Examples of Problematic German Media Coverage of the Middle East Conflict

Typical Examples from German and Austrian Print Media, which result in the viewers not only getting a distorted picture of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict, but which also reaffirm anti-Semitic stereotypes and of Jews in general….

Examples of anti-Semitic Imagery…
Examples of when text and imagery have no correlation other than to reinforce a stereotypical image

Title: **Der Krieger als Friedensengel (The warrior as an angle of peace)**

Text/Caption: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP: President George W. Bush in a meeting with orthodox Rabbis a year ago

Why this picture? Well, that is the question. Why was this one year old picture chosen by the Tagesspiegel, if not to suggest that orthodox Jews have major influence over the US president, i.e. reaffirming the old libel that Jews control the world?

Source: Tagesspiegel, 04.06.2003, Page 3

Title: **Alles nach Plan (Everything according to plan)**

Text/Caption: Losing Power? The Ultra-orthodox parties are unlikely to be winners in the elections in Israel on Tuesday. Instead its rivals from the populist Schinui party are likely to gain votes.

Why this picture? Orthodox Jews represent a minority in Israel, (let alone as a percentage of World-Jewry). Nonetheless Tagesspiegel chose a stereotypical picture of an orthodox Jew with a long dark shadow to be the lead picture for an article about the Israeli elections.

Source: Tagesspiegel, 27.01.2003, Page 2

Title: **US-Regierung stimmt Bevölkerung auf Krieg ein (US-Government preparing public for war)**

Caption: Wahlgeheimnis – Secrecy of the vote

Text: An orthodox Jew voting in Jerusalem. Participation during the parliamentary elections in Israel was lower than in years before until Tuesday evening. Favorite to win the election is Likud, the party of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (Report Below)

Why this picture? Again, orthodox Jews represent a minority in Israel, (let alone as a percentage of World-Jewry). Nonetheless the Süddeutsche chose a stereotypical picture of an orthodox Jew with a large emblem of the State of Israel to be the lead frontpage photo for an article dealing with the then upcoming Iraq war, thereby even insinuating a relationship between Jews, Israel and the US led war in Iraq.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 29.01.2004, Frontpage

Source: KURIER, 20. April 2003, Page 7

Title: Israel und die Palästinenser Führung verstehen sich zu positionieren für die Zeit, in der der Frieden ausgehandelt werden soll – VERZAHNTE PROBLEME (Israel and the Palestinian Leadership know how to position themselves for the long run, the time when peace will have to be negotiated – INTRICATE PROBLEMS)

Text/Caption: Ultra-orthodox Jews observe Passover, the festival of Easter. Therewith they observe the remembrance of the freedom of the Israelites after Egyptian slavery

Why this picture? The KURIER adds another aspect to the use of orthodox Jews in photographs dealing with Israeli politics. Here a group of Jews is portrayed as setting a fire, a fire which is linked to the Palestinian conflict, as if this group of Jews were building a front against the Palestinians. A more appropriate picture would have been that of a group of violent Palestinians setting light to large roadblocks, etc.. Additionally one should note that Passover is not the same as Easter. They are two unrelated holidays.

Typical Example of the victims being given the same, if not more attention than the victims, generally reinforcing the imagery of a strong Israel…

Title: Luftangriff auf Hamas-Führer *Title of Article* (**Air raid on Hamas leader***)

Text/Caption: Violence from childhood on: Jewish settlers in Ofra

Why this picture? This picture was shown in a number of German newspapers to show the "violent" nature of Jewish settlers. Fact is that this child is carrying a stone, clearly not throwing it, like many of the Palestinian children, which we, unfortunately, far too rarely get to see in the media She is not violent. She is not attacking anyone. At the same time, there is once again no correlation at all between this picture and the main text, which deals with Hamas.

Source: TAZ, 11.01.2003, Page 10

Title: Friedenshoffung in Nahost erstickt in neuer Gewalt (Hope for peace in the Middle East suffocates in new violence)

Text/Caption: The two faces of suffering: A Palestinian mother (l.) mourning in the village Rantis for her son, one of the assassins from Tuesday. A young Israeli cries for the victims immediately after the violent bomb attack at a cafe in Jerusalem

Why this picture? On the left: the mother of a terrorist, the mother of an assassin; on the right: a mourner for the victims of the murderous attack of this very mother's son. Both pictures are entitled: "two faces of suffering". Both pictures are of equal size and equal attention and sympathy is being given to the murderer as to his victims. (One should note that this mother clearly did not disassociate herself from her son's actions!) Additionally the title of the article is phrased so vaguely, that no one can know whether or not peace is being suffocated by Palestinian terrorists, or Israeli defence measures.

