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To Whom It May Concern:

On June 8, 2007, we submitted an online complaint regarding Jeremy Bowen's June 4 website article, "How 1967 defined the Middle East." The BBC News website reply of June 15 failed to satisfactorily address our concerns, and on June 26 we appealed to the Editorial Complaints Unit. We received the ECU's final reply on October 29, more than four months after our appeal was submitted. The ECU did not uphold our complaint. For reasons which will be detailed below, we are appealing the ECU decision to the BBC Trust's Editorial Standards Committee. In addition to our appeal, which is detailed below, please find enclosed our original complaint, the BBC News website reply, our letter of appeal to the ECU, and the ECU reply.

Our complaint is that Mr. Bowen's article violates BBC's Editorial Guidelines calling for accuracy and impartiality. The replies from BBC News and the ECU ignored key points of our complaint, misrepresented certain parts of the complaint, misinterpreted comments by Israeli figures, and pointed to individual cases that seem to confirm its position while ignoring other important cases that are inconsistent with the BBC's assertions.

Below you will find, broken down by topic, the details of our complaint, a summary of the BBC's reply thus far, and our rejoinder.

“Everyone’s Interpretation of International Law”

The article asserts that Israel’s settlements are illegal under “everyone’s interpretation of international law except its own.” As we noted in our initial complaint and our appeal to the ECU, this hyperbole is demonstrably false and violates the BBC’s editorial guideline calling for accuracy.

Non-Israeli experts in international law, including distinguished professor of international law Julius Stone and former U.S. Undersecretary of State Eugene Rostow, have argued that Israel's settlements are legal. Moreover, successive American governments have not deemed Israel's settlements illegal under international law, and President Reagan explicitly asserted that they are “not illegal” (*New York Times*, Feb. 3, 1981). The BBC is not expected to favor this view; but it is expected to acknowledge it, and avoid reporting as fact simplistic and inaccurate hyperbole about “everyone’s” view on the legality of settlements.

BBC News Reply

The reply from the BBC News website failed to address this issue at all.

CAMERA Appeal to the ECU

We reiterated our concerns in the appeal.

ECU Reply

The ECU did not uphold this part of our complaint even though its letter to CAMERA, written by Philip Abrams, acknowledged that the passage “is not phrased as precisely as it could be.” Mr. Abrams then asserted: “I think it’s clear from the context that by ‘everyone’ [Mr. Bowen] is referring to the position of governments, not that held by individuals.” He also pointed to the British government view that “settlements are illegal under international law.”

CAMERA Rejoinder

It should first be noted that BBC’s Editorial Guidelines call for output to be “presented in clear, precise language.” Mr. Abrams acknowledged in his letter to CAMERA that this is not the case because the passage “is not phrased as precisely as it could be” In effect, then, he acknowledged that the passage violates BBC’s editorial guideline calling for clear and precise language. Nonetheless, he chose not to uphold this part of our complaint.

Moreover, we disagree with Mr. Abrams’ claim that it is “clear from the context” that Mr. Bowen is referring to the position of governments and not of individuals. Mr. Bowen’s use of “everyone” is not qualified in any way. Many readers will undoubtedly take the false assertion about “everyone’s interpretation of international law” at face value.

But even if one were to accept that readers will all understand Mr. Bowen was referring to

governments and not individuals, his assertion is still factually incorrect. As noted above, the United States government does not label Israeli settlements as being illegal under international law. And again, there was President Reagan's assertion that the settlements are legal, which no presidents since have contradicted. These facts were noted in our initial complaint and in our appeal to the ECU, but apparently the information was ignored. It might also be worth noting that Mike McCurry, the State Department spokesperson under President Clinton, also indicated that the U.S. does not feel settlements are illegal. During a Jan. 3, 1995 briefing, Mr. McCurry was asked: "Is it still the United States position that the settlements are not illegal but obstacles to peace?" In reply, he asserted: "Yes our view on that — our view specifically on that has not changed."

In conclusion, Mr. Bowen's assertion about "everyone's interpretation of international law" does not comply with BBC guidelines calling for "accuracy" and "precise language." The BBC has also failed to comply with its obligation to "acknowledge serious factual errors and correct mistakes quickly and clearly." As the BBC guidelines further note, "Inaccuracy may lead to a complaint of unfairness. An effective way of correcting a mistake is saying what was wrong as well as putting it right."

Omission of Arab Aggression

Our complaint notes that although Mr. Bowen's article purports to help readers "understand what happened in the Middle East war of 1967," it makes no mention of the Arab aggression that led to the fighting. Nowhere do readers learn that Egypt expelled United Nations troops from the Sinai Peninsula and massed its own forces near the Israeli border, with plans and intent to attack; or that Egypt blocked the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, a *casus belli* under international law. Nor are readers informed that Israel did not attack (or "smash," as Mr. Bowen put it) the Jordanian and Syrian armed forces until those countries first attacked Israel. These omissions can only severely distort readers' understanding of "what happened."

