International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC) Journalist Handbook

By Timothy Covi & Johannes Wahlström
Updated by: George Rishmawi, Jenka Soderberg Ghassan Andoni and others

Contents

Introduction

In the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict, increased restrictions on international and local media agencies have stifled fair and accurate reporting from the region. The daily, ongoing violence of the Occupation is rarely reported on in the international news in general, and even more rarely reported within the US. The reasons for this are various -- not the least of which is the fact that in 2001, a year after the present occupation of Palestine began, the Israeli army began demanding that international reporters screen every news story about Palestine through them. The result was, and continues to be, massive self-censorship among international reporters in Palestine, and military censorship in some cases. Another major factor in the underreporting of violence in Palestine is the fact that very few international reporters actually make it into the Palestinian Occupied Territories at all -- most end up doing their reporting from Jerusalem, and little news of the daily violence behind the army checkpoints ever gets beyond those checkpoints into Israel. A third factor in the underreporting of violence within the Palestinian territories is the fact that Palestinian reporters, journalists and news crews are for the most part unpaid. Palestinian journalists often find themselves isolated and alone, reporting their daily news stories to a local audience that already knows the story, having just lived through it that day. The problem for these Palestinian journalists is that the news simply does not get out.

Seeking to reinstate a more functional media apparatus in the region, the IMEMC has built, over the last three years, an online English language news site based on international standards of journalistic professionalism. IMEMC's demand for contextual reporting and its independence means that IMEMC news reporters have an unprecedented level of freedom, as well as a responsibility to adhere to and maintain international standards of journalistic integrity.

Addressing the needs of the difficult working environment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, IMEMC has developed training strategies and methodologies that advance professionalism. IMEMC helps train local volunteer journalists in international news standards, such that they can publish and syndicate their work to a global audience, not only by providing English accessibility, but by reshaping local journalism to accommodate more critical international standards.

The IMEMC has adopted a basic set of news principles and styles for the purpose of communicating local events to an international audience. The standards of what has come to be known as "international journalism" are founded both in a set of ethical principles that are considered universal in news reporting, and also in stylistic principles that have been adopted for the purpose of communicating to a diverse audience in as efficient a manner as possible. Using the basic structural devices of international journalism gives IMEMC journalists an edge in syndicating reports beyond regional or colloquial media.

In this handbook, we outline a news schema specific to the regional conflict, but also attentive to the interests of foreign audiences. We have proposed standardized terminology for groups and situations that are commonly dealt with, but are rarely accurately described. The IMEMC house styles lay the groundwork for terms that will push news media toward more critical and contextual reporting, to go beyond the facile surface of events and analyzes the underlying social and political problems.

News Schema

The IMEMC divides news coverage into two main categories: political/conflict coverage, and social coverage. News articles published at the IMEMC will typically fall into one of these categories. A special case is the news brief, which is typically a less contextual report that describes events where limited detail is available. News briefs are usually conflict coverage, describing incidents of violence related to the occupation, but may also include political events about which there is little information available.

These categories are never absolute. Armed conflict converges with politics, politics with social issues, social issues with conflict, etc. At times, differentiating between these categories at all is useless, as all forms might take place in one article. The division exists only to illustrate more clearly the kind of news the IMEMC produces so journalists and editors are working with the same set of standards.

Most journalists working at the IMEMC are professionals and already know a great deal about news styles and structure. The IMEMC wants to provide one added benefit for local journalists—a clear model for writing to an international audience. The model of writing employed by the IMEMC is the most widely employed model in international news (*the 'Pyramid Model' – see 'Style Tips' on p. 16 of this guide)*, and thus provides a level of professionalism often lacking in local coverage.

Conflict Coverage / Political Coverage

News media and media critics often try to divide news coverage in areas of conflict into categorical terms, referring to conflict coverage on the one hand, and political coverage on the other. However, armed conflict and political policy converge in such a way that a clear delineation between the two is often hard to make. Accurate reporting in a region of intense conflict cannot be based on a clear division in these terms. Conflict coverage is never contextual without an understanding of political developments, and political coverage is never complete without an understanding of how physical or armed conflict informs political environments and shapes policy decisions.

Practically speaking, it is difficult to determine how to accurately and effectively cover both conflict and politics. News media are faced with the imperative of providing an audience with the most significant developments as they occur, but the dilemma is that in relating *every* incident of armed conflict to a political process, audiences become bored with the political process itself—tolerance levels for the repetitive aspects of armed conflict are very low generally. On the other hand, to ignore incidents in armed conflict altogether would be irresponsible journalism, as it would lead to a misrepresentation of reality.

