Many international media outlets have not shed light on the war against Hamas, but have joined in: unverified terror propaganda has been spread and inconvenient facts ignored. Commentator Masha Gabriel criticizes an industry that is gambling away its own credibility.

When Hamas claimed in October 2023 that Israel had bombed the Christian Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza and killed 500 people, major editorial offices from London to Zurich ran the headlines – without checking, without distance. Only days later did it emerge that the claims were false. “But the scene was irresistible. Finally, people could return to their favorite story: Israel as the perfect villain, Gaza as the ideal victim,” writes Masha Gabriel. Reporting thus became a moral production. Images, figures and videos by so-called “citizen journalists” served above all to feed a “genocide” narrative. Anyone who demanded proof was morally ostracized – even in German-speaking countries.

30-dollar club becomes the “highest authority”

Some media outlets particularly liked to refer to the “International Association of Genocide Scholars”. However, the supposed “expert organization” turned out to be a club that anyone can join for 30 dollars – including fake members such as “Adolf Hitler” or “Palpatine”. With only 28% turnout, Israel was nevertheless officially “accused” of genocide. This is exactly the kind of source that the media love because they appear serious, says Gabriel. “And later they like to quote actors and analysts in order to appear knowledgeable themselves. If it wasn’t so tragic, it would be funny.”

At the same time, journalistic principles eroded. The grotesque impact of this dynamic was demonstrated by the case of the Palestinian influencer “Mr. Fafo”, who repeatedly staged his own death – with millions of views. After his actual killing (by Palestinian militias, not by Israel), Western activists and celebrities honored him as a hero. Contradictions disrupted the narrative.

The whitewashing continued even after the ceasefire: *El País* described public executions by Hamas as an expression of its “authority on the streets”. Brutality was glorified as a criterion of order.

Moral bankruptcy

The media had adopted Hamas propaganda instead of checking facts and

presenting multiple perspectives. The claim to truth had been sacrificed to emotional partisanship. The French essayist Caroline Fourest spoke of faillite journalistique – “journalistic failure” – and moral bankruptcy. “And that’s exactly what it was,” writes Gabriel.

The result is double damage: a distorted picture of the conflict – and an industry that has lost its own compass. Credible journalism does not die through censorship, but through convenience, emotionalization and a loss of courage disguised as empathy.

German, abridged version. The commentary first appeared in the original English version at Jewish News Syndicate (JNS).

About the author

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