Copyediting Palestine: Media Bias in Journalism Style Guides

Editar Palestina: Sesgo Mediático en los Manuales de Estilo Periodístico

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ABSTRACT
Introduction: The purpose of journalistic style guides is to provide media practitioners with guidance on language to convey a neutral and objective presentation of information. This paper investigates thematic style guides published with a focus on Palestine and analyzes how these style guides construct media bias. **Literature Review:** In the literature reviewed a structural media bias against Palestinians that favors Israeli narratives is documented in research as an integral part of anglophone mainstream media through the reproduction of Orientalism, Zionist narratives, and anti-Palestinian racism. **Methodology:** A comparative content analysis was conducted on four thematic style guides, sampling common terms through a grounded theory approach. **Results:** The results show similarities and differences in the style guides' definitions, sourcing, and explanations of key terms related to Palestine and its historical, legal, and geographic contexts. **Discussion:** The style guides notably differ in their content with some perpetuating anti-Palestinian bias in various implicit and explicit ways, such as Nakba denial, questioning Palestinian history, and reproducing Israeli sources and narratives. **Conclusions:** Our analysis concludes that anti-Palestinian bias and racism are an integral part of some anglophone newsroom policies and practices as implemented in style and editorial guidelines. Thematic style guides on Palestine thus can further perpetuate colonial conquest and anti-indigenous violence.

Keywords: Style guides; Palestine/Israel; Media bias; Orientalism; Colonialism; Anti-Palestinian racism; Zionist narratives.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El propósito de los manuales de estilo periodístico es proporcionar a los profesionales de los medios, instrucciones sobre la lengua para transmitir una presentación de la información neutral y objetiva. Este artículo investiga los manuales de estilo temáticos publicados con un enfoque en Palestina y analiza cómo estos manuales construyen el sesgo mediático. **Revisión de la literatura:** La literatura revisada revela un sesgo estructural de los medios contra los Palestinos que favorece las narrativas israelíes y que forma parte integral de los principales medios anglófonos a través de la reproducción del orientalismo, las narrativas sionistas y el racismo anti-palestino. **Metodología:** Se realizó un análisis comparativo de contenido de cuatro manuales temáticos, muestreando términos comunes a través de un enfoque de teoría fundamentada. **Resultados:** Los resultados muestran similitudes y diferencias entre los manuales en sus definiciones, fuentes y explicaciones de los términos clave relacionados con Palestina y sus contextos histórico, legal y geográfico. **Discusión:** Los manuales de estilo periodístico difieren notablemente en su contenido. Algunos perpetúan el sesgo anti-palestino en varias maneras implícitas y explícitas, como la negación de la Nakba, el cuestionamiento de la historia palestina y la reproducción de fuentes y narrativas israelíes. **Conclusiones:** Nuestro análisis concluye que el racismo y el sesgo anti-palestino forman una parte integral de algunas políticas y prácticas de las redacciones anglófonas, tal como se implementan en las pautas editoriales y de estilo. Los manuales temáticos sobre Palestina pueden, por lo tanto, perpetuar aún más la conquista colonial y la violencia anti-indígena.

Palabras clave: Manuales de estilo periodístico; Palestina/Israel; Sesgo mediático; Orientalismo; Colonialismo; Racismo anti-palestino; Narrativas sionistas.

1. Introduction

A journalism style guide, style sheet, manual, or handbook, is generated typically by a news organization with the aim of providing internal guidelines, rules, and recommendations for a standardized use of language and style which can be defined as "what many writers on the subject think a given construction or word choice should be" (Wachal, 2000, p. 199). The aim of a style guide is thus to pursue objective journalism and express rhetorical strategies determined by the media within a communicative situation (Attolino, 2007, p. 205). Major anglophone news institutions purport in their style guides to seek clear and efficient language tools that facilitate formulations and assist standardization for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax. Such style guides usually include lexical references for words and concepts, presented in alphabetical order. Due to progressing digitalization, style guides are increasingly published online, either in addition to or in lieu of, print editions.

A close reading of the foreword and introduction sections of some of the style guides employed by dominant media outlets and organizations reveals their purported commitment to objectivity, clarity (Associated Press, 2018), accuracy and fairness, impartiality (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], n.d.), honesty and integrity (Reuters, n.d.) with a focus on grammar, punctuation and style. *AP's* proclaimed objective is "to be clear, fair and concise around the globe" (Associated Press [AP], 2018), while the BBC is committed to "the highest standards of English because well-written stories are easier to understand" (BBC, n.d.). The goal of the "*New York Times* Manual" is to provide "clear, precise, literate prose that effectively conveys important information to busy readers" (Siegal and Connolly, 2015). An implicit assumption within these style guides is, thus, that proper usage of language as well as adhesion to accuracy, fairness, and independence are journalistic ideals that can be maintained through proper guidance and tools. In this way, style guides are internal documents produced by news organizations that aim to supervise journalistic work practices in newsrooms.

However, accuracy, fairness, and independence in journalism are structured by the political economy of news organizations that determines employment practices and shapes the cultural diversity found among journalists and editors, or lack thereof, in newsrooms. Feminist political economy scholarship notes a link between media ownership and governance that supervises employment practices and the lack of diversity found within media organizations (Byerly and Ross, 2006; King and Bonin-Labelle, 2021). To address the problem of newsrooms

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being dominated by whiteness, sexism, ableism, heteronormativity, Orientalism, and other ideologies, activists and advocacy organizations are increasingly producing style guides to influence newsroom practices. For example, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation or GLADD, an LGBTQ+ media monitoring organization based in the US, published eleven editions of its "Media Reference Guide" that includes a glossary of LGBTQ and Transgender terms, a community calendar, links to other guides, and twenty "in focus" sections to provide journalists "education and guidance on telling LGBTQ people's stories" (GLAAD, n.d.). Similarly, the National Center on Disability and Journalism (NCDJ), affiliated with Arizona State University, prepared a "Disability Language Style Guide" that was last updated in 2021 and provides "basic guidelines", defines over 100 terms, and is available in English, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian (NCDJ, n.d.). Such style guides, produced by advocacy organizations, aim to transform hegemonic media practices structured by the political economy of newsrooms.