One solution to this problem would be to reduce the amount of coverage that deals with armed conflict. Doing this, however, leads to a problem – the decision of what is newsworthy. Most media agencies engaged in this process will suggest that large incidents are newsworthy, while relatively small incidents are negligible, creating a state of sensationalism. An example of this process in practice would be thus: most news agencies widely cover bus bombings. These are huge incidents with high casualty rates. On the other hand, news agencies typically avoid coverage of daily house demolitions, where those affected are smaller in number. Over time, this type of reduction and sensationalism can lead to an inaccurate portrayal of the reality of low-intensity warfare, in which events happen on a daily basis that are rarely considered 'newsworthy' by major news agencies. For example, housing demolitions in the Palestinian occupied territories over the course of a month can lead to hundreds of homeless families, a fact that is not widely understood or represented.

As a practical solution to this problem, the IMEMC has developed a system of news reporting that involves a two-step news model, in which incident reports are available in an abbreviated format as news flashes and briefs. Incident reports are archived for a period of one week, so that IMEMC journalists can review the incidents and compile more contextual reports based on multiple incidents in various locations at various times. This process of news writing allows readers to both read about what is happening on a daily basis in terms of armed conflict, and to read about how these incidents affect and are affected by politics and political policy decisions.

Features

Although political/conflict coverage dominates headlines, social coverage is also a large focus of the IMEMC, mainly covered in the 'Features' section of the site. Without an understanding of the narratives of local residents, international readers begin to lose sight of the people being affected by local conflict and politics. Social coverage is characterized by attention to personal stories. Examples of this type of coverage would focus on topics such as the effect of house demolitions on communities, access to education, health care issues, living standards, religious issues.

Again, social coverage is not an absolute form. It is obvious that armed conflict and political policy affect society in multiple ways, and that a society's approach to conflict and politics affects how the two are conducted. We use the term social coverage simply to convey that the IMEMC wants to produce articles that focus on social issues in addition to simply reports on politics and conflict.

Article types

The IMEMC divides news coverage into five main styles: news briefs/flashes, news articles, analysis, feature reports, and editorial/op-ed articles. Below is a basic description of each news style.

The basic structure of news briefs, news articles, and news analysis for international journalism is the "inverted triangle." This structure means the most important information in an article—the "news," so to speak--comes in the lead paragraph, and the details follow in the body.

News Briefs: A Two Step Model

News briefs are short, concise descriptions that generally fall into two categories: minor developments and incident reports. Minor developments would be written in cases where an event doesn't merit the attention of a detailed news article, but is nonetheless significant enough to mention. Such news briefs would also be written in a case where a journalist has a lead, but for one reason or another cannot contact sources for details and quotes.

Incident reporting, on the other hand, describes armed or physical conflict events. Incident reports supply readers with small packages of information that are not connected to broader issues.

News briefs are defined by very basic characteristics. A news brief is short, detailed, factual, consisting of the following components:

- **Who**
- **What**
- **Where**
- **When**

The IMEMC News Briefs section provides coverage of the latest events and developments in the region. Headline news is where these developments are put into context and are expanded upon.

As a two-step process toward creating more contextual news reporting, IMEMC utilizes news briefs as tracers. News briefs generally convey significant ground developments in the area. Such developments can be traced over the course of a few days on the news briefs page, and patterns can be highlighted for use in headline news articles, weekly audio reports and news analysis pieces that will bring both conflict and politics into a contextualized whole.

IMEMC reporters should constantly check the website and keep track of developments such that information from news briefs can be used in upcoming articles.

News Articles

News articles can be viewed as one step removed from news briefs. News articles are typically time sensitive, and will only differ from news briefs in that they expand on the level of detail, and are contextualized reports, relating the news of the day to previous developments in such a way that events are connected to one another over time. The basic components are as follows:

- o fully factual
- o loaded with detail
- o contextualized accounts
- o devoid of personal opinion
- o usually very time-sensitive

An added demand of writing news articles for an international audience is determining what is news worthy. An international audience will not necessarily be concerned with local events in the same way in which locals would be. IMEMC journalists should practice being an outsider in their own environment, analyzing what would be considered interesting information and interesting angles according to a foreign audience.

News articles should always highlight the most recent developments in the lead. The lead tells the reader what the news is. By international standards, leads are typically no more than 25-30 words, and express concisely what happened, when, where, and who was involved. Following the lead comes background information. Following background information is further context—the body of the article. The close should leave the reader with one final thought to consider, but should not give new information.

