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ETHICAL ASPECTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ARMED CONFLICT IN GAZA IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA RT AND CNN AS A MODEL

ЧАНБАХОИ АХЛОҚИИ ИНЪИКОСИ НИЗОИ МУСАЛЛАХ ДАР FAЗЗА ДАР BAO-И БАЙНАЛХАЛҚЙ: RT BA CNN ЧУН НАМУНА

ЭТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ ОСВЕЩЕНИЯ ВООРУЖЕННОГО КОНФЛИКТА В ГАЗЕ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ СМИ: RT И CNN КАК ОБРАЗЕЦ

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Keywords: media ethical standards, ethics of news coverage, international media, RT channel, CNN channel, armed conflicts, conflict in Gaza

The subject of this research is to study the ethical aspects of media practice during the news coverage of the armed conflict in Gaza 2023 in the international media. The research aims to determine the extent to which international media outlets, especially RT and CNN, adhere to professional media standards such as objectivity, neutrality, and credibility during coverage of the conflict in Gaza. The study provides a modern vision of the ethical challenges in light of the development of the work of the media and its impact on the course of conflict events. The research seeks to answer the following questions: What extent do the international media, especially RT and CNN, adhere to the standards of credibility, neutrality, and objectivity in their coverage of the conflict in Gaza 2023? What are the differences between RT and CNN in Professional Ethics? How did political ideologies and tendencies influence the commitment to ethical aspects during the international media coverage of the conflict in Gaza? The research reached several conclusions, the most important of which are: that RT adopted objective and balanced coverage of the events of the conflict in Gaza, focused on humanitarian issues such as conveying the suffering of civilian victims, according to the criteria of social responsibility in news coverage of armed conflicts, while CNN coverage was not neutral and biased, by framing the conflict with political and ideological frameworks biased against Palestinians. The Western media used racist media rhetoric in describing the victims of the conflict. This discourse consists of the humanization of Israeli victims and the dehumanization of Palestinian victims.

Калидвожахо: стандартхои ахлоқии BAO, этикаи гузориши хабар, расонахои байналмилал \bar{u} , канали RT, шабакаи CNN, низоъхои мусаллахона, низоъ дар Fазза.

Дар ин мақола масоили зерин мавриди арзёби қарор гирифтаанд: То кучо расонақои байналмилали, ба хусус RT ва CNN дар инъикоси муноқишаи Fазза дар соли 2023 ба меъёрқои эътимод, бетарафи ва объективи риоя мекунанд? Фарқи байни RT ва CNN дар ахлоқи касби қангоми инъикоси муноқишаи Fазза чи гуна аст? Идеологияқо ва тамоюлқои сиёси чи гуна ба риояи ахлоқ қангоми инъикоси васоити байналмилали дар бораи муноқишаи Fазза таъсир расониданд? Муаллиф зимни тадқиқи масъала ба хулосае омадааст, ки RT ба инъикоси объективи ва мутавозини муноқишаи Fазза риоя намуда, ба масъалақои башардустона, аз қабили расонидани ранчу азоби қурбониёни гайринизоми дар Fазза мутобиқи стандартқои масъулияти ичтимой дар инъикоси ахбор дар бораи муноқишақои мусаллақона рафтор намуд. Дар қоле ки матолиби CNN дар бораи низоъ бетараф набуда ва бо чақорчубаи муноқиша аз дидгохи гаразноки сиёси ва идеологи алайқи фаластиниқо равона шудаанд. Матбуоти гарби қангоми тавсифи қурбониёни низоъ аз дискурси расонақои нажодпараст ва субъективи истифода карданд.

Ключевые слова: этические стандарты СМИ, этика новостного освещения, международные СМИ, телеканал RT, телеканал CNN, вооруженные конфликты, конфликт в Газе.

