

Tribe ERG Guidance to Coverage related to Hamas terrorist acts and Israel-Hamas war with Vox.com and NYMag Editorial Examples:

We, your Jewish friends, neighbors and colleagues all grow up learning that people hate Jews. That is something that might be hard to read or accept if you live and work amongst the lucky ones of us who live freely here in New York or DC, but this is something that we, as Jews, universally, whatever our station in life, all learn and learn to accept walking through this life - both because of the long history of antisemitism and because of our own direct experiences with it. Jews have served as scapegoats for the ills of the world since time immemorial and we are all aware of this tendency for it to rise up again in every generation. This hatred has led to attempted genocide, expulsion and exile of Jews in nearly every corner of the Earth, not just during some faraway or biblical time, or by Nazis during in the Holocaust, but from the former Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Morocco and Tunisia – in our lifetimes and in fact, encompasses the experiences of the people you work with every day. We, as your colleagues working in news media are also aware of the vital role that our work and, on the other side, unmitigated propaganda, have in stoking that hatred. And with that in mind, coverage of Israel, the only Jewish state in the world, the site of refuge for the most persecuted people in the history of the world (which is not hyperbole) is and has always been not just about Israel. The context of the country's existence and challenges and the way we speak about it is not just about one country. We implore you to understand, as we do, that words matter and words have power. We would urge you to consider the information and resources we are presenting to you and to make change – it's never too late to learn more of the history and perspective of the Jewish people and to check deep-rooted and internalized prejudices. Recognize our humanity and our fear. Vox Media prides itself on being a leader in using inclusive language in our journalism – we are asking you to include us too.

We also want to be clear, this document is not meant to diminish Palestinian suffering or the Palestinian perspective - on the contrary, recognizing that is vital in our coverage of the conflict on a broader scale. However, in regards to the Hamas terrorist attack, we feel that the Palestinian perspective is the *only* perspective being offered in our coverage, which not only is extremely hurtful towards the Jews, but also does a major disservice to our audience by not painting a clear picture.

Acknowledge terrorism. Hamas is not a militant group. It is not a group of fighters or freedom fighters, militants, combatants, the resistance, or soldiers. It is a terrorist group in league with ISIS, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Hezbollah and is [recognized](#) by the United States, the [EU](#), the [UK](#), [Canada](#), and [Australia](#) as a terrorist organization.

Avoid “both sides” framing. Recognize and acknowledge that this war was started by brutal, barbaric violence by terrorists on Israeli citizens (of many faiths and political perspectives) with the sole purpose of exterminating a people. Subsequent reporting should make clear that a nation has the right to self-determination and self-defense. It is dangerous to frame coverage around the concept that Jews' and Israel's right to exist is in itself a provocation for and thereby a justification for slaughter. In doing so, remember that this is a war between Israel and Hamas, not between Israel and Palestinian citizens.

Consider the historical context. The historical conflict is multifaceted, with religious, historical, political, and territorial dimensions. Reducing it to a single narrative does a disservice to those genuinely seeking understanding - especially in an “explainer”. When considering the broader context of Palestinian-Israeli relations, it is critical to remember Israel’s historical experiences and reasons for its security approach. What drives most of Israel’s neighboring detractors is hate, not politics. Israel has security concerns that are often the driving force behind many of its actions. The state has been under the threat of terrorism and rocket attacks, since its existence, leading to the need for protective measures. Reporting also cannot erase the historical perspective of Israel, including the indigeneity of Jews in Israel as well as other groups in the region. Again, Jews have been subject to genocides and expulsions for centuries and the creation of Israel was the first and only time Jews have established their ancestral “home,” only to face attacks persistently for the last 75 years.

Avoid dangerous and factually-inaccurate “buzzwords.” Framing a “conflict” as merely “colonialism” is inherently dangerous and feeds into one narrative and perspective while disregarding historical fact. In addition, words like “apartheid,” “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” are often used to evoke a visceral emotional reaction in favor of one group, while not always being factually accurate and assuming as a statement of fact that there are indeed certain things occurring. Jewish ancestry has existed in Israel for centuries and ignoring these facts in favor of these buzzwords that attempt to equate the issues with other points in history is hurtful, demonstrates a strong bias (if not blatant antisemitism) and inaccurate.

