

Sample Media Texts Answers

Read the transcript provided for each media text below and choose from the SPJ Code of Ethics which principle(s) was either upheld or violated. Explain your choices. **Items in bold are teacher explanations, not part of the original transcripts.**

Media Text 1

National Public Radio's January 20, 2011 "Morning Edition" presented a segment entitled "Israeli Settlements Divide Palestinian Village" by Lourdes Garcia-Navarro. This is a human interest story, not a breaking news report, in which the journalist interviews a Palestinian man discussing Israeli construction of settlements and the West Bank security barrier. He asserts they are disrupting life in his village—the town of Walaja—near the Jewish neighborhood of Gilo in southern Jerusalem. Below is the transcript, which along with the audio is available at:

<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/20/133071551/Israeli-Settlement-Update>

RENEE MONTAGNE, host:

This is MORNING EDITION from NPR News. I'm Renee Montagne.

STEVE INSKEEP, host:

And I'm Steve Inskeep.

The construction of Jewish housing has increased sharply in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Palestinians want both of those areas to be part of a future Palestinian state, and so the building has complicated stalled peace talks. The construction comes after a building moratorium in some areas expired last year, and it is affecting the lives of Palestinians.

NPR's Lourdes Garcia-Navarro visited a tiny village on the edge of Jerusalem.

LOURDES GARCIA-NAVARRO:

In Walaja's recent history, the village has been moved, its people scattered, its land eroded and now, they're facing isolation. Palestinians here say it's a microcosm of the conflict. And it shows no signs of abating.

Mr. AHMED DARASH(ph):

My name is Ahmed Darash. My village is al-Walaja.

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

We are sitting near the village spring on a blustery winter day with one of the village elders.

Mr. DARASH:

(Foreign language spoken)

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

Darash recounts how in 1948, when the state of Israel was created, the village was captured and many residents fled to other countries. Those who remained moved across the valley and into caves. **[The segment refers to Arab residents fleeing Walaja in 1948, during Israel's War of Independence. It omits any context for their flight. Listeners are not told that there would have been no war, and thus no Arab flight, had Israel's**

neighbors, including the Palestinian Arab leadership at the time, accepted the 1947 U.N. partition plan (as had the Jewish leadership of British Mandatory Palestine).]

Slowly, they began to rebuild the village on land located in what was then territory controlled by Jordan. Then, after the 1967 war, Israel took over the area. Land was slowly expropriated, Darash says. Houses were demolished. And then the settlements started to rise.

Mr. DARASH:

(Foreign language spoken)

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

Now, Walaja falls half in and half out of the boundaries of Jerusalem, and it's almost completely surrounded by the settlements. On the crest of the hill behind it is the settlement of Har Gilo. On another flank is the huge, Gilo East Jerusalem settlement.

And then, recently, came the news that more land was going to be confiscated to finish building a wall that will completely fence the village in. **[Garcia-Navarro's report mentions the security barrier Israel is building between Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank (part of the overall West Bank security barrier). However, it omits mentioning why Israel is building it—countless Palestinian terrorist attacks during the 2000-2005 "second intifada" that murdered more than 1,000. (In retrospect, the barrier has contributed to a dramatic reduction in such killings.) Garcia-Navarro calls the proposed structure a "wall" using the preferred terminology of Israel's detractors, although more than 95 percent of the barrier is made of fence, ditches and/or electronic surveillance. The segment mentions Jewish "settlements" that have "nearly surround[ed]" Walaja—said to be "half in, half out" of Jerusalem (is it a West Bank village then, or an Arab neighborhood of Jerusalem?—including "the huge Gilo East Jerusalem settlement." This error—Gilo is actually a Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem, not a West Bank settlement, has been corrected by major news media including *The Washington Post*. Garcia-Navarro, and NPR by extension, appear to believe that Arabs can live anywhere in and around Jerusalem but that Jews should not.]**

Mr. DARASH:

(Through translator) This wall will eat up more than 2,000 dunams [approximately 500 acres] of Walaja land.