The IMEMC aims to be a trendsetting agency. This means that in determining news worthiness, IMEMC journalists should not follow the trends of another newspaper, radio, or TV news station. It is well known that news agencies of all varieties harvest their own biases and interests. Following other media companies' news means following their agenda, their faults and weaknesses in addition to their strengths. IMEMC does not have to hold the line of what is generally reported in the international and local press. Journalists at IMEMC have the freedom and are invited to investigate news stories that are under-reported or altogether misrepresented in the international press.

Analysis

Analysis is separated from news articles in that it is less time sensitive and offers discussion and analysis about current events. News articles are relatively straight forward. They report on current events, provide detail and context, and are meant to simply convey information. News analysis adds an additional feature—an argument about *WHY* events are unfolding as they are.

In many ways, since news analysis provides insights and contains a direction, this type of writing borders on editorial writing. There is a fine line between the two, though.

A simple way to describe the differences is this: in an editorial, you have an opinion and you search for facts to make *YOUR* opinion convincing. In news analysis, you approach facts and find a thesis, argument, or direction for an article, providing an analysis of the facts.   Personal   opinion   is   not interjected in news analysis. The analysis remains in third person, and never strays from facts. If facts don't support the analysis, this is a clear indication that the piece is opinionated and constitutes an editorial.

- o find patterns in current events
- o put facts and events into context
- o have a direction based on these patterns and facts
- o analysis is based on facts and patterns

News analysis follows the same basic structure of a news article—a lead, background, body, and a close. Three stylistic differences are notable, however. First, the lead paragraph should be slightly shorter, and should include what has happened, when, and *WHY* it is important. A second paragraph, called a

"tease," generally follows. The tease recounts what happened in limited detail, brings the reader to the situation, describes who was involved, where, and when, etc. Finally, unlike straight news reporting, the body of a news analysis article provides analytical statements based on facts, and the close should come to an actual conclusion or suggested conclusion. News analysis is typically in the vein of investigative journalism—conclusions are absolutely based on facts.

Feature Articles

Feature articles are an opportunity to fully engage in a subject and tell a story. Features articles have various definitions and standards, but IMEMC generally regards features as longer pieces that focus on one theme, and develop critical aspects of that theme. In addition, features tell a story and should be evocative and poetic.

Features can take personal stories to exemplify larger social and political issues. Feature writing is widely regarded in international reporting, and is considered a critical component of social narratives. IMEMC journalists should try to provide features regularly, and should approach editors with ideas for upcoming features on a regular basis.

Features have a few basic elements that make them unique and that engage readers. First, the lead of a feature should capture the mood of the article. It should create an impression, bring the reader into the story with setting and atmosphere. Second, the flow of the piece is critical. Organization of events should be considered carefully to make a story line—facts and ideas should fill in the story line.

Standard Terms and Styles

Terminology

In order for readers to be able to trust and easily understand the news they are receiving from media, newspapers, TV, and radio stations must adopt standardized language that is used consistently from one event to another. The IMEMC has outlined house styles that are particular to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Editors and writers should familiarize themselves with these styles, and should propose amendments according to cases that surface in the daily production of news.

The styles outlined in this guide are the standard for how the IMEMC reports on the conflict and on groups engaged in local politics/actions. Many of these terms have been adapted from less appropriate terminology widely employed by international and local media with regard to this conflict.

References to Armed Groups:

Israeli armed groups:
- **Israeli military (soldiers):** The term IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) has been coined by the Israeli government, and is commonly used in international press. IMEMC considers this term to be biased, as the descriptor utilized could be argued by opposing sides as either 'defense' or 'offense'. Some of the online press has begun using 'IOF' (Israeli Occupation Forces) instead. The IMEMC uses neither IDF or IOF, but Israeli military or army.
- **Israeli Settler Militias:** A reference to armed activity by settler groups that may or may not have organized political representation or organized political decision-making, but have taken up arms, usually but not always with the tacit approval of the Israeli military. These groups, however are not associated with the Israeli military.
- **Armed Children:** In the inflamed political/religious environment of Palestine/Israel, children are commonly initiated into armed political action at a much earlier age than 18. Based on this, IMEMC considers children bearing arms a separate category. Terminology referring to such children should be based on international law, which also stipulates that the *arming of children is illegal*. Consider the commonly used term "settler youth," or "hilltop youth," used to describe young settlers (sometimes as young as early teens) who are engaged in

political/violently confrontational activity. These terms tacitly place powerful political status on the children they describe. The focus should, instead, be placed on those who are responsible for arming this youth. The child should not be given political status other than that of the context of his/her upbringing.

