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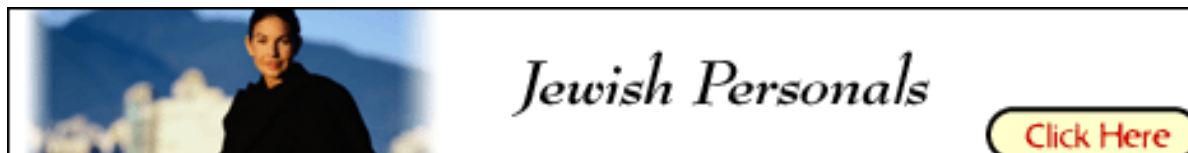
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Protesting the 'Post' Objecting to Mideast coverage, group joins boycott

by Eric Fingerhut

Staff Writer

A local group that monitors the Middle East coverage of *The Washington Post* is joining with its counterparts in New York and Los Angeles for a nationwide "subscription stoppage" to protest what they view as an anti-Israel bias in major newspapers.

The "Day of 7's" protest will start on July 7, which is also the seventh day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, and continue for seven days. It is sponsored by this area's eyeonthe^{post}.org and similar groups devoted to monitoring *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*. Organizers are also hoping groups in other cities will sign on.

Robert Samet of Potomac, an eyeonthe^{post}.org board member, said the protest is necessary to "draw people's attention" to *Post* coverage of Israel, which he says has "been worse [than usual] lately."

He doesn't believe the group has "unrealistic expectations," nor does he believe the protest will hurt the newspaper financially, but he thinks it will "get a message across."

Phone messages to the *Post's* media relations department were not returned.

Another *Post* critic, Warren Manison of Potomac, said the protest is important to "make our voices heard."

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"There's a frustration out there" with *Post* coverage, he said.

Samet was particularly bothered by the coverage leading up to the cease-fire agreement among Palestinian terrorist groups. The *Post*, he argued, has not sufficiently reported on the Israeli problems with the cease-fire, namely that it gives time for organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad to regroup and violates the road map's requirement that the Palestinians disarm terrorists.

He also objects to the paper's continuing reference to Hamas terrorists as "militants." He also complained about a *Post* editorial last month that labeled Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi as a media specialist and not a terrorist. Samet acknowledged that newspapers have a right to state their opinions on the editorial page, but said that such opinions too often seep into the news pages.

He said *Post* coverage of Israel improved last month when Glenn Frankel, usually based in London, spent a couple weeks filling in for regular Israel correspondents John Ward Anderson and Molly Moore.

Frankel's coverage was "fair," Samet said, and if the reporter had continued to cover the region for the paper, eyeonthe.org might not have participated in the subscription stoppage. In one article, Frankel noted that Hamas' ultimate goal was the destruction of Israel, not a Palestinian state, a point that *Post* critics believe the paper usually overlooks.

A weeklong *Post* protest in June 2002 had more than 1,000 participants, according to organizers. A *Post* official estimated then that more than 400 people canceled or stopped subscriptions as a result of the boycott effort.

That protest was sponsored by boycottthe.org, which evolved into the media watchdog group eyeonthe.org last August. At the time, leaders of the group said that some people who were upset at the *Post*'s coverage disliked the idea of a boycott, so the name change allowed the organization to appeal to a broader audience.

But Samet said that eyeonthe.org always retained "the option to periodically engage in different forms of protest."

There was no intent, he said, "to permanently abandon the subscription stoppage as a form of protest."

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