Consulate General, which approached the paper about presenting Masoud's photographs for the Polk Award.⁵⁰ It blamed Honest Reporting for not having evidence of Masoud's complicity with Hamas, which the original report only raised as a possibility. The *Times* also criticised the non-profit for accusing Masoud of lying about his waking up at 5:30 am. The *Times* acknowledged the falsehood but claimed it was not its own error.

When approached about this incident, a spokesperson for the *Times* said that the 'reference to a photographer suspected of planned entry into Israel alongside Hamas militants is flatly false and has been widely debunked'.⁵¹ But apart from the *Times's* repeated denial, the suspicion had not been debunked. In fact, AP, which was the first to publish Masoud's photograph, is being sued in a Federal Court by survivors of 7 October for hiring freelance photographers embedded with terrorists.⁵²

On 7 January 2024, the *Times* published an article titled: '*Two More Journalists Killed in Gaza, including Son of Al Jazeera Reporter; Hamza al-Dahdouh and a second reporter were killed in what officials in the territory said was an Israeli airstrike*'.⁵³ US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken saw the report and expressed his 'deep sorrow'.⁵⁴ On 10 January, the IDF issued documented proof that the two 'journalists' were Hamas fighters:

On 7 January 2024, an Israeli aircraft directed by troops targeted the operators of a Hamas drone, posing a threat to our soldiers near Rafah. The operators were later identified as Al-Dahdouh and Thuria. Documents found by our troops in Gaza revealed Thuria's role as Squad Deputy Commander in Hamas' Gaza City Brigade, as well as Al-Dahdouh's roles in the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization's electronic engineering unit and previously as a deputy commander in PIJ's Zeitun Battalion.

The *Times* failed to cite this critical information and did not update or correct the initial article. It repeated the false information about the 'killed

journalists' in three other articles while omitting the IDF information about their links to Hamas or the PIJ.⁵⁵

Testimonials from inside the newsroom

Several testimonials from the *Times* newsroom and articles published by former senior staff during the war explain the findings and provide important context. The first two articles criticised the false report on the Ahli explosion. On 23 October 2023, Alyson Cowan, a writer and editor who worked for the *Times* for over 25 years, was outraged not only by the false reporting on the explosion, but also by the paper's conduct once it realised the report was false: 'propping up propaganda . . . kept smears online for six days, unfixed, un-apologized for, unexamined and largely uncorrected, notwithstanding the white flag of an Editor's Note that was finally posted'.⁵⁶ She testified that the *Times* had changed significantly and concluded that 'journalism's warriors must stick to the facts and leave the making of propaganda to someone else'.

On 24 October 2023, Charlotte Klein exposed an internal *Times* chat in a Slack channel called #israel-briefings, which hundreds of journalists have access to.⁵⁷ Her article illuminated the decision-making processes leading to the publication of the wrong information about the Ahli explosion. Minutes before the final phrasing of the lead headline, the international editor opposed what he thought 'goes way too far', and two junior editors also thought it would be better 'to hedge it', but one of the senior news editors in the newsroom insisted. The international editor tried to convince him again, saying 'we can't just hang the attribution of something so big on one source without having tried to verify it and then slap it across the top . . . Putting the attribution at the end doesn't give us cover, if we've been burned and we're wrong'. Still, the phrase remained at the top of the homepage for hours.

James Bennet, former editorial-page editor of the *Times*, offered a much broader context for the *Times*' errors.⁵⁸ He 'realized how different the new *Times* had become from the old one that trained me . . . to a place I barely recognized'. He described in detail the deterioration of ethics at the paper, noting that 'the *Times* is not good at acknowledging mistakes' and its problem 'has metastasized from liberal bias to illiberal bias . . . (infected by) pressures of intolerance and tribalism'. Bennet thought the deterioration was a reaction to the fierce competition from 'digital natives' like *Vox* and *HuffPost*. He added,

the rise of opinion journalism over the past 15 years changed the newsroom's coverage and its culture . . . *Times* readers are being served a very restricted range of views, some of them presented as straight news . . . And yet the *Times* insists to the public that nothing has changed. By saying that it still holds itself to the old standard of strictly separating its news and opinion journalists, the

paper leads its readers further into the trap of thinking that what they are reading is independent and impartial—and this misleads them.

