

From: Owenna Griffiths
Date: Mon, 3 Dec 2012 10:21:13 +0000
To: 'Chris Doyle (CAABU)' <doylec@caabu.org>
Subject: RE: Complaint re BBC Newsround on Israel and Gaza

Dear Chris,

Thank you for e-mail about our report which was broadcast on 21 November.

In my reply below I have dealt with your points in a slightly different order to the way you set them out, though I will keep to your numbering system, in order that I may group what I consider to be related complaints together.

Let me first respond to what I see as the key aspect of your complaint - the factual inaccuracy you described in your points 3 & 7 when we said in our report that "Israel lost land to Egypt and Jordan."

This was a factual mistake for which we apologise.

Our report has now been amended. Similarly, we have altered the piece with reference to point 7 so that it says "In 1967 another war left Israel in control of Gaza and the West Bank. To this day Israel remains in control of the West Bank. And although they left Gaza in 2005, they still remain in control of who and what goes in and out."

We have also clarified the text you refer to in point 6 on our web page. While not denying its importance in Palestinian history, however, we think the exact nature of the 1947 partition plans would be too detailed for our audience. To that end, it is important to remember that Newsround broadcasts to an audience of 6-12 year olds.

On reflection we have also altered the original phrase 'Muslim Palestinians' to 'Palestinian Arabs' (your point 2).

In making these changes, however, we do not accept your allegation that the report is biased.

Any piece for Newsround which aims to set out the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict will, by necessity, omit some events and compress others because of the demands of space. The question is whether or not we have done this fairly and without doing disservice to the facts. We believe that this is the case with your points 4, 8 and 11.

Similarly, on your point 1, we felt it was editorially justifiable to use the end of the Second World War as a starting point for recent history, while pointing out in the report that 'for centuries' people have fought to control the region.

We would also point out that this report is placed firmly within the context of a web page which sets out in more detail many of the points you raise (points 5, 9, 10 and 12), and which could not be included in our short film, including, for example, the Palestinian refugee crisis and the blockade that you describe.

The fact that the original content has been amended is also made clear on the website.

Let me return, however, to where I started. We would always strive to be accurate in our reporting and it is a matter of regret that in this instance we did not fully achieve our aim.

Yours sincerely

Owenna

Owenna Griffiths
Editor, BBC Newsround