Предметом данного исследования является изучение этических аспектов медиа-практики во время освещения вооруженного конфликта в Газе 2023 года в международных СМИ. Исследование направлено на определение степени соблюдения международными СМИ, особенно RT и CNN, профессиональных медиа-стандартов, таких как объективность, нейтральность и достоверность, при освещении конфликта в Газе. Предоставляется современное видение этических вызовов в свете развития работы СМИ и их влияния на ход конфликтных событий. Автор статьи стремится ответить на следующие вопросы: в какой степени международные

СМИ, особенно RT и CNN, придерживаются стандартов достоверности, нейтральности и объективности в своем освещении конфликта в Газе 2023 года? Каковы различия между RT и CNN в профессиональной этике при освещении конфликта в Газе? Как политические идеологии и тенденции повлияли на приверженность этическим аспектам во время международного медиа-освещения конфликта в Газе? Изучение материалов по теме позволило прийти к определенным выводам, наиболее важными из которых являются: в RT придерживались объективного сбалансированного освещения событий конфликта в Газе, фокусируясь на гуманитарных вопросах, таких как передача страданий гражданских жертв в Газе, в соответствии со стандартами социальной ответственности в новостном освещении вооруженных конфликтов, в то время как освещение CNN событий конфликта не было нейтральным и было предвзятым, путем обрамления конфликта предвзятыми политическими и идеологическими рамками против палестинцев. Западные СМИ использовали расистский и субъективный медиа-дискурс при описании жертв конфликта. Этот дискурс состоит из гуманизации израильских жертв и дегуманизации палестинских жертв.

Search methods and tools

The problem of the research is the ethical media challenges faced by the international media in covering the events of the conflict in Gaza, under the influence of ideological tendencies and political pressures faced by the media during the coverage of armed conflicts. The research assumes that there is a direct relationship between adherence to ethical professional standards and the quality of news coverage of armed conflicts in the international media. This article presents a descriptive study and a critical analysis of a sample of news coverage in the international media, especially RT and CNN channels, to find out the extent to which these media outlets are committed to the ethical aspects of media during the coverage of the armed conflict in Gaza 2023. The research cites a range of opinions of experts and specialists in media ethics research on media coverage of the events of the conflict in Gaza.

Introduction

The media in our modern world play a vital role in shaping public opinion and transmitting news about current events and issues. During times of armed conflict, this responsibility becomes more sensitive and complex, as the media has to deal with a range of professional and ethical challenges that can affect how news and information are presented to the public. Armed conflicts contribute to creating an environment full of violence and tension, where unprofessional news coverage can manipulate information and distort facts, thereby exacerbating the conflict and endangering the lives of civilians. Therefore, the ethics of media practice during armed conflicts is a delicate matter that requires careful consideration and careful guidance. Hence the an urgent need to study how the media interacts with these conflicts in a way that enhances the chances of peace and justice, rather than fueling conflicts or spreading propaganda and false news. For example, media coverage of the conflict in Gaza is a major challenge for the media, as political, cultural, and religious interests are intertwined with a complex reality.

Many studies have touched on this topic, the most important of which are: Study Ahmed S. [1, p. 27] titled «How did the news coverage of the war on Gaza differ between Al Jazeera and CNN», and study Basim T. [2, p. 1-7] titled «War in the Post-Truth Era: Western Media Coverage of Israel's 2023 War on Gaza», and study Othamania A. [10, p.1040-1052] titled «The media coverage of the Western news channels of the war on Gaza after the Al-Aqsa flood operation: a field study in the framework of the theory of social responsibility», and study Petrov, A. S. [11, 45-62] titled «Analysis of the Russian media discourse on the conflict in Gaza 2023-2024», and study Shahzad, F. & Qazi, T. A. [13, p. 101-114] titled «Framing of Israel and Palestine Conflict in RT news, Al-Jazeera, CNN and BBC News», and study Warshaga, A. & Huang C. P. [16, p. 32-37] titled «A Critical Comparative Analysis of Media Trends in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Case Study of Al Jazeera and The Washington Post».

1.1. The concept and characteristics of the ethics of news coverage during armed conflicts

The concept of ethics of media practice refers to the principles and values that should guide the work of the media during the coverage of events and issues of interest to the public. These principles include accuracy in communicating news and information to the public, avoiding bias, respecting human rights, and maintaining the confidentiality of certain information to protect civilians. In the context of armed conflicts, these principles overlap with political, humanitarian, and security considerations that make it necessary for media professionals to make informed and quick decisions about what to publish and how to present it to the public. It controls the objective construction of news coverage, ideological backgrounds, political trends, and social and cultural contexts imposed by the variable of the crisis or issue, where there are multiple visions and concepts of news coverage according to these contexts, and the media practice gives an impression and a self-concept, consistent with the policy of the media in general. Accordingly, when transmitting news, the media must adhere

to the importance of instilling trust between the communicator and the public, by objectively presenting events and attributing them to primary sources and avoiding presenting private points of view that may give distorted narratives of the truth [14, p.37-53].