Other examples of guidance for journalists are prepared in response to specific events being reported by the media. One such example comes from the Syrian Female Journalists Network that published a "Code of Conduct" in 2017 with the goal of improving the representation of Syrian women in coverage of the war in Syria. The code develops articles organized under six parts that address basic concepts concerning gender and the representation of women in media, specific problems concerning the portrayal of women in advertising and various types of media, ethics, practices and rules of media work, professional practices and rules, and the monitoring role of media (SFJN, n.d.). More recently and in response to Israel's war on Gaza in 2021, the Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association (or AMEJA) circulated a "Media Resource Guide Palestine/Israel" to provide tips for reporting on Israel and Palestine. While not a style guide that defines terminology, some of the guidance offered advises reporters to produce news that includes context, avoids problematic language (such as "both sides" framing or describing Gaza as "Hamas controlled"), uses recommended wording (such as "forced removal" rather than "eviction" or "real estate dispute"), verifies evidence provided by Israeli government or military sources, and interviews Palestinians who should be identified as Palestinian and not Arab-Israeli (AMEJA, 2021).

The above style guides from GLAAD and the NCDJ along with the SFJN's and AMEJA's guidance provide evidence of increasing advocacy that is seeking to improve newsroom practices from a social justice perspective. Style guides prepared by activists and advocacy organizations are one means of democratizing the media system. In recent years several style guides have been published with a particular focus on reporting about Palestine, with some offering guidance from a human rights and de-colonial perspective. In order to address the urgent need for research on how style guides produced within news organizations construct media bias in news reporting on Palestine, this article will analyze the content of four thematic style guides developed by different types of media organizations for reporting on Palestine. After reviewing the scholarly literature on media bias and reporting on Palestine, this article will detail the methodology and results to inform the discussion and conclusion with the goal of answering the following research question: *How do style guides reproduce media bias on Palestine?*

2.   Literature review

The ongoing Palestinian Nakba, constantly perpetuated through local, regional, and transnational realizations of Zionist colonial violence, is accompanied by a visible media bias on Palestine which, through its mirroring of geo-political power asymmetries, reflects the discursive hegemony of the Israeli apartheid regime and facilitates the preservation of the colony's contested existence. Media mistranslates the Palestinian struggle to international audiences and serves as a major strategic tool for the communication of the colonizer's engineered narratives that justify the continuous genocidal erasure of indigenous Palestine.

Recent events that were deemed newsworthy in Western media displayed yet again the persistence of bias in the reporting on Palestine. While the Israeli regime's ethnic cleansing campaign in East Jerusalem and large-scale

bombardments of Palestinian refugees in Gaza in May 2021 received media attention, the framing, language, and bias remained largely in favor of the Israeli colonial regime (Hamid and Morris, 2021; Jegić, 2021). These events revealed again the extent of censorship and surveillance that Palestinians and voices in support of Palestine face in private and public media (King, 2021a), while Zionist colonizers organize attacks in online spaces (King, 2021b). The censorship of criticism of the colonial regime on social media, which "are dominated by mostly US-based monopolies whose political and economic structures are fundamentally anti-Palestinian" (King, 2021b, p. 38), received attention in particular due to Palestinian activism and resistance efforts.

Reporting on Palestine has been affected by various forms of bias due to Western investment in colonialism in Palestine, the prevalence of culturally standardized Orientalism and Zionism, the coercive power of Zionist lobbying as well as particular newsroom policies. Western government and media representations can reinforce structures of power (Bishara, 2008), while Israeli terrorism is largely absent from the media discourse (Suárez, 2017; Chomsky, 2001). Key terms such as clashes, chaos, and conflict (Soussi, 2019) continue to dominate news bias on Palestine, while the colonial structure remains obscured, thus contradicting the lived experience of indigenous Palestinians under a genocidal settler-colonial conquest.

2.1. Orientalism

Media bias on Palestine reflects culturally-embedded Orientalism in Western hegemony that significantly helps to maintain colonial power-relations in Palestine. Although thoroughly scrutinized in research, Orientalism, i.e., a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1979, p. 3), "a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away" and "a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (Said, 1979, p. 2), maintains its discursive hegemony. Both the Zionist colonial narrative and the dominant media representations of Palestine depend on the exploitation of Orientalist structures and framings. A crucial component of Orientalist thought is the misrepresentation and distortion of Islam. As Said argued, "[m]uch in current representations of Islam is designed to show the religion's inferiority with reference to the West" (1981, p. XXV) with Islam having constituted "peculiarly traumatic news" in the West. Shaheen (1985; 2003; 2008) showed that almost all cinematographic representations of Arabs and Muslims in U.S. movies "are bad ones" (2003, p. 176). Shaheen concludes that "for more than a century Hollywood, too, has used repetition as a teaching tool, tutoring movie audiences by repeating over and over, in film after film, insidious images of the Arab people" (2003, p. 172), including the stereotypical representation of Palestinians as terrorists. Even sympathetic representations of Arabs and Muslims, which marginally emerged in the twenty-first century, oftentimes reproduce dominant stereotypes through the usage of native informants, disclaimers, and, what Alsultany refers to as "simplified complex representations" (2013, p. 165) while the "terrorism" framework continues to dominate.

