



UPDATE

BBC Coverage of the Israel-Hamas war

Further analysis of BBC News output since our initial report covering the first eleven months of the conflict.

October 2024

INTRODUCTION

On 30 September 2024, Britain's leading Jewish organisations came together to endorse a report highlighting anti-Israel bias in the BBC's coverage of the Israel/Hamas war and to call for an independent inquiry.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council and the Community Security Trust endorsed the report. It was compiled and edited by the BBC's former Director of Television Danny Cohen, and concluded the BBC was "institutionally hostile to Israel".

Sir Ephraim Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi, said the report recorded "the repeated and longstanding failure to ensure impartial and accurate news coverage of the existential war that Israel is fighting on multiple fronts".

In the months following the damning report's publication, Israel marked the one year anniversary of the terror attack by Hamas which left 1,200 people dead and saw 251 taken hostage – of which 101 are still being held captive in Gaza. The country fought back against Hezbollah in the north and endured a ballistic missile attack from Iran as well as a terrorist attacks on its own streets.

However, the BBC has continued to portray Israel as the aggressor, to parrot Hamas lines about casualty figures without qualification, to platform guests with extreme antisemitic views and to allow claims of 'genocide' to go unchallenged.

Increasingly it appears that the BBC newsroom is out of control, with its management unable to maintain the standards expected by our national broadcaster.

“Whatever it takes”

Mohammed Marandi

One day after the BBC was presented with the report, it invited Iranian propagandist Mohammed Marandi to appear on BBC Radio 4’s flagship Today programme.

Marandi was presented as an academic from the University of Tehran and the BBC failed to disclose his deep affiliation to the Iranian regime – a breach of its own Editorial Guidelines.

In a live interview with presenter Mishal Husain, Professor Mohammed Marandi called Israel a “genocidal regime” and attacked Britain and the West for supporting a “Holocaust” carried out by Israel.

Marandi has been described as one of the “Iranian regime’s main propagandists”. He is the son of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s personal doctor and served in the IRGC – a proscribed organisation by the US.¹

He said: “Iranians will definitely do whatever it takes to make sure that the Israel regime fails in its genocide in Gaza and its genocidal airstrikes in Lebanon.”

Asked what he meant by “whatever it takes”, Marandi said: “Just as the UK supports this holocaust in Gaza, just as it supports the slaughter of the Lebanese and just as it justifies whatever actions the Israeli regime takes, we have no doubt that they will be with the Israelis until the very last Palestinian.

“Because we are all Amelek – we are inferior, they are the chosen people, they are your allies and it’s basically an extension of the Western empire over the last few hundred years – the civilising mission. Wherever the West has gone, they are civilised and that justifies the destruction of the uncivilised and the barbarians, so this is basically a repeat of history and the only solution is resistance.

“The only way forward is resistance because there is nothing that will stop this Israeli regime because that is the nature of the regime...it believes in ethno-supremacism, it believes they are the chosen people, they have exceptional rights and therefore they have exceptional rights to the whole region. It’s not just Palestine, it goes beyond the borders of Palestine.”²

Marandi’s antisemitic views and conspiracy theories were scarcely challenged during the interview.

In a statement, the Board of Deputies said it was “deeply concerned” that the guest was allowed to continue without “clear pushback” by Ms Husain.

“We will be raising this directly with the BBC at the highest levels,” the BoD said.³

The CST’s policy director David Rich described the broadcast as “appalling” and urged the BBC to “explain themselves”.⁴ Historian Sir Simon Schama said it was “breathtakingly irresponsible” to allow the comments to go unchallenged.

The BBC, in a statement, said he was challenged but went on: “...we accept we should have continued to challenge his language throughout the interview”.

His appearance also raised fresh questions about the due diligence carried out on guests. On 7 October 2023, Marandi posted on social media: “It’s been a great and historic day. Israel can’t even defeat the besieged Gazans. How can the regime even contemplate confrontation with Hezbollah, let alone the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is time for colonisers to go back to their homes in Europe and North America.”