Be precise in describing military actions. The assertion that Israel has one of the most advanced militaries should be juxtaposed with the reality that it is a small country (the size of New Jersey) surrounded by larger nations, most of which have historically been hostile, and by many terrorist groups with stated antisemitic and anti-Israel goals and with an advanced cache of weapons. When reporting on the undoubted humanitarian impacts of the blockade on Gaza, it is vital to understand that it is predicated on legitimate security concerns and that Israel is not the only nation bordering Gaza or that controls access. The power dynamics are more complex than often portrayed by the media. Further, when reporting casualties it is crucial to highlight the context in which these casualties occurred. For instance, Hamas often launches rockets from civilian areas, making it challenging for Israel to respond without civilian casualties, and has hidden IEDs and car bombs amongst civilians. The Ministry of Health in Palestine is run by Hamas and thus when sourcing to them, this consideration should be weighed.

Think about the voices you’re including. When speaking with experts on Palestine, as well as civilians, you should seek out Israeli voices, too.

Acknowledge inherent antisemitic undertones. This is about more than just Israel. In its [charter](#), Hamas calls for the extermination of all Jews and the destruction of a Jewish state. Recognize that criticism of any nation or its politics or military is valid, but criticism of a Jewish nation’s right to exist is antisemitism. If you would not question another state’s existence, parse out why you would do so to the only Jewish one.

Additional Resources:

- [ADL Media Guidelines](#)
- [Project Shema](#) (which offers trainings)

- [AJC Reporting on Antisemitism](#)
- [Myth: Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic](#)

General Thoughts/Questions:

- Overall, the tone of a lot of the content takes a particular slant and, as such, would possibly be helped if it was labeled as opinion or an op-ed and not presented as the editorial brand as a whole taking a particular one-sided approach.
- Are these stories getting sensitivity reads?
- Are we applying equal scrutiny to/requiring equal amounts of corroboration for all sources? Or being more credulous of sources from some sides than from others?
- Going forward as we continue to report on what's happening in Israel and Gaza, it's imperative to remember how this war began—a terrorist attack that slaughtered thousands of civilians—and to continue to frame coverage around this point without losing sight of it.

Vox's newsroom (and possibly other newsrooms across the company) have been using AMEJA's guidelines and IMEU's in their style guides, despite the fact that the guidelines are one-sided and include some problematic and potentially antisemitic rhetoric, as well as a troublesome lack of acknowledgement of terrorism (and barely any mention of Hamas, certainly not of it being a terrorist organization separate from Palestinian civilians, which does a disservice all around):

<https://www.ameja.org/Media-Resource-Guide-for-Palestine-Israel>

<https://imeu.org/article/guidance-for-reporting-on-palestine-israel>

Use of antisemitic rhetoric:

- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/7/23907912/israel-palestine-conflict-history-explained-gaza-hamas>
 - *"Instances of Israeli security forces and Israeli settlers antagonizing Palestinians through violence are on the rise, from the pogrom on the city of Huwara to a new tempo of lethal raids on Jenin. Israeli government ministers have been pursuing annexationist policies and sharing raging rhetoric; both incite further violent response from Palestinians and appear at a time when new militant groups have emerged that claim the mantle of the Palestinian cause. The now-regular presence of Israeli Jews praying at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, one of Islam's holiest sites, have further pressurized the situation. A Hamas commander cited many of these factors in his statement."*
 - The framing at best tries to justify or explain the terrorist attack and at worst, victim-blames. It's also perplexing why we're citing and linking out to a Hamas statement as a reputable, journalistic source in a way that seems to frame it as Hamas making an understandable argument. Even the use of the word "pogrom" seems appropriative of a term that has historical connotation and meaning of ethnically- and religiously-motivated attacks against Jewish people.
- <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/10/israel-gaza-war-manufactured-consent.html>

- “The Israeli government and its supporters have led global campaigns to make supporting this boycott illegal. They have developed confusing worldwide messaging claiming that criticizing Israeli apartheid is the same thing as antisemitism. Every aspect of nonviolent organizing for a more equitable solution has been met with distortion as a tool of repression.”
 - Quotes like this invoke age-old antisemitic tropes of Israel and Jews controlling the world.
 - Also assumes as statement of fact that there is in fact “apartheid”

Absence of factually-correct language (i.e., referring to the attacks as “terrorism” or Hamas as “terrorists”)

- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/7/23907296/israel-war-hamas-attack-rocket-strike-response-2023>
 - “A group of fighters from Hamas’s military arm, the Al-Qassam brigades, entered Israel Saturday.”
 - This wording is quite passive with word choices like “fighters,” “military,” and “entered” instead of more precise words like “terrorists” and “attacked.”
 - The use of “fighters” to describe Hamas terrorists (aside from the choice to not call them terrorists, which is concerning in and of itself) is concerning because “fighters” often has a positive connotation (ex: “you are such a fighter” to someone going through hard times) and exacerbates the concerns that are also raised here about how the articles in other ways imply or suggest that these attacks are warranted or deserved.
 - This piece illustrates an example of why the term “freedom fighters” or “fighters” is problematic: [Opinion: Many Palestinians in Gaza hate Hamas. My father certainly did | CNN](#)
- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/14/23917260/israel-hamas-war-gaza-humanitarian-crisis>
 - “Though Israeli military policy is to use disproportionate force in Gaza as a deterrent strategy, that has so far failed to enact durable security, limit Hamas’s ability to strike Israel, or allow space in Israeli politics for any sort of political negotiation that could lead to a more peaceful future.”
 - There’s mention of Israel’s “military policy” of using “disproportionate force” and the manner of writing frames it as if this is a documented military strategy by the country.
 - The hyperlink here directs to another Vox article, but the mention of “disproportionate force” in this one directs to an article from [RAND](#), which actually says: “On the Palestinian side, the United Nations (UN) estimated the number of Palestinian deaths at 2,133, of whom 1,489 were civilians — a point that Hamas used to advance its legal and international claim that Israel used disproportionate force. By contrast, Israeli estimates suggest that there were 1,598 Palestinian fatalities in Protective Edge, of which 75 percent were combatants.” Again, citing a Hamas talking-point seems questionable at best, antisemitic at worst.
 - This framing also negates any responsibility of Hamas.

The justifications for the terrorist attack/idea that civilians "deserved" it

- The concern here is based on the very deep and entrenched antisemitic principle that the premise that Jews' very existence—and desire for self-determination is in and of itself a provocation. The fallout is obsessive coverage of what Israel did/didn't do to itself.
- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/14/23917260/israel-hamas-war-gaza-humanitarian-crisis>
 - *"It took Hamas's deadly attack today to remind Israel, the United States, and the world that Palestine still matters."*
 - This feels incredibly insensitive in light of the atrocities that Israelis have suffered, almost suggesting that Israelis "deserve" what happened to them. The article is suggesting that what happened is "symbolic," which is noted later.
 - *"Hundreds of Israelis have been killed, a historic scale of violence for the country. The Israeli counterattack will inevitably lead to more death and destruction for Palestinians and a tightened occupation."*
 - Here, it feels like we're once again rationalizing the plight of Israelis, suggesting that the crimes against Israelis and Jews are justified and should be ignored.
- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/14/23917260/israel-hamas-war-gaza-humanitarian-crisis>
 - *"Israel and the United States have wished away Palestinians. The terrible bloodshed of today's attacks underscores the cost of doing so."*
 - This echoes a lot of the extremist, terroristic talking points and veer dangerously toward victim-blaming and putting the blood on the hands of Israel and the United States instead of a group American and the EU recognizes as a terrorist organization.
 - *"If you had lifted the siege of Gaza, you would not have had this happen."*
 - This also shifts-blame back onto the victims of this barbaric attack
- NYM IG ["Explanations are not excuses"](#)
 - View some of the comments

Imbalanced reporting overall

- <https://www.vox.com/videos/2023/10/16/23919562/israeli-army-october-7-hamas-attack?fbclid=IwAR1WrJ7GqswRTlv42TYdsmVBCbQTuQ2OFrKDFzbzFFBRjMpZc8nJuWxPy8>
 - At Vox, we understand the focus on reporting is on explainers, but we have to be mindful of what it is we're explaining and how. The sheer brutality of the atrocities taking place in Israel is largely absent and ignored. This is the big story. This is why the war erupted. This is why we are writing follow up pieces. It would be hard for our audience to grasp that based on the coverage thus far. There's plenty of detail related to Palestinians' suffering, and almost none on the atrocities suffered by Israelis. It's shocking to have an information vacuum on this subject in particular.
 - At 2:18, as an example, there's the quote: "In 1948 a Zionist militias and Zionist paramilitary groups carried out a mass expulsion and massacre of Palestinians..." with large numbers "750,000 expelled" and "15,000 killed " on the screen (and a barely seen "estimated"). At the same time, the suggested timeline does not offer a single word about Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq attacking Israel the next day after the Israeli Declaration of Independence was signed in 1948.

