

MIMC Organization Report Regarding the 2021 May Gaza Conflict

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses the levels of objectivity and professionalism in the covering of Israel and Israel-related events in Hungarian online media during the 2021 May Gaza conflict.

Analyzed here are four admittedly liberal or left-wing news portals chosen by the large size of their readership (Mérce, 444.hu, Telex), and/or previous occurrences of anti-Israel sentiments (Mérce and Azonnali).

Our research question was whether these news portals offered comprehensive and balanced news on the Gaza conflict, whether they treated Hamas as a terrorist organisation and whether there were any differences between the narrative of Hamas and their covering of the events.

MIMC Organization has employed a tag-based search for the word "Israel" on these websites, except for Azonnali, where tags are used inaccurately and did not produce results. In the case of the latter news portal, we have used a manual scouring of the website for Israel-related articles. Here we have analysed articles published between 6th May 2021 and 6th June 2021.

2. MÉRCE

Mérce is a far-left opposition news portal which has previously published anti-Israel news and distortions.¹

During most of the period in question, Mérce's editor-in-chief was Nóra Diószegi-Horváth, who, as of 1st June, has left the site. According to this announcement, she has not actually worked at Mérce for most of this year, and the website's real editors-in-chief were Bence Bogatin, Gáspár Papp and Orsolya Pósfai.²

On 12th May, a summary³ of the conflict was published by Mérce journalist Soma Ábrahám Kiss. Kiss referred to Hamas and Islamic Jihad as “militants”, but refrained from calling them terrorists. He emphasised that Hamas did not have technology comparable to the Iron Dome,

¹ <https://huilmediacenter.com/tag/merce/> (All articles cited here were last accessed: 15th June 2021).

² <https://merce.hu/2021/06/01/dioszegi-horvath-nora-foszerkeszto-tavozik-a-mercetol/>

³ <https://merce.hu/pp/2021/05/12/ego-muszlim-temetok-es-zsinagogak-elszabadult-a-pokol-izraelben-percrol-percre/raketak-szazait-lotte-ki-a-hamasz-izrael-ujabb-lakoepuleteket-dontott-romba-szerdan-folytatodtak-az-osszecsapasok/>

and underlined that the fighting was not between armies of equal power. Kiss wrote that according to Israel, "they have killed four high-ranking (Hamas) officers in Gaza, which does not help the deescalation of the conflict, just like it does not help that prime minister Netanyahu has announced more murders (sic!) to come".

Co-editor-in-chief, Bence Bogatin, has also published an article⁴ on the same day. Bogatin has also refrained from calling Hamas a terrorist group. He wrote that "during the night protests have started all over Israel for the rights of the Palestinians," naming Acre and Lod as some of the locations. His article includes video footage of Arab rioters setting buildings on fire in Acre. As it is known, one Israeli Jew, Yigal Yehoshua later succumbed to his wounds suffered during the Lot riots. Bogatin did not label the riots as such, and instead referred to them as "protests".

On 24th May MÉRCE published a longer analysis by Csaba Vincze. Vincze claimed that Israel "has never taken seriously" that according to international law, no Jewish settlements can be built in Gaza. In reality, Israel has evacuated all Jewish settlements inside the Gaza strip in 2005. The article cynically calls Hamas a "group representing all evil in Israel". Vincze also wrote that Israeli "commandos" have raided the Al-Aqsa mosque in order to create a conflict to hinder the coalition talks of Yair Lapid. In reality, Israeli special forces were not involved - it was the police who raided violent protesters throwing stones at praying Jews. There is also no evidence that the May conflict had anything to do with the Israeli coalition talks. The article also claimed that Israel was "maintaining apartheid".⁵

3. 444.HU

444.hu is a left-wing news portal that has previously published inaccurate articles on Israel.⁶

The first article on the rocket attacks of Hamas was written by András Király. His article failed to call Hamas a terrorist organisation.⁷

On 11th May Márton Bede wrote a summary of the day's most important news. Of the Gaza conflict, he wrote that "it is difficult not to think that the wave of violence somehow has something to do with the desperate meddling of prime minister Netanyahu who wishes to somehow stay in power". As our report has previously noted, there is no evidence that the conflict has anything to do with the Israeli coalition talks.⁸

⁴ <https://merce.hu/pp/2021/05/12/ego-muszlim-temetok-es-zsinagogak-elszabadult-a-pokol-izraelben-percrol-percre/szerda-hajnalban-is-folytotdak-az-izraeli-tamadasok-egyre-no-a-halottak-szama/>

⁵ <https://merce.hu/2021/05/24/ez-a-sokadik-eszkalacio-talan-atformalhatja-a-vilag-kozvelemenyet-az-izraeli-palesztin-konfliktussal-kapcsolatban/>

