

To: Brith Sholom Media Watch Subscribers
From: Jerry Verlin, Editor (jverlin1234@comcast.net)
Subj: Brith Sholom Media Watch Alert #373, 2/24/08

This Week In the Exponent: The “Broader Context” of the Cover Ad Editorial
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Maybe you caught our Jewish Exponent’s lead editorial this week, “Front-Page Fix,” defending its running ads starting this week on its cover. The editorial explained that “the Exponent is not a charity. It is a for-profit company owned by a nonprofit entity.” Federation relies on it, the editorial said, “to make money to support” our community’s efforts for Israel and local Jewish causes. It said that some in the community “will be disappointed” by ads on the Exponent’s cover, “but the idea of it must be seen in a broader context.”

It’s that “broader context” of a Jewish Exponent’s community role, not ads on its cover, that’s relevant to a pro-Israel mainstream media watch. Both Jews and non-Jews see our ethnic community-owned weekly as our community’s media voice. If I’m right, as I’ve said 373 times now, that our greater community’s main daily broadsheet purveys continuing anti-Israel imbalance, our own community’s weekly belongs in the thick of the fight. So I sent this email this week “To The Editor” of our community’s weekly:

2/22/08

To the Editor, Jewish Exponent :

What matters about our Jewish Exponent’s cover is not whether it sports the one or two ads defended in this week’s editorial, but those two words, “Jewish Exponent.”

With Israel’s 60th anniversary approaching, the “mainstream” media’s increasingly prominent coverage will magnify the already damaging impact on public perceptions of the media’s insistent mis-portrayals of the Arab-Israeli conflict’s core history – specifically,

*** the media’s insistent refusal to call the UN’s Partition of Palestine between its Arab and Jewish populations the UN’s Partition of Palestine, and insistent substitution of “the creation,” “establishment,” “founding” – i.e., anything abrupt, unilateral and artificial – “of Israel”;

*** the media’s insistent attribution of seemingly exclusively “Palestinian” refugees, not to the media-unmentioned multi-nation Arab invasion to undo Partition, Israel and all, but to “the war that followed Israel’s creation,” without those invading Arab states so much as named; and

*** the media's virtual silence on Israel's absorption of the greater number of equally indigenously Middle Eastern Jewish refugees from vast Muslim lands than Arabs left tiny Israel.

Years ago, I wrote to our Exponent's then editor, pleading that left to themselves the Inquirers of the media will continue to run roughshod over Middle East history to Israel's great detriment in the continuing struggle between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine, and that in Philadelphia our Jewish Exponent is all that stands in the way of our Philadelphia Inquirer having the field to itself. This week's editorial called the Exponent a "for-profit company" which its publisher, the Federation, relies on "to make money to support" the Federation's efforts for Israel and local Jewish causes. Well and good, but a newspaper's being a Jewish Exponent for Israel includes being no less relentless in contesting mainstream media anti-Israel imbalance than the mainstream media is in purveying it.

For starters, alongside the ads on next week's cover, our Philadelphia Jewish Exponent should tell the Philadelphia Inquirer that the UN's Partition of Palestine was the UN's Partition of Palestine, not "the creation, establishment and founding of Israel"; that the Arab refugees were displaced in Palestine's invasion by named Arab states, not by "the war that followed Israel's creation"; and that the core "refugee" issue includes the indigenously Middle Eastern Jewish refugees from Muslim lands whom Israel absorbed.

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This Week In The Inq: Gross Imbalance In Reporting UN Sderot-Gaza Comments
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The Inq ended last week with an across-the-top-of-the-page Saturday (2/16/08) A6 AP story, with a 3-column, 2-line headline consuming 10.5 sq inches, "U.N. Official In Gaza Cites 'Grim' Conditions," leading off: "The eight-month closure of Gaza has created 'grim and miserable' conditions that deprive Palestinians of their basic dignity, the United Nations humanitarian chief said yesterday."

That same UN humanitarian chief then visited Sderot, which Saturday's Inq article had noted he would, following which he declared that the indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza on Sderot "has absolutely no justification and should be stopped."

The Inq knew on Saturday, when it printed its 10 sq inch headline to an article leading with the UN humanitarian chief blasting the "closure of Gaza" for creating "'grim and miserable' conditions that deprive Palestinians of their basic dignity," that this UN official would then visit Sderot. And the Inq knew on Monday, after this UN official had visited Sderot and declared that the daily rocketing of Israel from Gaza "has absolutely no justification and should be stopped" how it had headlined and led Saturday with what he had said about Gaza. Balanced reporting required that the Inq give equivalent

headline and article lead prominence to what this UN official had said about Sderot as to what he had just said about Gaza. Surprise Of The Week, the Inq didn't do so.

The Inq should have headlined, just as big as "U.N. Official in Gaza Cites 'Grim' Conditions," something like "U.N. Official Says Sderot Rocketing Has 'Absolutely No Justification.'" Instead, the Inq headlined its Monday (2/18/08) A2 NYTimes (Kershner) article reporting his "absolutely no justification" statement "Israeli Forces Kill Four In Gaza Raid." It sub-headlined, non-bold, much smaller, "A U.N. official in the area condemned Palestinian rocket attacks," adding "but questioned Israel's response."

