



# Media Coverage of Gaza

## The case of Cyprus

Nicholas Karides



Ινστιτούτο Μέσων  
Μαζικής Ενημέρωσης  
Institute for Mass Media



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Published by **Universitas Publications**  
and the **Institute for Mass Media**

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Nicosia 2057, Cyprus

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Cyprus Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nicholas Karides, Media coverage of the war in Gaza:  
The case of Cyprus. Universitas Publications and the Institute for  
Mass Media, 2026.

**ISBN 978-9925-628-06-3**

Designed by Adds On Design Ltd  
Front cover photo: Mohammad Abu Samra / AP  
Printed at Lithofit Printers Ltd, Nicosia, Cyprus





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The **Institute for Mass Media IMME** was established in 1999 as an independent non-profit research organization dedicated to the study of the media. It worked closely with the Department of Communications of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Nicosia and since January 2022 it is part of the group of knowledge-creating institutions operating under the Universitas Foundation. IMME is engaged in projects that promote quality journalism in the public interest, expand news literacy in schools and society at large, study the socio-political context in which the media operate and support and monitor media freedom and media pluralism.

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# Preface

The conclusions of IMME's 2024 study on how the Cypriot media had covered the war in Ukraine found that media interest in that war began to fade when another war exploded much closer to Cyprus. Gaza inevitably supplanted Ukraine completely.

But even wars succumb to what we call news cycles. These begin suddenly, gain intensity then wane or fade completely. Sometimes they flare up again. News cycle dynamics are driven by the gravity of the news but increasingly by the media's race for virality which is itself driven by the public's dwindling and erratic attention, what Chris Hayes describes as the most precious but 'endangered resource'\* of our new attention economy.

The most unacceptable or unfathomable events fail to remain in global consciousness when our individual as well as our media's attention is so volatile, so easily distracted. The situation becomes desperate as this already chaotic digital landscape is manipulated by malicious actors and well-oiled state communication machineries disrupting the media and distracting broad swathes of the public.

Some media have themselves fallen victim to this phenomenon; some have even become willing tools of that manipulation. We appear to have reached a moment of widespread media capture and increasing media capitulation to corporate and political interests. There is a very clear decline in the media's willingness to stay on track and abide by their obligation for slow and deliberate scrutiny of what is important and meaningful.

The war in Gaza has manifested how this capture and capitulation have become normalized and pervasive, as segments of the media have not dared go beyond the limits of what Israel's long-standing and now entrenched narrative framework had shaped and permitted. The mechanisms of denial and the diversionary cries

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\* Chris Hayes, *The Sirens' Call*, 2025.

of antisemitism combined by the almost total ban of foreign media from the theater of war has resulted in insufficient reporting, in cycles of repetitions of unexamined narratives and a fall back to inoffensive coverage. Along with repetitive uses of numbing images and statistics, they have pushed the unacceptable suffering of a people into the background, a spectacle which has reduced Palestinians to an assigned dehumanized role of constant, even expected, victimhood. Sometimes in ignorance, other times willfully, media operated as vehicles through which the dominant power's narrative is laundered and served to a tired and distracted global public opinion.

A lot of the mainstream media have proved weak and self-serving; they have abdicated their obligation to zoom in and expose injustice, to scrutinize diplomatic double-speak, and to insist on holding those responsible accountable. Scattered within them, however, some editors and reporters, including in Cyprus, have remained focused on that obligation by operating against the tide of indifference, the temptation of virality and the traps of manipulation.

# First things first

There are some crucial points that need to be made before any attempt to understand and analyze the media coverage of what happened, and is still unfolding, in Gaza, even after the October 2025 ceasefire. These points have very little to do with the Cypriot media themselves but have everything to do with their, and the international media's, capacity to provide accurate and meaningful coverage, and ultimately, fulfill their watchdog role.

1. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) had forbidden all foreign journalists from entering Gaza since their operations began in October 2023<sup>1</sup>. Journalists who had stayed in or entered Gaza – and these have mostly been Palestinians working on their own or as freelancers for external media organisations - have been systematically smeared, silenced and, often, targeted and killed.

Data from the Committee for the Protection of Journalists in New York indicate that 249 journalists have been killed in Gaza (to 15 December 2025)<sup>2</sup>, of these 210 members of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. It has to be made clear that these journalists have been killed by the IDF, either through indiscriminate bombings, targeted bombings or planned drone attacks, in some cases in what can only be described as executions. There has never before been such a deliberate attempt to exterminate journalists (often their families too) during wars. Shockingly, there has never before been an example of a country's authorities and media boasting about those killings.

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1. Importantly, Egypt had also not been allowing foreign journalists access to Gaza for independent reporting from as far back as 2013. In February 2025 one-hundred international journalists requested access from Egypt's State Information Service. They came from inter alia CNN, NBC, NPR, CBS, ABC, Sky News, Reuters, the FT, the Washington Post, France 24, Le Monde, AP, BBC, El Pais, CBC, Los Angeles Times, and Drop Site News.

2. <https://cpj.org/issue/israel-gaza-war/>



Those not killed have been subjected to relentless pressure and threats in a systematic campaign, fomented by Israeli intelligence, to discredit, dehumanize, and blacklist them—but also to harass those who defend them.

It is noteworthy that Israel had co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 2222 in 2015 which insists to an end to impunity for those who attack journalists during armed conflicts.

2. The above can only be seen as a deliberate Israeli strategy to silence and prevent the truth about what was happening in Gaza from coming out. Despite Israeli denials – the most prominent being that the journalists were on Hamas’ payroll - it is impossible not to see this as an integral part of their tactical warfare. It is what the Guardian’s chief Middle East correspondent Emma Graham-Harrison described as Israel’s parallel Gaza campaigns: one for military control of the strip; another for narrative control of how the world understands what happens in the strip.

The Berlin based journalist Hanno Hauenstein wrote that the killing of journalists in Gaza made one thing painfully clear, that Israel does not want a record to be left. When the history of this genocide is written, he said, there will be chapters on the media’s role, and the German media section would be uncomfortably large: “No one should claim they didn’t see it happening”.

On 14 August 2025, Yuval Abraham writing in the magazine +972 revealed<sup>3</sup> that the Israeli military operated a special unit called the Legitimization Cell, tasked, among others, with gathering intelligence from Gaza that could bolster Israel’s image in the international media, identify Gaza-based journalists it could portray as undercover Hamas

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3. [www.972mag.com/israel-gaza-journalists-hamas-hasbara/](http://www.972mag.com/israel-gaza-journalists-hamas-hasbara/)

operatives, in an effort to blunt growing global outrage over Israel's killing of reporters. The Legitimization Cell's motivation was not security, but public relations, wrote Abraham. The Committee for the Protection of Journalists called Israel's accusations against reporters as unfounded and as intended "to manufacture consent to kill".

3. As a result of points 1 and 2 – unacceptable as they are – a lot of the news coming out of Gaza could not always be fully corroborated. The absence of this corroboration may have been intended at favouring the IDF and the Israeli government's narrative. Instead, what has ended up happening is that the Israeli narrative has been eroded losing credibility while whatever news coming out of Gaza from Palestinian sources has gained enhanced exposure and has won sympathy.
4. Despite the outcry by international journalism bodies and human rights and civil society institutions, the global political and diplomatic establishment has been either ineffective but mostly unwilling to hold Israel to account on the matter of the media ban and the targeting of journalists. Double Down News has called this a betrayal of Palestinian journalists by their colleagues in the West.
5. French historian Jean-Pierre Filiu, given rare permission to enter Gaza for academic research during the conflict (December 2024), said a month researching there had convinced him that Israel was trying to silence reporting from Gaza. "Now I understand why Israel is denying the international press access to such an appalling scene," he told Haaretz on his return. "Even though I have been in a number of war zones in the past, from Ukraine to Afghanistan, via Syria, Iraq and Somalia, I have never, but never, experienced anything like this." Later<sup>4</sup> he told Le Monde that 'The most shocking thing is the gap with the outside world's perception.'

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4. Le Monde, 25 May 2025, L'historien Jean Pierre Filiu raconte son séjour a Gaza

6. The consequent gap in perception that Filiu identified would not have been tolerated by a previous generation of war correspondents and their news organisations built on a reputation of operating independently and at huge risk, to witness and record developments for their readers or viewers. Despite huge technological advances this type of uncompromising journalism has, understandably given the risks, almost become non-existent. Journalism requires journalists to be where things happen, not to relay what they are told happened. Without this capacity journalism becomes irrelevant and inadequate and those it seeks to serve become ill informed, ignorant and exploitable. This is what Israel has sought in this instance and what a large majority of news organisations and their readers have ended up tolerating, indeed normalizing, as an inevitability.

# Not a Footnote

It remains for scholars to decide whether the abhorrent terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 merited a declaration of war and the ferocity and ruthlessness which Israel unleashed against what, in the end, was an unarmed and abandoned people. It is also up to scholars (and potentially jurists at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court) to decide whether the war it declared and executed - Operation Iron Swords - could have been ended much sooner when the military objectives it set out had been fulfilled.

Which leads to the question of genocide or, what professor Omer Bartov, Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University, more accurately described as ‘the genocidal undertaking’. On 16 September 2025 a UN Committee of Inquiry issued a report in which it stated that there were reasonable grounds to conclude that genocidal acts as defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide had been carried out by Israel against the Palestinians. It went on to call for all states to fulfil their legal obligations to punish those responsible. The above notwithstanding, the number of casualties and the human suffering they carry cannot be relegated to a footnote:

Casualties from 7 October 2023 to 4 November 2025			
	Israel	Gaza Strip	West Bank
Killed	1,671	68,875	1,065
Injured	8,378	170,679	10,760
Specific note on Gaza: 93% of schools and universities destroyed or damaged; 700,000 children living in tents, 50% of population with no access to basic sanitation, 81% of all structures destroyed or damaged; highest rate of child amputees per capita globally.			
Sources: Health Cluster’s Unified Dashboard; UNOCHA; Israeli authorities; Truthout (Nov. 2025).			

# The Media Scene

The media landscape in Cyprus is lively and, on the surface, fairly competitive but in the absence of a regulatory framework for the online media sector it remains dangerously opaque as regards media ownership, concentration and pluralism in general.

The traditional party-political influence over media has weakened considerably in recent years mostly because the parties themselves have lost their hold on society and, because, post-financial crisis the profound financialization of the economy has led to business interests becoming the most dominant influencing force. In fact, not unlike other countries, politics have themselves bowed to business interests and surrendered to the abstraction that is captured by the notion of ‘the market’. Similarly, the media.

In 2025 two key media organisations, Phileleftheros and Politis, were purchased by major corporate entities with no previous involvement in the media sector. Despite predictable declarations by the new owners it remains unclear how these changes will affect the integrity of their output and the local media landscape.

The development came just when the European Media Freedom Act came into effect in the European Union. EMFA obliges media service providers to “make easily and directly accessible to the recipients of their services up-to-date information” on their ownership, including direct or indirect owners and shareholders. The Act requires Member States to adopt national rules - for example, establishing or adapting media ownership databases or administrative procedures to ensure uniform enforcement at the national level. To date the Cyprus parliament has not passed the necessary legislative measures that would make EMFA enforceable in the country.

Mainstream newspapers, including the two whose ownership has recently changed, have successfully maintained a strong digital presence through their websites and online platforms and compete strongly with a range of digital-native news with TV and radio also still strong. Interestingly, the annual survey by the Union of Cyprus Journalists<sup>1</sup> revealed that TV and social media are the primary platforms for access to information tied at 72% with online portals third at 45%.

The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor<sup>2</sup> found considerable risks in its detailed assessment of Cyprus' media landscape (see table, next page) while Cyprus ranked 77th in the 2025 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index<sup>3</sup> down from 65th in 2024.

Beyond the many institutional shortcomings, journalists face serious challenges from low salaries and financial instability, employment uncertainty, increased workloads, risks to their editorial autonomy to being frequently targeted by political actors. In fact, one of the key challenges is the absence of effective regulations that prevent political figures and parties from exerting control and influence over the media through ownership structures or other means.

Equally, the dominance of very large online platforms as the vehicles for the dissemination of the media's online output has affected the operational mindset of the entire media spectrum from a pervasive clickbait headline mentality to the incessant frequency of fast and inadequately cross-referenced or fact-checked reporting.

Fact checking is conducted by a handful of agencies namely Fact Check Cyprus, a member of the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory, and the Cyprus Investigative Reporting Network CIReN, but as yet these do not reach non-expert audiences. The disappointing aspect is that mainstream media do not make use of their important corrective findings.

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1. Union of Cyprus Journalists, September 2025

2. Media Pluralism Monitor, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, EUI, June 2025

3. RSF.org/en/index, 2025



## Risks to media pluralism in Cyprus

Source: MPM 2025 report<sup>4</sup>

Fundamental Protection	Market Plurality	Political Independence	Social Inclusiveness
Protection of Freedom of Expression 30%	Transparency of Media Ownership 90%	Political Independence of the Media 92%	Universal and Inclusive Access to the Media 35%
Protection of Information Integrity 79%	Plurality of Media Providers 81%	Editorial Autonomy 47%	Representation of Minorities in the Media 79%
Protection of the Right to Information 59%	Plurality in Digital Markets 94%	Integrity of Political Information during Elections 39%	Local/Regional and Community Media 49%
Journalistic Profession, Standards and Protection 26%	Media Viability 81%	State Regulation of Resources and Support to the Media Sector 48%	Gender Equality on the Media 79%
Independence and Effectiveness of the National Regulatory Authorities 39%	Editorial Independence from Commercial and Owners' Influence 87%	Independence of Public Service Media 65%	Media Literacy 81%
<b>Overall:</b> 47% (Medium to Low Risk)	<b>Overall:</b> 85% (Very High Risk)	<b>Overall:</b> 58% (Medium to High Risk)	<b>Overall:</b> 65% (Medium to High Risk)

Finally, in a media environment that is deeply vulnerable to disinformation, the state has not yet developed any strategies on news literacy and on combating foreign information manipulation and interference. Media literacy in general remains poor despite significant efforts by various educational and media institutions (the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, the Cyprus Radio Television and Digital Services Authority, universities and research bodies, including IMME).

Though dated, according to the latest OSIS Media Literacy Index<sup>5</sup>, Cyprus ranked 28th among 41 countries classified within the cluster of being 'at risk of further decline'.

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4. Christophorou and Karides, 2025.

5. Osis.bg - Open Society Institute, Sofia, 2023

# The Historical Context

After the rise of Nazism in 1933, hundreds of European Jews escaped to Cyprus, a British colony at the time. Until then the number of Jews on the island was estimated at around one hundred. Between August 1946 and January 1949, the British set up 12 centers on the island for Jewish refugees – nearly all of whom were Holocaust survivors and most of whom had been detained to prevent them from entering the British Mandate of Palestine.

Conditions in the centers were harsh, and many Cypriots provided aid to Jewish refugees suffering from overcrowding and poor sanitation. In total, at these sites, the British detained approximately 52,000 refugees (the majority of whom were between the ages of 12 and 35), including some 1,300 persons from North Africa. Roughly 2,000 children were born in the camps, and approximately 400 people died during their internment. The majority of persons in these camps eventually moved to the State of Israel after its creation in 1948<sup>1</sup>.

Cyprus established an annual ceremony of remembrance and commemoration for Holocaust victims on January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day. High-level government officials, including the president of the House of Representatives, regularly participate in the ceremonies. Since 2009, public secondary school teachers read a message about the Holocaust and lead a discussion with students on International Holocaust Remembrance Day and lessons on the Holocaust are included in secondary school history curricula. The Jewish community in Cyprus is building a museum and cultural center in Larnaca to raise awareness about the Holocaust and, in particular, the support that Cypriots gave to Holocaust victims and other Jewish refugees who resided on the island from 1946 to 1949. The chief rabbi of Cyprus estimated that as of mid-2019, there were approximately 3,000 Jewish residents, including many expatriate Israeli, British, and Russian citizens.

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1. US Dept of State, Report by the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues – Cyprus <https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/cyprus/>

Diplomatic relations between Israel and Cyprus were established with the declaration of independence of Cyprus in 1960 when then foreign minister Golda Meir telegraphed president Makarios to announce that the State of Israel recognized the new Republic. Yet relations remained frosty for decades as Cyprus became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (in 1961) and chose to pursue a strong pro-Arab foreign policy in an effort to limit the influences of the West as well as of Greece and Turkey. Makarios also courted Egypt's president Nasser, the key player in the Eastern Mediterranean whose relations with Israel were strained.

It was as late as 1994, during the presidency of Glafcos Clerides, that Cyprus opened its embassy in Tel Aviv. In fact, it was only in the last decade-and-a-half that a rapid and substantive improvement in relations occurred with the first visit by a Cypriot president to Israel in 2011 when Demetris Christofias, the country's first left-wing head of state met with prime minister Netanyahu, and with president Shimon Peres reciprocating in the same year. The visits came shortly after the two countries agreed on the delimitation of their Exclusive Economic Zones.

Frequent high-level contacts between the countries followed with growing cooperation in the fields of energy, emergency response (firefighting, medical support), joint Israeli-Cypriot consortia operating water desalination plants, defence and security, and trilateral cooperation with Greece. Cyprus allowed Israel to use the island as a base for its forces as Israeli jets, naval vessels, and ground troops were routinely allowed in Cyprus for operational reasons and training exercises. Cyprus regularly participates alongside Israel in military exercises in the Mediterranean and in the respective countries. The shift in relations was also prompted by the shared concern over regional instability and tensions with Turkey but mostly a mutual desire to exploit the discovery of large off-shore gas reserves in the Mediterranean.

It is important to note as Yonatan Brander highlighted in a 2022 paper<sup>2</sup> that in several addresses to the Knesset as prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu pointed to his work on Israel-Cyprus relations

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2. PRIO Paper, Brander, Yonatan (2022) A Strategic Friendship: Israeli Perceptions of the Israel-Cyprus Relationship. Occasional Paper Series. Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre.

as one of the crowning achievements of his time in office and took credit for building friendships with countries like Greece and Cyprus alluding to the three countries as “the only democracies in the Eastern Mediterranean” and, as such, bound by their shared commitment to the “ideas of pluralism, diversity, choice, debate”.

In May 2023, Netanyahu formally announced plans to build a pipeline transporting natural gas from Israeli offshore reserves to a liquefaction facility to be built in Cyprus. In the same month, the former Cypriot Energy Minister George Papanastasiou confirmed that Cyprus and Israel were working towards such a deal. Importantly, the partners in the Aphrodite gas field project in Cyprus’ EEZ are Israel’s NewMed, with a 30% holding; the US’s Chevron and BG Cyprus (Shell), each holding a 35% stake. In the aftermath of October 2023 energy experts claimed the war could cast a shadow over the development of gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean delaying projects and final investment decisions.

Israel was the second largest tourism market for Cyprus in 2023 and helped offset the fall in Russian tourists after sanctions relating to the war in Ukraine, much in the same way that investment from Israeli companies setting up on the island helped the Cyprus economy withstand the loss of Russian investments. While tourist arrivals from Israel started to drop sharply from October 2023<sup>3</sup>, arrivals for longer term stays and property purchases and other investments increased considerably as they escaped the fallout of the war in Gaza. In August 2025, Euronews quoted official figures revealing that 82,000 Israelis who left Israel in 2024 had moved to Greece, Cyprus, and Portugal<sup>4</sup>.

Israeli leaders had always recognized that Cyprus was a bridge to Europe and a springboard for their expanding interdependence with Europe. As early as the mid-1990s, Shimon Peres had advocated for Cyprus’ full membership of the European Union because he believed Israel would benefit from ‘having the EU on its doorstep’. Over the years Cyprus acted as a moderating voice during crises in Israel-EU relations. This was manifested in May 2025 when Cypriot minister for Foreign Affairs Constantinos Kombos raised objections

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3. Sapienta Cyprus Snippets, 15 March 2024 and 9 October 2024

4. <https://gr.euronews.com/2025/08/06/xiliades-israelis-egkataleipoun-israel-gia-ellada-cyprus-portugal>

during a European Union foreign ministers council discussing a Dutch proposal for a review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement over Israel's obstructions to humanitarian aid reaching Gaza.

Kombos claimed his objection was procedural<sup>5</sup> and expressed his concern over any motion potentially not being passed unanimously. He reiterated Cyprus' position that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was tragic and unacceptable and that there must be a change in Israel's attitude and a large flow of aid on a large scale [into Gaza]". The Cypriot government scrambled to mitigate the criticism but it didn't have to work very hard as the affair dissipated, absorbed by the broader erratic, ambiguous and highly ineffective European diplomatic reaction.