BBC News Reply

The reply from the BBC News website noted that "the intention of the article was not to provide a detailed history of the war and its causes." It further notes that the piece was "part of a wider range of coverage," some of which did mention, for example, the Egyptian naval blockade.

CAMERA Appeal to the ECU

CAMERA responded that even if the BBC covered the Six-Day War in other articles, this does not mean that the article in question — or for that matter any other article on the topic — is objective, fair and accurate.

ECU Reply

The ECU repeated that the article is "a fairly brief account of why Israel won in 1967 and the

consequences of that victory.” Mr. Abrams also pointed out that the article discussed the “bloodcurdling threats” by an announcer on the Voice of the Arabs radio station, and thus, he claimed, readers would have no doubt that Arab countries were aggressively promoting war.

CAMERA Rejoinder

Both of BBC’s replies suggest that the causes of the war, including massive military threats, are details that need not be included in Mr. Bowen’s discussion of “what happened in the Middle East war of 1967.” The causes of the war, however, are not merely “details.” They are key to understanding what happened in the war and what is happening today.

Furthermore, the idea that the article was too brief to include these key points cannot be taken seriously in light of the other, less important details Mr. Bowen saw fit to include in the article. For example, if the age and supposed confidence level of Israeli generals before the war merit mention, and if the idea that at the time “there was no television, and generals and politicians did not leak their business to their favourite journalists as they do today” merits attention, then surely the piece should have also mentioned Arab actions which led to war — including large scale Egyptian military maneuvers after expelling UN peacekeepers, naval blockades, and in the case of Syria and Jordan, the launching of hostilities against Israel.

Regarding Mr. Abrams’ assertion that the article’s comment about the Voice of the Arabs radio station conveyed that Arab countries were aggressively promoting war, it is strange (as we also noted in our appeal to the ECU) that BBC mentioned only the belligerent and threatening statements by an Egyptian *radio personality*, while ignoring similar statements repeatedly trumpeted by the *leaders* of Arab countries. It was known at the time, for example, that Egyptian President Gamal Nasser said if war starts “our main objective will be the destruction of Israel” (*New York Times*, May 27, 1967). Readers will rightly see threats by radio personalities as much less serious than threats by Arab leaders who had at their disposal modern weapons and armies.

The accuracy section of BBC’s Editorial Guidelines notes that “All the relevant facts and information should be weighed to get at the truth. If an issue is controversial, relevant opinions as well as facts may need to be considered.” By ignoring such relevant facts in a piece that promises to explain “what happened,” the BBC violated this guideline.

Israeli Confidence

While the BBC article ignored the hostile steps and violent rhetoric by Arab heads of state (as noted above), it further minimized the threat to Israel by falsely suggesting that the sole reason Israeli civilians were fearful was because Israel’s leaders and generals concealed from the public their purported sense of confidence. According to Mr. Bowen, “[t]he Jewish Goliath had never been in better shape, and knew it, or rather its leaders did.” Israeli civilians “were left to their own fears” Israeli generals “all knew that the only way that Israel would lose the war would be if the IDF did not turn up,” and saw victory as “inevitable.”

We noted in our complaint that this characterization of Israelis leaders and generals is a significant and misleading exaggeration. True, some of Israel's political and military leadership felt assured in their army's capabilities. But the pervasive sense of fear before the war was hardly limited to Israel's general public. Prime Minister Eshkol and many others felt that Israel's ability to win the war depended on an Israeli first strike. During the run up to the war, Eshkol stated that "[t]he first five minutes will be decisive. The question is who will attack the other's airfields first." If Egypt destroyed Israel's air force, Israel's leaders felt that the war would be much harder and longer, with massive, catastrophic Israeli casualties. Israel's chief of intelligence General Aharon Yariv felt that Egypt might bomb the country's strategic site in Dimona, and that if Israel didn't act, the combined Arab armies could push its forces to, or beyond, the UN Partition lines. If Israel didn't respond to Egypt's acts of war, he said, the country would lose its deterrence and its neighbors would "threaten her security and her very existence." Israel's general staff determined that "every delay is a gamble with Israel's survival." Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin did predict an Israeli victory, but he also foresaw a "terribly hard war with many casualties," and felt that the threat to the country was existential. As Egypt was building up its forces in the Sinai, Rabin told his generals that "[i]t is now a question of our national survival, of to be or not to be." The stress of the situation would eventually cause Rabin temporarily to suffer a nervous breakdown — hardly something one would expect from the "hugely self confident" generals described by Bowen.

