



# ***ISRAEL MATTERS!***

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## **Hamas, Israel, and the *New York Times***

*Israel Matters* readers have no doubt noticed that when it comes to the October 7 Hamas massacre of Israelis and the war that ensued, reporting by the *New York Times*, America's most revered newspaper, seems to have veered from relaying the facts of the conflict to a narrative that evokes sympathy for Palestinians while downplaying Israel's side of the story. The extent to which the "Gray Lady" has pursued such a narrative, however, has never been studied systematically – until now.

Yale professor (and deputy dean of the management school) Edieal Pinker, an expert in quantitative analysis, has produced a blockbuster paper titled "An Analysis of the New York Times Coverage of the War Between Israel and Hamas." His study, publicly available at the Social Science Research Network site SSRN.com, is based upon the text of 1,561 articles that were published in the *New York Times* between October 7, 2023 and June 7, 2024.

As will be detailed below, what makes his analysis so powerful is his contrast of *NY Times* reporting with the documented *Israeli* casualties of the war as reported by the Armed Conflict Location and Event database and the IDF; the number of Palestinian casualties published by Hamas is routinely cited.

Here in Prof. Pinker's own words is what he found:

1. The dominant summary description of the war is that Hamas attacked Israel on October 7th,

2023 killing 1200 Israelis, and Israel's military response has killed X thousand Palestinians with X increasing over time.

2. Mention of the Israeli hostages is often left out of the above summary.

3. Mentions of Israeli violence is extensive.

4. Mentions of Palestinian violence post-October 7th is rare and at odds with actual events.

5. Mentions of Israeli casualties after October 7th is relatively infrequent and out of sync with actual Israeli casualties.

6. There are many articles whose main topic is some aspect of Palestinian suffering with many personal accounts of such suffering.

7. Very few articles mention any Israeli suffering that is not directly related to the events of October 7th.

It is important to understand that the findings above are the *results of* a detailed study of *NY Times* articles about the war. Of the 1,561 articles included in this study, 895 or fully 70% fit the summary description in the first point above! Regarding points #4 and #5, 1,423 of the 1,561 articles did not mention the deaths of Hamas combatants, nor did they mention Israeli casualties post-October. While there was actual, heavy fighting happening on the ground in Gaza, from the perspective of the *New York Times*, it seems that Israeli soldiers are fighting civilians or shadows, not Hamas. In fact, Israel lost 364 soldiers during the time period covered by the

study, with an additional several thousand wounded.

Pinker's study also provides a novel way of understanding how a regular reader of the *New York Times* encounters this narrative by focusing on the frequency with which readers would come across different types of stories. For example, personal stories of Palestinian suffering were reported on two out of every three days on average. With respect to Israeli casualties, there were ten streaks each lasting at least one week where there were no stories mentioning Hamas casualties, which obviously leaves the impression that Palestinian casualties are all civilian.

Israel was mentioned more than Hamas in 93% of the 1,561 articles in the study, while in total Israel was mentioned more than 27,000 times compared to 8,500 mentions of Hamas. The impression left is that Israel has all of the agency behind this conflict, with Palestinian civilians bearing the cost.

In January, the former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in an interview with the *Times*, called the lack of news coverage of Hamas "astounding." Blinken stated "You hear virtually nothing from anyone since October 7 about Hamas. Why there hasn't been a unanimous chorus around the world for Hamas to put down its weapons, to give up the hostages, to surrender?" Prof. Pinker's study suggests an answer – the narrative promoted by the *New York Times* minimizes the role of Hamas while promoting Israel as the agent behind this conflict.