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

Land that has two important landmarks that are essential to village life. We walk down into the farmlands that nestle in a steep valley. Nadia Awadallah lives in al-Walaja.

Ms. NADIA AWADALAH(ph):

(Through translator) All this area in front of you here is going to be confiscated by the Israelis. It includes graveyards - a graveyard here to your right and a graveyard here to your left. There's also a spring of water from which the whole village gets its water. They want to include it in the area which they want to confiscate.

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

Underneath a row of trees are several mounds built into the hillside. Among those buried here was a young man who was killed during the first Palestinian uprising in the late 1980s.

His father just died this past month but, says Nadia, they buried him in another part of the village.

Ms. AWADALAH:

(Through translator) One reason why we did not bury his father here is because of the risk that we take in burying a new one here. Imagine burying him, and then the Israelis coming and opening the grave and desecrating his grave. So we did not take a chance. **[NPR's "report" provided no corroboration of, let alone challenge to, one villager's implied accusation that Israel would desecrate Palestinian Arab graves. Allowing such a serious charge to be made without substantiation or challenge amounts to collaboration with defamation.]**

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

The villagers have petitioned the court to stop construction of the wall near the graves and spring. And while the case is being reviewed, building in this area has halted. But nearby, work is continuing on a new access road for settlers. It, too, is on land that was once part of Walaja. And above them in Har Gilo, new homes are being built. Meanwhile, the villagers say any new home they try to build is under threat of demolition by Israel. **[The report mentioned that the barrier's construction has been halted while an Israeli court considers an appeal to change its route around Walaja. But it is silent on the fact that Israel has altered, and continues to alter, the exact route of the barrier in response to similar appeals, and that alignment changes by the Israeli military in response to Supreme Court decisions have reduced the amount of the West Bank on the Israeli side from approximately 12 percent to less than eight.]**

Mr. DARASH:

(Foreign language spoken)

GARCIA-NAVARRO:

Sitting in his plastic chair, elder Ahmed Darash tells a children's fable to describe what is happening to his village. A cat was asked to equally distribute two pieces of cheese to two mice, he says. Each time he'd weigh one of the morsels, he'd take a bite; eventually, there was nothing. And then, he says, the cat ate the mice as well. We are, he says, at Israel's mercy.

Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, NPR News.

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Principle(s) Upheld or Violated:

- “Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.”
- “Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.”

Violated:

The subject of NPR's Garcia-Navarro's one-sided report ostensibly portrays blameless Arab victims facing a supposedly heartless Israel destroying normal life in the town of Walaja. This human interest story is focused entirely on Palestinian grievances and is devoid of essential facts and context. Not a single Israeli is given the chance to respond to serious accusations leveled. Not a single word is mentioned about the purpose of the security barrier as a deterrent to Palestinian terrorists who infiltrated from the West Bank and killed hundreds of Israelis. Nor does Garcia-Navarro herself interject any comment or explanation on Israel's behalf.

When it comes to Israel, in this example and many others, NPR does not see itself bound by its own statement of principles: one that promises "every possible effort is made to reach an individual (or a spokesperson for an entity) that is the subject of criticism, unfavorable allegations or other negative assertions in a story in order to allow them to respond to those assertions." This segment also violates the Telecommunications Act, under which public broadcasting receives congressional funding. The act requires "strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature."

Media Text 2

On May 5, 2011, *The New York Times* published the following story:

" [Hamas Leader Calls for Two-State Solution, but Refuses to Renounce Violence](#)" by Ethan Bronner (May 5, 2011)

CAIRO — One day after celebrating a [landmark reconciliation accord](#) for [Palestinian](#) unity, [Khaled Meshal](#), the [Hamas](#) leader, said on Thursday that he was fully committed to working for a two-state solution but declined to swear off violence or agree that a Palestinian state would produce an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The whole world knows what Hamas thinks and what our principles are," Mr. Meshal said in an interview in his Cairo hotel suite. "But we are talking now about a common national agenda. The world should deal with what we are working toward now, the national political program."