BBC News Reply

The BBC News reply did not directly address any of the above points, but rather referred to "a number of emails" that protested the article's comment about "two Goliaths in the Middle East in 1967." The BBC then pointed to British and U.S. assessments that showed Israel being in a position of strength.

The BBC also referred to a March 1967 interview with Yitzhak Rabin in the *Jewish Chronicle* in which Rabin, the Israeli Chief of Staff at the time, said Israel "enjoys superiority over her enemies which seems to be assured for many years to come."

CAMERA Appeal to the ECU

In our appeal to the ECU, we again relayed the above quotes by Messrs. Eshkol, Yariv, Rabin and the general staff. We noted that if Rabin's statement in March 1967 is seen as reflecting Israel's views at the time, surely his statements in May-June 1967 should be seen as reflecting the country's views during the subsequent Arab military buildup. We reiterated that Rabin foresaw a "terribly hard war with many casualties," and told his generals that "[i]t is now a question of our national survival, of to be or not to be," and that other Israeli political and military leaders made similar statements. Moreover, we noted, the *British* and *American* military assessments referred to by the BBC do not change the fact that *Israeli* leaders and generals — and not only its supposedly ignorant masses — were indeed extremely concerned for the security of the country and its residents during the run-up to war. American and British assessments are not relevant to our complaint, as we did not protest the portion of Mr. Bowen's article that described these assessments.

ECU Reply

Mr. Abrams replied: “Mr. Bowen, it seems to me, is doing no more than suggesting that, contrary to the ‘myth of the 1967 Middle East War,’ Israel’s military was superior to the combined Arab armies, and that’s why it won.”

He relayed Mr. Bowen’s sourcing for the assertion about British and American assessments of Israeli strength. Mr. Abrams also referred to Michael Oren’s recently published book, *Six Days of War*, noting that Oren described U.S. officials as being confident in Israel’s quick victory, and referred to Abba Eban’s discussion of President Johnson’s confidence in Israel’s ability to win the war.

He also relayed Mr. Bowen’s description of his conversation with Elad Peled, an Israeli divisional commander in 1967, who told him about “the great confidence of the generals, which is attested to in many secondary sources.”

Mr. Abrams reiterated Mr. Bowen’s comments about Yitzhak Rabin’s March 1967 interview with the *Jewish Chronicle*, and relayed Mr. Bowen’s assertion that the piece failed to discuss Mr. Rabin’s breakdown “because in a short article you can’t write the entire history of the war.”

Finally, Mr. Abrams makes the following assertion: “If I understand you correctly, you are suggesting that a single event, which consisted solely of a crisis of nerves lasting no more than two days and affecting one individual, albeit the Chief of Staff, is sufficient to demonstrate that the leaders of the Israeli military were less than confident of the outcome of a war which was, by that stage, inevitable.”

CAMERA Rejoinder

This final claim — that I referred only to Mr. Rabin’s breakdown to make my point about the Israeli mind set before the war — is not only patently false, but also extremely disturbing, as it indicates that Mr. Abrams did not give careful attention to our appeal, or at worst willfully ignored much of the evidence I provided. It is exceedingly clear that my original complaint and my appeal to the ECU referred to much more than Rabin’s breakdown. I referred to specific statements by the Israeli prime minister, statements by the chief of intelligence, statements by Rabin, and statements by the general staff. Only after relaying these comments did I also mention the nervous breakdown. It should be noted that the quotes I provided (by Eshkol, Yariv, Rabin and the general staff) come from the same book Mr. Abrams cited to substantiate his assertions about American and British assessments: Michael Oren’s *Six Days of War*. Mr. Abrams obviously finds this well-regarded book to be relevant when discussing these assessments. Why, then, does he ignore what the book documents about Israeli fears — both on the civilian level *and* the military/governmental level?

Regarding Mr. Abrams’ assertion that Mr. Bowen “is doing no more than suggesting ... Israel’s military was superior to the combined Arab armies”: A reading of the BBC article makes it quite clear that Mr. Bowen *did* in fact do more than comment on Israel’s military edge. Yes, he spoke

about outside assessments of Israel's military strength; but he also discussed the completely different issue of Israeli leaders' *opinions* about the upcoming war. Because our complaint does not focus on the former, BBC's repeated reference to American and British assessments are irrelevant, and serve to demolish a straw man rather than address the actual substance of our complaint.

As I note above, the problem is with the article's overall treatment of Israeli opinions about the looming war. Mr. Bowen is welcome to conclude that the Israeli military was qualitatively stronger than that of its adversaries, but he is not free to misrepresent the Israeli views at the time and downplay the fears and concerns at the top level of Israel's government and military. Yet this is precisely what he did. He painted a misleading picture of supremely confident Israeli leaders and generals, and an Israeli public which was worried only because these leaders and generals kept them in the dark.

