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MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT – CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS

*Giorgi Abazadze*¹

¹ Mass communication at Caucasus International University

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Abstract

Another wave of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict has claimed the lives of many people already; There are also civilians among them. With the advent of each active phase of this century-old conflict, a two-way discussion layer emerges in the media – human rights problems and moral issues of war become relevant. The role of the media is undoubtedly important; He is responsible for helping to overcome the conflict between Israel and Aphrodisiac on the one hand, and on the other hand, to provide the world with real information on the processes.

The 2023 processes also caused a big wave in the information sphere. Now the review of issues and the coverage of conflict processes in the media are becoming even more careful.

Keywords: *Israel, Palestine, stories, Zionism, extremism, violence, hatred, mosque*

Introduction

Our research area is the processes of covering the Israeli and Palestinian conflict in the media; Consequences and problems.

In the paper, we used the historical and comparative approach of qualitative research.

Our goal is to examine the role the media played in the emergence of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Based on the materials we have studied, we have come to the conclusion that the information spread in the media significantly strained the situation between Israel and Palestine. As a result, we came to the conclusion that the contribution of information media in the process of inciting conflicts is undoubtedly great and requires caution.

Religiosity in the global information age includes the following elements:

- **Religion and religiosity in the global information society do not lose their significance and acquire a new quality;**
- **We observe processes of religious secularization and the sacralization of secularization;**
- **Traditional religions have acquired new sociocultural meanings;**
- **Religious organizations base their activities on market laws;**
- **There is a deterritorialization of religious communities;**
- **New religious movements are emerging;**

- **Growing interest in non-traditional manifestations of religion, mysticism, occultism, and esotericism;**
- **The threats of religious extremism and terrorism are increasing;**
- **The role of religion in the political and economic life of society is increasing;**

Coverage of religious conflicts in the media becomes particularly relevant, as there is constant tension among people of different religions worldwide. The aim of our research is to determine the role of the media in covering religious conflicts. In particular, how religious conflicts are portrayed in the media and what specific outcomes exist for the parties involved in the conflict.

In considering the delicate balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility, it is crucial for European nations to protect both freedom of speech and religious rights. Collaborative efforts can significantly contribute to achieving a more balanced approach, promoting harmonious coexistence among different religious communities.

It is impossible to avoid covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a religious perspective.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is caused by several factors: ethnic, national, historical, and religious. However, we will focus solely on the religious dimension. It is intriguing to explore the extent to which religion influences the identity, politics, and perspectives of participants in this conflict.

First, several religious factors related to Islam and Judaism are significant. The extreme religious Zionists in Israel adhere strictly to their beliefs and are resistant to making concessions to the Arabs. Conversely, Islamist groups in Palestine and the wider Islamic world advocate for the liberation of “holy” areas and sites for religious reasons, often promoting violence and animosity towards Israel and the Jewish people. Tensions are further exacerbated by religiously motivated narratives circulating in extremist media outlets, which propagate mistrust and suspicion of the other side’s hidden religious agendas.

The situation has become highly tense, fueled by widespread rumors of a “Jewish

plan” to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and erect a Jewish temple in its place.

An article published in 2021 is interesting, where the journalist quotes the words of one of the Jews: “I have no such intention, because God will do it.” “God will destroy Al-Aqsa Mosque and build a third temple on earth instead.” “Everything, including Al-Aqsa, belongs to the Jews, because God created the world only for His holy people, the Jews” Mosque? — (<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/do-israeli-jews-really-see-to-demolish-al-aqsa-mosque/2171703> [source]). Other articles on the mentioned issue are no less provocative and irritating; The article published in April 2023 (Israeli attack on Al Aqsa Mosque: Latest move to demolish the masjid and built Solomon’s Temple — [source](<https://muslimmirror.com/eng/israeli-attack-on-al-aqsa-mosque-latest-move-to-demolish-the-masjid-and-built-solomons-temple/>)), which talks about the desecration of the Aqsa Mosque and the plan to demolish it. The journalist clearly represents the side, he does not simply tell the story, but aggravates the facts with such words as “ruthless”, “cruel”, etc.— “The Israeli police broke the doors and windows to enter al-Aqsa and mercilessly attacked worshipers.” After that, he reminds the reader that: “Al-Aqsa Mosque is an Islamic site where for decades, according to long-standing international agreements, unwanted visits by non-Muslims, prayers and rituals.” However, Palestinians are only allowed into Al-Aqsa Mosque for a limited time, which is feared to be the basis for dividing the mosque between Muslims and Jews, just as the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron was divided in the 1990s. However, Israel’s control of East Jerusalem, including the Old City, violates several principles of international law, which stipulate that an occupying power has no sovereignty over the territory it occupies and cannot make any permanent changes there. Israeli soldiers used batons and rifles to smash Palestinian worshipers inside the al-Qibli prayer hall of al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, sparking outrage around the world. The author ends the article with the following words: “In the face of Jewish barbarism, Palestinians remain the most oppressed and brave fighters in the history of

