

Censored: Israel and Palestine

"Censored: Israel and Palestine" is a chapter excerpted from *Censored 2005*, a volume in a series produced by "Project Censored," a nationally respected media research organization whose mission is "To Tell The News That Didn't Make the News."

The strongly worded chapter documents a pervasive cover-up on Israel-Palestine in the American press. Weir describes her awakening on this issue, the founding of If Americans Knew, and the organization's subsequent studies into media coverage of the conflict.

Weir's groundbreaking work exposed a problem that exists across the political spectrum, and helped build a movement to address it.

In winter 2001, freelance journalist Alison Weir spent a month traveling alone throughout the West Bank and Gaza to see for herself what was going on. Upon her return she founded If Americans Knew, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing Americans with accurate information on this critical region.

She has given talks on Capitol Hill, at the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, the Asia Media Summit, and at numerous universities and other venues throughout the U.S. Her articles have been published in diverse anthologies, periodicals, and on numerous websites.

IF AMERICANS KNEW

Censored: Israel and Palestine



*In this chapter from the 2005 edition of Project Censored's yearly book revealing the biggest news stories that "didn't make the news," If Americans Knew executive director **Alison Weir** describes the history of Israel, its continuing violations of human rights, and the cover-up on this issue in the American press.*



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If Americans Knew Mission Statement

In a democracy, the ultimate responsibility for a nation's actions rests with its citizens. The top rung of government - the entity with the ultimate power of governance - is the asserted will of the people. Therefore, in any democracy, it is essential that its citizens be fully and accurately informed.

In the United States, currently the most powerful nation on earth, it is even more essential that its citizens receive complete and undistorted information on topics of importance, so that they may wield their extraordinary power with wisdom and intelligence.

Unfortunately, such information is not always forthcoming.

The mission of If Americans Knew is to inform and educate the American public on issues of major significance that are unreported, underreported, or misrepresented in the American media.

It is our belief that when Americans know the facts on a subject, they will, in the final analysis, act in accordance with morality, justice, and the best interests of their nation, and of the world. With insufficient information, or distorted information, they may do the precise opposite.

It is the mission of If Americans Knew to ensure that this does not happen - that the information on which Americans base their actions is complete, accurate, and undistorted by conscious or unconscious bias, by lies of either commission or omission, or by pressures exerted by powerful special interest groups. It is our goal to supply the information essential to those responsible for the actions of the strongest nation on earth - the American people.

Censored: Israel and Palestine

By Alison Weir

Founder and Executive Director of If Americans Knew
Excerpted from *Censored 2005: The Top 25 Censored Stories*
(Seven Stories Press; 2004)

The most monumental cover-up in media history may be the one I'm about to describe. In my entire experience with American journalism, I have never found anything as extreme, sustained, and omnipresent.

Three and a half years ago, when the current Palestinian uprising began, I started to look into Israel and Palestine. I had never paid much attention to this issue before and so – unlike many people – I knew I was completely uninformed about it. I had no idea that I was pulling a loose piece of thread that would steadily unravel, until nothing would ever be quite as it had been before.

When I listened to news reports on this issue, I noticed that I was hearing a great deal about Israelis and very little about Palestinians. I decided to go to the Internet to see what would turn up, and discovered international reports about Palestinian children being killed daily, often shot in the head, hundreds being injured, eyes being shot out.¹ And yet little of all this was appearing in NPR reports, the *New York Times*, or the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

There was also little historic background and context in the stories, so this, too, I began to fill in for myself, reading what has turned into a multitude of books on the history and other aspects of the conflict.² I attended presentations and read international reports.

The more I looked into all this, the more it seemed that I had stumbled

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onto a cover-up that quite possibly dwarfed anything I had seen before. My former husband had been one of the founders of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), an institution known for its powerful exposés. He and CIR have won numerous well-deserved awards from *Project Censored* from the very beginning of its creation. Nevertheless, the duration and violence of the injustice I was discovering, and the extent of its omission and misrepresentation – even in *Project Censored* itself, seemed unparalleled.

In February and March of 2001 I went to the Palestinian territories as a freelance reporter, traveling alone throughout Gaza and the West Bank. I saw tragedy and devastation far beyond what was being reported in the American media; I saw communities destroyed, ancient orchards razed, croplands plowed under. I saw children who had been shot in the stomach, in the back, in the head. I still see them.

I saw people convulsing and writhing in pain from a mysterious poison gas that had been lobbed at them; they said it felt like there were knives in their stomach.³ I talked to men who had been tortured.⁴

I watched as a mother wept for her small son, and I took pictures of his spilled blood. I watched a son grieve for his mother, killed on her way home from the market on a day that I was told was the Muslim equivalent of the day before Christmas, or Passover, and I thought of my own son, the same age.