Mr. Abrams cited two examples of Israelis demonstrating confidence — Mr. Rabin's March 1967 comments to the *Jewish Chronicle* and Elad Paled's comments to Mr. Bowen — to prove his point. But it is surely against the BBC Editorial Guidelines to cherry pick certain quotes that support a view while ignoring many other quotes that cast doubt on that view. Mr. Abrams apparently dismissed my assertion that if Rabin's statement in March 1967 should be seen as reflecting Israel's views at the time, surely his statements in May-June 1967 should be seen as reflecting the country's views during those months on the very brink of war. (As I have previously noted, Rabin foresaw a "terribly hard war with many casualties," and told his generals that "it is now a question of our national survival, of to be or not to be.") At each stage of the complaints process, I relayed these other comments by various officials and generals, which show that the fear of terrible losses, defeat or even destruction was not limited to the (supposedly ignorant) masses, but were shared by a number of extremely high ranking officials. If some officials were "hugely self-confident" (Ariel Sharon's pre-war swagger comes to mind), then by all means it is fair to mention this. But it is simply wrong to pretend that officials at the highest levels had no fear for the fate of the country.

Finally, Mr. Bowen's assertion that "in a short article you can't write the entire history of the war" is certainly true. But in responsible journalism, this truth cannot be used as an excuse to relay only selected information that seriously distorts the full, accurate picture.

Israel's "Unfinished Business" and Zionism's "Innate Instinct to Push Out the Frontier"

As noted above, the Bowen article downplays Arab responsibility for the war by overlooking the hostile Egyptian actions that sparked the war and ignoring the fact that the fighting on the Jordanian and Syrian fronts started only after those countries launched attacks against Israel.

And while disregarding the Arab role in starting the war, the piece seems to go to great lengths in casting Israel as eager for battle. It claims that Israeli generals "had been training to finish the unfinished business of Israel's independence war of 1948 for most of their careers," and alleges that Zionism has an "innate instinct to push out the frontier."

Our complaint to BBC expressed shock at these comments, as they absolutely turn reality on its head. It was not Israel but rather the Arab world that, by its own admission, had sought to take care of “unfinished business” from 1948 — namely, the destruction of Israel. This view was epitomized by Iraqi president Abdel Rahman Aref, who shortly before the 1967 war declared: “The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948.”

The BBC’s classification of Zionism as having an “innate instinct to push out the frontier” reveals a disturbingly twisted and prejudiced understanding of Zionism. Our complaint recalled that, immediately after the war, Israel decided it would give up the Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula, by far the vast majority of the land area conquered during the war. It recalled that, far from seeking to take over the West Bank, Israel in fact hoped to avoid fighting on the Jordanian front. It sent a message to Jordan’s King Hussein assuring him that Israel wouldn’t fight against his country unless Jordan launched an attack against Israel. It was only because the king dismissed the message that the West Bank ended up in Israel’s hands. These points, which underscore that from Israel’s perspective the Six-Day War was a fight for the defense of the country rather than a war of expansion, were ignored by Mr. Bowen.

BBC News Reply

The reply from the BBC News website failed to address this issue at all.

CAMERA Appeal to the ECU

We reiterated our concerns in our appeal to the ECU. We noted that the assertion about Israel’s “unfinished business” from 1948 is outrageous *not* because the Israeli army did not train in preparation for possible war. As all armies, they did train. The outrageous aspect of the passage is that the desire “to finish the unfinished business” of the 1948 war describes the openly-avowed stance, in reality, of the Arab world, as indicated by the aforementioned Abdel Rahman Aref quote and others like it.

Considering that Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol took pains to avoid war and hoped not to fight on the Jordanian front once war broke out, and in light of the fact that Israel offered to return almost all of the territory it conquered in exchange for peace, it would have been much more fair and accurate to point out that the *Pan-Arab movement* was intently focused on expanding their frontier by destroying Israel. The article’s dubious claim about Zionism’s “innate instinct” to expand the frontier, coupled with its omission of *a*) Israel’s requests that Jordan refrain from joining the fighting, *b*) its offer to return territory after the war, and *c*) the Pan-Arabist desire to expand its frontier by destroying Israel, are extremely misleading and inconsistent with the BBC’s editorial guidelines calling for truth, accuracy and impartiality. (See our rejoinder below for further details about why this characterization of Zionism is false.)

ECU Reply

In the ECU reply, Mr. Bowen defended his reference to Israel’s “unfinished business” by

claiming he was “referring specifically to the desire to overturn the Jordanian conquest of the Old City.” He cited the memoir of Gen Uzi Narkiss, noting that the general “writes specifically [about] the feeling he had ... about taking the Old City.” Mr. Bowen also referred to Yigal Allon’s belief during the Arab-Israeli 1948 war that Israel should capture the West Bank. He also noted: “At no time do I say that there was a plan to capture and hold territory.”

