

The media's embrace of anti-Semitism

Mainstream media have led to the banalization of anti-Jewish imagery through the mindless repetition of false claims of Israeli abuses. The William of Norwich calumny has been brought back to life in Gaza.

by Matthew M. Hausman



News coverage of the current unrest in Gaza shows how profoundly anti-Semitism has infected the mainstream media, as reporters have mobilized the blood libel myth to disparage Israel and promote the revisionist Palestinian narrative.

Though media bias against Israel has been well-documented in recent years, the use of classical anti-Jewish tropes to suggest Israeli bloodlust against Arab civilians marks an

ethical low-point for journalism as a profession. One does not have to scratch too far below the surface to see that depicting Israelis as callous predators while lending credence to fictitious claims of Israeli atrocities conjures images of the blood libel, which traditionally accused Jews of ritual murder and precipitated crusades, pogroms, and massacres.

The blood libel was employed by Christians starting in medieval times (and increasingly by Muslims from at least the 19th century onward) to justify the persecution and murder of Jews throughout Europe and the Levant. Blood libel symbolism was popularized across diverse religious, ethnic and political lines – by Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians; by Russians, Ukrainians and Poles; by Islamic leaders and Arab nationalists; by despotic European monarchs and the enlightened progressives who opposed them; by communists and socialists; and by right-wing zealots, fascists and Nazis.

For more than a thousand years, various religious, ethnic and national leaders around the globe accused Jews of rapacious parasitism and thus facilitated wholesale degradation and suffering.

Today one might expect to find such hateful themes in extremist literature and on radical websites. The mainstream press, however, has done far more damage by its banalization of anti-Jewish imagery through the mindless repetition of false claims of Israeli abuses. Western journalists have reinforced the myth with ill-conceived stories from unvetted sources accusing Israelis of indiscriminately attacking schools and hospitals, firing on unarmed civilians, and even killing Arabs to harvest their organs. And they have maintained an unrelenting editorial campaign to undermine Israel's right to protect herself, to inflate civilian casualty reports by misidentifying armed terrorists as innocent noncombatants, and to deny the genocidal anti-Semitism that pervades Palestinian society. ...

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