I listened to old people who described the start of this holocaust – over fifty years ago, at the end of an earlier one. They described what it was like when three-quarters of your entire population is ethnically cleansed from their homes and land, children dying along the roadside while aircraft shell the fleeing families. They told of dozens of massacres of entire villages, and I've since read accounts by Israeli soldiers, published in Israeli publications, of how they raped the women, and then killed them, of how they used sticks to crush the skulls of children.⁵ I discovered the message sent by Menachem Begin, later elected Israeli prime minister, to troops following the massacre of Palestinians in one village, Deir Yassin:

“Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest. Convey my regards to all the commanders and soldiers. We shake your hands. We are all proud of the excellent leadership and the fighting spirit in this great attack...Tell the soldiers: you have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue this until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest.”⁶

Booklets available from If Americans Knew

The Origin of the Palestine-Israel Conflict	Do Palestinians Teach Their Children to Hate?
Rachel's Letters	The Information Blockade: The Prism Between Middle Eastern Reality and Americans
The Cost of Israel to the American People	Iraq, Palestine, and the Israel Lobby
American Media Miss the Boat	Israeli Attacks on the US Navy and Marines
Palestinian Right to Return and Repatriation	Las Cartas de Raquel en Español
Serving Two Flags: Neo-Cons, Israel and the Bush Administration	Being a Target: Reports from Gaza & 'Close your organization or die...'
Reflecting on our Relationship with Israel	A Rose by Another Name: The Bush Administration's Dual Loyalties
Living With the Holocaust: A Child of Holocaust Survivors Visits Palestine	The People Who Pushed for War
Censored: Israel and Palestine	Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel
Christians in the Holy Land	Christians Discriminated Against by Israel
Let Us Rethink Our 'Special Relationship' With Israel	Einstein's Letter to the New York Times
Special Report: Israel's Treatment of Americans	Jewish Defense League Unleashes Campaign of Violence in America
The Cost of Israel to U.S. Taxpayers	Life in a Palestinian Refugee Camp
The Israel Lobby and the Left: Uneasy Questions	Biased Thinktanks Dictate US Foreign Policy
Pressure on Campus: Interest groups successfully stifling academic discourse	Stealing Success Tel Aviv Style
	A War for Israel

39. Personal conversation with filmmaker Tom Hayes, Director of "People and the Land."
40. <http://www.hrw.org/un/chr59/israelot.htm>; <http://www.dci-pal.org/reports/dcireports.html>; http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/israel_and_occupied_territories/reports.do
41. "Human Genome Project Opens the Door to Ethnically Specific Bioweapons," #16
42. Mordechai Vanunu, see Mark Gaffney, *Dimona, the third temple? : the story behind the Vanunu revelation*, Amana Books, : Brattleboro, VT, 1989
43. Green, Stephen, *Living by the Sword*, pp. 193-218; <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0591/9105011.htm>; Neff, Donald, *Fifty Years of Israel*, pp. 279-287, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/1097/9710070.html> , Donald Neff, "Nixon Administration Ignores Saudi Warnings, Bringing On Oil Boycott," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Oct/Nov, 1997, pp. 70-72
44. <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/032486/860324012.html>; <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0689/8906021.htm>
45. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/pg-blankfort.html; <http://www.wrmea.com/aipac>; <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0198/9801065.htm>
46. Numerous excellent articles can be found at http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/neocons.html, Israeli media by the way, have covered this aspect openly, eg: *Ha'aretz*, Friday April 04, 2003: "The war in Iraq was conceived by 25 neoconservative intellectuals, most of them Jewish, who are pushing President Bush to change the course of history..."
47. Green, Stephen, "Serving Two Flags", *CounterPunch*, Feb. 28-29, 2004, <http://www.counterpunch.org/green02282004.html>
48. Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out*, Lawrence Hill Books, Chicago, 1989, pp. 295-314; *Democracy Now*, Thursday, April 24, 2003, "San Francisco Chronicle Fires Reporter for Attending Peace Protest," http://www.veteransforpeace.org/sf_chronicle_fires_042403.htm
49. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/about_us/death_threat.html
50. Phan Nguyen, "Mother Jones Smears Rachel Corrie: Specious Journalism in Defense of Killers," *CounterPunch*, Sept. 20, 2003 <http://www.counterpunch.org/nguyen09202003.html>. In contrast, *Harper's* magazine ran a number of Corrie's letters. These can be read in full at http://www.ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/rachelsletters.html
51. Palestine Monitor, "Palestinian Intifada Fact Sheet", http://www.palestinemonitor.org/new_web/factsheet_intifada.htm#Statistics%20for%20the%20Palestinian%20Intifada.

Censorship At Work

And I saw the cover-up. I saw how one of the most massive and brutal displacements of a people in modern times has largely been swept under the rug; how the continuing and ruthless methods used by a theocratic, exclusionary state⁷ to rid itself of people of the "wrong" religion/ethnicity are covered up. Let me describe how this censorship works.