Mr. Bowen defended his reference to “Zionism’s innate instinct to push out the frontier” by quoting Yigal Allon, who wrote that “the true frontier of the State of Israel moves and forms according to the movement and location of Jewish workers of the earth.” Mr. Bowen also justified his assertion by claiming that “had they [Zionists] not had the instinct for expansion,” the Zionist settlement of Palestine would not have grown beyond its first Ottoman-era kibbutz, and Israelis would not have settled the Old City of Jerusalem and the West Bank after the 1967 war.

Mr. Abrams then made the somewhat unrelated claim that “It is quite clear from a variety of material that the founders of the State of Israel did not accept the division of Jerusalem, which happened in 1948.” He quoted David Ben Gurion’s December 5, 1949 speech to support this claim. He also cited Menachem Begin’s comments of 5 December 1949 and of 3 May 1950, which indicated that Mr. Begin thought Israel should include Bethlehem, Hebron and all of Jerusalem.

Mr. Abrams concluded that “In the light of this kind of material, and an absence of any clear statement from any government of Israel on where the borders of the state should be, it seems to me that the observation that Zionism has ‘an innate instinct to push out the frontier’ is justified by both the actions of successive Israeli governments and the public statements of leading Zionists.”

CAMERA Rejoinder

Both Mr. Bowen and Mr. Abrams selectively cited quotes and actions that support (and sometimes fail to support) the BBC’s claims of “unfinished business” and “innate instinct” to expand. But they ignored the many quotes and actions which contradict those claims. This cherry-picking of selected quotes might be expected in a prosecutorial brief, but not in fair-minded journalism.

Obviously, a statement by Uzi Narkiss and David Ben Gurion, and a couple of comments by Yigal Allon and Menachem Begin, are not enough to define Israel’s view of unfinished business, and are certainly not enough to define Zionism.

Mr. Bowen’s assertion that by “unfinished business” he was referring only to “the desire to overturn the Jordanian conquest of the Old City” is problematic *a)* because the article makes no such qualification, *b)* because Mr. Bowen failed to demonstrate that in Israel there was any universal or active desire “to overturn” the Jordanian conquest, and *c)* because he failed to demonstrate that, if specific Israelis did harbor such a desire, this desire represented Israel or Zionism in general. To be sure, many Jews and Zionists lamented Jordan’s annexation of that

part of Jerusalem. (Most of the international community, in fact, did not recognize the Jordanian annexation.) But lamenting something is not necessarily the same as seeking to overturn it.

General Narkiss's comment about a "feeling" he and his colleagues had conquering the Old City, moreover, hardly suggests that Israel had "unfinished business" from the 1948 war. It simply underscores that many Jews feel an intense connection to Jerusalem's old city and the sacred Jewish shrines therein.

Mr. Bowen's assertion that Yigal Allon in 1949 urged Prime Minister Ben Gurion to capture the West Bank may seem more relevant. But just because one Israeli expressed in 1949, during a war for survival, that Israel should capture the West Bank, it does not indicate Israel as a whole has since felt "unfinished business." Indeed, the Israeli cabinet on September 26, 1948 *voted down* a proposal for the IDF to conquer the whole Judea-Hebron region by a margin of 7 to 6, or perhaps 7 to 5 (Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pg. 242). Mr. Bowen might prefer to focus on those 5 or 6 who voted for the proposal, but accurate and fair journalism must take into account that the majority of cabinet members voted against it.

Additionally, the Ben Gurion quote relayed by Mr. Abrams does not support the assertion that "the founders of the State of Israel did not accept the division of Jerusalem" Mr. Ben Gurion in this speech was specifically expressing his opposition to having "Jewish Jerusalem," the western section of the city already under Israel control, incorporated into an international Corpus Separatum. That does not indicate *expansionist* tendencies. It indicates opposition to *contraction*.

The quotes by Mr. Begin, on the other hand, do suggest that he felt Israel should control eastern Jerusalem and portions of the West Bank. But again, this is one man's view. In fact, it is evident from his comments of 3 May 1950 that Zionists in the Knesset did not share his view.

Addressing the Knesset, Mr. Begin scolded his colleagues, protesting: "[Y]ou are prepared to legitimize the annexation" of the West Bank by Jordan. Moreover, Mr. Begin was speaking as a member of a party, Herut, that garnered just 10 percent of the vote.

And what of the fact that he was elected Prime Minister in 1977? If, as Mr. Abrams asserted, one must consider "the actions of ... governments," then one must consider that under Mr. Begin's rule the amount of land controlled by Israel substantially *shrunk*, because the Prime Minister turned over the Sinai Peninsula, 90 percent of the total land area captured in 1967, to Egypt.

