



Oct. 7 Reports Implode: Beheaded Babies, NY Times Scandal, & More

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Glenn Greenwald: One of the most important parts of journalism when it comes to war is to scrutinise and investigate and debunk propaganda that comes from every side in every war. Propaganda and lies are part of every war. You might remember at the start of the war in Ukraine, there were all kinds of lies told about things that happened, that never happened, about courageous Ukrainian soldiers on an island saying F*** You Russia, and refusing to surrender and being killed when in fact they all surrendered, about some mythical fighter pilot called the Ghost of Kyiv who had supposedly shot down, single handedly 50 or 60 different Russian jets and that was a complete myth as well. Just lies that constantly get turned out. You go to every war; the war in Vietnam that was provoked by an absolute lie that the U.S. security state now admits they lied about, which they claim was an act of aggression by the North Vietnamese in the Gulf of Tonkin, which is completely fabricated. Obviously, the war in Iraq was provoked by fabricated claims of weapons of mass destruction. And the Gulf War, they had a woman who was paid to come and testify before Congress about how Saddam Hussein was pulling babies out of incubators, and it just shocked everybody about the evil and the savagery of Saddam Hussein. It turned out to be completely untrue – as almost every war. And there's nothing different about the war in Israel, in Gaza.

What was necessary was for Israel not to just accurately describe the atrocities that were committed on October 7th, and there were absolutely atrocities on October 7th; civilians killed in terrible ways, in brutal ways, people shot indiscriminately. But that wasn't enough. Knowing what the Israelis intended to do in Gaza, they needed the world to believe that this was not just an ordinary attack, that this was done by a kind of evil we had never seen before. Remember, they were describing them as worse than Nazis, worse than ISIS. And all kinds of stories got fabricated. That 40 babies were beheaded on October 7th. That babies were killed by being baked in ovens. That babies were cut out of their mothers wombs. And most importantly of all, that Hamas use on a mass scale sexual violence and sexual assault. And one of the most important articles that sealed this narrative as being confirmed was a December 28th article in The New York Times by their Pulitzer Prize winning bureau chief, Jeffrey Gettleman, along with two journalists that nobody ever heard of before, Anat

Schwartz and Adam Sella. They had very prominent by-lines on this article, even though they were not New York Times reporters, and had never reported on Israel previously. And the article headline was *Screams Without Words How Hamas Weaponized Sexual Violence on Oct. 7th*. And it read, quote: "A times investigation uncovered new details showing a pattern of rape, mutilation and extreme brutality against women in the attacks on Israel".

Now, one of the things that happened was that a family that was featured in the New York Times article as having had a close relative who was raped by Hamas on October 7th came out and repudiated the story, angrily objecting to their inclusion in this story. And it was covered only by a handful of small, independent outlets that tend to be critical of Israel, one of whom was Mondoweiss, who on January 3rd, 2024, so just five days or so after this New York Times article was published, had this article with the headline *Family of key case in New York Times October 7th sexual violence report renounces the story, says the reporters manipulated them*. Quote: "A New York Times story claiming a pattern of gender based violence on October 7th hinged on the story of Gal Abdush, but the Abdush family said there's no proof she was raped, and that Times reporters interviewed them under false pretences. A heartbreaking photo of Gal Abdush's family – a working class Mizrah Jewish family who lost their daughter and son-in-law Nagi Abdush – appeared on the newspaper's cover. The newspaper devoted a third of its story to the Abdush story. On December 29th, the Israeli website 'YNET' published an interview with Etti Brakha, Gal Abdush's mother. In the interview, the mother said that the family knew nothing about the sexual assault issue until the piece in the Times was published. Quote: 'We didn't know about the rape at all. We only knew after a New York Times journalist contacted us. They said they matched evidence and concluded that she had been sexually assaulted'. Then, on January 1st, Nissim Abdush, Nagi's brother, appeared in an interview on Israeli Channel 13... Nissim repeatedly denied that his sister-in-law was raped. Nissim also stated that no official party informed them of these doubts or this investigation, neither the police nor forensic experts. In the interview, Abdush reiterated that his brother's wife was not raped and that quote, 'the media invented it'. Gal's sisters also denied allegations of rape."