A few days after the deaths of the little boy and of the mother I mentioned above, there was a suicide bombing in Israel. I went to a hotel in East Jerusalem and saw that the *New York Times* had published a front-page story about it.⁸

I wondered if the paper had run similar headlines about, or at least had mentioned, the Palestinian deaths in the days before, and I discovered that they had not. But I noticed that the story about the suicide bombing had at least contained some information about these preceding Palestinian deaths – one phrase each, in the second paragraph. Near the end of the story, full of extensive, graphic descriptions of the Israeli tragedies, I also saw that there were a few paragraphs about Israeli crowds beating random Palestinian Israelis to a pulp – one was almost killed – and chanting "Kill Arabs."

A few days later I was back in the San Francisco Bay Area, and went to the library to see how the *San Francisco Chronicle* had covered these events. (I had emailed them on-the-scene reports, incidentally, about both Palestinian deaths.) I noticed that this paper, also, had neglected these deaths at the time. It had, however, carried the *New York Times* report about the suicide bombing that had followed. When I looked at the *S.F. Chronicle's* version of this report, however, I was astounded: someone had surgically excised the sentences near the top of the story telling of the Israeli killing of a nine-year-old Palestinian boy and a mother of three. The person had also deleted all information about the Israeli mob violence.

Since that time I've monitored the media closely, and investigated numerous similar incidents, in an attempt to discover the nuts and bolts of obfuscation on Israel.

Not long ago Admiral Thomas Moorer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, passed away. For many years Moorer, a four-star admiral and World War II hero, had strongly condemned Israel's 1967 attack on the USS Liberty⁹, a virtually unarmed US Navy intelligence ship. Israeli forces had killed 34 American servicemen and injured 172; stretcher-bearers were

machine-gunned and lifeboats were shot out of the water. In addition, Moorer had been outraged at the U.S. government's abandonment of this crew. Following the attack, crew members, surrounded by blood and body parts, had been ordered by the government not to speak to anyone about what had just been done to them, and were dispersed to new postings around the world. One critically injured crewman who had been evacuated to a hospital in Germany woke up to find military policemen on either side of him, and an identity band on his wrist with someone else's name on it.¹⁰

Moorer had long called for an investigation of all this. Last fall, in fact, he had chaired an independent commission on this incident, reading a report on Capitol Hill that said, among other things: "Israel committed acts of murder against American servicemen and an act of war against the United States."¹¹ Another admiral – who had been the head of the Navy's legal branch – read a just-released affidavit by the officer who had been the chief attorney to the quickie Naval court of inquiry set up by Admiral John S. McCain, Jr. (Sen. John McCain's father) to look into the attack. This affidavit revealed that there had been a cover-up at the presidential level – that Pres. Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had ordered the court to find, despite all evidence to the contrary, Israel innocent of culpability.¹²

The story of the commission's unprecedented findings died after one day of coverage. Despite an excellent AP report on it, a search of 300 newspapers only turned up 10 that had printed it.

A few months later Moorer died. The first quick AP obituary that came out about him contained one sentence about the Israeli attack. It was minimal, but present. Within a few hours a longer obit came out, containing a great deal of additional information about Moorer. But the sentence on the Israeli attack had been taken out.

I have phoned AP many times, asking them why information on the USS Liberty was removed from the obituary, and who removed it. Each time, the person I reached agreed that the Liberty information was important, and told me they would get back to me. I'm still waiting.

I'll discuss just four more telling examples. While such groups as Amnesty International have condemned Israel for its routine torture of Palestinian prisoners for decades¹³, coverage of such abuse virtually never appears in American media.

In October of 2002¹⁴ I received email reports of a Palestinian farmer who had been brutally tortured by Israeli settlers. I felt this was an important

ed in the American media. Our primary area of focus at this time is Israel/Palestine.

26. All four of our studies completed so far can be found online at http://www.ifamericansknew.org/media/report_cards.html
27. Information about Israeli and Palestinian children killed in the conflict is available online at <http://www.rememberthesechildren.org>
28. <http://www.btselem.org>
29. Ackerman, Seth, "The Illusion of Balance: NPR's coverage of Mideast deaths doesn't match reality", *Extra!*, November/December 2001, <http://www.fair.org/extra/0111/npr-mideast.html>
30. The second study is online at <http://www.ifamericansknew.org/media/merc2/report.html>
31. Retro Poll of September/October 2002, online at http://www.retopoll.org/results_poll_01.htm
32. Richard Curtiss, "The Cost of Israel to US Taxpayers, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Dec. '97, pp 43-45, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/1297/9712043.html>
33. There are numerous excellent histories that cover this period; two are *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, Pluto Press, and *Nur Masalha, Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*, The Institute for Palestine Studies: Washington D.C., 1992. A book list can be found at http://www.ifamericansknew.org/about_us/materials.html#books
34. <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0794/9407072.htm>
35. Desmond Tutu & Ian Urbina, "Against Israeli Apartheid," *International Herald Tribune*, 07/02
36. Mallison, Sally V. and W. Thomas, *Armed Conflict in Lebanon 1982: Humanitarian Law in a Real World Setting*, American Educational Trust.
37. McDowall, David, *Palestine and Israel: The Uprising and Beyond*, University of California Press (1989): "Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, shifted away from firearms, telling his soldiers to use 'might, power, and beatings'... Soldiers armed with cudgels beat up those they could lay their hands on regardless of whether they were demonstrators or not, breaking into homes by day and night, dragging men and women, young and old, from their beds to beat them. At Gaza's Shifa Hospital 200 people were treated during the first five days of the new policy, most of them suffering from broken elbows and knees. Three had fractured skulls...A government official explained: 'A detainee sent to prison will be freed in 18 days... but if soldiers break his hand, he won't be able to throw stones for a month and a half.'"
38. For example, "People and the Land", Director: Tom Hayes; "Palestine is Still the Issue", Director: John Pilger.