Palestinian armed groups:

Palestinian organizations engaged in armed struggle are frequently categorized as terrorist groups or militants. These words, in contrast to those used to describe the Israeli military, when considered in context, are inflammatory and biased. IMEMC has opted to use terms that are dependent upon the circumstances of struggle.

- **resistance groups/resistance fighters**: When groups are engaged in armed conflict inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- **armed wing**: Palestinian Resistance groups often consist of parallel wings, one armed and one political. While different media frequently conflate the branches of the organizations, there are significant differences between the structures. Referring unilaterally to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, etc. neglects contextualizing the status of the members. The name of the group (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, etc) preceded by 'the armed wing of ...' can be used to describe actions in other contexts.
- **Palestinian security forces/police**: The Palestinian Authority has two armed forces (security forces and police), neither of which is formally organized as a military. For this reason, 'Palestinian army/military' is not used by the IMEMC.
- **Palestinian resistance**: A general reference to armed resistance groups.
- **bombing / bomber:** In Arabic news the term martyr is typically used to describe that which is described in western media as a suicide bomber. IMEMC has opted to use neither of these terms, as the former is ideologically laden, and the latter places the emphasis on self-destruction, negating other political narratives. (A further description on the reasoning behind this choice of terminology follows in the section below entitled 'Sensitive Terms')

References to civilians/non-combatants (both Israeli and Palestinian):

- **Political Wing members:** people associated with the political wing of Palestinian resistance movements. They are typically non-combatants, and the essence of their identity is political (ie, they are politicians).
- **Civilians:** non-combatants, not carrying arms, not political figures. The term is often used in the context of combat situations where civilians are injured. Specifically, IMEMC uses the term in a way that differentiates between armed people/groups, settlers, and soldiers. It is important to consider victimization when characterizing people as civilians in a conflict situation.
- **Non-combatants:** people who are not engaged in armed combat, but are neither civilians. The term can apply to soldiers and other combatants who have relinquished arms during combat.
- **Children:** Children are a distinct portion of the population that are granted special status as innocent civilians. Children lack the cognizance to determine a political identity of their own, and, therefore, cannot be implicated in the political identity of those they are raised by and/or around. By international law a child is defined as a person under the age of eighteen.
- **Israeli Settlers:** political identity is relevant when this term is applied. The term "settlers" should be used instead of "Israeli" if the political identity of the settler (the space / social standing a settler occupies in the conflict) is the relevant factor in the news article. Regularly, settlers are neither civilians, nor non-combatants, but are also not necessarily combatants (as described above). They are a group apart from others.

References to geographical locations/identities:

News media agencies working in this region are faced with a complicated task when describing the region of Palestine/Israel, as many geographical references are highly politicized.

The IMEMC has created a standard set of terms describe places and regions, and the inhabitants of those regions.

- **Palestine/Israel**: Used to describe the entire region currently under Israeli military/political jurisdiction.
- **State of Israel/Israeli State:** A term defined by the Israeli government as the state of Israeli as opposed to the "land of Israel." This area excludes the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- **Occupied Territories/West Bank, Gaza Strip:** Denoting Palestinian territories which were occupied in 1967 and are currently under Israeli jurisdiction.
- **Annexed and/or Occupied Golan Heights:** Denotes the land confiscated from Syria by Israel.
- **East/West Jerusalem:** reference to the de facto Palestinian and Israeli sections of the city by 1967 borders.
- **Israeli Settlements/Colonies:** describing all land illegally occupied by Israeli settlers.
- **Palestinian Cities/Districts/Refugee Camps:** For an international audience, there is no need to differentiate between cities, districts, and in certain cases refugee camps which have the same name.

- **Palestinians:** refers to the Arabic population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as refugees living in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and various parts of the world who were disenfranchised from what is now the state of Israel.
- **Israeli-Palestinians or Palestinian citizens of Israel**: Israeli citizens of Palestinian origin residing in the state of Israel.
- **East Jerusalem residents**: Palestinians holding Israeli ID cards, residing in Israeli controlled East Jerusalem
- **Israelis**: refers to the citizens of the state of Israel who live within the 'Green Line' temporary border established in 1967
- **Israeli Settlers**: term used to refer to Israelis living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The grouping includes both armed and unarmed members.