He defined that as "a Palestinian state in the 1967 lines with Jerusalem as its capital, without any settlements or settlers, not an inch of land swaps and respecting the right of return" of Palestinian refugees to Israel itself.

Asked if a deal honoring those principles would produce an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Mr. Meshal said, "I don't want to talk about that."

He added: "When Israel made agreements with Egypt and Jordan, no one conditioned it on how Israel should think. The Arabs and the West didn't ask Israel what it was thinking deep inside. All Palestinians know that 60 years ago they were living on historic Palestine from the river to the sea. It is no secret."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/06/world/middleeast/06palestinians.html> shows the entire article.

Principle(s) Upheld or Violated:

- “Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional materials, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.”

Violated:

This headline is deceptive but also a “mixed bag.” Calling for a two-state solution may suggest that Hamas would moderate its stance toward Israel in exchange for a Palestinian state alongside of Israel. However, by stating that Hamas refuses to renounce violence, the headline reflects reality. Hamas’ leader Khaled Meshal has stated that he was fully committed to working for a two-state solution, but declined to agree that a Palestinian state would end the conflict. When he was asked whether the establishment of a Palestinian state on the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, the dismantling of settlements and the “return” of Palestinian refugees and their offspring to Israel would end the conflict, he answered, “I don’t want to talk about that.” As Meshal said, “The whole world knows what Hamas thinks and what our principles are” (CAMERA’s website posts a link to the Hamas charter, which can also be accessed directly at:

http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=56&x_miscitem=20

Headlines are frequently the main source of news for many people who do not take the time to read articles in their entirety. Individuals interpret headlines through their own “lens,” and from the headline above may infer that by accepting a two-state solution, Hamas is ready for peace with Israel. Informed readers, however, know that Hamas has been unwavering in its declaration to never recognize Israel and to seek a Palestinian state “from the river to the sea,” meaning Israel’s destruction.

Media Text 3

“Slaughter of the Fogels: After the West Bank Killings,” by Karl Vick (*Time Magazine*, March 13, 2011) describes the murder of five members (three children and their parents) of the Fogel family in the community of Itamar, in the northern part of the West Bank (Samaria).

The murder by knife of three children, including an infant of 3 months, and both parents in a West Bank settlement late Friday night rocked Israel terribly. The news broke on Saturday morning, and the shock was somehow both muted and amplified by the enforced public silence of the Jewish Sabbath. But Shabbat ended at sundown, and freed from the strictures of enforced rest, events lurched forward with something very like vengeance. **[The first paragraph opens with only passing mention of the murders, and closed with the indication that the article would not so much deal with the killings themselves, but with Jewish "vengeance."]**

First came the condemnations. "This is a despicable murder of an entire innocent family, parents, children and an infant, while they were sleeping in their home on the Sabbath evening," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement. "We all know," Netanyahu added, "as those who want to strike at us will know, that the future of the settlements will not be decided by terror." (See the West Bank's emerging middle class.) **[Paragraph two manages to convey the sense that Israeli condemnations of the attack, rather than being justified expressions of disgust and outrage, were little more than glib political acts.]**

A few hours later, however, the Prime Minister made certain that the attack would, in fact, have a direct impact on Israel's West Bank settlements. Before Sunday dawned, his government had approved construction of 500 new homes on Palestinian territory. The homes are to be built on settlement blocs close to the 1967 border, densely packed and often suburban, rather than in the remote hilltop settlements like Itamar, where the Fogel family lived and where friction with neighboring Palestinians is far more common. But it was the first new construction Netanyahu's government has approved, and the clearest effort to transmute the deaths of the Fogels into politics. It would not be the only one. **[In the third paragraph, Vick continues with this theme, accusing Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of cynically attempting to "transmute the deaths of the Fogels into politics." The article one-sidedly fails to consider that the murders themselves of Fogel family members were "political"—committed, as Israeli police often describe such terrorism—from Palestinian "national" motivations.]**

