

# The New York Times' Orwellian obsession with Israel

The Jewish state and Judaism received disproportionate negative coverage throughout 2022.



by Phyllis Chesler

Are things really as bad as I think they are regarding propaganda against Israel and Jews, a subject I began closely tracking in 2001?

Recently, I asked five educated pro-Israel people: "How many first-section, hardcopy articles about Israel and Judaism do you think *The New York Times* published in the last six months of 2022?"

They answered, “Probably around 30 or 40, maybe less.”

Shockingly, the answer is at least 127. Yes, I carefully counted them. This averages *five* negative articles every week in just one section. Given that Israel is the size of the state of New Jersey, the *Times* seems pathologically obsessed with it. Although they very occasionally publish a neutral or positive piece, at least 95% of their first section articles fixate on Israel’s alleged imperfections and falsely magnify them into “atrocities.”

These anti-Israel pieces also tend to be much longer than other articles. According to a 2012 [study](#) published in *Sociology Mind*, most *Times* articles are an average of 622 words. The *Times*’ 127 anti-Israel articles seem to average approximately 1,700 words each, often appear on the front page, continue on one or two inside pages and feature many photos. This past August alone, these articles totaled more than 43,000 words.

The *Times* also makes extensive use of its Twitter account, posting up to a hundred times a day to its 54.8 million followers. An Oct. 24 [article](#) on Hasidic schools and financial fraud garnered 3,687 likes and was retweeted 1,728 times. Also in October, the [allegation](#) that Israel was driving Palestinians to live in caves drew 6,111 likes and 3,432 retweets.

Imagine the psychological effect of being barraged with so much propaganda every day, month and year. And that’s from just one newspaper.

Moreover, the *Times* consistently runs headlines that are blatantly biased if not cunningly deceptive.

For example, an Aug. 5 headline read: “[Israel Hits Gaza, Prompting Rocket Barrage and Ending Relative Calm.](#)” This buried the fact that Israel was trying to prevent an imminent attack on Israeli civilians by Islamic Jihad.

A Sept. 28 headline, "[4 Palestinians Killed in West Bank During Israeli Raid](#)" failed to reveal until the end of the article that the Palestinians killed were combatants, or as the *Times* put it, "militants ... armed with assault rifles."

An Oct. 9 headline shouted, "[A Deadly Shooting at an Israeli Checkpoint Sets Jerusalem on Edge.](#)" Based on the headline, one would not know that the killers were three Palestinians and the victims were an Israeli soldier and a severely wounded security guard.

The *Times'* anti-Israel and anti-Judaism bias extends far beyond headlines. While ignoring the alarming increase in antisemitic incidents and the escalation of physical attacks against visibly Orthodox Jews, primarily by African-American men, the *Times* instead chose to demonize Jews and Judaism.

In 2022, at least 12 articles appeared within a four-month period that [criticized Hasidic schools](#) for their students' [low test scores](#), given that they are [funded](#) by the [government](#); for creating ["no show" jobs](#) and [diverting monies](#) meant for [education](#); for [prioritizing religious](#) over [secular](#) subjects; and for [homophobia](#) within their communities. In this same period, the *Times* did not publish a single article about the religious curriculum, suspected corruption, sexism or homophobia in Islamic or Christian schools.

When the facts directly conflict with the *Times'* narrative of Israel as evil, such facts are minimized or even omitted from the story.

An Oct. 14 article titled "[Unrest Grows in West Bank in Deadliest Year Since 2015](#)" listed multiple incidents in which Israel "shot dead" Palestinians, falsely implying that Israel routinely murders innocent people. Only at the very end did the article acknowledge that, during a search for a terrorist in Jenin, "Palestinian gunmen fired on the [Israeli] soldiers,

leading to a lengthy gun battle in which two Palestinians were shot dead.”

On Dec. 24, an article titled: “[A Christmas Tree Brings Life to a Destroyed Palestinian Village](#)” blamed Israel for the shrinking Christian population in Palestinian-controlled territories. However, according to Raymond Ibrahim, it is [mainly Muslims](#) who harass, arrest, persecute and murder Christians in and near Bethlehem. The Christians who remain are afraid to speak out against either the Palestinian Authority (in Judea and Samaria) or Hamas (in Gaza).

