

Ability to manipulate language is crucial if a journalist is to transmit a biased message. Apparently Associated Press journalists have both the ability to manipulate language and the guidelines driving them to do so. AP apparently believes that Palestinians can never be terrorists, however many Israeli soldiers and civilians they kill or attempt to kill, whether with bullets, knives, stones or scissors.

One wonders whether journalists new to AP's Israel office get an introductory session where they are told that they must not — when it is on behalf of AP — make use of the words "Palestinian terrorists." It seems however AP-approved to quote an Israeli official saying that a perpetrator of a terror attack is a terrorist, as long as the journalist does not use such incendiary terminology himself.[1] [2] The same goes for terms such as "Palestinian attackers" and "assailants." [3]

Perhaps newcomers are also offered a convenient list of AP-approved synonyms for use in describing murderous activities by Palestinians which sidestep what the terrorists actually do: murder others, particularly civilians, out of ideological motives.

Thus the Palestinian killer of Israelis becomes, in the agency's jargon, a Palestinian extremist,[4] militant,[5] gunman,[6] lone wolf,[7] or a Palestinian rebel.[8] The United States considers Hamas and Hezbollah to be terrorist groups.[9] They are on the list of foreign terror organizations prepared by the US Department of State, France, [10] Canada,[11] and Australia.[12] The EU considers both to be terrorist organizations as well.[13] Despite this official categorization, the AP commonly refers to Hamas[14] [15] and Hezbollah[16] [17] as "militant" organizations.

One might wrongly assume that the AP believes it impossible for Muslims to be terrorists. However when spouses Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik shot fourteen civilians dead in San Bernardino, California on December 2, 2015, apparently without the support of any organization, the AP showed no such restraint. It described them as terrorists, without quotation marks.[18] It did not term them “gunmen” or “lone wolves.” AP reporting on members of the Pakistan-based Muslim terror group that carried out the 2006 Mumbai attacks, killing more than 160 people, also described them unequivocally as terrorists, again without quotation marks.[19] The AP also used this term for the ISIS-backed terrorists who perpetrated a series of attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 that killed 130 people.[20] Even Richard Reid, the Muslim “Shoe Bomber” who was caught before he managed to commit an intended act of terror on a 2001 flight was described as a “terrorist plotter,” without quotation marks, by the AP.[21]

The large international news agencies are a major source of information abroad concerning Israel. Their bulletins are used by many media channels worldwide, and when this information is disproportionately and incorrectly negative about Israel, the impact of that negativity has far reaching consequences on a global level. It is therefore hugely important to expose double standards in their reporting of what may falsely appear to be ‘facts on the ground.’

There is much more to say about the special set of semantics the AP uses in anything to do with Israel. In 2001, 16 year old Shoshana Ben-Yishai was murdered in a random Palestinian terrorist attack in Jerusalem. With complete irrelevance to the attack, the AP described the victim as a “settler,” because she lived in Beitar Illit, roughly one mile away from the Green Line.

Furthermore, the AP went on to describe the Israeli civilian who shot and killed Ben-Yishai’s terrorist murderer as a “West Bank settler,” again information totally irrelevant to the attack itself which took place in Israel’s capital. HonestReporting rightly noted that “labeling Israelis as anything less than “civilians” suggests that they are combatants, and helps legitimize Palestinian attacks against them.”[22]

Manipulating headlines is another well-known technique used to distort news reporting. At the height of the Second Intifada in 2002, the AP reported on two incidents involving Palestinian terrorists on the same day. In one incident, a Palestinian terrorist opened fire at random in downtown Jerusalem, wounding eight Israelis. That same day Israel uncovered a Hamas bomb factory in the West Bank and killed the four terrorists who operated it. The AP headline for that day was “Israel Kills 4, Palestinian Wounds 8.”^[23] In another incident several days later a Palestinian terrorist used a stolen car to run over police, soldiers and pedestrians before being shot. The AP headline for this incident: “Palestinian shot dead in Tel Aviv.”^[24]

In view of the many bulletins the AP puts out about events concerning Israel and the way it influences worldwide perception of Israel’s actions, a detailed study is needed to investigate the AP’s editorial policies in far more depth than has been done to date. Former AP journalist Matti Freedman published inside information which indicated a structural prejudice against Israel in the agency.^[25] A major media with bias against Israel should be analyzed by the Israeli authorities like any other hostile force.

