



# peace journalism

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How media reporting  
affects wars and conflicts



Kvinna till Kvinna

**Peace journalism.  
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affects wars and conflicts.**

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# Where stories take place

“Were you raped during the Liberian war?” This question was asked by a foreign journalist to the Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. When she said no, she was no longer of any interest.

Most of us are so accustomed to traditional media coverage of war and armed conflict, that we probably don't pay attention to how male dominated it is. Despite the fact that conflicts affect whole populations, women are almost invisible in the reports. If they are present at all, they are often seen crying in the background and are talked about – rather than listened to.

Men are often asked to explain and interpret the conflict in many different roles; as combatants, warlords, experts and politicians. Women, on the other hand, are rarely asked about their opinions regarding the conflict in general, and if they are, it is usually from a woman's or the victim's perspective.

However, media conflict coverage suffers from more than gender imbalance. People representing the civil society and people working for peace on grassroots level are marginalized too. Traditional conflict reporting also has a strong focus on occasional violent events. It rarely explains the ongoing processes, backgrounds or contexts in which the events occur. How does this influence our understanding of the conflict? And what are the consequences of such reporting? This is where peace journalism comes in.

## What is peace journalism?

Peace journalism can be described as a theory and a tool for journalists and others who strive to understand conflicts in a larger context. The theory has been developed from peace and conflict analyses which indicate that the choices journalists make

when they are reporting about conflicts affect not only our understanding of the conflict – but also what we perceive to be the solution. This, in turn, affects the conflict and its outcome.

The theory challenges the image of journalists as neutral and objective purveyors of information, and describes media's relationship with society as symbiotic. Society's prevailing conventions and values influence the media – which in its turn influences society's values and shapes our behaviours through its coverage. This means that journalists covering conflicts will always be involved in the events and processes on which they report.

This also gives journalists a responsibility to at least identify and consider the outcomes of their reporting. As Ross Howard points out in his handbook *Conflict sensitive journalism* (published by Impacts and International Media Support in 2004), conflict reporting can be destructive for a community by promoting fear and violence. But it can also be constructive, by making citizens better informed – and possibly safer by also reporting on efforts to promote conflict reduction.

According to the theory of peace journalism most conventional conflict reporting unwittingly fuels



### Focus on the Middle East

The examples and interviews in this paper are mainly from the Middle East, especially Israel and Palestine. The conflicts there are well known and ongoing. Media frequently highlights the violence and troubles in the Middle East, but not so much the peace initiatives taken by civil society.

further violence. Peace journalism aims to correct this bias. In the words of the British journalist Jake Lynch, author of the book *Peace Journalism*: “Peace journalism takes place whenever editors and reporters make choices about what stories to report and how to report them – which create opportunities for the audience to consider and to value nonviolent responses to conflict.”

Peace journalism challenges the media to keep analysing the prevailing conventions and values that govern their work. Why are certain sources considered more reliable than others? What alternative sources could contribute to a deeper understanding of the conflict? What news are excluded and why do we report on one thing and not the other? Are the facts presented really facts or actually claims?

Besides trying to explain what causes the conflict, peace journalists give voice to all perspectives – including nongovernmental organisations and people from all parts of civil society. They report on different efforts made to resolve the conflict, look closely at all sides, and choose their words carefully. In return, they are able to produce a more comprehensive report, and contribute to a more developed democracy where well-informed citizens can make well thought out decisions – that could possibly bring about peace.

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### Peace journalism with a gender perspective

Peace journalism and the women’s movement share criticism of the prevailing conventions for conflict reporting and have both criticized the disparate gender balance within the media. Feminists have been talking for a long time about how the media’s gender imbalance connects with peace and sustainable development. In 1995, the UN Conference on women’s rights in Beijing established that the media is one of the twelve most important areas in need of review in order to work towards achieving global gender equality. 189 countries out of the 193 members in the UN signed an agreement to work to promote more female journalists and to resist gender stereotypes in the media.

Even though research shows an increase in women’s presence as subjects in the news since 1995, the world depicted remains predominately male. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project report from 2010 more than 3 out of 4 people, 76 percent, in the news are men. The report further shows that only 1 of 5 of all experts asked to comment news are women, and almost half of the stories told reinforce gender stereotypes.

It is obvious that media excludes and discriminates against women. A study conducted by The Kvinna till

Kvinna Foundation in 2008 shows that the gender imbalance in media is even greater when it comes to conflict reporting. The study confirms the urgent need to integrate a gender perspective in all news media, including peace journalism. This is also one of the areas that The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation is working with.

Besides the book *Peace Journalism* by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, this paper is partly based on earlier publications by The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation: the Swedish report *Vi rapporterar om kvinnor i krig* (2006) and two articles by media expert Agneta Söderberg Jacobson.



#### Brief history of peace journalism

Peace journalism was introduced by the Norwegian Peace Studies professor Johan Galtung in the 1970s. The model was further developed in the book *Peace Journalism* by British journalists Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick in 2005. Since then, peace journalism has become a rapidly growing field of research, practice, teaching and training. In 2010, Jake Lynch and Johan Galtung launched their book *Reporting Conflict: New Directions in Peace Journalism*. There they continue to develop the theory and challenge reporters to tell the real story of conflicts.



#### The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation Media Monitoring Project

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation conducted a study that involved monitoring the Swedish media conflict coverage for 14 days in 2008. This study included the newspapers *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, Swedish Television (SVT), Swedish Radio (SR) and the news agency TT. The monitoring group counted the number of women and men appearing as news subjects, and looked at the various roles given to men and women. The group also monitored the extent to which peaceful conflict resolution was taken up and if the underlying cause of a conflict was included in the reporting. The monitoring showed that only 15 percent of the conflict coverage in Swedish news media has female news subjects. Another finding was that 9 out of 10 of all the experts heard in Swedish conflict reporting are men.