1 BBC Iranian expert who ranted about ‘chosen people’ pictured in IRGC uniform, [Jewish Chronicle](#), 11 October 2024.

2 BBC accepts it failed to ‘continually challenge’ Tehran professor, [Jewish News](#), 1 October 2024.

3 Mishal Husain failed to sufficiently challenge guest over anti-semitic conspiracies, BBC admits, [Telegraph](#), 1 October 2024.

4 Dave Rich, [Twitter](#), 1 October 2024.

Marandi appeared as a guest on BBC News Channel later the same day, despite a flood of complaints about the Today programme interview. He was introduced as a university professor and again his claims of “genocide” and “war crimes” by Israel went largely unchallenged.

Two days later, in a statement, the BBC accepted that failures to properly challenge Marandi amounted to “a lapse in our usual editorial standards”.⁵

It is difficult to understand why someone who shared racist abuse on a flagship BBC programme would be invited to appear again later the same day on the BBC. It is unfathomable, following the controversy about Marandi’s appearance, why he would be invited back a third time. But that is exactly what happened on 26 October when Marandi was interviewed on BBC Radio 4’s Six O’Clock News by International Editor Jeremy Bowen.⁶

It is hard to believe this happening if the interviewee had made racist remarks about any other minority community within the UK. The only explanation can be a lack of management grip or a willingness by BBC journalists to give platforms to antisemites.

5 Today, interview with Professor Mohammad Marandi, **BBC Complaints**, 3 October 2024.

6 Six O’Clock News, **BBC Radio 4**, 26 October 2024.

“Logical and Legal”

The Supreme Leader

The BBC sparked further outrage three days after the report’s publication, when the BBC News Channel broadcast for more than 40 minutes a live speech by Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran during which he praised the Hamas atrocities of 7 October as “logical and legal”. Khamenei delivered a speech to celebrate Iran’s 2 October bombardment of Israel, which saw 181 ballistic missiles rain down on towns and cities across the country forcing millions to flee to bomb shelters for safety.⁷

Although Israel’s defence systems and allied interception prevented loss of life, Khamenei described the attack as “punishment” for what he called Israel’s “astonishing crimes” – a reference to the killing of Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah.⁸

The decision to mainstream the Supreme Leader’s propaganda and hate speech was defended by the BBC after a slew of complaints from leading Jewish community figures.⁹

In a statement the BBC said: “The BBC News channel took rare footage from Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s first public speech since 2020 as part of analysis and scrutiny on the contents of the speech. As Iran’s involvement in the conflict has intensified, it is important and editorially relevant to hear from the key players to aid understanding of developments. Our journalists, including colleagues from BBC Persian, provided context and explanation for audiences.”¹⁰

It is, however, difficult to imagine the BBC would give 40 minutes of airtime to a speech by Vladimir Putin to ‘aid the understanding’ of Russia’s war on the Ukraine.

7 Propaganda, hate speech and disinformation: the BBC’s idea of ‘a range of perspectives’, **CAMERA UK**, 6 October 2024.

8 Iran’s leader defends strikes on Israel in rare public speech, **BBC News**, 4 October 2024.

9 BBC slammed over ‘shameful’ coverage of Iran’s Supreme Leader as the fanatic branded Oct 7 attack ‘logical and legal’, **The Sun**, 4 October 2024.

10 BBC News, speech delivered by Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, **BBC Complaints**, 11 October 2024.

“A Morning Of Hope”

Sally Nabil

As the conflict spread to Lebanon, BBC Breakfast featured BBC Arabic journalist Sally Nabil – a woman who liked social media posts on 7 October that celebrated the Hamas massacre of Israeli men, women and children.¹¹

One post Nabil liked described 7 October as a “morning of hope” even as the world reeled in horror over the appalling atrocities committed by Hamas.¹²

News journalists have a ‘particular responsibility’ to uphold the BBC’s values of impartiality on social media. Ms Nabil was suspended by the BBC but, following an investigation, was allowed to return to work.

The BBC’s light touch response prompted fierce criticism from senior representatives of the British Jewish community who believed Ms Nabil should have been sacked.¹³

Ms Nabil showed evident – and shocking – bias in her social media response to the Hamas massacre and it is extraordinary that BBC News’ management believe that it is appropriate for Ms Nabil to take any further part in reporting the conflicts between Israel and its Iranian-backed neighbours.