The Republic recognized the State of Palestine in 1988 but had traditionally demonstrated its solidarity towards the Palestinian people long before – especially after 1974. With the Republic's mobilization for international support to end Turkey's occupation of the northern part of the island, the entire political spectrum in Cyprus threw its support behind the plight of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation. The left wing AKEL and socialist EDEK parties maintained particularly close relations with Palestinian political groups. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation which was critical of Turkey's actions in Cyprus was allowed to organize events in the country where international conferences on Palestine were also frequently held. When the PLO's Beirut headquarters were attacked in the 1980s many of its members and much of its publishing output was moved to Cyprus.

The Republic has consistently supported a comprehensive and final two state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state. In December 2012, it voted in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution that granted Palestine observer status to the UN, following which it upgraded the status of the Palestinian delegation in Nicosia to an Embassy. The war in Gaza has been the first time in which Cyprus appeared to equivocate on matters that related to the Palestinian issue, avoiding to commit itself with the conviction and clarity it once maintained.

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5. <https://cyprus-mail.com/2025/05/21/cyprus-objection-to-review-of-eu-israel-agreement-procedural-kombos-says>



# The Coverage

The nature and impact of the Cyprus media's coverage of the war in Gaza was determined by the overall tone they used about the conflict and by how they framed both context and actual developments. This was determined by how they selected, prioritized, titled and elaborated the content from the information coming in. Overwhelmingly, that information was coming in through international news agencies, global legacy media, the Greek media, region-specific news outlets and social media platforms but rarely directly from Cypriot sources. Everyone involved was in essence processing second-hand information.

While a couple of newspapers had –at various stages of the last two years- correspondents in the region or, in the case of broadcast media, frequent access to Greek-speaking analysts who were stationed in think tanks or research institutions around the region (some in Israel), like all global media, they never had direct access to what was happening on the ground. One senior journalist explained “we know the region well but in truth we have no access, we never have primary information or material.”

With the already incomplete view of what was happening inside Gaza given the IDF ban on media access to the area, the framing of what they received from news agencies was significant in terms of what, in the end, the Cypriot public was exposed to and got to understand about the war.

Equally, while the coverage in Cyprus, likely to be similar in many other countries, was about how the media chose to deal with incoming news flows it was also about how they responded to the conflicting narratives that the warring parties articulated and put out.

It was important, of course, that the warring parties were fundamentally mismatched; on the one a nuclear power and functioning democratic country with its sophisticated comms

machinery and unlimited lobbying power<sup>1</sup>, and on the other a terrorist organization and a disjointed, helpless and, crucially, voiceless people in the Gaza strip itself.

It was, on the one hand, a case of a slick, strategically structured and controlled content and denials versus the erratic, obstructed, and always under threat Palestinian reporting coming out of Gaza. Reporting that came in part through the probing of experienced foreign correspondents working on the periphery, the individual posting of Palestinian journalists and witnesses on online platforms and the broadcast interviews with medical and humanitarian staff stationed in Gaza.

For the media, the way they dealt with the challenge of ascertaining the truth behind this mismatched information battle was partly to present both sides separately, inconclusive as this was, never certain about the truth but comfortable that the reporting would at least be adequately 'balanced' and even considered fair.

## **The war as background**

Beyond access, tonality, selections and emphasis regarding the actual war, its atrocities and pain, beyond even the deciphering of the battle of narratives, coverage, quite significantly was also about other relevant or associated but secondary developments to the war. The diplomacy, the reactions, the fall-out and disruption, the humanitarian aid etc.

This secondary dimension gradually replaced the coverage of the actual war. It took over quickly and gave audiences and readers a false sense that it was the war that was being covered. The war was obviously the reason everything else was happening but it began to fade into a backdrop in front of which everything else transpired. In Cyprus' case this fade-out was served through the country's perennial obsession with its national problem and its geopolitical role.

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1. A 6 March 2025 investigation by independent outlet Follow the Money found that high-ranking Israeli military personnel held unregistered meetings with MEPs to promote Israel's national security interests. Academics have also long documented the network of interest groups dedicated to preserving the notion that Israel is acting in self-defence among European policymakers (see footnote p 99).

The media shaped this new framing by a) highlighting and often prioritizing the effects of the war on Cyprus and b) focusing on the role Cyprus would play in the unfolding events beginning by the evacuations of foreign nationals and peaking with the humanitarian aid corridor and, in the end of 2025, its search for a role in the post-ceasefire reconstruction.

The early part of the war was dominated by Hamas' atrocities and later the ferocity of Israel's response, but the ensuing humanitarian crisis came to the foreground and the war coverage itself receded. It was replaced by Cyprus' role in the crisis with the Cypriot government's communication narratives on that role dominating headlines, making the war and the difficult questions about genocide, secondary, merely the scenery in front of which the humanitarian diplomacy and logistics were being played out.

## **The elusive starting point**

This study assesses coverage by the Cyprus media of some selected key events since the 7th of October 2023 raids by Hamas-led gunmen. It does so by selecting specific news moments within the two-year period, moments which relate to Gaza itself but also moments that relate to Cyprus' stance vis a vis what was happening in Gaza. It must be said that the selection is broad but limited, and ultimately, not conclusive.

It is also crucial to consider a significant point that is often ignored which, in fact, the research itself revealed: Disconnecting this period from the preceding sequence of historical developments has significantly contributed to the decontextualized, often distorted perceptions of the present, even, it seems, among those in the journalistic profession.

The war in Gaza is a continuation of many political injustices, uprisings, terrorist acts, wars –whether acknowledged, recognized or denied— that go back in history. Disconnecting it from that past has actually undermined the coherence, accuracy and fairness of the reporting of the events over this two-year period. It has by extension undermined the credibility of the media who fell into this trap.

The 7<sup>th</sup> of October did not set the clock to zero despite the state of Israel's efforts and the media's unresponsiveness to historical contextuality and accuracy. This failure tainted the public's understanding of developments.

On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Hamas-led gunmen stormed into southern Israel from Gaza and rampaged through communities killing over one thousand people and taking hundreds of hostages. The 7<sup>th</sup> was a Saturday which meant that the main Sunday newspaper editions failed to provide comprehensive coverage. Some were caught without adequate reporting while, as expected, their online editions and the broader online and broadcasting media mobilized fairly quickly and provided continuous coverage and updates of the developments. It was yet another confirmation of the lag in the capacity of the printed media, already in decline, to keep up.

That weekend's coverage was drawn mostly from international news agencies with a recording of the global condemnation of the Hamas attack to the global support for Israel's right to defend itself. The Cypriot media immediately and sharply focused on the effect on Cyprus as flights to Israel were diverted to Larnaca and as the immediate repatriation of Cypriots from the region began.



On 8 October Israel declared a “state of war” and began intensive airstrikes on Gaza; Lebanon-based Hezbollah fired missiles on Israel, saying its attacks aimed to support Palestinians in Gaza. As early as the 10<sup>th</sup> local media turned to the ambassadors of Israel and Palestine for assessment and commentary. The Palestinian

ambassador in Nicosia Abdallah Attari said that Gaza had seen 17 years of blockade of 2 million Palestinians in an area of 45 square kilometres. The situation in Gaza had not started on Saturday, as there were years of oppression leading to the situation. Asked how he saw the situation developing, he said that “we have repeatedly warned of the consequences of blocking the political horizon and failing to allow the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination and to establish their own state.” He said that “Israel’s repudiation of signed agreements and non-compliance with internationally legal decisions have led to the destruction of the peace process... These are the reasons behind the explosive situation and the absence of peace and security in the region.”

In a separate interview with the Cyprus News Agency, Israel’s ambassador Oren Anolik, spoke of savagery and said nobody would hit Israel and get away with it, “We are now at war. This is not a war against the people of Gaza, this is a war against a terrorist organisation which indiscriminately was targeting civilians”. On the same day, just three days after the Hamas attacks, most media picked up a Reuters report in which U.N. Human Rights chief Volker Turk condemned Israeli retaliatory air strikes hitting residential buildings and schools across the Gaza Strip, adding that “sieges” were illegal under international law. Turk also condemned “horrificing mass killings by members of Palestinian armed groups” and said the militants’ abduction of hostages was also forbidden under international law.

On 13 October, Israel told residents of Gaza City to move south, beginning a process that would uproot nearly the entire Gaza population. On 19 October a U.S. warship intercepted missiles and drones launched from Yemen towards Israel. Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis continued attacks on Israel and against Red Sea shipping. On 21 October aid trucks were allowed through the Rafah border crossing from Egypt into Gaza where food, water, medicines and fuel had begun to run out. On 27 October Israel launched its ground offensive. In the days that followed heavy Israeli shelling on the Jabalia refugee camp killed hundreds of civilians, including children. On 15 October Kathimerini’s headline summed up the perspective from Nicosia under the title “Uncharted Waters for the Middle East” with subheads “The power game, the new balances, Cyprus and Erdogan’s calculations”.

More significantly the paper's brief front page opinion editorial under the title "Above All [we should align] with Justice" appeared to capture Cyprus' collective mindset:

*"The drums of war began beating last Saturday, once again resounding across the long-suffering land of the Middle East. Cyprus' position in this war should be dictated by its own national interests, with humanitarian values and the dictates of international humanitarian law always at the forefront of its priorities. It would also be beneficial for the Republic of Cyprus to emerge as a pillar of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean region, even though it too faces its own unresolved problem of Turkish occupation."*

Phileleftheros' front page led with the headline "Developments overturned - with a role for Cyprus" and at the top left corner "Cyprus in terror over side effects". Equally, half of Phileleftheros' front page was given to more detailed analysis and maps provided by the Greek newspaper To Vima with whom Phileleftheros maintained a collaboration





(see p. 27). This was indicative of the reliance of Cypriot media – also of television channels – for content from Greece especially when it related to breaking foreign news.

On 22 October news broke that Israeli leaders requested of Cyprus to convey the ‘real’ situation in Israel to the European Union. Cypriot president Christodoulides who met with Israeli president Herzog and prime minister Netanyahu in Tel Aviv emphasised the need for de-escalation of the crisis, continued humanitarian aid to Gaza, the avoidance of civilian casualties on all sides, and the initiation of a political dialogue that could pave the way for a resolution to the Middle East conflict. On his return he highlighted the importance of the recognition of the island’s role and explained that as an EU member with excellent relations with all neighbouring states it can “aid in the communication between Israel and Brussels”. His remarks captured the Cypriot narrative for the months to come, one that would be absorbed by the media and would become the cornerstone of the scope and tone of the general coverage.

After condemning Hamas’ terrorist attacks, the president said he “developed some ideas that we have and that we shared with our Arab friends, to see how we can create a situation that will not lead to further escalation...we are all affected by these developments”.



In the month of October Cyprus received requests from 26 countries for support in transporting foreign nationals fleeing Gaza or Israel to their home countries via Cyprus, less than a 40-minute plane trip away.



The media paid considerable attention to the death of several members of the family of Wael Al Dahdouh, a Palestinian journalist not yet known to Cyprus or the world, but whose personal tragedy

and work ethic, would become a symbol of the Press' resilience and the cruelty of the Palestinian predicament.

Phileleftheros' front page on Sunday 29 October reflected the Cypriot media's reporting perspective of the war by headlining interviews it had secured of both the Israeli and Palestinian

ambassadors to Nicosia describing them as 'the clash of the warring factions... over the crimes happening in our neighbourhood'. The two interviews got top billing above its main feature which was "Turkey playing with fire" over the new role Turkey was seeking in view also of the Middle East crisis. All this sat above a photo of Israeli troops and the headline "Gaza has become hell".

On the eve of the publication of the interview the Israeli ambassador directly criticized a Phileleftheros journalist who had denounced him in

a comment published in the paper's 'Behind the Scenes' section under the title 'What did they [Palestinians] gain, by leaving?' The journalist claimed that Israel's warnings to civilians to evacuate to the south were insufficient for their protection, given how densely populated the area is and that Israel was in any case bombing the areas to which people were fleeing.

The ambassador responded (top next page) with equal sarcasm in a lengthy post on X, blaming civilian casualties on Hamas and questioning the journalist's judgment. The altercation gained considerable traction online and was one of several similar exchanges that would follow.

While the conflict continued to dominate the headlines in November and though there was clear support for Israel's right to attack Gaza





in self-defence, the ferocity of the bombardment and the resulting conditions for Palestinians began to change the West's rhetoric and this began to be reflected in the Cypriot media too.

## Key Moment 1

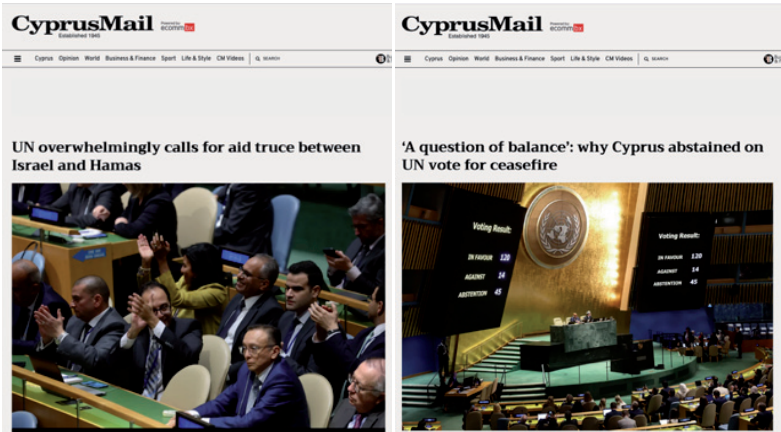
But while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's call for "a humanitarian pause" (and calls by others for a ceasefire or humanitarian corridor) and the majority of the UN General Assembly voting in favour of a ceasefire, Cyprus (and Greece) abstained during the vote with the US, Israel, Hungary and 11 others voting against. The left wing Akel party and its mouthpiece news media Haravghi and Dialogos were incensed by the government's abstention. Haravgi began to speak of "Cyprus' dangerous involvement in the Middle East clash" warning of the government's non-balanced stance likely to have dangerous consequences for Cyprus.

"The Christodoulides government must immediately give answers to the Cypriot people about its attitude," the party said. "Does he not have an opinion on the need to end the bloodshed in Gaza? Does the government of Cyprus not have a position when the great majority of the world's states call for an end to the killing of thousands of civilians?" they asked. "This attitude exposes Cyprus, nullifies its credibility internationally, and, at the same time, puts this country's



government on the side of those who are covering up the ongoing ethnic cleansing at the expense of the Palestinian people.”

The Cyprus Mail within a matter of a few hours ran the announcement of the ceasefire motion and then Cyprus’ abstention from the vote.



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Φιλοδοξούμε ότι το φόρουμ του ΑΚΕΑ θα προσθέσει στον διεκδικητικό διάλογο

29.10.23

**ΕΥΡΩΠΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΤΑΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗ**

Επικίνδυνη η ανάμειξη μας στη σύρραξη στη Μέση Ανατολή

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Αναφέρουμε το κάλεσμα ανάμεσα σε ΟΚΥΜΕΤ και οργανώσεις για συλλογικές συμβάσεις

29.10.23

# Το στίγμα της αποχής στον ΟΗΕ για ανθρωπιστική εκχειρία στη Γάζα

Η Γ.Σ. του ΟΗΕ ενέκρινε ψήφισμα με το οποίο ζητά την απρόσκοπτη χορήγηση ανθρωπιστικής βοήθειας

ΔΗΜΟΣΙΕΥΣΗ ΣΤΗ ΣΕΛΙΔΑ 3, 24

Πέρα από το ΑΚΕΑ για την αδιανόητη στάση της κυβέρνησης Χριστοδουλίδου για τηρήσει αποχής από το ψήφισμα στον ΟΗΕ για εκκείρια στη Γάζα

«Ο Νίκος Χριστοδουλίδης πρέπει να αντιληφθεί ότι είναι Πρόεδρος της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας και να τοποθετείται με γνώμονα αυτό»

## Επικίνδυνη η ανάμειξη της Κύπρου στη σύρραξη στη Μέση Ανατολή

**Η κυβέρνηση Μ. Χριστοδουλίδη δεν τόλμαε μια ισορροπημένη στάση και αυτό ενδέχεται να έχει επικίνδυνες συνέπειες για την Κύπρο**

by Media House

Η κυβέρνηση της Κύπρου θα μπορούσε να πάρει μια πιο ισορροπημένη στάση στην κρίση στη Μέση Ανατολή και όχι να υιοθετεί αναφανδόν υπέρ των Ισραήλ, επιμένοντας στον «απαιτείται ο διεθνισμός Αλέξανδρος Ζαχαριάδης» τονίζοντας ότι υπάρχει ακόμα χρόνος η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία να προβεί σε ανάλογες ενέργειες προς την Παλαιστινιακή Αρχή. Από την πλευρά του ο επίκουρος καθηγητής διεθνών Σπουδών στο Πανεπιστήμιο Ανατολής της Δυτικής Αλεξάνδρειας Φίλιππος, υποστηρίζει ότι η στάση της Κύπρου, με μια ενδεχόμενη επίταξη της σύρραξης, ενδέχεται να έχει καταστροφικές συνέπειες για την Κύπρο. Με τη στάση του, πρόσθεσε, ο Ν. Χριστοδουλίδης και η πολιτοφιλία της ελληνοκυπριακής πολιτικής ηγεσίας έχουν κάνει την Κύπρο συνώνυμη σε ένα εγκληματικό κατά τη ανθρωπότητα.

### Η στάση της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας, δυστυχώς, δεν είναι ισορροπημένη

Στα πρώτα πέντε χρόνια της στάσης της Κύπρου σε αυτή τη διαμάχη, ο Α. Φίλιππος ανέφερε ότι «η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία ακολουθεί σκέλη μια ηρωική, η οποία ξεκινάει εδώ και χρόνια, δηλαδή της επιπερίστασης των 'έθνων ανερχομένων' μέλου της ευρωπαϊκής και στρατιωτικής συνεργασίας με το Ισραήλ, που σήμερα μετατρέπεται με τον πιο δραστήριο τρόπο σε επιπερίστασης της γενεονομίας που αγγίζει το ισραηλινό κεφάλαιο στον άμεσο επίσημο της ΕΕ».

Η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία σήμερα αποχέει από στήριξης των Ισραήλ, γεγονός που οδηγεί σε αθέμιτο κέρδη, εγκληματικό σκάνδαλο

Ανατολή, που σήμερα ενδέχεται να επεκταθεί και στον γειτονικό Αφρικό. Αυτό συνεπάγεται και ενδεχόμενες καταστροφικές συνέπειες για τον ίδιο τον Κύπρο, σε περίπτωση εμφάνισης άλλων συνδυασμών όπως του Ισραήλ ή της Χαζαχιστικής. Ο ίδιος Χριστοδουλίδης, αλλά και η πολιτοφιλία της ελληνοκυπριακής πολιτικής ηγεσίας έχουν κάνει την Κύπρο συνώνυμη σε ένα εγκληματικό κατά τη ανθρωπότητα.

Από την πλευρά του ο ΑΑ Ζαχαριάδης απαντάει ότι «για να κρίνουμε τη στάση της κυβέρνησης της πρέπει να δοούμε το ζήτημα υπό το πρίσμα του ευρωπαϊκού πολιτισμού».

των Ισραηλινών από και ανεπίσημα η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία καταδικάζει τον τρομακτικό ενόχλημα της Χώρας της 7 Οκτωβρίου. Εν συνεχεία, θα πρέπει να λάβουμε υπόψη και τη θεωρητική αντίληψη όλων των κυβερνήσεων μας που στόχο είχαν να παύσουν το ρόλο γέφυρας μεταξύ Ευρώπης και Μέσης Ανατολής.

Με βάση τα πιο πάνω η επίσημη του Προέδρου της Ισραήλ δεν είναι από μόνο της αναδομημένη κρίση. Πρέπει όμως προβληματιστεί γιατί δεν συνεννόησε και με τον Πρόεδρο Αρχής Ουασιτάι, η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία και η διεκδικασία της θα μπορούσε να πραγματοποιηθεί

δύο πλευρές για να συμβάλει στην αποκατάσταση τους, ιδιαίτερα με γνώμονο την ελληνοκυπριακή κατάσταση και στη διεκδικητική. Η στάση του οποίου διατηρείται αυτή τη στιγμή θα γίνει επίσημη όταν ο αρχηγός των άρματων ισραηλινών στη Γάζα θα αναβεί, δυστυχώς, είναι και της παραπομπής στρατιωτικής κλιμάκωσης.

Υπάρχει ακόμη χρόνος η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία, που βοηθάει μια μπορεί να προβεί σε αντίστοιχες ενέργειες προς την Παλαιστινιακή Αρχή, διότι αντιστοιχεί έστω και να παύσει τη στήριξη της για ανθρωπιστικά ζητήματα εντός της ΕΕ. Πρέπει θα πρέπει να δαν μια πιο ισορροπημένη στάση.

By the middle of December 2023, the war is relegated to third or fourth item in the bulletins' running orders with the Cypriot humanitarian proposal taking precedence over the actual events in Gaza. By the beginning of 2024, whenever there was a Cypriot angle to the war then it became a leading story; on other occasions it was pushed into 'other news'.