2.2. Zionist Colonialism

Media bias needs to be analyzed within the historical and ideological contexts of the colonial conquest of Palestine. The European settler-colonial ideology of Zionism emerged in the nineteenth century and resulted in the creation of a Western colony, offshore, or implant in Palestine that was to be permanently allied with European powers (Shlaim, 2001). For indigenous Palestinians, the Zionist settler-colonial project appeared as an "alien society" (Sayegh, 1965, p. 19). With Zionism remaining a dominant cultural force in the West, the underlying power-relations show an indigenous erasure and settler-colonial inscription (Jegić, 2019, p. 71). Albeit academically studied in detail (Rodinson, 1973; Shafir, 1996; Masalha, 2012; Shlaim, 2001; Pappé, 2007), the settler-colonial dimensions of the struggle in Palestine and the racist ethno-national character of Zionism are rarely part of news reporting on Palestine/Israel. Thus, rather than "conflict", the situation of Palestine is one of colonial war that requires analysis within the frameworks of trauma (Sayigh, 2013), ethnic cleansing, genocide (Rashed et al., 2004; Ratner, 2014; Shaw, 2013; Boyle, 2013), and apartheid (Hijab and Gassner, 2017).

2.3. Anti-Palestinian Racism

While media bias on Palestine has evidently been influenced by Orientalist, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic

discourse, the phenomenon of distinct anti-Palestinian racism plays a pivotal role, but remains understudied. According to Podur, "anti-Palestinian racism has been empowered by the inability to name it" (2021, p. 3). The lack of a clear verbalization of anti-Palestinianism thus further perpetuates the prevalent bias. In fact, Podur clearly locates the roots of anti-Palestinian racism in settler-colonial racism towards indigenous people: "It is 'anti-native' racism nearly all of whose tropes are derived from previous settler-colonial projects like Canada, Australia, the US, Apartheid South Africa, and France in Algeria" (p. 4). A recent report by the Arab-Canadian Lawyers Association agreed that anti-Palestinian racism in the media includes not recognizing Palestinians as an indigenous population and defined several other forms such as Nakba denial, justifications of human rights violations or violence against Palestinians, silencing Palestinians in the media or framing Palestinians as "inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values" (2022, n.p.). In fact, while recent publications have confirmed a bias against Palestinians in anglophone media, the term "anti-Palestinian racism" is oftentimes absent in academic publications.

2.4. Media Bias

News is a socially constructed practice, and the choice of which events are reported does not reflect their intrinsic importance but rather represents "a complex and artificial set of criteria for selection" (Fowler, 1991, p. 2). Entman suggests three meanings of the term "bias", i.e., "distortion bias" that alters or falsifies reality on purpose, "content bias", in which news favors one particular side, and "decision-making bias", referring to "the motivations and mindsets of journalists who allegedly produce the biased content" (2007, p. 163). Scholarship on bias in anglophone media has found a clear discrepancy between the representation of Israelis and Palestinians, both in quantity and quality, a privileged access of Israeli regime representatives to Western mainstream media, the lack or absence of Palestinian voices and their historical background, the omission of key terms that more accurately represent the situation in Palestine, such as settler-colonialism, illegal settlements, occupation, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and apartheid, as well as the misrepresentation of colonialism in Palestine through the usage of particular framing and language that euphemize the colonial war into a conflict. Sirhan (2021) along with Hamid and Morris (2021) highlighted a consistently pro-Israeli bias in British press coverage. Philo and Berry (2011) showed through a thematic analysis a bias in favor of Israel in the news coverage during the outbreak of the Second Intifada by BBC and ITV. Similarly, in a critical discourse analysis, Richardson and Barkho (2009) identified how the BBC enforces "gate-keeping" practices on Palestine/Israel and imposes limitations that reflect "the hegemony, power and control of one side" on the ground in the media representation as well (p. 619).

A systematic pro-Israel news bias also dominates in the five top U.S. newspapers, i.e., the *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*, as evidenced through a sentiment analysis of fifty years of news headlines conducted by Siddiqui and Zaheer (2018). The privileging of Israeli voices in news headlines is visible in the dominant phrases "Israel says" and "says Israel" which suggests that Israeli sources are an integral component of headlines (Siddiqui and Zaheer, 2018, p. 10). Pro-Israeli bias in the *New York Times's* coverage of the First and Second Intifada has further been documented by Jackson (2021) and by Zelizer et al. (2002). Additionally, through media framing analysis conducted on coverage of the Intifada of the Knives, Attar and King (2023) revealed that major U.S., U.K., Canadian and Australian print newspapers published a lack of context on the situation of Palestinians, depicted Israelis as victims and Palestinians as perpetrators, framing them as antisemites and terrorists as "part of a systematic approach to silencing and omitting Palestinian voices" (Attar and King, 2023, p.13).

Multiple studies have noted a "double standard" in coverage published by the *Associated Press (AP)* (Shihadah and Weir, 2018; If Americans Knew, 2006), whereby Israeli deaths were reported in AP headlines upwards of four times higher than Palestinian deaths and articles focusing on Israeli deaths were significantly longer. This is particularly significant given that the AP reaches an audience of more than half of the world daily (AP, n.d.). Similarly, a study of *New York Times* content between September 29, 2000, and September 28, 2001, and between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2004, showed that the newspaper reported Israeli deaths at a rate 2.8 times higher than the deaths of Palestinians, while the discrepancy increased by almost 30% in the later

period (If Americans Knew, n.d.a). Another study for the same time period revealed that TV programs ABC's *World News Tonight*, CBS' *Evening News*, and NBC's *Nightly News* reported Israeli deaths at a higher rate, while underreporting Palestinian deaths (If Americans Knew, n.d.b).

