

2017-59: Selby vs MSN

September 1, 2017

The National NewsMedia Council mediated and dismissed a complaint about anti-Israel bias in an MSN time-line article compiled by two journalists from Associated Press.

Jeffrey Selby filed a complaint about the article's observation that "Palestinians say it stems from anger at decades of Israeli rule in territories they claim for a state." He stated that the observation was not relevant and that the article displayed anti-Israel bias.

Reading it in context, the statement is an observation that is warranted in accord with journalistic standards of presenting both sides of a controversial issue. A close reading of the article as a whole indicates no support for the complaint of attack on Israel, bias or anti-Semitic reporting. The article is a lengthy compilation of reaction from a variety of sources as a newsworthy and widely-reported event unfolded. It reported on reaction from a number of world leaders, including Israel's president, and quoted his note of condolence, which labeled the terrorism and spoke of the need to "stand united" against those who use violence to stifle freedom and destroy the lives of others. That reaction was reported in a manner consistent with reporting of statements from other leaders.

There is no evidence to support the complainant's view that the article became "a Palestinian issue". While the article stated that Israel is coping with attacks and stated the reported impetus for those attacks, there was no factual error or editorial comment in that news reporting. Some readers may be particularly sensitive to issues regarding Israel, Palestine, Lebanon or Germany but taken as a whole, references and quotes in this article can be reasonably read as accurate, transparent, and relevant to the events of the day.

The Canadian Press is distributor of AP material in Canada. Both CP and MSN are National NewsMedia Council members and were therefore notified about the complaint.

After a careful review of the complaint and the article in question, the NNC found no breach of journalistic standards or ethics. If grounds for a complaint had been found, the news media organizations would have been requested to respond and remedy the identified issues.