Over half of all stories on peace and war reinforce gender stereotypes, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project report from 2010. The picture shows a street in Iraq, a country where women rarely are listened to. Photo: The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation/Anna Lithander

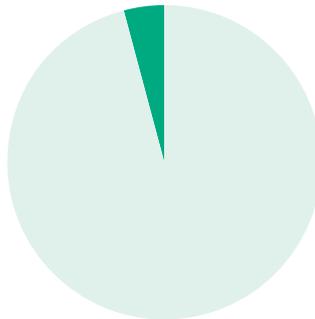
**The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)**

GMMP maps the representation of women and men in news media worldwide. GMMP research has been carried out in five year cycles since 1995 and relies on the voluntary efforts of hundreds of individuals and organisations, including grassroots communication groups, media professionals and university researchers.

The last report from 2010 is based on the monitoring of 1 281 newspapers, television and radio stations in 108 countries on 10 November 2009. The research covered 16 734 news items and totally 35 543 news subjects.

One of the findings in the GMMP 2010 was that news stories on peace negotiations and similar topics do not deal with the issue of gender.

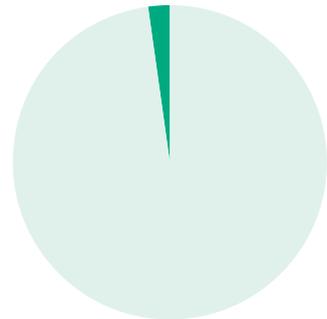
4%



**Stories that raised the issue of gender (in)equality in 2010**

Left: Peace, negotiations, treaties (local, regional, national) 4% (yes) 96% (no). The full report can be found at [www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)

2%



Right: Foreign/international politics, relations with other countries, negotiations, treaties, UN peacekeeping. 2% (yes) 98% (no).

# Hidden values

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**Jake Lynch**

British journalist and author of the books *Peace Journalism* and *Reporting Conflict: New Directions in Peace Journalism*.

Peace journalism has been criticized for being biased and is often misunderstood as peace advocacy lacking objectivity. But Jake Lynch, a British reporter who has worked for the BBC, Sky News and *The Independent*, says the idea of objectivity needs to be reconsidered.

“There is no such thing as value-free reporting. Too often the values are hidden, and claims passed off as facts – like Iraq’s so-called ‘weapons of mass destruction’. So of course reporters should report the facts, but they should also consider how they have come to meet these particular facts, how the facts have come to meet them, and what is left out in the process”, he says and continues:

“War journalism is journalism about conflict that has an unwitting value bias toward violence and violent groups that usually leads audiences to overestimate violent responses to conflict by ignoring non-violent alternatives. Peace journalism, by identifying and supplementing these reporting conventions, aims to correct this bias. And, by doing so, allows opportunities for the society to consider and value non-violent response to conflict.”

## Question the power structure

Peace journalism is often more accurate than traditional news reporting, Lynch argues, since it picks up on all perspectives. It is open about its assumptions and aims to open up meanings in conflict to give its audience the possibility to form their own opinion. To give voice to all perspectives of course includes women. “Journalists should report on the whole society, not half of it”, Jake Lynch says.

He believes that one of the reasons why traditional media coverage is so male-dominated is the focus on official sources and people in power positions. With a

peace journalism perspective, media shifts focus to stories that include civilians of both genders.

“In many ways you can say that the media today reflects and reproduces society’s power structure, not its composition. With a peace journalism perspective you question that power structure, and give the weak a voice”, says Jake Lynch. “Peace journalism challenges reporters to come up with new people to interview, instead of the minister of defence, whom we have already interviewed a hundred times.”

Lynch also believes that conflict coverage could be better with more female reporters in the field. One of the reasons war journalism is so male-dominated is that it has been a male domain for so long. Of course women are not better peace journalists by nature, but due to their experiences of being women, they may be open to a wider range of different perspectives, Jake Lynch argues.

“Many female reporters may have a different social repertoire and be familiar with the world-views of a wider range of people than their male counterparts. When men are discussing the war, they often miss women’s perspective.”

### Audience response

Jake Lynch is currently Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney. He has been researching audience responses to television news stories repackaged as peace journalism. One of these stories concerned people arriving to seek asylum in Australia from conflict zones such as Afghanistan. In the media’s coverage of this story, the refugees themselves are rarely interviewed.

“This of course influences the public’s view on the refugees. It is not until we hear their stories that we can understand why they risk their lives to come all the way here by boat. Then it becomes harder to push

their perspectives and interests out of the frame.”

An essential part of peace journalism is to explain a conflict’s background and context. As it should be in all journalism. The job is basically about bringing answers to the questions who, what, where, when, why and how. However, the “why” question is more difficult than the others. Not only because it takes more time and research to answer it properly, but also for commercial reasons, says Jake Lynch.

“When newspapers have to maximize daily sales, they can’t afford to lose buyers. So they stick with an agenda that most people can agree on. If they report on a bomb incident, it is easier to just report when, where and how many were killed. When you ask why, and start analyzing, you risk dividing people. This in turn could mean losing readers”, he says.

But the rise in non-commercial media holds more potential for peace journalism. “It is an idea whose time has come.”

# Difficulties and interests

## What is conflict and how is it resolved?

According to peace studies and conflict analyses, conflicts arise in situations where two or more individuals try to pursue goals which they believe they cannot share, or when some people want change, and others disagree.

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However, not all conflicts are violent – there is always more than one way of responding to a conflict – and non violent responses are always possible. If a disagreement is managed peacefully, it can be a positive process and lead to progress in a society.

On the contrary, when conflicts are not managed properly, they can become violent. Conflicts tend to be more violent when resources such as food, housing, jobs or land are scarce and not shared fairly. Other issues that can fuel violence are when there is little or no communication between the opposing groups, when the groups have incorrect ideas and beliefs about each other, or when power is unevenly distributed and there are unresolved grievances from the past.

Conflicts do not end by themselves. All sides must first talk to be able to move towards a non-violent resolution. When parties are not yet negotiating, news media might be their only channel of communication.

By exploring and reporting on the difficulties and interests of all sides, peace journalism can

## Egypt vows revenge for Sinai killings

By Rebecca Collard in Jerusalem and David Blair

EGYPT'S army promised "revenge" yesterday after Islamist gunmen killed 16 soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula, then launched a failed attack on Israel.

It was the bloodiest in a series of violent incidents on the frontier. The extremists raided an Egyptian army base in the town of Bafah on Sunday night, killing the guards and stealing two vehicles, which they used to burst through the border fence and penetrate more than a mile into Israeli territory.