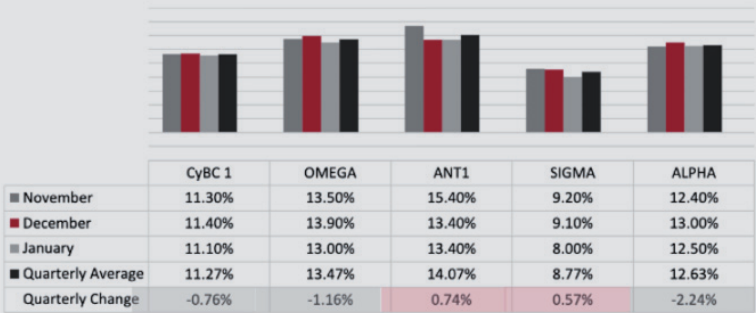
Prioritization is a crucial part of the language of news. In this war as in many international events media in a country like Cyprus take their lead from the leading global news outlets and agencies. Often it is the way the rest of the world sees a crisis that defines how the Cypriot media come to consider it and prioritize it. So, at some point when the immediacy wore off and the Gaza events receded in the daily run-down of news bulletins, the Cyprus media began – one could even argue almost unconsciously - to approach the crisis from the safe distance of an outsider. They put aside proximity, affinity and dependency, and in the process dehumanized the events. Gaza gradually became a spectacle rather than a human catastrophe that urgently needed the Press to expose and sustain it.

Perhaps more important and revealing was that, beyond opinion editorials and the torrent of social media, the Cypriot mainstream media didn't challenge its leadership on Gaza, rarely asking difficult questions or exposing what would later be seen as its duplicity in their position vis a vis the war crimes unfolding in Gaza. Most of the output from the government was relayed without officials convincingly pressed as to the rationale behind decisions and the inconsistency they revealed.

### Television News

Overall, leading into the end of 2023, the broadcast media (ANT1, ALPHA, OMEGA, SIGMA and especially the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation CyBC1) offered comprehensive coverage with most segments leading prime time bulletins (see below for viewerships).\* CyBC's main news segments often extended to between 8 to 10 minutes every evening providing the situation on the ground, the humanitarian crisis, the hostage related developments, the diplomatic efforts, the global reaction and the political tensions within Israel. At CyBC there was reliance on international news agencies for visual feeds and reporting with frequent reference to Reuters' disclaimer that it was not itself able to verify some of the information provided by the Israeli Defence Forces.

Evening News Viewership Ratings  
November 2024 - January 2025

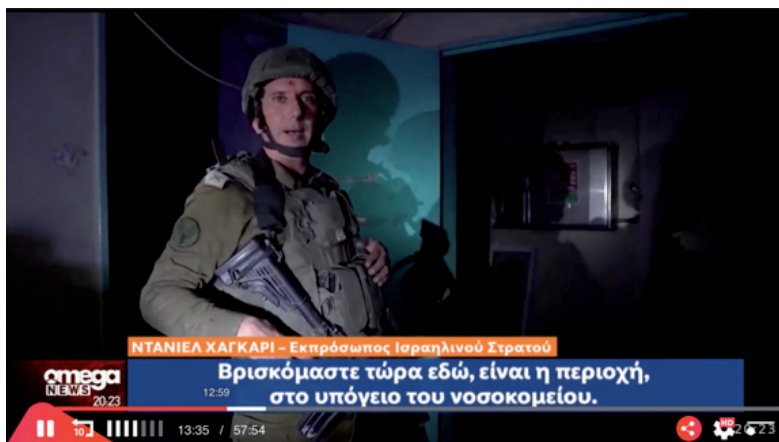


\*From MediaGnosis quarterly report produced by Gnora Communication Consultants

The Cyprus Mail's regular commentator Alpen Ali Risa KC was quick, as early as the end of October, to highlight how Israel and its allies in the West had lost what he described as the "the moral high ground even though, to begin with, there was no moral equivalence between the barbaric attack on Israeli civilians on October 7 and Israel's right to defend its citizens in response". Risa would later claim that the aerial bombardments of Gaza in the months that followed were a war crime and that it was not whether but how Israel went about exercising its right of self-defence.

## Key Moment 2

On 13 November Al Shifa hospital in Gaza was heavily bombed – with patients including babies in incubators killed – and Israel claiming that Hamas had used the basement of the hospital to store arms.



The bombing marked the beginning of the collapse of the Gaza health system, and it came on the day the Cypriot minister of Foreign Affairs, attending the Council of the EU presented the Cypriot government's proposal for Cyprus to operate as a safe harbour from where "high volume, high frequency" humanitarian aid could be sent to Gaza. Cyprus' underlying approach was based on its geographic proximity, the existing infrastructure at Larnaca port and its strategic relations with the key regional stakeholders.



The media juggled between the raw impact of the Israeli strike on the hospital and the Cypriot government's efforts to push for humanitarian aid but rarely considering the incongruity of the moral distance between these two events. Both were treated and consumed as routine developments of war.

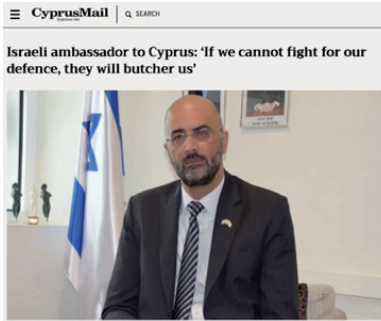
The media also failed to address – primarily because they were not in a position to verify themselves – the veracity of the persistent Israeli claims that Hamas maintained arms depots and cells beneath medical compounds. The clash of these arguments hovered above all related coverage never being resolved but it was the footage of the Israeli military and accompanying diagrams that were embedded in public consciousness.

The coverage of the hospital bombings gradually deteriorated into a banal spectacle of horror while the drive to secure humanitarian aid was hyped into a suspenseful diplomatic drama. Separately and combined, they filled media time and satisfied the voyeuristic frenzy for breaking news. The readers and viewers never got to understand the truth, they just consumed the sustained unresolved enigma.



Just like Phileleftheros in October, the Cyprus Mail published also interviews of the Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors one week apart. Only a month into the war, this is 12 November 2023, Jean Christou conducting the interview with the Israeli ambassador Oren Anolik forewarned of what was to come:

*“Israel may have the support – for now – of most Western governments ‘to defend itself’ to use the political terminology,*



*but the mood on the streets belies this and as each day passes and the Palestinian civilian death toll mounts, Tel Aviv will find it increasingly difficult to justify its Gaza operation as self-defence."*

The journalist Andrea Kadis in her introduction of Abdallah Attari's interview, a week later on 19 November 2023, writes:

*"Are we at a point where people dying by the thousands and hostages missing in the hundreds have become a daily norm? With the war in Gaza raging for over a month and no end in sight, what will normal even look like when the dust has settled? And what will be the price?"*

By the end of November Cyprus' proposals for a "sea corridor" to supply humanitarian aid to Gaza began to get more traction. However, the logistical challenges of the capacity of docking vessels to a large floating platform were still unresolved and the option of aid distributed via a port in Israel and then taken to a northern entry point into Gaza were still remote. The Cypriot foreign minister traveled to Israel with a team of experts to discuss the practical dimensions of the scheme. The thrust of the proposal was for international humanitarian aid to be sent and stored in Larnaca located only 210 nautical miles from the conflict zone so as to gradually attenuate the problems of trucks crossing through Rafah at 100 lorries per day when the need actually exceeded 400.

In December Israeli forces launched their first large scale ground assault in southern Gaza towards Khan Younis. On 5 December, which the IDF described as one the harshest days of the war, there

## EU throws weight behind Cypriot plan to ship aid to Gaza

The plan is to allow Gazans access to big volumes of aid carried by ship, rather than just the small quantities brought by truck from Egypt.

was a repeat of the call by the UN Secretary General to protect civilians. On 6 December CyBC reported the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk expressing concern that civilians in Gaza were collectively being punished and living in “utter deepening horror” On 8

December CyBC reported that the Palestinian academic and writer Refaat Alareer was killed while on the next day the United States vetoed a Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire for a humanitarian corridor to be established. Reuters reported that the UK had informed the Cypriot government that it could make available vessels that were capable of approaching shallow ports and could carry up to 80 tonnes of humanitarian aid.

### Key Moment 3

On 10 December the news agenda was set by an exclusive story in Kathimerini newspaper that the Cypriot police had been assisted by Israel’s intelligence agency Mossad in averting an alleged terrorist strike against Israeli-interests and citizens in Cyprus in November. In the process two Iranians —alleged to be IRGC agents— were detained and would be expelled from the island with Israeli sources “troubled” by the use of the Turkish occupied northern part of Cyprus “both for terrorism objectives and as an operational and transit area”. The two Iranian nationals were believed to have come to the Republic from the areas north of the UN Buffer Zone and had refugee status.

Media approached the story from the perspective of the security threat that the Turkish occupied areas and the buffer zone posed. The Turkish Cypriot authorities denied the allegations. There was also considerable coverage of Mossad’s statement referring to Cyprus’ contribution and of the related conversation between Cypriot president Christodoulides and prime minister Netanyahu with the emphasis on the gratitude expressed by the latter for the protection afforded to Israelis by the Cypriot state.

The news reinforced the notion of Israel's and Cyprus alignment and common interests, as well as the value of Israel's support in the intelligence realm. The already dominant perception among political circles was that Israel is crucial for Cyprus' own internal security, in pre-empting potential terrorist threats and more importantly enhancing its understanding of the military situation in the areas occupied by Turkey. The timing, extent and tone of the media coverage in promoting a sense of relief and solidarity with Israel in Cypriot public consciousness cannot be underestimated.



## The Turkish Cypriot dimension

A week after Israel's assistance to the Republic in foiling a possible Iranian-ordered attack against Israelis on the island, the Cyprus Mail reported extensively from the northern part of Cyprus that with the strong opposition to Israel's actions against Palestinians, Jews living north of the UN buffer zone were increasingly becoming a target, particularly by Turkish nationalist circles. It said identities of companies, property developers and individuals were disclosed on social media and referred to a Turkish Cypriot business association statement condemning Israel's attack on Gaza, calling for a ceasefire, and concluding: "The Jewish colony settled in our country should be controlled and the necessary measures should be taken regarding their residency here."

The Turkish daily Sabah, claimed that there were 35,000 Jews living in northern Cyprus and that Israel was "conquering" the territory while the Islamist Milli Gazete claimed that "Zionists are

amassing land in Cyprus, especially in areas that face Tel Aviv” and said an “unarmed invasion” is taking place. The Turkish minister of foreign affairs while downplaying the reports was quoted as saying that Turkey was conveying its concerns to the Turkish Cypriot authorities.

“The territories of TRNC...were taken by guns,” a very critical Serhat Incirli wrote in the Turkish Cypriot opposition daily Yeniduzen, after the announcement. “And now foreigners are buying these lands. The fuss is especially about some Israeli individuals or companies... Is there a problem if the looted territories are bought by Turkish companies rather than Israeli ones? No... We are being racist... Did we not steal the land over which we are fighting, being antisemitic, disgracing ourselves? The essence of the issue is very simple: ‘Fascists Turks cannot stomach that the stolen land is now being sold to some Israeli companies’.”

The article pointed to a sharp increase in construction and property sales in northern Cyprus in recent years with some 4,600 foreigners given permission to buy properties in the first ten months of 2023. But, it added, far more properties were being bought in the north by foreigners who had been granted Turkish Cypriot citizenships; by lawyers on behalf of foreigners; or Turkish Cypriot companies with “silent foreign partners” to avoid limitations imposed on foreigners. Official records do not show such transactions and estimates are that about 50 per cent of transactions are not recorded.

The report quoted Fikri Ataoglu, responsible for the tourism dossier, as saying “It is important to protect the land in the TRNC and not give it over to foreigners, ... I don’t want TRNC land to be sold to anyone other than Turks.”

Days before the reports in the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot press Israel had said that it was “troubled” by the use of the northern part of Cyprus “both for terrorism objectives and as an operational and transit area”. The statement described the north “as an area of activity and transit to attack Israeli and Jewish targets. [This] constitutes a disturbing issue.” Turkish Cypriot officials were quick to brush off Israel’s statement, with the speaker of the assembly Zorlu Tore labelling it as an “attempt to conceal the genocide it is committing in Palestine”.

## **The banality of repetition**

On 18 December CyBC reported on a Human Rights Watch assessment that the Israeli government was using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in the occupied Gaza Strip. Israeli forces were deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food, and fuel, while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance, apparently razing agricultural areas, and depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival. CyBC said the Israeli govt described Human Rights Watch as antisemitic.

By the end of December there was an almost predictable approach to the news with most TV news bulletins making reference to the death toll (21,000) since 7 October (55,000 injured) and with the repeated dramatic calls by WHO and the UN calling for a ceasefire. News bulletins in this period became a repeated motif along with the frequency of postponements of the approval and release of a UN Security Council resolution in favour of a ceasefire.

Towards the end of the month on 29 December, the Republic of South Africa filed in the Registry of the International Criminal Court an application instituting proceedings against Israel concerning alleged violations in the Gaza Strip of obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

On 31 December Israel's minister of Foreign Affairs expressed the country's readiness to process humanitarian aid from Cyprus by allowing vessels to make use of the Cyprus corridor.

## **The war continues into 2024**

In early January 2024 Israel signaled it would start withdrawing from northern parts of Gaza, but did not. On 9 January Alpha News reported that Israel and Cyprus were 'erecting a wall' against Turkey as developments in Syria and Turkey's role in the collapse of the Assad regime had resulted in yet another standoff between Israel and Turkey. There were reports of an urgent trip to Cyprus by Israel's president Isaac Herzog who met with his Cypriot counterpart to assess the situation. On the same day the president

met with the Foreign Minister of the UAE who later met separately with Israel's president. The bulletins repeated the Cypriot president's oft repeated line that 'Cyprus was a paragon of stability and security in the region and that in the context of its humanitarian aid efforts it was "part of the solution and not of the problem"'

On 12 January the Cyprus Mail online ran an article accompanied by video produced by the Cyprus News Agency in December with a Cypriot medic from Doctors Without Borders, Nikolas Papachrysostomou (below), who said that Gaza counted one dead person per 100 of the population and Rafah, a city of 300,000 inhabitants before the war swelling to 1.5 million. "Nothing is safe and no one is safe in Gaza. In the morning when people say 'good morning, what are you doing?', everyone's answer, regardless of nationality, is: 'I'm alive'."



On the same day the International Court of Justice ruled that it was plausible that Israel's acts could amount to genocide and issued provisional measures, in which it ordered Israel to take all measures to prevent any acts contrary to the 1948 Genocide Convention. Prime minister Netanyahu stated on 13 January that it was Hamas that was committing genocide, and "would murder all of us if it could".

The media paid attention to the deterioration of the relations between Turkey and Israel as Israel's defence minister, Yoav



Gallant, accused Turkey of serving as the “executive arm of Hamas” with Israel’s ambassador to Cyprus, Oren Anolik, stating that the option of exporting Israeli natural gas to Turkey was “no longer on the table” and that transferring gas to Cyprus, potentially for conversion into liquefied natural gas, remained an option.

On January 26 the International Court of Justice by fifteen votes to two, called on Israel to abide by its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza and take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of genocide.



Though the public broadcaster CyBC’s overall handling of the coverage was commendable and its journalists provided comprehensive and thoughtful reporting on Gaza throughout, on that evening the news on the ICJ came 16 minutes into the bulletin, after items on sports violence, economic measures for the Turkish Cypriot community and organized crime. The report came under the headline “Voice of International Law” (above) and began: “The ICJ did not call for a ceasefire nor did it openly accuse Israel of genocide, but it did send a clear message for the need to protect the civilian Palestinian population” and described international law as the only moral recourse of the people suffering the consequences of the war. It duly reported prime minister Netanyahu’s rejection of the call describing any suggestion that Israel was engaging



in genocide as “false and outrageous”. By February public hearings opened at the ICJ with 52 states and three international organizations presenting legal arguments –the largest number of parties to participate in any single case in the court’s history.

## **Key Moment 4**

In March after weeks of speculation and consultations between US, Israeli, Cypriot and UAE officials the Cypriot authorities announced that in cooperation with Israel a maritime corridor was established to facilitate pre-screened cargoes to Gaza. Throughout the month officials from more than 35 countries and international organizations—including the UN and the EU— coordinated their efforts at the Cyprus Joint Rescue Coordination Centre in Larnaca to strengthen the initiative named “Amalthea”. US president Joe Biden welcomed the Republic’s initiative with the US National Security Council’s praising Cyprus’ president.

Soon after, the European Commission’s president Ursula van der Leyen visited Cyprus with the Cypriot president explaining the logistics on site and Phileleftheros proclaiming on its front page “Cyprus’ value skyrockets with Amalthea” with a few days later reporting that Turkey was furious over Amalthea and was trying to block the initiative. For days the Cypriot presidency was allowing the media to speculate over the departure of the first shipments with the president himself claiming “I cannot say the specific time for security reasons” which offered the sense of suspense and achievement and set the tone for Cyprus’ broader regional role in the months to come.

In the end more than 500 tonnes of aid were shipped from Larnaca to Gaza. Aid included shelf-stable and ready-to-eat food. On 24 March a protest was held at the Larnaca port, against Cyprus’ decision to grant Israel access to the port. In a statement, United for Palestine Cyprus said: “Our government has brought shame and risk to our country.” The organisers claimed “Cyprus has granted Israel the ability to conduct military and commercial operations through our island, making us complicit in war crimes, ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and the theft of natural gas off the coast of Gaza. Furthermore, this could put us in potential danger should Hezbollah decide to attack Israel’s presence at Larnaca’s port.” In early April the shipments were returned to Cyprus following

the deaths of seven members of the World Central Kitchen NGO which was a crucial operator in the distribution of the aid. During this period headlines online and in front pages focused on Cyprus' and its government's role and the praise it received. There were headlines such as (below):

- “Christodoulides: Through Amalthea Cyprus’ significant role is acknowledged”
- “Turks requested of the US to ‘kill’ Amalthea but to no avail”;
- “Turkish Frenzy over Amalthea”;
- “Amalthea injured; Nicosia on stand-by”



On 11 April 2024 the foreign ministry of the United Arab Emirates announced the allocation of 15 million US dollars in support of the Amalthea Fund, to support the maritime corridor.

By May the temporary jetty constructed by the United States US Army and US Navy to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza was moved into place as more shipments of humanitarian aid were dispatched from Cyprus. The first shipment to have docked was from the British government and comprised of temporary shelters made up of plastic sheeting.

The Cypriot government spokesman said subsequent shipments from Cyprus were set to take food items, medical supplies, hygiene products, and more temporary housing provisions to Gaza.

The Cypriot foreign ministry issued a statement that “we are proud to work with the US and the UK, and key partners in the Amalthea plan, to scale up the flow of humanitarian aid” to Gaza. Now it is in place, the jetty’s capacity will begin at 90 lorryloads per day, rising to 150 per day once the operation is in full swing.

# CyprusMail

HOME  
Flooded government services report sent to the Legal Service

BUSINESS  
Bankrupt Cyprus after tax profits surge to €100m in 2023

LIFESTYLE  
A ship look can be the teen story

INSIDE your SundayMail

## Gaza aid corridor put into operation

Cyprus stands as the EU's lighthouse in this region'



President Christodoulos and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen shake hands in front of a blue backdrop with the word 'REPUBLIC'.

### Church court for monks in sex and cash scandal

By Matthew Pridemore

A High Court judge has ordered a church court to hear a case involving a group of monks who were accused of sexual abuse and misappropriation of funds. The case involves a group of monks who were accused of sexual abuse and misappropriation of funds.

# SundayMail

RETHINKING AT 95  
After 70 years in a cluttered Nicosia shop, a cobbler finally calls time

ENGLISHMAN IN JAPAN  
James Clavel's popular (Shogun) is remade for a new generation of TV viewers

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Lifestyle supplement to see you through the week

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Day says will be ambitious

World  
Putin vows to punish those behind recent measures

Comment  
Status of Cyprus solution: too much power in one man

Business  
Corporate mobility within the EU

Sport  
How name shopping Messi saved an Israeli grandfather from Hamas

## Aid plan a 'master stroke' for Cyprus

But caution expressed over sea corridor stopping aid arriving in Gaza by land or taking attention from larger problems



A man and a woman are holding a small child. The man is wearing a black cap and a black t-shirt, and the woman is wearing a black t-shirt. They are both smiling at the camera.

### Tax department says will look into scandal-hit monastery

By Matthew Pridemore

The tax department has announced it will investigate a scandal involving a monastery. The scandal involves a group of monks who were accused of sexual abuse and misappropriation of funds.