The ethics of media coverage plays a vital role in organizing the work of media institutions and orienting them towards providing content that respects humanitarian principles and avoids inciting hatred and violence. Kunelius, a researcher on media ethics, believes that the more the media adheres to objective presentation of events, abstracts from subjectivity, and adheres to the standards imposed by the ethics of the media profession, the more trust between the media and the public increases. kunelius also points out that "journalistic practices should be directed not only to the search for truth, but also to the commitment to the public interest, the achievement of justice, and respect for the dignity of all people" [7, p. 340].

The importance of ethics in the coverage of armed conflicts is demonstrated when we consider the impact of the media on the course and outcome of the conflict. Maalouf, a researcher in the field of media and conflicts, explains that the media is not just a vector of events, but a "social actor" capable of shaping events by the way he chooses to cover them. This effect puts a double responsibility on the shoulders of media professionals, as media coverage can contribute to the escalation or de-escalationn of the conflict, depending on how the news and information are processed. In armed conflicts. It requires the media to be very careful when transmitting news to the public, as false or biased information may lead to serious consequences of conflict, and Malouf emphasizes, that "journalistic ethics is considered the bulwark that protects societies from the risk of information manipulation, and that the dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information can further complicate the conflict and complicate peace efforts" (8, p.166-171). In the context of news coverage of armed conflicts, the media must adhere to a set of ethical and professional standards while covering conflicts, to ensure fair and responsible coverage. The most important of these standards are objectivity, credibility, transparency, accuracy in reporting news, neutrality, and impartiality to a particular party, respect for the privacy of those affected by conflicts, in addition, to balance in presenting the different points of view of the parties to the conflict [15, p. 97-112].

1.2. Features of the ethics of news coverage of the conflict in Gaza in the international media

With the outbreak of the armed conflict in Gaza on October 7, 2023, the role of the media has emerged as a major and decisive player in directing the course of the conflict, and there have been several accusations of some media outlets abandoning professional standards to defend a certain point of view and ignoring others. While experts emphasize the importance of adhering to the standards of balance and accuracy in coverage. They also point out that "it is difficult to achieve this in wars and crises, especially from those in charge of the media, given the dependence of most media outlets on political ideologies that control their editorial policy in covering conflict events. The conflict in Gaza witnessed several media moral positions, which were interacted with by the media. For example, the BBC apologized for describing demonstrators supporting the Palestinian cause in London as "supporters of Hamas". Western media coverage focused on "condemning Hamas" and this was a key question in their meetings, especially with political and military experts and analysts. In light of the sympathy of the Western media for Israel, CNN anchor Anderson Cooper, who fought back tears, lost his feelings during an interview with an Israeli citizen talking about her family members held captive by Hamas [3, p. 45-60].

The reasons for the bias of the Western media in covering the events of the conflict in Gaza can be explained as a result of ideological trends supporting Israel, and what is displayed on Western screens and websites, shows a deliberate bias in favor of Israel, and that these channels offer superficial analyses that do not take into account the complex history of the Palestinian issue. This biased news coverage ignored that the killing of children and women is happening in Gaza, and in continuation of the non-objective Western media policies towards covering the events of the conflict in Gaza, the American channel CBS deleted on October 12, 2023, an intervention by the American researcher of Palestinian origin, Nora Erekat, in the prime time program, because of Erekat's criticism of the channel's anchor framing Israeli violations against Palestinian civilians, describing it as "very hostile". Erekat responded to the presenter after describing the Hamas attacks as "barbaric", and demanded to use the same term to describe what Israel is doing against civilians in Gaza [1, p. 13].