2.5. Language

Anti-Palestinian bias has further been maintained in major news outlets through language, as several studies have shown. The usage and manipulation of particular language easily facilitates the perpetuation of ideology and bias. Conceptual metaphors and categories that form part of everyday spoken and written language can convey ideological meaning (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003; Lakoff, 1987). Zelizer et al. (2002) evidenced an alignment of language with an Israeli perspective in U.S. newspapers. The researchers found that reporting on the Second Intifada was "borrowed from the established repertory for reporting events in the region" (p. 287). This suggests that much of the reporting on Palestine is a reproduction of Orientalist ideology. *The New York Times* showed an Orientalist anti-Palestinian bias through language, such as a disproportionate use of the passive voice when referring to violent actions perpetrated against Palestinians (Jackson, 2021). As Sirhan argued, "the misuse of language plays a large role in the representation and reporting of this 'conflict'" (Sirhan, 2021). According to Balaghi (2013), the use of the passive voice by the *New York Times* "represents the grammatical power to dodge responsibility" (p. 150). When reporting on the Freedom Flotilla in the year 2010, the *New York Times* has "without explicitly endorsing the Israeli position" used style and language to implicitly do exactly that (Balaghi, 2013, p.154). Syntax, grammar and punctuation, such as putting the very term Palestine in square quotes or adding qualifiers such as "so-called" (Balaghi, 2013) are applied to discredit Palestinians. Attolino (2007) notes that in the case of the apartheid wall, the *AP* uses the Israeli-coined "separation fence", while the term preferred by Palestinians is only used in quotation marks, if it is used at all. Similarly, the omission of qualifiers may add to the creation of bias. Shihadah and Weir (2018) found that while the AP used the word "settlement" 19 times within two months in 2018, it only referred to the illegality once and only in a diluted way. Media coverage may furthermore distort reality through euphemisms, such as using "ethnic cleansing" instead of "genocide" (Attolino, 2007). The lack of clear definitions of terms can lead to an improper usage, as the terms "terror" and "terrorism" show (Attolino, 2007). Sirhan recommended the need for a new lexicon, "one that subverts the pervasive propaganda and blatant bias in order to reflect the real circumstances of the 'conflict'" (Sirhan, 2021, p. 216).

While the presence and dimensions of media bias on Palestine have been researched to a considerable extent, research on the ways in which bias is produced and standardized and how particular language is manipulated is urgently necessary. The specifications and regulations of journalistic language and style have a direct impact on bias and representation in news reporting. Indeed, in order to regulate and/or standardize news reporting on Palestine, several style guides and manuals have been published within the last years. In some cases, excerpts from internal style guides have been released in response to complaints made concerning news coverage. After the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) censored the word Palestine (Kattenburg, 2020) and issued an apology that stated, "Yesterday in my interview with Joe Sacco, I referred to the Palestinian Territories as 'Palestine'. We apologize. My bad" – excerpts from their internal language guidelines were released by the Ombudsperson in response to a series of complaints made by the Canada Palestine Association (Nagler, 2021). In order to expand the understanding of the multifaceted construction of media bias on Palestine, this article attempts to investigate media bias found in journalistic style guides through content analysis.

3.   Methodology

Four open access thematic style guides have been selected for content analysis (see Table 1). This includes: 1) "A Style Sheet on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" prepared by Martin Bailey from the Media Group of the Middle East Forum, "an ecumenical, church-related organization that works for balanced reporting on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict", that compiles 115 defined terms and was published by Americans for Middle East Understanding (AMEU) in 2002; 2) "A reporter's glossary of loaded language in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" offers definitions of 72 terms written by "six Israeli and Palestinian advisers" and was published by the International Press Institute (IPI), a global association of professional journalists, in 2013; 3) the BBC, which has a long history of news

reporting that includes establishing the Palestine Broadcasting Service in 1936 during the British occupation of Palestine (King, 2021a), published its news style guide titled "Israel and the Palestinians" online in 2006 and last updated in 2015 to provide an "abbreviated version of its journalists' guide to facts and terminology" that lists 20 defined terms; and 4) the volunteer-run International Middle East Media Center published the "Journalist Handbook" in Palestine in 2003 and last edited in 2017 defines 33 words (including 5 sensitive terms) and 3 discarded terms. All four style guides were produced in English, are available online, and made to support journalists writing news about Palestine for Western audiences. The next section reports on the results from the comparative content analysis of these categories and this will be followed by a discussion of the results that builds on the outcomes of the literature reviewed above.

Table 1. *Open access style guides on Palestine.*

Publisher	Year Updated	Country of Publisher	# of Terms
Americans for Middle East Understanding	2002	US	115
International Press Institute	2013	Austria	72
British Broadcasting Corporation	2015	UK	20
International Middle East Media Center	2017	Palestine	36

Source: Own elaboration.

While the number of terms defined in each style guide varies widely from 20 terms by the BBC to 115 by the AMEU, the methodology compiled a purposive sample through word searching the guides to locate terms that were defined in all four style guides to facilitate comparative analysis. For example, the phrase "cycle of violence" is defined in the BBC's style guide, but this phrase is not defined or used in the style guides produced by the IMEMC, AMEU or IPI. In another case, the AMEU defined "detention" (administrative and juvenile) whereas the IPI employed this word in its definition of the term "security prisoner" used by Israeli officials and media, and the IMEMC (2017) referred to "detention" in its definition of "kidnapping" to explain why they refrain from using the term "arrest":

> Kidnapping: by definition this term means; "The crime of unlawfully seizing and carrying away a person by force or Fraud, or seizing and *detaining* a person against his or her will with an intent to carry that person away at a later time". When Israeli soldiers *detain* a Palestinian and move them to unknown locations, it is pure kidnapping, especially that the occupied territories is not legally under the Israeli civil jurisdiction. It is some kind of a military zone according to the Israeli military orders. Therefore, IMEMC does avoid using the term "arrest" in order not to legalize the kidnapping by the Israeli military. (*emphasis* added, 2017)

However, the word search revealed that the BBC's style guide did not define or use the terms "detention", "kidnapping", "arrest", and "prisoner" in any of the definitions provided. Therefore, the terms "detention" or "security prisoner" were excluded from our comparative analysis that purposively selected words and phrases found in all four style guides.