Now, one of the things that happened when these rape stories began emerging, and there was all kinds of demands that Western feminists who say that they defend women in rape cases, have an obligation to come out and denounce Hamas, defend Israeli women. This happened right at the time when hostages were being released from Gaza, and a lot of them are giving interviews saying that they were actually well treated while in captivity. This is not my claim, this is theirs. They were back in Israel, safe. Several of them had no people left back in Gaza. And they were saying things like they were well treated. They were never victimised by sexual assault, including women that their captors shared with them the same food that they ate. And that was becoming a big concern because the only way the Israelis could, and they knew this at the time, justify in people's minds what they were doing and knew they were going to do to Gaza, namely, destroy it all, was if they could convince people that the people in Gaza were not really human beings, that they were subhuman. And that's how the Israelis spoke about them from the very beginning, when the defence minister said, we're going to cut off all food and water, he quickly added, we're dealing with human animals and that's how

we're going to treat them. And to this day, if you object to what's happening in Gaza, you'll have all kinds of people who want to defend it. Insist that, Oh, the people in Gaza deserve it because they're savages, they're monsters, they're not really human, and point to a lot of these debunked stories about what was done on October 7th, that actually never happened. And again, there were atrocities on October 7th, there is no denying that. But they had to manufacture some of the worst stories because they wanted to put people's heads that everything we're going to do for the next eight months or nine months, any extreme suffering you're about to hear about, including the killing of children, these are not really human beings, these are monsters and mongrels and subhumans. And all of these fabricated stories were necessary to do that. Just like war propaganda of this kind always is designed to accomplish.

Now, one of the things that happened is that a Twitter user, named Zei Squirrel, who was an anonymous Twitter user, someone very smart, someone very vigilant, someone who does a lot of that kind of research, that independent journalism is dedicated to doing, even though this person has no resources, works alone. They're the ones who broke a story that the New York Times should have known on their own about the people they were using to report that story. On January 24th this account wrote the following: "Oh my God. One of the three authors of the New York Times' 'mass rape' atrocity propaganda hoax is Anat Schwartz. She liked posts calling for Gaza to be turned into a, quote, 'slaughterhouse'. This is the person the New York Times hired to write about Palestinians and frame them as subhuman monsters. By the way, Anat Schwartz never wrote a single word for the New York Times before November. That's s her first piece for them, and they chose a person who believes that Gaza, quote, 'must be turned into a slaughterhouse', and that Palestinians are, quote, 'animals' who deserve a 'Holocaust'." Zei Squirrel then came back, this week and said: "The other 'on the ground reporter' who gave Jeffrey Gettleman all the materials for the hoax, which he then gleefully wrote up, is Adam Sella, the nephew of Schwartz's husband, a recent college grad inspiring food writer who also has zero reporting experience". And there you see his bio, Adam Sella. He was one of three reporters on this story. He's obviously a very young person. He describes himself as a freelancer at The New York Times who lives in Tel Aviv. And in the about section, he says he went to Harvard. He says, "I am a writer, researcher, editor and translator covering Israel, Palestine and the intersection of food and the environment". He got a B.A. in comparative literature at Harvard, and he says, "My background is working for various publications and food companies, combined with my hands on work in kitchen and farms, which makes me well-suited to write about sustainable food". That's who they got along with this person Anat Schwartz, who upon further investigation, also served in the IDF, has been liking all kinds of tweets over weeks calling for mass death in Gaza. And those are the two 'on the ground reporters', quote unquote, that fed Jeffrey Gettleman this story that ultimately came very dubious. And it is a huge crisis for the New York Times to have so much questionable behaviour in one of their most important stories covering this war.