In the same context, warshaga, a specialist in Media Ethics, pointed out that there is a deliberate bias by the Western media in covering the events of the conflict in Gaza, and that " it is immoral for the media to believe and spread the belief that there is a brutal and barbaric people by nature, because of their religion or culture, and the media should objectively seek to understand the situation in Gaza, instead of hosting political experts who have not previously visited Gaza, and just want to amplify events to support their side of the story, and that what the Western media now presents is a distorted

reality.". Regarding objectivity and impartiality in covering conflicts, Warshaga also said, "We do not expect Western media to be objective in such situations since most of them follow media agendas controlled by Western ideology [16, p. 34]. This promotion and bias of the Israeli point of view in the Western media and neglect of the Palestinian or neutral point of view is not the product of the moment, historian Maha Nassar observed in the issue of the magazine "972" in 2020. She pointed out that "since 1979, there have been only 46 editorials out of 2,490 articles in the New York Times on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that discussed the Palestinian vision of the conflict, most of which were written by Palestinians. In contrast, the Washington Post published 3,249 articles, including 3,217 articles supporting and promoting the Israeli point of view [17, p. 12-14].

Moreover, eight BBC journalists launched an open letter to the international public, accusing their organization of failing to provide objective and balanced news coverage of the events in Gaza, saying that the BBC was keen to "humanize the Israeli victims compared to the Palestinians, and omitted the historical context of the conflict from its media coverage. Basim Tweissi notes that the Daily Mail did not publish the number of Palestinian deaths in Gaza on its front page during the first fourteen days of the conflict, but it mentioned with interest the number of Israeli deaths several times. Jones pointed out that "the Israeli suffering was the only one that deserves to be mentioned on the front page of the newspaper, the Palestinian victims have been removed from the front" [2, p. 4].

The bias of the Western media is also evident in the rhetoric used in the media coverage of the conflict in Gaza. The Guardian newspaper described the Hamas attack on the seventh of October as a "criminal rampage". The Economist called it a "bloodthirsty attack on Israel". At the same time, the Western media refrained from describing the Israeli attacks on Gaza in similar terms, after Israel killed more than 40 thousand Palestinian civilians. Another irrefutable example of language differences is what the Washington Post website published when talking about Israeli civilian victims, by using the building formula known when describing Hamas attacks, "rockets kill Israelis", while the newspaper used the passive voice when mentioning Palestinian civilian victims when talking about Palestinian victims "Palestinians died", (the Washington Post later amended this wording to "they were found dead" following a wave of popular anger on social networking sites [10, p. 1049].

There is no doubt that the biased media language when talking about Palestinians in the Western media is a cause for regret. The adoption of such racist media language dehumanizes the Palestinian civilian victims and humanizes the Israeli civilian victims, which in itself is a consecration of racism. These divergent views on media coverage of the Gaza conflict perpetuate the disparity in newsrooms and fuel an ongoing debate about the objectivity of Western media. The Hamas attack and its aftermath was an event worthy of media coverage because it was a violent and shocking military action. However, the massive Israeli reprisals did not receive the same share of Western media coverage, but passed without criticism and were talked about as legitimate acts within the right of self-defense. It is also noteworthy that the media coverage of the conflict in Gaza has been devoid of something fundamental, namely the historical context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948. Western media coverage has offered to mention the historical and geopolitical contexts of events and completely ignored them, that mentioning the historical background is an important factor in enhancing the level of understanding and awareness of the public in covering armed conflicts.

1.3. The ethics of news coverage of the conflict in Gaza on the channel RT

Russia Today (RT) is one of the leading international news channels closely following the developments of the conflict in Gaza 2023. The news coverage of Russia Today channel enjoys a great following from the public, especially from the public in Russia, the Arab countries, and many countries whose interests intersect with Western ideologies, and the channel represents a moderate and neutral media, away from the news coverage of most biased Western media. The channel's coverage of the events in Gaza faces major challenges, the most important of which is maintaining the standards of neutrality, objectivity, and balance, in light of a complex media environment fraught with political tensions and geopolitical influences. Russia Today channel is one of the channels that adopts a balanced perspective in dealing with important international issues, in commitment to social responsibility towards the public, to keep the public up to date with the most important and latest global news, especially coverage of the events of the armed conflict in Gaza. The channel also provides the Russian point of view on international issues, and its coverage of events is often consistent with the positions of the Russian state and its foreign policy. It can be noted that the channel has shed more light on the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, as a result of the Israeli bombardment, which resulted in the death of thousands of children and women, highlighting the suffering of civilian victims affected by armed conflicts, is one of the most important ethics of news coverage of armed conflicts. Unlike the Western media coverage of the events in Gaza, the channel focused on highlighting the

historical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to form a comprehensive and objective understanding of the causes of the conflict and its repercussions [9, p. 83].