After compiling the common terms, we further refined the data by creating categories to bring together similar words and phrases. This method follows a grounded theory approach to data analysis that interprets meaning arising from the collected data without preconceived understandings (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A methodology using ground theory codes the data to form initial patterns and then to create categories that will be refined through analysis that draws insights from a theoretical framework or literature reviewed (Corbin and Strauss, 2007). For the coding process guided by grounded theory, patterns were first detected by searching for the common terms compiled and then reviewing the definitions found in each guide. Categories for further analysis were then formed based on overlapping definitions. For example, the term "Nakba" was defined by both the IPI and AMEU, whereas the term "refugee" was mentioned in all guides except the IPI's, and the phrase "right of return" was defined by both the BBC and the AMEU. These patterns were deduced into the same category

of "Nakba, Refugees, Right of Return" due to the overlapping definitions that included the same common terms, such as the BBC's definition of the "right of return" and AMEU's definition of "Nakba" both referring to "refugees". With this approach, the coding of the data to detect patterns deduced nine categories of terms as listed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Patterns detected and deduced into categories.*

TERMS	BBC	IPI	AMEU	IMEMC
Assassination, Execution	X	X	X	X
Border, Green Line	X	X	X	X
Colonies, Settlements	X	X	X	X
Jerusalem	X	X	X	X
Israeli, Jewish, Zionist	X	X	X	X
Nakba, Refugees, Right of Return	X	X	X	X
Occupation, Occupied Territories	X	X	X	X
Palestine, Gaza Strip, West Bank	X	X	X	X
Terrorism, Terrorist	X	X	X	X

Source: Own elaboration.

The next section reports on the results from the comparative content analysis of these categories and this will be followed by a discussion of the results that builds on the outcomes of the literature reviewed above.

4. Results

4.1. Assassination, Execution

The BBC's style guide states, "The word 'assassination' is often used to describe a senior figure who has been murdered, but the word 'killed' or 'killing' may be perfectly adequate … The phrase 'targeted killing' is sometimes used by Israel and should be attributed" (2015). The IPI style guide suggests that terms like "execution" attribute "guilt of either the attacker or the targeted person" and concludes that "assassination" is the alternative term. Similarly to the BBC, IPI mentions the use of the word "targeted" to argue the following:

> this term gives the impression that an operation was clinical and glosses over serious property damage or civilian injuries and even deaths that may have resulted from the attack. On the other hand, there are Palestinian media that refer to similar attacks as executions or murders, which makes it seem like the targets are not members of militant Palestinian factions. It is better for journalists to refer to an assassination, air strike, or operation without using this descriptor. (2013)

By contrast, only the AMEU's style guide notes that Israel uses the term "targeted killings" to "describe its policy of executing Palestinians without bringing them to trial", making such practices extrajudicial assignations or executions that are condemned by Palestinian human rights groups. In the IMEMC's style guide, the entry on "assassination" comes under the section that defines "sensitive terms" and distinguishes assassination from murder and killing, to conclude assassination "should only be utilized in cases where there is a clear political motive that suggests the killing were premeditated and intentional", adding that "murder" is "The deliberate killing of a person posing no threat" and "killing" is the preferred term "when there is a lack of conclusive evidence that would suggest murder or assassination" (217).

4.2. Border, Green Line

The BBC defines the Green Line as "a dividing line or a boundary", cautioning journalists, "If you call it a border

you may inadvertently imply that it has internationally recognised status, which it does not currently have". The BBC goes on to suggest the following defintions of the Green Line: "the generally recognised boundary between Israel and the West Bank". In contrast the IPI states that "The Green Line, otherwise known as the 1949 armistice line, was created by a set of treaties established between the new State of Israel and its neighbour Jordan. It formed the de facto border of the Israeli state until 1967". The IPI states that after the war and occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967, the Green Line is "often referred to in political discussions" and "could serve as the border of a future Palestinian state". Only the AMEU acknowledges that "Israel has never officially fixed its territorial borders", noting that "When David Ben-Gurion announced the creation of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948, he refused to define its borders, saying [in his writings], 'we have to set up a dynamic state bent upon expansion". The IPI acknowledges that "Since 1967, the green line provides the boundary between Israel and the occupied West Bank", adding that "In some areas, such as north of Bethlehem, Israel has further extended its control, leading to the use of the phrase 'creeping green line". However, the IMEMC's style guide only briefly defines the Green Line "temporary border established in 1967". Yet this makes the IMEMC the only style guide analyzed to refer to the Green Line as "temporary".

4.3. Colonies, Settlements

Both the BBC and IPI distinguish "colonies" from "outposts". The former as authorized illegal settlements and the latter as unauthorized; however, IPI notes that outposts still benefit from "basic services from the authorities (i.e. electricity, water, and security)". The BBC suggests the following wording for its journalists: "all settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are considered illegal under international law, though Israel disputes this". Where the BBC style guide states that "It is normally best to talk about 'Jewish settlers' rather than 'Israeli settlers' - some settlers are not Israeli citizens", the IPI guide does not make this distinction and defines "settlements" as "Jewish–Israeli towns and communities situated in the West Bank". The IPI's style guide also acknowledges, "There is a Palestinian view that all settlements built on territory that Israel captured in 1967, including in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, are illegitimate and constitute colonialist activity", adding that "The United States, the European Union, and the United Nations consider these areas occupied". The IPI observes that Palestinian media and officials use the term "settler", but states that this use has a negative connotation for some Israelis because the term implies that "those residents do not belong there". The IMEMC also refers to the "settlements" and "colonies" to describe "all land illegally occupied by Israeli settlers". The AMEU does not use the word "illegal" to define the terms "colonies" or "settlements". Rather they state, colonies are "settlements established by the Israeli government in the occupied territories" and settlements are "residential communities constructed around Jerusalem and scattered in strategic areas throughout the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights". AMEU acknowledges that, "Most settlements were constructed on confiscated Arab land and at least partially at the expense of the Israeli government … these settlements, built for Jews only, often are massive apartment blocks or suburban homes, and are a source of international controversy and Arab anger".