The gunman, who wore suicide bomb vests, were intercepted and killed by Israeli forces near the town of Yavul.

Since the onset of the protests against Hosni Mubarak's regime in January 2011, the Sinai Peninsula has become increas-

ingly lawless. Israel has accused Cairo's new government under president Mohammed Morsi of failing to take control of the situation. Thousands of Europeans visit Egypt's Red Sea resorts in Sinai, making the deteriorating security situation a danger to the country's own economy, as well as to Israel.

Visiting the border yesterday, Ehud Barak, the Israeli defence minister, said: "I hope that this will be a wake-up call for Egypt regarding the necessity to be sharp and efficient on their side."

A statement from Egyptian army promised to "avenge" the soldiers who died.

An Egyptian official said the assault on the army base had been a joint operation, mounted by extremists who entered the country through a tunnel from the Gaza Strip, along with others from Sinai.

The Daily Telegraph, 7 August 2012



This article published in The Daily Telegraph 7 August 2012 is a good example of what journalists Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick call war journalism: "Journalism about conflict that has an unwitting value bias toward violence and violent groups that usually leads audiences to overestimate violent responses to conflict by ignoring non violent alternatives."

help to create an understanding for the needs of the other parties. By putting real people in the story and describing how the issue affects them, peace journalism makes the other sides human, which makes it more difficult to go to war against them. Peace journalism can also help bridge the barriers between different parties in a conflict by searching for overlapping needs or interests. Perhaps there are solutions that can be shared.

### What are the underlying structural reasons for conflict?

Often facts, backgrounds and different perspectives tend to go missing in traditional conflict reporting. Due to lack of time, space and resources, media concentrates on who threw the stone, and does not seek out to explain the circumstances in which this stone was thrown.

The problem is that without the context no reporting of a violent event is correct or complete. To understand violence, we need the whole picture. This is important since, according to the theory of peace journalism, the remedy for a conflict depends on the diagnosis.

If the media only reports on the horror and violent acts of a conflict, the public will only understand the conflict in those terms. If a group of armed people kill soldiers in north Sinai, as in the story described in *The Daily Telegraph* (on the left), and we don't understand why, we presume the only explanation must be revenge for previous violence, as if violence was its own cause. This leads us to think that the only remedy is more violence as a form of punishment, which is also what the article suggests.

If instead journalists search for an explanation of how the conditions for violence are being produced, including possible solutions, the public may see the conflict in different terms and can assist in resolving it. This is how peace journalism works.

Some people might say that contextualizing or trying to explain violence equals justifying it. But an explanation of violence is not the same thing as a justification for it. In the words of Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick: Peace journalism makes the conflict transparent, in the sense that we can see what would need to change for the underlying issues to be transformed.

If, for instance, the lack of water is the real reason of a riot, we can start to examine different solutions to guarantee all parties a secure supply of water, instead of using more violence to punish the people who are fighting.

The media monitoring conducted by The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation first showed that the underlying cause of conflict was focused on in about 46 percent

of the news items. On closer inspection however, it was clear that the background information consisted mainly of event and incident reports rather than explanations of the underlying causes of the conflict that are still taking place.

Of course not every news report can give a full explanation of a conflict. When the space is limited it is more a question of how it is explained. After reading a short news report, what do the readers expect to happen next? What will they seek to hear more about? Does the report open up for non violent solutions or does it reproduce fear and mistrust?

The emphasis on structural issues is one of many aspects of peace journalism that complies with feminist theory. Research has established that often factors such as poverty, division of natural resources or the lack of gender equality are more vital explanations for physical violence than reprisals or hate between ethnic or religious groups. When a society neglects to strive towards gender equality, the resulting inequality becomes an impediment to social and economic development. According to a report from UN Women (formerly known as UNIFEM) societies suffering from severe inequality are also more often plagued by armed conflicts.

This means that simply ending the physical violence will never be enough in conflict resolution. It will happen again if the cultural and structural issues are ignored. If, instead, structural problems are emphasized, this will facilitate measures connected to efforts that address democracy, human rights and gender equality as a given necessity, which decreases the likelihood that those affected will be violent again in the future.



#### Media failure – an example

One example of when media failed to deliver a full explanation is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the second Intifada in the years 2000–2005, British television reported almost daily about the conflict. Still, when Glasgow University researchers interviewed the viewers, they found that most of them mistakenly thought the settlers were Palestinian. Furthermore, substantial numbers thought it was the Palestinians who were occupying the Occupied Territories. Source: Peace Journalism by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick.

# If only one would change

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**Laila Odeh**

Palestinian freelance journalist and correspondent, working for the television news channel France24 and Montecarlo Radio in Jerusalem.

**“The tv news channel that I work for right now is only interested in the hard news about the struggle and violence, so often I just report on what is happening at the moment without analyzing or explaining the background”, Laila Odeh says.**

She was born in Jerusalem and has worked as a journalist in Israel and Palestine for different international media outlets since 1993. She knows the conflict very well, and would prefer to do more analyzing and explain the structure in which the events occur. However, most of her editors only want her to report exactly what the official leaders say. Laila

Odeh says it’s frustrating, since she often knows when the leaders mean something else than what they are saying. To make up for this, she says it’s important to go out and ask civilians in the street for their opinions too.

“They are the ones who are affected by the decisions made by the leaders. If you want to know what the consequences of the politics are, you have to talk to the people living in the reality”, she says.

Laila Odeh adds that it is equally important to speak to both men and women. Without female news subjects the picture presented will never be complete. “Sometimes women and girls are shy and don’t want to be on tv, but I always try to persuade them to give their opinion. It is really important that their views are reported too.”

In most Arabic media women are pretty much invisible in the commenting field – especially as experts. “It is a big problem”, Laila Odeh says. “I don’t know why, every time I ask a male colleague why they don’t invite female experts, they don’t even reply. It is as if they don’t think women can do it, and they don’t want this to change. But I think that if one tv channel would change, the rest would follow.”

“Like in the rest of the world there is no lack of female experts. The Palestinians are very educated people, and the universities are full of women. You just have to look beyond the old conventions.”

