

How the Washington Post Turned a Feel-Good Story into an Anti-Israel Attack

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Articles & Testimony

Despite not taking the time to speak with Israeli officials or even verify key details on the ground, reporters proceeded with a heavily slanted piece that raised further questions about the paper’s wartime editorial policies.

Sadly, tendentious media reporting from the Hamas-Israel war has grown commonplace, but I have never seen a story quite like the *Washington Post* piece (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/11/17/israel-gaza-war-babies-families/>) headlined “Israel’s war with Hamas separates Palestinian babies from their mothers.” The *Post*, one should recall, labels its news coverage of the conflict “Israel-Gaza War,” an editorial decision which implies Israel is at war with Gaza, rather than the more-accurate “Israel-Hamas War,” the term used by the *New York Times*, not famous for being pro-Israel.

On the editorial side, the paper of Woodward & Bernstein already suffered a blow to its free speech credentials when it buckled under pressure and pulled a cartoon of a mass-murdering Hamas terrorist by a Pulitzer Prize-winner because it was “divisive.” (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/media/2023/11/08/washington-post-hamas-cartoon-michael-ramirez/>)

So, it is only mildly surprising to see this 31-paragraph piece in the news section. What is the gist? That several dozen Palestinian mothers and premature infants have been separated because of the war, the latter all cared for in unidentified hospitals in Israel or the West Bank.

“Tragedy” is a much-used term in a conflict that began with Hamas’s murder and kidnapping of Israeli babies—a fact interestingly not mentioned in a story about babies and this war—but no one dies in this story; these Palestinian babies are all safe and protected. Indeed, the journalists could have written a wholly different story—“Despite war, Gazan babies safe and protected in Israeli and West Bank hospitals”—but they opted to focus on the alleged distress

of the mothers instead of the well-being of the babies.

I say “alleged” because in this lengthy story, only one mother was quoted by full name and she was reached by phone in Gaza. Indeed, it’s not clear whether any of the journalists reported from Gaza. (The story was datelined Nablus, with one reporter in London.)

West Bank nurses are cited, but a story about Gazan mothers quotes only one. Yet somehow, with a Nablus dateline, the reporters produced this: “The mothers trapped in Gaza have spent the past month and a half cowering in fear as Israeli airstrikes shake the earth and ground forces encircle the north of the enclave. Rooms that expecting parents decorated lovingly for new babies have been smashed. Clothes that infants would have worn in their earliest weeks have been lost to the rubble.” How did they get any of that?

And then there is the uncomfortable fact that some of these babies are being cared for in Israel—yet the whole story rests on the inhumanity of Israel’s alleged policy of denying re-entry permits to some mothers, preventing them from reuniting with their children, but the reporters do not appear to even have sought comment from Israeli officials, allegedly because “staff members fear reprisals from Israeli authorities.” Really? What sort of reprisals? Did the reporters document any examples of such reprisals? Did they even ask?

Strange story indeed—in a war filled with death, the *Washington Post* took a fundamentally good news story about premature babies from Gaza cared for by compassionate people across enemy lines and turned it into a horror story, with diabolical Israelis lurking overhead. Along the way, reporters who stated with precision what infant items are on the floor of blown-out buildings in faraway Gaza repeated unverified accusations against unnamed Israeli authorities by unnamed administrators in unnamed hospitals in unnamed Israeli cities. If that isn’t the one-sided editorialization of news, what is it?

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