

204-220 Townsite Rd
Nanaimo, BC, V9S 5S8
January 18, 2024

CBC Ombudsman
PO Box 500, Stn A
Toronto, Ont. M5W 1E6

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of the Nanaimo chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to urge fairer coverage of the conflict in Palestine/Gaza, coverage that is free of the current political influences.

Below is a copy of a letter sent to the CBC by the Mid-Islanders for Justice and Peace in the Middle East. We write in support of the points made in this letter, particularly, the lack of context for the Hamas attack on Israel, the Occupation and the terrible consequences for the Palestinian people, the war crimes being carried out by Israel.

We are concerned, as well, with the framing, point of view and language used by CBC reporters and interviewers detailed in the letter below.

Crimes are being committed against humanity with our government's complicity and this is being ignored by our public broadcaster.

Canadians are forced to look now for more reliable information from sources such as UNICEF and Doctors without Borders.

It is time for the CBC to live up to its commitment for informed debate on important issues.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dyane Brown", written in a cursive style.

Dyane Brown

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Nanaimo chapter

Letter to CBC

Mid-Islanders for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
October 31, 2023

We are writing to express our dismay regarding your coverage of the conflict in Palestine / Israel, specifically the continuing massacre and potential genocide in Gaza, and we are asking CBC to seriously consider the following critical points and to **make immediate efforts to provide coverage that relies less on Israeli and U.S. talking points and provides opportunities for other voices.**

The **CBC's stated mission** is to "serve the public interest": "to inform, to reveal, to contribute to the understanding of issues of public interest and to encourage citizens to participate in our free and democratic society." It claims "to be independent of all lobbies and of all political and economic influence."

It is our view that, with respect to this conflict at least, **the CBC is abjectly failing to live up to its mission and these claims.**

Context

You rightly condemned the Hamas incursion on October 7 but provided no perspective on what might have motivated it, namely the **70-year illegal occupation**, complete with illegal settlements, land dispossession, home demolitions, restrictions on movement, arbitrary and abusive detention and imprisonment, torture and other ill-treatment, unlawful killings – and many other abuses that have been well documented.

Other facts critical to contextual background:

- The Israeli **occupation is unlawful under international law** (UN Commission of Inquiry), and the settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories violate international humanitarian law and constitute a war crime (Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention). Yet, on the *National* on October 26, the CBC said "settlements [in the Occupied Territories] are *considered* illegal by many in the international community. No – they *are* illegal.
- Punishing civilians in Gaza for the actions of Hamas fighters is collective punishment and a **war crime under international law**. This has been occurring in Gaza for at least 16 years.
- NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have determined that Israel is committing the **crime of apartheid**.
- All of these injunctions against Israel are backed up by dozens of **UN Security Council Resolutions** going back decades.

This crucial context is nowhere to be found in your reporting on this conflict.

We insist that violations of international law and war crimes are worthy of investigation and discussion, especially at this critical moment. It is the **CBC's obligation** to introduce these matters in accordance with your commitment to "invest our time and our skills to learn, understand and clearly explain the facts to our audience" (CBC Mission).

In contrast, one quick search on your web page produces dozens of stories on Vladimir Putin's war crimes and his arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court.

CBC's Use of Language

In addition to this lack of context, the CBC's use of framing, point-of-view, and language contribute to a **distorted understanding of this conflict**. For instance:

- On numerous occasions your reporters have asked Palestinian supporters to condemn Hamas' actions, but never do we see pro-Israeli spokespersons asked to do the same about the actions of Israel.
- The CBC insists on referring to Palestinian violence as "terrorism," whereas Israeli violence is "self-defence"; similarly, Israelis are "killed," whereas Palestinians "died," etc.
- Daily, the CBC reports that "Israel has been carrying out targeted raids" (CBC Radio, Oct. 27/23), when in fact, these "targets" are never verified.
- Regarding the attack on the al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, the CBC uncritically accepted the "official" explanation, despite considerable evidence that it was an Israeli rocket, and despite Israel's well-documented track record of targeting health facilities (as well as schools, ambulances, UN personnel, refugee camps, etc.). Furthermore, there has been little to no follow-up on the attack on the hospital, and the story has effectively disappeared from discussion, something, we believe, would not be the case if there was solid proof that Hamas was responsible for the hospital attack.

Media blackout in Gaza

There is essentially a media blackout in Gaza, and journalists themselves have been targeted by Israel. It is nearly impossible for outside reporters to get into Gaza, even from Israel. Israeli bombs have already killed 26 journalists in the Gaza Strip since October 7, and there is evidence that Israel is targeting journalists' families. **But this important context is not even mentioned by the CBC**, never mind investigated.

