



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for action against *Haaretz* after the newspaper published extracts from a book critical of the country's lack of action after being warned by the United Arab Emirates of the likelihood of Hamas attacks on Oct 7, 2023

Coercion and threats to silence critical voices

Granville Williams
on the ways the Israeli government seeks to control critical reporting of its actions in Gaza

The film *NAZA* won the Special Jury Prize at the 83rd Venice International Film Festival on Saturday 13 September. The 80-minute documentary examines the Israeli military systems behind the mass killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. *NAZA* is the term used by Israel's intelligence service to indicate how many civilians it predicts will die in an airstrike in Gaza.

Israeli filmmakers Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, who also made the film *No Other Land* about settler violence in the occupied West Bank, directed the film and spoke to 24 Israeli military or intelligence whistleblowers on condition of anonymity.

What they described were the AI-powered targeting systems which were used to kill tens of thousands of people in Gaza.



Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor with the Special Jury Prize for '*NAZA*' during the closing ceremony of the Venice International Film Festival

One source in the film claims that approval had been given to kill 500 *NAZA* in order to kill one Hamas member.

The response to the film with-

'I will act immediately to revoke the Israeli citizenship of these despicable creators on the grounds of treason'

in Israel was predictable. The Israeli army initially rejected the allegations, criticising the anonymous testimonies whose identities could not be verified.

But it was the response of the Israeli Culture Minister Miki Zohar which typifies the government response to such critical reporting. He wrote on X, "The creators' burning self-hatred, and their willingness to harm their homeland in order to re-

ceive applause from antisemites around the world, is beyond comprehension and constitutes a betrayal of the state. I will act immediately to revoke the Israeli citizenship of these despicable creators on the grounds of treason against the state."

This same pattern of threats and coercion against critical voices was revealed a week before when Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told lawyers to begin defamation proceedings against the newspaper *Haaretz*, one of the few critical independent voices in Israel, after it carried extracts from a book, *Hostages: 843 Days of Abandonment*, written by Shlomi Eldar and Ruth Yuval.

Netanyahu warning

The book extracts claim that in September 2023 the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, warned Netanyahu that Hamas was planning an operation just days before the 7 October 2023 attacks.

Netanyahu's Likud Party accused *Haaretz* of 'blatant foreign interference in Israel's elections',

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Tim Gopsill considers the issues behind the successful campaign to block the early release of two of the three killers of PC Andrew Harper

Panic with killers on the loose

Journalists have a grisly fixation with violent crime. “If it bleeds, it leads” (the page), they like to say. They work hand-in-glove with police, for mutual benefit: media get their gruesome stories; police get their free publicity.

On 22 July the *Daily Telegraph* published a story that clearly came from Thames Valley Police: two of the three killers of one of its former officers, PC Andrew Harper, were scheduled for early release from jail, along with 6,000 other prisoners, to relieve overcrowding in the system.

PC Harper died horribly in 2019 while being dragged along a country road at 60 mph by a Seat Toledo driven by an 18-year-old criminal escaping from a robbery he was committing with two 17-year-old friends, who rode in the back.

The three were found guilty of manslaughter, not murder. They denied awareness that the officer had been caught behind the car by a tow strap, and at the trial in 2020 the judge acknowledged it was not proven that they knew.

Driver Henry Long was sentenced to 16 years. Passengers Albert Bowers and Jessie Cole were given 13 years in a Young Offenders Institution; both transferred to adult prison at age 20 and were now scheduled for release.

Thames Valley Police launched a petition to put a halt to it – an extraordinary event for a force to mobilise a public cam-

paign against a decision of the Prison Service.

Media picked it up quickly and there followed what was called a ‘public outcry’. PC Harper’s mother Debbie Adlam fronted the campaign and 1.07 million signed the police petition.

Newly installed Prime Minister Andy Burnham was on the spot. The media asked: would he have the courage to override the decision? This would be an early marker for his Premiership. After weeks of dithering Burnham caved in to the orchestrated campaign. It turned out he lacked the courage to stick to the decision.

