

What about it, New York Times?

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GATES
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Officials
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They Were Just Children

At least 67 people under age 18 in Gaza and two in Israel were killed during this month's conflict, according to initial reports. They had wanted to be doctors, artists and leaders. Read their stories, Pages A10-11.



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WASHINGTON -
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I am pretty sure that if one managed to dig through the top-secret corporate mission statement guiding *The New York Times* and provided for its internal use (whether it is stored on paper, or is only communicated via a wink-wink, nod-nod, "you know what I am talking about" method), "fabricating indignation against Israel" would be somewhere near the top of the list.

Certainly, the paper's most recent "oh! ah! can you believe it?" piece concocted by the whole team of *The New York Times* investigators, Patrick Kingsley, Ronen Bergman, Gabby Sobelman, and Myra Noveck is nothing more than yet another example of manufactured outrage that really falls under a rubric "so what about it?"

Its breathtakingly sensational title, ["Palestinians Were Targeted by Israeli Firm's Spyware, Experts Say"](#) that

describes the possible venue of how Israelis obtained the damning information used for “outlawing last month of six Palestinian rights groups [Israel] accused of being fronts for a banned militant group,” that allegedly have “taken donations from European countries and institutions that were meant to be used for humanitarian and rights-related activity – and instead funneled that money to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and other countries” only caused me to shrug my shoulders. After all, who should the Israelis target by spyware if not their enemies – including the Palestinians potentially engaged in terrorism? Isn’t that what security agencies do the world over?

So you could form your own opinion, here is the chronological sequence of events I extracted from *The New New York Times*’ “scoop”: (1) Israelis interrogated “two former accountants of [another] organization [called the Health Work Committee] who were fired from their posts in 2019. The two accountants claimed that the other outlawed organizations were all controlled by Popular Front members, but at times conceded that some of those allegations were based on conjecture.” (2) Apparently, to prove that “conjecture” one way or the other, Israelis checked on the contents of the phones of the members of those six organization’s: “The Palestinians suspected that their phones had been hacked shortly before their organizations were outlawed last month and they asked for assistance from Front Line Defenders, which worked with Citizen Lab to screen their phones” and “The analysis said that Pegasus had penetrated the phones of four employees of the outlawed groups, based on analysis of their phone logs.” Apparently, no such traces were found on the phones of the other two listed organizations (needless to say, “The Israeli prime minister’s office and the Israeli Defense Ministry denied that Pegasus had been used to hack the Palestinians’ phones.”) (3) Apparently, the evidence was conclusive enough

to designate them as terrorist organizations, and “that more conclusive and secretive evidence about the six organizations had been provided to American officials in recent weeks.”

None of this is particularly complicated, none of this is an “aha!” story in which “a man bites dog.” In fact, I guess this is as routine as it gets. In a nutshell, [this is how Syrian nuclear program was discovered](#), no one in the international community disputing the findings or making a fuss.

Yes, Israel’s NSO is much in the news. Yes, it was blacklisted by the US. Yes, its products may have been used by some governments for activity outside of what they were licensed for. But for all the froth at *The New York Times*’ mouth, there is simply nothing wrong with its use (even if it indeed occurred) to check on suspected terrorists. The ends justify the means – Palestinians have been caught time and again, for instance, transferring weapons and terrorists in their ambulances despite being prohibited from doing so by humanitarian law; funneling European money to terrorist organizations by their NGOs doesn’t strike me as any different.

The New York Times would do well to learn to moderate and calibrate its indignation, it seems to me. And – needless to say – it should remove bashing of Israel from the paper’s mission statement, whether written out, or unspoken.