Sensitive terms:

Massacre: *The deliberate and relentless slaughter of a large number of non-combatants.*

The term massacre is often loosely used by news media, yet it is an act that is extremely particular. The IMEMC has based its definition of the term on an analysis of its use historically, as opposed to simply relying upon a dictionary definition. When employed, the term should discriminate between cases where victims were killed systematically and cases in which they were killed incidentally. A prescient example comes from the case in which approximately 300 people were killed when an American missile struck a bunker in Iraq. This strike occured in a situation in which no evidence suggests that the American military was cognizant of civilian presence inside the bunker. Although a massive number of people were killed, it could not appropriately be called a massacre.

Journalists should also discriminate between cases where the killing was instantaneous and indiscriminate, and cases where the killing was elongated and discriminate. The shelling of an industrial district resulting in the death of nearby residents would not be described as a massacre. On the other hand, the case of Baruch Goldstein entering the Abraham Mosque in Hebron and unloading a number of machine gun cartridges on the worshipers, killing scores of people in 1994, would constitute a massacre.

Assassination: *The sudden and intentional killing of a public or political figure with a political motive on behalf of the assassin.*

The term 'assassination' has often been used in the media as a means of legitimizing a

political motive—either the motive of the assailant, or of the newspaper producing the article. For instance, if it were written that a Palestinian activist were assassinated, it would suggest that the activist were targeted as an individual, when in fact the circumstances of the killing may have been less specific. In this case, the newspaper might be trying to suggest that there is a practical political motive on the behalf of the assailant where there is none, or might also be politicizing what merely amounted to murder.

In conclusion, the term should only be utilized in cases where there is a clear *political* motive that suggests the killing were premeditated and intentional.

Murder: The deliberate killing of a person posing no threat

Killing: Default; when there is a lack of conclusive evidence that would suggest murder or assassination.
Kidnapping: by definition this term means; "The crime of unlawfully seizing and carrying away a person by force or Fraud, or seizing and detaining a person against his or her will with an intent to carry that person away at a later time." When Israeli soldiers detain a Palestinian and move them to unknown locations, it is pure kidnapping, especially that the occupied territories is not legally under the Israeli civil jurisdiction. It is some kind of a military zone according to the Israeli military orders. Therefore, IMEMC does avoid using the term "arrest" in order not to legalize the kidnapping by the Israeli military. (See below)
Arrest: A seizure or forcible restraint; an exercise of the power to deprive a person of his or her liberty; the taking or keeping of a person in custody by legal authority, especially, in response to a criminal charge.

Discarded Terms
- Terrorism
- Extremism
- Fundamentalism

The IMEMC will not use the above terms in news reports based on professional consideration of accuracy in reporting. The terms terrorism, extremism, and fundamentalism have all been so broadly used in the news media that their definitions have become tenuous, misrepresentative, and ideologically laden. The IMEMC's main concern regarding the usage of these terms is a matter of definition. Namely, what should and should not be considered terrorism, extremism and fundamentalism.

The way these terms have been used by media agencies regarding this conflict has been rather problematic for a number of reasons. Looking at 'terrorism' as a term, for example, the most commonly used description of terrorism implies non-state-sanctioned violence or threats of violence upon a civilian population as a means of political coercion. In this case, the term becomes ideologically laden as it suggests that those with political power are exempt from acts of terrorism, which in turn implies that their aggressions are legitimate. This characterization of terrorism inaccurately places a disproportionate amount of blame on those with little to no political power.

In the second case, the term terrorism could be used in a unilateral sense based on a simple definition (the use and threat of violence as a means of political coercion). By using this definition, the term would equate state sponsored and non-state sponsored activities. Although it may initially seem an ideal approach, there are significant underlying problems. By conflating all acts of violent coercion, a news publication could easily disregard all political contexts in which these acts are conducted. Such news might lead audiences to see conflict in a myopic manner,

whereby terrorism is simply conducted by everyone all the time, when this, too, is a misrepresentation of the conflict.

The terms extremism and fundamentalism, effectively, operate in the same way. Both terms place the vantage point of the person who employs the term at the center, effectively positioning the debate according to the political position of the media employing the term.

Although both overarching political affiliations in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict have an incentive to use these terms, a more accurate depiction of reality can be attained by discarding these terms entirely. The IMEMC has opted for the latter approach. In cases where the term terrorism would be applied by most media, IMEMC will treat the event in a more specific manner, highlighting the context in which the event occurred. Equally, IMEMC will not use the terms "extremism" and "fundamentalism" to describe groups or people. Instead, IMEMC will focus on the group's identity according to their self-definition and evident/observable political/religious beliefs and actions.