This asks serious questions of the BBC’s editorial processes and standards. Why was a clearly biased journalist allowed to report further on this conflict?

It should also be noted that Ms Nabil appeared, in this case, on BBC Breakfast in the UK. This is an insight into the way the severe problems with bias at BBC Arabic are repeatedly finding their way into the BBC’s coverage for UK audiences.

11 BBC Breakfast, [Twitter](#), 3 October 2024.

12 BBC journalists investigated for posts about Oct 7 massacre still reporting on Israel-Gaza conflict, [Telegraph](#), 2 March 2024.

13 BBC accused of ‘letting off’ staff who ‘supported Hamas terror attacks’, [Jewish Chronicle](#), 29 November 2023.

“A Range of Perspectives”

Deborah Turness

On 1 October 2024, the CEO of BBC News, Deborah Turness put out a statement entitled: ‘October 7th: One Year On’. On the same day that Mohammed Marandi was twice given a platform to spew anti-Jewish race hate, Ms Turness was explaining the importance of delivering “a range of perspectives” in delivering an impartial news service.

It is right the BBC should provide a platform for a range of diversity of opinion, but providing a platform for contributors to make racist statements is not something the BBC would ever contemplate, if an interviewer was attacking any other minority.

She goes on to write: “But if there is one thing we have learned more than any other in the past year, it’s that such is the depth of the polarisation in this war, so many have come to see impartial reporting as being somehow against them, because it does not solely reflect their view of the conflict.

“Much of this is perhaps explained by social media algorithms and echo chambers that serve consumers more of what they already ‘like’. People mostly follow people whose opinions they agree with, and as more news providers put their journalism behind paywalls, consumers increasingly subscribe to media brands that reflect their own world view. They are increasingly living in an information ecosystem that surrounds them with their own views and opinions.

“But BBC News does not and cannot reflect any single world view. In this war, we cannot be a place where any side feels that their perspective prevails. Our job is to report fairly and impartially, to report without fear or favour. Our duty to public service journalism means we will always hear from a range of perspectives – including those you may not agree with.”¹⁴

The implication of Ms Turness’s statement – the day after the publication of the Cohen report and its endorsement by the Chief Rabbi – is that the only reason the Jewish community and others have been so concerned about the BBC’s coverage is that they are incapable of distinguishing between coverage they don’t agree with and coverage that is inaccurate, biased and in breach of editorial guidelines. Many of the examples of inaccuracy have been accepted by the BBC, so this is another example of the BBC gaslighting its critics from the Jewish community.

“Hezbollah and Iran have played it Fairly Rationally”

Andreas Kreig

Another guest who appeared on the BBC News Channel to discuss Iran’s missile bombardment of Israel was an associate professor at King’s College London’s Defence Studies Department.

Andreas Kreig said: “The international community has to make sure that whatever Israel does is not upending the regional order as we know it, and the US has a responsibility. So we’ve been in this cause for 12 months now of constantly red lines being crossed, mostly by the Israelis. Hezbollah and Iran have played it fairly rationally trying to always try to be very cautious in how they respond, trying to leave off ramps where they could. The Netanyahu government has kind of lost the opportunity at every junction to use an offramp that was given to them.”

Mr Kreig is, of course, entitled to his view, no matter how peculiar it may be, but under BBC Editorial Guidelines, the broadcaster should make clear “contributors’ affiliations”. The associate professor had previously worked for the Qatari Armed Forces: a state that funds, hosts and supports Hamas.¹⁵ His appearance led to the BBC being mocked online by the Guido Fawkes blog.¹⁶

¹⁵ Academic suggested on BBC that Israel has been the aggressor – just as Iran’s missiles were launched, [Jewish Chronicle](#), 7 October 2024.

¹⁶ BBC Guest: Hezbollah and Iran “Rational and Cautious”, [Guido Fawkes](#), 2 October 2024.

“A Flagrant Violation of International Law”

UNIFIL

In Lebanon the United Nations established a peacekeeping force to patrol the buffer zone south of the Litani River and the border with Israel – the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Under UN Resolution 1701 this area was to be regularly patrolled by the 50,000 strong UNIFIL soldiers to maintain peace and uphold international law.

