



**August 2, 2024**

**An Open Letter to:**

Associated Press  
The BBC  
Reuters  
The Wall Street Journal  
The Washington Post

**From:**

Ted Deutch, CEO of American Jewish Committee (AJC)  
Eric Fingerhut, CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)

**An Open Letter to the Media: What You Keep Getting Wrong in Israel Coverage**

On Saturday, July 27, a Hezbollah rocket strike next to a soccer field in the northern Israeli town of Majdal Shams left 12 Israeli Druze children dead and dozens more injured. Far too many media outlets downplayed this tragedy as just another episode in the Middle East conflict, as if these senseless deaths matter less because the children and teens murdered were Israelis.

Those who looked to the media for clarity and fact-based coverage likely struggled, as many outlets painted an all-too-familiar distorted picture. Perhaps the worst offender was *The Washington Post*, whose July 29 front page featured a photo of Israeli Druze families mourning a murdered child, yet the headline said, "Israel hits targets in Lebanon." Not only does the headline fail to mention the kids who were murdered, or reference their grieving families, but it also invites the reader to conclude that Israel was responsible for the attack.

That egregious error of judgment built on the *Post's* front-page Sunday article, one of whose headlines declared, "Hezbollah denies responsibility for fatal rocket strike," as if leading with its denial—despite clear evidence to the contrary—superseded the horrific loss of life. The Hezbollah-controlled *Al Mayadeen* had swiftly reported that Hezbollah, Iran's proxy in Lebanon, took credit for the attack. But 40 minutes later, when it became apparent that Druze children were killed, it desperately sought to change the narrative. The media unflinchingly obliged.

Anyone relying on the Associated Press would have initially been led to believe this was nothing more than another border skirmish. Its story headlined "[Israel, Hezbollah Exchange Kills 3 Militants and Injures 11 in Israel-Occupied Golan Heights,](#)" offered no clue about the scope of the tragedy, though the fact that three terrorists were killed was somehow deemed the most

important event. While the story was later [updated](#), the AP went into contortions trying to give Hezbollah a fair shake, taking space to [speculate](#) on whether the Majdal Shams strike was an accident, as if that should matter.

CNN also effectively gave Hezbollah the benefit of the doubt. A [post on X](#) called the attack one on a “soccer field in Israeli-controlled Golan Heights that Israel blames on Hezbollah.” Beyond joining other media in reflexively adding an adjective in front of Golan Heights—as if that somehow rationalized the bombing—CNN ignored the fact that Hezbollah had taken credit for the strike two hours earlier.

Moreover, virtually every dispatch about the attack noted Hezbollah’s denial of responsibility, yet only some of these same articles cited the U.S. and Israeli evidence-based conclusion that Hezbollah is responsible. In stark contrast, many of these same news outlets immediately reported the false Hamas accusation that Israel had destroyed a hospital in Gaza last October. When evidence quickly surfaced that the explosion was caused by a Palestinian Islamic Jihad missile that hit the hospital’s parking lot, those same media outlets were slow to walk back their reporting, if at all.

Journalists are trained to report both sides of a story. But that does not mean they should go looking for a side when one is not there. Case in point: the coverage of the [assassination](#) of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh. Even if he was not a military commander, make no mistake, his hands were dripping with the blood of thousands of innocents, and few others have failed the Palestinian people in the ways he did. Yet, some media, like [Reuters](#), tried to portray him as a moderate. The [BBC](#) went a step further and called him “moderate and pragmatic.” But you can’t be moderate and a terrorist. You’re either bent on murdering Jews or you’re not. Haniyeh was.

Time and again too many in the media are eager to demonize Israel and to obscure Israel’s actions - portraying them as proactive attacks rather than acts of self-defense. But Israel’s enemies, like Hezbollah or Haniyeh, appear to get the benefit of the doubt. Those concerned about the public’s trust in journalism should be deeply troubled by this picture.

Beyond this disturbing comparison in coverage is an even more troubling component - when attacks against Israelis or Jews don’t seem to count. The media has so often rushed to spotlight the death of children in Gaza. Children dying in conflict is, of course, horrible, and should be reported on. But why is there less of a need to report that Hamas is using Gazan children as human shields? Or to report on the murder of kids in the Golan? One [BBC headline](#) went out of its way to be generic: “Eleven dead in rocket attack on Israeli-occupied Golan.” There is nothing generic about the children who were murdered.

Nor is there anything generic about the more than 6,000 missiles Hezbollah has fired into Israel since October 8, the day after the Hamas attack. Or the 60,000 Israelis who have had to flee their homes in northern Israel to avoid the line of fire from an enemy solely devoted to Israel’s destruction. But to see coverage of either is a rarity.

The media has often reported on how antisemitism and anti-Zionism have reached record levels across the globe, especially since October 7. Indeed, it is vitally important to shed light on such existential threats to Israel and the Jewish people. But the media must hold up a mirror to itself and acknowledge that its inaccurate, incomplete, or disingenuous reporting is fostering antisemitism and anti-Israel animus.

At a time when tensions in the Middle East have never been higher and Israel faces threats from mortal enemies on seven fronts, it is essential that media outlets do better and report on all developments with clarity and accuracy and without bias.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Theodore Deutch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

The Hon. Ted Deutch  
Chief Executive Officer, American Jewish Committee (AJC)  
Member of Congress (2010-22)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric D. Fingerhut". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

The Hon. Eric D. Fingerhut  
Chief Executive Officer and President, Jewish Federations of North America  
Member of Congress (1993-95)