4.4. Jerusalem

The BBC begins by defining the "status of Jerusalem" as "one of the most sensitive and complex issues", while IPI and AMEU both acknowledge "cultural and religious significance for both Israelis and Palestinians, as for Jews, Muslims, and Christians". While the IMEMC provides only a brief entry for East/West Jerusalem, which they define as "the de facto Palestinian and Israeli sections of the city by 1967 Borders", the BBC, IPI, and AMEU have detailed entries that all describe Jerusalem as a capital city. AMEU notes, "Although claimed by Israel as its capital, Jerusalem is not recognized as such by the United States or most other nations", adding "Palestinians expect that when their state is formally established, its capital will be in East Jerusalem". This wording differs from the BBC that states, "Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state of Palestine", adding "Do not call East Jerusalem the Palestinians' capital. You can say that Ramallah is their administrative capital and that East Jerusalem is their intended capital of any future independent state". The BBC provides the following suggested wording for its journalists: "The BBC does not call Jerusalem the 'capital' of Israel, though of course BBC journalists can report that Israel claims it as such. If you need a phrase you can call it Israel's 'seat of government', and you can also report that all foreign embassies are in Tel Aviv". IPI has additional entries on the phrases "united capital of Israel / united capital of the Jewish people" and "eternal capital of the Palestinian people", concluding:

There are Israelis who object when Palestinian media refer to Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Palestinian people, just as there are Palestinians who object to Israeli references to Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Israeli/Jewish people because it implies that all of Jerusalem is either only Israeli/Jewish territory or only Palestinian territory. (2013)

Concerning the capital of Palestine, AMEU and the BBC used the words "expect" and "want" respectively, while IPI states, "Palestinians seek to make East Jerusalem the capital of their future state, and the place where their government will be based; although it is not recognized as such by the United Nations". Only the definitions by AMEU mention international law to state that East Jerusalem "is considered part of the occupied territories".

4.5. Israeli, Jewish, Zionist

The BBC cautions journalists to carefully consider "whether you mean 'Israeli' or 'Jewish'", suggesting that "the latter might imply that the story is about race or religion, rather than the actions of the state or its citizens". The BBC only provides this racialized definition of Jewish people with no separate entries on "Israeli" or "Zionist". IPI notes that "Jews" and "Israelis" are not interchangeable terms, noting that this conflated use "is problematic because it is often used by Palestinians in a way that has a negative connotation". The AMEU has separate entries for "Israel, Israelis, Israelites" and "Jews" with the former defined as "citizens of Israel are Israelis; Israeli can be used as an adjective to describe a person, place, or thing" and the latter as "Followers of the religion known as Judaism, although designation includes 'secular' as well as 'cultural' Jews". The IMEMC only defines "Israelis" and "Israeli Settlers", the former as "the citizens of the state of Israel who live within the 'Green Line' temporary border established in 1967" and the latter as "Israelis living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The grouping includes both armed and unarmed members". Neither the BBC nor the IMEMC define "Zionist" and only the IMEMC does not define "Jewish". Both the IPI and AMEU have entries on "Zionism". IPI describes "Zionism" as a "Jewish national liberation movement that brought about the establishment of the State of Israel". AMEU states that "The term Zionism was first used in 1890 in its modern context as a movement to resettle Jews in historic Palestine and to create the state of Israel". Both IPI and AMEU mention UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 adopted in 1975 that declared Zionism is "a form of racism and racial discrimination". IPI adds "This resolution was revoked in 1991, via UN Resolution 46/86" and AMEU notes this as well, adding, "due to diplomatic lobbying by the United States, the 1975 resolution was repealed".

4.6. Nakba, Refugees, Right of Return

The IPI's style guide does not mention the word "refugee" in any of the 72 definitions provided and does not define the term; however they do define Nakba as:

> the term used by Palestinians to refer to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the establishment of Israel. It commemorates the end of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, which Israelis refer to as the War of Independence. It is the name for the most traumatic collective memory for Palestinians, and literally means "a catastrophe". In the Palestinian consciousness, this date represents the displacement of Palestinians, their separation from their land, and the subsequent ban on their return to what they see as their homes and properties. (2013)

AMEU mentions "refugees" in their definition of Nakba, stating, "700,000 Palestinians became refugees and 419 villages were destroyed. The Nakba is marked by ceremonies each year on May 15. The Israeli analyst Meron Benvenisti has used words like 'ethnic cleansing' to describe the actions of Israeli troops in more than 30 documented massacres". The BBC does not define Nakba, but they do mention "refugees" in their definition of the Right of Return. The BBC suggests that "There is a dispute between the two sides over why they are refugees" and suggests journalist report the "the two different views" by using this wording: "There is a Palestinian demand that Palestinians 'who fled or were forced out of their homes' during the 1948 and

1967 Arab/Israeli wars have the right to return to their homes". The AMEU is the only style guide that mentions "the right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes" is enshrined in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Resolution 194 approved by the UN General Assembly. The AMEU also is the only style guide that defines "refugees":

> Individuals who flee from or are driven from their homes, especially in time of war, and are unable to return. The United Nations defines a Palestinian refugee as a person 'whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the conflict in 1948, and who, as a result of this conflict, lost both his home and his means of livelihood and took refuge in 1948 in one of the countries where the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (U.N.R.W.A.) provides relief. (Bailey, 2002)

In contrast to the above definitions, the IMEMC only mentions "refugees" in defining the terms "Palestinian Cities/Districts/Refugee Camps" and "Palestinians". The IMEMC's style guide does not mention Right of Return or Nakba.