Judith Miller, formerly a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter for the *Times*, expressed similar reservations.⁵⁹ She also argued that the *Times* has ‘abandoned its commitment to objective reporting, blurred the boundary between news and opinion . . . and shifted from being overtly “liberal” to an “illiberal” paper’. Miller further claimed that ‘readers have grown skeptical and dismissive of the “paper of record”, and that she and Bennet join ‘a growing body of criticism by former *Times* insiders’. She explained: ‘reporters and even interns who once lived in fear of their editors now made their editors fear’. Miller gave examples of the paper’s news division ‘quietly erasing’ false reports from its digital version ‘after historians and readers expressed outrage and pointed out errors’. She concluded that ‘the paper I joined in 1977 is not today’s *New York Times*’, since the old *Times* was committed to covering news ‘without fear or favor’, and that ‘while the *Times* still does some extraordinary reporting, it is doubtful that its reputation for slanted, ideologically driven journalism can be reversed’.

Another example of the challenges the *Times* faces, is the 28 December 2023, comprehensive investigation of Hamas’s weaponised rape and savage sexual abuses of Israeli women on 7 October.⁶⁰ This investigation provided additional evidence of the internal pressure the *Times*’s young journalists apply on senior editors to adopt highly biased coverage practices and norms. In this case, the pressure was so intense that it created the impression that these journalists were political ‘activists’, engaging in advocacy, feeling no obligation to follow journalism standards.⁶¹ It should be noted that contrary to the numerous and repeated errors analysed above, the sex crimes investigation was led by Jeffrey Gettleman, an experienced Pulitzer winning journalist; was conducted for over two months; relied on over 150 testimonies; and received exceptional praise from *Times* Editor-in-Chief Joe Kahn, who described it as a ‘signature piece’.

The *Times* was not the first media outlet to report the systemic Hamas sexual crimes. *CNN*, the *New York Post*, and the *Guardian* among others published news reports about Hamas’s sexual crimes before the *Times*.⁶² The *Times*’s investigation, however, was the best researched and received exceptional resonance. The fiasco that followed the publishing explains, at least partially, the errors discussed in earlier pages.

Apparently, some radical *Times* journalists felt the investigation damaged their pro-Hamas cause. They opposed its very publishing and after failing to convince the editors to shelve it – attacked the *Times* credibility by leaking internal information to a radical left pro-Hamas media outlet.⁶³ These unprecedented internal attacks reverberated in pro-Hamas outlets, which claimed the investigation had been ‘debunked’, ‘unraveled’, and ‘discredited’.

The radicals were extremely angry at the *Times* investigation because it was ‘reproduced by many media outlets worldwide . . . generated palpable buzz on social media and intelligentsia circles, prompting many to denigrate the Palestinian resistance movement’.⁶⁴

After months of an internal feud constantly leaked, the *Times* formally stood by the investigation but effectively conceded to its internal ‘newsroom intifada’.⁶⁵ First, by publicly firing and denouncing the Israeli reporter that was hired after 7 October specifically to investigate the Hamas sex crimes, for ‘liking’ a pro-Israeli social media post on the day of the 7 October massacre.⁶⁶ Secondly, by publishing a later article based on superficial evidence, which partially contradicted one of the testimonies in the original investigation, without literally stating that it was doing so.⁶⁷ The *Times* tried to conduct an internal investigation to find the leakers who ‘questioned the reporting behind the Gettleman story and alleged that the suffering of Gazans isn’t getting the same attention’. Still, the investigation was then encountered with ‘the union filing a grievance alleging that the company was targeting a group of staffers of Arab and Middle Eastern descent’ and ended with no conclusion.⁶⁸

The internal allegations against the *Times* investigation were superfluous, since Pramila Patten, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, had also published a report about Hamas’s sexual crimes that reached the same conclusions:

There are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence – including rape and gang rape – occurred across multiple locations of Israel and the Gaza periphery during the attacks on 7 October 2023.⁶⁹

Sheryl Sandberg, who served as Chief Operating Officer of Meta Platforms from 2008 to 2022, also produced a documentary film, ‘Screams Before Silence’, which presented abundant and convincing testimonies to barbaric rape routines on 7 October, including taped admissions of captured Hamas Nukhba fighters.⁷⁰ The *Times* ignored the documentary film in its news reports.