One can only wonder what would happen if exposure of AP was moved up to the government level. How would the AP react if the Government spokesperson would open every press conference with a list the biased semantics and headlines used by AP since the previous press conference? The agency’s many omissions of relevant context should be added, as well as its fabrications and, mischaracterizations, rounding off with its disrespect for civilian deaths. How many times would such public and detailed exposure be needed before the AP headquarters realize that their manipulations are now transparent and should be discontinued if they want to maintain any journalistic credibility?

[1] Daniella Cheslow, “2 Palestinian attackers killed, 2 Israelis die in Jerusalem,” Associated Press, *Las Vegas Sun*, 23 December 2015.

[2] Tia Goldenberg, “Palestinian attacks in Tel Aviv, West Bank leave 5 dead,” Associated Press, 19 November 2016.

[3] Daniella Cheslow, “Israel: Palestinian assailant killed, 2 protesters dead,” AP, *The Big Story*, 11 December 2015.

[4] Zeina Karam, “Palestinian extremist dies in Lebanon,” Associated Press, Fox News, 20 July 2008.

[5] Bassem Mroue and Josef Federman, “Notorious Lebanese militant killed in Syria airstrike,” Associated Press, 20 December 2015.

[6] Nebi Qena, “Palestinian kills 2 Israelis; 2 Palestinians die in clashes,” Associated Press, 13 November 2015.

[7] Mohammed Daraghmeh and Karin Laub, “Fueled by rage, Palestinian lone wolf attacks in 3rd month, Associated Press, 9 December 2015.

[8] Ibrahim Barzak, “Palestinian Rebels Attack Gaza Base, Killing 4 Israelis,” Associated Press, *The Ledger*, 14 January 2005.

[9] “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State.

[10] “Liste Unique de Gels,” Ministère des finances et des comptes publics, République Française, 21 December 2015.

[11] “Currently listed entities,” Public Safety Canada, Government of Canada, 2 December 2015.

[12] “Listed terrorist organizations,” Australian National Security, Australian

Government.

[13] “Council Decision (CFSP),” 2015/1334,” The Council of the European Union, 31 July 2015.

[14] Josef Federman, “Amid detente with Hamas, Israel says 2 citizens held in Gaza,” Associated Press, 9 July 2015.

[15] Fares Akram, “UN envoy says Gaza reconstruction speeding up,” Associated Press, 17 September 2015.

[16] “Israel wraps up missile defence testing amid tensions with Hezbollah,” Associated Press, *Toronto Star*, 21 December 2015.

[17] “Bulgaria links Hezbollah to bombing of Israelis,” Associated Press, CBS News, 5 February 2013.

[18] Brian Melley, “Family ties can help shield terrorists from detection,” Associated Press, 19 December 2015.

[19] Eileen Sullivan and Sofia Tareen, “US Terrorist Links Pakistani ISI to Mumbai Attacks,” Associated Press, Homeland Security Committee, 24 May 2011.

[20] “The diabolical terrorist plotting behind the Paris attacks,” Associated Press, *New York Post*, 10 December 2015.

[21] Erica Werner, “House set to tighten restrictions on visa-free travel to US,” Associated Press, 7 December 2015.

[22] “Teen Settler,” HonestReporting, 5 November 2001.

**Manfred Gerstenfeld: ASSOCIATED PRESS SEMANTICS - A
SIMPLE TACTIC FOR BIAS
isranet-publications
Blog, January 13, 2016
<https://www.isranet.org/blog/manfred-gerstenfeld-associated-press-semantics-simple-tactic-bias/>**

[23] Jason Keyser, “Israel Kills 4; Palestinian Wounds 8,” Associated Press, AP News Archive, 22 January 2002.

[24] “Dishonest Reporting ‘Award’ for 2002,” HonestReporting, 30 December 2002.

[25] Matti Friedman, “An Insider’s Guide to the Most Important Story on Earth,” *Tablet*, 26 August 2014.