- example, the *Houston Chronicle* carried Sontag's story under the headline: "Palestinian suicide bomber kills 3 Israelis: Attack gladdens West Bank mourners as conflict grows"
9. For more information about the attack on the *Liberty*, visit http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/ussliberty.html
 10. *Assault on the Liberty* (Random House 1980; Ballantine 1986; Reintree Press 2002), <http://www.ussliberty.org>.
 11. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/ul-commfindings.html
 12. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/ul-boston.html;
<http://www.freewebs.com/gidusko/boston>
 13. Neve Gordon & Ruchama Marton, *Torture: Human Rights, Medical Ethics and the Case of Israel*, Zed Books, London; See for example, Amnesty International Report, "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Mass detention in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions", May 23, 2002, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde150742002>.
 14. <http://www.flashpoints.net/index-2002-10-30.html>
 15. For first-hand reports, visit <http://www.palsolidarity.org>, <http://www.hearpalestine.org>, or <http://www.cpt.org/hebron/hebron.php>
 16. *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 10, 1999, A20
 17. See for example, Amnesty International Report, "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Mass detention in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions", May 23, 2002, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde150742002>
 18. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/01/29/prisoner.exchange>
 19. "Hizb Allah leader says Israel tortured him", Al Jazeera, January 27, 2004, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/EC01FA53-F114-44AF-89F9-75903CB8008F.htm>; Gutman, Matthew and Tovah Lazaroff, "Dirani to Testify on Rape Charges," *Jerusalem Post*, Jan 27, 2004
 20. For example: "Facility 1391: Israel's Secret Prison," *UK Guardian*, Nov. 14, 2003 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,1084796,00.html>; "Lebanese group calls on ICRC to prevent Israeli torture in jails," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, March 13, 2000
 21. Enav, Peter, Associated Press, "Militant says he was abused by Israel", Jan. 27, 2004.
 22. "Israel Surrenders A Bargaining Chip," *Washington Post*, April 6, 2000, p. 1
 23. Jerri Bird, "Arab-Americans in Israel: What 'Special Relationship'?", June 2002, <http://www.partnersforpeace.org/inmedia/db200206010/>
 24. <http://www.afsa.org/fsj/2002.cfm>
 25. If Americans Knew is dedicated to providing full and accurate information to the American public on topics of importance that are underreported or misreport-

story, and decided to check it out. I phoned the American on the scene who had sent out the report and asked for more information. He filled in the gruesome details, sent me photos, and gave me the name and address of the hospital where the victim was being treated. I then phoned the *S.F. Chronicle* and gave the foreign desk all the information I had gathered. I suggested that they send one of their correspondents in the area to cover it, since although *Chronicle* reporters always reside in Israel, they do occasionally visit the Palestinian Territories.

No word, however, ever appeared of this incident in the *Chronicle*.¹⁵ In fact, a search of the *Chronicle* looking for the words "torture" and "Israel" in lead paragraphs turned up only one article in the past 10 years: an editorial in 1999 that opined: "Israel's Supreme Court was courageous, idealistic and absolutely right to outlaw torture as an interrogation technique by the Shin Bet security force."¹⁶ Unfortunately, Israeli torture did not end after this decision.¹⁷

Earlier this year, American media reported prominently on a prisoner swap in which an Israeli businessman imprisoned by Lebanon was traded for three Lebanese resistance leaders and a few hundred Palestinians (who had been scheduled for release within a few months anyway). Earlier news stories had reported that the Israeli had been tortured in Lebanon, but, happily, upon his release the man stated that he had been treated well by his captors.¹⁸

On the other hand, I learned through Al-Jazeera that one of the Lebanese leaders just released had, two days before, testified for 10 hours in an Israeli court describing gruesome sexual abuse by Israeli prison guards, his claims validated by a member of the International Red Cross.¹⁹ (Incidentally, I subsequently saw that accounts of this abuse had been reported in the foreign press for years²⁰).

I was in Washington DC at the time, and noticed that there had been no mention of any of this in the *Washington Post*, despite extensive coverage of the swap. I then did a search of the *Post* website, typing in "Mustafa Dirani" and "torture," and was surprised to find a full, detailed report on it by Peter Enav of AP.²¹ In other words, the *Washington Post* had the information on Dirani, the story was on their website, but they had not printed a word of it in the newspaper. (And you only found it on the website if you knew to look for it.)

