

Media Monitoring Guide

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The Importance of Media Monitoring

The media is a very powerful industry and reports on the Middle East conflict go a long way in shaping and moulding public opinion on the issue. Israel is very sensitive to what it considers negative reporting on its role in the conflict and has increasingly marginalized news agencies that criticize it. For example, one of the most well-respected British agencies, the BBC, was barred from Israeli press conferences in the summer of 2003 due to the airing of a documentary on Israel's weapons of mass destruction.

Due to this, many reporters are reluctant to report on the conflict in an objective manner and often simply peddle the statements made in official Israeli reports, regardless of how far from the truth it may be. For example, when American peace activist Rachel Corrie was run over and killed by an Israeli bulldozer, despite eye-witness and even photographic evidence showing it was a deliberate act of murder (Rachel had a luminous fluorescent jacket on and was shouting through a loud-speaker), the official Israeli story was that the bulldozer driver did not see her. This official version was carried forward by many reporters.

In order to redress this balance, it is essential for you to monitor the media, whether broadcast or print, and make contact with them when the need arises to correct bias or inaccuracies. This is a simple and easy way to get active in the fight against Zionist propaganda and lies in the Middle East conflict.

There are many different ways to make contact, including a letter, email, fax and telephone calls. When writing a response, you need to decide if you to make the letter one that is printable, or one that is intended solely for the journalist/ producer. The styles of letter would differ greatly depending on this, and tips can be found further below.

Options for Media Monitoring:

1. None of us can read or listen to everything, but you can pick one or two sources and try to monitor them consistently. That way, you can become familiar with reporting patterns and the work of individual reporters over time, and have a much stronger case for your arguments. This knowledge will also provide you with a better basis to establish a dialogue with the people who you are trying to influence.

- For example, you can choose one broadsheet (e.g. The Times) and one daily television news programme (e.g. Five News at 7pm) and monitor them on a daily or weekly basis.

2. As a general rule, you can be critical and alert when watching TV or listening to the radio or when you pick up a newspaper. If there is anything that strikes you as bias, unfair, or even fair and accurate, contact the station/paper and let them know. This can be done via the telephone, fax, email or letters.

3. If you have more time to spare, pick 3 media sources each day or week, e.g. the Times, ITV News and Radio 5. Review their coverage of the conflict and contact them on a regular basis in support or opposition of their reporting.

4. Monitor the media on an ad-hoc basis when you are confronted by articles / broadcasts that are grossly unfair, bias or inaccurate, or on the other hand, very well researched and written objectively.

Media monitoring does not need to take a lot of time, and you can set yourself achievable targets such as one letter/ email/ phone call a week. Remember, it takes only 12 complaints for investigations to be launched by some media sources. Supporters of the Israeli brutal Zionist policies are well-ahead in media monitoring and watch media sources like hawks. We need to challenge them.

Tips for Media Monitoring

1. Become an analyst. For every broadcast/ article, ask yourself:

- * What are the positives and negatives?
- * Is it fair and balanced, or bias?
- * Is the Israeli and Palestinian viewpoint represented?

2. Before commencing action, ask yourself:

- * What would I change to make it more balanced/ fair?
- * What response would I like to see from the editor or journalist?
- * What information can I offer to help balance this article/report?

3. Once you have decided that an article or report is biased or inaccurate, and you know what you want to say and what responses you would like, you can act on that in one of the following ways:

- * Call the station, editor or journalist responsible for the article. Ensure you are armed with the name of the author/producer, title and date, and rehearse what you want to say.
 - **Be polite and talk to them as you would wish to be spoken to.** If you rant and rave, they will dismiss you as a nutcase and do nothing. If you express your opinion effectively and politely, they will be forced to take notice.
 - Argue factually and calmly and make sure you know your information well.
 - Try to quote from the article to validate your points.
 - * When writing letters, always include as a heading the title of the article or broadcast, and the name of the writer/ producer. Also, give brief details of the content to jog the editors' memory. Remember that the aim is to correct bias and inaccuracies, not simply to admonish.
4. Don't always complain. Media Monitoring applies just as much to positive and balanced articles. If you send letters or make phone calls in praise of balanced reporting, this will encourage more of the same.
 5. Remember, people generally love to be praised, and praising their work should evoke a more positive response, and signify that you are making objective comments rather than having a personal attack at the journalist. Therefore, even where you disagree with what has been reported, be prepared to praise aspects that you agreed with or thought of as positive.
 6. Once you have made your point, make clear what further action you would like, e.g. politely ask for apologies/retractions or rebuttals as appropriate.
 - If you can offer the journalist an authentic source of information, then do so. This could open an avenue for dialogue for you, and will certainly ensure the journalist has no defence in the future for similar flawed reporting.