Despite costing \$550m dollars a year, UNIFIL has failed to enforce the resolution as Hezbollah has infiltrated the land south of the Litani River and built fortresses and weapons caches often near UNIFIL posts and built a network of underground tunnels.

It has also failed to act as Hezbollah used these positions to fire thousands of rockets into northern Israel over the last twelve months – starting on 8 October 2023.

These rockets have displaced 60,000 Israelis, injured innocent civilians and killed 12 children as they played football this summer.

When Israel began its strike back against Hezbollah, and its subsequent ground operation in southern Lebanon, the UNIFIL workers were urged to withdraw for their own safety.

The BBC coverage of the impact of Israel’s actions fails to explain this context, paints Israel once more as aggressor and UNIFIL is portrayed as facing “attacks on peacekeepers” as a means of trying to “force” them out.¹⁷

On 13 October 2024, a large barrage of anti-tank missiles was fired at IDF troops in southern Lebanon. The attack came from Hezbollah terrorists based very near to a UNIFIL post in Ramyah.

During the attack two soldiers were seriously injured and 23 more were hurt. Under heavy Hezbollah fire, two Israeli military tanks began a rescue mission to rescue the casualties. During that rescue, one tank drove into a UNIFIL post to save soldiers as it was forced to reverse under heavy gunfire.

The BBC rushed out a news notification and two stories which repeated UNIFIL claims that this action amounted to a “flagrant violation of international law”.

A BBC Breaking News post declared: “UN peacekeepers say Israeli tanks forced entry to their position in south Lebanon as PM Netanyahu demands they leave area.”¹⁸

A subsequent BBC Live story online stated: “IDF tanks ‘destroy gate’ at UN peacekeepers’ compound in southern Lebanon”.¹⁹

The UNIFIL statement claimed the tank “forcibly entered the position” and says 15 peacekeepers were “injured by smoke from rounds fired by Israeli tanks”. A third article that evening repeated the claim that “UN says Israeli tanks forced entry into one of its positions in south Lebanon”.

Israeli rounds were fired to provide cover as IDF tank crew went to rescue soldiers who had been shot. The injuries sustained by UNIFIL peacekeepers were skin irritations and gastrointestinal reactions.

17 BBC News facilitation of UNIFIL talking points, [CAMERA UK](#), 15 October 2024.

18 BBC Breaking News, [Twitter](#), 13 October 2024.

19 UN condemns ‘large number of civilian casualties’ in north Gaza as Israel steps up campaign, [BBC News](#), 13 October 2024.

The reports created an impression of tanks deliberately storming the base to intimidate UNIFIL workers into leaving and posing a threat to the safety of peacekeepers.

Following an IDF statement, the BBC amended its online story but the claims of UNIFIL workers remained at the top of the copy. Further down, the response from the IDF is dismissively described as a “different version of events”.²⁰

20 UN says Israeli tanks forced entry into base in south Lebanon, [BBC News](#), 13 October 2024.

“Anger and Grief”

Orla Guerin

Since its ground operation into southern Lebanon, the Israel Defence Force has documented and posted evidence of weapons caches, underground tunnels, bunkers and Hezbollah watch posts – all established in defiance of international law and under the noses of the United Nations peacekeeping force.

It is from these positions that Hezbollah has fired tens of thousands of rockets into northern Israel for a year – forcing tens of thousands of Israeli families to flee their homes. Israeli military believe that following the Hamas terror attack, thousands of Hezbollah terrorists were moved into position near the Lebanon border to storm the Galilee and commit a fresh wave of atrocities.

The IDF spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari has briefed journalists about the invasion plan foiled by 70 covert commando missions into southern Lebanon to dismantle the immediate threat.²¹

However, the BBC’s focus on Israel’s ground operations in Lebanon has been predominately on casualties and the displacement of people caused by conflict rather than the overwhelming evidence of the threat posed to Israel by Iranian backed Hezbollah terrorists. Scores of headlines portray Israel as aggressor – on 4 October: ‘Israel strike hits key road used to flee Lebanon’;²² the following day: ‘Lebanon hospitals close as Israeli strikes hit health facilities.’²³

The heartbreaking costs of war have featured heavily, but the cruel realities of how Hezbollah operates – like Hamas it uses the civilian population as human shields and hides its weapon stores near or below hospitals and schools – have featured less prominently.