Longer prison terms

Prison overcrowding is a desperate problem. It is presented as too little space, but really there are too many people. There are 10,000 more places than 20 years ago, and crime is falling, but successive governments have legislated for ever longer sentences.

There is now the absurd position that convicts cannot serve their sentences according to the rising scale. Instead the judge rules on the proportion the prisoner might expect to serve. PC Harper’s were told they should serve two thirds. The pair are

There are nearly 16,000 people in prison with no sentence, fixed or otherwise. They are on remand awaiting trial



Photo: Thames Valley police / PA



PC Andrew Harper with his wife, Lissie

Front page of the *Daily Telegraph* of July 22

As a result of Burnham’s decision, which required the addition of manslaughter offenders to those who cannot be released early, 1,500 more people will remain inside.

Selecting prisoners for release is a delicate exercise for professionals in the prison and probation services, not for politicians, even ministers. Personal considerations or the pleas of victims should not come into it. If Debbie Adlam has a case then so do hundreds of others.

Weak decision

The increasing influence of victims on the criminal system – naturally blown up by the media – stands against justice. The criminal courts judge on crimes against society, not individuals. That means the same penalty for all, with no special pleading by victims.

Burnham made a weak decision, currying favour with the right-wing law-and-order brigade. It coincides with the existing Starmer solution of building 14,000 more prison places.

There seems to be no space in the mass media to air the overwhelming arguments for reducing the numbers imprisoned. Not as long as the press and police can manipulate public opinion, and our rulers just fall into line.

Left Field: a new collective voice emerges from the North East

A welcome new initiative provides a space for views from the left to get a wider airing. *Left Field*'s Editorial Director **Andy Walker** explains why it has been launched

While regional newsrooms continue to shrink and whole districts become news deserts, a new independent outlet has launched from an unlikely direction – not London, but County Durham – with an unashamedly political mission: to report the stories the mainstream media won't touch and to tell them the way the mainstream press won't.

Left Field launched on 10 August 2026, covering grassroots movements, trade unions and left politics in the UK and beyond. It publishes original journalism, interviews, opinion and debate, with contributions drawn from organisers working in communities, workplaces and campaigns across the country. There's no editor-in-chief and no conventional newsroom hierarchy. Editorial decisions are made collectively by the people who take part and it has no rich backers – funding comes from people and organisations who support what it's trying to do.

For readers of *MediaNorth*, the model will feel familiar. It sits alongside a small but growing wave of independent, subscriber and supporter-funded outlets trying to fill the gaps left as local and national media consolidates around fewer owners and fewer resources – the kind of gap this publication has spent years warning about, and which *Left Field* was set up to answer directly on the political and trade union beat.

I founded *Left Field* after nearly six years editing the construction and infrastructure title *Infrastructure Intelligence*, a career that also took in communications and campaigning roles at Keep Britain Tidy and the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, and – closer to my current freelance work as a communications adviser to the international engineering federation FIDIC – almost five years as a volunteer press officer at FC United of Manchester, the supporter-owned football club formed when fans broke away from Old Trafford's ownership model. That experience of a genuinely mutual, member-run organisation isn't a bad description of what we're eventually trying to build with *Left Field* itself.

Trust in media has fallen

As a working journalist, trade unionist – I'm also secretary of the Newcastle NUJ branch – and campaigner, I've watched trust in the media fall away in recent years. Part of that is down to mainstream outlets peddling false balance on some stories and straightforward bias on others – not least on Gaza and migration – and all too often covering things that just don't matter to ordinary people's day-to-day existence.

Left Field is meant to be different. It's written by and for working-class people who want to see change and who are hungry for the ideas that will help them get there. We want to go behind the



Andy Walker

headlines to uncover what's really going on – the social, cultural, political and trade union stories that rarely get a hearing in the establishment press.

Reflecting our commitment to transparency in independent media, we're also seeking membership of the Independent Media Association and registering with the independent press regulator, Impress – steps that matter to us given how often the legitimacy of independent and alternative outlets gets called into question.