Shabo described the attacks on the *Times* investigation as ‘October 7 denial’.⁷¹ In addition, *Times* reporters not affiliated with the ‘newsroom intifada’ resonated testimonies like Bennet, Miller and Cowan on the subject:

The problem for the *Times* is that many of its own staffers do not want to investigate the sexual violence that occurred on October 7. They see it as a vulnerability to their own side in the information war about Gaza. There are a huge number of people at the *Times* who are activists, and it is their job to tell a particular story . . . The precedent was set that this works. If it doesn’t work through one means, they will find another.⁷²

It appears, therefore, that the *Times*’ journalists who questioned the investigation are not professional reporters who are obligated to maintain accuracy,

fairness, ethical and professional standards. They would like to transform the *Times* into a radical-left paper and tried to pull whatever leverage possible on the senior professional staff to do so. They managed to campaign against their own employer and were even helped by a group of journalism professors, who contacted the *Times* and demanded to review the investigation.⁷³ The professors' demand was unprecedented as they found one 'article so flawed that they needed to band together to demand action'.

Usually, media criticism deals with a series of articles published over time, not only with one article. Laurel Leff, a university professor of Journalism, severely criticised the professors' intervention:

In this case, the gist of the story has held up; no clear evidence of journalistic wrongdoing has emerged, and *The Times* has exhibited some willingness to respond to criticisms. The professors calling for an investigation therefore seem more interested in joining an ongoing propaganda war, than in righting a journalistic wrong. That's no place for a journalism professor to be.⁷⁴

It is quite possible that the radical journalists at the *Times*, who challenged the investigation, were educated by the journalism professors who sent the petition or their likes, which is disturbing.

Given the many errors documented in this article, one must wonder why the professors failed to demand an investigation of the entire *Times* coverage of the war, not just one article, and why they have not demanded similar inquiries of the investigation of Hamas's sexual crime reports by other media outlets. This puts the professional *Times* reporting at an even greater risk, because while continuous professional errors are concealed, and journalists who show severe flaws in their practices are not addressed or investigated, professional journalism is attacked and publicly humiliated. Moreover, because of the internal turmoil, the *Times* changed its original intention to submit the investigation for the Pulitzer award.⁷⁵

Conclusion

This article demonstrates serious errors, inadequate corrections, serious omissions and poor editorial supervision in the *Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. These were not just sporadic failures. They seem to represent an endemic malaise. The errors discussed above were identified by external sources, not by the newspaper itself. There may well have been many more distortions no one has found or bothered to challenge the paper with. The *Times* has also failed to learn from its errors. The corrections were late, vague and sometimes evasive, and seem to be used as a cover-up for much bigger reporting failures, and not as a tool to improve accuracy and journalistic practices. The Editor's Note about the Ahli Hospital fiasco attributed the failure to 'relying too heavily on reports by Hamas', yet this

practice did not change. The casualty reports throughout the war relied almost solely on the Gaza Ministry of Health, which is controlled by Hamas, and frequently produced false and inflated data. Also, the repeated omissions of IDF statements about journalists that were active Hamas operatives showed that the *Times* preferred to believe Aljazeera, a questionable news organisation serving an autocratic leader, over the credibility of the IDF, a formal institution of a democratic state.

Several findings are astonishing. Young pro-Palestinian or even pro-Hamas journalists challenged the credibility of an important investigation from within. They leaked internal information to a radical anti-*Times* website and intimidated their editors. Far from loyal colleagues, they scorn colleagues with different views and think they should be political activists rather than reliable and professional reporters. A Palestinian journalist, fired for posting antisemitic material on the social media, was rehired, contributed to false articles, yet was publicly supported. The *Times* also strongly defended a Gaza photojournalist suspected of working with Hamas and even submitted him for a prestigious award. A reporter who made false arguments about casualties, and a commentator who repeatedly misquoted statements, continued to work for the *Times* and wrote more on the subject. Apparently, committing errors and distortions does not have consequences.

The *Times* is not alone in the fast changing, competitive digital world, in which journalistic ethics are less respected and sometimes completely ignored. But the *Times* is more powerful and more influential than any other newspaper. It is widely syndicated and imitated. It is a major source for White House policymakers, and as Bennet and others have stated in their testimony, the *Times* pretends nothing has changed, but its newsroom has radically changed and does not uphold the same standards it once did. This misleads many readers who still believe they are receiving broad well-founded views, as well as accurate and impartial information. Given these circumstances, a Public Editor could have helped to preserve high professional standards, but the *Times* cancelled this position in 2017. Perhaps, it is time to restore it.

