

Media show little interest in Israeli bombing of Gaza

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August 28, 2020



Israel is bombing Palestine again, although you likely wouldn't guess that from watching TV news. For the eleventh straight night, Israeli Defense Force warplanes have been bombing the densely populated Gaza Strip. Israel's bombs have caused considerable damage, forcing the [shutdown](#) of the area's only power plant.

But US corporate media, focused on the coronavirus and election coverage, have shown little interest in the renewed violence in the Middle East. Searching for “Gaza” on the websites of **NBC News**, **CNN**, **MSNBC** and **PBS** elicits no relevant results. Nor has **Fox News** addressed the bombings, although it did find time ([8/18/20](#)) to cover the archaeological discovery of an old soap factory in Israel’s Negev Desert.



Smoke and flames rise after war planes belonging to the Israeli army carried out airstrikes over the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, August 12, 2020.

AFP (CBS, 8/13/20) describes attacks on Gaza as “the latest retaliation against fire bombs suspended from balloons that have been released from the Palestinian territory.”

Other major news networks were not much better. In a wide ranging interview with Trump advisor Jared Kushner, **CBS’s Face the Nation** host Margaret Brennan ([8/16/20](#)) did mention that “there were hostilities overnight in Gaza. There were Israeli airstrikes. Palestinian militants fired off rockets,” in a question about the US’s role in the Middle East, but did not return to it.

CBS (8/13/20) also reprinted an **AFP** newswire story headlined “Israel Responds to

Fire Balloons From Gaza Strip With Fighter Jet Strikes,” which began by stating (emphasis added):

Israel attacked targets of Islamist group Hamas in Gaza and halted fuel supplies to the enclave Thursday in the latest retaliation against fire bombs suspended from balloons that have been released from the Palestinian territory.

The story clearly presents the bombing as a reactive Israeli counter-effort—not an attack on Palestine, but a response against Hamas, which it describes not as a political party but as an “Islamist group.” Hamas, it insists, was the target, despite later noting that a UN-run school was also hit. **AFP** did not comment on the lack of symmetry between homemade explosives tied to balloons and F-35 jets.

ABC News, meanwhile, relied on another news agency for all of its (limited) coverage (two pieces), reprinting (8/16/20) an **Associated Press article** that similarly presented the cutting off of Gaza’s electricity supply as a “response” to aggression from the “Palestinian militants” of Hamas.



The Washington Post logo is at the top left, with the tagline 'Democracy Dies in Darkness'. Below the logo, the word 'Health' is in blue. The main headline is 'Israel strikes Gaza targets after arson balloons launched'. Below the headline is a large photograph of a Palestinian boy standing in the rubble of a destroyed building. At the bottom of the image, there is a caption: 'A Palestinian boy inspects the damage in his family home following Israeli airstrikes in Burieh refugee camp, central Gaza Strip, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2020. (Khalil Hamra/Associated Press)'.

AP (*Washington Post*, [8/16/20](#)) reported that “Israeli aircraft bombed several sites belonging to the militant Hamas group in the Gaza Strip”—though in the **Post** the article was accompanied by a photo of a boy with his destroyed home.

A second **AP** story, headlined “Israel Strikes Gaza Targets After Arson Balloons Launched,” was picked up not just by **ABC** ([8/16/20](#)) but by influential outlets like the **New York Times** ([8/15/20](#)), **Washington Post** ([8/16/20](#)) and **Guardian** ([8/16/20](#)). The piece is at pains to present Israeli actions as directed purely against Hamas, and as a response, not an aggressive action, allowing Israeli military spokespersons to drive the narrative. Indeed, much of the report reads like an IDF press release.

A leaked 2009 publication from the [Israel Project](#)  , an Israeli/American group that advises Israel advocates on what language to use when discussing the Palestine conflict, stresses that they should “clearly differentiate between the Palestinian people and Hamas.” “If it sounds like you are attacking the Palestinian people (even though they elected Hamas) rather than their leadership, you will lose public support,” they counsel. Media, it seems, are doing their job for them, in much the same way they reflexively present US actions against Iran as a “response” or a “counter” to the threat from Tehran (**FAIR.org**, [6/6/19](#)).

In their seminal books on media coverage of the conflict, [Bad News From Israel](#) and [More Bad News From Israel](#), Greg Philo and Mike Berry wrote that TV news followed a “consistent pattern,” which misleadingly presented the events as “Palestinian action and Israeli response and retaliation,” their focus group sessions showing that the presentation had a “significant effect” on how the public remembered events and apportioned blame, effectively legitimizing Israeli actions. Sixteen years after their first study was published, corporate media appear to be following exactly the same playbook.

The US press sampled here have produced barely any original coverage of the 11-day (and counting) bombing campaign of the area commonly described as the world's largest [open-air prison](#). This is in contrast to foreign channels such as [Al-Jazeera](#) and [RT](#), or alternative media like [Democracy Now!](#), all of whom have followed the events in more depth, and often with fewer resources. When corporate media have covered it, they have followed tried and tested conventions that reproduce an Israeli-friendly narrative.

Media coverage of Israel/Palestine is a topic FAIR has criticized for decades (e.g., [Extra!, 1/91](#); [Extra! Update, 2/05](#); [FAIR.org, 8/6/14, 3/29/19](#)). The reporting on the latest round of attacks on Gaza follows the patterns we have often remarked on: downplaying Palestinian suffering and viewing the conflict from an Israeli state perspective.

Source: [FAIR](#)