Left Field is published at leftfield.org.uk and via a free weekly e-news, and – much like the model *MediaNorth* readers will recognise from outlets such as West Yorkshire's newly launched *Exchange* – its growth depends on the people who read it as

much as those who run it. We're actively looking for writers – activists, organisers, trade unionists and community writers with stories that deserve wider attention are welcome to get in touch with us at news@leftfield.org.uk.

At a time when so much of the media landscape feels increasingly consolidated, homogenised or simply hollowed out, *Left Field* is a bet that a collectively run, reader-funded outlet with an openly political mission can still find an audience – and, more importantly, can still do journalism that matters to the people it's written for. **MN**

Andy Walker is founder of *Left Field* and secretary of the Newcastle branch of the NUJ.



Nicholas Jones opens his archives to revisit the strike and highlights the lessons learned by the right to attack trade unions

The Grunwick strike: 50 years on

An epic struggle by Asian women in north-west London who were on strike for two years in the late 1970s became a cause celebre for the left while also providing an unprecedented opportunity for opponents of trade unionism.

Events marking the 50th anniversary of the Grunwick dispute have highlighted how strategies adopted by right-wing activists and provocateurs succeeded in producing a playbook for thwarting organised labour.

Margaret Thatcher, then Conservative opposition leader, was the beneficiary of what became a blueprint for the legislative curbs which her government introduced on taking office to control strike action and limit mass picketing.

Women who were dubbed by the news media 'strikers in saris' were led out by Jayaben Desai in August 1976, and their legendary defiance, against the odds, became an inspiration for other

low paid immigrant workers.

She was up against Grunwick's resolute proprietor, George Ward, who became a figurehead for a right-wing campaign to defend his refusal to grant trade union recognition or take back the strikers.

Finding ways to manipulate and exploit the dispute to stand by those who wanted to continue working was a key objective.

Legal advice

From the start Ward was advised and assisted to take every opportunity to mount legal action to challenge both the white-collar union APEX, which took on responsibility for representing Mrs Desai and her fellow strikers, and government-backed institutions such as the conciliation service ACAS.

By going repeatedly to the High Court – and all the way to the Court of Appeal and finally the House of Lords – Ward frustrated every attempt to negotiate recognition or reinstatement.

A parliamentary campaign to co-ordinate support for Ward was fronted by the Conservative MP John Gorst, and an extra-

Margaret Thatcher, Conservative opposition leader, who learnt many lessons from the strike



Jayaben Desai, the tenacious leader of the strike, which drew wide support from trade unions and the left

ular direct action by right-wing activists. Their most daring exploit was early in the strike after Grunwick's mail had been blocked by the Union of Postal Workers.

In a night-time operation 25 NAFF members with three vehicles arrived at the Grunwick film processing plant.

By 2am they had loaded up an accumulated backlog of 100,000 uncollected packages which were taken to a barn in Gloucestershire where activists licked and stuck on £12,000 worth of stamps.

Developed photographs were posted to customers around the country saving Grunwick from bankruptcy.

McWhirter revealed in his memoirs that Mrs Thatcher described NAFF's night-time raid as the 'greatest thing since the Entebbe raid' when Israel rescued hijacked plane passengers.

Later in the dispute mass pickets were deployed when police had to escort buses taking Grunwick staff to work. The road outside became a frequent flash-point generating bloody scenes on TV.

After over 500 arrests – the most since the General Strike – and 240 police had been injured, Labour Prime Minister Jim Cal-

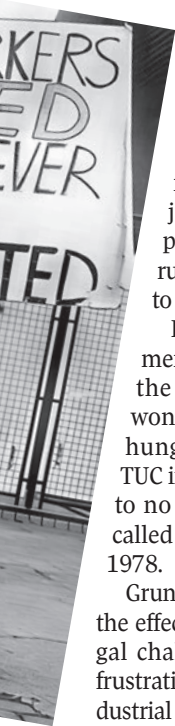
parliamentary advance was organised by a libertarian pressure group, the National Association For Freedom (later the Freedom Association) which was established the year before the Grunwick strike with the backing of Norris and Ross McWhirter, co-founders of the Guinness Book of Records.