mankind” (Israeli attack on Al Aqsa Mosque: Latest move to demolish the masjid and built Solomon’s Temple — [source](<https://muslimmirror.com/eng/israeli-attack-on-al-aqsa-mosque-latest-move-to-demolish-the-masjid-and-built-solomons-temple>)). With these words, the author seems to call the Palestinians to fight. It can be said that this kind of provocative talk in the media really achieves its goal, because Palestine and Israel are in a state of war today; One of the main motives of the conflict is religious.

According to Hamas, the “Al-Aqsa storm” has commenced — an attack on Israel aimed at protecting the holy site. Their targets were hundreds of soldiers and civilians. Interestingly, only Muslims are allowed to pray in the building under the status quo agreement reached more than a century ago (source: [Why the Al-Aqsa mosque continues to be a flashpoint of tensions](https://edition.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/al-aqsa-storm-militants-infiltrate-israel-after-gaza-rockets-10-07-intl-hnk/h_39194feb91b8fd11e64aec8eb17d5f7)).

Many in the Muslim world fear that the exclusive right to pilgrimage has been violated and that the mosque itself is in danger. The deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the Arab and Islamic world contributes to the growth of religious radicalism; All this pushes a large part of the youth towards fanaticism and politics inspired by religion.

Religious beliefs often hold a sacred and central place in the lives of individuals, shaping their identity, values, and purpose. However, when freedom of expression intersects with religious sensitivities, conflicts can arise. Conflict often emerges when statements, whether intentional or unintentional, challenge or offend deeply held religious beliefs.

The Charlie Hebdo incident in 2015 serves as a stark example of the tension between freedom of expression and religious sensitivities. The publication of a caricature of the Prophet Muhammad in a satirical magazine sparked outrage in the Muslim world, resulting in tragic consequences. This incident underscored the necessity for societies to uphold respect for religious beliefs while safeguarding the right to freedom of expression.

Achieving the delicate balance between freedom of expression and religious sensi-

tivities necessitates a nuanced approach. Governments, civil society, and religious institutions play pivotal roles in fostering an environment where both rights can coexist harmoniously.

Incidents in Copenhagen and Stockholm, where far-right groups and individuals publicly burned Islam’s holy book, the Quran, ignited a global debate on the fragile equilibrium between freedom of expression and religious sensitivities.

The tragic attacks on the offices of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015 sparked a global debate about the delicate balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility. The editor’s decision to publish caricatures of Muhammad became the subject of judgment. Although the editorial board claimed their actions were in line with European standards of freedom of speech, the fact posed potential existential threats.

The publication of caricatures of Muhammad in “Charlie Hebdo” incited indignation within the global Muslim community. A portion of society argued that these caricatures insulted a significant segment of the population for whom Muhammad is a revered figure. The conflict between the magazine’s right to freedom of expression and the perceived disrespect for religious beliefs underscored the challenge of navigating various cultural and religious sensitivities within democratic values.

Achieving the delicate balance between freedom of expression and religious sensitivities requires a nuanced approach. Governments, civil society, and religious institutions play important roles in fostering an environment where both rights can coexist harmoniously.

Incidents in Copenhagen and Stockholm, where far-right groups and individuals demonstratively burned Islam’s holy book, the Quran, sparked a global debate on the delicate balance between freedom of expression and religious sensitivities.

An Iraqi Christian refugee living in Sweden burned a copy of the Quran outside the Central Mosque in Stockholm. This act caused such an uproar that it necessitated the evacuation of embassy staff after protesters stormed the building.

Two far-right activists destroyed a copy of the Quran in front of the Iraqi embassy in

Copenhagen. Following these incidents, Denmark and Sweden began considering banning religious protests involving the burning of the Quran or any other religious text.