And again, if one is to consider "the actions of successive Israeli governments and the public statements of leading Zionists," as Mr. Abrams asserted, then one must consider that Zionist leader Moshe Sharett believed Israel's military successes during the 1948 war "meant the absolute end of Israeli expansion beyond the 1947 borders allotted to it in the UN partition plan" (Gabriel Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate*, Oxford University Press 1996, pg. 450).

One must also consider that after the 1948 war and before the Lausanne Conference, Israeli leaders reached a consensus "concerning a *de facto* recognition of the annexation to Transjordan," and that "Sharett proposed that Israel enter negotiations with Transjordan on the

formal partition of [Jerusalem]... . Since the cabinet moderates and Ben-Gurion supported him, this line was adopted as Israel's main policy" (Sheffer, 458-59).

In addition, according to a 1950 United Nations report, Israel noted at the time that it had "no ambitions" regarding the West Bank:

Concerning the political frontier between Israel and Jordan, the Israel delegation proposed that with regard to the central area of Palestine then under Jordanian military authority, **the boundary between it and Israel should follow the then existing line** between Israel and Jordanian military forces, subject to certain modifications in the interests of both parties. **The Israel delegation stated that Israel had no ambitions regarding this central area.** It considered that the disposition of the area was a matter which should form the subject of a proposal agreed upon and put forward by the delegations of the Arab States, the Arab inhabitants of the territory, and the refugees. Until the future status of the area was settled, **Israel would continue to recognise the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan as the de facto military occupying Power.**

Concerning the remainder of the frontier between Israel and Jordan, the Israel delegation proposed that **it should be the same as that between Transjordan and Palestine under British Mandate.** (General Progress Report and Supplementary Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, available at domino.un.org, emphasis added)

That report also noted that, on 12 September 1949, Israel asserted to a UN Commission that

The Government of Israel now asserts its title to the territory over which its authority is actually recognized... Although some of the invading Arab armies still stand on the soil of Palestine, **Israel is not advancing any further territorial claims.** But of the territory now constituting the State of Israel, there can be no cession.

After the Six-Day War, "many ministers still hoped to create an autonomous Palestinian entity" in the West Bank (Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War*, 314). Ben Gurion on 19 June 1967 suggested "that an autonomous Arab state should be formed on the west bank of the Jordan River, in the area now occupied by Israel" (*New York Times*, 6/20/67)

Then there is the fact that Ehud Barak offered to withdraw from 92 percent of the West Bank, and agreed to Bill Clinton's proposal that Israel withdraw from 98 percent of the territory; and that Ariel Sharon further shrunk the amount of land controlled by Israel when he withdrew from the entire Gaza Strip.

Of course, it might on the surface seem that I am doing the very thing I accuse the BBC of doing — citing selected quotes and actions to make a point. The difference, though, should be apparent. The BBC's cherry-picked assertions were meant to be journalism. They were meant to support blanket statements about Israel's view and about Zionism's innate instincts. My selected statements are merely meant to show that BBC's journalism ignored an important part of the picture, and that the BBC's blanket statements do not withstand scrutiny. Unlike Mr. Bowen and Mr. Abrams, I am not seeking to convince anyone that my quotes are the only relevant assertions

on the topic, nor am I suggesting that they prove (for example) that Zionism has an innate instinct to contract. The quotes I relay do prove, however, that Zionism — a complex, broad concept that incorporates a vast spectrum of views — is not marked by an “innate instinct to push out the frontier.”

In other words, the relevant thing here is that the BBC relayed controversial and unsupportable opinions as fact, in violation of its Editorial Guidelines.

I will conclude this section with a quote from Avi Shlaim. I am specifically referring to Mr. Shlaim because he is hardly sympathetic to the mainstream Zionist narrative, and is in fact known for his virulent criticism of Israel and Zionism.

In his book *The Iron Wall*, Mr. Shlaim wrote that:

Victory in the Six-Day War marked the beginning of a new era in Israel's history — an era of uncertainty. The victory reopened the old question about the territorial aims of Zionism. This question had been settled by the 1949 armistice agreements, and the armistice lines were reconfirmed in the aftermath of the Sinai Campaign. By 1967 it had become clear that the Zionist movement could realize all its essential aims within the 1949 borders. Now, following a war seen by the overwhelming majority of Israelis as a defensive war, as a war of no choice, they were in control of Sinai, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank. The question was what to do with these territories, and to this question there was no simple answer.