Ross McWhirter was assassinated by the Provisional IRA in late 1975 and, as the Grunwick dispute unfolded the following year, Norris McWhirter was determined to do what he could to assist Ward.

He marshalled some spectac-

Mrs Thatcher described NAFF's night-time raid as the 'greatest thing since Entebbe raid' by Israel in 1976





laghan set up a government inquiry under Lord Scarman.

Reinstatement of the strikers was recommended but Ward rejected the Scarman report and a House of Lords ruling upheld his right not to recognise a union.

Fearing the labour movement was about to declare the dispute could not be won, Mrs Desai mounted a hunger strike outside the TUC in November 1977, again to no avail, and the strikers called off their action in July 1978.

Grunwick had demonstrated the effectiveness of repeated legal challenges as a means of frustrating and destabilising industrial action.

Prepared for miners

Lessons learned in the dispute meant that Mrs Thatcher and her acolytes on the right were well prepared a decade later for the 1984-85 miners' strike.

Agitators such as the wealthy provocateur David Hart operated behind the scenes funding and co-ordinating astute legal action by working miners challenging the legality of the strike.

Mrs Thatcher's cabinet records revealed how she had intervened privately to assist strike breakers who were being harassed during the dispute.

She liaised with the Miners' Wives' Back to Work Campaign to prevent victimisation.

In the late 1970s the TUC was at the height of its power and influence. Union membership was about to top 12 million thanks to the support of the Wilson and Callaghan government.

Grunwick exposed fault lines in trade union procedures and practices, compounded by weaknesses and loopholes in representation and state protection for workers.

MN

Julian Petley revisits *Year of the Beaver*, an important film on the significance of the Grunwick strike

Strong arm tactics

One did not have to be Cassandra in 1977 to see that Grunwick could well be a harbinger of grim things to come on the trade union front, and by 1985, the year that Faction Films' *Year of the Beaver* was made, the forebodings felt by many on the Left at the Thatcherite ascendancy had proven to be all too well-founded.

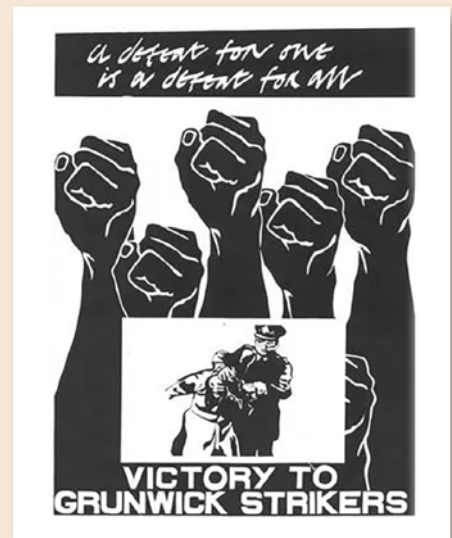
Subtitled "A Film about the Modern 'Civilised' State", *Year of the Beaver* goes well beyond an account of the strike, important though it is as an antidote to the way in which it was represented at the time and as a reminder of a key industrial dispute that has been rather overshadowed by larger subsequent strikes. Thus it takes in the growth of monetarist policies under the previous Labour government, the collusion of trade union leaders in this process (Jack Jones, then head of the TGWU, called 1977 'the year of the beaver' in an effort to encourage increased productivity and smoother union-management relations), the rise of the extra-parliamentary Right, hostile media coverage of industrial disputes, the surveillance of workers' political activities and increasing police violence towards strikers and their supporters.

Sweated labour

As the film itself notes, the Labour Party and the trade union hierarchy tended at the time to represent Grunwick as an anachronistic throwback to a past of sweated labour. But as the film-makers themselves explained: "Only by reviewing the material we'd recorded, sifting through the picket-line rhetoric, recreating the TV staging of events, did we come to see Grunwick not as something from the past but a model for capitalism's future."