A report by Senior International Correspondent Orla Guerin, is typical. It is posted under the headline: ‘Anger and grief in south Lebanon city almost deserted after Israeli strikes’.

Reporting from Tyre she wrote: “You drive fast, but don’t speed, knowing there are eyes in the sky. Mostly you are the only car on an empty road – which can make you a target. The knowledge is always with us, like the body armour we now wear. But civilians here have no armour plating to shield them and many Lebanese no longer have a roof over their heads.”²⁴

It was twelve days into the ground operation before the BBC turned its focus to the threat posed by Hezbollah. The BBC News website published an article by journalist Lucy Williamson, who was escorted across the border by Israeli military to report on what was found.

She wrote: “We were also shown three caches of weapons it said were found inside civilian homes here, including boxes of brand-new mortars, new anti-tank missiles and mines, as well as sophisticated shoulder launched rockets and night-scopes. One anti-tank missile we saw was already semi-assembled.

“The chief of staff for the 91st Division, Roy Russo, also showed us a garage he said had been used as an equipment warehouse, with sleeping bags, body armour, rifles and ammunition hidden in a large barrel.

21 IDF: Hezbollah was ready to invade en masse after Oct. 7; we covertly raided 1,000 sites, [Times of Israel](#), 1 October 2024.

22 Israel Strike Hits Key Road Used to Flee Lebanon, [BBC News](#), 4 October 2024.

23 Lebanon hospitals close as Israeli strikes hit health facilities, [BBC News](#), 5 October 2024.

24 Tyre: Anger and grief in south Lebanon city almost deserted after Israeli strikes, [BBC News](#), 5 October 2024.

“‘This is what we call an exchange zone,’ he said. ‘They’re morphing from civilians into combatants. All this gear is designed to manoeuvre into [Israel] and conduct operations on the Israeli side. This is not defensive equipment.’”²⁵

The BBC’s reporting of Israel’s conflict with Hezbollah has repeatedly failed to provide proper context for the war, including the months of rocket barrages that Israel faced from Hezbollah before the war started, UNIFIL’s failure as peacekeepers and the tactics Hezbollah has employed that endanger the lives of innocent Lebanese citizens.

25 Inside Israel’s combat zone in southern Lebanon, [BBC News](#), 12 October 2024.

“If It Hurts, It Hurts”

Life and Death in Gaza

Following on from its moving documentary about the Hamas massacre at the Nova Festival on 15 October 2024, the BBC aired a documentary called ‘Life and Death in Gaza’ which followed four Gazans caught up in the horrors of the war unleashed by Hamas. The face of the promotional documentary material is Aya Ashour, who features heavily in the film.

Her social media posts have included repeated celebrations over murdered Jews. On 27 January 2023, when seven Jews were murdered outside a synagogue she posted: “Pray for us, brother Shlen!” The post featured a celebrating emoji and a glass of wine.

On 5 May 2022, following the murder of Jews by two axe-wielding attackers in Elad she posted: “If it hurts, it hurts.” This post came with a fire emoji and a Palestinian flag. And on 29 March 2022, when five civilians were murdered in the terrorist attack on Bnei Brak, she posted: “Glory to the weapon. Glory to the rebels.”²⁶

It is hard to understand why the BBC would focus its coverage on a racist who celebrates the deaths of Jews.

“The Biggest Monster of Destruction”

Yahya Sinwar

On 16 October 2024, the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of the 7 October atrocity, was welcomed by UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and US President Joe Biden.

On BBC Radio 4's PM programme Arab nationalist politician Sami Abou Shahadeh, leader of the Balad party, was interviewed by presenter Evan Davis who failed to challenge a string of antisemitic comments and conspiracy theories during the interview.

Mr Shahadeh, a Palestinian Israeli politician who served on the Knesset between 2019 and 2022, called Israel “the biggest monster of destruction that I know about all over the world”.