On Dec. 31, the article “[For Palestinians, a Rush to Claim ‘Martyrs’ Killed by Israel](#)” claimed that Israel is definitely, perhaps purposely, killing civilians whom Hamas and Fatah, in a sick competition, (falsely) claim as martyrs.

I wondered: Is *The Washington Post* equally obsessed with Israel? Try worse. In only the last *three* months of 2022, the *Post* averaged eight such articles every week—96 in total.

Although the headlines were a bit more accurate, the articles themselves were equally biased. While the *Post* did report acts of antisemitism and acknowledged that such incidents are on the rise, they repeatedly blamed them on [Donald Trump](#), [right-wing extremists](#) and the [Republican Party](#) as a whole—as well as on Kanye West.

The *Post* also branded Israel’s new democratically-elected government an “[illiberal democracy](#)” and the “[most extreme](#),” “[most right-wing](#)” government in Israeli history. It further equated Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) and other Israeli leaders with Trump and the Republicans.

As of May 2022, the *Times* had almost [10 million](#) paid subscribers across digital and print platforms, with an average of [130 million](#) unique website visitors every month. The *Post* had almost [three million](#) paid subscribers and averaged about [65 million](#) unique website visitors per month.

According to Middle East expert Dr. Mitchell Bard, “Few media outlets (including wire services) can cover foreign affairs, so they reprint *Times* stories. This has gotten worse as local papers became financially strapped.”

These two newspapers are not the only venues obsessed with Israel. According to Matti Friedman in [Tablet](#): “When I was a correspondent at the *Associated Press*, the agency had more than 40 staffers covering Israel and the Palestinian territories. That was significantly more news staff than the *AP* had in China, Russia or India, or in all of the 50 countries of sub-Saharan Africa combined.”

We do not yet have an appropriate name for what happens when long-trusted media, the internet, teachers and professors as well as the academic curriculum, religious leaders, anti-Israel activists on campus and in the streets, international organizations including human rights groups and one’s peers all repeat the same thing over and over again for 22 (or 50) years until everyone believes the information is true.

This kind of conditioning, coupled with rewards (“friends,” a good grade, a job) and punishments (losing friends, getting doxed or fired), is far beyond mere “brainwashing” as it was previously understood. And it’s happening on a massive, global scale and in many languages.

How does propaganda work? Sometimes, it consists of big blatant lies, narrative- rather than fact-driven, with malevolent purpose. More often, is a steady, low-key diet of info-bits that are meant to normalize the larger lies.

Today, the biggest lies, also known as “hate speech” when applied to certain people, but not Jews and Israel, are seen as the biggest truths. Propagandists insist that such lies are protected by doctrines of free speech or academic freedom.

Thus, Israel is an “apartheid” state (it is not); Israel is a “colonial settler state” (it is not); Israel is racist and

homophobic (it is not); Israel is not a democracy (it is); Israelis persecute Arabs and Muslims (they don't); and "Palestine" and "Palestinians" are the only indigenous people of the Holy Land (very much a lie). The "two-state solution" is viewed as "fair," even though it is code for the elimination of Israel.

We have been immersed in such lethal lies for so long and from so many different but simultaneous quarters (Western "progressives," the Islamic world, etc.) that it is now almost impossible to separate lies from truth. Will it take another 22 or even 50 years to do so? Do we have that long to wait?

Someone known as Emmanuel Goldstein, Orwell's fictional, non-existent character in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is presented as the enemy of the state—the scapegoat for all that goes wrong.

Israel is Orwell's "Goldstein."

We are drowning in sewage.

First published in [\*Jewish News Syndicate\*](#).

*I want to acknowledge my assistant Amanda Barsky for working with me on this piece.*

*Phyllis Chesler is an emerita professor of psychology at the City University of New York (CUNY) and the author of 20 books, including "Women and Madness" (1972), "The New Antisemitism" (2003) and "A Family Conspiracy: Honor Killings" (2018).*