The Intercept reported, based on sources at The New York Times, that their highly popular and influential podcast, Daily, had planned on having Jeffrey Gettleman on to talk about this story, and then ultimately decided that it couldn't pass their fact checking, and that given all

the questions, including the denials by the key family, decided not to feature in on the Daily at all, and to this day it hasn't been. And as a result, there's all kinds of internal scrutiny now in The New York Times as a result of all these things that were found, including by this anonymous Twitter account, that The New York Times could easily have found with the same investigative scrutiny. Here's the headline in The Intercept from today, *New York Times puts, quote, 'Daily' episode on ice amid internal firestorm over Hamas sexual violence article.* Quote, "As the Times faces scrutiny for the coverage of Israel's war on Gaza, it has capitulated to the pro-Israel media watchdog CAMERA." "The New York Times pulled a high profile episode of the podcast "The Daily", about sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas on October 7th, amid a furious internal debate about the strength of the paper's original reporting on the subject, Times newsroom sources told The Intercept. The episode had been scheduled for January 9... and the critics have highlighted major discrepancies in the account presented in the Times, subsequent public comments from the family of a major subject of the article denouncing it, and comments from a key witness seeming to contradict a claim attributed him to him in the article".

Now, one thing that should give you a great deal of scepticism about things you've been told are some of the stories that shaped how people understood not just October 7th, but who the people in Gaza are deliberately. Here from NBC on October 12th, five days after the Hamas attack: *Unverified reports of, quote, '40 babies beheaded' in Israel-Hamas war inflame social media.* Quote: "No photo evidence has been made public as of Thursday morning corroborating claims that babies had been beheaded. Israel has published photos of dead infants after the terrorist attack. The most high profile claim came Wednesday night, when President Joe Biden said that he had seen photographic evidence of terrorist beheading children." And he then walked that back saying, actually, he hadn't seen those photos. He had just been told about them by Netanyahu. And then the biggest debunking came by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, which is a liberal newspaper, but also editorially in favour of the Israeli war in Gaza. And on December 4th, 2023, so almost two full months after the attack, they published this article which said: *Hamas Committed Documented Atrocities. But a Few False Stories Feed the Deniers.* So they were framing it as these false stories are damaging because it gives credence to the people who say Israel is lying. But the article was very damning about the extent of the lies on October 7th. This is their subheadline, remember, this is not a leftist newspaper in America. This is a mainstream newspaper in Israel that supports the Israeli war in Gaza. Quote, "The extensive evidence of crimes against humanity committed by Hamas terrorists on October 7 should not be contaminated by unverified stories disseminated by Israeli search and rescue groups, army officers and even Sara Netanyahu. Quote, "According to a reporter for i24News, an army commander told her that at least 40 babies had been killed, some of them beheaded. The report above was later quoted on social media, often referenced quote, 'dozens of beheaded babies', though sometimes it was, quote, 'burnt babies' or 'hanged babies'. For example, the Foreign Ministry of Israel published an account by Col. Golan Vach from the Home Front Command, who said that in one house he found the bodies of eight burnt babies. The Twitter account of the Prime Minister's Office also referred to the murder of infants and showed very graphic pictures. According to the tweet, President Benjamin Netanyahu showed the pictures to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

According to sources including Israel's National Insurance Institute, kibbutz leaders and the police, on October 7 one baby was murdered, 10-month-old Mila Cohen. She was killed with her father, Ohad, on Kibbutz Be'eri."

So I just want you to remember what you were told about what happened October 7th, all those stories that circulated, including from the Israeli government and contrast it to the very comprehensive report from Haaretz that demonstrated that on October 7th there was a total of one baby who was murdered. Other than deliberate lying at an intent to deceive, how is that possible to have concluded that there were 40 beheaded babies, when there was a grand total of one infant that was killed on October 7th. Only lying and fabrication would cause somebody to claim that you would see 40 beheaded babies. They had none of those. There were no cutting babies out of wombs, there were no baking babies in ovens. These were all absolute lies spread by the Israeli government and their supporters, the United States, not because there were no atrocities on October 7th, there were, but because the goal was to convince Americans that people in Palestine are something completely different. They're not human. They're somehow more savage than Nazis. They're worse than ISIS. And all of these lies were vital to sustaining that. At the end of the day, a lot of these lies were what led a lot of Americans to decide, including people who marched under the banner of America First and staying out of other foreign wars, that Joe Biden is right to finance the Israeli war, because these people that are being killed are people who deserve it because they're subhuman. And if you get to the point where you've let people lose your humanity, relinquish your humanity, cheer for some of the most grotesque acts that human beings are capable of imposing on others, including entire populations of women and children, then I would suggest that you need to seriously reconsider what it is that you have been led to support.

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