## **Do you cover peace initiatives for your current employer?**

“Yes, but only if the official leaders are negotiating. And to be honest we hardly cover that anymore either, since it never leads anywhere. We don’t cover small peace groups since my editors are more interested in the big news than what is going on in everyday life.”

# Every party has a stake

When a society is threatened by violent conflict, opposing sides immediately seek to control the media. Today all governments, parties and organizations have a media strategy. They know how to create facts for the media to report, and how to use the media to influence the public's view of the conflict. To get one's message out in the media is extremely important since the public generally accept what is presented in the news as 'truth'.

All sources journalists use have their own agenda and it's important for journalists to remember that, and to clarify the difference between facts and claims.

Before the war in Iraq, for example, many media outlets repeated the claim that Saddam Hussein was hiding weapons of mass destruction in a way that made it seem like an established fact. That is how propaganda works.

Sometimes women are used in the warmongering. The ultimate case of misogyny propagated by the media occurred prior to the Rwandan genocide, when hate campaigns against a particular ethnic group carried out in the media often focused on women. In radio telecasts men from one ethnic group were incited to rape women from the other group. Agathe Uwiringiyimana, the first woman to hold the position

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## Peace journalists choose their words carefully and...

...avoid the imprecise use of strong emotive words such as tragedy, assassination or massacre, unless this is really what has happened. These words can help justify disproportionate responses which escalate the violence. Peace journalists don't minimize suffering, but are precise about what they know.

...avoid demonizing adjectives like vicious, cruel, brutal or barbaric. These terms always describe one party's view of the other, and help to justify an escalation of violence. Instead peace journalists report what they know about the wrongdoing and give as much information as they can about the reliability of other people's descriptions of it. If it is still being investigated, say so, as a precaution since the truth may not yet be known.

...avoid demonizing labels like terrorist, extremist, fanatic and fundamentalist. These words take sides, and make the other side seem impossible to negotiate with. Instead peace journalists call people by the name they give themselves, or give more precise descriptions. Bombers or suicide hijackers are both less partisan and give more information than terrorists.

...avoid victimizing expressions like devastated, defenceless and tragedy, since these words only tell us what has been done to, and could be done for, a group of people by others. This is disempowering and limits the options for change. Instead peace journalists report on what can be done by the people. How are they coping, what do they think and can they suggest any solutions?

Source:  
Peace Journalism  
by Jake Lynch  
and Annabel  
McGoldrick.

as prime minister, was often portrayed in propaganda campaigns as promiscuous and a threat to the nation. When the genocide started, she was one of the first victims.

To avoid taking part in the propaganda campaign, peace journalists always avoid making an opinion or claim seem like an established fact. Instead, peace journalists tell their audience who said what and give as much information as they can about the reliability of other people's descriptions and views.

### More than two sides of the story

A fundamental principal of journalism is that when reporting a conflict all parties should be heard. However, traditional conflict reporters often seem to interpret "all parties" of a conflict as "both parties" as if there were only two sides of the story. When giving voice to two sides, they avoid being partial or "one-sided". But by doing so, the conflict is also framed as a tug of war between two aggregated parties, where everyone is on one side or the other. Readers and audiences are left unaware of the fact that there are always people who don't support violence.

According to the theory of peace journalism this dualistic perspective tends to lead us to overvalue violent solutions, and undervalue non violent ones. If you have a dualistic perspective, the remedy of a conflict is a military victory, for one party to get rid of the other.

Very often, the dualistic perspective in traditional conflict reporting also creates a sense of "us" versus "them". This tends to lead to the understanding of "us" as the good guys and "them" as the bad ones. By picturing the other side as barbaric terrorists beyond the pale of civilized behaviour, traditional conflict reporting usually works to dehumanize and demonize "them". When focusing exclusively on the suffering, fears and grievances of only one party, media suggests that coercing or punishing the other party might be the best solution.

Peace journalism works in the opposite way. It avoids portraying a conflict as consisting of two opposing sides, and instead of only talking to official sources such as governments, politicians and warlords, it aims to give voice to ALL parties and perspectives, including women, civilians and NGO's working for peace. This could mean interviewing merchants affected by the general strike, students who are not allowed to study their maternal language, parents who don't have diapers in the refugee camps or workers who are unable to go to work due to checkpoints etc. They are also affected by the conflict, and should enjoy greater influence.

Enabling civilians to be heard creates a broader

perspective on the conflict. In the words of Lynch and McGoldrick, authors of the book *Peace Journalism*: The whole essence of peace journalism is based on understanding what is needed to create a lasting peace, addressing the genuine needs and interests of all sides.

By doing so, peace journalism also opens up for a wider range of outcomes. When conflicts are looked at in more than one way, it becomes easier to come up with more alternative ways to resolve it. When we have many different options, violence becomes less attractive and when the larger community takes an interest, there is usually more pressure not to use violence.

In an ambitious and sophisticated attack, global jihad terrorists infiltrated Israel on Sunday night after breaking into Egyptian military base and stealing two armored jeeps.

One of the vehicles, likely booby-trapped exploded as it rammed through Keram Shalom crossing, which is shared by Israel, Egypt and the Gaza strip. A number of terrorists succeeded in exiting the second vehicle before it was destroyed by an air strike. They crossed into Israel and engaged in a firefight with IDF troops.

During the raid on the Egyptian base, around 15 Egyptian soldiers were killed. IDF sources said the attackers were probably Beduin residents of Sinai who were part of a larger global jihad terror cell based in the peninsula. Six terrorists were killed in the gunfight.

No one was injured in Israel. IDF sources said it was possible that the terrorists intended to abduct a soldier or to infiltrate a nearby community to attack residents.

The IDF said the attack was not connected to an Israeli air strike earlier in the day against a global jihad terror cell that was in the final stages

Jerusalem Post, 6 August 2012



In this extract from an article published in The Jerusalem Post 6 August 2012, the journalist clearly puts himself on one side by calling the other side "terrorists" and only giving voice to his own country's defence forces. After reading this, what do you expect happens next?

# Need for new angles



**Saam Kapadia**

Swedish reporter and editor working with The Correspondents, a weekly tv program broadcasted by the Swedish public service television company Sveriges Television (SVT). Photo: Carl-Johan Söder.