"This is unfortunately the first time since the formation of the second Netanyahu government that new housing has been approved," said Danny Dayan, who chairs the umbrella group for settlers. "And it's a pity that parents and their children needed to be murdered for it to do so." The group called for many more houses on the West Bank, which many Jews believe is theirs by a promise from God. In Sunday's Cabinet meeting, Interior Minister Eli Yishai suggested a formula: "At least a thousand homes for each person murdered," he said. (See photos of young Palestinians.) **[Paragraph four is devoted to showing the supposed callous cynicism of another Israeli, who appears in the story to care more about settlements than the lives lost.]**

The more than 100 Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land are widely considered illegal under international law. Last month, a U.S. veto ended an attempt in the U.N. Security Council to condemn the policy. **[Paragraph five repeats the partisan view that settlements are illegal. It ignores sources of international law, including the League of Nations Palestine Mandate, Article 6, which encourages "close Jewish settlement on the land" west of the Jordan River; Article 80 of the U.N. Charter, which upholds the Mandate; the 1924 Anglo-American Convention, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which does not call for complete Israeli withdrawal from territories gained in 1967, including the West Bank. Numerous international law specialists have concluded that the Jewish state has strong claims to land in the West Bank.]**

The rest of the article is available online at:

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2058660,00.html>

Principle(s) Upheld or Violated:

- “Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or content.”

Violated:

Karl Vick, *Time Magazine*'s correspondent in Israel, reveals as he has done on many occasions, that he is not committed to impartial reporting on the Arab-Israeli conflict. He does not let a horrific attack get in the way of his anti-Israel animus. His discussion of the incident, published online two days after a terrorist slit the throats of five members of the Fogel family, strains to recast Palestinians as victims and Israelis as aggressors. Most of the report portrays Israelis cynically, suggesting they are using the incident as an excuse to build settlements. He notes that Jewish communities in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) are “widely considered illegal under international law.” But he omits mention of basic facts supporting Israel’s contention that the settlements it authorizes are legal.

Vick implicitly condemns Israeli officials while gently describing (later in the article) Mahmoud Abbas as one who “preaches nonviolence.” Abbas has criticized Palestinian attacks during the second intifada, for example, on grounds that they were not effective at the time, not that they violated previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements or were morally wrong. More recently, “preaching nonviolence” by Abbas has included Palestinian Authority honors for participants in anti-Israeli terrorism. Nevertheless, in paragraph after paragraph, the reporter rewrites the bloody attack against the Fogels to cast Israel as the villain and Palestinian Arabs as the victims of Israeli machinations.

Media Text 4

The *New York Times* corrected an April 15, 2010 photo caption of a Reuters image showing Ramat Shlomo.

Error (photo caption, April 15, 2010):

Ultra-Orthodox Jews last month in Ramat Shlomo, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank. (Amir Cohen/Reuters)

Correction (April 16, 2010):

A picture caption on Thursday with the continuation of a news analysis article about a shift in the Obama administration's Middle East policy referred incorrectly to Ramat Shlomo, the name of a Jewish housing development that Israel says it is expanding despite objections by the United States and the Palestinian Authority. It is a neighborhood in East Jerusalem, not a settlement in the West Bank.

Principle(s) Upheld or Violated:

- “Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.”

Upheld:

The New York Times corrected two mistakes. (1) that Ramat Shlomo is not a settlement and (2) that Ramat Shlomo is not in the West Bank; it is in East Jerusalem

Note that the second correction incorrectly refers to “East Jerusalem,” rather than the more accurate term “eastern Jerusalem.” East Jerusalem is often used in a partisan way, paired with the words “Palestinian” or “Arab.” Referring to the area as Palestinian East Jerusalem or Arab East Jerusalem implies Palestinian or Arab hegemony, despite the fact that eastern Jerusalem has been more than 40 percent Jewish for years and Jews always lived in the area.