This indicates the film-makers' interrogatory, self-reflexive attitude towards their subject that makes *Year of the Beaver* much more than simply the record of a premonitory strike.

The issue of media representation looms large throughout the film, and particularly notable is the richly allusive manner in which the process of image production is constantly foregrounded, be it in the defamiliarising, stylised ways in which news photographs and TV clips are presented or the re-



Poster with a prescient message that anticipated the miners' strike of 1984

peated shots of televisions being assembled. At one point a smug BBC-type voice breathlessly announces over a shot of a TV assembly line in Japan that "loyalty to the company is so strong that workers take less holiday time than they are due." And at another, the commentary states that "in our more recent history it was television which told the story of competitiveness, of paying our way, of working our way towards what they called the 'necessary realism'."

Faction Films played a key role in the production of *The Miners' Campaign Video Tapes*, and the strike, though never actually mentioned, hangs like a heavy shadow over the entirety of *Year of the Beaver*. The lack of support for the Grunwick workers on the part of the Labour government and the TUC is an ominous pre-echo of the events of 1984-85, while a Yorkshire miner on the Grunwick picket line observes of the violent policing that "any government which can stand by and see the kind of slaughter we've seen this morning must know they're going to introduce policies that will need strong-arm methods to enforce them." In the end it was a Tory government that did so – and how – but, as *Year of the Beaver* makes abundantly clear, the die had already been cast. **MN**

● *The Year of the Beaver* can be viewed at www.labournet.tv/en/videos/year-beaver



Media coverage of two Cambridge professors was strikingly different, one receiving relentless attention, but the other remarkably little. **Julian Petley** examines the reasons

A tale of two professors

This is the story of two Cambridge senior academics: Jason Arday, the recently deceased Professor of the Sociology of Education, and James Orr, Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion in the Faculty of Divinity. Comparing their treatment by both the right-wing press and Cambridge itself reveals a great deal about both institutions – and none of it remotely positive.

Arday was the victim of what Carole Cadwalladr has called a ‘digital lynching’, essentially for embroidering his life story – an all too common occurrence – and plagiarising some of his academic work. Of course, no journalist would ever dream of lifting material uncredited from another paper, but dispassionate inspection of Arday’s work would strongly suggest not plagiarism – a conscious attempt to deceive by passing off others’ work as one’s own – but poor presentation and failure to adhere to proper academic procedures.

In the case of his PhD, Liverpool John Moores University has admitted that there were problems arising from inadequate supervision while some of his journal articles suffer from inadequate editing (unfortunately a besetting sin in far too much academic publishing today). That Arday was autistic makes these shortcomings on the part of both the university and his publishers all the more reprehensible.

Undercover sting

Now consider Orr, recently seen in the undercover sting on Channel 4 News arranging, in his then role as Reform UK’s Head of Policy, for what he takes to be an American company to fund three opinion polls on behalf of the party.

This would clearly break campaign finance laws, but Orr



Jason Arday

blithely reassures the journalist posing as a donor that ‘we could easily get away with it’, not least because the Electoral Commission is ‘so dumb and ineffective’.

From 25 July, the day the plagiarism allegations about Arday were first reported, until 20 August, 242 articles about him were published in the national press.

The *Times* and *Telegraph* published the highest numbers: 53 and 39 respectively. There were two peaks: after Arday resigned from Cambridge on 5 August and following his death on 14 August. The coverage quickly moved from the plagiarism issue to Arday’s wider claims about his life, and from the very beginning the right-wing press framed questions about his work in the context of Cambridge’s efforts to diversify its academic workforce: in other words, from an anti-‘woke’ perspective.

For example, the *Daily Telegraph*’s first story was headlined ‘Cambridge’s diversity pin-up in

Orr’s activities should have been ringing loud alarm bells in both the press and Cambridge long before the sting



James Orr

plagiarism row’, which set the tone for much of the subsequent reporting.

According to detailed analysis undertaken by Newscord, 163 articles about Arday – mostly critical, where not abusive – were written in the week after he resigned. By contrast, only thirteen were written about Orr in the week after the Channel 4 revelations (although 92 mentioned him en passant in wider stories about Reform or Farage), following which he was rapidly suspended by Reform.