“We don’t call it peace journalism, but it is basically what we are doing here”, says Saam Kapadia, about his work at the Swedish public service television company Sveriges Television (SVT).

The Correspondents is a weekly TV program on global issues. Every program consists of a theme with three different stories. At least one of them should include a positive angle. “We are always trying to find counterparts to the overall news. There is a lack of positive stories in the news today, since most media has a strong focus on negative aspects”, Saam Kapadia says.

They are right in the middle of planning a program on garbage, where one angle is that disposals are a flourishing business. Another angle is people in Denmark who are recycling to minimize their waste. If The Correspondents would report on the euro crises, they would also find a few positive aspects, like the bicycle industry which is going great in Greece, since more and more people can’t afford to use their cars.

These days the whole news department at SVT works in this way, Saam Kapadia adds. “But it hasn’t always been like this. There is a new awareness about the need to show different angles than the ones we are used to. If we want to keep our credibility we need to show all nuances of the world. This is especially important now that people can find different news through the internet and social media.”

“To have at least one positive angle also makes better and more dynamic programs”, says Saam Kapadia and adds that this is also true about gender balance. A program with only male faces will never be any good.

Seven years ago, a group of female reporters in the news department at SVT stood up and said: “From now on we will count the number of men and women

in the news”. Soon their statistics showed that women were more or less invisible.

“Since then we always think about who we interview. I am not saying that we always succeed but our goal is to have at least 40 percent female news subjects in every newscast. The reason it’s not 50/50 is that we have to interview the people in power, and they are mostly men”, says Saam Kapadia.

However, the Media Monitoring Project study made by Kvinna till Kvinna clearly states that the effort to show more women has not been as successful when covering conflicts.

“This goal is only for the reports we produce ourselves. Unfortunately we can’t always be in the field and thus have to use content from major news agencies. There seems to be a lot of old fashioned Anglo-Saxon male reporters working for the agencies, and this is definitely reflected in their reporting”, Saam Kapadia says.

### Fighting stereotypes

As a part of showing counterparts he and his colleagues at The Correspondents are also fighting stereotypes. They always make an effort to picture strong active women and stay away from ordinary victim portraits.

While ordinary newscasts often fail to explain the background and context, The Correspondents aims to correct that. If there is a conflict somewhere, they go there to talk to ordinary people and try to find answers to the question why this is happening. However, they often find themselves with stories showing only two parts. “There is always a tendency to simplify a conflict, and we are really satisfied when we don’t fall into that trap”, Saam Kapadia says.

He adds that they often talk to people on the street to get the perspectives of civilians. And they often use experts working for NGO’s. “Even though Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders have an agenda like everybody else, they usually know more than official sources about the situation on the ground, and I would say that they have a very high credibility in Swedish media.”

### Peace initiatives

While one of the assignments of SVT is to promote democracy and resist racism, Saam Kapadia says that the only aspect of peace journalism that he doesn’t agree with is the aim to promote peace initiatives.

“That would be campaign journalism in my opinion. Who am I to say that the people in Libya are not right to make armed resistance against their regime? We want to show different perspectives but leave it to the public to make up their own mind about what solution would be the best. If we make a program about peace initiatives, it would be to show a new trend in the peace movement, not to promote peace.”

# Look for peace initiatives

One aim of peace journalism is to report on peace initiatives. One way of doing so is to look for different solutions to the conflict and report on the possibilities for withdrawal, compromise or transcendence. Instead of waiting for official leaders to offer solutions peace journalists pick up and explore peace initiatives wherever they come from, put these ideas to the leaders and report their response. Peace journalists can also show examples from other peacefully resolved conflicts in other places.

In all conflicts, there are always people who have a vision for peace. If they were given attention in the international media, the conflict's image may not appear as morbid or downcast. By telling their stories, the public would get a more progressive image which could possibly contribute to the conflict's resolution.

However, the monitoring of conflict reporting in Sweden showed that representatives of peace groups, human rights groups and humanitarian groups appeared in as few as four percent of the total news items.

When asking journalists why people working for peace are so often overlooked, they sometimes say that peace activists are written off as too personally affected by the conflict or biased for having an agenda. However, governmental and "official" sources are also parties to the conflict, and should not be treated any different from alternative sources. Another response is that stories on peace initiatives doesn't qualify as "news".

## Women too!

Despite the fact that both men and women participate in conflicts and are affected by them, women's underrepresentation is even greater in conflict



### Slow progress

Stories by female reporters contain more female news subjects than stories by male reporters, according to the GMMP 2010. In 2000, 24 percent of news subjects in stories by female reporters were female, in contrast to only 18 percent in stories by male reporters. In 2010, the statistics stood at 28 percent and 22 percent respectively. The statistics show a slow rate of progress towards more gender-balanced journalism.

reporting than other news topics. The monitoring conducted by Kvinna till Kvinna showed that only 15 percent of the conflict coverage in Swedish news media has female news subjects. The study further showed that almost nine out of ten of all the experts heard in Swedish conflict reporting are men. It is almost as if one of the definitions of an expert is “male”.

There are many problems with this. One is the media’s role in reproducing particular patterns of gender inequality. Who explains and interprets a conflict in the media influences not only our understanding of the conflict, but also our view on gender. What the media is telling us is that only men can interpret the world around us. This influences how we unconsciously as a society treat men and women.

### What is important to women?

Another problem with the under-representation of women in the media is that issues important to women are neglected. An example is the media coverage of Israel and Palestine. When following the news one is easily led to believe that the thing that threatens Israelis the most is a possible invasion from Iran. However, according to Women’s Security Index – a survey based on interviews conducted with more than 700 women living in Israel – women are more concerned with other security threats. Most women said that financial anxieties and the fear of sexual harassment, rape and attacks threaten their security more than war or Iran.

## World’s presence at Tehran confab shows ‘never again’ is empty slogan, PM says

Ban, Abbas among attendees at NAM meeting • UN head says Iran needs to prove peaceful intentions

• BY HERB KEINON and KHALED ABU TOAMEH

The participation of 120 countries in a conference in Iran right now shows just how hollow the world’s post-Holocaust pledge of “Never Again” really is, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a senior German politician on Wednesday.

