

# COMPETING NARRATIVES EXPOSED: Did you hear that two Palestinians were captured the day *before* that Israeli soldier was?

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As it turns out, journalists do not climb to the top of their respective headquarters each day and direct large, all-seeing mirrors towards each region of the globe before effortlessly broadcasting the most compelling images onto your television screen later that evening, complete with straightforward, de-politicized descriptions of their content.

As soon as the newsroom directs its focus towards news items that involve war or conflict, particularly one that is as hotly disputed as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many more decisions are involved. As it turns out, the news that streams onto your television screens each night is no mirror of the world – it is the result of an actively manufactured version of reality.

Many issues problematize the mainstream media's coverage of conflict. Time constraints in television, word limits in newspapers, ideologically-laden yet politically-endorsed and relatively unquestioned terminology, a seemingly never-ending range of differing historical accounts that no two groups are likely to ever agree upon, and the influence of public relations and intense pressure by well-organised lobby groups are just a few. Still, reporting conflicts is one of the most important tasks of mainstream media, since the majority of the public will only receive information about foreign crises from this coverage. Television remains the main source of world news for the large majority of the UK population.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it is absolutely vital that television reporting of conflicts is analysed and broadcasters are pressured to maintain balance and a high standard of impartiality.

If the news was just a reflection of images caught in a mirror, news agencies like Reuters and Associated Press would cease to exist. These organisations fuel the news that we receive and the consequence of this dependency is a lack of diversity between news outlets and, more crucially, a restricted and politicized information flow. While the domination by only a handful of news agencies can result in a selective representation of the globe and has the potential to advance only certain political and economic interests, news is still largely the result of public relations. It may appear as though news is spontaneous and investigative, but in fact the majority of content on mainstream television broadcasts is planned.<sup>2</sup> Certain events, like the World Cup and the Queen's birthday are clearly known in advance, but much of the rest of news is a direct result of public relations management. Groups make statements to the media – from governments to corporations to scientists – and each maintain a vital interest in promoting a particular perspective of an event.

Particularly when military conflict is involved, these groups share a fundamental concern that the resulting news coverage will be structured around a narrative that shows their exclusive group in a favourable light – often to the detriment of others. It is also often the case that one group involved in a conflict will be better resourced and therefore have superior public relations

capabilities. With respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most journalists will acknowledge that Israel has a more efficient public relations machine.<sup>3</sup> Therefore Israel's ability to supply journalists with information that supports their favoured narrative is significantly increased. Also, most correspondents live in Israel when covering the conflict and the BBC is the only Western broadcaster that retains a permanent presence within Gaza.<sup>4</sup> This fact alone disrupts the flow of information. Greg Philo and Mike Berry published a study in 2004 of content, audience reception, and production factors involved in the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada or uprising in September 2000. The following quotes are from journalists who have experienced the different nature of each side's public relations management:

Palestinian spokesmen are their own worst enemy. They often come across as boorish, the message is often incoherent. (Interview, June 2002)

Palestinians don't have a clear public relations approach. They [Palestinians] start from a reactive approach. I get 75-100 emails a day from official Israeli sources and organisations which support [Israel] (about 15 per cent from government, the rest lobbyists and supporters). I get perhaps five a week from Palestinian sources. (Interview, June 2002)<sup>5</sup>

These production factors influence the way in which events in the ongoing conflict will be covered – particularly how they will fit into a favourable narrative for one group or the other. The task of mainstream media organisations is to ensure that balance is maintained – that the full range of differing perspectives of events and overall narratives are featured in their reports regardless of any potential inequality on the public relations front.

## A brief illustration of US coverage of the 2006 Israeli-Gaza crisis

The famed slogan of the United States' leading news program, Fox News, reminds its audiences: "We Report. You Decide."<sup>6</sup> Below is one example of their coverage that occurred during the first few weeks of the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip that began at the end of June 2006:

*A Fox correspondent stands in Gaza, describing the empty scene in which Israel has reportedly 'cut Gaza in half,' when shots appear to be flying towards him and he is forced to end the report.*

Presenter A: Scary.

Presenter B: But I just don't understand. They have...it says 'press'...that's the colour, that's international...

Presenter A: Bad guys shoot at anything.

Presenter B: Right...but it's Israel.