Not one of the education correspondents who wrote about Arday wrote about Orr.

Of course, it might be argued that this discrepancy was because Orr was not the main subject of the Channel 4 News/*Verbatim* sting, although he features very heavily in it, plotting illegal acts whilst lounging superciliously in various exclusive venues. But this would be to ignore the fact that Orr’s activities should have been ringing loud alarm bells in both the press and Cambridge long before the sting. In the event, it was only *Byline Times*, repeatedly, and the *Financial Times*, very belatedly on 3 September, that thought these worthy of comment at all.

Two of the main charges against Orr are that his work for

Reform has taken precedence over his responsibilities to Cambridge, and that he has used his position at the university to propagandise on behalf of far-right ideas and organisations – for example the Edmund Burke Foundation, of which he is chair; the Roger Scruton Legacy Foundation, of which he is a director and which has received funding from the Orban-backed Matthias Corvinus Collegium; and the Reform-adjacent Centre for a Better Britain, whose advisory board he chairs.

‘Conservative kibbutz’

The fact that he describes his private Cambridge premises as a ‘Conservative kibbutz’ (although ‘madrasa’ could also fit the bill) at which he houses students and where race science advocates and other hard-right political figures such as J.D. Vance, Jordan Peterson, Charles Murray and Peter Thiel have all been guests, does give credence to the second charge and raises concerns that this arrangement could be seen as risking breaching both the university’s staff and students relationship policy and the terms of its safeguarding statement.

Of course, it goes without saying that if Orr was embroiled with the equivalent organisations and figures on the Left we would never hear the end of it in the right-wing press. And, given its rapid ditching of Arday once the media storm broke, one wonders how Cambridge would have responded to such a situation. However, in the real world of the decidedly right-wing Orr and a largely supine and complicit press, it simply brushed off *Byline Times*, huffily telling them that it was ‘unable to engage with the approach as a legitimate media enquiry’, following which its press office passed on the publication’s perfectly legitimate questions straight to Orr’s lawyers.

As we approach the third anniversary of Israel's continuing devastating assault on Gaza, **Tom O'Malley** reviews an important book on the role of US media in this catastrophe

Selling genocide

When Adam Johnson monitored the first 100 days of media coverage of the assault on Gaza after 7 October 2023 he chose not to focus on the Conservative or MAGA media like the *Wall Street Journal* or Fox News. Their dehumanisation of Palestine was 'not in doubt or dispute'.

Instead he focused on the Centre Left media, the type read by Democrats when their Democratic President Joe Biden was enabling Israel's genocide. This meant outlets like CNN, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Politico and MSNBC. He drew on over 12,000 articles and 5,000 TV clips.

Shortly after the Hamas attack a story emerged from Israeli officials and reporters that the remains of '40 beheaded babies' had been found.

This claim was then repeated 'without evidence or skepticism' across the sources he was monitoring: including CNN, NBC and CBS. It culminated in Biden telling reporters he had seen photos of the children decapitated by Hamas. No evidence was shown to substantiate these claims.

Dehumanising Palestinians

Stories like this were part of a drive in large parts of the US media to dehumanise Palestinians, equate their activities with those of ISIS, and reduce their motives to 'at best' a racial hatred of Jewish people or, at worst, nihilistic jihadi bloodlust. After this the media engaged in deeply anti-Palestinian and pro-Israeli coverage. By the