4.7. Occupation, Occupied Territories

The BBC suggests that the term Occupied Territories refers to "East Jerusalem, the West Bank and strictly speaking the Golan Heights", adding that the preferred use of this term is "to refer to the West Bank as a whole and not the Golan Heights". AMEU notes that the Gaza Strip is part of the "Territories occupied by Israel in 1967". Both the BBC and IPI note that "Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005". However, the IMEMC notes that the terms "Occupied Territories/West Bank, Gaza Strip" denote the "Palestinian territories which were occupied in 1967 and are currently under Israeli jurisdiction". The BBC suggests that "the phrase 'occupied West Bank' can also be used", although they advise journalists to "not to overuse the phrase within a single report in case it is seen as expressing support for one side's view". Notably, the AMEU's style guide was the only one that mentioned the Forth Geneva Convention and Oslo Accords, the former stating that "no occupying power may legally seize territory by war nor transplant its own population into the occupied territories" and the latter calling on Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories.

4.8. Palestine, Gaza Strip, West Bank

The IMEMC's definition of Palestine/Israel is similar to their definition of Occupied Territories as it also emphasizes Israeli control by stating "the entire region currently under Israeli military/political jurisdiction". The BBC's definition of Palestine declares "There is no independent state of Palestine today". They also direct journalists to "not affix the name 'Palestine' to Gaza or the West Bank- rather, it is still an aspiration or an historical entity". IPI's entry on Historic Palestine observes this term indicates "the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River as their homeland. Palestinians argue this territory was called Palestine under the British Mandate…" The IPI goes on to state that "Since 1948, Israel has received United Nations recognition as a state, and today it is an independent and sovereign country recognized worldwide". The style guide from AMEU adds that Palestine is "Located from biblical times on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean, the area was first designated as Palestine by the Romans in the 2nd century. Although the 1947 U.N. Resolution 181 provided for a Palestinian state on 43.5 percent of Mandate Palestine, Palestinians still remain stateless". The AMEU's definition of Palestine is the only style guide to reference Resolution 181.

The BBC style guide defines the Ramallah, as the Palestinian "administrative capital in the occupied West Bank", and states the Gaza Strip "was occupied by Israel when it captured it during the 1967 War", but does not say this occupation was illegal as was mentioned above in the AMEU's entry on the Occupied Territories. Similarly, the IPI also does not use the terms "illegal" or "occupation", writing "Palestinians, the United Nations, and many countries have criticized Israel's continued control over territories captured during the 1967 war, and the subsequent settlement of Jewish Israelis in those areas, which are not internationally recognized as belonging to Israel". Notably, the IPI does not define the Gaza Strip nor West Bank, although they mention "territories" can be "used as an alternative name for the West Bank". The BBC's definition of the latter references the ongoing occupation of Gaza, regardless of the reference to the 2005 "withdraw" mentioned above. Under Gaza Strip, the

BBC observes that "Israel retains control of the airspace, seafront and all vehicle access. All movement into and out of Gaza is controlled by the Israeli authorities, except the pedestrian-only Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza, which is controlled by the Egyptian authorities". The BBC goes on to explain Israel's "control" over Gaza with the following details:

> Restrictions on access to Gaza were extensively tightened by Israel in June 2007, after Hamas violently forced out rival Fatah in the running of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli cabinet designated Gaza as 'hostile territory' and imposed economic sanctions including the restriction of movement and goods. Israel says this is in response to rockets fired from Gaza towards Israel. The restrictions came to be known as the blockade. In 2010 the Israeli government eased some of its 2007 restrictions after international criticism against the developing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. (2015)

4.9. Terrorism, Terrorist

Both the BBC and IMEMC state that the terms "terrorism" or "terrorist" should be avoided. The BBC observes, "Terrorism is a difficult and emotive subject with significant political overtones and care is required in the use of language that carries value judgements. We try to avoid the use of the term 'terrorist' without attribution". The IMEMC forbids the use of the terms in news reports to maintain professionalism and accuracy. They note, "The terms terrorism, extremism, and fundamentalism have all been so broadly used in the news media that their definitions have become tenuous, misrepresentative, and ideologically laden". The IMEMC goes on to problematize the term "terrorism":

> the most commonly used description of terrorism implies non-state-sanctioned violence or threats of violence upon a civilian population as a means of political coercion. In this case, the term becomes ideologically laden as it suggests that those with political power are exempt from acts of terrorism, which in turn implies that their aggressions are legitimate. This characterization of terrorism inaccurately places a disproportionate amount of blame on those with little to no political power. In the second case, the term terrorism could be used in a unilateral sense based on a simple definition (the use and threat of violence as a means of political coercion). By using this definition, the term would equate state sponsored and non-state sponsored activities …. By conflating all acts of violent coercion, a news publication could easily disregard all political contexts in which these acts are conducted. Such news might lead audiences to see conflict in a myopic manner, whereby terrorism is simply conducted by everyone all the time, when this, too, is a misrepresentation of the conflict. (2017)

Similarly, the AMEU defines "terrorism" as "An act causing extreme fear, dread, fright", suggesting that this may apply to state-sponsored terrorism or armed resistance. The AMEU adds, "Judging whether such acts of a state or a resistance group are contrary to international conventions is the task, not of journalists, but of tribunals such as the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and countries that signed the Geneva Conventions". This makes the AMEU's definition on "terrorism" the only style guide to reference international legal frameworks. The AMEU also cautions journalists using terrorism to describe "every act of violence from the Palestinian side is to reveal a pro-Israeli bias in their reporting" and is the only guide to recommend journalists employ the term "resistance" in such reporting. By contrast, the IPI advises that "Terrorism and terrorist should be used only in instances that meet the widely accepted definition of acts of violence against civilians carried out in order to advance political goals". The IPI also states that "Journalists should describe incidents specifically, using phrases such as suicide bombing, firing rockets at civilians, or air strikes that killed civilians and specify what actions were committed by a specific person or group".

