

THE BLOGS > Mark S. Golub

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CNN's "unreliable" criticism of Israel



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On Sunday, January 18, 2015, Brian Stelter, host of CNN's "Reliable Sources," put graphics on the screen to illustrate that many of the world leaders participating in the Million Person Unity Rally in Paris (last Sunday, January 11, 2014) were guilty of what his guest Jeremy Scahil of *The Intercept* calls a "CIRCUS OF HYPOCRISY" - because their countries are guilty of repressing free speech.

Stelter introduced the graphics by saying the countries he was about to profile have "a pretty terrible record when it comes to press freedom." Stelter began with Saudi Arabia, which CNN described as "relentless in its censorship of the media" and jailing writers for insulting freedom. CNN cited Saudi's "Press Freedom Ranking" as the 164 lowest out of 180 countries according to the French non-profit media watchdog "Reporters Without Borders."

But in addition to highlighting the institutionalized repression of freedom of the press in Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey and Egypt, Stelter chose to include Israel on CNN's "hypocrisy list" with a CNN graphic showing that the Israeli media "must comply with military censorship and gag orders," and has a Press Freedom Ranking of 96 of 180 from "Reporters Without Borders."

It is preposterous and outrageous for CNN to add Israel to a list of brutal and repressive regimes which hardly qualify as authentic democracies.

A democracy at war invariably puts some restrictions on its press coverage. Reporters Without Borders acknowledges this fact of life and offers an explanation for Israel's ranking in its published notes:

"Journalists in Israel enjoy real freedom of expression despite the existence of military censorship but the country fell in the index because of the Israeli military's targeting of journalists in the Palestinian Territories."

CNN surely knows that the United States has the exact same kinds of military censorship and gag orders as does Israel. Would CNN add the United States to its list of hypocritical countries participating in the march since America's Ambassador to France was present?

When Scahil suggested that the U.S. also was hard on journalists, Stelter quickly countered that he did not see a comparison between other repressive countries and the United States. Stelter's counter to Scahil applies equally to Israel.

In its analysis of Israel's overall commitment to the press, Reporters Without Borders carefully describes the general condition of Israeli journalists as "enjoying real freedom of expression despite the existence of military censorship." This statement alone should have prevented CNN from adding Israel to its hypocrisy list.

Reporters Without Borders' secretary general Christophe Deloire makes a very important general statement about the kinds of countries which promote free speech, saying:

"...democratic countries occupy the top of the index while dictatorial countries occupy the last three positions....it is clear that democracies provide better protection for the freedom to produce and circulate accurate news and information than countries where human rights are flouted."

For the third consecutive year, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway were leaders in press freedom with Canada ranking 20th and the United States ranking 32nd. China, Iran, Syria and North Korea were among those ranking lowest on the list. The Palestinians ranked 146th.

As the only legitimate democracy in the Middle East, Israel embodies the western commitment to press freedom which CNN should celebrate. To suggest that Israel restricts freedom of the press in ways similar to Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey and Egypt is an affront to all those who support the principle of Freedom of the Press and a profound journalistic irresponsibility that causes one to wonder what kind of anti-Israel bias is at the heart of CNN news analysis.

Sadly, it reflects the height of journalistic unreliability.

About Mark S. Golub

Lauded by Newsweek as one of America's most influential rabbis, Mark Golub is recognized within American Jewry as a leading interviewer and television producer. His award-winning national program, "L'Chayim," has aired continuously since 1979 with a guest list that reads like a "Who's Who" on the world Jewish scene.

Rabbi Golub originated JBS-Jewish Broadcasting service (formerly Shalom TV), America's first National Jewish Television Network.

To arrange an interview with JBS President Mark S. Golub, contact [Edith Samers](#) at 203-536-6914.