- The 1948 war was far more complicated than “Zionist militia” attacking Palestinians, and this video is extremely misguided. This places the entirety of the blame on Israel without ever mentioning any sort of attacks from the Palestinians in that war or throughout history.
- <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/10/israel-gaza-war-manufactured-consent.html> (clearly an opinion piece with a distinct stance)
 - *“On October 7, these unending, untenable conditions exploded when Hamas broke through Israel’s imposed barriers. They reentered the land they consider home. They attacked formerly Palestinian villages and cities, now under the control of Israel. After decades of being on the receiving end of highly organized violence, they switched roles and became the murderers and kidnappers of more than 1,300 Israeli children and adults.*
 - *“President Biden called Hamas’s attack ‘an act of sheer evil’ without acknowledging the decades of colonial repression that make this violence legible.”*
 - This fails to acknowledge that what drives most of Israel's neighboring detractors is hate - not politics. That is the framework to understand.
 - There is a broad conversation to be had about the issue of colonialism and indigenous people to the land. And can anyone argue this violence is “legible”?
- Compare the header/URL and content of these two examples: both groups are equally abhorrent in their purpose - but one framing signals virtue and the other doesn't even entertain it.
 - <https://www.vox.com/2021/8/27/22643461/isis-k-kabul-airport-afghanistan-taliban>
 - *“Isis-K, explained by an expert”--What to know about the Afghanistan ISIS offshoot that waged a deadly attack at the Kabul airport.*
 - *“Hamas, the militant group that attacked Israel, explained”--What is Hamas and what does it want out of this new resurgence of violent conflict?*
- <https://www.vox.com/world-politics/2023/10/14/23917078/israel-hamas-war-gaza-iran-hezbollah-khameinei-lebanon&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1697587269476449&usq=AOvVaw17xKCuhCTEe95fs5pfSwLt>
 - Phrases like “*what is now Northern Israel*” discount the country. The constant referral of Hamas and Hezbollah as “groups” as opposed to “terrorist organizations” also normalizes their actions and behaviors.
- <https://www.vox.com/today-explained-podcast>
 - The lead in is how not everyone views Hamas as terrorists and they start by Sean saying “The United States, Israel, and many of their allies officially designate Hamas as a terrorist organization.” And then continues to say “so Hamas was a charity organization”– first, why is our language choosing to humanize terrorists and appear to be questioning whether the designations as a terrorist organization are valid especially in the face of unspeakable violence and terrorism? Also, this statement about charity also comes across as it being Sean’s suggestion/conclusion that goes further than the source’s quote. And in making this conclusion, his tone appears callus and impressed instead of just letting the source speak for itself.

- The source in this episode also says that most Palestinians view Hamas not as terrorists but as "*freedom fighters*." This does a big disservice to Palestinian citizens by conflating the two, which is patently false, and implying many are behind a group that ultimately does not have Palestinian citizens in its best interests. [Also - see above]
- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/14/23917260/israel-hamas-war-gaza-humanitarian-crisis>
 - This article is extremely one sided. While there is clearly merit to the humanitarian crisis, there are facts missing (for example, it doesn't mention the internal sabotage). There is no mention of how Hamas is restricting civilians from leaving, how their officials are stealing fuel from the UN reserved for aid, and also: "*On Monday, the Israeli government shut off Gaza's access to water, electricity, and fuel as part of its declared siege of the region*" yet it doesn't mention Israel only provides 10% of Gaza's water.
- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/7/23907296/israel-war-hamas-attack-rocket-strike-response-2023>

- ***The important question: Why did Hamas attack Israel?***

Hamas is likely seeking the return of Palestinian prisoners in Israel, according to experts. In the past, the group has successfully traded a small number of Israeli hostages for Palestinians held in Israel, notably keeping Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit for five years before exchanging him for 1,000 Palestinian prisoners, the New York Times reported.

