

Code of Ethics Scenarios *Answers*

Two fictitious scenarios are presented below, each followed by two headlines and two paragraphs. For each scenario, determine the headline and paragraph that appear accurate and “ethical.” Which headline/paragraph is incorrect and what code of ethics principle does it violate?

Bear in mind that you generally need to read an entire article, or at least several paragraphs, to determine if it is accurate and/or ethical. For the purposes of this exercise, however, base your evaluation on the headline or paragraph only.

Scenario A

You are at a checkpoint outside the Palestinian-controlled town of Jenin. An Arab woman complains to you about being stopped and searched by Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint. She says she cannot get to her job on time and her family needs her income to buy food. An Israeli lieutenant nearby explains the checkpoints are necessary because Palestinians have been known to smuggle bombs into Israel and blow up Israelis. If Palestinians stop their terrorism, he says, Israel can then dismantle the checkpoints.

Headline 1: Checkpoint Woes: One Woman’s Story

Headline 2: Checkpoint Brings Security for Israel, Misery for Palestinians

Paragraph 1

Um Jabali is a simple woman. The mother of five has managed to steer clear of politics for most of her 47 years, tending to her small flock of goats and date trees almost as tenderly as she has to her children. But now she is angry. A checkpoint outside the Palestinian-controlled town of Jenin is keeping her from going to her job at a health clinic in the nearby town of Burqin. “These Israelis are just looking for ways to humiliate us,” she complained, “How am I going to feed my children?”

Paragraph 2

An ugly concrete barrier stands outside the city of Jenin. Um Jabali, 47, a worker at the health clinic in the nearby town of Burqin waits to pass through this Israeli-manned checkpoint. “These Israelis are just looking for ways to humiliate us,” she complains, “How am I going to feed my children?” Uri Palti, a 22-year-old soldier nods his head sympathetically. “It isn’t easy for them,” he says, “but we need to check that terrorists are not coming into our cities to kill our children. You know, women can be suicide bombers too.”

Answer

Headline 2 and Paragraph 2 present both sides of the issue. **Headline 1 and Paragraph 1** violate the principle: “Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.” This is one of the most prevalent problems in reporting on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel is often accused of wrongdoing and journalists report the

claim without seeking out the Israeli side of the issue, thereby implying the charge is accurate. At times, the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) says it will investigate a charge but if there are delays in assembling the information, the reporter may never follow up and the allegation remains unrefuted.

Scenario B

You are covering a clash between Israeli and Palestinian forces in the town of Tulkarm, when the violence escalates suddenly with gunfire and firebombs flying. Amid the smoke and shooting, a Palestinian Arab rushes by you, carrying the bloodied body of a little girl. “What happened?” you ask. “The Israelis shot her,” he replies and runs off.

Headline 1: Israeli Soldiers Kill Palestinian Girl in Tulkarm

Headline 2: Israelis and Palestinians Battle in Tulkarm; Palestinian Girl Shot

Paragraph 1

Amid fierce fighting between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian forces in the West Bank city of Tulkarm, a Palestinian girl was shot dead by Israelis.

Paragraph 2

Amid fierce fighting between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian forces in the West Bank city of Tulkarm, a Palestinian girl was shot.

Answer

Headline 2 and Paragraph 2 present the known facts. Without verification, the reporter has no way of knowing whether the child was actually dead, who was responsible for harming her or even if she was indeed a Palestinian Arab. **Headline 1 and Paragraph 1** violate the principle: “Test the accuracy of all information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error.” As pointed out previously, this principle is often violated with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Claims of mistreatment proliferate and are used as the basis for stories in the news media. Without rigorous fact-checking, journalists may be guilty of spreading misinformation.