Style tips for IMEMC Reporters and Editors
Writing leads:

One of the first things students of journalism in America are taught is that news stories (as opposed to features, analyses, etc.) should normally be structured like a *pyramid*: the top should be narrow and sharp, and the further down you go, the wider it should get. What does this mean? The beginning of the story should present the main point(s) simply and clearly, uncluttered by details that are of secondary importance. Such facts should be offered further down in the body of the story. As a rule, the least crucial details should be placed toward the end of the story - the part of the pyramid that's wide and heavy.

The headline, of course, is the very tip of the pyramid, where the point of the story is stated in a very condensed way. Then comes the lead (pronounced and occasionally written as "lede"), the first sentence of the story itself, where the news is stated again a little more fully, but with only the most important details.

Once the lead has presented the key news, you can add a "nut graf," which tries to put the lead in context and explain what's important about it, or immediately start fleshing out the story with more details. This is very important for long and complex stories, but isn't always necessary for short factual reports.

The pyramid is not the only possible way to structure a story - in features, and occasionally in news stories, it may make more sense to start with an anecdote, a small detail that reveals a larger truth.

But for simple, relatively straightforward news stories, like most of those on the IMEMC site, the pyramid model makes sense. It has two main advantages: First, it ensures that readers who don't bother to go through the whole story, just glance at the beginning, will get the main point. This is even more true on Web sites like IMEMC than in a newspaper, because the lead appears on the front page, under the headline, while the rest of the story isn't even visible unless the reader has enough motivation to click on the front-page link. Second, the pyramid model increases the chances that readers will go on to the rest of the story, and understand it the way you want them to, because they'll understand what's important about it and won't be bored or distracted by minor details.

In the pyramid model, the lead is thus the key to the whole story.
1. Keep the lead short and to the point - don't clutter with details
Example 1:

June 2, 2005: Israel's Security freeze raid on Katif hotel
ORIGINAL: Even as the Israeli security establishment has announced it was decided to raid the Maoz Yam Hotel in the Gaza Strip settlement of Neveh Dekalim, police have temporarily frozen any immediate plans for the raid after the information was leaked to settlers and to the press.

EDITED: Israeli police have delayed a planned raid on a Gaza Strip hotel that's been taken over by extremist opponents of the government's disengagement plan, after information about the impending raid was leaked to settlers and the press.

In this case, the names of the hotel and even of the settlement are secondary - save them for the body of the story. (To put it another way, those names mean nothing to the average english-reading Internet surfer, who is presumably your target audience.)

Example 2:
June 28, 2005: Low Turnout in Settlers' Road Protest
ORIGINAL: Against settlers' council expectation for 100,000 participants, only few thousands of right-wing activists demonstrated against the Gaza disengagement plan Monday under the banner "Stop—we must think again,"

EDITED to focus on main point (low turnout): Only a few thousand right-wing activists turned out for Monday's demonstrations against the Gaza disengagement plan - far short of the 100,000 predicted by the Settlers Council, organizer of the protests.

2. Unless you're using an "anecdotal lead" (see above), the lead should encompass the main themes of the story, not just one case
Example 1:
July 4, 2005 Extreme heat, bugs, and denial of medical care make life in detention camps miserable :
ORIGINAL: Lawyer of the Palestinian Prisoners Society, Fawwaz Shalloudi said that he visited several detainees in the Negev detention who told him that they are suffering from extreme heat in the Negev desert in addition to the dangerous presence of bugs, warms and snakes.

EDITED: Palestinian detainees in Israeli detention camps are denied needed medical care and suffer from extreme heat and insect infestations, according to lawyers from the Palestinian Prisoners .

3. Don't put things in the lead that aren't followed up in the story.
    Example: In the example just given, the un-edited lead mentions bugs, worms and snakes, but there was no mention of bugs, worms or snakes in the article itself.

Sentence structure
    The principle that the key point should come first applies to individual sentences as well as to the story as a whole.

1. Put source name *after* the content, unless the source's identity is the key point.
Example 1:
Look again at the story above: the original started with the fact that lawyer Shalloudi visited some detainees in the Negev. The editor turned it around so it starts with the key point: the bad conditions the prisoners face.

Example 2:
> *27 June, 2005: Pal. factions abroad to move offices to Gaza*
> *ORIGINAL: "A senior Palestinian source reported on Monday that leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian factions based in Lebanon and Syria are planning to move to the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal."*
> *EDITED: "Leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian factions based abroad are planning to move to the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal, a senior Palestinian source reported on Monday."*

    If the source's identity is what's important or surprising - for example, if the charges about prison conditions had come from an Israeli prison guard, or if the story revolved around differences between what Palestinian and Israeli government spokespersons were saying - then it would probably be a good idea to mention the source at the beginning of the sentence.