⁶ <https://www.szombat.org/velemeney/progressziv-korholas-es-machiavellista-szep-szavak>

⁷ <https://444.hu/2021/05/11/kovekrol-es-konnygazgranatokrol-raketakra-valtottak-a-palesztinok-es-az-izraeliek>

⁸ <https://444.hu/2021/05/11/1600-forint-az-elet>

Bede was also called out by Neokohn for having joked on his social media page about the deportation of Israelis during the Gaza conflict.⁹

On 11th May, writing of the Israeli bombings in Gaza, journalist Imola Kiss put the words "terrorist targets" in quotation marks, which is unnecessary as Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation in Hungary and in the EU.¹⁰

On 12th May Balázs Kaufmann wrote that "the tone of the Israeli leadership does not grant a lot of hope for those who are wishing for a ceasefire (...)". Based on his article one might think that the Israeli leadership's tone is responsible for Hamas being a terrorist organisation.¹¹

On 15th May the aforementioned Imola Kiss wrote of the Israeli bombing of a building which housed the offices of AP. Kiss wrote that "Israel has given no explanation as to why they have targeted the building housing the press (...)". In reality, by the time of the publication of her article, the IDF's Twitter page had already clarified that Hamas had been conducting military operations from the very same building. Kiss's article remains, as of the day of the publication of this report, uncorrected.¹²

4. TELEX

Telex is a left-wing news portal founded by ex-journalists of Index.

The first article on Hamas' rocket attacks was published on 10th May by three Telex journalists. The article failed to label Hamas as a terrorist organisation.¹³

On 12th May Gergely Nyilas published an interview with Israeli far-left author Gideon Levy. The article simply introduced Levy as an "award winning journalist" for Haaretz, and failed to mention that Levy is so blatantly anti-Israel that his article has appeared, translated to Arabic, on the website of Hamas. Levy blamed the current conflict on Israel, and claimed that in order to have peace, the wall around the Gaza strip has to go. Telex published the call for the destruction of the anti-terrorist barrier without any meaningful comments.¹⁴

One day later, the same Gergely Nyilas has lamented that one cannot check the authenticity of the reports of child victims on the Palestinian side. In fact, a number of reports have been

⁹ <https://huilmediacenter.com/2021/05/29/444-hu-journalist-jokes-about-deporting-israelis-during-gaza-conflict/>

¹⁰ <https://444.hu/2021/05/11/mar-28-halalos-aldozata-van-a-legicsapasoknak-gazaban>

¹¹ <https://444.hu/2021/05/12/netanjahu-szerint-ez-meg-csak-a-kezdet>

¹² <https://444.hu/2021/05/15/az-izraeli-legiero-felrobbantotta-az-associated-press-es-az-al-jazeera-epuletet-gazaban> (published at 16:22); <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1393550963588358149> (published at 14:56) In Hebrew: „IDF fighter jets recently attacked a high-rise building that includes military assets belonging to the military intelligence of the terrorist organization Hamas”.

¹³ <https://telex.hu/kulfold/2021/05/10/hamasz-raketa-izrael-jeruzsalem>

¹⁴ <https://telex.hu/kulfold/2021/05/12/izrael-raketatamadas-hamasz-kelet-jeruzsalem>;
<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/177889>

published on the topic since, including the ousting of one "child victim" as a 17-year-old fighter for Hamas. Nyilas, however, has not published any more articles on the topic of child victims.¹⁵

The bombing of the office building housing AP was also reported by Telex's Dávid Sajó, who failed to quote the explanation of the IDF in his article.¹⁶

On 20th May Gergely Nyilas wrote a summary of the conflict, alleging that in 1948 Israel has "deported hundreds of thousands of Arabs".¹⁷ For his accusation of deliberate and state-organised ethnic cleansing, Nyilas offered no historical proof.

5. AZONNALI

While not necessarily justified by its small readership and uneven quality, the left-wing Azonnali website, partly financed by LMP (green) MP Péter Ungár, has recently launched into a massive anti-Israel campaign, not abstaining from even the vilest of anti-Semitic language and accusations.

This quest is largely championed by two Azonnali journalists, Csaba Tibor Tóth and Péter Techet. Techet's manipulations and distortions have already been covered by the MIMC Organisation, but he did not write any significant articles during the May Gaza conflict.

Tóth, however, has published a series of articles and interviews related to the subject, all of them containing anti-Israel lies, fake news and distortions that are difficult to fully cover, therefore here we are limiting ourselves to the most blatant ones.