Mr Davis asked whether it was entirely “predictable” that many Palestinians would die as a result of what Sinwar started.

Mr Shahadeh said: “I don't think it was predictable, because I don't think if any human being, Palestinian leader or any other, would have expected this genocidal war... Israel since 7 October killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, most of them are women and children.”

He added that the “main issue, the main challenge for peace and justice and equality for all, is the Israeli occupation and the Israeli consistence of keeping an apartheid regime all over historical Palestine.”

In response, Mr Davis replied: “Sami thanks so much for talking to us. Obviously, Israel has a different view and would push back about many of the words you choose to describe it but really appreciate, really appreciate you coming on and setting out that point of view.”²⁷

To merely point to the fact that Israel would contest much of what had just been said, does not amount to holding Mr Shahadeh to account, nor was he subjected to the same level of scrutiny that spokespeople supporting Israel are subjected to. It is hard to imagine that such outrageous falsehoods and smears would be given uninterrupted airtime, with perfunctory pushback only at the end, were it any other subject than Israel.

“The Biggest Defeat”

Jeremy Bowen

The hope that the death of Hamas terrorist leader Sinwar could prove a pivotal turning point in the war was given short shrift by the BBC’s International Editor Jeremy Bowen. In an article published on 17 October 2024, he concluded that Netanyahu “made it clear that however big a victory, it was not the end of the war”.

Describing Sinwar, Mr Bowen added: “His death is a serious blow for Hamas, the organisation he turned into a fighting force that inflicted the biggest defeat on the state of Israel in its history.”²⁸

This sentence is particularly telling with regards to Mr Bowen’s perceptions of Israel and the Middle East. Israel was not at war with Hamas on 7 October, and the rape, beheading and slaughter of innocent Israelis on that day was not a “defeat” but a barbaric terrorist attack.

In the same article he said the war had killed “at least 42,000 Palestinians”. He made this statement without proper attribution to Hamas, or making clear that these figures are highly contested. He also took it upon himself to assert that these figures were an underestimate.

28 Bowen: Sinwar’s death is serious blow to Hamas, but not the end of the war, [BBC News](#), 24 October 2024.

“Hezbollah is a Terrorist Organisation”

Lord Mann

The Government’s independent advisor on antisemitism, Lord Mann, said the Danny Cohen report should have sent “shockwaves in the BBC” – but it seems many of the criticisms levelled at the broadcaster over its coverage of the conflict against Hamas, have been repeated.

A BBC News article reporting on Israel’s ground operations against Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon did not mention that Hezbollah is a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK. A second article covering Iran’s rocket launch also fails to describe Hezbollah as terrorists.

Lord Mann told the Daily Telegraph: “Hezbollah is a terror organisation and should always be reported as such. They almost treat them as an army rather than a terror organisation that is armed.”

A BBC spokesman said the corporation referred to Hezbollah as a “proscribed terrorist organisation” when “editorially relevant”. No clarity was provided as to the circumstances in which the terrorist nature of Hezbollah would not be ‘editorially relevant’ during an armed conflict.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism said: “The BBC is stubbornly failing to describe Hezbollah in legally accurate terms. Using any other descriptor risks legitimising or downplaying the actions and rhetoric of this and other terror groups. British Jews should be able to expect better from our national broadcaster.”²⁹

The BBC’s coverage of the war on Hamas also continued to repeat mistakes that had been frequently highlighted within the report submitted on 30 September 2024. This included failure to refer to Hamas as a proscribed terror organisation.

On 20 October 2024, the headline on the BBC News website read: “At least 87 killed in strike on Northern Gaza, officials say, as UN warns ‘nowhere’ is safe.” It stated: “Israeli strikes have killed at least 87 people... according to the Hamas-run authorities.”³⁰

29 ‘Hezbollah are acting rationally’: The BBC’s Israel problem laid bare, [Telegraph](#), 2 October 2024.

30 At least 87 killed in strike on northern Gaza, officials say, as UN warns ‘nowhere is safe’, [BBC News](#), 19 October 2024.

