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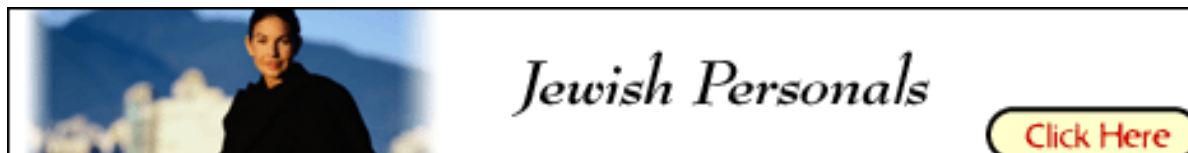
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Keeping an eye on the Post Locally designed Web site monitors paper's Mideast coverage

by Eric Fingerhut

Staff Writer

Some of the activists who spearheaded a June effort to boycott *The Washington Post* have decided to forego a boycott and focus their efforts on a Web site that will monitor the newspaper's coverage of the Middle East on a daily basis.

EyeonthePost.org, which first appeared on the Web last week, is devoted to "regular and substantive media analysis and critique" of what the group's organizers believe is "skewed coverage [of] Palestinian terrorism against Israel," according to the site.

The site, which mirrors the design of [washingtonpost.com](#), lays out 11 "media bias categories" by using codes of ethics written by the *Post* and the Society of Professional Journalists, as well as guidelines drawn up by the pro-Israel media watch Web site Honest Reporting.

EyeonthePost.org's board of directors also came up with some categories on its own, including "pejorative syntax and grammar" and "unreported news."

Not yet at full strength, the site posted its first detailed critique last week, analyzing an Aug. 18 *Post* article dealing with Palestinian suicide bombers. The site charges that the piece distorted facts (by using the term "cycle of violence" and equating Palestinian and Israeli deaths, among other examples), used "misleading terminology" (by calling suicide

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bombings a "military tactic"), selectively omitted important information (failing to note "that the only reason the Israelis have had difficulty coping with suicide bombers is their moral decision to refuse to deliberately target innocent civilians") and deployed "imbalanced reporting" (by failing to include criticism of the tactic of suicide bombing).

Germantown's Peter Hebert, a member of the group's board, said that when the site is fully operational, it will include a daily critique of *Post* coverage prepared by eyeonthe^{post}.org's team of about a half-dozen volunteer analysts, as well as a database of *Post* Middle East articles categorized by the type of bias the organization believes each division represents.

For instance, said Hebert, one would be able to request a listing of all of the "imbalanced reporting" in articles by *Post* Israel correspondent Molly Moore.

Eyeonthe^{post}.org also plans to send out weekly media alerts to subscribers as well as run a listserv to discuss *Post* coverage, and has allied with two other media watch groups, one that critiques *The New York Times* and another that monitors the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Bethesda's Peter Vardon, a member of the "information resources committee" that analyzes coverage, said he decided to participate in eyeonthe^{post}.org because he has been "frustrated with *Post* coverage of Israel for many years."

"The real problem is over time a consistent pattern portraying Israel in the worst light," he said, by minimizing Palestinian "atrocities" and using "cliches like cycle of violence."

Hebert hopes the site will give people in the community who are upset at the *Post*'s coverage the "tools" to write a letter to the editor. The site includes tips on how to write an effective letter.

He noted that some, while upset at the *Post*'s coverage, disliked the idea of boycotting the newspaper. Dropping that word in the group's name allows the site to appeal to a "much broader audience," he said.

The former group, called boycottthe^{post}.org, organized a weeklong boycott of the *Post* in June. Organizers claimed that 1,300 people participated. The *Post* said more than 400 people canceled or stopped subscriptions in either the week before the boycott or in the month leading up to the effort.

Hebert considers the earlier group successful because the *Post* admitted some faults in its coverage. He cites the June ombudsman column in which Michael Getler said the *Post* "frequently fails" to point out that terrorist groups like Hamas want to see the destruction of Israel, and a comment by a *Post* editor that the paper is being careful in its use of language in Middle East stories.

Eyeonthe*post*.org members argue that they are not looking for the *Post* to favor Israel in its coverage, but simply to report the news fairly and accurately.

Rodney Brooks of Columbia, who is no longer involved with *eyeonthe*post*.org* but contributed to the group and spoke last weekend about the issue at Tifereth Israel Congregation in D. C., has compared the *Post's* coverage with other media outlets -- including *The Baltimore Sun*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Times*, the Associated Press and Reuters. He found it to be the most unfavorable to Israel.


As part of his comparison, Brooks examined wire service articles that appeared in multiple papers. He said the *Post* articles frequently cut relevant information favorable to Israel that was included in the original wire story, or changed wording to reflect poorly on Israel.

For example, he pointed to a May 28 AP article printed in both the *Post* and the *Sun*. The *Sun* version read "Israeli troops fired tank shells and machine guns yesterday, killing a Palestinian woman and her 13-year-old daughter," while the *Post* article said "Israeli troops killed a Palestinian woman and her 13-year-old daughter." The *Post* version is harsher and implies that the killing was deliberate, Brooks said.

Brooks, who disagrees with some of the policies Israel has pursued in the West Bank, said that while there may be innocent explanations for many of these omissions or changes, when it happens "over and over, day after day," it adds up to a "pattern" of bias.

Brooks also took *Post* articles from April and May and categorized how much space was devoted to "damage" to Palestinians as a result of Israeli actions and "damage" to Israel as a result of Palestinian actions. He said 3.7 times more space was devoted to coverage of "damage" to Palestinians than to Israelis.

Calls to the *Post* for comment on the new site were not returned by press time.



Hebert said the site, which is run by volunteers, is applying for nonprofit status and is looking for donations as well as volunteers in a number of areas, including fund raising, information technology and public relations.

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