Tóth, who is an ex-journalist of the aforementioned far-left and anti-Israel MÉRCE news portal, has recently written that Palestinians in Israel and abroad had memories of a "genocide and exodus" for generations, thereby implying that Israel had, at one point, committed "genocide" against Arabs.¹⁸

Neokohn has also uncovered that Tóth has written an article in 2015 for HVG, where he claimed that Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu was "happy" about the creation of ISIS.

Tóth has not refuted any of the above quotes, but merely wrote on his Twitter page that he was under attack by "Hungarian operatives of the Israeli right wing gvt."

Tóth has also written a recent reply to Israeli-Hungarian security policy expert Robert C. Castel, in which he accused Israel of being "colonialist", of being having "solely created" Gaza (probably meaning that it is only Israel who is responsible for anything happening within the

¹⁵ <https://telex.hu/kulfold/2021/05/13/szarazfoldi-akciora-keszul-az-izraeli-hadsereg-gazaban;>
<https://neokohn.hu/2021/05/31/modern-vervad-a-new-york-times-es-a-haarec-cimlapjan/>

¹⁶ <https://telex.hu/belfold/2021/05/16/ezekrol-a-hirekrol-maradt-le-hetvegen-ha-nem-olvasta-a-telexet>

¹⁷ <https://telex.hu/kulfold/2021/05/20/izrael-palesztin-konfliktus-hamasz-tuzszunet-terv>

¹⁸ <https://huilmediacenter.com/2021/05/24/azonnali-journalist-writes-of-peaceful-hamas-activists-genocidal-israel/>

strip, and not Hamas), of using "mass punishment" against Palestinians in Gaza, of treating "0 (year olds)" as "terrorists", of forcing contraceptive medication into Ethiopian Jewish women in general, and of being a "classic apartheid-state".¹⁹

It is necessary to make clear that Israel is not a colony, Gaza is run by Hamas, not Israel, Israel is not punishing residents of Gaza collectively, no Israeli official has ever claimed that infants were terrorists, there is no proof that Israel is forcing Ethiopian Jewish women to take contraceptives, and the accusation that Israel is an apartheid state is inherently anti-Semitic.

6. CONCLUSION

Having analysed the Israel-related news of 3 major left-wing news portals (Mérce, 444, Telex) and one minor news portal (Azonnali), we have concluded that all four of them have showed obvious anti-Israel bias, clearly preferring the narrative of Hamas over that of Israel - the very same Hamas which is labeled as a terrorist group in the EU and in Hungary. All four of these news portals have included distorted facts, one sided reports and outright lies or mistakes in their reporting.

7. ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Nachdem wir die Israel-bezogenen Nachrichten von drei großen linken Nachrichtenportalen (Mérce, 444, Telex) und einem kleineren Nachrichtenportal (Azonnali) analysiert haben, sind wir zu der Schlussfolgerung gekommen, dass alle vier offensichtliche antiisraelische Voreingenommenheit aufweisen. Sie haben eindeutig das Narrativ der Hamas dem Israels vorgezogen. Wir sprechen über dieselbe Hamas, die in der EU und in Ungarn als Terrorgruppe bezeichnet wird. Alle vier dieser Nachrichtenportale haben verzerrte Fakten, einseitige Berichte und offene Lügen oder Fehler in ihre Berichterstattung aufgenommen.

8. ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

Megvizsgálva három nagyobb baloldali hírportál (Mérce, 444, Telex) és egy kisebb hírportál (Azonnali) Izraellel kapcsolatos híreit, következtetésünk, hogy mind a négy egyértelműen elfogult volt Izraellel szemben, világosan a Hamász narratíváját preferálva Izraelével szemben – ugyanazon Hamászét, melyet az EU és Magyarország is terrorista szervezetnek tart. Mind a négy hírportál közölt eltorzított tényeket, egyoldalú riportokat és egyértelmű hazugságokat a témában.

9. סיכום

מניתוח הידיעות בשלושה אתרי חדשות מרכזיים, בנוגע לישראל, (מרצה, 444, טלקס) ופורטל חדשות קטן אחד (אזונאלי), הגענו למסקנה שארבעתם הראו הטיה אנטי-ישראלית ברורה, ואימוץ מוחלט של

¹⁹ https://azonnali.hu/cikk/20210611_az-izrael-parti-cikk-ami-a-legjobb-erv-az-izrael-parti-cikkek-ellen

הנרטיב הפלשטיני ושל ארגוני הטרור על פני זה הישראלי - ארגוני טרור דוגמת חמאס, אשר נמצאים ברשימת ארגוני הטרור של האיחוד האירופי והונגריה. הדיווחים מכל ארבעת אתרי החדשות המצויינים לעיל כוללים דיווחים חלקיים או עיוות העובדות, דיווחים חד צדדיים ושקרים מוחלטים