

Stop Media Bias Against Israel and Use the Media to Promote and Defend Israel

Media outlets are an important source of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish misinformation and bias. But effective advocates for Israel and the Jewish People can fight back and also use media as a valuable tool to help Israel and Jewry.

You can help ZOA set the record straight. You can make a difference! By writing letters-to-editor or posting/commenting online or directly contacting journalists or calling TV and radio stations in response to coverage of Israel and Jewry, you convey that the public is alert to skewed, inaccurate or incomplete reports and misinformation. Public participation in promoting balanced, accurate coverage is essential and urgent. We encourage you to respond regularly to unfair media portrayals of Israel and inaccurate and distorted articles about her adversaries. It is also important to communicate appreciation to journalists whose reports are objective and factual.

Respond while the issue is still fresh in the minds of journalists, commentators and their audience.

State the point of your letter or phone call within the first two sentences. Be specific about why the article or broadcast was unfair or wrong.

Letters and op-eds: Be concise. Most publications will not print more than 150 words for a letter to the editor. Limit your topic. While an article or broadcast may contain numerous instances of bias, focus on just one or two. It's better to fully explain one point than to inadequately cover five. Stick to the facts. Hostile or overly emotional language is counterproductive. Be cordial and polite in your tone. If you are writing an op-ed, try to limit your submission to 800 words.

Be pro-active. Don't wait for a crisis to be an advocate for Israel. Establish a cordial relationship with decision-makers at local media outlets. Send in letters or make calls about Israel's prolific contributions to medicine, science and technology, or expose what Israel's enemies are doing and saying.

Four Types of Media:

There are essentially four main types of media: Print (newspapers and magazines), Broadcast (TV and radio), New Media (Web-only news outlets such as Breitbart or Huffington Post) and User-Created (social media, podcasts, YouTube, etc.). Each type requires specialized interactions with people who have specific titles or departments. For user-generated media, perhaps some additional skills or knowledge may be required. Don't worry: It's not as complex as it seems.

There are essentially four categories where media comes into play for advocates: reaction, pro-active, offense and defense.

- Reaction: You see or hear an anti-Israel report and you contact the outlet to complain, or you create a letter to the editor or a social media post in response to a post.
- Pro-active: You learn about a development – such as an Israeli medical breakthrough, or that the Palestinian Authority is increasing its financial incentives for those under its rule to attempt to murder Jews. You write about this as a letter to the editor, or your own article or social media post. Be sure to cite the source of your information.
- Offense: Remind the world what Israel's enemies are doing and/or have done when Israel is pressured to make even more dangerous concessions. The anniversary of a major terrorist attack, or a reminder that the Palestinian-Arabs have not had an election in 15 years and are split between the PLO and Hamas – and yet the world presses Israel to make concessions. There are just a couple of possibilities.

- Defensive: Reminders about all that Israel has already given up to try to achieve peace is one of many possible examples of subject matter for a letter, op-ed or social media post to use when, for example, Israel is blamed for the lack of peace.

Generally on a media outlet's website there is a "contact" or "about" link or button that advises where to send letters or op-eds.

Who to Contact When You See or Hear Anti-Israel Media Bias

Different types of media have different structures, and typically those whom Israel activists need to reach have different titles depending on the media platform.

When dealing with print or broadcast media, begin by contacting the newsroom. Ideally you want to reach people by phone. Alternately, send an email. In either case, it is important to reach decision makers. For print media, try to reach the news editor or the managing editor. You may need to try to reach the publisher if the bias is especially egregious or someone else is not responding satisfactorily. In broadcast media, try to reach the news director or the station manager or general manager. Most of the time it is unproductive to try to reach the reporter who wrote or filed the report. If you still get no satisfaction to resolve the problem, consider reaching out to corporate ownership (where applicable) or advertisers' corporate officers.

In any interaction, always be polite. Hostility or profanity will not accomplish anything, plus it gives a bad name to the pro-Israel community. Ask for a correction or that an anchor or reporter cease offering misinformation. Be concise and be sure to have the facts at your fingertips and be ready to provide sources for your information if/when asked. Be firm and explain that by printing or reporting lies or inaccuracies, the media outlet is misinforming rather than informing the public. When a term such as "occupied" or "West Bank" or "Palestine" are used, inform the person you are interacting with that such terms are not only inaccurate, but they are also politically charged. Remember that the First Amendment affords legitimate media outlets a lot of leeway to be biased. You can only appeal to their sense of honesty, integrity and balance.

New Media and User-Generated Media are more difficult to resolve issues of bias or misinformation. It is difficult to reach people by phone at new media outlets. Some have a general email address while others offer a "masthead" or a list of staff and their email addresses. You may have to search through the website to find this contact information. Also look at "About us" if there is such a link at the top or bottom of the website's homepage. Many offer areas to comment or "talk back." Take advantage of them.

User-generated content websites are generally free-for-alls with no limits and no recourse unless content is blatantly antisemitic – and even then the chances of getting something pulled are slim. Most sites have ways of reporting offensive content. There may be opportunities to comment or reply directly to the creator of the content. You can make your own user-generated content to correct the bias and misinformation. It can be done with a smartphone.

Keep this directory handy and use it often!