Seventy years ago, Netanyahu told Prime Minister David McAllister of the German state of Lower Sax-

ony, “six million of my people were exterminated in an act of genocide. The world pledged ‘never again’; it passed treaties against genocide; it formed the United Nations; it made a commitment that this thing will never be repeated. Today, over 120 countries are in Tehran, saluting a regime that not only denies the Holocaust but pledges to annihilate the Jewish state.”

Many in the international community appear to have learned nothing, Netanyahu

Special IAEA team to examine Iranian nuke program, Page 2

said. “I think this is a disgrace and a stain on humanity.” He added that he was pleased that Germany was among the countries that “refuses to take part in this charade.”

See NAM, Page 10

## Ahead of UN address, Netanyahu calls Iran biggest threat to world peace

Iranian supreme leader Khamenei blasts ‘bloodthirsty Zionist wolves’ as 120 countries sit in silence

• BY HERB KEINON

After two-thirds of the world’s countries listened silently Thursday to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launch an anti-Semitic diatribe against Israel at the Non-Aligned Meeting summit in Tehran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced he would respond at the UN General Assembly next month.

“In Tehran today, the representatives of 120 countries heard a blood libel against

the State of Israel and were silent. This silence must stop,” Netanyahu said.

Iran doubles underground nuclear capacity, Page 8

“Therefore, I will go to the UN General Assembly and, in a clear voice, tell the nations of the world the truth about Iran’s terrorist regime, which constitutes the greatest threat to world peace.”

Khamenei, speaking to the

NAM gathering that included UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said “an independent country with a clear historical identity called Palestine” has been taken away from its people through the use of weapons, killings and deception, and has been given to a group of people the majority of whom are immigrants from European countries.

“This great usurpation – which at the outset was accompanied by massacres of defenseless people in towns



ALI KHAMENEI (Reuters)

See NAM, Page 10

### Jerusalem Post, 30 – 31 August 2012

Two headlines from The Jerusalem Post 30–31st of August 2012. When following the Israeli media one is easily led to believe that Iran is one of the security threats that worry Israelis the most. However, when Israeli women are asked about their biggest security concerns, they say rape and sexual harassment.

# Women as victims



**Anat Saragusti**

Freelance journalist and executive director of Agenda, Israel's only non-profit organization working to make the mainstream media a more diverse and pluralistic arena.

**“This is the one million dollar question”, Anat Saragusti replies when asked why there are so few female news subjects in conflict reporting. If women are at all present in the Israeli media conflict coverage they are usually portrayed as victims.**

“They are used as eye witnesses, as mothers or wives of soldiers asked to talk about their children. They are very seldom used as experts in security issues”, she says.

Anat Saragusti has left a job as a senior member of the Israeli television broadcasting company Chan-

nel 2 News, to work with Agenda. It is an organization aiming to make the public discourse more inclusive and pluralistic, by pushing for under-privileged voices to be heard in the mainstream media.

One of her main concerns is the underrepresentation of women in the news. She says one explanation why women are made invisible is that media outlets are still controlled by men. When she worked for Channel 2 news half of the staff were female. “But they were always, and still are in all media outlets, lower in their positions.”

Another explanation is the army's influence in Israel.

“We live in a militaristic society and even though the army service is mandatory to both men and women alike, it is still men who do the important things while women take care of the children and serve coffee. In the 63 years of the existence of the state of Israel, it was only a year ago that a woman became a general of high rank.”

Anat Saragusti continues: “The army has a great influence on our public discourse, on our political system, and in constructing our minds. And it is very difficult – if at all possible – to change these concepts.”

When the Israeli media needs someone to explain conflicts and security issues they usually ask ex-generals from the army. These ex-generals are always male. When Anat Saragusti questions this order, she is told that women do not understand security issues. “People think that only a man with high ranks from the army can understand these issues deeply. They think that they cannot rely on a woman to make decisions or to analyze the reality.”

Israel was one of the countries that adopted the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security as a state law. Since then Anat

Saragusti has been very active in promoting the idea to include women in the decision making process – both in the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and in other security issues.

It is extremely important that women are involved when discussing security, she says, because “in our country security is a top issue. It influences elections, the peace process, the national agenda and the national budget. All our lives are subject to security. It is hard to explain this to someone who lives in a peaceful country and doesn’t have to deal with the dilemma whether the national budget should be spent on state security or education and welfare”.

Anat Saragusti continues: “In my country when you talk about security it is usually state security and not human security. And the public discourse, which is pushed by all our leaders, says that we are under a constant threat. If it’s not the Arab countries surrounding Israel, it’s the Arab spring, or the suicide bombs, or the rockets from Gaza, or Iran. There is always a crucial threat that we need to deal with and allocate money to. And it is always of higher priority than all other plans like education or health.”

### Focus on state security

According to Anat Saragusti the Israeli media does not question this focus on state security. On the contrary, the news usually reinforces the sense of living under constant threat. The “others” are often described in a negative way, and only mentioned in a negative context.

“In Israel we have a minority of 20 percent Arab citizens and they hardly exist in the mainstream media. When they are mentioned, it is mainly in a negative context, and mainly around security issues where the Arabs are presented as a threat.”

In her work at Agenda, Anat Saragusti works closely with the Israeli-Arab citizens and other minorities like immigrants from Ethiopia. In her effort to promote different voices to be heard, Agenda helps leaders from these groups to improve their media skills.

“We also bring together journalists to get to know these communities and develop sources there, to make these minority groups heard and visible to the general public through the mainstream media.”

### What about the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, how are they described in the Israeli media?

“When the Palestinians are mentioned in the media it is usually around security issues, portraying them as violent, or talking about how under-developed they are in all parameters of civilizations.”

The Palestinians are rarely interviewed; instead the media usually brings an Israeli expert in to talk about them. However, these days “the mainstream media hardly covers the occupation or what is going on in the Palestinian territories. It is a non-issue, due to the fact that there are no suicide bombs any more”, Anat Saragusti says.

Lately the Iranian threat has been a bigger concern. The perception of Iran is widely discussed in social media arenas like Facebook. Saragusti adds that even in the mainstream media there is a lively and open discussion around a possible attack on Iran: “Many voices are heard. But all of them are the usual voices of ex-generals, ex-army seniors and male journalists.”