Positive Aspects of Media Monitoring

1. Reading unfair and imbalanced reports can create a great deal of frustration and anger, and writing emails or letters is a good way of relieving that frustration.
2. Published letters reach a wide audience, and there's a great sense of satisfaction from seeing your name in print.
3. Although only a tiny percentage of letters are printed, unpublished letters are all read and sent on to the journalist/ producer and therefore can still have an effect.
4. If a large number of letters are sent on the same issue, it increases the chances of at least one or two being published, and gives the newspaper or journalist an indication of the strength of their readers' opinion on the issue at hand.
5. Never underestimate the importance of writing to editors and journalists if you have no intention of getting your letter published. More often than not, you will get a reply.

Suggestions for More Effective Media Monitoring and Broadening Understanding

1. Read foreign media. Become familiar with them and use them to contrast with UK coverage. Do your research. Be accurate and precise. Don't say something is a fact unless you are sure (be particularly careful with 'facts' from Internet sources). If you are not sure about a claim that you have read or heard, check different types of sources. You are always much more effective if you can show you command the facts.

2. Always be accurate. Quote people **PRECISELY** and **ACCURATELY**. Keep a pen and paper near the radio or television. Cite your sources and the date, time and individuals responsible for reports if possible. Remember, your credibility is a valuable asset.

3. If you represent a group, you can ask for a meeting with a newspaper's editorial board. Before going to such a meeting, carefully research the newspaper's editorial policy and reporting and be equipped to point to both positive and negative elements.

4. If you are writing a letter for publication you must be concise and to the point. If you are writing to a journalist and the letter is supposed to educate him or her, then you can afford to make it longer and include more information.

5. Become a source. The vast majority of journalists are decent people. They may not be experts on the issue you are interested in, and they rely on the information their sources give them, so it pays to become a source of timely and reliable information and analysis. Provide information in moderate doses. If you bombard the journalist with lengthy e-mails of articles you find fascinating, he or she is unlikely to read them. Always inform reporters of local events that could educate them. Once you establish a record and some credibility, journalists will begin to turn to you to discuss ideas, or even ask for quotes and interviews.

6. Develop networks. Share your letters with interested friends and fellow activists. This will encourage others to follow your example, and will help others to become more critical and astute consumers of news.

Guidelines for Writing Letters to be Published

1. **Accuracy** - ensure that your information is correct. We demand it of the journalists and should therefore demand it of ourselves. Where possible, support your arguments factually.
2. **Timing** - the speedier the response, the more chance it will get published. For example, with daily broadsheets, unless letters are received by mid-morning on the day of publishing, it is unlikely that they will be printed.
3. **Brief** - remember, the shorter the better, as many newspapers receive hundreds of letters a day and journalists are very busy. It may help to focus on one major point. Also, make your main point as early on in the letter as possible, as editors will tend to cut the end of a letter if they are running short of space - make this easier for them. If possible, try to make your letter one simple paragraph of no more than 7 lines in size 12 Times New Roman font.
4. **Clear** - all letters must make sense. Also remember that whilst you may know a great deal about a subject, maybe not all the newspaper readers will so include brief and succinct explanations where necessary. Punctuate your letter properly and use correct grammar.
5. **Personal** - often letters are more likely to be published if they contain personal knowledge or experience.
6. **Constructive** - remember to praise coverage that you appreciate as well as criticise or correct that which you dislike.
7. **Polite** - newspapers will not publish letters, and journalists will not reply to them, if they are offensive. Be polite.