HOW TO SELL A GENOCIDE

The Media's Complicity in the Destruction of Gaza

By **Adam H. Johnson**

Pluto Press

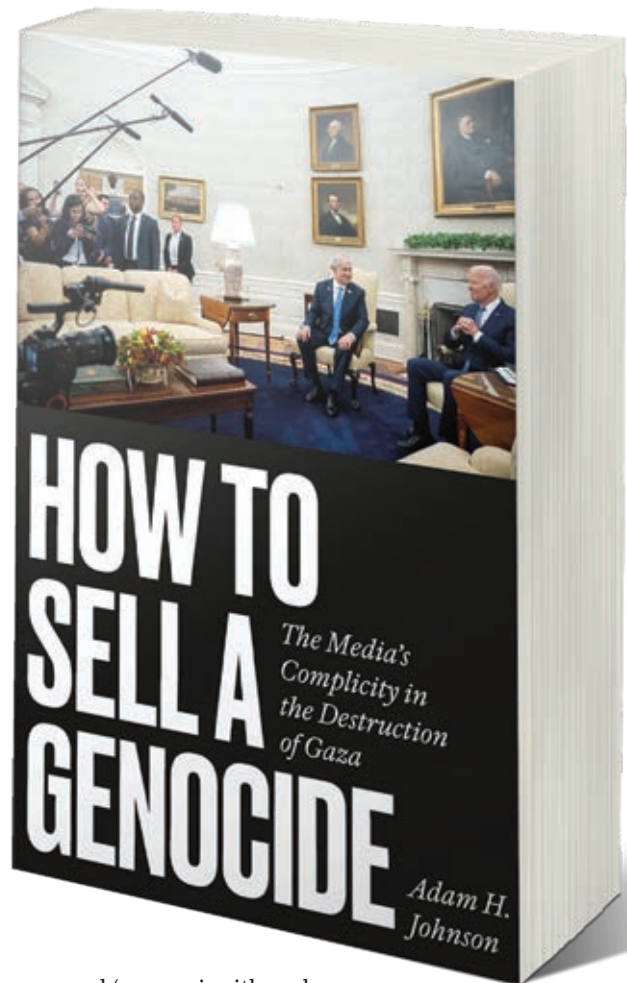
£14.95 pbk / £9.95 ebook

end of the survey, a conservative estimate of Palestinian deaths was 24,000, of which an estimated 70% were women and children. In media outlets he monitored the term 'massacre' was used to describe Palestinians killing Israelis 344 times, but was never used for Israelis killing Palestinians. 'Barbaric' was used 14 times to describe the killing of Israelis 'versus zero times for Palestinians'.

New York Times headlines were clear about Russia's responsibility in Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, it declared 'Russia Attacks As Putin Warns World'; and on March 10 2022: 'Russia strikes maternity centre'.

Contrast this with its description of events in Gaza: 'Blasts Kills Hundreds At Gaza Hospital' (18 October, 2023); 'An explosion, then "Too Many Bodies to Count"' (19 October, 2023). The responsibility of Israel for the strikes and deaths is simply absent from the headlines. He points out that where Israel was

Joe Biden could have exercised financial and military pressure to force Israel to stop. He didn't



concerned 'agency is either always missing or framed in purely defensive terms'.

Letting Biden off the hook

Joe Biden could have exercised financial and military pressure to force Israel to stop. He didn't. Instead, Centre Left media gave him cover.

One way was to emphasise his helplessness: 'Six Months Into Gaza War, Biden Confronts the Limits of U.S. Leverage' (*Washington Post* 6 April, 2024). Whether or not Biden really was powerless was never 'meaningfully questioned'.

Another was to suggest that Biden was secretly upset, and outraged: 'The Long, Tortured Road to Biden's Clash With Netanyahu Over Gaza War' (*New York Times*, 11 May 2024). Yet, 'no mainstream reporter found it suspicious that Biden refused to use any of his available leverage to stop the thing he was allegedly so upset about'.

The book is full of many more examples like this. There were people within the media who resisted, but that didn't stop the appalling coverage, and they

paid a price: there were over one hundred cases of retaliation against media workers in the months following 7 October.

Johnson points out that killings on this scale, 'don't happen without PR cover; they don't happen without a propagandised, misled, distracted and lied-to public'. Carrying out 'a livestreamed genocide' over two years 'without any meaningful domestic pushback, was a historic achievement by the US Security state and its media allies'.

The media's role was: 'to rationalise, negotiate, obscure, and, ultimately, deny the most inconvenient of truths: a genocide carried out, defended, and authored by elite liberals and liberal institutions'.

