**Asking tough questions**

[**Dr James J Zogby**](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/dr-james-j-zogby)

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Too often both the Israeli and Arab press fail miserably in reporting on violent acts in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Aspects of the recent press coverage of murderous assaults by Israeli forces into Palestinian-populated areas and deadly Palestinian attacks against Israelis have been particularly upsetting. For example: On January 26th Israeli undercover units (arriving in milk trucks) invaded Jenin, heavily armed and firing their weapons. Palestinians responded with gunfire. In the end 10 Palestinians lay dead. Parroting Israeli military disinformation, the press reported that the Israeli assault’s targets were “terrorists” or a “ticking bomb” preparing an attack on Israelis. Israeli (and American) journalists asked no questions, and the case was closed. But what was the evidence for this charge? How else could the alleged “terrorists” been apprehended without a murderous assault putting civilian lives at risk? Instead, journalists accepted that the only evidence needed—judge, jury, and executioner—were the words and bullets of the Israeli invaders.

[First consignment of Pakistani spices, dates reaches Israeli Market](https://www.nation.com.pk/28-Mar-2023/first-consignment-of-pakistani-spices-dates-reaches-israeli-market)

The upsetting subtext is that Israel is currently holding over 800 Palestinians as Administrative Detainees (AD)—the highest number since the occupation began. An AD is a Palestinian imprisoned without charge, evidence, or the right to a trial or a defense, with some held in this legal limbo for years. Palestinians can be held after arrest without due process and referred to as “suspected terrorists.” And when a Palestinian is killed, it’s reported that the evidence confirmed that the victim was indeed a terrorist. That’s not journalism. Nor is it journalism when the Israeli and American media simply report on the Israeli military’s arrest of dozens of family members or the demolition of an accused terror suspect’s home, as if these criminal acts of collective punishment are normal and justifiable behavior. They are not.

Arab reporting can be equally galling. After the deadly Jenin raid, a Palestinian shot and killed seven Israelis in Neve Yaakov, a settlement east of Jerusalem. Some Arab (and American “left”) media referred to these murders as “an operation” or a “successful attack.” Similar upsetting language was used after a deranged Palestinian rammed his car into Israelis waiting at a bus stop, and days later when two 13-year-olds attacked Israelis. Again, when Hamas sent out desperate young men with bombs strapped to their bodies to kill themselves and as many Israelis as possible, some media accounts described these acts as “heroic” and “successful operations.” They were not.

[Fed govt tables bill moderating CJP's powers in national assembly](https://www.nation.com.pk/28-Mar-2023/fed-govt-tables-bill-moderating-cjp-s-powers-in-national-assembly)

Instead of celebrating these senseless acts as part of a strategy to liberate Palestinians, journalists, especially those sympathetic to Palestinian suffering, should ask what leads a young person to such anger and despair that they’re driven to suicidal behaviour and killing innocents. Journalists who accept and use the terms “heroic” and “successful” to describe senseless acts of murder are no better than their Israeli (and American counterparts) who blindly echo the Israeli military “ticking bomb” line to justify undercover murderous assaults or fail to question the legality and morality of collective punishment. I can already hear critics from both sides taking issue with this column.

Supporters of Israel will ask: How else can Israel deal with the threat of terrorists? But they ignore the very real problems posed by extrajudicial killings and collective punishment—the absence of due process to justify the charges of “terrorist” or “ticking bomb,” the lack of any legal basis for wanton violence, and the inevitable result of bitterness and desire for revenge. Similarly, apologists on the Arab side will justify the random attacks on Israelis by arguing that their presence in Israel or especially in settlements makes them legitimate targets. They’ll ask: How else can Palestinians make Israel pay for its crimes? These arguments, like those of Israel’s apologists, make no moral, legal, or political sense.

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Just as Israel’s violence hasn’t ended Palestinian resistance, neither has Palestinian violence ended the occupation. If anything, these behaviours only serve to intensify Israeli repression and Palestinian rage toward their oppressors. While this column won’t alter the Israeli military’s brutish culture or heal the psychological wounds of an angry teenager with a knife, we can at least ask journalists to use accurate language and ask the right questions when they cover the tragic and deplorable deeds of both sides.