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Kathimerini reported on the Palestinian Embassy's social media post which read: "We all know that there are about 8,000 bodies under the rubble, 'missing persons'. You destroyed Gaza and now you are building a port on our ruins and corpses?..." In its reporting and analyses the newspaper was able to provide technical as well as diplomatic context warning of the risks of overplaying Cyprus' role consistently advocating that it needed to navigate with "seriousness, prudence, and effectiveness" to allow diplomatic gain for the Republic and the often-used phrase of the "geopolitical upgrading of Cyprus".



In June as the International Court of Justice hearings intensified on South Africa's claim of genocide, prime minister Netanyahu said the phase of intense fighting against Hamas was coming to an end but that the war would not end until Hamas no longer controlled the enclave.

## Key Moment 5

On 19 June the Cypriot government was caught off-guard when Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, warned that the organisation could consider Cyprus part of the war with Israel if it continued to allow the latter to use its airports and bases for military exercises or military purposes directed against Hezbollah. "Opening Cypriot airports and bases to the Israeli enemy to target Lebanon would mean that the Cypriot government is part of the war, and the resistance will deal with it as part of the war," Nasrallah stated.



In response president Christodoulides stated that Cyprus is in no way involved in any military operations in the region or elsewhere and, in what would become a mantra for many months, stated that "Cyprus is part of the solution not a part of the problem". Some commentators argued that Nasrallah's statements should not be read as a threat to Cyprus per se, but they were rather directed at the use of the British bases on the island, which Nicosia had no control over, in the event they were used in a full-blown Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

Around this time the UK website Declassified UK reported that Britain had used RAF Akrotiri to send over dozens of military transport planes to Beirut since the bombing of Gaza began in October 2023. News relating to the use of the British Bases were picked up intermittently by the local media but they were rarely



highlighted. From time to time the ministry of Defence would issue statements to the effect that the UK Bases could not be utilised for aggressive missions against neighbouring countries. Phileleftheros' columnist Costas Venizelos wrote that if the UK wanted to assist the US and Israel (against Iran) they should launch their missions from their country not Cyprus. He went on to raise the need to challenge the legitimacy of the Bases following the International Court of Justice's decision on Mauritius, a matter, he added, that had been 'swept under the carpet.'

### **The British Bases**

A year later, in July 2025, digital content producer Nuvpreet Kalra from CodePink reported that Britain had carried out over 500 surveillance flights from RAF Akrotiri over Gaza and claimed that the intelligence provided by the Shadow R1 aircraft assisted Israel in carrying out its attacks on infrastructure in Gaza; also that bomber planes from RAF Akrotiri were used for attacks on Yemen while Typhoon fighter jets and Voyager refueling planes were used to support US and Israeli attacks on Iran. Much later, in December 2025, a Declassified UK documentary titled "Will this documentary put Keir Starmer behind bars?" claimed that 739 surveillance flights had taken off RAF Akrotiri for Gaza. It said these had shared thousands of hours of surveillance footage with Israel in real time. The programme had correlated flight times with what it said were "major massacres." It also quoted the former conservative Defence Secretary Grant Schapps as saying that the jets "do not have a combat role.' Phileleftheros offered extensive coverage to the documentary.

On the question of the UK sovereign bases there was a sustained degree of citizen-journalism present on social media platforms with activists such as Matthew Stavrinos and Melanie Steliou posting regularly on TikTok and Instagram and who later were interviewed by non-Cypriot media outlets including Declassified UK.

With the Cypriot government downplaying the Hezbollah statement and reassuring the public but also securing the support of the EU, Kathimerini's political correspondent Yiannis Ioannou under the title "[Cyprus is] Part of the solution, not of the problem" (next page) said the direct threat caused intense concern, reminding of Cyprus' proximity to the turbulent subsystem of the Middle East.

# Μέρος της λύσης, όχι του προβλήματος

Τι σηματοδοτούν και πώς ερμηνεύονται οι ευθείες απειλές της Χεζμπολάχ εναντίον της Κύπρου

ΤΟΥ ΓΙΑΝΝΗ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ

Το δόγμα του Χασάν Ναρσάβι την περασμένη εβδομάδα, με το οποίο για πρώτη φορά, με αφορμή τον πόλεμο Ισραήλ-Χαμά στα Γάζα και την κλιμακωτή απειλή στον νότιο Λίβανο μεταξύ Ισραήλ-Χεζμπολάχ, αποτελεί ευθείας την Κύπρου διαμορφώθηκε έντονη απειλή επιστομολογίας τα μεγάλα εικάζονται της Κύπρου στο ταργαμένο και συγκροτούσε υποσυστήματα της Μέσης Ανατολής. Ο Ναρσάβι, που συχνά επιδιώκει να πάρει ομιλίες, με αφορμή και την κλιμακωτή των τελευταίων μηνών στην περιοχή, με τον ΕΔΡ να βρίσκεται σε πόλεμο ετοιμότητας για ένα δεύτερο μέτωπο με τον Λίβανο, έδωσε ουσιαστικά με τον καιρό ο Κύπρος κεραιμολογείται επικρατούσα από το Ισραήλ σε περιπτώσεις ενός πολέμου πόλεμος Ισραήλ-Χεζμπολάχ νίκη θα γίνει μέρος του. Σημειολογικά αλλά και ουσιαστικά το νέο εδάφους που για πρώτη φορά ο Κ.Α. ένα κρότος-μύλος της Ε.Ε., γίνεται αντικείμενο ευθείας απειλής από έναν μη κρατικό δυνάστη όπως ο οργανισμός Χεζμπολάχ, που αποτελεί ανεξάρτητο μέτωπο μέρος του λεγόμενου φερόμενου «Μετα-Αντίστασης», που αρέχεται από το Ιράν, και έχει στρατηγικό αποτέλεσμα στις συγκρούσεις σε

Χαμά, Αλβανία/Ισραήλ, Ιράκ και Υμέν.

Φοβισμός Χριστοδουλίδης, ανέλθωσε σε κάτι τέτοιες επαναλαμβανόμενες πως όχι μόνο δεν συζητείται στον πόλεμο αλλά αποτελεί μέρος της λύσης του προβλήματος στην περιοχή. Οι κινήσεις της Ανατολής όμως για αποστολή περιηγητών δεν περιουσιάζουν στις διαδρομές τοποθέτησης του προέδρου Χριστοδουλίδη. Όπως επισημαίνεται ο «Κ» οι απειλές της Παροικίας από έγκυρες πηγές καλούν οι υπαρκ-

**Η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία δεν εμπλέκεται με κανένα τρόπο στον πόλεμο, αυτό είναι η κύρια απάντηση της κυβέρνησης μετά τις απειλές.**

φορικές διαμορφώσεις του Λιβάνου που θέλουν τα δύο μέρη να προχωρήσουν όλα σε έμμεση επαφή. Μετά και την ενεργητικότητα κανονικών επικοινωνιών δόθηκε δικτύωση μηνύματα από τη Χεζμπολάχ σε σχέση με τη προετοιμότητα δολοφονίας Ναρσάβι. Η θέση της Δημοκρατίας ότι ο πόλεμος αποτελεί μέρος της λύσης του προβλήματος



Ο Χασάν Ναρσάβι, ηγέτης της αντι-ελίτς οργάνωσης Χεζμπολάχ του Λιβάνου που αποτελεί επιβεβαιωτική απειλή εναντίον του Ισραήλ και της λύσης.

μάχου του λεγόμενου «Μετα-Αντίστασης». Ενδεικτικά ήταν και η απειλή της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης να επιβεβαιώσει στα συνέτητά του στην «Ο» του Τζαμί Μπαρτόν που επίσης τοποθετήθηκε ενάντια σε διαμορφώσεις υπέρ της αντίστασης με τον ΥΠΕΣ της Κ.Α. Κωνσταντίνου Κάρμα, να συζητεί το θέμα με τον Λιβανέζο ομόλογό του.

## Η απειλή

Εκτός των άλλων τον σοβαρότητα της απειλής τα δύο στοιχεία που προκύπτουν είναι:

Πως θεωρητικά η Χεζμπολάχ μπορεί να κινείται με το παραπάνω της αντιστάσεως περσιάζει τη Κύπρου. Γάτο, κάτι τέτοιο για να γίνει υπαρκτό προϋποθέτει που δεν αφορούν μόνο την ίδια την οργάνωση και τα δυνατότητά της αλλά εξαρτώνται κυρίως από πώς θα εξελιχθεί ένας πόλεμος ισραήλ, όπως το 2006, πόλεμος μεταξύ Ισραήλ και Χεζμπολάχ στο νότιο Λίβανο.

Σε σχέση με την ως άνω διατύπωση, ο Κ.Α. δεν εμπλέκεται με κανένα τρόπο στον πόλεμο Ισραήλ-Χαμά-Χεζμπολάχ και επιπλέον προκειμένου ο πόλεμος να μην πραγματοποιηθεί από δυνατότητες των ισραηλινών δυνάμεων από το αφορμό πρώτο αίτημα σε διαμορφωθεί επίπεδο και δεύτερο ένα σε-

νάρχο γενεαλογίας του πολέμου Ισραήλ-Λίβανου όπου η Χεζμπολάχ θα έχει πολλά κίνητρα υποδοχής του κράτους του Ισραήλ (π.χ. παροχές Μέντ Τζαβόν, Λαμίν Χακάρ, Ελντ ή Λαμίν, κ.α.).

Φυσικά, η διάλυση της προετοιμότητας τρομοκρατίας (στηρίζεται στο πρόσημο παρόλιν συμφών που απειλείται στην Κύπρο, η διάλυση των δυνάμεων που κατόπιν αποτελούν νοτιοί έλεος, δεν έχουν υποστεί ποτέ απειλές στρατηγικού κτύπου -αεροπορική ή πυροβολική- και δεν συμμετέχουν ενεργά σε στρατιωτικές επιχειρήσεις στα Γάζα ή τον Λίβανο) και η δράση της Χεζμπολάχ έχει επιμεινεί στο παρόλιν στην Κύπρο πρόθεση δράσης τα με πιο γνωστά την περίπτωση με τη ντυτική αμυνία στα Λαδάκια (το 2015) αποτελούν, σε κάθε περίπτωση, ζήτηματα που πρέπει να απασχολούν τα αρμόδια της Κ.Α. χωρίς κατ'οίκον να υφίσταται σε επίπεδο διαμόρφωσης διάλογου μια προετοιμότητα ποσότητα και αντιστοίχως ή μια κατάσταση αφορητικής εφρακασίας. Καταλαμνικά η απορριπτό μετόλ Ισραήλ-Χεζμπολάχ, χωρίς να αποδοκίμασε μια κλιμακωτή που θα υπαρκτεί τον πόλεμο από τον Γάζα, συνθήκη δολοφονίας στο βόρειο μέτωπο του Ισραήλ και υπό από το πλαίσιο οι δολοφονίες Ναρσάβι εναντίον και σε αυτό το πεδίο.

Nasrallah's inflammatory rhetoric, was the first time Cyprus, an EU member state, had become the target of a direct threat from a non-state actor such as Hezbollah. The media headlined president Christodoulides' reaction that not only did Cyprus not participate in the war, but it was part of the solution to the problem in the region. The media fall out of Hezbollah's leader's statements about retaliation against Cyprus included listings of possible targets in Cyprus, drawn mostly from the Israeli media, including the Andreas Papandreou Air Base in Paphos, the Lakatamia Air Base, the Area Control Center in Troodos and the UK's RAF Base in Akrotiri.

On 24 June Fanis Makrides of Phileleftheros reported on Israeli media identifying potential Hezbollah targets in Cyprus and quoted a local defence analyst who maintained that Cyprus had been "victimized to send Tel-Aviv a message". The analyst was critical of what he said was a tendency by Israel's Defence Ministry to leak to Israeli media information about Cyprus after joint military exercises were conducted whereas it demanded of Cyprus never to publicise any information itself.

In July 2024 the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion finding Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian

On 27 July a Hezbollah rocket killed 12 children and teenagers in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, prompting Israel to vow retaliation.

On 9 August Phileleftheros carried the headline “Bridging role as [we] await the strike” with the Gaza conflict – indirectly as it happened - becoming a frontpage lead article only because a related development affected Cyprus. With Hezbollah’s growing threats, the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, one of Hamas’ leading political figures in Iran and the fear of escalation in Lebanon, media attention returned to Cyprus’ readiness to handle the evacuation of foreign citizens from the region under its ESTIA operational plan but also the potential outflow of immigrants from the region towards Cyprus’ shores. By this time the humanitarian initiative Amalthea had begun to falter not having delivered any practical benefit to the Palestinian people or any spectacular results for Cyprus’ diplomacy.

[illegible]

# OffsiteNews

Economy & Brief

ΔΙΑΡΚΗΣΙΑ: 01 ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2014

## Απειλές Χαζμπούλαχ: Ανησυχίες για Τουρισμό

### Ότε μισή λέξη από τα Κόμματα για τις απειλές Χαζμπούλαχ

Μόνο η ΔΗΠΑ καταδικάζει - Το ΑΚΕΛ εξέδωσε ανακοίνωση αλλά δεν έγραψε ούτε ένα γινώγα για τις απειλές του Ρασάμλα

- ▶ ΗΘ Δύσβαση: Συμπερατήριμα σε Χριστουδουλίδη
- ▶ Κομισιόν: Απειλή προς Κύπρο είναι και προς ΕΕ
- ▶ Σώματα Ασφαλείας Είναι σε ύψιστο συναγερμό
- ▶ Επιχειρηματίες Ψυχραιμία και αποσυλίσμωση
- ▶ Οι σχέσεις με Λίβανο τους τελευταίους 12 μήνες

### Τέρας Χιζμάν Εντάρλ Λαϊτάνο

Η Κυβέρνηση τους καλεί να κάνουν για κτίριο κτήριο

### ΚΟΝΑΥΛΙΑ & ΔΗΜΟΙ

Ξαναεξελέσαντος Δήμου αλλά η κρατική χρημεια καλὰ κρατείται

ΤΑ ΑΒΟΛΑ

Οι Τερερβάρεις της ανασφάρεις



The month of August also saw Turkey submitting its request for joining the ICJ case while the World Health Organization recorded the first confirmed case of polio in Gaza for 25 years. In September Israel expanded its operations into Lebanon and detonated thousands of booby-trapped pager communications devices used by Hezbollah injuring hundreds of its members. At the end of the month an Israeli airstrike in Beirut killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

Media coverage of protests against the war was marginal. These were initially described as pro-Palestinian or ceasefire protests, later acquiring an anti-genocide dimension. On occasion, in Limassol, they were pre-texted against the British Bases involvement on the Israeli bombing raids in Gaza. The protests were mostly organized by the Cyprus Peace Council and supported by the left-wing AKEL party and were well attended by Cyprus' standards but rarely swelled up as mass rallies drawing at best a few hundred protestors with on occasion perhaps above one thousand. These were never comprehensively covered by the Cypriot media, securing at best a reference to the organisers' press release or a photograph and caption or in broadcast media a few seconds of coverage.

A TV news editor maintained that on some occasions it could not justify news coverage of a protest given the small number of the protesters attending but the Cyprus News Agency confirmed that it sent a reporter to cover every protest irrespective of the turnout.

While, as we saw, the use of the British military bases during the conflict was not discussed at length in the Cypriot media, aviation experts' findings were surfacing online persistently pointing to evidence of UK aircraft offering surveillance intelligence within Gaza's airspace during Israeli bombing raids. When in October 2024 Iran attacked Israel, there were rumours and fears over the possibility of an attack on the British bases and speculation over whether or not the Bases were capable of repelling a similar ballistic missile attack. The UK defence minister John Healey visited Cyprus and said that British Royal Airforce jets "played their part in trying to prevent further escalation in the Middle East" which raised further questions about exactly how Britain was aiding Israeli defence against Iranian missiles.



In October 2024 an error in the translation of a Palestinian state press release from Arabic to English in which Cyprus was referred to as Greek Cypriot Administration was elevated to ‘an alert’ but was quickly attributed to a mistake (above). Most media picked up on it but played the matter down when the Palestinian ambassador explained the background of the translation error. The incident did offer the opportunity to expand on the close historical ties between Palestine and Cyprus but online comments of a more conspiratorial twist linked the down-grading of the Republic to ties between Turkey and Palestine.

On the first anniversary of 7 October, Phileleftheros carried an extensive and what it said was an exclusive piece in which Israeli hostage survivors spoke to its senior reporter Andreas Bimbishis about their experience the year before. Phileleftheros had been



invited by the Israeli embassy in Nicosia to join a pool of other media who were flown to Israel where they were given access to former hostages and families of still held hostages and were taken to the Be'eri kibbutz and adjacent neighbourhoods. Be'eri is located a few kilometres from eastern border of Gaza and is the area where Hamas terrorists conducted one of the most horrifying massacres in which 101 Israeli civilians and 31 security officers were murdered.

**philenews**

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ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΚΥΠΡΟΣ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΑΠΟΨΕΙΣ ΣΤΟΝ "Φ" PODCAST ΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΑΘΛΗΤΙΚΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΣΜΟΣ

ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

#7η Οκτωβρίου #ισραήλ #Πόλεμος Ισραήλ-Χαμάς #Χαμάς

## **Αποκλειστικά στον Φ – Επιζήσαντες αφηγούνται τα γεγονότα της 7ης Οκτωβρίου**

The piece was a legitimate human-interest story and the invitation to Phileleftheros is part of normal government communications actions that all states engage in as they promote their agenda and narratives. On the day it was published, hundreds of other similar stories were published globally and it was the same day hundreds of rallies took place around the world, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza as Israel continued its demolition operations of the strip. A contrasting situation where competing actions and narratives seek to win the communication war in which the media remain the most crucial platform. On the eve of the anniversary Phileleftheros hosted an opinion editorial by the Israeli ambassador.

Just days before the 2024 US election, on 30 October, president Christodoulides met with outgoing US president Biden at the Oval Office and discussed a new effort by the US administration and mediators in the Middle East to forge cease-fires to end fighting in Lebanon and Gaza. Reuters spoke of “the small Mediterranean island nation [playing] a critical role in efforts to get humanitarian aid into Gaza since the war between Hamas and Israel began more than a year ago.” The headlines in the Cypriot press [top right: An Alliance of Stability”] seemed like the culmination of the Cypriot diplomatic frenzy to get Amalthea launched and secure the US’s



support as the government hovered between not upsetting Israel but not being seen as being insensitive to the plight of the Palestinian people. This delicate balancing act was reflected in the media's own reporting approach.

In November a ceasefire was finally agreed while the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu, former defence chief Yoav Gallant, and Hamas' Mohammed Deif for

alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity (proceedings against Deif were terminated on 26 February 2025, following confirmation of his death). All media reported on the news of the arrest warrants with legal experts invited on TV news bulletins to discuss how Cyprus would have to respond if Netanyahu were to visit the country. All agreed that the Republic as a signatory to the ICC would be obliged to arrest the Israeli prime minister but it was unlikely that he would travel to countries where the risk would exist. In December US president-elect Donald Trump said there would be "hell to pay" in the Middle East if hostages in Gaza



Τι θα κάνει η Κύπρος με το ένταλμα σύλληψης του Νετανιάχου | AlphaNews Live

were not freed before his January 20 inauguration, a demand he reiterated on 16 December and 7 January.



## The war drags into 2025

In the second week of January 2025 the media reported on a lengthy meeting held at the presidential palace between the Cypriot president, the president of Israel and the deputy prime minister of the UAE which was framed as a tri-partite cooperation meeting but which media sources were aware was mostly related to the prospect of the release of some of the Hamas-held hostages. The media reported that it was possible that the hostage situation was discussed given how after the Abraham accords, the UAE had been playing a discreet but important mediating role including on the hostage situation.

Within days negotiators reached a deal for a Gaza ceasefire, the first after 15 months of conflict. The phased deal included hostage and prisoner releases. On the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration in Washington, Hamas freed a group of hostages as the ceasefire deal came into effect. Hamas fighters paraded them during their release in a show of strength. In February, however, Hamas threatened to stop hostage releases as both sides accused each other of ceasefire breaches.

On February 11 the Cypriot president met with the president of Israel in Nicosia. The first phase of the ceasefire expired without

agreement on a second phase and on 2 March Israel cut off Gaza aid as a pressure tactic later saying it would use force to free the remaining hostages. It resumed intense airstrikes on Gaza that Palestinian health authorities say killed hundreds.

## Key Moment 6

The Cypriot national guard participated in an Israeli-led multinational aeronautical exercise, to which the Cyprus defence ministry referred as “military cooperation” with “friendly countries”. On 1 April, the Cyprus government spokesman, Konstantinos Letymbiotis, stated that president Christodoulides and prime minister Netanyahu had a telephone conversation, in which they “reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance bilateral relations.”