I phoned the *Post* and was referred to the editor responsible for foreign news. I asked why the paper had not contained information about Dirani's

testimony and corroborating statements by others. He replied that they were waiting to look into it further, and would probably cover it sometime in the future. I pointed out that alleged torture of an Israeli – since proved to be false – had been printed, and asked, unsuccessfully, for an explanation of this double standard in news coverage. To date, this projected coverage has still not come.

In fact, index searches revealed that while many newspapers had covered the prisoner swap extensively, and a number of newspapers around the country had carried the report of Dirani's abuse buried on their websites somewhere, I could find only nine newspapers that had printed these serious allegations of Israeli torture of a major Lebanese figure – interestingly, most of them local papers.

Moreover, in my searches I also came across the fact that Dirani's young nephew Ghassan had been imprisoned by Israel for ten years. Israel had never contended that Ghassan was even political, much less a member of any resistance groups; he was simply held as a bargaining chip. At some point he had apparently suffered a complete mental breakdown, and was transferred to a psychiatric prison. Finally, he was released to his family in Lebanon, his mind, reportedly, gone. All of this, also, was unmentioned in American coverage of the prisoner swap.²²

In June 2002, *Foreign Service Journal* published what should have been an explosive exposé on Israel's torture of American citizens.²³ Yet, when I went to the journal's website, I could not find the article. In fact, there was no mention that the issue even contained such a piece. I phoned the editor, and discovered that they had decided it was too controversial to put on their website. Today, the website does mention the article (in an extremely expurgated fashion; minus the word torture, for example), but there is still no link to the actual report.²⁴ In addition, I have not been able to find a single American news source that even mentioned this thoroughly documented report.

Finally, in the midst of the unfolding scandal about torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at Abu-Ghraib, two international human rights organizations released findings that 374 Palestinian teenagers imprisoned by Israel were being treated with similar cruelty. There was a short AP story on the report. It was sent to Britain, Europe, Africa, India, and Asia. It was not, however, sent to American newspapers. Phone calls to AP asking why it was deemed newsworthy in the rest of the world but not in the United States went unanswered.

Endnotes

1. A few of the best online sources include Al Jazeera; Reports by Robert Fisk and Phil Reeves in the London Independent; The UK Guardian; The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs; The Palestinian Red Crescent Society; and B'Tselem. Regarding eye injuries, an example is: "By May 2001, there were already two hundred people treated for eye wounds at St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem alone." Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine*, Seven Stories Press, New York, p. 115
2. Some of the best books I have read are listed at the end of the article and online at http://www.ifamericansknew.org/about_us/materials.html#books
3. For more information about the nerve gas being used, see Brooks, James, "The Israeli Poison Gas Attacks: A preliminary investigation", *Media Monitors Network*, January 8, 2003, <http://www.mediamonitors.net/jamesbrooks2.html>
4. There are numerous human rights reports on Israeli torture, see for example, "Israel Increases Its Use of Torture Practices Among Palestinian Prisoners", A Report Issued by the Palestinian Prisoner Society, June 21, 2002, <http://www.ppsmo.org/e-website/Reports/Israeli%20Torture%20July%202002.htm>
5. *Davar*, June 9, 1979: Testimony of an Israeli soldier who participated in the massacre at al Duwayma Village on Oct. 29, 1948: "[they] killed between 80 to 100 Arabs, women and children. To kill the children they fractured their heads with sticks. There was not one house without corpses. The men and women of the villages were pushed into houses without food or water. Then the saboteurs came to dynamite the houses. One commander ordered a soldier to bring two women into a house he was about to blow up ... Another soldier prided himself upon having raped an Arab woman before shooting her to death. Another Arab woman with her newborn baby was made to clean the place for a couple of days, and then they shot her and the baby. Educated and well-mannered commanders who were considered "good guys"... became base murderers, and this not in the storm of battle, but as a method of expulsion and extermination. The fewer the Arabs who remained, the better." For additional information on Israel's beginnings: Masalha, Nur, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*, The Institute for Palestine Studies: Washington D.C., 1992.
6. Ball, George W. and Douglas B. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present*, W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 1992, p. 29.
7. See for example, Amir S Cheshin., Bill Hutman, and Avi Melamed, *Separate and Unequal: The Inside Story of Israeli Rule in East Jerusalem*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1999, and David McDowall, *Palestine and Israel*, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 123-145
8. Deborah Sontag, "Suicide Bomber Kills 3 Israelis," *New York Times*, March 5, 2001; it's interesting to see how this situation was reported elsewhere; for

**Un-Censoring:
Some Recommended Reading on Israel-Palestine**

Fallen Pillars: US Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945

by Donald Neff

Deliberate Deceptions

by Paul Findley

Perceptions of Palestine

by Kathleen Christison

Fifty Years of Israel

by Donald Neff

Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel

by Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky

Sharing the Land of Canaan

Mazin B. Qumsiyeh

Assault on the Liberty

by James Ennes

(First-hand account of Israel's attack on US Navy ship)