The national unity government, hastily formed on the eve of the war, was not well placed to answer this question. It consisted of twenty-one ministers representing seven different parties and a wide range of ideological positions. Some of the parties were internally divided on the question of what should be done with the territories. ... Herut members subscribed to the Revisionist Zionist ideology, which claimed the West Bank as part of the Land of Israel, whereas the General Zionists did not. ... Most of the Mapai leaders were pragmatic politicians who had accepted the prewar territorial status quo, whereas Ahdut Ha'avodah's leaders were territorial expansionists. Divisions ... lay not only between parties but within parties. (250-51, emphasis added)

That is, that territorial aims of Zionism was something that was a “question” to Zionists themselves. Shlaim also suggests that before the end of the Six-Day War, this question had been settled in favor of *not* expanding, and that Zionism was content within the 1949 lines. And to the question of what to do after 1967 there was “no simple answer.” Some felt the territory should be kept, others “accepted the prewar territorial status quo.” Between and within parties, there were “divisions” about what course Zionism should take.

Clearly, Mr. Bowen's characterization of Zionism having an innate instinct to expand and Israeli leaders seeking to finish the unfinished business of 1948 are distorted, misleading, and in violation of BBC guidelines.

The Current Situation

The article's account of the post-war years, under the heading "Occupiers," similarly distorted history to place disproportionate blame for the conflict on Israel's shoulders while exculpating the Palestinians. Bowen wrote:

Four days after the war ended, US Secretary of State Dean Rusk warned that if Israel held on to the West Bank, Palestinians would spend the rest of the century trying to get it back.

Forty years on, Israel has settled around 450,000 people on land occupied in 1967, in defiance of everyone's interpretation of international law except its own.

The unmistakable message is that conflict has continued for the past 40 years because Israel ignored Dean Rusk's warning.

Unsaid is that for a majority of those 40 years the PLO refused to recognize Israel's right to exist and swore to violently destroy the country. (It wasn't until 1974 that the PLO agreed to accept a state that didn't include all of Israel. And even then, the Palestinians vowed to use any land they controlled as a base from which to continue attacking Israel, with the ultimate goal of conquering the remaining portions under Israeli control.) Despite this, Israel sought to give Palestinians a significant degree of autonomy just after the war. And only a few years ago, it offered to dismantle most Israeli settlements, and turn over the entire Gaza Strip and nearly all of the West Bank to the Palestinians. This offer was rejected. Readers cannot even begin to understand why the West Bank remained under Israeli control for 40 years without knowledge of the PLO's rejectionist stance during that period.

In other words, contrary to Mr. Bowen's message, Israel did not ignore Dean Rusk's warning at the cost of continued conflict. It was not intent on holding onto the West Bank after the war, but rather was cautiously prepared to give most of it up. (Recall Mr. Oren's assertion in his book, quoted above, that "many ministers still hoped to create an autonomous Palestinian entity" in the West Bank after Israel took the territory from Jordan.) But the Arab parties were not prepared to end the war against Israel.

BBC News Reply

The reply from the BBC News website failed to address this issue at all.

CAMERA Appeal to the ECU

We reiterated our concerns in the appeal.

ECU Reply

Mr. Abrams wrote: "It seems to me that history has shown Dean Rusk to be correct" He added:

I take your point as suggesting that you believe Palestinian behaviour accounts for the

present situation. I don't think Palestinians would accept that, and any balanced account of the present situation would need to reflect that difference of opinion. In a brief article such as this ... it seems to be an appropriate exercise of Mr Bowen's judgement to discuss what the problems are, and leave the discussion of why they came about to a different forum.

CAMERA Rejoinder

It should first be noted that the question is not whether or not Mr. Rusk was correct. The question is whether Mr. Bowen's article was a fair, accurate or "balanced account" of the situation.

Mr. Abrams once again cited the fact that this was a "brief article," and suggested that for this reason the piece could not discuss why current problems came about.

This argument is specious. The brevity of the piece did not prevent Mr. Bowen from discussing, for example, Israel's settlements in relative detail. He wrote about the number of settlers, the degree of protection afforded to the settlers, and the fact that Palestinians see settlements as a catastrophe. He also describes settlements as a "legacy of 1967" that has "deepened the conflict with the Palestinians." If the article were truly to be a balanced account that reflects "difference of opinion," as Mr. Abrams said, it surely would have to also note that the Palestinian rejection of Israel, which characterized the vast majority of the 40 years since 1967, has also "deepened the conflict."

If Mr. Bowen's brief analysis could go to the relative depth of noting, too, that "the failure of Arab nationalism in 1967 was also a major factor in the early development of political Islam" and that "the mosques began providing the answers to questions that the secular strongmen could not convincingly answer," he could also have mentioned that the refusal of Arabs to make peace with Israel (as expressed by the Arab world at the 1967 Khartoum summit) was a "major factor" in the lack of peace in the region and in Israel's decision to build settlements, and that Arafat's rejection of Bill Clinton's peace offer is a "major factor" in explaining why Israel still controls the West Bank.