“We are not at War with the People of Lebanon”

Hidden Gold

On 22 October 2024, the IDF published a document detailing how Hezbollah funded its terror network both by smuggling weapons and through Iranian money transferred by the Quds Force from the profits of Iranian oil sales in Syria.

The information was published as part of a warning to Lebanese people to move away from the terror network’s financial facilities in the Dahieh area, earmarked for targeted strikes by the Israeli military.

The statement stated there was a bunker containing millions of dollars’ worth of gold bars that belonged to killed leader Hassan Nasrallah.

The Israeli military detailed how this hidden wealth was “concealed under a hospital” and talked about a bunker “under” Al Sahel Hospital, in the heart of Beirut. The statement added: “The IDF will not strike the hospital. Instead we call on the Lebanese authorities to stop Hezbollah taking this money from its terror activities and return it to its rightful owners, the Lebanese people. We are not at war with the people of Lebanon, we are at war with Hezbollah.”

A day later, hospital staff invited BBC international reporter Orla Guerin and other journalists to tour the hospital. Reporting from inside, Ms Guerin stressed how they allowed free access to every part of the hospital.

She said: “The morgue was opened up, all the drawers were opened to show us there was nothing inside. Doctors have been opening piles of surgical scrubs, boxes of equipment, very, very keen to show us everything there is to see and to prove that there is nothing here.”³¹

The report appeared to be attempting to debunk the IDF’s claim but missed the point that the military never claimed the gold was within the hospital but in a bunker “under” it. Ms Guerin’s “performative” investigation was mocked on social media and the IDF’s Arabic spokesman Avichay Adraee urged the journalists on the tour “not to waste time on theatrics”. He gave them directions and the address of the entrance to the bunker.³²

It is not clear why Ms Guerin did not attempt to investigate the whereabouts of the bunker, during her report or subsequently.

31 BBC tours hospital Israel says sits above millions in Hezbollah gold, [BBC News](#), 23 October 2024.

32 Avichay Adraee, [Twitter](#), 22 October 2024.

“That’s what any Israeli Soldier should do.”

Eran Etzion

On 23 October 2024, the BBC aired an interview between Special Correspondent Fergal Keane, working with BBC Verify, and Israel’s former Deputy Head of the National Security Council Eran Etzion.

Mr Etzion is described as a man whose “judgement was trusted at the highest levels of the state” and a “long standing critic” of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu whose “years of public service earned him widespread respect”.³³

In August 2023, Mr Etzion shared a video post on X that likened the Israeli Prime Minister to Adolf Hitler. In the video (also shared by the former PM Ehud Barak), Professor Ichak Adizes, a tenured professor at UCLA, Stanford, Tel Aviv University and Colombia University, suggested that Netanyahu, like Hitler, would eventually commit suicide.³⁴

Mr Etzion’s interview with the BBC appeared to be little more than conjecture dressed up as a news story under the headline: “IDF soldiers should refuse orders that may be war crimes”.

It was clear, during the course of the interview, that Mr Etzion had no evidence of any war crimes being committed by Israeli soldiers, only that it was his fear.

“If a soldier is expected to commit something that might be suspected as a war crime, they must refuse, that is what I would do I were a soldier. That’s what any Israeli soldier should do,” he said.

The report also quoted “one of Britain’s most prominent war crimes lawyers” Professor Philippe Sands KC, and incorrectly stated that the ICC prosecutor was seeking an arrest warrant for the IDF Chief of Staff, (rather than Israel’s Prime Minister). The error was subsequently corrected.

The article ended with a brief statement from the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the army’s relief wing, which said it was their policy to facilitate aid into Gaza “without limits”. The BBC report adds: “That is Israel’s narrative. But as scenes of civilian suffering continue to emerge from Jabalia it is being widely challenged.”

It is not clear why the BBC chose to give such prominence to a series of unproven views that had no basis in evidence.

33 IDF soldiers should refuse orders that may be war crimes, Israeli ex-security adviser tells BBC, [BBC News](#), 23 October 2024.

34 Israeli Ex-PM shares video of prof. equating Netanyahu with Hitler, [The Jerusalem Post](#), 28 August 2023.