Journey to Jerusalem

Grace Halsell

Expulsion of the Palestinians

Nur Masalha

They Dare to Speak Out

Paul Findley

The Lobby

Edward Tivnan

The Passionate Attachment

George W. Ball, Douglas Ball

Samed

Raja Shehadeh

Zealots for Zion: Inside Israel's West Bank Settlement Movement

by Robert Friedman

The New Intifada

edited by Roane Carey

Fateful Triangle

Noam Chomsky

Media Studies

Soon after my visit to the occupied territories I founded an organization called *If Americans Knew*²⁵ to monitor the media and to provide Americans with accurate information on this topic. Two years ago, prompted by such anecdotal evidence of massive omission, *If Americans Knew* began conducting statistical case studies on coverage of Israel and Palestine. We chose categories that would be universally acknowledged as significant and as immune as possible from subjective interpretation. We recorded the number of deaths of both Palestinians and Israelis mentioned in headlines, then compared the percentages of overall deaths that were covered.²⁶

Our findings are staggering.

We discovered, for example, that the *San Francisco Chronicle* had prominently covered 150 percent of Israeli children's deaths—i.e., many of the deaths were the subject of more than one headline in the paper—and five percent of Palestinian ones. In other words, Palestinian deaths were rarely accorded headline coverage even once.

In the first three and a half months of the current Palestinian uprising against Israel's continuing confiscation of Palestinian land and suppression of human rights, Israeli forces killed 84 Palestinian children. The largest single cause of their deaths was gunfire to the head.²⁷ During this period, not one Israeli child was killed. Not one suicide bombing against Israelis occurred.²⁸

Of these 84 Palestinian children, only one received headline coverage in the *Chronicle* – Mohammed al-Durra, the little boy whose murder while he was cowering with his father was recorded for all the world to see by a French TV crew.

Was the *Chronicle* alone in such unbalanced news coverage?

No. A study of National Public Radio that Seth Ackerman²⁹ conducted for Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) showed that NPR had reported on 89 percent of Israeli children's deaths and 20 percent of Palestinian ones. In other words, NPR, which has been accused of being "pro-Palestinian," reported Israeli deaths at a rate four and a half times greater than Palestinian deaths.

Two studies we conducted of the *San Jose Mercury News* – for a total of twelve months of data – also revealed enormous distortion in coverage. For example, we discovered that front-page headline coverage of all deaths

(adults and children) had so emphasized Israeli deaths over Palestinian ones that the newspaper had, in effect, reversed reality – and then widened the gap. While 313 Israelis and 884 Palestinians had been killed during this period, *Mercury News* front-page headlines had reported on 225 Israeli deaths, and only 34 Palestinian ones – 72 percent of Israeli deaths and 4 percent of Palestinian ones.³⁰

What do these case studies tell us about American coverage in general? A great deal.

Let us imagine what would have happened if a newspaper's headlines had reported the World Series backwards – that the score had been reversed, the winning team declared the loser. The paper would have been the laughingstock of the country; late-night comics around the nation would have had a field day.

Yet, here was an equivalent error in a situation involving life and death, literally, and virtually no one noticed. Why? The logical conclusion is that the entire environment of news most people were accessing – television, radio, magazines – communicated similar inversion.

As a result, the public is staggeringly misinformed. During the current intifada, Palestinian children were being killed – often shot in the head – day after day, week after week, month after month, before a single Israeli child's death. Yet a survey taken later that year showed that 93 percent of the respondents either had no idea which children had died first, or believed them to be Israeli.³¹ And this despite ample coverage of the conflict in general: the *Chronicle*, for example, ran over 250 stories on Israel and Palestine during this period.

Also omitted was information on US tax money to Israel: well over \$10 million per day – more than to all of sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean put together.³² Our study showed that in six months of extensive reporting on Israel, the *Chronicle* had never even once reported the total amount of US money being sent to Israel.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg of omission on this issue.

Let us look at *Project Censored*, itself – a highly respected media-monitoring institution intent on bringing attention to critical information not covered by the corporate media. Each year it screens thousands of articles in hundreds of journals, drawing on the participation of a long list of experts. It has helped publicize profoundly valuable information on a wide variety of topics, with particular sensitivity to injustice, racism, and the plight of oppressed populations.

James Ennes, for being the first to gather and expose the story of the USS Liberty and its cover-up; Andrew Killgore, for his numerous writings and his historic role, with Richard Curtiss, in founding and keeping alive the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs and the American Educational Trust book publishing; Paul Findley, for ground-shaking research on the Israel lobby and the injustice being done to Palestinians and Muslims; Stephen Green, for his meticulous investigative reporting on Israeli spying and arms procurement; Alfred Lillienthal, for his early and principled exposes of Israel; and, especially, Donald Neff, for his brilliant and comprehensive books on all aspects of Israel, Palestine, and the core injustice at the center of the Middle East.