Misc. Practical Points

1. If you are hoping to have your letter published then label it "For Publication". If you don't know exactly who to write to, address your letter to "The Editor".
2. **You must include** your full name, address, and phone number. Include a note after your signature if you do not want the newspaper or media outlet to publish these details.
3. Refer **EXPLICITLY** to the reason that you wrote (the article/ letter/ column/ editorial) and the date. e.g. "In your editorial 'Life Under Fire' of 1 April 2001 ..." If you are sending an e-mail, you may also want to give the link to the relevant article or area of the site at the end of your letter to make it easier for the journalist.
4. You may want to write to individual journalists to address specific concerns or to congratulate them. Personal e-mail addresses can be guessed from their organisation's style: for example, Alan Philps at the Daily Telegraph can be contacted at alan.philps@telegraph.co.uk. It is usually a good idea to copy to the relevant editor in cases where you want to say "Thank You".
5. Speak in your own name only unless you really are a designated authority on behalf of others. Letters are most effective when made to express your own opinions and to correct the mistakes you have observed yourself. Editors do not take kindly to what may be seen as people hiding behind other groups, or effectively advertising on behalf of organisations. If you want to let friends or acquaintances know what you have written, forward them a "blind copy" (bcc) via e-mail or forward a copy of correspondence after the original has been sent.
6. Avoid anything even remotely libellous, or anything that may label you as the writer as a 'crank' or 'eccentric', especially if you intend to send letters regularly. That doesn't mean avoiding controversial issues, but simply writing using your head more than your heart. Be reasonable.
7. If you target your letters for publication, don't give up or become disheartened if they are not published. Remember, papers such as The Times receive on average 65,000 letters a year. That's over 200 a day, and they only publish an average of 15 per day. Your letters may be very good, but they need to be of a standard that the editor simply cannot afford to leave it unpublished. Scrutinise letter that are published on the same topic as your, and try to identify why they were published at the expense of yours. This will help you to improve your letters.

Contact Details for Major Print Media

Times, The

1 Pennington Street
London
E1 9XN
Tel No: 02077825000
Fax No: 020 7782 5046
Email: letters@thetimes.co.uk

Independent, The

1 Canada Square
London
E14 5DL
Tel No: 020 7005 2000
Fax No: 020 7293 2056
Email: letters@independent.co.uk

Financial Times

1 Southwark Bridge
London
SE1 9HL
Tel No: 020 7873 3000
Fax No: 020 7873 3076
Email: letters.editor@ft.com

Daily Telegraph

Tel No: 020 7538 5000
Fax No:
Email: dtletters@telegraph.co.uk

Daily Mail

Tel No: 020 7938 6000
Fax No: 020 7937 4463
Email: letters@dailymail.co.uk

Evening Standard

Northcliffe House

2 Derry Street
London
W8 5EE
Tel No: 020 7938 7147 /7148
Fax No: 0207 937 2648
Email: letters@standard.co.uk

Daily Express

United Media Ludgate House
245 Blackfriars Rd
London
SE1 9UX
Tel No: 020 7928 8000
Fax No: 0207 620 1654
Email:

The Scotsman

Barclay House
108 Holyrood Rd
Edinburgh
EH8 8AS
Tel No: 0131 620 8620
Fax No:
Email:

WEEKLY PUBLICATIONS

The Economist

Tel No: 020 7830 7000
Fax No:
Email: letters@economist.com

The Spectator

56 Doughty St.
London
WC1N 2LL
Tel No: 020 7242 0603
Fax No:
Email: letters@spectator.co.uk

The Observer

119 Farringdon Road
London
EC1R 3ER
Tel No: 020 7278 2332
Fax No:
Email: editor@observer.co.uk

New Statesman

7th Floor Victoria Station House
191 Victoria St.
London
SW1E
Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: letters@newstatesman.co.uk

Sunday Times

1 Pennington Street
London
E1 9XN
Tel No: 020 7782 5000
Fax No:
Email: letters@thetimes.co.uk

Independent on Sunday

1 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London
E14 5DL
Tel No: 020 7293 2000
Fax No:
Email: sundayletters@independent.co.uk

Sunday Telegraph

1 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London
E14 5DT
Tel No: 020 7538 5000
Fax No:
Email: stletters@telegraph.co.uk

Sunday Express

United Media Ludgate House
245 Blackfriars Rd
London
SE1 9UX
Tel No: 020 79 28 8000
Fax No:
Email: editor@express.co.uk

Mail On Sunday

Northcliffe House
2 Derry Street
Kensington
London
W8 5TT
Tel No: 020 7938 6000
Fax No:
Email: letters@mailonsunday.co.uk

BBC

BBC - TV & Radio (Switchboard)

Tel No: 020 8752 5252
Fax No: 020 8749 7534
Email: info@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Breakfast

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: breakfastTV@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Newsnight