# Rape as war method

During the war in the former Yugoslavia and the genocides in Rwanda in the 1990s, media started to pay more attention to the fact that rape was used as a war method. It was important to bring these crimes into the public light, and media coverage was part of the reason why the use of rape as a war method was included as a crime subject to sanction by the permanent Criminal Court in the Hague (ICC).

At the same time, the media attention often caused further exploitation of women who had already had traumatic experiences. The media hounded rape victims for interviews – and still do. Women who have suffered gender based violence are often doubly victimized: Once by the perpetrators and a second time by insensitive reporting which sensationalizes the violence.

This is especially common if the conflict takes place somewhere far away, as if the distance lessens media's responsibility for the woman exposed. However, these days a report from DR Congo showing the name and face of a raped woman published in a European newspaper, can easily be found on the internet by the woman's family and her perpetrators. There are examples where a raped woman has been stigmatized and ostracized by her own family and community after being exposed in the media.

Of course it's still important to report on these war crimes, but peace journalists with a gender perspective consider the consequences of their reporting and would probably choose not to mention names nor show images exposing the women. It might also be helpful to go through local women's organizations, since they have a lot of knowledge and experience in this field.

It is important to highlight the structure behind sexual violence and the fact that rape as a war

method is often sanctioned within armed groups and defense forces. Peace journalists could further report on initiatives made in the society to strengthen women's position and fight sexual harassment. By giving voice to groups who oppose these kinds of crimes, the public learns that rape is not inevitable in conflicts; it is something that we can and must work to extinguish.

## Challenging stereotypes

According to the Global Media Monitoring Project, over half of all stories on peace and war reinforce gender stereotypes. This means that more than half of the reports from conflicts reproduce generalized simplistic and often exaggerated assumptions of masculinity and femininity.

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### Gender (in)equality in the news

The proportion of news stories highlighting issues of gender equality or inequality is increasing, according to the GMMP 2010. In 2005, 4 percent of stories highlighted inequality issues, compared to 6 percent in 2010.

The best result can be found in Latin America which has tripled the proportion of such stories, from 4 percent in 2005 to 12 percent in 2010.

The seeming progress in reportage in the Middle East, from 1 percent of stories highlighting (in)equality issues in 2005 to 4 percent in 2010, may be due to a truer representation of the region. The rise in the number of participating countries from 2 in 2005 to 6 in 2010 could account for the new finding.



A woman sitting passive in the foreground, while two men are actively working in the background. This image published in The International Herald Tribune on 28 August 2012 is typical for conflict reporting. Neither the woman nor the men pictured are interviewed in the article.



When powerful women and politicians are pictured, the Global Media Monitoring Project noted that it is often a bit different from the portrayal of men. While male politicians often appear in head shots or alone at podiums above crowds, female politicians are often pictured as gendered subjects who rely on men. For instance, German Chancellor Angela Merkel often appears chaperoned by male politicians or flanked by male world leaders, like the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy. This picture was published in The International Herald Tribune on 9 December 2011.

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Only a very small percentage of the stories challenge these assumptions in terms of attributes, traits, roles or occupations. Some conflict reporting neither challenges nor reinforces stereotypes, but as the authors of the Global Media Monitoring Project report point out – it is important to remember that this “neutrality” veils and serves to maintain subtle or unquestioned gender bias.

When women and men are portrayed through gender stereotyped lenses, this impacts the behaviours, actions and attitudes of society. When women are portrayed only as victims in conflict reporting, we are led to believe that women are passive by nature, while men depicted as fighters, politicians and experts, are active and authoritative.

Of course women suffer in armed conflicts, and of course this must be brought to public attention. However, when women in active roles as breadwinners, activists and soldiers are relegated to the background we lose sight of the fact that women are also agents who are influenced by and who influence conflict outcomes.

It is also important to acknowledge that women are not always ‘good agents’. In order to ensure a just and comprehensive representation of conflicts it is also important for media to depict women that deviate from the norm of the ‘good woman’.

There are lots of other stereotypes in society, many of them linked to race, religion, class, or sexuality. Peace journalism challenges and aims to remove all

stereotypes in conflict reporting, since stereotypes only tell us what might be different about the others. Stereotypes lead to the assumption that the others always act in a certain way and never change. This kind of prejudice often leads to conflict and can even help to justify violence.

### A few words on images

Images and texts are equally important for the total impression of a news report. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project report 2010 there is a big difference between how men and women are pictured. While men are usually photographed either from the head up or fully clothed, women’s bodies are more often pictured and in various states of undress.

In many cases, photos and captions of women in the news serve to reinforce a variety of stereotypes. Often the placement of photos of women is juxtaposed with sexualized titles and captions that have little to do with the woman pictured – or vice versa.

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation’s monitoring of the Swedish media showed that women are seldom seen in images from armed conflicts. The Global Media Monitoring Project noted that when they are pictured, women in conflicts are often nameless and appear passive, or pictured in the background, working in fields or doing domestic tasks, as part of the scenery. In contrast, images of men display active figures, engaged in all sorts of activities from armed combat to political debates.



Another telling example is this interview with five female peace activists in the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan* published in October 2004. These women are portrayed as strong politically active women, which is rather unusual in the news media. Furthermore, they are asked about their personal experiences as well as the conflicts in which they live. However, to illustrate the article, the women were asked to walk arm-in-arm. This image of five women laughing transmits warmth, fellowship and hope. You can tell that they really want to cooperate. This is of course a positive thing. But does this picture transmit a sense of power, seriousness and the capacity to actually make a difference? Would male peace activists be portrayed like this?



#### Master suppression techniques

Both peace journalism and feministic theory build on analyses of power structures. When analyzing the male dominated news media in general, and conflict reporting in particular, you find that both women and activists working for women's rights, human rights and peace, are subjects to suppression. The 'master suppression techniques' identified by Norwegian Social Psychology professor Berit Ås can easily be adapted on traditional conflict reporting:

1. First of all, women are made invisible in the media, since they are rarely portrayed as news subjects and even more seldom as agents. Likewise, peace movements and women's rights activists are made invisible and marginalized by being ignored.
2. Women are often ridiculed in the media. One example is that they are often portrayed with irrelevant comments on their clothing and appearance. Another example is the focus on women's private lives, rather than their professional roles. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project female news subjects are identified by their family status four times more often than male news subjects.
3. Another way to exert power is to withhold information. When the media fails to provide information on women's situ-

ations or even include information from women to the same extent as information from men, it affects our image of our society and of political decision-making. This is also valid when it comes to reporting on peace initiatives and peace movements in the media.