Notes

1. Kingsley et al., "Hundreds Die."
2. Al-Khalidi, "Jordan Cancels Summit."
3. Benton, "The *New York Times* Offers."
4. *New York Times*, "Corrections." October 20, 2023.
5. Tani and Hoffman, "Biden Blasted."
6. *New York Times*, "Editor's Note." "Gaza Hospital."
7. Garcia-Navarro, "Behind the Editor's Note."
8. Allsop, "The Silence."
9. Podhoretz, "How the *New York Times*."

10. Mounk, “How the Media.”
11. Lobel, “Unprincipled Western Media.”
12. Cowan, “My *New York Times*.”
13. See note 10 above.
14. Ravid, “Biden’s Red Line.”
15. Debusmann, “Harris Tells Netanyahu.”
16. Reuters, “Too Many Civilians.”
17. Reuters, “Spain Denounces.”
18. Leatherby, “Gaza Civilians.”
19. Gonen and Tausig, “*The New York Times* coverage.”
20. Santora and Hopkins, “Officials in Mariupol.”
21. Leatherby, “It’s Beyond Anything.”
22. Stack, “Gaza Deaths.”
23. Stoll, “*New York Times* Corrects.”
24. *New York Times*, “Corrections.” December 28, 2023.
25. Simpson et al., “Statistically Impossible.”
26. Epstein, “Gaza Fatality Data.”
27. Wyner, “How the Gaza Ministry.”
28. Spencer, “Israel Implemented.”
29. Spencer, “Israel Has Created.”
30. Adesnik, “ Hamas-Run Gaza Health Ministry.”
31. Overton, “Gaza War.”
32. Adesnik and Chen, “Gaza Health Ministry Flimflam”.
33. Associated Press and TOI, “Analysis Finds Flaws.”
34. Mpoke and Kershner, “An Israeli Military Spokesman.”
35. Islamic Republic News Agency, “Iran lawyers back.”
36. US House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Committee. “Chairman McCaul Calls.”
37. Rozenberg, “What Did Top Israeli.”
38. Gilboa, “Israel Should Indict Iran.”
39. Stack, “I’ve Been Under Bombardment.”
40. Stack, “Don’t Turn Away.”
41. Goldberg, “America Must.”
42. Taler, “NYT Rehires.”
43. Hijjy, “Devastation in Gaza.”
44. Honest Reporting, “Broken borders.”
45. Barr, “News Organizations Deny.”
46. Landler, “Israel Accuses.”
47. Honest Reporting, on X.
48. Plosker, “Reckless Reporting.”
49. *New York Times*, “Statement on Yousef Masoud.”
50. McCraw, “Response from *The Times*.”
51. Author’s Personal correspondence, March 28, 2024.
52. Odzer, “October 7th Survivors.”
53. Yee and Harouda, “Two More Journalists Killed.”
54. Jarjouli, “In Doha, Blinken Says.”
55. Schanzer, “The Growing List.”
56. See note 12 above.
57. Klein, “You Don’t Want to Hedge.”
58. Bennet, “When the *New York Times*.”

59. Miller, "I Used to Work."
60. Gettleman et al, "Screams Without Words."
61. Lake, "Who Is in Charge."
62. Rubin, "Israel Investigates."
63. Boguslow and Grim. "Times Puts DAILY Episode."
64. PressTV, "Sham."
65. Darcy, "*New York Times* Stands."
66. Edelson, "*New York Times* Cuts."
67. Ragson and Odenheimer, "Israeli Soldier's Video Undercuts."
68. Bruell, "*New York Times* Ends."
69. United Nations, "Reasonable Grounds."
70. Allen, "Sheryl Sandberg Brings."
71. Shabo, "The Intercept."
72. See note 61 above.
73. Wagner, "Journalism Professors Call."
74. Leff, "Why Did a Group."
75. Hroncich, "Pulitzer Prize for Gaza."

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Notes on contributor

Eytan Gilboa is Professor Emeritus of International Communication and Founding Head of the School of Communication, Bar-Ilan University. Lilac Sigán is a veteran author, commentator, and columnist at the daily *Maariv* (Tel Aviv). An earlier version of this article was presented at the Annual Convention of the Israel Communication Association, Herzliya, 18 April 2024.

ORCID

Eytan Gilboa  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5500-6894>

Lilac Sigán  <http://orcid.org/0009-0003-1768-6870>

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