Source: WELT, 11.09.2003, Page 7

When text and imagery have no correlation other than to reinforce a negative image of Israel…

EU-Gelder für Arafat stehen in der Kritik

Source: WELT, 25.01.2003, Page 6

Title: **EU-Gelder für Arafat stehen in der Kritik – Parlamentarier fordern Untersuchungsausschuss, um die Verwendung von 10 Millionen Euro zu überprüfen (EU-Funding for Arafat being criticized – Parliamentarian demanding a Committee of inquiry to examine the use of 10 million Euro**

Text/Caption: Angry Palestinians after the death of a Jihad-activist. Critics keep on criticizing that the survivors of terrorists keep on getting funding from dubious sources

Why this picture? There are many reasons why we chose this picture as an example of biased media coverage of the Middle East conflict. Foremost, however, is the fact, that while the topic of this article points to criticism of Arafat, the PA and the EU, the large, dominating picture points to criticism of the Israeli army, which the careless reader has to assume to have "murdered" some poor "activist". Instead of being critical of the funds abuse and the corruption described in the article, the emotions raised in the reader are those of empathy and sympathy. This is typical for articles in which there is no obvious relation between picture and text.

Hamas lehnt neue Waffenruhe mit Israel ab

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 29.08.2003, Page 11

Title: **Küstenstadt Ashkelon mit Raketen beschossen - Hamas lehnt neue Waffenruhe mit Israel ab (Coastal City Ashkelon attacked with missiles – Hamas refusing to enter into ceasefire with Israel)**

Text/Caption: "Let us live with dignity": A Palestinian woman taking part in a demonstration in Gaza against US Middle-East Politics.

Why this picture? The article deals with the terror organization Hamas, which is refusing to enter into a ceasefire. An obvious picture to accompany such an article would have been one from a Hamas parade, a dressed-up-Hamas-suicide-bomber, or something else to that effect. Instead the oversize picture chosen to accompany this article sets out to get the readers sympathy for the poor, the elderly, women, children, etc., who are supposedly being prevented from being able to live in dignity, because of US Middle East policies, and because of Israel, of course. In the end, an article, which points to criticism of a terror organization, turns into a magnet for sympathy for Palestinians and for anger against the victims of Hamas, the Israelis. The victim becomes the wrongdoer.

Examples of a generally problematic wording and imagery serving to reinforce a negative image of Israel…

Abbas verurteilt Terror

Title: **Reaktion auf neue Anschläge gegen Israelis – Abbas verurteilt Terror – Palästinensischer Premier will aber keinesfalls mit Gewalt gegen Extremisten vorgehen (Reaction to new attacks against Israelis – Abbas condemns terror attacks – Palestinian Prime Minister does not want to use force against extremists, though)**

Text/Caption: Checkpoints in the Westbank: In fear of new terrorist attacks the Israeli army sealed off the borders again

Why this picture? There is absolutely no correlation between the contents of the article, which supposedly deals with PM Abbas condemning terrorism and the chosen photograph. Clearly, the Israeli soldier with his hand on his gun, is being shown as the aggressor, while the Palestinians are being portrayed like this poor, helpless, frightened, unarmed little child. The image which remains in people's minds is not the text, but the picture in front of their eyes!

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 10.06.2003, Page 8

Israel will Hamas liquidieren

Title: **Israel will Hamas liquidieren (Israel wants to liquidate Hamas)**

Text/Caption: Israel's war against Hamas is likely to set all of Gaza ablaze

Why this picture? The clear insinuation here is that Israel is the aggressor and not the party defending itself, i.e. that Israel "will set Gaza ablaze". Additionally, the chosen wording, i.e. that Israel wants to "liquidate" Hamas is radical and again suggests aggression on behalf of Israel. Some people may even associate "liquidation" with the annihilation of Jews, which Hitler had planned in WWII.

Source: TAZ, 13.06.2003, Frontpage

The German media makes Israeli poltics…. The German media portrays who it thinks is good and who is bad…

Wegweiser zum Frieden

Title: **Wegweiser zum Frieden (Guide to the peace)**

Text/Caption: CHANCE FOR BETTER TIMES? Amram Mizna, hope carrier of the Israeli work party, looks at the Palestinian city Jenin.

Why this picture? During the Israeli elections the German media did not merely report neutrally about events in Israel, it chose its own candidate to support – some more obviously than others. The Tagesspiegel could not have been more clear about whom it supported. Amram Mitzna was their candidate for "hope" and "better times".

Source: Tagesspiegel, 11.01.2003, Page 3

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

Title: **Auf kurze Sicht (Short sighted)**

Text/Caption: HASTILY: Israel Prime Minister Ariel Scharon tries to look through binoculars without removing the protective caps beforehand. Shortly thereafter he has solved the problem with foresight. As part of the election campaign Scharon visited an Israeli army camp, in which snipers are trained (Page 6 and Opinion Page).

Why this picture? Ariel Sharon clearly was not whom the Tagesspiegel wanted to see elected. They portrayed him as not having a vision for the future, as a hardliner, as dangerous, etc. Unfortunately, the Tagesspiegel was representative of German media as a whole, which, unlike with candidates from other countries who stand to be elected, kept on being described with all sorts of negative adverbs – "the hardliner Sharon" was probably the most common phrase, with which Sharon was (and often still is) described in the German media.

Source: Tagesspiegel, 08.01.2003, Frontpage