

Executive Summary

This study qualitatively and quantitatively examines Israeli media's coverage of human and civil rights. It focuses on Hebrew Israeli media and examines the method of coverage and the prominence of human rights in its agenda. Furthermore, it discusses the extent of Hebrew media's coverage of political, social, cultural and religious rights of multiple groups comprising Israeli society. This is a groundbreaking study, whose central issue has never before been consistently and adequately addressed.

The study was conducted in April-July, 2011. The sample includes Israel's primary media outlets: the newspapers Yedioth Ahronot, Ma'ariv, Ha'aretz, Israel Hayom, and the news broadcasts on the television stations Channel 1, Channel 2, and Channel 10. Despite the fact that the sample does not include all Israeli media outlets, the breadth and the quantity of the covered articles in this study allow us to reach general conclusions regarding Israeli media's coverage of human rights, especially considering the great similarity between various media outlets' discourse on these issues in Israeli media.

This study combines quantitative methods with vital qualitative factors. Quantitative media research methods afford the ability to track the frequency, the breadth and the location of articles that address human rights. Focusing on large quantities is designed to allow generalized observation of coverage patterns. The qualitative aspects are designed to reach insight at the content level.

The study was held between the 1st of April and the 31st of July, 2011. A total of 384 articles on human rights out of 1585 were examined from a variety of media outlets. It is worth noting that throughout this period, a representative sample of articles was methodically chosen, ensuring continuity in the coverage of specific issues.

The research tool was an encoding questionnaire consisting of 53 questions, some numerical or close-ended questions, some open-ended questions, and some constructed according to an ordinal classification scale, requiring meticulous reading of every article included in the sample. The study examined four newspapers. The ratio between the number of articles included in the sample from each newspaper was impacted by the fluctuating number of articles in each newspaper. Yedioth Ahronot comprised 29.53% of the sample, Ha'aretz comprised 25.55%, and Ma'ariv comprised 11.4% of the sample. Israel Hayom comprised 17.03%. Alongside print media, Channel 2 comprised 6.94% of the sample, Channel 10 comprised 4.79% and Channel 1 comprised 5.11%.

The study found that 259 articles of the print media and 125 of TV news segments addressed human rights. Among television stations, Channel 10 broadcasted the highest number of segments on the issue: 56.58% of its segments dealt with the issue of human rights. Next was Channel 1, which broadcast 45.68% of its sample articles on the issue. Channel 2 came in third in the number of segments it devoted to the issue, standing at 40.91%.

In print media, Ha'aretz was the leader in the amount of articles devoted to the issue of human rights, wherein 21.23% of its articles that were examined in the sample dealt with human rights. The sample showed that the newspaper Israel Hayom, coming in not far from Ha'aretz, devoted 20.74% of its articles to the discussion of human rights. 18.86% of the articles in Ma'ariv and 17.95% of the articles in Yedioth Ahronot addressed the issue of human rights.

Upon examination of the number of segments discussing human rights in the entire sample, Channel 10 did not lead on the quantity of segments it broadcasted on the topic. Only 43 segments, which represent 11.20% of the entire sample, originated from Channel 10. Therefore, the reason that Channel 10 had the highest percentage of segments discussing human rights among the lot of television stations, as opposed to the low percentage of segments within the general sample, apparently stems from the fact that the number of the

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general segments from this particular channel is relatively smaller than other channels.

Across the entire sample, it was determined that Ha'aretz published the largest quantity of articles addressing human rights (22.40%). The newspaper Yedioth Ahronot displayed lower degree of sensitivity to human rights (21.88%), compared to Ha'aretz. 14.58% of the total number of articles discussing human rights were covered in the newspaper Israel Hayom, and 8.59% of the total number of articles on human rights were covered in the newspaper Ma'ariv. In TV media, 11.72% of the segments that addressed human rights were covered on Channel 2, whereas 9.64% of the segments on human rights were covered on Channel 1.

The results suggest that Channel 1 (9.64%), Ma'ariv (8.59%) and Israel Hayom (14.58%) addressed human rights to a lesser degree in their news coverage. It is possible that the reason for this is the nationalist ideological outlook of Ma'ariv and Israel Hayom, reducing the prominence of human rights in their agenda, or that it is not as prominent in comparison with their approach to other issues in these newspapers. There is a need for a logical explanation for the low percentage of coverage of human rights on Channel 1, Israel's public broadcasting authority. Of all media, one would expect this particular outlet to demonstrate an increased sensitivity to the issue of human rights; however, it is possible that the fact that it is politically controlled by the government greatly influences the nature of its coverage of current Israeli affairs.

Study results indicate that most articles covering human rights (71.1%) discuss the rights of Israel's Jewish population. 9.9% of the articles discuss the rights of Israel's Palestinian population, whereas 9.4% of all articles discussed Palestinians' human rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territory (OPT). 3.1% of the articles addressed settlers' rights in these territories. Palestinians' human rights in East Jerusalem were covered in only 1.3% of the total number of articles.

This data demonstrates the prominence of the discussion of human

rights in Jewish society as a whole and the marginality of articles that deal with specific groups within this society. The marginality of the discussion of human rights in East Jerusalem is particularly noticeable, considering the daily violations of human rights in the city. Furthermore, the discussion of the violation of human rights by the Israeli army and by settlers is not accorded much discussion in Hebrew media. In instances where there is such discussion, the reports do not always support the victims of rights violations.

Furthermore, the findings show that there are nine different groups that are addressed in the various reports that were included in the study sample. The groups are: women, the elderly, children, people with special needs, prisoners and detainees, victims of house demolition, victims of political actions, foreign workers and 'others'. Diagram 4 clearly demonstrates that the group that is addressed the most represents those who are harmed by various political actions (36.2%). Prisoners and detainees (6.5%), children (5.7%) and women (4.9%) are next in line. It is important to note that there are many articles (40.9%) that do not contain a specific social category, despite the fact that they address human rights. This category of 'other' includes victims of violence or lack of healthcare, foreign journalists, road accident victims, etc. During the period of the sample, there was an increase in violent incidents, reflected in the increased coverage of the rights of those who had been harmed.

The conclusions of the study demonstrate a number of patterns that are worthy of further discussion.