The number of hostages is as yet unknown, but they are reportedly being held both within Gaza itself and in Israeli villages where Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters have been able to infiltrate. The hostages include a "substantial" number of both civilians and IDF soldiers, the Israeli military confirmed Saturday.

Saturday's attack, though it's unprecedented in scale, complexity, and surprise factor is all happening in the context of increased settlements in the West Bank, a brutal, 16-year blockade on Gaza by Israel and Egypt, the political vacuum in the Palestinian territories, the displacement of generations of Palestinians since the founding of the Israeli state, and the apartheid under which Palestinians live.

Most Gazans are either refugees from the 1948 Nakba, when mass numbers of Palestinians were displaced during the Arab-Israeli War, or descendants of those refugees, said Zaha Hassan, a human rights lawyer and fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. They've lived under a strict blockade by Israel and Egypt, relying on foreign aid to access basic necessities, and about one-third of Gazans live in extreme poverty according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. There is also little mobile connectivity, Hassan said, making communication with the outside world difficult.

Diana Buttu, a Haifa-based analyst and former legal adviser to the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian negotiators, told Vox in an interview that many Palestinians were jubilant at the start of the attacks. "When you punch your abuser in the face, it feels good," she said. "The first reaction was elation — we saw that both in Gaza and in the West Bank. In Ramallah [in the West Bank] people were over-the-top happy because it was not just a punch in the face," but also because Hamas was able to breach the security state that defines and diminishes so many Palestinians' lives.

Palestinians have also lived without real political representation or power for decades, both within Israel and within the Palestinian territories. Though Hamas nominally controls Gaza and the Palestinian Authority the West Bank, these parties have been unable to negotiate a solution to the crisis or to uphold democracy within the Palestinian territory.

Mahmoud Abbas, president of the PA, has been in office since 2005, and neither Gaza nor the West Bank has held elections since 2006 when Hamas and Fatah, Abbas's party, failed to make a coalition government for the West Bank and Gaza.

With Israel normalizing relationships with Arab nations — including, potentially, Saudi Arabia — and the US unlikely to take an active role in negotiations between Israel and Palestinian leadership, some Palestinians feel they have no other choice, Hassan said.

"The message has been clear to Palestinians," Hassan said. "They can't wait on some Arab savior and they can't wait on the US government to act as peace broker — that they're going to have to take matters into their own hands, whatever that looks like."

- This entire section from this article feels pretty biased, one-sided and problematic.
- First, it's justifying abduction and taking prisoners by framing it as a run-of-the-mill prisoner exchange when video plainly showed that's not the case. Taking dead bodies into Gaza to parade them through the streets is not a politically or militarily rationalized negotiation tactic.
- Second, quoting an expert who says citizens were "jubilant" at the start of the attacks with "elation" and "over-the-top-happy" and saying this was "not just a punch in the face" is cruel and cold, and also does more danger to the Palestinian cause by conflating Palestinian citizens with terrorists or falsely implying that all Palestinians stand behind terroristic acts of pure evil.
- The same goes for saying like many felt they have "no choice" and that people should be allowed to "take matters into their own hands, whatever that looks like," which again seems to justify rape, abduction, and slaughter of unarmed, unwarned, unprepared civilians.
- <https://www.vox.com/world-politics/2023/10/14/23914904/arab-world-israel-palestine-conflict-middle-east>
 - There is very similar messaging in this article, where the context is significantly absent in the section "Why Palestine galvanizes the Arab world."
- <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/17/23921722/biden-israel-visit-mideast-trip-gaza-hamas>
 - *"But if Israel can't commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities so that water, food, medicine, and humanitarian assistance reach Palestinians in Gaza who are in need, then Biden may need to break from his usual approach and speak up publicly. (A ceasefire would require negotiations with Hamas, which Israel is unlikely to pursue right now, but Israel could unilaterally pause the bombardment of Gaza and allow for humanitarian corridors.)"*
 - Note here that every single responsibility is on Israel, when they are the ones who were attacked. Israel has to commit to a ceasefire; Israel has to negotiate with Hamas but won't; Israel can unilaterally pause the bombardment. What about what the Palestinian authority can do? What about Hamas committing to not being hostile? What about the reasons that Israel won't negotiate with Hamas (i.e., they were attacked and hostages still remain in Gaza)?