



## PRESS RELEASE

### Five out of six media outlets studied demonstrated a lack of balance in reporting on the Israel-Gaza situation

**MONDAY 11 December 2023. SYDNEY, Australia**

Academic [research](#) commissioned by the [Islamophobia Register Australia](#) ('the Register') has analysed the Instagram accounts of six major Australian news outlets, and revealed an imbalance in reporting of the Israel-Gaza situation.

Research commissioned by the Register, and conducted by Dr. Susan Carland, examines Instagram posts made from *ABC News*, *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *9News*, *news.com.au*, and *The Daily Aus* between October 7th 2023 and November 7th 2023.

Overall, five of the six accounts analysed (*ABC News*, *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *9News* and *news.com.au*) demonstrated a lack of balance in their reporting in at least one of the assessed categories. Five out of six major Australian media outlets failed to meet minimum standards of humanising Palestinians in their posts about Israel-Gaza. Five of the six accounts showed inequality and a lack of balance in their use of the active, passive and middle voice when reporting.

It found posts made by *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *news.com.au* displayed the most imbalance and lack of humanising reporting of Palestinians in comparison to Israelis against the nominated criteria.

The research focuses on three key areas:

- 1) The choice of descriptive language used in the written posts/captions of the Instagram posts.
- 2) The grammar used in the posts (specifically the employment of passive, active, or middle voice).
- 3) The humanisation of the stories. To be classified by the research as humanising, the outlet needed to provide at least two of the following: a first name for the person; show their face; and use some of their own words.

Within the boundaries of the three focus areas, Dr. Carland's research uncovered the following key points:

#### Use of descriptive language

- *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Australian*, and *news.com.au* were unbalanced in their use of descriptive terms when reporting on Israel and Palestine. The three outlets used highly emotive language when it came to attacks against Israel, whilst downplaying the intensity of the language or removing it altogether when describing attacks on Palestine.
  - *The Daily Telegraph* used descriptive terms such as "gruesome", "murdered", "horrific", "shock", "massacre", "atrocities", "harrowing", "graphic", "terrified", and "brutal" to describe the Oct 7 Hamas attacks on Israelis. It used no similarly emotive descriptive words to describe Israeli attacks on Palestinians.



- *The Australian* used 30 evocative terms used to describe the Israeli experience compared to nine for the Palestinians.
- *news.com.au* used two descriptive terms for the Israeli experience (“despair” and “begged”) and none for the Palestinian.
- *9News* and *ABC News* were relatively balanced, with equal numbers of descriptors for each experience. *The Daily Aus* used almost no descriptive terms for either the Israeli or Palestinian experience.

### Use of humanising stories

- Five out of the six accounts failed the humanisation test (as prescribed by Dr. Carland, above) when talking about Palestinian experiences. Five of the six accounts passed the test for Israelis.
  - *ABC News* had seven posts about Israelis that passed the test and seven posts about Palestinians that passed the test. The ABC was the only outlet to provide any posts that passed the “humanising test” for Palestinians.
  - *The Australian* had ten posts about Israelis that passed the test, and no stories that passed the test for Palestinians
  - *9News* had 4 stories about Israelis that passed the test, and no stories that passed the test about Palestinians
  - *The Daily Telegraph* had two posts that passed the test about Israelis, and no stories that passed the test about Palestinians
  - *news.com.au* had one post that passed the test about Israelis, and no stories that passed the test about Palestinians
  - *The Daily Aus* had no posts about either Israelis or Palestinians that met the criteria

### Use of grammar (specifically, voice)

- The passive and middle voice were much more often used to describe what was happening in Gaza than in Israel, contributing to a minimisation of the Palestinian experience, and denying the possibility of an actor causing an event, (instead framing something like bombing as a natural, spontaneous occurrence)
  - In the only post by *The Daily Telegraph* that spotlights the direct experience of Palestinians in Gaza, it used the middle voice to describe “bombs falling” on Palestinians. *news.com.au* and *9News* also employed the middle voice when writing about Palestinians in Gaza.
  - *The Australian* used the passive voice in a post to describe attacks on Gaza. *9News* also used the passive voice to describe an attack on Gaza while using the active voice to describe attacks on Israel in the same post.
  - *ABC News* used the active voice or explicitly ascribed the actor (Hamas, rockets coming from Gaza) to describe attacks on Israel 11 times. *ABCNews* used the active voice or explicitly ascribed the actor (Israel, Israeli forces) six times to describe attacks on Gaza.
  - *The Daily Aus* was relatively balanced and the most consistent in their use of the active voice when describing attacks by both Israel and Hamas.



“The research we’ve conducted clearly shows an imbalance between how Palestinian stories are told in the media and how Israeli stories are told in the media,” says Sharara Attai, Executive Director of Islamophobia Register.

“It’s concerning that despite this research being only a starting point, and limited in scope, almost every media outlet that we examined demonstrated a lack of balance in their reporting.”

“Palestinian people and their plight in Gaza are being systematically dehumanised by large and influential parts of the media to their substantial audiences. Whilst they may appear to just be ‘words’ to some people, the linguistic discrepancies we’ve uncovered in the media actually play a significant role in shaping community attitudes about groups of people.

“Anti-Palestinian racism is a specific and documented form of Islamophobia. With such a massive rise in reported incidents of Islamophobia since October 7th, we take issue with the imbalance of humanising and dehumanising descriptors between the accounts of Israelis and Palestinians. It minimises and conceals the Palestinian reality, and leaves doors open for racist behaviour in Australia, as it further perpetuates damaging ‘us’ versus ‘them’ narratives.”

The Register previously reported that from October 7th 2023, when the latest escalations in the Israel-Palestine situation began, to 24 November, the Register received 230 reports of Islamophobia — constituting a thirteen-fold increase when compared to pre-October 7 levels in 2023. Incident reports have continued to come in, currently sitting at 288 reports.

The Register recognises the tremendous impact that current events in the Middle East are having on many Australians and stands against both Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Any Australians struggling at this time are urged to seek mental health support. Relevant services include Lifeline: 13 11 14 and Hayat Line (service for Australian Muslims): 1300 993 398.

**-ENDS-**

### **About the Islamophobia Register Australia**

[Islamophobia Register Australia](https://www.islamophobia.com.au) is a not-for-profit organisation that has been leading the tracking and tackling of Islamophobia across Australia since its launch in 2014. It provides a secure and reliable online reporting platform that captures nation-wide data and offers first-hand support to victims of Islamophobia. Having recently expanded its board and appointed an inaugural Executive Director, the Register has grown its operations to take its work and influence to the next level.

Its operating model has been commended and replicated by multiple other marginalised groups who have approached the Register to support them in the establishment of their own reporting models. This includes the First Nations Racism Register, ‘Call it Out’ founded by the National Justice Project and the Jumbunna Institute. The Register was also recently invited to provide evidence at the Disability Royal Commission who are looking to make formal recommendations to create a similar organisation to track and tackle disability hate.

### **Media Enquiries**

For media enquiries please contact:  
contact@islamophobia.com.au