The channel relied on the reports of its correspondents in Gaza to convey the events of the conflict. In addition, and out of the channel's keenness on accuracy and credibility in covering the events, the channel also relied on videos and photos from reliable local sources in Gaza, which makes its coverage of the events in Gaza clearer and more reliable for the public, the public trusts live videos and photos from the battle more than what the reporters transmit. This gives credibility and accuracy to the coverage of the conflict in Gaza, especially with the spread of digital media, which gives the public freedom and a large space to interact with the events. Therefore, the channel's keenness to involve the public in interacting with the events of the conflict, makes it a reliable mass media outlet that meets the needs of the public in knowing the truth. The media discourse in Russia Today channel is based on the idea of finding a final solution to the two-state solution(Israel-Palestine), where the channel focuses most of its coverage of the conflict in Gaza on the need to establish peace and avoid military escalation by the conflicting parties. We believe that this balanced media discourse adopted by the channel is basically consistent with the ethics of media practice during armed conflicts, as one of the media's tasks and functions during conflict is to advocate for peace and avoid violence and military escalation. The channel adopted balance and objectivity in covering the events of the conflict in Gaza, by providing explanation, interpretation, and analysis, and presenting the different points of view of the parties to the conflict, allocating a wide news space for Palestinian and Israeli political and military experts and analysts alike. Russia Today represents an ideal alternative media for the audience seeking truth, credibility, and objectivity to know and understand the issues and events of armed conflicts, unlike the Western media, which adopts biased and non-neutral narratives, in which media ethics overlap with political ideology and racist cultural considerations [13, p. 110].

1.4. The ethics of news coverage of the Gaza conflict at CNN

CNN is facing constant accusations of bias, impartiality, and spreading misinformation in its coverage of the conflict in Gaza. It is known that the channel represents one of the tools of American soft power in expressing American ideology and positions. The spread of misinformation in the channel's coverage stands out as a real indicator of these accusations, as it often relies on Israeli government sources, as a reliable source of information, while questioning Palestinian sources, leading to the publication of inaccurate news about the situation in Gaza. This false news contributes to the formation of a distorted image of Palestinians, as they are stereotyped in the channel's coverage as permanent aggressors, while Israelis are portrayed as permanent victims due to violence. CNN has relied on non-objective framing in its coverage of the conflict, by sorting and classifying the victims of the conflict according to their Israeli or Palestinian nationality; Israeli victims are shown by their names and faces, especially when publishing stories of their suffering, while Palestinian victims are referred to by numbers and graphs. There is no doubt that these disparate and subjective criteria inspire sympathy for the Israeli victims by public opinion, dehumanize the Palestinians, and reduce their lives to statistical figures [6, p. 47-62].

In this context, the CNN website published an undocumented news item in one of its newsletters, that Hamas "beheaded" 40 Israeli children. This claim was based on reports from the Office of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and was quickly retracted by a CNN reporter. Publishing such allegations without verifying them is contrary to journalistic ethics, which journalists and their institutions must adhere to, and which allows publication only on the basis of ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information from reliable sources. It is true that the previous claim lacks evidence, but the spread of the story to the public caused a shock in international public opinion and created a sympathetic feeling in support of Israeli retaliation, and we believe CNN was aiming to achieve this goal regardless of the authenticity and accuracy of the information published. CNN Palestinian sources often attribute to Hamas when it comes to the statistics of the Palestinian death toll, ignoring the data of the Palestinian Ministry of Health. In contrast, information about the Israeli side is attributed to the Israeli government. This in itself calls Palestinian sources into question, accusing them of inflating the death toll and deliberately misleading international public opinion. It is one of the images of media bias and lack of impartiality in covering the events of the conflict. As an example, the channel also publishes statements by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli officials with blind confidence, without verifying the authenticity and accuracy of the information they provide, the channel published a statement by Netanyahu about the death of 1,400 Israelis in the October 7 attack, before the channel announced on November 10, reducing the number of victims to 1,200 people. This also reveals the scale of amplification and disinformation in the channel's coverage of the events of the conflict [4, CNN websitel.