Presenter C: Uh...but it's also...if, if he's correct and again, we don't know who exactly was shooting at him...but the other guys there are trying to protect themselves-

Presenter A: Completely shifting gears, are you a rotten speller?

(Fox News, 13th July 2006)

Presenter A appears extremely confused and cannot comprehend the events he witnessed. Helpful Presenter B tries to ease his confusion by putting the situation into a dialectic that resembles President Bush's rhetoric of good vs. evil – hence "Bad guys shoot at anything." But this just baffles him even further since "it's Israel" and therefore, it follows, Israel can not possibly be shooting since they are not the "bad guys".

Granted this example is not the result of an in-depth analysis of Fox News' coverage of the most recent incursions into Gaza by the Israelis, nor is it meant to paint a definitive picture of their reporting. Still, it provides a demonstration of the construction of reality that takes place by presenters on behalf of the audience and the danger of neglecting contextualization in favour of what appears to be a preconceived narrative.

## UK coverage of the 2006 Israeli-Gaza crisis

While not as explicit as the seemingly impulsive and simplified dialectic applied to coverage of Israel's actions by Fox News, as presented above, coverage within the UK is fraught with a common narrative that is left almost entirely unquestioned.

In every headline, in every teaser, in every opening remark, the 2006 Israeli attack on Gaza was narrated as a response to the captured Israeli soldier, Cpl Gilad Shalit. It is certainly the case that hours after the capture of Cpl Shalit by the military wing of the ruling Palestinian Hamas party, Izzedine al-Qassam, the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) and the previously unknown Army of Islam, "dozens of Israeli tanks, backed by helicopter gunships, pushed into the Gaza strip" (BBC News online, World Edition, 25th June 2006).<sup>7</sup> From that point forward the narrative was set: the ensuing conflict between Israel and Gaza began with the June 25th capture of Cpl Shalit by Palestinian militants.

This narrative fits the common stereotypical scenario of action followed by response and retaliation. This scenario is inherently simplistic and lacks context, but more importantly it mimics the narrative pattern that has been consistently found in previous analyses of UK coverage of this conflict: precisely that the Palestinians perform an 'act' of aggression to which the Israeli's must 'respond'.<sup>8</sup> By selectively concentrating on Palestinian action (here: the capture of Cpl Shalit), even though in this case it directly proceeds Israeli action, a cycle of violence is again solidified in the minds of the audience and blame inevitably falls on the Palestinians without consideration of the context nor any historical conditions. Greg Philo and Mike Berry's audience research demonstrates how this narrative pattern is transferred<sup>9</sup> to the audience and revealed in focus group discussions such as this conversation with a student group in Glasgow:

Female Speaker: You always think of the Palestinians as being really aggressive because of the stories you hear



on the news. I always put the blame on them in my own head.

Moderator: Is it presented as if the Palestinians somehow start it and then the Israelis follow on?

Female Speaker: Exactly, I always think the Israelis are fighting back against the bombings that have been done to them.

(Philo and Berry 2004:222)

The same narrative is also exposed within a news writing exercise where focus group members were given photographs from TV news coverage and asked to write a news item. Narrative-consistent phrases that continually arose within content analysis of TV coverage (following September 2000) appeared in the output:

*“Israeli army retaliates”, “[Israeli] government reaction”, “Israeli army retaliated”, “Israelis responded”, “In response to Palestinian attacks”* (2004: 228-229, original italics).

So why did this narrative damage public understanding of the conflict on this occasion? Because the context within which the apparent *beginning* of the conflict (Cpl Shalit’s capture) transpired is extremely relevant to an understanding of the crisis – particularly since significant Israeli actions against the Palestinians in Gaza occurred during the month leading up to Cpl Shalit’s capture. The following are excerpts from BBC News online articles that appeared during the month of June, leading up to Cpl Shalit’s capture on June 25th.

#### **Wanted militant dies in Gaza raid**

A senior Palestinian official in the Gaza Strip has died in an Israeli air strike in the town of Rafah.

Samhadana, a senior security chief in the Hamas-led government, was one of four killed in the attack on a training camp, which injured seven others.

He was one of Israel’s most wanted men in Gaza, and was thought to be involved in a 2003 attack on a US convoy.

A spokesman for the PRC vowed to *“open the gates of hell”* in response.

They fired their weapons in the air and *swore that they would strike back at Israel*, our correspondent says.