In memoriam awards should go to Edward Said, who broke through this censorship, and to Grace Halsell and Elmer Berger, who sadly did not. I am at a loss to describe the tribute that should go to 23-year-old Rachel Corrie, whose life and death, as well as whose words, have been largely erased or distorted in media discourse on Israel and Palestine – including by some publications once considered progressive, such as *Mother Jones*.³⁰

Next, I hope future editions of *Project Censored* will include work by some of the other superb writers and reporters on this topic today: Ali Abunimah, Naseer Aruri, Dennis Bernstein, Jerri Bird, Jeff Blankfort, Lenni Brenner, Alexander Cockburn, Kathleen Christison, Norman Finkelstein, Delinda Hanley, Rashid Khalidi, Janet McMahon, Rachele Marshall, Nur Masalha, Nigel Parry, Jason Vest, Ahmed Yousef, Mazin Qumsiyeh, Charlie Reese, and the many others deserving of recognition. I apologize for those I'm forgetting to mention and I hope others will add to this list. (I have not included here foreign journalists of note, because it is my understanding that *Project Censored* concentrates on censorship inside the U.S.)

Finally, we must help to end the censorship of the ongoing reports by Palestinian and international journalists, including Israeli ones, who report at great risk from inside the Palestinian territories (in the past four years twelve journalists have been killed there and 295 wounded³¹), as well as by writers from such organizations as Christian Peacemaker Teams and the International Solidarity Movement, and, especially, from among the Palestinian population itself, who are daily sending out searing first-hand accounts from the very center of the violence.

May they all survive.

known for its ethical actions against censorship, to join us in activities regarding our *Chronicle* and *Mercury-News* studies, the reaction was disappointing. CIR, we were told, was in the midst of negotiating with the *Chronicle* on some future projects. (We also later noticed that David Yarnold, Executive Editor of the *Mercury-News*, is on the CIR advisory board.) When we contacted Media Alliance about co-sponsoring a forum on our studies, a project that we had thought would mesh well with the organization's progressive philosophy, our phone calls went unreturned.

When we asked Peace Action why their brochures about nuclear weapons omitted any mention of Israel's large arsenal of such weapons, we were told that discussing Israel would interfere with the group's ability to lobby Congressman Tom Lantos (one of Israel's most fervent Capitol Hill supporters and a major promoter of both Iraq wars).

These are not isolated incidents.

All of the above organizations – and many others with equally dubious records on Palestine – have produced profoundly important, often courageous, work. Why has there so often been a “blind spot” on Israel?

I suspect that the causes are complicated and multi-factorial. I suspect that I and others like me – who remained ignorant and negligent on this issue for so long – bear much of the guilt. I suspect that others whose emotional ties to Israel served as blinders on this subject share in our culpability. I suspect that still others who knew the truth and refused to speak of it, or who participated in its cover-up, bear a significant portion of this awful responsibility. I suspect that the career damage⁴⁸ and death threats⁴⁹ that often result when one begins to speak out on this issue played a part.

Whatever the cause, it is time that we all, finally and resoundingly, move forward. It is time that we bring to an end what we have all helped to perpetuate.

Perhaps one of the places we can start is by recognizing and disseminating the immense body of work created through the years by journalists diligently digging up the still mostly-buried facts on Israel and Palestine. Many of these people are nearing the end of their careers, and it is time we thanked them, and joined in their efforts.

I propose a special Lifetime Most Censored Award, and that among the first to receive it be the following writers whose extraordinary work has continually been censored out of American discourse on the Middle East: (in alphabetical order) Richard Curtiss, for his massive research into all aspects of Israel and Palestine, in particular on U.S. aid to Israel and Israeli PACs;

Yet, it has largely missed one of the longest and most egregious cases of oppression of the 20th (and now 21st) century.

Over fifty years ago, the massive dispossession of almost an entire indigenous population was carried out by a colonial population pursuing ethnic “purity”³³ – a purity Muslim and Christian Palestinians did not fit into. Israeli writer Yshar Snmilasky described this beginning: “We came, shot, burned, blew up, pushed and exiled... will the walls not scream in the ears of those who will live in this village?”³⁴

In 1967 this nation then overran the small remnants of land left to the indigenous population, and placed the inhabitants under brutal military occupation. In 1982 this apartheid nation³⁵ invaded yet another country in its quest to prevent the original inhabitants of what was now Israel from returning to their land. Some 20,000 men, women, and children in Lebanon were killed, and hundreds of thousands injured – through the illegal use of American-made weapons. One American physician wrote at the time that she had never before seen “such hideous injuries.” In one day, 1,000 mangled limbs were amputated.³⁶