On 3 April, during his visit to the US, president Christodoulides met with the leadership of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) with the intention of boosting “strategic” ties between Cyprus, the US, and Israel. Significantly, Cyprus purchased from Israel its own “Iron Dome,” a Barak MX anti-aircraft defence system developed by Israeli Aerospace Industries,





which according to Kathimerini became fully operational in March 2025. It later became known that negotiations over the purchase of the defence system had been in full swing in October 2023 but these were interrupted as a result of Hamas's terrorist attacks.

On 4 April the embassy of Palestine issued a statement describing Cyprus' decision to abstain from a UN vote on human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories expressing its "deep disappointment" with the 16 countries that abstained. It singled out Cyprus as a country that had itself suffered from occupation and violations of international law. The resolution was adopted with 27 votes in favour, 4 against, and 16 abstentions.

Cyprus, at the time a newly elected member to the UN Human Rights Committee, defended its abstention by arguing that the resolution did not fully reflect the broader international context and



riskied being "politically misinterpreted" criticising it for failing to clearly condemn the 7 October 2023 attacks by Hamas, including the hostage-taking and alleged "sexual and gender-based violence". Cyprus reaffirmed what it called Israel's "right to self-defence within the limits

of international law" calling for renewed ceasefire negotiations to secure the release of hostages and allow the "unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid". Cyprus did vote in favour of two other resolutions on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and on the unlawful Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

During a one-day working visit to Tel-Aviv where he met with Benjamin Netanyahu on 4 May president of Christodoulides said Cyprus can become a bridge between Israelis and Palestinians (on the same day Spain, Ireland and Norway announced that they

would recognise a Palestinian state). The visit sparked criticism from advocacy groups who said the meeting with the Israeli prime minister, who faced an International Criminal Court arrest warrant, undermined Cyprus's commitment to international law. But the criticism, which came from vocal but marginal groups in the Cypriot scheme of things never received any traction in the mainstream media and was mostly played out on social media platforms.



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ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΟ ΨΕΦΔΟΛΟΓΙΣΜΟΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

**ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ**  
[Αναστάσιος Ντασιάνης, Νίκος Χριστοδουλίδης, Νίκος Χριστοδουλίδης, Νίκος Χριστοδουλίδης]

**Στο Ισραήλ ο Πρόεδρος Χριστοδουλίδης – Συναντήθηκε με οικογένειες ομήρων – Πάει και Παλαιστίνη**



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**Υποδέχτηκαν με διαδήλωση τον Χριστοδουλίδη στο Ισραήλ – Τον περίμεναν υποστηρικτές του Αϊκούτ έξω από το Προεδρικό**



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**Ντασιάνη σε Χριστοδουλίδη: Έχουμε κοινές αξίες – Ζήτησε νέα τριμερή Κύπρου, Ελλάδας, Ισραήλ**



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LOCAL INSIDER/ECONOMY WORLD SPORTS WHAT'S ON FOR

**Local**  
# Benjamin Netanyahu # Gaza # ICC # Israel # Nikos Christodoulides # Palestine # united for palestine # war

**Christodoulides Israel visit raises ethical, legal questions about Cyprus, activists say**





More attention was given to the government spokesman's statements defending Cyprus' foreign policy as "responsible and balanced" and "guided solely by the desire to uphold its national interests". Critics questioned whether Cyprus genuinely values international law given its diplomatic approach to Israel while simultaneously invoking international legal principles regarding its own divided and occupied status.

Christodoulides' visit and footage of him referring to the Netanyahu as his "dear friend" and Israel as a country with which the island "shares common values" was widely criticised at grassroots level. Criticisms grew after Cyprus failed to sign a statement by 22 nations on 20 May that urged Israel to "allow a full resumption of aid into Gaza immediately and enable the UN and humanitarian organisations to work independently and impartially to save lives..." The Cypriot government initially declined to comment on why Cyprus was not among the group, then its foreign minister said the objection was 'procedural' while the president accused his opposition critics that they were trying to score political points. He subsequently made a vague but assertively worded remark that "the continuous transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza is something that cannot be obstructed by anyone and anyone who obstructs it is condemnable and this is the position of the Republic of Cyprus".

The Christodoulides government's closeness to the Israeli leadership, and what can only be described as a practically engaged but ethically detached approach on the crisis in Gaza, generated accusations of "collusion in genocide". Matters got worse when on 21 May Cyprus objected to a review of the EU's agreement which governs its political and economic ties with Israel. The Cypriot foreign minister was one of nine to object to the review on what he said were 'grounds of procedure'.

The government struggled by reiterating that it was conducting "high level diplomacy" and clarified that its reservations towards the revision of economic ties with Israel, had to do with concern over "whether or not the actions to be proposed would have the desired effect". The government's position was channeled through the Cyprus News Agency with titles varying, the one in Phileleftheros headlining that the minister "explained" Cyprus'

position on Israel while Politis reported that minister said “the disagreement concerned procedural issues”.

## Cyprus fails to join nations urging Israel to allow full aid into Gaza

## Cyprus' objection to review of EU-Israel agreement 'procedural', Kombos says



Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos

It appeared again to be a case of tactical ambiguity on the part of the government which the media - in their news stories - absorbed as delivered without much wrangling or poking though opinion editorials they later hosted were scathing in their criticism. It was a case of the government putting out statements, the media carrying them unchallenged when those statements were incomplete or unsatisfactory.

The Christodoulides government insisted that its “strategic policy” enabled the state to be in contact with Israel, as well as the Palestinian Authority.



At the end of June 2025, the secretary-general of the left-wing AKEL addressing his party’s conference warned of the dangers of “massive and uncontrolled” purchases of residential units and large tracts of land in Cyprus by Israeli citizens. This provoked a reaction by Israel’s ambassador who responded by claiming the remarks were antisemitic (see Public Sphere chapter p.81).

The humanitarian situation reached catastrophic proportions with over 57,000 Palestinians killed, almost the total population of Gaza displaced, most hospital buildings collapsed or damaged and the health system in disarray. July saw a persistent flow of images that pointed to famine in Gaza. The UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese released her report and called for sanctions and an arms embargo on Israel and for global corporations to be held accountable for “profiting from genocide”.



Curiously, the Cypriot media made scant reference to Albanese, her work and public interventions. On one of those rare occasions when attention fell on Albanese, Philenews carried a particularly scathing take-down piece titled: “Who and what is Francesca Albanese really?” In it, its Tel-Aviv based columnist, Costis Constantinou wrote that Albanese cannot officially be said to be representing the UN as her work

was offered pro-bono and went on to question her integrity pointing to allegations of financial impropriety. In particular

Constantinou linked the fact that she was not paid by the UN to alleged disclosures that a trip she had taken to New Zealand in late 2023, after the October attacks, had been covered by organisations associated with Hamas in Australia.

On 21 July the Cyprus Police arrested three individuals for allegedly displaying the Palestinian flag on balloons which were released over a stadium in Limassol during a football match between the Cypriot team Pafos FC and Maccabi Tel Aviv, which was taking place in the presence of the president of Cyprus. The three individuals, who claimed to be activists belonging to a leftist group called “afoa.cy,” were held for questioning. They were formally charged with offenses related to the posting of political symbols in a sports venue and causing a public nuisance.

The leftist opposition party AKEL described the arrests as a provocative act of authoritarianism, intimidation and criminalisation of freedom of expression as the incident had occurred at a considerable distance from the stadium where the match was taking place.



It said that inside the stadium the police had no problem with Israeli flags being displayed whilst allowing Israeli team supporters to light flares and smoke bombs – actions that normally constituted criminal offences.

On 3 August the shocking images of the two Israeli hostages held by Hamas made headlines and oddly elicited the reaction of the ministry of Foreign Affairs which used the opportunity

to point to a broader need for humanitarian assistance for civilians on a massive scale.



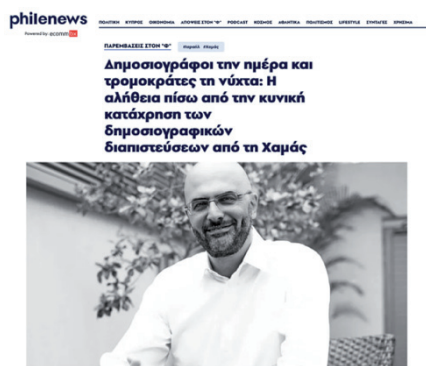
**Φρίκη με βίντεο της Χαμάς με όμηρο  
να σκάβει τον τάφο του σε σήραγγα:  
«Πεθαίνω, δεν έχω φάει εδώ και μέρες»**



On 10 August Anas Al Sharif and four other journalists were targeted and killed in Gaza. The incident got considerable coverage with most media referring to reports that the IDF spokesperson Avichai Adraee had shared a video of Al-Sharif on X some weeks before and had accused him of being a member of Hamas's military wing. UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression Irene Khan called it "an unsubstantiated claim" and a "blatant assault on journalists".

Al-Sharif himself had told the Committee to Protect Journalists he lived with the “feeling that I could be bombed and martyred at any moment”. Al Jazeera said the attack was “a desperate attempt to silence voices in anticipation of the occupation of Gaza”<sup>\*</sup>.

All Cypriot media covered the story though none as top news with the coverage mitigated perhaps by the effective spread of doubt and confusion that Israel’s communications output had generated about the journalists. (see also p.96). The Israeli ambassador to Cyprus went on a media round with interviews and statements such as “Journalists by Day, Terrorists by Night” in Phileleftheros and “What the Media are Not Telling You” on ANT1Live.



<sup>\*</sup> The same had occurred on 29 September 2024, when an Israeli airstrike targeted the home of displaced Palestinian journalist Wafa al-Udaini in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza. She, her husband, and their two young daughters were killed. Her two sons survived.



In mid-September a circular by the Israeli government to Cyprus, calling for all antisemitic graffiti to be cleaned up, sparked controversy and a political row as it appeared that the presidential palace had requested the circular to be passed on to local authorities for action. The leftist AKEL asked whether it was considered antisemitic to display a Palestinian flag or to call for an end to genocide and accused the administration of transforming the Republic into “a propaganda tool” for the Israeli government. Politis led with the title “Who governs here, Cyprus or Israel?” (see also Public Sphere chapter, page 90)

At the end of September there was some coverage of the Global Sumud Flotilla’s mission to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza. It was mostly drawn from Greek agencies and media, conveying factually the output from both representatives of the Flotilla and the Israeli authorities and the tension that began to build as it sailed past the southern side of Cyprus as it approached Gaza. When the vessels were intercepted on 1 October and the activists were detained, the coverage over their treatment (mostly Greta Thunberg’s mistreatment and the Israeli Ministry’s denunciation of her claims) drew some interest but the unfolding detail, both technical but also political, was mostly played out on social media platforms with online news sites not following it as closely as one would have expected.

Part of the problem with this sort of rolling coverage is that it is dictated by the online clickbait nature of the Cypriot media, so it is released in rolling snippets with rarely any long-form reporting. In the days that followed, the docking of various vessels at Cyprus’ ports drew some attention as did the fact that there were Greek nationals among the crews. But the stories were approached as streaming adventures and less about what the flotilla had claimed it had set out to achieve. The substance of the mission was supplanted completely when a protest that took place outside the ministry of foreign affairs in Nicosia in support of the flotilla was mishandled by the police and the focus of media attention became the police violence against the protesters rather than the plight of the Palestinians that the flotilla was intended to address.



## Multinational Crew on Gaza Flotilla Vessel Assisted in Larnaca

*Cyprus says it acted “swiftly and responsibly”, granting entry to a multinational crew after safety, identity and health checks at the port of Larnaca.*



A peace summit on 13 October in Egypt attended by representatives from 30 countries (including Cyprus) discussed the details and implementation of a peace plan initiated by US president Trump. A prisoner exchange took place, with Hamas releasing the remaining 20 living Israeli hostages while Israel released 1,718 Palestinian detainees held without charge and an additional 250 Palestinian prisoners convicted of crimes in Israeli courts.

The peace plan called for the division of Gaza into an Israeli-controlled outer zone and a coastal region to remain under the control of Palestinian technocrats under international supervision, the disarmament of Hamas and the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip. Ceasefire violations by both Israel and Hamas were frequently recorded.

Most of the Cypriot media attention in that week of October focused on president Christodoulides’ handshake at Sharm El Sheikh with president Trump, the significance of Cyprus’ participation, the six-

point plan tabled by the Cypriot government to support the peace agreement and the behind-the-scenes efforts by Turkey to obstruct Cyprus’ participation.

The already limited media coverage of the final weeks of the war fizzled out once the peace plan was agreed and the Summit was concluded.

Christodoulides had reportedly included the Amalthea initiative as part of a multi-point plan for how Cyprus could aid in the “implementation and realisation” of president Trump’s plan for the future of Gaza. It was reported at the time that the US plan stated that “the mechanisms and procedures which have been developed within the framework of Amalthea\* for fast-track security checks in Cyprus are usable for the next phase and can offer important solutions”.



\*At the end of December 2025 the ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that more than 30,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid have been delivered to Gaza via the Amalthea aid corridor since it was created in May 2024.

# Fact Checks

Fact-checking has only recently begun to enter the mainstream Cypriot media's operational culture both as part of the internal editorial process but also as a case-by-case reporting deliverable. Only two organisations engage in fact-checking, Fact Check Cyprus which is a member of the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory and the Cyprus Investigative Reporting Network CIREN\* under a specific project supported by the European Media and Information Fund (EMIF).

On the war in Gaza, Fact Check Cyprus conducted a few enlightening checks but it is not clear how widely these were read by the public or picked up by other local media.

- 1 On 14 August 2025 it looked into the Israeli claim that Palestinian photographer Anas Zayed Fteiha, a correspondent for Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency had staged photographs in Gaza that served Hamas' propaganda focusing particularly on allegations surrounding two photos.

The allegations were first reported in the German magazine Bildt and partly in Süddeutsche Zeitung and picked up by Greek, then Cypriot social media [The allegations were published in two Greek news portals Makedonika Nea and iefimerida.gr but not by any of the main Cypriot news outlets]. The key claim presented in Bild was that the photographer was an activist who has spoken out against Israel, and that his photographs were one-sided and could not be trusted. The saga was also presented by the president of Israel in some of his public appearances.

Fact Check Cyprus considered the various sources including various other photographs from different angles that showed that

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\*CIREN is a project initiated by the Institute for Mass Media IMME with the support of the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project OCCRP, of which CIREN is now a member centre.

Doubts about images

## This Gaza photographer stages Hamas propaganda



the photo captured a real food distribution point, where food had been distributed consistently and on the day the photo was taken, and referred to videos showing the same people in the photos receiving food a short time later. It quoted Israeli fact checking organisations that corroborated this and concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that the photos from Gaza were staged. On the contrary, the humanitarian crisis was real and the specific location where the photo was taken was a real food distribution point. It is worth noting that following the allegations two photo agencies, AFP and DPA terminated their cooperation with Anas Zayed Fteiha but Reuters maintained its cooperation with him, officially stating that his photos met the standards of “accuracy, independence and impartiality.”

The Bild story was swiftly amplified on various online platforms [especially X] by Israel’s foreign ministry, which cited them as proof that Hamas manipulates global opinion. Fteiha was branded an “Israel- and Jew-hater” serving Hamas by rightwing influencers.

## How German media outlets helped pave the way for Israel's murder of journalists in Gaza Hanno Hauenstein

In the run-up to this week's deadly attacks, stories linking Palestinian reporters to Hamas gained currency, says Berlin-based journalist Hanno Hauenstein



13 Aug 2025 18.06 CEST

In August 2025 Berlin-based journalist Hanno Hauenstein wrote that in this instance German media had become “a direct pipeline for Israeli talking points”, which are quickly recycled into the international arena and repackaged as “evidence”.

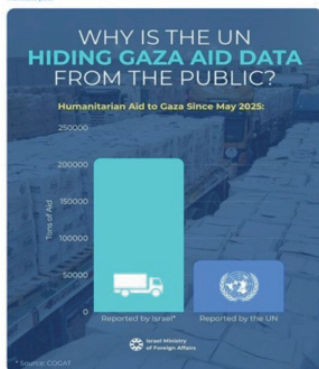
Anas Fteiha himself commented on Bild’s accusations: “I don’t create suffering; I document it. What the people of Gaza endure, including siege, starvation, bombardment, and devastation needs no fabrication or dramatization. It only demands a conscience bold enough to reveal the truth to the world.”\*

- 2 In September 2025 Fact Check Cyprus looked into the Israeli claim that the UN had been engaged in a ‘cover up’ regarding the true amount of aid going into Gaza. Israel claimed that since May 2025 it had facilitated the entry of 208,542 tons of humanitarian aid into Gaza and that the UN recognized only 69,775 tons — ignoring aid sent by donor countries, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, NGOs, and the private sector. “Why this cover-up?” it asked, “What are they hiding?” The claim appeared on the official X account of the Israeli embassy in Greece.

**Israel in Greece** @IsraelinGreece  
 Από τον Μάιο, το Ισραήλ έχει διευκολύνει την είσοδο 208.542 τόνων ανθρωπιστικής βοήθειας στη Γάζα. Όμως ο ΟΗΕ αναγνωρίζει μόνο 69.775 τόνους — αγνοώντας τη βοήθεια που έστειλαν οι χώρες δωρητές, το Ανθρωπιστικό Ιδρυμα για τη Γάζα, οι ΜΚΟ και οι ιδιωτικές τράπεζες.

Γιατί αυτή η συγκάλυψη; Τι κρύβουν;

Όταν ο ΟΗΕ δείχνει τη μισή αλήθεια, αυτό δεν είναι ενημέρωση — είναι χειραγώγηση.  
 Translate post



3:36 PM · Aug 25, 2025 · 100 Views

**Protocols Without Zion** @ProtocolsWZion

Δεν υπάρχουν λόγια για την βαρβαρότητα των Παλαιστίνιων. Αφίσαν τα χειρότερα για το τέλος. Κρατάνε μια ολόκληρη στρατιά παιδιών με εγκεφαλική παράλυση, τα οποία η Χαμάς κρατά σκόπιμα στη Γάζα για προπαγανδιστικές φωτογραφίες, παρόλο που είναι ευπρόσδεκτα στα ισραηλινά νοσοκομεία

Translate post



\*At the time this study went to print the Bild article remained online, uncorrected.

Fact Check Cyprus conducted a survey of the available sources regarding the flow of aid and concluded that Israel's claim of a "cover-up" by the UN was misleading as the differences in reporting were due to methodological differences, in essence Israel having recorded incoming aid for distribution while the UN more strictly and accurately recording what is actually distributed to the final beneficiaries – the civilian citizens of Gaza. This meant that aid that was stolen, lost, seized by armed groups or remained undistributed in warehouses was not counted. The fact check was particularly useful in making this distinction but also recorded the credibility of the foundations participating in the aid campaign, highlighted the level of humanitarian aid theft and the Israeli government's bureaucratic restrictions on experienced international NGOs that traditionally work with the UN.

Given that Cyprus was so central to the aid process and so much local media attention was placed on it, the fact that this was not picked up by the mainstream is telling. Fact Check Cyprus concluded that Israel's claim of a "cover-up" by the UN was misleading.

- 3 Fact Check Cyprus also looked into the claims of barbarity by Palestinians for deliberately holding in Gaza malnourished children with cerebral palsy for propaganda photos even though they were welcome in Israeli hospitals. Its research found that the famine in Gaza was not limited to children with disabilities or health problems, and that the malnutrition crisis was real and affected 22% of the population, as documented by international organizations and there was no evidence that the children in the photo (previous page) had any other health problems, nor that Hamas was preventing children with problems from obtaining medical help.

The famine would continue to be disputed and described as 'fake news' not in the media but often in comments that appeared under online media reports. And this despite the fact the warning issued by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification IPC on 22 August that all three famine criteria had been met: collapsing food consumption, acute malnutrition, and deaths caused by both.



Though not making direct reference to fact checking, academic Giorgos Venizelos writing in *Phileleftheros* in August 2025 under the title “Disinformation as complicity to the Gaza genocide,” made a plea to local columnists and media organisations to refrain from echoing ‘word for word’, as he put it, Israel’s official talking points and phraseology and called on the Cyprus Media Ethics Committee to be alert to the systematic denial of evidence of Israel’s violation of international law and the normalization of its narratives and to monitor whether its code of conduct was being adhered to.

Poignantly, the Cypriot journalist and analyst Yiannis Ioannou in an op-ed on disinformation in the Cypriot press in August 2025 explained the situation like this:

*“Journalistically we are not trained to fact-check – in the instance of a fake report in a Turkish tabloid newspaper with sensationalist front pages we didn’t even bother to make a simple check; because we can’t ask this of young colleagues working at online news sites who work the scroll shift for peanuts. And this is where the key to tackling disinformation rests – disinformation which is hybrid and more sophisticated than we can fathom. To have the incentive every time to check something before they publish in the midst of the struggle for speed and clicks, one has to be better paid”*

Ultimately fact checking, like all high-quality journalism of which it is an integral operational part, takes time and as Ioannou suggests, neither time nor incentives are available to journalists in Cyprus. This is because young reporters are forced to operate in a culture in which publishers refrain from investing in them having the time and the training necessary to grow and improve.