(BBC News online, World Edition, 8th June 2006, added italics)<sup>10</sup>

#### **Palestinians killed on Gaza beach**

Seven people, including three children, have been killed by Israeli shells which hit a beach in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials say.

At least 30 people were wounded in the shelling, they say.

In a statement, the military wing of Hamas *threatened to resume attacks* on Israel in the wake of “massacres”.

The group has been observing a *self-imposed ceasefire* for more than a year.

“What the Israeli occupation forces are doing in the Gaza Strip constitutes a war of extermination and bloody massacres against our people,” Mr Abbas said.

(BBC News online, World Edition, 9th June 2006, added italics and bold)<sup>11</sup>

#### **Israel captures pair in Gaza raid**

Israeli soldiers have *seized two Palestinian men* in an overnight raid into the southern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said the two brothers were members of the militant group Hamas and were planning attacks on Israel.

Hamas said they were sons of a member but were not involved in Hamas. It *called the abduction a crime*.

(BBC News online, World Edition, 24th June 2006, added italics and bold)<sup>12</sup>

Before exploring this context, it is critical to note that Israel also has grievances of their own, even though no articles detailing them occurred during the month prior to Cpl Shalit’s capture. While suicide bombings perpetrated by Palestinians are extremely poignant events that should be categorically condemned, Hamas renounced suicide bombing as a strategy of resistance against Israeli occupation and entered into an unofficial ceasefire in the spring of 2005.<sup>13</sup> But Islamic Jihad rejected



Huda Ghaliya cries beside the body of her father, who was killed in an explosion on a Gaza beach on June 9.

Hamas’ ceasefire and has continued this strategy. Also, Qassam rocket fire has become a mounting concern for the Israelis as this Palestinian militant activity of firing what many media outlets refer to as “crude missiles” began to increase in June 2006. Still, according to Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, 8 Israeli civilians have been killed by Qassam gunfire during a 25 month period of June 2004 to July 2006 while Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) actions within Gaza claiming to be an attempt to stop these Qassam rockets during a much shorter 4 week period of 26th June to 24th July resulted in the deaths of 126 Palestinians.<sup>14</sup>

Although a comparison of casualty figures lacks important context, it is still valid to note that according to B’Tselem, between 29th September 2000 and 15th September 2006, 3,824 Palestinians were killed by Israelis while 1011 Israelis were killed by Palestinians. Included in these figures are 764 Palestinian minors and 119 Israeli minors. This is particularly important in light of the general public’s lack of understanding of this conflict, which finds beliefs among many British, German, and American students that more Israelis have been killed than Palestinians or that both sides have suffered equally in terms of casualties.<sup>15</sup> Many more issues are involved in this conflict that are too complex to discuss within the space available here (Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza, water, restrictions on Palestinian movement, residency, destruction of property, detainees and prisoners, east Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, the separation barrier, to name a few).

To explore the missing context that is implied by the inclusion of the above BBC online articles, it is important that UK television news reporting<sup>16</sup> of these events that preceded Cpl Shalit’s capture during the month of June 2006 as well as the coverage of the first few days following his capture is analysed (up to and including 29th June<sup>17</sup>).

The first story found on BBC News online regarding the death of senior Palestinian official Jamal Abu Samhadana on 8th June 2006 was not covered except when mentioned the following day in relation to the “Gaza beach violence”. For this report, all news outlets showed the gripping footage of the young girl Huda Ghaliya wailing for her father on the beach as she discovered her dead family members. Of course good pictures are a prerequisite for television news and Huda’s exasperation was highlighted. Blame for Israel appeared to be the running headline but within each report, with the exception of ITV,<sup>18</sup> Israel’s responsibility was questioned in some manner. Since this time the Israeli army’s investigation has unequivocally concluded that they should bear no blame since they did not even fire any shells at the beach that day. Opposing this, Human Rights Watch military expert Mark Garlasco claimed that Israeli shelling was the cause after an examination of forensic evidence at the scene, doctor’s reports, and witness statements which he claims were unavailable for the Israeli investigation.