In 1987 there was more violence, when the virtually unarmed indigenous population in the occupied territories attempted to rise up against their occupiers and died at the rate of 7 per every one Israeli death. The Palestinian death rate would have been higher, but the occupation forces chose a less reported form of violence to subdue the rebels – soldiers held them down and broke their bones. In the first three days of this new strategy, 197 people were treated for fractures at one hospital in Gaza alone.³⁷ The policy was implemented by Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli leader later known as a “peacemaker” before being assassinated by a Jewish extremist. One episode was caught on film, and can be viewed in various documentaries.³⁸ The Israeli cameraman was later killed by Israeli forces.³⁹

Through this entire period there was an ongoing campaign to break the indigenous people's spirit. Tens of thousands were incarcerated without recourse to judge and jury. Tens of thousands were tortured, humiliated, maimed. Homes were destroyed by the thousands, cropland plowed under and replaced with concrete colonies from which the ancestral owners of the land were to be eternally excluded. Families were ripped apart, sons deported, schools closed.⁴⁰

And in its first 20 years, *Project Censored* made no mention of any of this – of this profoundly covered-up conflict, of these people, of this oppression. The longest-standing military occupation of modern times – unmentioned.

The largest refugee population in today's world (an estimated 8 million), and the longest dispossessed – unmentioned.

Actually, *Project Censored* carried one story on Israel during this period – an exposé of its support of oppression in Central America. Then finally, in 2001, in *Project Censored's* 25th anniversary edition, there was notice of Israel's oppression of Palestinians – it was mentioned in the introduction and in a story about ethnically specific bioweapons.⁴¹

Astoundingly, the first time that a topic pertaining to Israel's treatment of Palestinians made it onto the *Project Censored* list was just last year. After including a story about U.S. tax money to Colombia in the previous volume – the #3 choice of that year – *Project Censored* decided to also cover U.S. tax money to Israel – a vastly larger amount, that has been dispensed far longer. This story was #24. Since many reports about *Project Censored* list only the top ten stories, this low rating meant that this story went widely unmentioned.

Such long neglect of this issue is startling, particularly given the subject matter that *Project Censored* regularly addressed, and the numerous powerful exposés on Israel related to these subjects that were ignored by the mainstream press – stories that seemed right up the *Project Censored* alley.

For example, *Project Censored* has done an excellent job of covering nuclear power and proliferation. Yet, through all these years there was no mention – ever – of Israel's possession of hundreds of nuclear weapons; no mention of the young technician who blew the whistle on their nuclear weapons program, and was then kidnapped by Israel, brought back for a kangaroo trial under grotesque conditions and held in solitary confinement in a cell two meters by three meters for over 12 of his 18 years of incarceration.⁴²

Similarly, *Project Censored* promoted important articles about Iran-Contra and on the oil embargo that shot oil prices through the roof and threw thousands out of work. Yet, there was no mention of the fundamental role played by Israel in both events.⁴³

Project Censored highlighted a moving and powerful report on the "Death of a Nation: The Tragedy of Transkei" in South Africa, yet there was no such article about the death of Palestine, and the various strategies being

implemented to expel its remaining inhabitants.⁴⁴

While *Project Censored* contained valuable information on "The Most Powerful Secret Lobby in Washington" (the Business Roundtable), there was no mention of the pro-Israel lobby that has been at the forefront of influencing US foreign policy in the Middle East for over half a century.⁴⁵

If space permitted, this list would go on and on.

Even last year, after *Project Censored* had begun to discover Palestine, the book's top censored story of the year, which exposed the neoconservatives' role behind the attack on Iraq, astonishingly omitted any mention whatsoever of these neoconservatives' close, long-term ties to Israel and the documented record of their work on its behalf.⁴⁶ Similarly, there was no mention

of what should have been an award-winning exposé on Israeli torture of American citizens that came out the same year.

Finally, this year, a story revealing that top U.S. governmental officials have been investigated by U.S. intelligence agencies for decades for spying for a foreign government – a story that should have produced reverberations throughout the country, resulting in Congressional inquiries and calls for special prosecutors⁴⁷ – was not only unmentioned by the mainstream media, it was missed by *Project Censored* and its array of experts as well. The foreign government was Israel.

In other words, while the corporate media was ignoring the slaughter, torture, and dispossession of

Palestinians, while it was ignoring a presidential cover-up that dwarfed Watergate in its significance, while it was ignoring the attempts of abandoned vets to get recourse from their government, while it was ignoring multitudes of stories of potentially world-shaking importance about Israel and its actions, *Project Censored* was, too.

I don't know why or how this has been happening, but I suspect that *Project Censored's* omission of this issue is largely a reflection of what has been going on throughout much of the progressive press – and community – for many years. A search of the Center for Investigative Reporting's website, for example, reveals only two stories, 25 years apart, about Israel or Palestine – both by the same author.

When we approached CIR and Media Alliance, another organization

Let us look at Project Censored, itself – a highly respected media-monitoring institution intent on bringing attention to critical information not covered by the corporate media...Yet, it has largely missed one of the longest and most egregious cases of oppression of the 20th (and now 21st) century.