He sees his media criticism and that of organisations like the Electronic Intifada, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, Al-jazeera and many others, as a way of challenging media support for genocide. It is worth reading for that alone, but also for its clarity and depth of thought and analysis. **MN**

EU drafts plans for social media

The European Commission is to propose new rules to restrict young peoples' access to social media and video-sharing platforms before the age of 15, according to draft documents.

The EU proposes a new 'EU KIDS Act' setting out age restrictions, along with new rules cov-

ering social media and AI to be safe by design. The proposals aim to create a tiered system for accessing social media under parental supervision before age 15.

The age restrictions are a major step by the European Commission to better safeguard minors on social media platforms, amid a backlash by politicians

and parents against the effects of platforms like TikTok, Instagram and others on the mental health of minors.

France, Austria, Denmark, France, Greece and Spain are pushing ahead with their own national laws to restrict young peoples' access to social media.

The EU's proposals would ap-

ply to social media, video-sharing platforms, online games, AI chatbots and AI companions, but would exclude educational tools.

The text of the laws is still subject to change and will have to be negotiated with European governments and members of the European Parliament. **MN**

Tony Burke

Silencing journalistic criticism

● From Page 1

while the prime minister said on X that the story had 'clear political timing, as part of the left's election campaign'.

Lawyers for *Haaretz* responded to Netanyahu's plans, saying they would not be deterred by what they described as the prime minister's attempts to silence journalistic criticism.

The lawyers' letter stated that the report was 'the product of an in-depth journalistic investigation and is based on sources pertaining to an issue of paramount public importance'.

'Ethnic cleansing'

The controversy about the book's extracts in *Haaretz* occurred at the same time as Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband changed Labour's stance on its policy towards Israel and the occupied territories, using terms such as 'ethnic cleansing' and 'unlawful occupation' for the first time, to impose sanctions



Ed Miliband was attacked after the UK imposed sanctions on West Bank settlements

on commerce connected with the occupied West Bank. These actions and the development of the controversial E1 corridor, which will sever the northern and southern West Bank from East Jerusalem, will ensure a two-state solution is geographically impossible.

As the far-right Israeli minister Bezalel Smotrich said, the project is designed to 'bury the idea of a Palestinian state'.

When Miliband issued his statement, along with eleven other countries, imposing a trade and financial cordon around these illegal settlements, he was attacked for being anti-Jewish, hostile to Israel, pandering to Muslims and stirring up

antisemitism in the UK.

Angered by his statement, the Israeli government announced several countermeasures, including ordering the closure of the British consulate in occupied East Jerusalem.

Since Israel's genocide in Gaza began in 2023, Israeli forces have killed more than 73,000 Palestinians and wounded 174,000 more.

Gaza famine

The army has also starved the population by blocking aid and commercial trade, leading to famine in Gaza City in August 2025.

Israeli forces have also destroyed the majority of homes, schools and hospitals in the territory, pushing the enclave into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Several leading international bodies and human rights organisations have concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to genocide, including a United Nations commission of inquiry.

As Anat Saragusti of the Union of Journalists in Israel points out 'Israeli media barely showed the Palestinian side of the story ... people are not seeing it in the mainstream Hebrew language media'. **MN**

US media watchdog FAIR is 40

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) held its 40th anniversary birthday celebration in New York on 15 September.

Jeff Cohen founded FAIR in 1986. He recalls visiting the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom office in London in 1985: "I picked up loads of literature, including criticism of biased coverage of the miners' strike. My future was now clear, thanks to CPBF. I returned to the US determined to launch a media criticism and accountability group."



FAIR founder Jeff Cohen

Over the years FAIR has flourished with its radio programme *Counterspin*, books it has published and its active online media presence. If you would like to know more about FAIR listen to the *Project Censored* broadcast where Jeff Cohen, Janine Jackson and Olivia Riggio talk about their history, their contribution to media criticism and media literacy and why FAIR still matters after 40 years:

www.projectcensored.org/celebrating-fairs-40th-anniversary

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