While it is not the CBC's fault that it has little to no access to Gaza or its citizens, CBC journalists, if they are paying attention, should expose, or at minimum mention, **Israel's obvious strategy here to prevent critical evidence in Gaza from being presented to your audience**.

In addition, we see little attempt by the CBC to reach out to the hundreds of medical personnel who are dealing with the trauma of attending to the thousands of victims. Why have you not interviewed, for instance, Dr. Mads Gilbert, Norwegian physician and humanitarian, who has worked extensively in Gaza? He is readily available, and has much to say about the Gaza death toll, as well as the attack on the al-Ahli Arab Hospital. Not only could he provide an opportunity for you to honour your commitment to presenting a "diversity of opinion" (CBC Mission), but

his evidence could lend some balance **the story on your web page which insinuated that the death tolls have been exaggerated**("Gaza death tolls: How the Health Ministry arrives at the numbers, and why they're criticized," Oct. 27/23).

If you are unable to access such sources and evidence, we insist that this constraint on your ability to do so is a critical part of the story, and **your audience deserves to know why this important perspective is missing from the record.**

CBC Purposely Ignoring an Important Public Statement

Another major story completely ignored by the CBC is the fact that **more than 800 scholars of international law and genocide have signed a public statement arguing that the Israeli military may be committing genocidal acts against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.** The directive by Israel's defense minister to impose a "complete siege" on the Gaza Strip, prohibiting the supply of fuel, electricity, water, and other essential necessities, is considered potentially genocidal by these scholars. They have called on the world to "take concrete and meaningful steps to individually and collectively prevent genocidal acts, in line with their legal duty to prevent the crime of genocide." Furthermore:

- Israeli officials are also using **dehumanising language** that could be seen as a precursor and incitement to genocide. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that "we are fighting human animals and we act accordingly," and that "Gaza won't return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything." Israeli Maj. Gen. Ghassan Alian said that "human animals must be treated as such. There will be no electricity and no water, there will only be destruction. You wanted hell, you will get hell."

- Israeli historian, Raz Segal, an expert in Holocaust and genocide studies, asserted that Israel's actions in Gaza since October 7 constitute **"a textbook case of genocide."**

How, then, are these **extremely important statements** by hundreds of experts not worthy of prominent presentation and extensive discussion on CBC outlets?

We seriously doubt that there would be no discussion of such an alarming assertion if a Muslim country were indiscriminately bombing an enclave in Israel with the same level of casualties that Gaza is experiencing. Or if Putin said, about Ukrainian civilians, that "human animals must be treated as such," almost certainly that would be repeated daily on CBC outlets.

Does it not "serve the public interest" (CBC Mission) to expose such perniciously racist language for what it is – **an incitement to genocide**? Have any Canadian government officials been asked by the CBC if their steadfast support of Israel is in any way compromised by what appears to be officially-sanctioned racism as a precursor in Israel, in the service of this incitement to genocide?

Little Coverage of Mass Protests Against Collective Punishment

Global protests against the slaughter of Palestinians have been occurring these past weeks – tens of thousands of people have marched in opposition to Israel's crimes and their governments' complicity in them. There is almost **zero coverage on your sites of these critical**

demonstrations by ordinary people all over the world, who have pronounced a verdict on the complicity of their governments in the mass slaughter of civilians, especially children.

Moreover **UNICEF** recently stated that “the situation in the Gaza Strip is a **growing stain on our collective conscience**. The rate of death and injuries of children is simply staggering.” This impassioned declaration by the most established and credible NGO in the world should be followed up by our media, but nowhere on any CBC sites can we find interviews with UNICEF representatives, or any questions posed to Canadian officials (such as Canada’s Ambassador to the UN) to respond to this disquieting statement.

We appreciate that, after decades of pressure and conditioning to use the “correct” language regarding Israel, the framing and the words flow automatically – our group is quite familiar with such tactics. However, given the unimaginable crisis unfolding in front of our eyes – a potential genocide – **media outlets have a moral obligation to critically examine their framing language and to provide their audience with crucial historical context**.

The CBC needs to find the courage to report the truth – which in this case amounts to exposing the **crimes against humanity** of an apartheid regime and **Canada’s complicity** in this. Your reporting aligns with Israel’s talking points in too many places, and worse, it often insinuates that the problem is more “nuanced” than your viewers appreciate, which is intellectual dishonesty of the highest order.

One or two images of dead or injured Palestinians does not achieve the “balance” that you appear to hope will assuage the many people in this country who see the relentless slaughter of innocent children, and their silent exclusion from the narrative, for what they truly are – crimes against humanity. **Our public broadcaster needs to stop its complicity in these crimes** and live up to its commitment to “contribute to informed debate on issues that matter to Canadians” (CBC Mission).

Thank you.

Mid Islanders for Justice and Peace in the Middle East



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