5.   Discussion & Conclusions

Contrary to the common purpose of style guides, i.e., to support journalists in their work and to uphold standards of objectivity, honesty, and accuracy in reporting, the analyzed content includes explicit and subtle forms of anti-Palestinian racism that are presented as journalistic style. Palestinian history, identity, and at times mere existence are marginalized, questioned and directly denied through biased use of language and presentation of historical and political contexts as well as the reliance on Israeli narratives.

The underlying context of Zionism and the structure of colonization remain largely absent in the analyzed style guides. Our results confirm the absence of Zionism from BBC's reporting which has been identified in previous research (Richardson and Barkho, 2019). While AMEU briefly referenced the historical context, none of the style guides identify Zionism as a settler-colonial ideology or movement, despite the clear emergence of Zionism as precisely that. On the contrary, the IPI euphemizes Zionism into a "Jewish national liberation movement", and, in doing do, romanticizes and justifies a dominant colonial narrative. However, this conflation of Zionism and Judaism contradicts the IPI's own claim that "Jews" and "Israelis" were not interchangeable terms. Notably, the IPI identified this conflation as problematic due to its alleged negative use by Palestinians. Thus, through generalization and attribution of negative intentions onto Palestinians, the IPI implicitly accuses Palestinians of a racist equation that the IPI itself constructs.

> "The underlying context of Zionism and the structure of colonization remain largely absent in the analyzed style guides"

The lack of historical elaboration within the analyzed style guides is particularly manifest in the contestation and exclusion of the Nakba. In several instances, documented moments of Palestinian history are questioned or presented as disputable views. The BBC style guide denies the Nakba by referring to the origins of Palestinian refugeehood as "a dispute between the two sides". The IPI delineates the Nakba as "the term used by Palestinians", thus framing a well-documented historical fact as a particular Palestinian opinion. Palestinian connection to Palestine is contested, such as in the IPI's contextualization of the ban on Palestinian right to return "to what they see as their homes and properties". This framing and the lack of a definition of the term 'refugees' thus fails to identify Palestinian ownership of their homes and implicitly presents Palestinian history as interpretable and ignores international legal conventions referenced by AMEU. Thus, an implicit Nakba denial is manifest within the supposed definition of the Nakba itself. Finally, the term Palestine itself is disputed. The BBC, like CBC, prevents their journalists from using 'Palestine', presenting it as an aspiration or historical entity, and thus deleting Palestine from present existence. The historical use of the term Palestine is further contested by the IPI and presented as a Palestinian argument.

In contrast, the reliance on Israeli narratives has been evident. The bias in favor of Israeli sources identified in this study confirms what was noted in previous research (Siddiqui and Zaheer, 2018). For instance, while the AMEU provides a definition of the Nakba, it quotes an Israeli analyst rather than a Palestinian to identify the term ethnic cleansing in quotation marks. The BBC and IPI in particular have integrated the official Israeli stance into journalistic practice by offering explanations for Israeli actions and by omitting crucial details of international law. In fact, only the AMEU style guide referenced the international legal conventions. Neither the BBC nor the IPI defined the occupation as illegal. The BBC even discourages the overuse of the adjective 'occupied' in relation to the West Bank "in case it is seen as expressing support for one side's view". It appears that the BBC identifies international law here as a contestable view. The entries on colonies and settlements are restricted to the territories occupied in 1967 which are only described as illegal by the BBC and IMEMC, while the IPI references the notion of illegitimacy and colonialist activity as "a Palestinian view" rather than an issue of international law. A clear endorsement of the Israeli position is further evident in the BBC's explanation of Israel's control over Gaza as an alleged response to Hamas' activities, offering the phrase "Israel says" as evidence. This wording authorizes the official Israeli perspective, according to which Israeli actions are mere responses to Palestinian actions and is in line with the Orientalist discourse that normalizes colonial violence by euphemizing it into mere reactions to indigenous behavior. The comparative content analysis showed the centrality of the use of language. As identified in previous research (Balaghi, 2013), anti-Palestinian racism is not explicitly presented as such, but rather perpetuated through style and word choice. This includes euphemisms, such as the reference to the Nakba as a 'displacement' (IPI) rather than genocidal atrocity.

In conclusion, the results of the comparative content analysis provide evidence of diverse forms of anti-Palestinian bias in journalism style guides. While the IMEMC and AMEU guides included some differentiation and context, bias in favor of the official Israeli position has been present throughout and particularly evident in the case of the BBC and IPI. These latter two style guides include entries that center Israeli concerns and amount to Nakba

denial. With the biased representation of historical events as Palestinian arguments and of colonial narratives as facts, the BBC and IPI style guides present anti-indigenous bias as journalistic practice, further adding to the systematic marginalization and, indeed, erasure of Palestine and Palestinian refugees in anglophone media.

The denial of Palestinian history, the absence of Palestinian refugees and the colonial structure of the Palestinian struggles as well as the presentation of the situation in Palestine as a myth of "two sides" further perpetuate colonial discourse and make it likely difficult for audiences to understand Palestinian realities. This is particularly concerning given the wide circulation of journalistic content based on the analyzed style guides. As a major anglophone mainstream media, the BBC reached nearly half a billion people per week in 2021 (BBC Media Centre, 2021).

As a result, anti-Palestinian bias and racism are standardized as journalistic practice, under the guise of editorial guidelines and adherence to a particular language and style that serve to uphold neutrality and objectivity. Anti-Palestinian racism thus remains inherently embedded in Western, anglophone media. The subtle integration of anti-Palestinian bias into language and style might make it more difficult for audiences to identify this bias, particularly as it reproduces current geo-political power structures and their Orientalist media representation as well as justifications for a settler-colonial conquest. Further research is needed in order to investigate the impact and implementation of style guides and other internal practices and policies that supervise journalistic reporting on Palestine in and beyond anglophone media.

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