Also, each station’s coverage is more defiant than

BBC online reports regarding the end of Hamas’ ceasefire.<sup>19</sup> This is significant since the end of Hamas’ self-imposed ceasefire and vows to attack Israel could have later been used as reference points when Cpl Shalit was captured in order for the audience to gain a greater understanding of the context within which this operation occurred. Samhadana’s death is also mentioned<sup>20</sup> as well as the deaths of 3 more Palestinians by Israeli air strikes that same day (9th June).<sup>21</sup> These references create a climate in which the public might expect a “response” by Palestinian militant groups, a “retaliation” against Israeli “actions” – yet references to these events are nearly imperceptible once Cpl Shalit is captured and the crisis appears to, according to the narrative, *officially begin*. Lastly, on the same day of Gaza’s “beach violence”, Jeremy Bowen – the BBC’s Middle East editor whose role was “enhanced”<sup>22</sup> in response to the BBC Governors Impartiality Review of BBC Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, published in April 2006<sup>23</sup> – sat in the BBC studio and rhetorically asked if Israel is acting disproportionately, and if this is the case, accusations of war crimes could occur under international law. He also likened the recent Israeli actions (that day’s killings and Samhadana’s death) to a “particular advantage” for the Palestinians since, for a while at least, “Palestinians internationally will have a sense of being on the moral high ground” (BBC1, evening news, 9th June 2006).

The third story referenced above in the BBC online excerpts regarding the Israeli raid into the Gaza Strip (despite their withdrawal from the region last September 2005<sup>24</sup>) and the seizure of two brothers on the day before Cpl Shalit’s capture by Palestinian militants was not reported on TV news. MIT Professor Noam Chomsky regards this Israeli action as a more severe issue under international humanitarian law than the Palestinian militants’ capture of Cpl Shalit since these acts took place under the context of a conflict wherein the Palestinian brothers are civilians yet Cpl Shalit is a soldier.<sup>25</sup> At the time of the incident Israelis claimed that the two brothers were members of the militant wing of Hamas, as quoted above in the BBC online news source, but no further Israeli comments have yet been found.<sup>26</sup>

Once Cpl Shalit is captured on 25th June, statements from Hamas regarding reasons for this action appear on BBC News online but are rarely mentioned in any televised coverage.<sup>27</sup> The death of Samhadana, recent deaths of civilians, and targeted killings of militant leaders are quoted online as instigators for Hamas’ “response”. What is not revealed to viewers is that the termination of Hamas’ approximately year-long ceasefire in “response” to Israeli “actions” and hence the expectation that a “retaliation” (note the reversal of the traditional mainstream narrative) could occur, which might include this very incident of the capture of an Israeli soldier. The only references to Israeli actions that could have inflamed Palestinian militants are found deep within reports – generally



in terms of “celebrations” inside Gaza following Cpl Shalit’s capture, said to likely be related to the “more than a dozen Palestinian civilians” recently killed by Israeli forces (BBC1, evening news, 26th June 2006). Most of the time the reports begin with descriptions of the continued “hunt for the soldier” – for instance, BBC correspondent James Reynolds says, “Somewhere here in Gaza, amidst the flames and the dark there is a kidnapped Israeli soldier. With bombs and shells Israel is trying to get him back.” (BBC1, evening news, 28th June 2006).

