

To: Brith Sholom Media Watch Subscribers
From: Jerry Verlin, Editor
Subj: Brith Sholom Media Watch Alert #374, 3/2/08

This Week In The Inq: Hamas Launches Foreign-made, Long-range Grad Rockets in Attacks of Unprecedented Scale Upon Major Israeli Port Ashkelon, But Without Mentioning Hamas, Ashkelon or the Imported Rockets, the Israel-Focusing Inq Headlines “Violence Escalates; Israeli Says Gaza Action Is Option”

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Here’s how the Inq headlined, Thursday, 2/28/08, through Sunday, 3/2/08, what happened This Week between Israel and Hamas:

Inq, Thursday, 2/28/08, A16, AP article: “Israelis, Gazans Swap Fire; Death On Both Sides”

Inq, Friday, 2/29/08, A2, AP article: “Violence Escalates; Israeli Says Gaza Action Is Option”

Inq, Saturday, 3/1/08, A3, NYTimes article: “Less Violence In Israeli, Gazan Clashes”

Inq, Sunday, 3/2/08, A1, LATimes article: “Dozens Killed in Israeli Troop Action in Gaza”

These four – Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday – were the Inq’s only headlines in the 8-day span Sunday, 2/24/08, through Sunday, 3/2/08, on the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Sunday 2/24’s “Hamas Preacher’s Family Says He Died After Torture By Fatah” was intramural.)

“Israel/Israelis” made all four of these headlines. “Hamas” didn’t make Any. “Gaza/Gazan/Gazans” made all four, like Israelis, but “Gazans” aren’t those mean daily rocket-lobbing militants. “Gazans” are just innocent why-can’t-we-all-get-along, peace-loving civilians just trying to get along peaceably with their post-Holocaust-implanted, Palestine-Occupying, Colonialist, Crusader, Zionist neighbors, despite being deprived of electricity, fuel, and This Week chlorine “because of an Israeli blockade” (Inq, 2/28/08, A16, AP sidebar), as though Gazans’ government is blameless for Gazans’ troubles.

What ACTUALLY happened starting Wednesday This Week, which you might not have gleaned from the Inq’s four consecutive days’ Friday-thru-Sunday headlines omitting both WHO did it and WHERE, is that Hamas GREATLY ESCALATED the Israeli-Hamas conflict by graduating from lobbing just “crude homemade” rockets lobbed daily at Sderot (not a regular feature, anyway, of Inquirer headlines) to launching full-fledged

military grade, longer range, bigger bang, Grad (a/k/a Kaytusha) rockets at the 100,000 plus populated Israeli industrial port city of Ashkelon. Instead of headlining

“ISRAELIS, Gazans Swap Fire; Death On Both Sides”

“Violence Escalates; ISRAELI Says Gaza Action Is Option”

“Less Violence In ISRAELI, Gazan Clashes”

“Dozens Killed in ISRAELI Troop Action in Gaza”

the Inq should have headlined:

HAMAS Launches UNPRECEDENTED Grad-Rocket Attack On Major Israeli Port

Thursday’s Inq AP article, which led with Israeli aircraft blasting Hamas offices and “metal shops,” and in which “Hamas claimed responsibility for the deadly attack on the college” in Sderot in which an adult student, father of four, had been killed, mentioned that “four rockets exploded in the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon No one was hurt,” down in par. 13 of 15.

But Friday’s AP article gave the Inq enough clues that Hamas had greatly escalated both its rocket weaponry and targets to warrant an Inq headline informing readers of what HAMAS had actually in fact DONE, rather than a mere “Violence Escalates,” followed by what an “ISRAELI SAYS” ISRAEL MIGHT do about it, “Gaza Action is OPTION.” It’s the Inq’s headline hair-trigger on contemplated Israeli responses vs ho-hum on Hamas really rocketing Sderot nearly daily, but in a bigger arena this time.

Friday’s Inq article LED: “A bloody spike in Israeli-Hamas fighting [note that “Hamas” made None of the headlines] put the Israeli city of Ashkelon and its 110,000 residents at the center of an intensifying rocket barrage yesterday – and Israel’s defense minister warned he would invade Gaza, if necessary, to halt the attacks.” The AP article’s text identified Hamas’ Ashkelon rockets as “longer-range, Iran-made Grad rockets smuggled in via Egypt.” Inq readers should have been told in the Inq’s headline “Israeli Says Gaza Action is Option” not just “Violence Escalates,” but that Israel’s enemy, Hamas, had greatly escalated that violence by attacking a large Israeli city with long-range imported rockets.

Still further evidence that the Inq should have headlined on Friday something more informative to readers than “Violence Escalates; ISRAELI Says Gaza Action Is Option,” is in a NYTimes’ Isabel Kershner article Thursday, in the International Herald Tribune, which the Inq chose not to print. Headlined “Israeli Coastal City Hit By Long-Range Rockets” (in contra-distinction to “Violence Escalates”), the often Inq-run Kershner led off: “Palestinian militants in Gaza fired at least eight foreign-made, long-range rockets at the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon on Thursday, scoring a direct hit on a house there for the first time and marking what Israeli officials described as a serious escalation of the conflict.” The article quoted an Israeli spokesman that the attacks were “a definite escalation” and that Israel knew “the steps it must take to halt the rocket fire,” as well as

Defense Minister Barak warning of possible ground action (as did the Inq's AP article), and stated as fact that "the scale of attacks" on Ashkelon Thursday "was unprecedented."

But without mentioning either Hamas, or its escalating shift to foreign-made, long-range Grad rockets in attacks of unprecedented scale on Ashkelon, the Inq's headline Friday informed readers only "Violence Escalates, ISRAELI Says Gaza Action Is Option." That Inq headline should have told readers WHY "Israeli Says Gaza Action is Option." But maybe that would have made Hamas seem more, and Israel seem less, the aggressor.

Regards,
Jerry

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Below is the letter to go to go in a stack to Toll and Tierney at the end of this month calling upon the Inquirer, as Israel's 60th anniversary of independence approaches, to cease its imbalanced portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict's core history in the specific ways cited in the letter and documented in the accompanying chronology of quotations from the Inquirer.

More than 50 community members have signed copies of this letter so far. If you think what it says there makes sense, append your name at the bottom and email it back to me. Better yet, copy it and get copies signed by members of your group and send them all back.

How the media persistently portrays the Arab-Israeli conflict's core history matters greatly in the forming of public opinion.

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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,