Additionally, in the ECU response Mr. Abrams made an assumption about my personal views: "I take your point as suggesting that you believe Palestinian behaviour accounts for the present situation." I don't see how my personal views should influence the BBC investigation into whether its article is consistent with the BBC Editorial Guidelines. But I will nonetheless respond that I believe the behavior of both parties to be relevant to the current situation. Unfortunately, in contradiction to Mr. Abrams' expressed goal of a "balanced account" that reflects "difference of opinion," Mr. Bowen's article makes it seem as if *only* Israeli actions should be scrutinized and criticized.

Refugees

The article states: "The war made 250,000 more Palestinians — and more than 100,000 Syrians — into refugees. No peace is possible in the Middle East without solving their problems." Not a

word is devoted to the thousands of Jews who were forcibly expelled from their homes in Arab countries as a result of the 1967 war.

BBC News Reply

The reply from the BBC News website failed to address this issue at all.

CAMERA Appeal to the ECU

We reiterated our concerns in the appeal.

ECU Reply

Mr. Abrams states that “in an article about the consequences of 1967, it seems reasonable to me to concentrate on the Palestinians.” He notes that the Palestinian refugees have raised major political problems. He also claims: “Looking at the text of the ‘Road Map’, there is some discussion of ‘refugees’, but none of it refers to Jewish refugees from Arab countries.” Mention of Jewish refugees, he continues, would be “too [great] a degree of detail than is necessary in an article of this kind.”

CAMERA Rejoinder

It is unclear why Mr. Abrams believes an article about the consequences of 1967 should focus on Palestinians affected by the war, but not Jews affected by the war.

Moreover, Mr. Bowen and Mr. Abrams seem to believe it is worth mentioning *Syrians* who fled the Golan Heights, but not the Jews who were expelled from their countries as a result of the 1967 war. (If one is to go by the definition of “refugee” in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Syrians are not refugees, since they are not “outside the country of [their] nationality.” Internally displaced would be a more accurate description.) Why are Jewish refugees of 1967 seen as an unnecessary “detail” while Palestinians who left the West Bank and Syria’s internally displaced from the Golan Heights are deemed worthy of mention?

Mr. Abrams’ reasoning about Palestinian refugees presenting a great political obstacle does not answer this question — not only because the article also mentioned Syrian refugees, who aren’t regarded as a major political factor, but because it is debatable whether the Palestinian refugees of 1967 are regarded as an especially large political problem. When Palestinians claim a “right of return,” they generally refer to United Nations General Resolution 194, which refers specifically to the Palestinian refugees of 1948.

Mr. Abrams’ claim that the “Road Map” does not refer to Jewish refugees from Arab countries is at best misleading. The road map does not refer by name to *any* single group of refugees. If this carefully worded international agreement meant to refer only to Palestinian refugees and not Jewish refugees, then it would say as much. But it does not. In fact, it refers to a “Revival of multilateral engagement on issues including ... refugees.” Because the issue of Jewish refugees

was discussed at both Camp David and Taba in 2000/2001, the reference to “revival” of engagement suggests that both Palestinian and Jewish refugees are meant to be discussed under the Road Map peace plan. (Palestinian National Council Chairman Selim al-Zanoun said at a news conference shortly after the Camp David negotiations that both Palestinian and Jewish refugees would have been compensated under a U.S. plan devised at Camp David, Reuters reported in August 2000. And the Moratinos Non-Paper summarizing the Taba negotiations notes that the issue of Jewish refugees was part of the discussions there.)

In summary, BBC’s guideline for impartiality would necessitate mention not only of the Palestinians who fled to Jordan and the Syrian internally displaced, but also of the thousands of Jews who were expelled from Arab countries as a result of the 1967 war.

Overall Bias

On each of the above topics, the BBC fell short of its Editorial Guidelines. Each example is a problem that should be considered on its own. At the same time, though, we believe there is an additional, separate issue that must also be considered — namely, the overall bias of the piece. (We raised the issue of the piece’s “outright anti-Israel bias” in our initial complaint.)

The Editorial Guidelines notes that “impartiality lies at the heart of the BBC’s commitment to its audiences,” and asserts that “we must ensure we avoid bias or an imbalance of views on controversial subjects.”

Each of the distortions described above tilts the article toward the pro-Palestinian narrative: The falsehood about “everyone’s interpretation of international law”; the casting of Israel as the aggressor by ignoring the Arab role in starting the war, minimizing the threat Israel felt, claiming Zionism is inherently expansionist, and suggesting that Israeli generals had planned on this war since 1948; the false idea that Israel alone is responsible for the past 40 years of conflict because it failed to heed Rusk’s warning; and the focus on Arabs displaced by the war while ignoring the Jewish displaced.

We thank you for your time and attention, and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Gilead Ini
Senior Research Analyst
Committee for Accuracy in
Middle East Reporting in America