Fact checking as a separate branch of journalism – rather than a part of its operational culture – rarely reaches the general readership, to which for the most part, good reporting is increasingly being denied. They are denied by their own habits, by algorithmic trickery, by the flooding of the zone and because, bar rare exceptions, of the deteriorating state of journalism in the country.



# The public sphere

The public debate in Cyprus over the war in Gaza was diverse and often impassioned with contrasting opinion editorials from politicians, academics and commentators hosted within the same pages both in offline and online media. The debate became increasingly inflamed as the Israeli offensive and the humanitarian crisis acquired catastrophic proportions and as the Cypriot government's stance remained very obviously lukewarm and overzealously diplomatic.

But while the public was confounded by what it was witnessing – from the horror of the terrorist attack in October 2023 to the gradual degradation and dehumanization of the Palestinians the public sphere was pre-occupied with the geopolitical, with process and primarily with Cyprus and the consequences, even opportunities arising from the war. In the timid climate of Cyprus very few attempts were made to offer context, historical depth or alternative readings that would challenge the government's line.

In the same way that the media sought to hold and project a sense of balance in their reporting by addressing all aspects of the unfolding events, similarly, they hosted a plurality of voices in their comment pages. These spilled over into social media where there were often sharp exchanges over the views of high-profile public influencers and over the Cypriot state's overall stance on the war.

Sometimes even within a media itself, for example in the widely read daily *Phileleftheros* (also *philenews.com*), there were instances of strongly contrasting positions and arguments between its own established writers. At a time when opinion generates greater virality than news, *Phileleftheros* is acknowledged in Cyprus as a newspaper where all views are showcased, often without much scrutiny as was the case of a controversial – now withdrawn – editorial by the chair of the Israel-Cyprus Chamber of Commerce

(see page 93). Phileleftheros' rather chaotic plurality constructed a false sense of balance obscuring the way the paper itself framed and presented the actual news coverage.

The paper's high profile Tel-Aviv based columnist Costis Constantinou consistently offered in-depth analyses of developments on Gaza and the region - at a level of detail and insight usually absent from Cyprus' media - which, however, more often than not appeared to reflect a perspective likely shaped by the proximity to information and sources in the Israeli capital. Constantinou's analyses were sometimes in sharp contrast to the analyses provided by another of the paper's columnists, Alekos Michaelides, who would convey perspectives that reflected an anti-Israeli bearing.

News bulletins and current affairs programmes consistently sought the views of political scientists and international affairs analysts from Greece and Cyprus. Programmes such as Soteris Baroutis' Αιχμές on Omega TV discussed the situation in Gaza with a declared intention of explaining the state of play and with considerable attention to the historical perspective but these too were contingent on the news cycle and the inevitable fate of Gaza fading into the background as the siege dragged on.

Beyond the mainstream there was a parallel debate among a new generation of cultural workers, curators and researchers engaged in a more radical critique of Cyprus and in this case Cyprus' perceived alignment with Israel. One was the platform afoa.cy made up of cyber-activists who used online posts, podcasts but also printed pamphlets to challenge mainstream media narratives which they saw as bowing to the political and economic interests of the Cypriot elite.

The contested issues of genocide and anti-semitism were explored by scholars including Haridimos Tsoukas, Alpel Ali Riza and Giorgos Venizelos, and columnists including Pavlos Xanthoulis, Giorgos Kakouris, Chrystalla Hadjidemetriou, Antonis Polydorou and Paris Demetriades. Their weekly columnns, mostly in the mainstream press' Sunday editions, served as reference points for

the public debate amid the incessant flow of shallow social media commentary or weaponized editorial positions. But in keeping with news cycles these opinions were sporadic and could not, objectively speaking, keep up with the unfolding catastrophe.

As early as December 2023 Alpel Ali Riza raised the question of war crimes by Israel. He wrote in the Cyprus Mail that while there had been an arrest warrant out for Vladimir Putin, for the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia he had not been charged with waging a war of aggression against Ukraine or for bombing civilians indiscriminately. Yet, Riza said, in Israel's case with the dead and injured disproportionately high in Gaza [at the time 17,000] and, in president Biden's words, Israel engaged in "indiscriminate" bombings of civilian population by dropping 'dumb' bombs in densely populated areas, the verdict could be nothing less than a war crime.

One of the instances where the key dimensions of the war were handled comprehensively and with journalistic thoughtfulness was in ANT1's interview (below) of the Israeli ambassador, in June 2025, during which the channel's head of news, Elli Kotzamani, challenged the diplomat with a degree of direct questioning which had for the most part been absent from the local media sphere. While similar questions – about war crimes, obstruction of humanitarian aid etc. - were raised and addressed in a plurality of



Συνέντευξη του πρέσβη του Ισραήλ Όρεν Ανόλικ στον ANT1 Κύπρου

opinion editorials by several commentators, the Cypriot public were denied the opportunities of assessing for themselves how Israeli representatives responded when pressed by Cypriot journalists.

In July 2025, the Cyprus Mail apportioned Israel full responsibility on the Gaza famine, its editorial views delivered robustly and consistently -particularly on matters that involved the plight of the Palestinian civilian population. It pointed to Israel's responsibility for the famine during the 11-week aid blockade, its deflection tactics and its final bowing to international pressure to allow aid in only after beginning to lose what it described as 'the propaganda war'.

Equally, but in a completely different style the Cyprus Mail's weekly satirical sketch *Tales from the Coffeeshop* where the paper's publisher offers scathing commentary about the Cypriot socio-political scene, carried frequent critical pieces including on the work of other Cypriot media when it came to Gaza: On Sunday 20 July 2025 the Mail's satirical sketch blatantly wrote: "Once a den of PLO supporters, Phil (*Philelefttheros*) has become the biggest champion of Israel's war in Gaza and the rest of the Middle East.

### **Tales from the coffeeshop: In times of crisis, a role for Cyprus**



*Evacuees from Israel arrive in Cyprus on Tuesday*

Its criticism was often specific but mostly directed at the entire Cypriot establishment. As early as October 2023 it said: “Delusions of world importance have always been strong at the centre of the universe, also known as Kyproulla [Cyprus], and they inevitably surfaced as soon as foreigners leaving Israel began using the sunshine isle as a transit destination, from where to take a flight home. Describing, the daily *Phileleftheros* as “the unwavering voice of the delusions”, the Mail said it had devoted most of a Sunday’s edition to them, its front-page headline announcing ‘Subversion of developments with a role for Cyprus’, and the sub-heading explaining that there were ‘New givens with Nicosia at the epicentre.’ The Cyprus Mail said it was all wild speculation about Cyprus’ influential new role.

*“When a crisis breaks out in our region, then the strategic and geopolitical hyper-value of Cyprus is highlighted yet again. A hyper-value dowry, which unfortunately, caused over the years the many conquests of the country....” We had developed the infrastructure to host all people leaving Israel “because we are a country that is a pylon [pillar] of stability,” the article boasted, adding that “we do not desire for there to be crises so that our role in the region could be highlighted,” before delusionally concluding: “After all, this role of vital significance, the strategic and geopolitical advantage of our country, can and must be exploited at any given time.”*

*This role of vital significance was confirmed by the invitation the president of the pylon of stability, with hyper-value, received to attend Saturday’s Cairo Summit for Peace. This was written before the summit took place so we cannot say whether Prez Nik II [Christodoulides] was received by a guard of honour when he arrived. Speaking to hacks on the sidelines of a conference in Nicosia on Friday he showed he was on the same wavelength as Phil. “The mere fact that Cyprus has been selected among the countries to be invited to such an important summit demonstrated the recognition of our role,” he said.*

The Cyprus Mail claimed “the Prez’s personal cheerleader [journalist Andreas] Bimbishis had written in *Phileleftheros*: “The presence of president Christodoulides at the Cairo summit has particular

significance for Cyprus as it highlights the role it can play, taking into account that the war is taking place in our neighbourhood”.

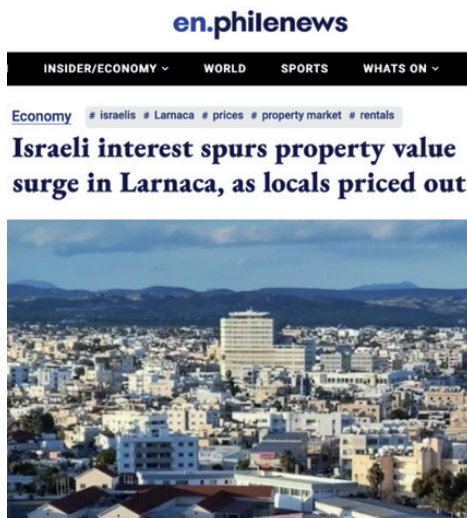
This type of Cyprus-centric perspectives to media coverage is widely acknowledged even among the media themselves who are resigned to the practice of highlighting it. It is a reliable tactic of capturing the public of a small country that always vies to punch above its weight to gain attention and significance. The country’s political class has for decades successfully exploited this practice, manufacturing ambitions and exaggerating the country’s potential.

There were of course other broader political, economic and social dimensions to the war and its fallout, reflected in, or refracted by, the media, which came to define the way the public sphere perceived and responded to it.

## The property dimension

The fallout of the Gaza war and the flow of Israeli nationals to the proximate safety of Cyprus brought an as yet unverifiable but detectible trend of Israeli nationals investing in Cyprus. “Israelis have made many investments in the Paphos district” said the chairman of the Paphos Chamber of Commerce mainly in tourist and hotel units, as well as in apartments and larger residential properties. The money

flowing into Paphos’ economy from Israelis is made both in the form of investments as well as in property purchases, with those purchases being made either for use as holiday homes or as buy-to-let properties. He added that a number of individual buyers have bought multiple properties in the area for use as rental properties, while others have invested in commercial properties. Asked about





the impact the current conflict may have on Israeli investments in Paphos, he said it is “too early to assess such a thing”, but noted that “some people, who were thinking of one day having a second home in Cyprus, may hasten their efforts to buy one.” He also noted that investments have been made in the Paphos district by Russians and Ukrainians but said the largest volume of purchases has come from Israeli nationals but would wait to draw safer conclusions” on the matter of future investments. He pointed out that Paphos police was increasing protection measures for Israelis, while a permanent guard had been placed outside the town’s synagogue.

In June 2025 the left-wing former communist party AKEL expressed concerns over what it called the ‘en masse’ buy-up of real estate in Cyprus by non-EU nationals, particularly Israelis with ‘targeted purchases’ of land creating gated communities in Larnaca and Limassol, with the party introducing legislation aiming to curb the granting of so-called ‘golden visas.’

The party’s leader Stefanos Stefanou told CyBC radio that far bigger states than Cyprus – Spain, Italy, even Germany – had placed restrictions on the sale of real estate to third-country nationals because they wanted to protect their land and prevent real estate price rises. His party tabled two bills in parliament aimed at restricting and checking the processes for the issuance of the so-called ‘golden visa’ – issued to non-EU nationals for an investment of at least €300,000 in real estate or company shareholding.

He pointed to areas in the towns of Limassol and Larnaca where he claimed specific areas were being bought en masse, and where gated communities were being created. “Zionist schools are being built – that’s what they call them – synagogues are being built, and you understand that this, in connection with various media reports appearing in serious newspapers in Israeli itself, suggested that Israel is preparing a ‘backyard’ in Cyprus... so this cannot but sound the alarm for us.”

He went on to stress: “We do not say this because of xenophobia or anti-semitism. But it is the government’s responsibility to ensure that Cyprus remains under the control of Cypriots in perpetuity.” The following day Israel’s ambassador to Cyprus Oren Anolik accused ‘a political leader,’ understood to be Stefanou, of using



antisemitic rhetoric and condemned the comments as targeting the Jewish community, calling them “plain and simple” antisemitism. He clarified that criticism of Israeli government actions is legitimate, but “targeting a community based on its identity had no place in a democratic society.” He wrote that since the October attacks numerous statements in Cyprus had harshly criticized Israel, and “I have never called them antisemitic, even if I completely disagree with what was said”.

He added, “Disagreement and open public debate are the lifeblood of a democratic society. But targeting a community based on their identity has no place in it.” In his initial Facebook statement, Anolik warned that, “What truly threatens social cohesion and democratic stability is the obsessive ongoing spread of made-up stories about ‘Zionist plans’ ...is not political opinion; it is hate speech.”

The ambassador concluded his statement on X by urging Cypriots to see through the campaign’s distortions, emphasizing his support for open discussion about Israel. However, he said he will continue to speak out against false accusations and vilification of Jewish communities, stressing that such attacks go beyond legitimate criticism and amount to hate.

AKEL’s Stefanos Stefanou rejected the Israeli ambassador’s accusations repeating that the party opposes all forms of hatred and misanthropy. AKEL, he said, a party of the left, was ideologically opposed to antisemitism and emphasized that his criticism targets the Israeli government’s policies, not the Jewish community.



"Israel tolerates no criticism and wants to control everything," Stefanou said, adding that under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, even UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the BBC were labeled antisemitic for criticizing the military campaign in Gaza. "We are against criminal, far-right policies, not people," he said.



## Η δήλωση του πρέσβη του Ισραήλ

ΑΠΟΨΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΗ  Δημοσιεύθηκε 27 Ιουνίου 2025 07:06

Politis in a strong op-ed titled plainly "The Israeli ambassador's statement" cut into the debate:

*"With all due respect to the Israeli ambassador in Nicosia, the State of Israel and the Israeli people, we cannot agree with the ambassador's statement [referring to] "unusual anti-Semitic rhetoric in public discourse in Cyprus in recent days." ... Regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the concerns expressed by the [AKEL] secretary general – and we disagree – we do not in any way consider his statement, even with its exaggerations, to be "anti-Semitic," and we believe that both the ambassador and every Israeli who has experienced antisemitism firsthand and knows exactly what it means can easily understand this. Antisemitism is one of the most extreme forms of racial or religious racism, which considers Jews a danger that must be eliminated, and we did not discern any of this in Mr. Stefanou's remarks. In this sense, we therefore consider the ambassador's intervention to be misguided and unfortunate, especially since his statement was not specific but generalised, to the extent that it almost "lumps together" the whole of Cypriot society. We are not turning a blind eye and we recognize that recently, and in response to the genocidal practices of the Israeli government against the Palestinians, strong anti-Israeli sentiments have developed in a large part of Cypriot society, but these are focused*

*on the country's prime minister and his far-right government and in no way against the Israeli people or Jews...and if the State of Israel and its representatives feel uncomfortable about the lack of support for their policies and practices in Cyprus and in the rest of the world, let them search for the fault in those policies and practices and not in others."*

### **'It's not antisemitism nor the Left; it's Gaza'**

Paris Demetriades commenting in Kathimerini on the debate over antisemitism – “despicable as it is” – said the real crisis to be focused on, “if we still consider ourselves human, is what’s happening in Gaza.... Anyone who genuinely condemns the Holocaust, the greatest shame of the so-called civilized West, should now be equally outraged at the unimaginable suffering being inflicted on Palestinians. Human decency isn’t à la carte.” The backlash to Mr Stefanou’s remarks, claimed Demetriades, said more about his critics than the Left itself.

*“Those suddenly eager to analyze the Left’s “fixations” are likely exposing their own. Yes, the Left has long suffered from ideological blind spots—its response to the war in Ukraine proved that dramatically. But timing matters. What we choose to speak about, when we speak, and how we respond in real time to global events all say a lot about our judgment. If, for instance, you’re obsessed with dissecting Hamas’s atrocities on October 7, 2023, which were indeed horrific, but say almost nothing about the Israeli military’s daily, exponentially greater brutality since then, something is very wrong. With your moral compass. And maybe your news sources, too.*

*Sure, it might have been wiser for Stefanou, as a left-wing leader, not to reference a specific people and to focus instead on Cyprus’ broader sellout to foreign capital, which, according to his ideology, has no homeland. But let’s not lose sight of what really matters right now. The big picture, at this moment, is not antisemitism. It’s not the Left. It’s Gaza”.*

A former Member of the European Parliament for the leftist AKEL, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, penned an editorial in July 2025 under the title “Are we really in danger? Are they buying us up?” in which

he sought to explore the true situation surrounding the scale of the rumoured heavy property buy-out of Cypriot properties by third-country nationals. Hadjigeorgiou spoke to an unnamed Land Registry official and was alarmed to find out that the state had no real sense or indeed view (implying policy) on the phenomenon but that the information was persistent that third country nationals – mainly from Israel – were paying handsome money for large geographical expanses, skyscrapers and historic buildings pushing prices up for locals. The writer's Land Registry source admitted that most purchases are conducted through companies and the department did not know the shareholders of those entities; it was also said that many Cypriot entities, land developers or individuals were utilised to purchase properties and then transfer them to Israelis, Russians and Chinese nationals with the state remaining in the dark. The former MEP said that those risking to raise the matter were accused of racism or antisemitism and alluded to the remarks made by the leader of the left wing AKEL party which he described as courageous. The issue was not national, but social and political, one of transparency, sovereignty and social equilibrium.

Data released in June 2022 following an MP's request the ministry of Interior showed that from 2021 to January 2025 in all districts except Nicosia, Israeli nationals were listed as fourth most frequent buyers after Cypriots, Russians and Britons.

The very reliable economist Fiona Mullen of Sapienta Economics wrote in October 2025 that reports about the proportion of sales to foreigners were somewhat misleading. Sales to non-EU nationals peaked at 31.8% of the total in 2018 and had reached 27.5% in 2024, compared with 60.4% for Cypriots and 12.1% for EU nationals. The state's audit office examined the potential for sales to foreigners via Cyprus-registered companies being counted as Cypriot sales but, according to Mullen, no one produced any hard statistics for the number of sales to Cyprus-registered companies owned by non-EU nationals. A local real estate data analytics company also pointed to the limitations of the figures pointing particularly to the absence of the value of the properties listed.

This absence of information and data and the absence of transparency that surrounds public information obligations of the

Cypriot state tend to confound the problem, allowing rumours and inaccuracies to infiltrate the media reporting and public opinion. The media rarely venture into investigating the background to such controversial issues and are content to reproduce figures without questioning the detail of the methods used by the state.

The public debate surrounding properties in the government-controlled areas also had a significant other dimension when in June 2024 an Israeli property developer Simon Mistriel Aykut was arrested while attempting to cross from the occupied areas into the government controlled areas of the Republic. Aykut pleaded guilty to 40 of the 242 charges that as founder of the Afik Group he had carried out various construction projects in Triкомо, in the occupied areas, many of which were believed to have been carried out on huge swathes of Greek Cypriot land valued at around 36m euros. Aykut's predicament infiltrated the broader political ties between Israel and Cyprus as his detainment – he was sentenced to five years in prison in October 2025 – was frequently met with protestations when for example the Cypriot president visited Tel-Aviv.

## **The medical cooperation dimension**

One of the foundations of Israel's brand-positive perception in Cypriot society has been the latter's reliance on the former's medical sector. A long article that appeared in several mainstream media in July 2025 by a well-established Cypriot cardiologist, Dr Lakis Anastassiades, vice president of the Cyprus-Israel Friendship association, elaborated the depth of this friendship through the health sector collaboration. Anastassiades outlined how from as far back as 1962 a significant group of Cypriots went to study medicine at the Hadassah Medical School of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and though political relations remained timid in the 70s and 80s by the early 90s dozens of Cypriot doctors participated in a cooperation programme that allowed them to follow medical developments in Israel at university medical centres in Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv and Beersheba.

With a gradually more favourable relationship in 1990 the Cypriot Health Minister accepted an "unofficial invitation" to visit Israel where he was received by then-Israeli deputy foreign minister

Benjamin Netanyahu. In 1997, the first official visit by a Republic of Cyprus health minister to Israel launched a scholarship programme for Cypriot doctors. In February 2014, during a visit by foreign minister Ioannis Kasoulides to Israeli president Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, the latter did not fail to remind the Cypriot minister that: “In the past, medical relations between our two countries were stronger than political cooperation!”\*

Not unconnected to the above and as media reporting of Israeli business investments in Cyprus gained greater exposure, news broke that a major €150m Hadassah Healthcare Park received environmental permission to begin construction outside the capital Nicosia. The project was said to include a five-storey private hospital unit with 156 beds, outpatient clinics, diagnostic and surgical departments, and facilities for oncology, radiodiagnostics, emergency services, and other specialised medical care aiming to offer specialised medical services currently unavailable in Cyprus, such as advanced oncological treatments, nuclear medicine, and a comprehensive Accident and Emergency Department. It would include a Rehabilitation Centre, a medical university, capable of accommodating up to 900 students, equipped with teaching rooms, laboratories, and research facilities, a biotechnology office building, dedicated to fostering research and innovation in health sciences and student accommodation facilities of 232 rooms.