2. When a quotation is long, particularly if it includes multiple sentences, break the quotation up and put the attribution after the first sentence, instead of at the end.
Example:
> *30 June 2005 "Army considering earlier closure of the Gaza Strip*
> *ORIGINAL: "A decision on sealing off the Strip is already in the air. If the trend toward growing extremism continues, there will be no choice but to declare the area a closed military zone in the near future," an Israeli army General Staff officer said on Tuesday.*
> *EDITED: "A decision on sealing off the Strip is already in the air," an Israeli army General Staff officer said on Tuesday. "If the trend toward growing extremism continues, there will be no choice but to declare the area a closed military zone in the near future."*

    Note: if you put the attribution in the middle, it's understood to apply not only to the previous sentence, but also to the immediately following one, so you don't need another "he said" or equivalent.

Other tips on story composition

- **Don't forget to credit source**
- If story is based on statements by an expert or organization, it should **explain when and under what circumstances the source made the statements** - did they issue a report? hold a press conference? Or was it just "in an interview with IMEMC"? In other words, why is this news now?
- **When cutting or editing a source story, be sure not to leave out essential facts.**
  Example:
  July 7, 2005 story on Greek Patriarchate planning to replace Irineos said Jordan had accepted his ouster, Israel and PA hadn't, but never stated that he had been ousted; more important, the story left out any explanation of why he's in trouble (sales of Old City property to Jews)
- **Be extra careful about the spelling of names -** Mistakes in this area undermine the credibility of the whole site

Suggested Terminology

Current usage	Change to
said	reported (first instance) stated (2nd instance)
north/south of the West Bank	in the northern/southern part of the West Bank
thorough searches	military searches
The brigades said	An (al-Qassam) brigades spokesperson reported
Moreover	In addition, also
Youth / lad	Child (up to 18) Youth (over 18)
Youths	Youth
Agricultural fields	Olive orchard, family farmlands, palm grove, farm
WAFA news Agency	The Palestinian news agency, WAFA
Soldiers	Israeli soldiers (in the 1st instance)
PA	Palestinian Authority (in the 1st instance)
raided	Invaded (raided not used)
Causing damages	Causing damage
Hamas's	Hamas'
Soldiers centered on	Soldiers based at
wounded to the arm	wounded in the arm
X is 15 year old	X is 15 years old
withheld (prisoners)	detained, kidnapped, (withhold used for information)
Soldiers topped several homes	Soldiers occupied several homes OR occupied roof tops of several homes
In Israeli detentions	In Israeli detention
On Monday at night	Monday night
more than two	at least two
An Israeli military source	The Israeli military (if not from specific source)
In the schools street	On School Street
On the other hand	Not used unless contradictory, use 'also' instead
Under security claims	For security reasons
raid	invade
Activist	(Armed) resistance fighter, member of the resistance
Annihilate gas	Inhale gas (annihilation is extermination)
Prisoners society, Hebron branch	The Hebron office of the Palestinian Prisoners society
Partial damage	The Israeli army partially destroyed
Under covered military units of...	Undercover military units from the Israeli army
On the entrance of X village	at the entrance to X village
smuggling weapons	trafficking in weapons
claimed responsibility of	claimed responsibility for (the shooting)
Helicopters dropped soldiers...	dropped paratroopers
uprooted agricultural fields	uprooted family orchards, farmlands
When it went off (explosive)	When it exploded
Critical wounds	Critical injuries, critically injured
Dozens have been	Dozens were (wounded, kidnapped…)

explosive (late to explode)	explosive left by the army which detonated sometime after impact
carpentry	carpentry workshop
light bombs	grenades and artillery fire
new military invasion against the area	new military invasion of the area
left at least 11 residents killed	left at least 11 residents dead
several areas in the West Bank, especially	Several areas, mainly in (Nablus, Qalqilia…)
14 Residents arrested in Hebron	14 Hebron residents kidnapped
lightly wounded	mildly wounded
Palestinian resistance fired	The Palestinian resistance fired, Palestinian resistance fighters fired
Three detainees highly sentenced	Three detainee receive harsh sentences (could also say 'long sentences')
Resident and a child wounded in Rafah	Two wounded in Rafah, including a child
highly sentenced,	sentenced to a harsh prison term OR Palestinian receives harsh prison sentence
Imposed fines over 12 detainees	Imposed fines on 12 detainees
Crushed into (hit with car on purpose)	Ramming (rammed the child with their car) د
20 executive years	twenty consecutive (not executive) years
MK	Member of the Israeli Knesset (can also say 'Member of the Israeli Parliament')
the army	the Israeli army (or Israeli soldiers)
Qassam Rockets	Home-made Qassam Shells or home-made shells