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized the importance of protecting freedom of expression, but also noted that such protests benefit extremists and pose a threat to general security and well-being.

These incidents sparked a debate about the balance between freedom of speech and respect for religious minorities. Both countries are seeking legal remedies to intervene in some circumstances, particularly protests at embassies. However, it has been emphasized that any changes should be made within the framework of freedom of expression protected by the Constitution.

The debate elicited strong reactions throughout the Islamic world, including diplomatic protests and condemnation of the decisions. Conflicting opinions also exist around the granting of permits for demonstrations of a religious nature.

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democratic societies, allowing people to express their opinions and views without fear of censorship or reprisal. In Western democracies, this right is enshrined as a fundamental principle that promotes open discourse, critical thinking, and societal progress. However, insulting religious sentiments in the name of freedom creates tension and calls into question the essence of multicultural coexistence.

Burning religious texts, especially a holy book like the Quran, is clearly a highly provocative act and is likely to have dire consequences.

The incident in Copenhagen and Stockholm was followed by large protests and demonstrations in Islamic countries. They believed that accepting the fact of burning the Quran in itself implies the government's implicit support for this event and contributes to the strengthening of Islamophobia.

The geopolitical consequences of Quran-burning demonstrations turned out to be profound, as reflected in Turkey's response — President Erdoğan decided not to discuss Sweden's accession to NATO precisely because of the encouragement of Islamophobia. Therefore, religious conflicts may have serious consequences for international

relations as well. These incidents have shown us that religious conflicts affect diplomatic alliances and global cooperation.

While freedom of expression is a fundamental right, it also carries with it a responsibility to balance individual freedoms among different communities. When granting permission for demonstrations that offend religious symbols, the expected consequences should be taken into account, considering both the national and international scales. Governments must evaluate both the right to expression and the potential harm it may cause, taking into account the worst consequences of provocative demonstrations.

Officials in Sweden and Denmark consider the Quran-burning demonstrations to be legal, arguing that freedom of expression gave the protesters the right to do so.

This fundamental democratic principle allows people to express their views, even if they are controversial or offensive to some. The Nordic perspective emphasizes the importance of protecting this right and clarifies that actions do not necessarily reflect the government's position. However, the challenge lies in reconciling the legal right to express opinions with the potential consequences that can arise from provocative actions ("Media Critique," 2023). The Prime Minister of Sweden, Ulf Kristerson, acknowledges that the decision made by the Stockholm police to allow the Quran-burning rally is legal. However, he considers it prudent to weigh the potential risks of such demonstrations in the future.

The Prime Minister's statement reveals that numerous applications for such actions have been received, indicating a growing trend that could pose serious risks to the country. Despite expressing concern, Kristerson has no concrete strategies in place to prevent these threats, and there has been no review of the strategy for issuing permits for such activities ("Media Critique," 2023).

The High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of the European Union, Joseph Borrell, also addresses the issue, condemning the Quran-burning demonstrations as a clear provocation and deeming religious hatred and intolerance unacceptable for the European Union. Borrell emphasizes the EU's commitment to supporting freedom of speech while acknowledging ethical considerations

(“Media Critique,” 2023). In considering the delicate balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility, it is crucial that European nations take care to protect both freedom of speech and religious rights. Joint efforts can greatly enhance the balance, promoting harmonious coexistence among different religious communities.

It is a fact that the media landscape is not always free from bias, and some media outlets may exhibit prejudice against particular religious groups. A comprehensive study of religious conflicts must commence by examining historical contexts and investigating the causes of religious tensions. The media can play a vital role in identifying issues that fuel conflicts. A historical perspective allows journalists to understand how religious narratives, political events, and socioeconomic factors have converged to shape the current landscape of religious conflict.

Therefore, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of religious conflicts. Priority should be given to analyzing media coverage without potential bias. Researching how different media outlets portray religious conflicts can shed light on the impact of journalistic choices on public opinion and contribute to media literacy efforts.

Ultimately, the study confirms that the main way to solve the problem is through independent media. Therefore, political freedom of the media is the cornerstone of a democratic society. Independence is critical to maintaining media credibility and public trust. When covering religious conflicts, political freedom allows the media to objectively present the facts — free of political agendas and biases. Independent media should be a reliable source of information for the public, thereby facilitating informed discussions and debates.

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Contact: abazadze58@gmail.com