CNN also deliberately distorted the image of Hamas in its news coverage, referring to them as "murderers, terrorists", and saying they are the main reason for all the suffering of civilians in Gaza, while publishing photos of an Israeli soldier killing a Palestinian civilian in the West Bank, describing him as a "man in military uniform" and did not indicate that he was from the Israeli army. It is a biased choice of words that depends on the nationality of the victims, blames and criminalizes Palestinians when the victims are Israelis, but does not criminalize Israel when it kills Palestinian civilians. This selectivity in describing the conflict is far from media ethics. It is also noticeable that the channel perpetuates a distorted stereotype against the Palestinians. The channel used language to describe the events in a non-neutral way. In most of the news it published, it referred to Israeli civilians as" killed "by Hamas, while Palestinian civilians described their deaths as "dead". The description of the murder of Palestinians in this way suggests to the public that their deaths occurred accidentally, and not because of Israeli shelling [5, p. 8].

News coverage of the Palestinian point of view was relatively limited on the channel, and most of the interviews with Palestinian sources were directed at them with accusations instead of asking conversational questions, which clarified for the public opinion the interpretation and explanation of the events. In turn, the channel allocates a large news space, especially in prime time, for spokespersons of the Israeli army. In this context, an analysis conducted by the Intercept Media Foundation showed that the channel tends to devote longer and more detailed coverage when talking about news related to Israel, compared to coverage dedicated to talking about the Palestinians. For example, when Israel was hit by a rocket attack from Gaza, the channel carried out extensive coverage, including interviews with Israeli officials, and extensive analysis of the repercussions of the attack. In contrast, when Israel responded with air attacks on Gaza that resulted in a large number of civilian casualties, the coverage was much less in time and detail, and the news was framed in the context of self-defense for Israel while underestimating the magnitude and importance of the suffering of Palestinians [12, p. 17].

Conclusion

RT adopted objective and balanced coverage of the events of the conflict in Gaza, and allocated a wide news space for Palestinian and Israeli political and military experts and analysts alike, by providing explanations, analysis, and presenting the different points of view of the parties to the conflict, in addition to addressing the historical context of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict, and focused on humanitarian issues such as conveying the suffering of civilian victims and health crises in Gaza, by the standards of social responsibility in news coverage of armed conflicts. The channel relied on the reports of its correspondents in Gaza to convey the events of the conflict. In addition, and out of the channel's keenness on accuracy and credibility in covering the events, the channel also relied on videos and photos from reliable local sources in Gaza, which makes its coverage of the events in Gaza clearer and more reliable to the public. Russia Today represents an ideal alternative media for the audience that is looking for truth, credibility, and objectivity, to know and understand the issues and events of armed conflicts, CNN coverage of the events of the conflict in Gaza was unbiased and biased, based on distorted facts and misinformation, by framing the conflict in political and ideological frameworks biased against the Palestinians. CNN also deliberately distorted the image of Hamas in its news coverage, referring to them as "murderers, terrorists", and saying they are the main reason for all the suffering of civilians in Gaza. This stereotyping contributes to the formation of a distorted image of Palestinians, as they are stereotyped in the channel's coverage as permanent aggressors, while Israelis are portrayed as permanent victims. News coverage of the Palestinian point of view was relatively limited on the channel. The channel relies on Israeli government sources, as a reliable source of information, while questioning Palestinian sources, which leads to the publication of inaccurate news about the situation in Gaza. The Western media used a racist and subjective media discourse in describing the victims of the conflict. This discourse consists of the humanization of the Israeli victims and the dehumanization of the Palestinian victims. The reasons for the bias of the Western media in covering the events of the conflict in Gaza can be explained as a result of ideological trends supporting Israel, and what is displayed on Western screens and websites, shows a deliberate bias in favor of Israel.

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