## **The northern dimension and Poseidon’s Wrath**

An article by Shay Gal, an expert in crisis management, geopolitical strategy and public diplomacy published in July 2025 in the conservative portal Israel Hayom under the title “Northern Cyprus is also an Israeli Problem” was picked up by most Cypriot mainstream media but in commentary rather than news reports. Gal claimed that for decades, Israel had treated the Cyprus conflict as a distant Greek-Turkish issue, but must now clearly acknowledge: Northern Cyprus is not just a Greek-Cypriot problem - it is also an Israeli one. In practical terms, he said, Northern Cyprus functions as an international no-man’s land, enabling Turkey and terrorist groups like Hamas and Iran’s Quds Force unrestricted operational freedom.

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\*The Jerusalem Post, 19/2/2014.



He claimed the Turkish occupied areas were a forward base for Turkey's military, hosting sophisticated weapons systems, cyber surveillance, and signals intelligence infrastructure capable of intercepting both military and civilian Israeli communication, alongside covert terrorist facilities supported by Ankara. He asserted that hotels, casinos, universities, and ports in northern Cyprus had reportedly become covert hubs for espionage, blackmail, and intelligence operations coordinated by Turkish security forces and organized crime networks and that while it was not Israel's role or desire to liberate northern Cyprus, if the threat reached a critical threshold, Israel's strategic posture would need to shift. He recommended that Israel, in coordination with Greece and Cyprus, prepare a contingency operation, which he termed "Poseidon's Wrath", for liberating the island's north. This would neutralize Turkish reinforcement capabilities from the mainland, eliminate air-defence systems in Northern Cyprus, destroy intelligence and command centers, and finally remove Turkish forces, restoring internationally recognized Cypriot sovereignty.

A few weeks later, on 6 October 2025, the eve of the second anniversary of Hamas' attack, Simerini newspaper and the news portal SigmaLive published an extensive interview with Shay Gal under the title "The new order of Cyprus-Israel deterrence and Turkey's fear."

In it, Gal said Israel's relations with Cyprus were at their 'highest' level in history. But this was not mere diplomacy – it was solidarity tested at the moment of truth. In June 2025, during what he described as the Twelve-Days War with Iran, Cyprus had not stood aside: it became a shield. He outlined how Israeli civilian aircraft were quietly relocated to Cypriot and Greek airports to protect them from potential Iranian retaliation. That move alone, claimed Gal, carried grave risk for Cyprus – and yet Nicosia had opened its skies. It later emerged that Iranian agents attempted to strike Cypriot soil precisely because of that choice. Trust is not built in statements – it is tested in crisis, and Cyprus "had passed the test" with courage.

"While others preached morality from a safe distance, Cyprus and Greece assumed the risk on their own ground. They became not

## Ο ισραηλινός αναλυτής που έγραψε για σχέδιο απελευθέρωσης της Κύπρου

01.08.2025 12:41 Πολιτικό

SigmaLive

f X in



Σειρά αντιδράσεων και σχολίων προκάλεσε το πρόσφατο άρθρο του Shay Gal με τίτλο «Η Βόρεια Κύπρος είναι πρόβλημα και του Ισραήλ», στην εφημερίδα Israel Hayom. Το εν λόγω αναφέρεται σε ένα σενάριο απελευθέρωσης των κατεχομένων με τη συνεργασία Ισραήλ - Κύπρου και Ελλάδας.

Ειδήσεις > Κυπριακό

## Συνέντευξη Shay Gal: Η Νέα τάξη αποτροπής Κύπρου-Ισραήλ & ο φόβος της Τουρκίας

06.10.2025 11:19 Κυπριακό

Μάριος Πούλλαδος

f X in



only friends in words, but allies in deeds – and every Israeli knows it. Therefore I say clearly: beyond exercises and procurement, we must move to a covenant of destiny. When Cyprus is threatened, Israel will stand by her as if Israel itself had been attacked. And when Israel is attacked, Cyprus will be there, as it was last June.

Cyprus is not a distant European periphery to be carved up. It is the heart of the Mediterranean – Europe's frontline. Together, Israel and Cyprus can anchor a new order of stability and freedom in our sea – not an order of occupation and denial dictated from Ankara, but one of courage, dignity, and the unbroken will of free nations, written from Nicosia, Athens and Jerusalem".

The shift in the balance of power in the region became clearer at the height of Israel's confrontation with Iran. Kathimerini's columnist Yiannis Ioannou wrote that "This isn't just a war, it's the Middle East reaching a historic breaking point" claiming that "a seismic shift in regional power" was taking place, and "Cyprus can no longer afford to view it from a safe distance".

By entering a phase of realignment...that Cyprus...will inevitably feel "our government and its leadership would do well to act more, speak less, and grasp what's at stake". In Cyprus, he went on, "we must be honest with ourselves: the Cyprus Problem, as central as it is to us, is tiny compared to the fires raging all around us. More and more, war is replacing diplomacy as the world's method of conflict resolution, and we must not ignore that grim reality, especially here in our volatile neighborhood. This moment also underscores the strategic importance of protecting our public discourse in Cyprus. We need to keep political and social debate grounded and free from toxicity, misinformation, and exaggeration".

In November 2025, with the ceasefire agreement secured by US president Trump purportedly in place and with the release of the remaining Israeli hostages, the Jewish Community of Cyprus organized the planting of 48 trees outside a Larnaca secondary school as "symbols of life and hope" in honour of Donald Trump. As the invitations were sent out it turned out that the municipality was unaware of the Trump tribute and the hostage connection, led to believe that the tree-planting was part of the Jewish Community's

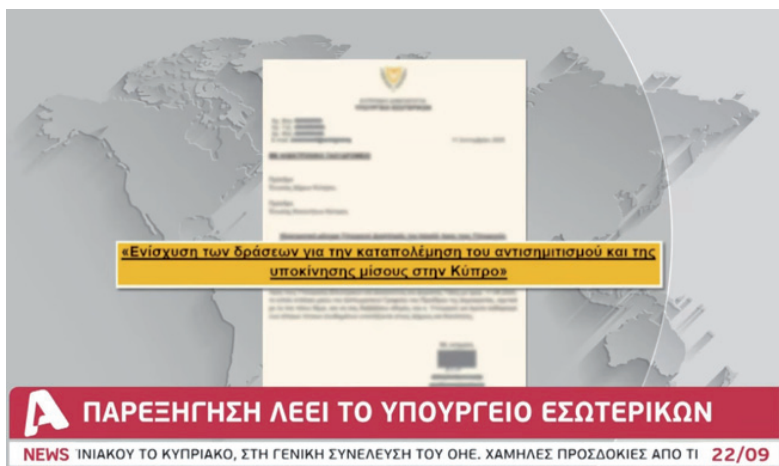
social and environmental contribution. The city council approved the initial request and had designated a traffic island outside for the occasion but the circumstances of the event spilled into friction in the media and the event was in the end cancelled.

## The Sovereignty dimension

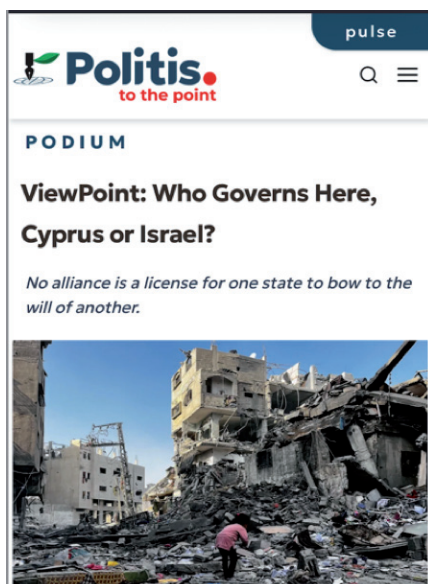
But nothing created as much controversy or sparked as much criticism against the Cypriot government as the reports that a circular was sent to all Cypriot municipalities by the ministry of Interior in September 2025 at the request of Israel's minister of Diaspora instructing them to remove graffiti and slogans criticizing the war in Gaza, labeling them as hate speech. The move sparked outrage, with critics saying that equating anti-Gaza war slogans with hate speech effectively supported Israel's military actions while the union of municipalities pushed back saying they would not take instructions from foreign governments with left-wing AKEL accusing the government of becoming a "puppet" for Israel and failing to defend Cyprus' sovereignty.



The minister of Interior defended the circular, speaking of a misunderstanding, saying it was a routine reminder of existing legislation and that he had explained its purpose to municipal leaders. While the media and the public on social media continued to voice concern that the government's actions may silence legitimate protest against the Gaza conflict the matters became worse when



it was revealed that the Israeli minister's request was sent to the Presidential Palace which forwarded it to the ministry of Interior without challenging or at least examining how the request could be seen as interference into the internal affairs of the country.



On 25 July 2025 media reported that a Brussels-based foundation called for the arrest of a soldier serving in the IDF who it reported was at the time on holiday in Cyprus. The foundation said it had filed a formal criminal complaint with the Cypriot authorities, demanding the “immediate arrest” of the soldier, accusing him of “direct involvement in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts potentially amounting to genocide” during Israel’s onslaught on the Gaza and having served in a unit which “played a central role in the destruction of Palestinian cities, hospitals, and refugee camps” scenes of which he had posted on social media. But the matter remained mostly visible on social media and resurfaced from time to time without however impacting the public debate.

When in September 2025 UEFA was pressed to consider the potential suspension of Israel from international football competitions one popular online media outlet ran a news item about the development under the headline “UEFA, what did you do in the case of Turkey?” Even though the piece was labelled a news item it carried the tone of an opinion in which a specific development was tied to a local grievance to make a specific national point. The piece itself was not trying to defend Israel (“if it has to be banned, so be it”) but was used to highlight what it considered UEFA’s double standards given Turkey’s continued occupation of Cyprus: “Why don’t we exploit this chance?” it asked in closing.

02 Δεκεμβρίου, 2025

Offsite news

#ΝΕΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΣ 2025

#ΕΚΠΟΜΠΗ «SNIPERS»

Αρχική > Ειδήσεις > Αθλητικά



## ΟΥΕΦΑ για την Τουρκία τι έκανε;





## An op-ed too far

In September 2025 Phileleftheros hosted an opinion editorial by Mr Eran Cohen, head of the Israel-Cyprus Chamber of Commerce under the title “Cyprus – It isn’t too late!” in which in blatant xenophobic language he described Muslim refugees in Europe as a threat associating them with criminality and terrorism, cautioning Cypriots from allowing citizens from Arab states to come to Cyprus for work. The article, in which Cohen denied the existence of a Palestinian people, has since been pulled down by Phileleftheros after drawing a great deal of criticism for its racist language. The fact that Phileleftheros removed the article was admission of its poor judgement. Among the critics, predictably, was the ambassador of Palestine to Cyprus who later wrote in Phileleftheros itself that the paper had received him with open arms when he had first arrived in Cyprus and offered it the following advice: “Don’t allow dangerous persons to infiltrate your pages, wherever they may come from, it doesn’t honor you.”

On the second anniversary of the Hamas attack, in October 2025, and with the announcement of US president Trump’s post ceasefire ‘peace plan’ many commentators (see next page) explored what Cyprus could draw from the initiative and how it could leverage the new situation.



## Gaza Peace Opportunity: Crucial Lessons for Cyprus

*By its nature, the Cyprus issue is significantly milder compared to the Palestinian one, which separated people with rivers of blood and hatred.*



More interestingly in November 2025 after the ceasefire agreement, Michael Rubin a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank based in Washington DC suggested that Israeli peacekeepers should replace United Nations peacekeeping forces stationed in Cyprus. Writing in the National Security Journal, Rubin, a former Pentagon official, advised president Trump to dismantle what he called UN “legacy zombie missions” such as the one in Cyprus. Rubin said as the UN had lost its credibility alluding to the allegations surrounding UN agencies in Gaza. With president Trump’s erratic approach to international conflicts it became an issue of concern among commentators, whether, given the Gaza outcome, his personal engagement on Cyprus would be a positive or a detrimental development.

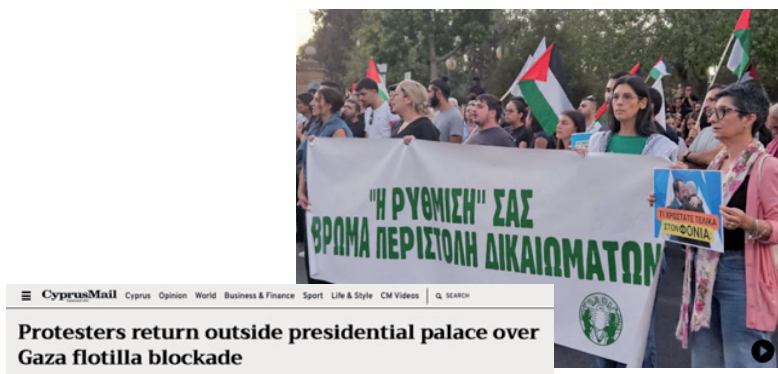
## Protests

Unlike in some key European cities where massive protests were organized and managed to affect the political stance of a few countries to hold Israel accountable, in Cyprus protests were

limited and modest in attendance. They were given coverage in the mainstream media but were mostly an afterthought not least because they were rarely massive in size. Their mobilization and to a great extent coverage of them was mostly manifested on social media platforms.

It cannot be said that the Cypriot government at any point came under pressure by the media or citizens in the street over its stance on the Gaza war. When the European Parliament elections took place in June 2024 the situation in Gaza did not feature at all in the public debate. Nor can it be said that the media pressed the Cypriot leadership over its frequent meetings with ICC indicted Israeli politicians (for which protests took place), nor about the unlawfulness of the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

On one occasion a protest did draw considerable exposure when outside the ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nicosia on 2 October 2025 protesters demanded government action over Israel's interception of tens of vessels and the detention of activists aboard the Global Sumud Flotilla which had sought to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza in international waters. The demonstration, followed protests in several cities across the world, was organised by the Global Movement to Gaza Cyprus, United for Palestine, Far Right Watch Cyprus, and Genocide-Free Cyprus, and called on the Cypriot government and all states to abide by the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion and act immediately regarding the ongoing situation in Gaza and the detained flotilla crew. In another of the rare references to Francesca Albanese in Cyprus



media, the remarks of the UN special rapporteur were picked up, calling Israel's seizure of flotilla activists as "unlawful" and blaming Western governments for their complicity.

But the media focus came only because of the police force's heavy-handed response to what was a peaceful protest by no more than 250 people. Shifting away from the substance of the protest and from Gaza itself it was the violence and the wide condemnation of it that made headlines. The police displayed an unnecessary show of force in what turned out to be the first occasion in years where violence was used against journalists. Protesters returned to the scene for several days following the first incident but by that time the focus of the coverage was the police and its excessive tactics and the accusations that the government had yielded to the Netanyahu administration, certainly much less about the Flotilla and Gaza's plight itself.

## **The killing of Journalists**

The Cypriot media covered Israel's killings of reporters in Gaza but the matter was never explored in depth or treated as seriously as it perhaps deserved given that journalism itself was under attack.

The tragic case of journalist Wael Al Dahdouh, who did not himself die in the raids, but whose family was almost entirely decimated, attracted greater attention than the deaths of journalists and of the way they were targeted. Al Dahdouh's tragedy offered greater drama as a human interest story rather than the targeted killings of the tens of other reporters. There were some opinion editorials by a number of journalists and academics which addressed the killings of journalists and reference to those reporters being protected civilians under international law, some of whom Israeli military spokespeople had frequently alleged were militants.

There was safety in the relaying of international reports about, for example, the death of Al Sharif, on which there were quotes from the Committee for the Protection of Journalists CPJ and its warning of the chilling effect on the media. Safety was also found in the reporting of the condemnation expressed by European institutions and Human Rights Organisations about the killings without

## Γάζα: Νεκρός δημοσιογράφος του Al Jazeera – Το Ισραήλ τον κατηγορεί για ηγετικό ρόλο στη Χαμάς

having to take a clear stand themselves. Headlines also very often stemmed from the safety of conveying both sides, (above from Kathimerini): “Gaza: Al Jazeera journalist dead – Israel accuses him of having leading Hamas role.”

The title projects the notion that the journalist had died (‘journalist dead’) as if by chance, not as a targeted killing while Israel gets to have its position about him articulated as desired, echoing the official narrative. The framing of the perspective here is unacceptably inappropriate.

Nonetheless, on 12 August the Cyprus Union of Journalists issued a strong statement on the assassination of Al Sharif and four of his colleagues expressing its disgust and condemnation and joined the International Federation of Journalists’ assessment that these were a deliberate targeting of journalists and as such constituted a war crime. It described Gaza as the greatest wound to free reporting and to democracy. It expressed its solidarity to its Palestinian colleagues and called for the UN to push for a binding convention for the protection of journalists.

### **Impunity paved by past killings**

When on 11 May 2021, Al Jazeera’s Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead by an Israeli sniper while covering an Israeli army raid in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin there was overwhelming evidence and international outrage; but her killers faced no consequences – a precedent that paved the way for the later treatment of Palestinian journalists. When the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had sounded the alarm on the murder of journalists in Gaza on 14 December 2023 western media reported on the increased incidents but they left Israel’s repeated denials unchallenged, normalizing the doubt they spread and establishing that accountability was an unrealistic if not impossible expectation.

# Findings

- 1 The challenges highlighted in IMME's study about the media coverage of the war in Ukraine persisted, two years on. The clumsy, and mostly hasty, convenience-led reporting –particularly online– with its lazy culture of copy-paste continued during the war in Gaza, a consequence of the erosion of editorial processes over the years and the pressure to deliver continuously 'breaking' news. Newsrooms operated as stenographic conveyors of international press agency reports adopting their framing of the developments or framing it to suit their own perspectives. Generally, for most media, the reporting was sensationalist, the titles provocative so as to arouse click-tempting emotion and were rarely careful or thoughtful. On broadcast media the reporting, a lot of which came from Greek TV channels, was always accompanied by dramatic music where sober, accurate and measured reflection were required. Particularly online, clickbait tactics dominated in the drive to make visual impact by turning events into a spectacle.

It is worth contemplating that print newspapers also sought (and some still seek) to convey the momentousness of events and crises and their own assessment of them through attentional signals – of large photographs and bold headlines on the page. But the newspaper format allows a structured prioritisation in a way that is helpful to the reader; online versions today are not able to effectively capture the impact of the page-spread despite being able to connect to infinitely more links on screen.

The attentional signals are very different online, restricted by the size of the smart phone screen and curated to the short attention span dictated by the infinite scroll. A few of the major international newspapers have been able to



recreate online environments that are conducive to long-form reading. Yet most, and certainly those in Cyprus, are lagging behind in their capacity to deliver reader-friendly long format journalism and remain trapped in a messy advertisement-cluttered visual environment.

## 2 Where the coverage of the Ukraine war had revealed a public sphere affected by an underlying Russophilia fueled by years of close political and cultural relations, opaque financial ties as well as a strong Russian presence in Cyprus, Gaza revealed something rather different.

The war came just when Cyprus' economic and political ties with Israel were blossoming but were not yet solidly established. In this fairly long transitional period the economic establishment and the conservative political establishment led by the last two right-of-centre governments had managed to inject into the public's consciousness the notion that Israel was not just a new energy and direct investment partner but a security ally, a democratic state and the sole protector of Western values in the region<sup>1</sup>. A notion hammered in by a proliferation of shuttle visits and amplified by a torrent of statements and activities in the public sphere which the media covered incessantly and always favourably.

With Israel's perceived access to the US power structures, its cutting-edge surveillance technology and expanding defence industry, some of it corporately registered in Cyprus, the government hovered between not upsetting its new-found ally but doing the bare minimum so as not to be seen as being insensitive to the plight of the Palestinian people. This delicate balancing act was soaked up by the

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1. The Israel Lobby and the European Union (David Cronin, Sarah Marusek, David Miller, University of Bath, 2016): The report examines how the Israeli state and wider Israel lobby - think tanks, interest groups, media related organisations - sought to divert attention away from Israel's actions and looked into the type of lobby activities, personnel and funding that worked towards that goal. It asserts that Western politicians' acquiescence to the Israeli narrative is made possible partly because there is a significant international network of groups dedicated to preserving the notion that 'a democratic Israel is merely acting in self-defence against Palestinian rocket fire'.

media, indeed it was reflected in most of the reporting. It was the result of a media landscape dependent on corporate support which turned it into a megaphone for business growth and all-out economic development. So the media played along, in fact it joined the frenzy making it very easy for public opinion to be convinced that Israel was a convenient, perhaps unavoidable, go-to choice - particularly with Turkey's menace always lurking.