Channel 4 News offers the most critical coverage by often fiercely questioning guests from both sides of the conflict. Presenter Jon Snow begins to make reference to the hidden context during an interview by mentioning the conditions under which citizens of the Gaza Strip have “not been safe ever since the [Israeli] pullout” since there has been “tremendous military activity above and from the land against them” (Channel 4 News, 26th June 2006). As well, Channel 4 refers to previous prisoner bargains that Israel has partaken in, thereby reflecting upon alternative options that may be available (27th June 2006) and goes so far as to mention that it “seems more like an exercise of retribution rather than a well-planned rescue mission” (28th June 2006). And finally, the most significant contextualization occurs again on Channel 4 when Jon Snow asks an Independent MP in the Palestinian Parliament, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, if “it wasn’t great timing” for the Palestinian militants to capture Cpl Shilat since a major breakthrough between Hamas and Fatah had just been occurring.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Barghouti responds with a list of grievances against Israeli actions that have occurred (air raids, artillery bombardments, large numbers of civilian deaths, etc.) and in so doing provides a context for the operation in which Cpl Shilat was captured that extends the narrative beyond the traditional media interpretation and allows for flexibility in the view that Palestinians have simply “started it again”. While Channel 4 News has provided the most instances of these types of revelations in comparison to the other news outlets examined, they are still buried within interviews and far removed from the headlines, teasers and opening lines that tend to receive the most vociferous attention and thereby are more likely to solidify the traditional stereotypical narrative that often accompanies coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On a final note, the BBC Governors review of coverage of this conflict recommended that ‘a stronger editorial “Guiding Hand” be provided, which has come in the form of the newly “enhanced” role of BBC Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen, as well as encouragement that the BBC “be more proactive in explaining the complexities of the conflict.” It was suggested that the latter could be fulfilled through “directly linking broadcast programmes to related background available online.”<sup>29</sup> As the above analysis of the BBC’s online coverage demonstrates, there is certainly more information online and presenters on the evening news programme have directed viewers to the website on occasion – but the stereotypical narrative still remains. In fact, it is even enhanced when multiple stories are interrupted within the webpage by a “Gaza Crisis Timeline” that unambiguously reaffirms the traditional narrative associated with this conflict in that Palestinian “action” begins a crisis, inevitably to be followed by Israeli “response” and “retaliation”.<sup>30</sup> With respect to the former recommendation, Bowen appears regularly on BBC evening news programmes in addition to correspondents and offers deeper analysis of the conflict. While he does mention important issues such as the Geneva Convention which prohibits “attacks on objects indispensable to civilians” and “collective punishment”, they appear dislocated since they are vague references with only implicit reference to Israel (BBC1, evening news, 29th June 2006). If

the intention is to maintain a safe distance from direct accusations against one party in the conflict, including more studio guests, akin to Channel 4, could provide more opportunity for deeper analysis of such issues. On another occasion Bowen gives an emotive, very detailed description of a suicide bombing from 9th August 2001 as a means of clarifying Israel’s stance towards Hamas,<sup>31</sup> which provides appropriate context but unfortunately neglects to inform viewers – many of whom are already struggling to comprehend the situation – that Hamas has not been involved in suicide bombings since August 2004. However, the same style of emotive, very detailed descriptions of Israeli actions against Palestinians was not included when Bowen shifted his “balance” to the other foot (BBC1, evening news, 28th June 2006).

### Final remarks

Even though mainstream media broadcasters assert their commitment to balance, fairness and impartiality, covering conflicts as politicized and hotly contested as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a challenging venture. It involves a difficult process of not only identifying the range of views that are present regardless of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the relative public relations machines involved, and ignoring the external pressure of well-organised lobby groups, but also a concerted attempt to fully represent this range of perspective. Also, since much of the public suffers from a lack of understanding, broadcasters should be encouraged to adopt new strategies to combat this problem in order to provide a more appropriate historical and contextual analysis. Advising viewers to “go to the website” for further information cannot be the only solution – particularly when a personal computer and availability of the internet is not accessible to everyone. Nevertheless, the existing factors that continue to push potentially well-intentioned broadcasters to embrace stereotypical patterns of narratives within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be further explored.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As of 2005, 72% of people mention television as their main source of world news and 94% believe it is important for TV news to be impartial (compared to 90% for radio and 84% for newspapers). Source: Office of Communications (2006) *The Communications Market 2006*. London: Ofcom.
- <sup>2</sup> Of course accidents, natural disasters, and other such phenomena occur and are likely to be newsworthy enough to be covered. Yet even once they have happened – and the same holds true for an ongoing military conflict – a mainstream news organisation will assign someone to cover it and therefore planning begins immediately and staff will know that news relating to the event will be incorporated into the broadcast for the next few days.
- <sup>3</sup> The section on production factors within Greg Philo and Mike Berry’s book *Bad News from Israel* (2004) explores this issue. Also, the author’s own ongoing PhD research has also arrived at similar conclusions.
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2006/06/gaza\\_stories.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2006/06/gaza_stories.html)
- <sup>5</sup> Both quotes are from Philo, G. and Berry, M. (2004) *Bad News from Israel*. London: Pluto Press. See p. 246.
- <sup>6</sup> Within the United States, the median viewership of Fox News has risen steadily since 2001 and registered an increase of 9% between 2004 and 2005. Meanwhile, the other two most popular news stations (CNN and MSNBC) have remained relatively stable over this same time period but show losses of 11% and 2% respectively from 2004 to 2005. Source: Project for Excellence in Journalism analysis of Nielsen Media Research data. For more information see: [http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2006/narrative\\_cabletv\\_audience.asp?cat=3&media=6](http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2006/narrative_cabletv_audience.asp?cat=3&media=6)
- <sup>7</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5114072.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/5114072.stm)
- <sup>8</sup> Philo, G. and Berry, M. (2004) *Bad News from Israel*. London: Pluto Press.
- <sup>9</sup> Media messages are not merely transferred, as the ‘hypodermic needle’ theory of audience reception would suggest, but for audience members with a limited understanding of, in this case, the conflict these narrative patterns are more likely to be absorbed without extended deliberation.