Standard IMEMC spellings:
(This list only includes those terms which are commonly spelled differently by different news outlets, in order for the IMEMC to maintain a standard spelling of each)

Rule: When writing a name with Al—please use the following system
Use the al (lower case) then the first letter of the word upper case. See below

When the L is pronounced	Example: alquds	
Right	al-Quds	Unless in the beginning of a sentence
Wrong	Al-Quds	
When the L is NOT pronounced	Example Alshija'iyeh	
Right	ash-Shija'iyeh	Unless in the beginning of a sentence
Wrong	Al-Shija'iyeh	Ash-Shija'iyeh

The above rule applies to (al) and (el) as well
However, there are some exceptions such as,
Salah Eddin, and words that start with Abd, such as Abdullah, Abdillah el-Khatib.

For the letters (ع) and (ء)
In the case of (ع) you use the ' before the letter ('Issa or 'Omar or 'Ali, Bil'in)
In the case of (ء) the ' comes after the letter (Sa'ed, Na'el) in this case, the letter (a') is the (ء)

Names of Places, towns, villages, cities neighborhoods etc:
'Askar Refugee camp
Beit Hanoun
Deheisheh
'Ein Beit el-Ma refugee (or al-'Ein refugee camp)
Al-Faraheen
Al-Hamra checkpoint
Huwwara checkpoint
Jenin
Khan Younis
Al-Khaza'a
Nablus
Al-Qarara
Qalqilia
Rafah
Ramallah
Salah Eddin Street
Salfit
ash-Shija'iyeh
Tubas
Tulkarem
Bethlehem

Beit Sahour
Hebron
Balata Refugee Camp
Za'atara Checkpoint

Parties/Politics:
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (The armed wing of Fatah)
Al-Quds Brigade, (The armed wing of Islamic Jihad)
Al-Qassam Brigade, (The armed wing of Hamas)
(Note that we do NOT use BRIGADES, we use BRIGADE)
Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah)
Hezbollah
Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
Popular Resistance Committees (PRC)
Palestinian People's Party (PPP), former communist party
Abu ar-Reesh Brigade (a Fatah armed group)
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
Abu 'Ali Mustafa Brigade, (The armed wing of PFLP)
Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)
An-Nasser Salah Eddin Brigade
Arab Liberation Front
Popular Struggle Front

Frequently used Arabic Names:
Ahmad Hillis (A Fatah leader in Gaza)
Ahmad Abu el-Gheit (Egyptian FM)
Ahmed Qurei (Palestinian Chief Negotiator)
King Abdullah II of Jordan
Husni Mubarak (Egyptian President)
Dr. Aziz Dweik (PLC Speaker - Hamas)
Marwan Bargouthi (Jailed PLC member and Fatah leader)
Mustafa Barghouti (PLC Member former Minister of Information, head of the Palestinian National Initiative)
Farouq el-Qaddoumi (Chief of the foreign affairs of the PLO)
Fawzi Barhoum (Hamas' spokesperson in Gaza)
Ghazi Hamad (Former Hamas' Government speaker)
Hussein esh-Sheikh (Senior Fatah leader in West Bank)
Ismael Haniyeh (Deposed PM, Hamas leader)
Khader Habib (Senior Islamic Jihad)
Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) (Palestinian President)
Dr. Mahmoud Az-Zahhar (Senior Hamas Leader – Gaza Strip, former FM)
Mohammad Dahlan (Senior Fatah leader Gaza, PLC members)
Dr. M'uawiyeh Hasanein (Director of Emergency Rooms at Ministry of Health)
Musheer el-Masri (Hamas spokesperson – Gaza PLC Member)
Nabil Abu Rudeineh (Fatah leader, President's Advisor)

Nabil Sha'ath (PLC member, Fatah leader)
Nasser Al-Kidweh (former PA ambassador to UN)
'Omar Suleiman (Egyptian head of Intelligence)
Rawhi Fattouh (Former PA interim President)
Saeb Ereikat (Head of the Negotiation Department at the PLO)
Sami Abu Zuhri (Hamas' spokesperson, Gaza)
Tayyeb Abdul Rahim (Presidency Secretary General)
Yasser Arafat (Late Palestinian President and head of PLO)
Bassam Salhi, (PLC Member)
Dr. Salam Fayyad, Palestinian Prime Minister

Last updated: June 1, 2009
George Rishmawi