The Inq's Monday article didn't lead with the U.N. official's statement that the rocket attacks have "absolutely no justification," as Saturday's had led with "the closure's" effect. The "absolutely no justification" statement was down in paragraph 4.

So the Gaza statement got a big headline and article lead, and the Sderot statement got a sub-headline and paragraph 4. Is that balanced Inq prominence of the UN humanitarian chief's statements on Sderot and Gaza?

And now look at that Inq headline Monday, "Israeli Forces Kill Four in Gaza Raid." No hint of who. "Extremists" or little kids? Monday's article lead gave a clue, if only a clue: "Four Palestinian extremists were killed in clashes with the Israeli army in southern Gaza yesterday..." A Monday headline as close to Monday's lead as Saturday's headline had been to Saturday's lead would have been "Israeli Forces Kill Four Extremists in Gaza Clash," but Israel's action seems more aggressive and less directed against military targets with the headline "Israeli Forces Kill Four In Gaza Raid."

Now, who were these "four," per the headline, "four extremists" per the article's lead? Monday's paragraph 12 (of 14): "Palestinian hospital officials said three of the four gunmen killed yesterday belonged to the military wing of Hamas, the Islamic group that controls Gaza, and that the fourth belonged to the Popular Resistance Committees, a smaller group." Note that, "extremists" of "the military wing of Hamas." Hamas is the government, "legitimate" or not, of the place launching the daily rockets. Is the IDF merely "the military wing" of Israelis? Or is the IDF Israel? The "military wing" of Hamas is Hamas. The Inq should really have headlined something like "Four Arab Fighters Killed in Israel-Hamas Clash," not "Israeli Forces Kill Four in Gaza Raid."

Toll-Tierney Letter Gaining Some Traction – Have YOU Signed On?

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A fair number of you Gentle Readers have appended your name and emailed me back, or signed and mailed to me, c/o Brith Sholom, the letter to be sent in a batch to Messrs. Toll & Tierney of the Inq in March along with a long list of citations of the Inquirer insistently calling Palestine's Partition the creation or founding of Israel, and attributing Arab refugees to "the war that followed Israel's creation" without naming the Arab invaders

who started that war and without mentioning the Israel-absorbed Jewish refugees from Muslim lands. Some of you have threatened to take copies to your condo's and groups. The more of us who speak up, the louder our voice.

SO DO THIS, if you're so moved: Print out the letter below, sign it and mail it to me at this address, or just append your name as the signer and email it back.

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c/o Brith Sholom
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3939 Conshohocken Ave.
Philadelphia PA 19134

Regards,
Jerry

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Mr. Bruce Toll, Chairman
Mr. Brian P. Tierney, Chief Executive Officer
The Philadelphia Inquirer
Box 41705
Philadelphia PA 19101

Dear Mr. Toll and Mr. Tierney:

May 15th, in Western calendar reckoning, will mark the State of Israel's 60th anniversary of its independence, a milestone that the Western media, including the Philadelphia Inquirer, will prominently cover.

I'm gravely concerned, based upon years of quotations from your paper enclosed with this letter, that the Inquirer will portray this milestone occurrence in a manner grossly unfair to Israel and the millions of Jews and Christians who recognize Israel not as a state artificially "created" or "founded in 1948," but as the Jewish people's continuous historical homeland since ancient times.

Specifically:

I object to the Inquirer's insistent substitution of expressions like "Israel's 1948 creation," "establishment," "founding," – i.e., anything abrupt, unilateral and artificial – for what actually historically happened, the UN's Partition of the remaining League of Nations Palestine Mandate between its Arab and Jewish populations, c. a million and six hundred thousand people, respectively.

I object to the Inquirer's religious rechristening of the multi-nation Arab invasion rejecting UN Partition as "the war that followed Israel's creation" without those invading Arab states so much as named.

I object to the Inquirer's adamant attribution of seemingly exclusively Arab refugees to that "war that followed Israel's creation" and not to the multi-nation Arab invasion.

I object to the Inquirer's persistent portrayal of these Arabs as "having fled or been forced from their homes," when many left with the encouragement of the Arab invaders.

I object to the Inquirer's incessant references to these Arab refugees from tiny Israel with virtually no reference whatever to that same era's greater number of indigenously Middle Eastern Jewish refugees from vast Muslim lands, the bulk of whom Israel absorbed.

For years, with as recent an instance as 2007, the Inquirer repeatedly preposterously exaggerated the c. half-million Arabs who left tiny Israel as "millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants," sometimes as "nearly four million Palestinian refugees and their descendants," poisoning Western public perceptions of partitioned Palestine's actual 1947 population, which was less than two million, a good third of it Jews. That the Inquirer has apparently stopped repeating this preposterous exaggeration has not undone the persistent poisoning of public perception it wreaked. Real, if but partial, rectification can come only from the Inquirer ceasing to purvey the remainder of its persistent mis-portrayal of seemingly exclusively Arab (retrospectively called "Palestinian") refugees from a sudden "1948 creation" or "founding of Israel," a mis-portrayal of which these preposterously exaggerated "millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants," still deeply ingrained in public perception, were a key formative part.

Very truly yours,