4. Power can also be exerted through double bind. First women are accused of not standing up for themselves, and when they do, they are accused of being unfeminine, bad mothers and wives etc. Unlike male activists, female activists find that whatever they are accused of is presented as being linked to their gender. In Serbia, for example, the organization Women in Black, which promotes peace and Kosovo's independence, has been accused in the media of conducting prostitution and being lesbians.

5. Women are also blamed and put to shame in the media. When women have been sexually harassed or raped, society and media pay attention to her behaviour or the way she was dressed, as if she is to blame for being raped.

6. Women are also objectified. Very often articles about human trafficking are not illustrated with men, but with sexualized images of women who have nothing to do with the article.

# What is newsworthy?

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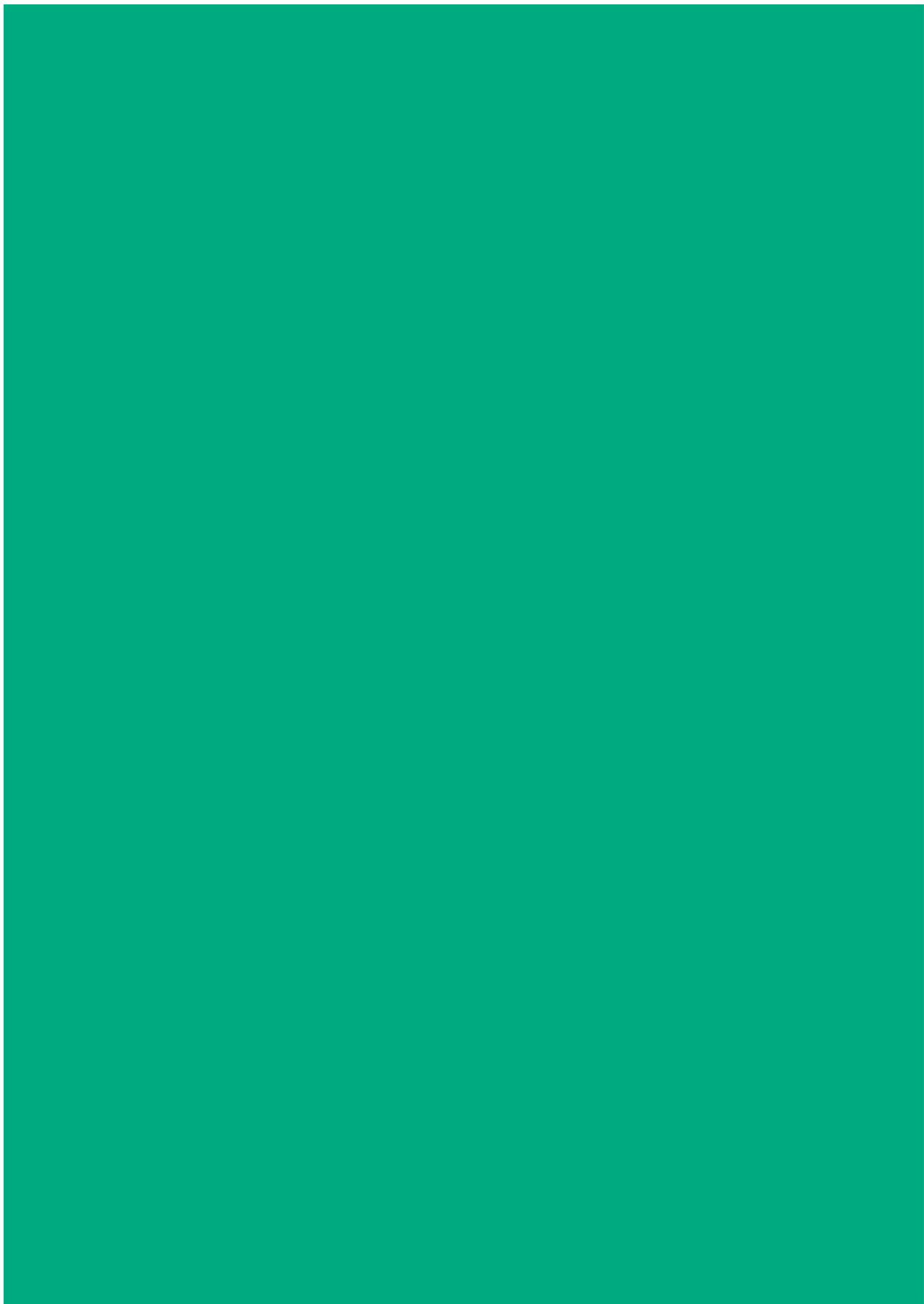
The results of the Global Media Monitoring Project and the study conducted by The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation point in the same direction. Women and civil society are not regarded as newsworthy, and journalists' interest in reporting news about peaceful conflict resolution is limited.

So what do media define and value as news? As Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick points out in their book *Peace Journalism*, news is about change, something new. Of course violence can be a source of significant change. But women sitting down in a non-violent protest and other groups working for peace can also bring about change.

Another of the main imbalances in traditional conflict coverage is the focus on visible damage and destruction, while the damage to mental health, structure and culture remains invisible. However, this is news too.

By looking for a new angle, an alternative view or a new insight, peace journalism can help reframe the conflict and open up to new solutions. Furthermore, when media reports about non-violent peace initiatives it unavoidably strengthens them, by showing the public that there are solutions and remedies other than more violence. On the contrary – by choosing to not report about peace initiatives – media disempowers them.

This is just as true about women's voices in the media. In the words of Inna Michaeli, a member of the Israeli organization Coalition of Women for Peace: "Journalists choose sides – they choose the side of power, which marginalizes us. They say there are no women in key positions – but if they talk to us we will become important."





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