- 3 Beyond these, once looked at more closely, the deeper challenge surrounding the Gaza reporting in Cyprus was not very different to challenges that the majority of the western media also had to face. And the key of those challenges was the over-reliance on international press agency reporting that was itself incomplete – handicapped by the Israeli government's ban on media entering Gaza – and the consequent entrapment in the strategic and sometimes deceptive Israeli narratives and denials about what was really going on. Editors would admit that it was 'consistently difficult' as one put it, to cross-check information coming out of Gaza or from Israel's spokespeople.

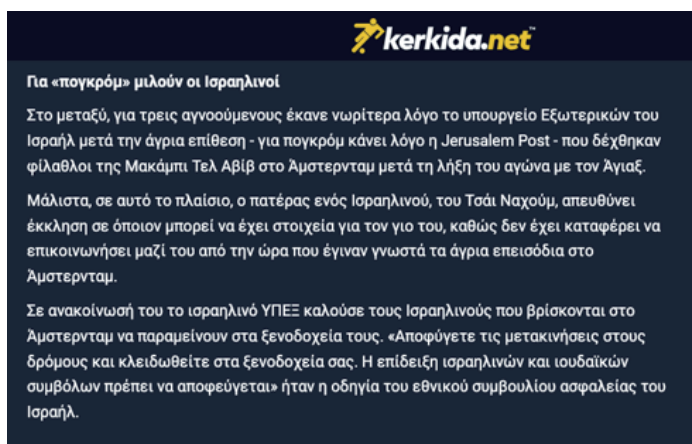
One early such example was the initial reporting of the unsupported claim about 40 beheaded babies and of indiscriminate raping by Hamas terrorists which dominated the news coverage and went viral on social media platforms in the second week of October 2023. What was first relayed from news reports by the Israel-based i24NEWS (and gained up to 40 million views in a matter of hours) was later frequently mentioned by prime minister Netanyahu and on one occasion by former president Biden but was never officially confirmed. It was however considered established truth in the first weeks, even months of the war. By the time investigations uncovered<sup>2</sup> the falsity of the claims it was too late for the media to use in a way that would walk back the impressions that had become implanted in public opinion. The imbalance in the

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2. PolitiFact, Poynter Institute, Double Down News, The Intercept.

media exposure of, on the one hand a sensational claim and, on the other, the exposure of the falsity of that claim, often months later remains one of the most difficult aspects of reporting.

A similar example of how sensational narratives became entrenched, and which relates to international news agencies, upon which Cypriot media were overly reliant, related not to warfare but to a football match. It came when on 8 November 2024 after the football match between Ajax and Maccabi Tel-Aviv, global headlines, including in Cyprus (below), framed acts of hooliganism in the streets of Amsterdam, as a ‘pogrom’ against Israelis.



The initial report came from Reuters, was picked up by Greek sports sites and later by Cypriot ones. It had spoken of “antisemitic squads” and “targeted attacks,” and included a video that captured violence which was not against Israeli fans but violence initiated by the Israeli fans against Dutch fans. As international mainstream television channels were scrambling to ascertain the veracity of what was being depicted, they still persisted with the framing of Israelis as the primary targets, which though may have been the case, was not the prevailing case. Like the 40-babies story, the “pogrom” storyline coming out of Amsterdam managed to

imprint itself on public consciousness and investigations and corrections and proof of falsity could do little to amend that impression.

- 4 There were frequent mentions by editors and journalists of being “pestered” by the Israeli embassy when they carried pieces which were perceived as unfavourable to Israel. None of the journalists implied that contacting them was meant as intimidation, acknowledging that the ambassador in particular was doing his job when he felt that his country’s interests were not served, but they did suggest that it was tiresome and distracting. They did not admit to any degree of conformist reporting because of the ‘pestering’ but to paraphrase Arendt again, after the banality of repetition in the coverage, the climate of caution the ambassador effected resulted in a new kind of banality, what can only be termed as the banality of inoffensive reporting. Media were consistently apprehensive of Israel’s possible response – diplomatic or otherwise – and it began to show.

This developed into an automatic mode of editorial risk management particularly for the pro-government media given that the country’s trajectory had been clearly defined. In the end there was a type of anticipatory compliance, a self censorship, collective and individual, based on the notion – uncomfortable for many – that the country was already neatly settled within Israel’s sphere of influence and was building a long-term beneficial alliance.

The above betrayed the absence of firm editorial policies that would make newsrooms safe from such influence. There is no policy or mechanism, at least known to journalists, by which, for example, the Israeli embassy could have been appropriately dealt with at senior level. Some journalists stated that they felt unsupported by their organisations. There was an occasion when the Israeli ambassador blatantly requested the assistance of editors and journalists in winning the war against Hamas. The diplomat may have felt that he was doing his job, but he also knew that unlike

in major reputable newsrooms in continental Europe where such remarks would have been deemed unacceptable, he could take his chances in newsrooms in Cyprus.

Newsrooms need the firewall of clear and strict editorial policies to make diplomats aware that these are things that cannot be said to journalists. But to do so they also need to do something else: to have firewalls between their commercial departments and their news departments freeing journalists of the burden of the interests or political affiliations of owners. This 'connecting door' proximity has been detrimental to independent journalism.

The deteriorating business model of the media over the years, the absence of true pluralism and, very importantly, the weak –and very susceptible to political and corporate influence– journalistic culture of the country have created a degree of self-censorship that makes interference unnecessary. It is very rare for a journalist to assert that they are free to write as they want. All considerations from ownership, awareness of the bias of publishers, of important corporate partners and advertisers are uncsciously integrated in the equation and affect the writing.

However, it must also be recorded that, rather encouragingly, the journalists we spoke to claimed there were no instances of interference from owners or board members in their daily coverage but they did admit that they were always aware of their leanings. Yet, we were told of instances at one television channel where there was 'some prompting from above' to refer more frequently to the Israeli hostage situation.

- 5 Significantly, there was a visible, palpable sense that the language and political discourse preferred by Israel had become normalized in the biggest part of the media landscape and its terminology and narratives were not being challenged. The ecosystem was dominated by the Israeli perspective without, however, this necessarily meaning that the Palestinian humanitarian aspect was

being ignored. Far from it, it was consistently present but it was through a lens that turned it into a distant spectacle, an abstraction, a background scenery in front of which everything else was being performed, be it the diplomacy or the humanitarian aid efforts. The number of casualties relayed everyday became a meaningless abstraction, bland statistics, like financial indexes; they were just there, day-in-day-out.

In a media environment like Cyprus' where the instinct is usually to sensationalise, the language used to frame Palestinian deaths was passive, the actual acts were cleansed of the true sense of words used to describe them: 'Palestinians died', 'Palestinians killed' as if by acts of nature rather than deliberate or indiscriminate bombings. The media used their positions to obscure the identities of both the victim and the killer. In this vein, clichés used across the global media made developments routine and managed to de-controversialise situations. For example phrases like 'cycles of violence' rendered the situations routine; as did the words 'conflict' and 'security,' the latter used only when it related to Israel, not in relation to the security of the Palestinian population in Gaza\*.

- 6 Most journalists themselves considered that the coverage in Cyprus was 'generally ok' (a phrase very frequently used) but that while the content of the reports was broadly acceptable, headlines which, as one journalist said, carry the effective feel of the situation 'were not always ok'. This confirms that coverage was fairly uniform but it was the tonality and emphasis that varied; It was difficult to pinpoint gross deviations in the coverage but it was obvious to see where the media stood from tone, selection and time devoted to the arguments coming out from each of the warring sides. Here there was what has come to be known as the "Israel first" framing.

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\*Gradually a war that was just a few hundred kilometres from Cyprus and despite consistent references to Cyprus' regional geo-political importance, faded into a distant affair. The coverage became a required inclusion aimed at operating as an obligatory background rather than a news worthy and urgent event in itself. What was also noteworthy was how silent the Cypriot media were on some of the reporting of Israeli media outlets who were themselves critical of the Israeli government's policy.



7 Just like in the case of the war in Ukraine, in the coverage of the war in Gaza, there have been some valiant attempts by individual journalists to uphold journalistic standards and break away from the stagnant Cypriot media model. But they were the exception, not the rule. As everywhere, Cypriot journalists receive negative commentary under their online reporting. It is one of journalism's unresolved debates, whether (and how) to moderate comments sections, useful as they are considered for a democratic debate but most of the time degenerate into malicious exploitation and deliberate toxicity. In the case of Gaza several journalists said they had comments which it was clear came from social media accounts, often anonymous, and supported by other groups of accounts which formed a pool of like-minded positions – potentially belonging to one and the same single identity.

Some journalists were upset by the criticism they received, others ignored it but it was clear that it had an effect on how they handled their content, apprehensive of the backlash. Yiannis Ioannou wrote in *Kathimerini* that “Time and again, we’ve seen anonymous Cypriot users turn into zealous keyboard warriors, flooding social media with half-truths, ideological rants, and even death wishes, parroting everything from the prophecies of monks to conspiracy theories. It’s a mirror of a deeper societal problem: our lack of functional literacy, both in general and in the digital sphere.”\*

8 A key issue that persists is that the quality of what is delivered greatly depends on those few journalists well-versed in history and international affairs who are able to explore and explain the developments solidly rather than desk journalists who have no expertise or experience on the matters they are tasked to cover. On top of this, foreign news coverage in Cyprus is still considered as “filler” to

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\*Editors and journalists require a news literate public but they are also capable of helping make the public more news literate. With AI invading the newsroom it will fall to informed professional editors and journalists to sustain and oversee a fair, accurate and humane approach to their duty. Public Service media, in the case of Cyprus, CyBC, has a profound role in this.

local news and thus minimum effort is made with most reports secured and relayed from mainly Greek news outlets never attracting the necessary attention or scrutiny by those who oversee it. What we had been told back in 2023 remains pertinent: “We simply do not have the capacity to filter international news, we consume it ‘raw’.

Where editors and journalists maintain a global rather than a Cyprus-centric outlook their awareness and approach is different. Where they are not allowed or able to step out of the agenda dictated by nationalist, corporate or political expediencies the coverage is narrow, incomplete or even biased.

Foreign news coverage has also depended on the language skills of the journalists which dictate the choice of sources they turn to. The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation CyBC which due to its institutional association with other European public service broadcasters has maintained journalists with good foreign language skills and a capacity to deal with other European (other than just Greek) sources on a frequent basis. It must also be said here that with all its problems, caused both by political intervention but also as a result of serial underfunding, on the matter of the war in Gaza, the work of the news team of the Cyprus’ public broadcaster was comprehensive and consistently solid. Also, ANT-1 Television maintained an Arabic speaker on its news-desk a move that appeared to enhance its selections and analyses. Overall, however, the coverage was picked up from Athens based Greek TV channels with which private Cypriot broadcasters have collaboration agreements.

- 9 Also on the positive side was the openness of the Cypriot media to host contrasting viewpoints despite this being driven by convenience and self-interest. Opinions fill pages and attract more readers and more friction which then fuels comments that lead to the sharing of the links on social media platforms. What does appear to have happened is that the media as institutions and their own leader-editorials have lost the gravitas they once had. Newspapers

used to articulate their positions on key issues prominently, clearly and with conviction, and those positions were taken seriously by the public and governments. Their opinion has been diluted with so many other opinions around.

- 10** The war in Gaza cannot be disconnected from Cyprus' own memory of dislocation and occupation. After decades of adopting a very specific stance in favour of the Palestinians, identifying with their plight, the Cypriot state officially came to side with the state that had not only been responsible for the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians in 1948 but for something worse than what they had themselves suffered in the hands of Turkey: what the academic Omer Bartov described as Israel's 'genocidal undertaking.'

The tension and then the tranquilization of this incongruity, the acceptance of it, has been a turning point for Cypriot society and its own perception of itself and of its legacy of principled positioning on global injustices. Perhaps this is what made parts of the media seem awkward, uncertain, and in the end indifferent.

Less and less but still there for sections of the media, the Cyprus problem remained the filter through which all political and diplomatic events were processed. A large segment of the collective sentiment in Cyprus which is reflected in the media operated within a framework defined by Turkish president Erdogan's consistent expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people, his desire to take on a role of guarantor in Gaza, and a call for Israel to return to the 1967 borders. That both Turkey and Israel are occupiers created a dissonance that was neutralised by the overriding criterion that—as least for the moment—Israel is anti-Erdogan.

- 11** The use of correct or politically appropriate terminology, always crucial in the journalistic realm when it comes to the Cyprus problem, was not considered with equal fervour when it came to Israel and Palestine. It would have been too much to expect the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) to be spelled out as Israel Occupation Forces (IOF)

as they are often referred to in Palestinian journalistic contexts, in the same way that Turkish forces in Cyprus are overwhelmingly referred to as occupation forces in the local media. Similarly, terms like “illegal” or “in violation of international law” frequently used when it comes to the regime in the northern occupied part of Cyprus were not used when reporting on Israeli-induced related situations in Gaza and the West Bank. Cypriot media fall victim to this type of terminological sanitization on the situation in Gaza but are quick to protest about it when it occurs within a Cypriot context.

**12** Whether deliberately or by ignorance or even by the inertia of not following proper editorial procedures over so many years, media everywhere became hesitant, bland, losing purpose and conviction. They accommodated the prevailing narratives and suppressed the negating alternative ones. Western media created and Cypriot media participated in sustaining a misleading public story that made Palestinians seem less human and painted ferocious Israeli violence against occupied, trapped people as just self-defense.

It was a slow process of dehumanization that took many forms but none more aptly captured by the author Mohammed El Kurd “...a phenomenon more implicit, yet far more pernicious and institutionalized ... The West’s refusal to look us [the Palestinians] in the eye... Here in the West, whether on television screens, university campuses, in public office, or in the public’s imagination, Palestinians exist in a false -and strict- dichotomy: We are either victims or terrorists.”<sup>3</sup>

The author Tareq Baoni writing about the challenges surrounding the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza wrote in July 2025 that “humanitarian aid has long served as cover for Israeli crimes” arguing that the legitimacy and morality of the blockade should be challenged by the international community. In this vein, the media’s compulsive reporting about the humanitarian aid to Gaza, especially in Cyprus,

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3. Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal, Mohammed El Kurd, 2025

appears to have served as cover for a much more serious offence of not covering and highlighting more vigorously the legitimacy and morality of the blockade itself. It is what Baconi describes as the logical culmination of playing with the occupier's rules. A situation that Cypriots are closely familiar with, having often endured it under Turkey. In the end Cyprus' humanitarian conduit role and the attention it drew domestically served to absolve it of any responsibility to address the substance of the dilemmas involved with greater clarity and moral bravery.

- 13** More broadly, and this relates not just to Cyprus, it must be said that after the euphoria of the 1993 Oslo Agreements and then their collapse in 1999 and for long periods after, the Cypriot and the international Press ignored the oppression and misery of the Palestinian people and addressed it only when rocket attacks and skirmishes began to re-enter the news cycle. Israel sieges on Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014, 2018 became part of the banality of repetition. Every next major crisis or phase omitted to take into account the last one, every new crisis was a new starting point until the next lull. Context was forgotten or sacrificed.

As the coverage showed Cyprus punches above its weight geopolitically and as part of the eastern Mediterranean region claims to know the area well. So how its media covered events, past and present, matters especially if instead of adding insight and context it ends up reflecting or inadvertently promoting the perspectives of others far removed from the region - rather than its own.

- 14** Gaza did bring some internal tension and raised difficult questions within the Cypriot political class, the media and within individual journalists but did not, for example, figure in the public debate prior to the June 2024 European Parliament elections.

The two conflicting positions that were the essence of that tension –the incongruity of believing that the leadership of the Israeli state whose people had suffered the Holocaust

80 years ago could have ended up undertaking a genocide against another people, despite the painful provocation caused by a terrorist faction– was difficult to confront and resolve especially when national and economic interests were at play. The result was a conscious and at times deliberate disguising of that tension. It became a process of distracting oneself from its essence, finding comfort in one side's perspective, conveniently disbelieving the other, not thinking hard enough, indeed deluding oneself, about the reality on the ground. Often that reality was so horrific as to be undecipherable, incomprehensible.

Much of the media and a lot of journalists chose to abstain from having to deal with this tension, when in fact it was their role to help expose, explore and explain it. Instead, they participated in a game of playing along, sometimes ignoring their own instincts, forced to distract the public with the surrounding actions and developments rather than challenging the reasons and substance of the war itself. So, they ended up offering packaged reporting and assessments, allowing dominant narratives to dictate rather than chasing raw facts, evidence and alternative perspectives. The end result was an inadequate and in Mark Fisher's words an 'anodyne mediocrity' which proved detrimental for their own relationship with the core values of the profession and, collaterally, disastrous for the fate of the Palestinian people.

# A final word on media responsibility

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese in her report “Gaza Genocide: A Collective Crime” bluntly asserted that the genocide must be understood as an “internationally enabled crime”. She argued that many states, primarily western ones, had “facilitated, legitimized and eventually normalized what happened in Gaza.”

While her report makes no specific reference to the media, she mentions that post 7 October 2023 western leaders had “parroted Israeli narratives disseminated by state and corporate media, repeating debunked claims and erasing core distinctions between combatants and civilians”.

Taking Albanese’s notion of ‘international enabling’ a step further, one must examine whether the western media –of which Cyprus’ are a part– by not pressing for the facts hard enough, by not making distinctions clear enough or by not highlighting the obligations of the international community boldly enough– have themselves in Albanese’s words “facilitated, legitimized and eventually normalized the genocide”.

It is a difficult and unprovable charge but it is one that feels embarrassingly true; enough, at least, for media ethics committees globally and every journalist individually to seriously contemplate.

We must all also contemplate the damage that the inadequate coverage of this war has done to the journalism profession, to public trust in journalism and to the credibility of the international institutions that are supposed to safeguard the lives and work of journalists - of all journalists, including in Palestine.

In assassinating Palestinian journalists and putting out shameless excuses to justify their killings, Israel silenced their voices but equally sinisterly it entrenched in international public consciousness the notion that Palestinian journalists are not



worthy of the journalistic pursuit for factual reporting. Palestinian journalists like all journalists elsewhere can be biased as they can be unbiased, they can be driven and dignified but lazy and easily corrupted, they can be poor but also exceptional.

It is worth considering that perhaps without them we would have known only half of the already limited things we know happened in Gaza. The scholar Mohammed El Kurd asks for a little humility from Western knowledge-producers, and I suspect he means the media too.

We all have to admit that the Gaza war was handled with what can only be described as a media-colonial gaze. This was partly expected from some of the usual suspects in the West but it is the last thing one would have expected the Cypriot media to be guilty of.

All in all, the media, internationally, for reasons sometimes beyond their full control, other times in ignorance or willfully, failed to comprehensively cover and to bring to the world's attention with conviction and responsibility what happened in Gaza. Journalists privately acknowledge this. Of course journalists alone are not the media; but they are its crucial component. Together they form that old notion, the institution that is the Fourth Estate, The Press. The word 'Press' itself may seem out of date in the haze of our online existence but it still represents and should continue to do so, an institution that chases and records facts and above all seeks accountability on the basis of those facts.

By its collective orientation but mostly its omissions the Press must acknowledge that – with very few battling exceptions – it served or covered up the strategic interests of those calling the shots, in this case Israel, the United States, the UK and embarrassingly, a morally exposed European Union.

In the end it fell short of defending the interests of a voiceless and dehumanized people and failed to preserve the integrity of the journalistic record, potentially, even, of the historical record.

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# Acknowledgements

During the course of this study, I talked to numerous reporters, editors, columnists, political analysts, academics and diplomats. I am grateful for the time they afforded me and for sharing their experiences and insights so openly. My deep gratitude to the Universitas Foundation for supporting the study and to its chairman Nicos Peristianis who insisted that this study should follow the one undertaken on Ukraine. I am also indebted to the members of the Board of the Institute for Mass Media for their ideas and sustained support. And of course to LA, SAK and AAK for our meaningful exchanges on this subject throughout the last two years. NK





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Like most media across the globe, Cypriot media were trapped in processing the war in Gaza using information that was not coming from independent, let alone their own, journalists within Gaza. Israel's ban preventing media from entering the Strip and the sustained control it had achieved and maintained over the narrative surrounding the situation of the Palestinians, framed a questionable context for reporting.

While interest and attention to developments in Gaza was strong and, overall, the coverage was continuous and extensive, the emphasis shifted very quickly to Cyprus-centric narratives, Cyprus' role and initiatives, the war's effect on Cyprus' economy, its diplomatic standing and its unresolved political problem.

These became a distraction, obscuring the fact that the truth wasn't coming out of Gaza pushing the deteriorating reality into the background. They turned the war and suffering into a distant spectacle and in the process dehumanized an entire people.

The study looks at how the coverage panned out and identifies the positives and the negatives. It attempts to answer why it was the way it was and what it revealed about Cyprus, its public sphere and media. It considers whether the media by not digging for the facts hard enough, by not making distinctions clear enough and by not pressing their leadership and the international community boldly enough, could have themselves eventually facilitated and normalized what happened to the Palestinians.