Tel No: 020 8624 9800
Fax No:
Email: newsnight@bbc.co.uk

BBC - World Service Radio

Tel No: 020 7240 3456
Fax No:
Email: worldservice.letters@bbc.co.uk

BBC - News 24

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: news24@bbc.co.uk

BBC - World Service TV

Tel No: 020 8225 7509
Fax No: 020 8749 8549
Email: worldwidetv.letters@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Panorama

Tel No: 020 8752 7103
Fax No:
Email: panorama@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Correspondent

Tel No: 020 8752 7500
Fax No: 020 8752 7599
Email: correspondent@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Five Live

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: fivelive@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Today Programme

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: today@bbc.co.uk

BBC - News Online

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk

BBC - Question Time

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: questiontime@bbc.co.uk

BBC - General TV & Radio

Tel No: 020 7580 4468
Fax No: 020 8749 6972
Email:

BBC - Your Comments

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: corporatepressoffice/tvc@bbc.co.uk

BBC Radio Comments and Complaitns

Tel No: 020 7580 4468 ext. 51495

Fax No:

Email:

INDEPENDENT TV & RADIO

ITN

Tel No: 020 7833 3000
Fax No:
Email:

ITN Foreign Desk

Tel No: 020 7430 4411
Fax No: 020 7430 4015
Email:

ITN Factual & Documentaries

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: Factual@itn.co.uk

ITN Radio

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: radio@itn.co.uk

Channel 4 TV

Tel No: 020 7396 4444
Fax No:
Email:

Channel 4 Foreign Desk

Tel No: 020 7430 4606
Fax No:
Email: c4foreign@itn.co.uk

Channel 4 News

Tel No: 020 7430 4601
Fax No: 020 7430 4608
Email: news@channel4.com

Channel 5 News

Tel No: 020 7833 3000
Fax No: 020 7497 5222
Email: simon.stanleigh@itn.co.uk

GMTV News

Tel No: 020 7827 7239
Fax No: 020 7827 7001
Email:

Sky Television

Tel No: 020 7705 3000
Fax No: 020 7705 3030
Email: news@sky.com

CNN

Tel No:
Fax No:
Email: cnn.feedback@cnn.com

Scottish Television

Tel No: 0141 300 3000
Fax No: 0141 300 3030
Email: viewer.enquiries@scottishtv.co.uk

London Weekend Television

Tel No: 020 7620 1620
Fax No: 020 7827 7710
Email: iewers@lwt.co.uk

Dispatches / Thew World This Week

Tel No: 020 7396 4444
Fax No: 020 7306 8357
Email: viewersenquiries@channel4.co.uk

Independent Radio News

Tel No: 020 7430 4814

Fax No: 020 7430 4834

Email: irn@itn.co.uk

Broadcasting Standards Commission

Tel No: 020 7233 0544

Fax No: 020 7233 0397

Email: bsc@bsc.org.uk

Lobbying MP's

While the Media play a big role in shaping public opinion, MP's are the ones with the real power. Making and maintaining contact with MP's and MEP's is always positive.

To locate your MP, you can:

1. Search by Postcode, Name or Constituency at:

<http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/>

2. Check the Alphabetical List at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/alms.htm>

3. Visit the Guardian MP profiles at:

<http://www.politics.guardian.co.uk/person/browse/mps/az/0,9379,,00.html>

TIP: If you write to Jack Straw (for example) he won't reply, and if you do get a reply it is likely to be from a civil servant. Your own local MP, on the other hand, has a duty to listen to you as a constituent. If they then raise the issue with Straw it is much more likely to get a proper response. In addition of course, you have now made two people aware of the issue.

Contacting Your MP

Write To:

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Make sure that their name is clear, so that it gets to its destination.

Put your address on it so that they can reply, and so that they realise that it is genuine.

Telephone:

To speak to your MP at the House of Commons, call the switchboard (020 7219 3000) and ask to be transferred to the MP's office. If you've already made contact with them, and you want them to have the paperwork at the ready, then probably a good idea to warn them first.

E-Mail:

Some MPs have email, but most don't. Check the next section to find out whether yours does. As a rule you have to send your email using a feedback form type window, rather than actually getting an email address.

Fax:

Visit <http://www.faxyourmp.com>

MEPs – To contact your local MEPs, visit:

http://www.europarl.org.uk/uk_meps/MembersMain.htm