<sup>10</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5062360.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/5062360.stm)

<sup>11</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5065008.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/5065008.stm)

<sup>12</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5112846.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/5112846.stm)

<sup>13</sup> ‘The last Hamas attack was a double suicide bombing on two buses in the southern Israeli town of Beersheba in August 2004 that left 16 dead.’ Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/3256858.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3256858.stm)

<sup>14</sup> For more information see: <http://www.btselem.org/English/index.asp>

<sup>15</sup> Here are responses to the question, asked in 2002, ‘Which side has had the most casualties? Is it a lot more Israelis, a few more Israelis, about the same for each, a few more Palestinians or a lot more Palestinians?’: 35% of British students knew Palestinians had a lot more, 43% thought there were more Israelis or that casualties were the same for each; and results showed respectively 24% and 51% for German students, followed by 18% and 47% for US students. Source: Philo, G. and Berry, M. (2004) *Bad News from Israel*. London: Pluto Press. See p. 231.

<sup>16</sup> Programmes considered are BBC1 evening news, BBC2 Newsnight, Channel 4 News, and ITV.

<sup>17</sup> This timeframe was chosen to allow for some coverage of Israeli attacks (for instance on Gaza’s only power station) and responses from the media to these actions.

<sup>18</sup> The only hint of uncertainty is seen with the report claiming it ‘appears’ that Israel is accountable.

<sup>19</sup> According to online reports Hamas ‘threatened’ to resume attacks while televised reports claimed that Hamas’ ‘called off ceasefire,’ will ‘resume attacks on Israel,’ ‘Hamas says its ceasefire is dead too’, and Hamas will ‘renew attacks’ (BBC1, Channel 4, Newsnight, and ITV respectively).

<sup>20</sup> His death is mentioned on all stations except ITV.

<sup>21</sup> ITV News notes that these strikes followed the firing of a rocket into Israel by Palestinian militants.

<sup>22</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/5096050.stm>

<sup>23</sup> Find the full reports here: [http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk/docs/rev\\_israelipalestinian.html](http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk/docs/rev_israelipalestinian.html)

<sup>24</sup> Although Israel still maintained control of Gaza’s borders, air and beaches after the withdrawal.

<sup>25</sup> As heard on US radio show Democracy Now on 14th July 2006. Source: <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/07/14/146258>

<sup>26</sup> It is not yet known what will happen to these individuals – possible scenarios include their release, charges being placed by Israel, or their status changing to ‘administrative detainees.’

<sup>27</sup> ‘A spokesman for Gaza’s Popular Resistance Committee said they carried out the attack on the military post in revenge for the death of their leader, Jamal Abu Samhadana, in an Israeli strike.’ (25th June 2006 - [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5114072.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/5114072.stm))

‘Hamas said the operation was a response to recent deaths of civilians and the targeted killings of two militant leaders.’ (26th June 2006 - [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5115890.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/5115890.stm))

<sup>28</sup> Relating to the agreement by Hamas and Fatah to a document, developed by Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, which backed a two-state solution, among other details. However, the question of acknowledging Israel – implicitly or otherwise – remains a major point of contention.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk/docs/rev\\_israelipalestinian.html](http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk/docs/rev_israelipalestinian.html)

<sup>30</sup> There are many instances of this, for example see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/5131404.stm> :

Sun 25 June: Cpl Shalit Gilad captured in cross-border attack

Mon 26 June: Palestinian Popular Resistance Committees demand prisoner releases in exchange for Gilad

Tues 27 June: Israel launches air strikes on Gaza, military enters southern strip

Thurs 29 June: Israel detains dozens of Hamas officials

<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation by Israel, the United States and the European Union.