

Press bias towards Israeli Ambassador

Palestinian Ambassador ignored

2,000% more press coverage for Mr Ron Prosor

Arab Media Watch report demonstrates UK press favouritism

London, UK – 16 January 2009

The London-based press watchdog, Arab Media Watch (AMW), has produced research demonstrating that British press reporting of the Middle East conflict has massively favoured the Israeli Ambassador to the almost complete exclusion of the Palestinian Ambassador.

A statement released by Arab Media Watch “expresses concern at the frequent use by the British press of Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor, compared with the near-total absence of his Palestinian counterpart Manuel Hassassian.”

AMW’s claim of bias is supported by London-based human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell:

“This research shows that the Israeli Ambassador has received 2,000% more UK national press coverage than his Palestinian opposite number, Ambassador Hassassian. Such bias does not give the British people a balanced perspective on the Israel-Palestine conflict and the tragic events in the Palestinian territories.

“The non-reportage of Mr Hassassian is particularly regrettable because he is a voice of Palestinian moderation, peace and constructive dialogue. By denying him coverage, the press is handing a propaganda victory to Israel and Hamas and allowing the hawks on both sides to dominate the public debate.

“This one-sided coverage of the Israeli Ambassador to the exclusion of the Palestinian Ambassador is evidence of partisanship, which does not assist balance, understanding or progress towards a solution to the Middle East conflict,” said Mr Tatchell.

According to AMW’s survey, from the time that Mr Prosor became Israeli Ambassador to the UK at the end of 2007 until the end of 2008, there have been 40 items (news articles, commentaries, editorials and letters) either by him, quoting him or mentioning him in British national newspapers.

In contrast, during the same period, Ambassador Hassassian has been mentioned only twice in the UK national press – both times in the Guardian, quoted in two articles by Middle East editor Ian Black. This is 20 times fewer mentions than Mr Prosor.

Mr Prosor has been reported in the following newspapers:

Newspaper	No. of Items	% of Items
Daily Telegraph	16	40
The Times	6	15
The Guardian	5	12.5
The Independent	5	12.5
Daily Mail	3	7.5
The Sun	1	2.5
Daily Mirror	1	2.5
Daily Star	1	2.5
News of the World	1	2.5
The Observer	1	2.5

"For the sake of balance, this should be rectified, particularly given the importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the frequency with which it is reported, and the regular use of Prosor," said AMW chairman Sharif Hikmat Nashashibi.

"Our findings call into question Prosor's complaint in the Telegraph that 'coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is routinely tainted with bias' against his country. Prosor's views are clearly and overwhelmingly more prevalent than his Palestinian counterpart."

Nashashibi added:

"Hassassian is an able and eloquent spokesman who is readily available to the media. Making use of him would contribute to a sense of even-handedness in British press coverage, which would benefit readers."

AMW expresses particular concern over the coverage by the Telegraph, not just because of the frequent platform it provides Mr Prosor, but because AMW has been writing to the newspaper since July 2008 requesting an explanation for the total absence of Hassassian in its pages. We have yet to receive a reply, though we have been promised one three times.

Here is a breakdown of the national press coverage of the Israeli Ambassador

Mr Prosor has authored six commentaries:

- three in the Telegraph
- two in the Guardian
- one in the Sun

A further four commentaries quoted him:

- three in the Telegraph (two by Con Coughlin, one by David Hughes)
- one in the Times (Hugo Rifkind)

Mr Prosor was quoted in 18 news articles:

- six in the Telegraph (including by Martin Beckford, Tim Butcher, Duncan Gardham

and

Con Coughlin)

- four in the Times (James Hider and Richard Beeston)
- three in the Independent (two by Donald Macintyre, one by Ian Johnston)
- one each in the Mail (Liz Thomas), Guardian (Toni O'Loughlin), Daily Mirror (Andrew Gregory), Daily Star (anonymous) and Observer (David Hills)

He was mentioned in a further 10 news articles:

- two each in the Telegraph (Charlotte Bailey and Tom Peterkin), Mail (Alex Brummer and anonymous), Guardian (Rory McCarthy and Toni O'Loughlin) and Independent (Ian Herbert, Andy McSmith and Mark Hughes)
- once each in the Times (Ruth Gledhill) and News of the World (anonymous)

The Telegraph also published a letter by Prosor, and an editorial mentioning him.

The relevant Palestinian contact details are:

Palestinian Ambassador Manuel Hassassian: Mob - 07904 673 706, email - mhassassian@btconnect.com

Palestinian Delegation: Tel - 0208 563 0008, email - info@palestiniangd.org.uk

Arab Media Watch is an independent, non-profit watchdog set up in 2000 to strive for objective coverage of Arab issues in the British media.

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