# The English Wikipedia as an Arena of the Anti-Israeli Struggle

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**The English-language Wikipedia is one of the main arenas shaping global consciousness regarding Israel and the conflict. However, the dominant presence of anti-Israeli editors makes it a tool that produces a one-sided narrative. When it was launched in 2001, Wikipedia inspired great hope for the democratization of knowledge, but over the years, it has become a battleground over the shaping of narratives on sensitive issues. Hostile actors toward Israel often determine the content frameworks, decide on the admissibility of sources, and dictate the narrative. This phenomenon has accelerated since October 7, when topics related to Israel have been treated in a selective and tendentious way that produces a biased and one-dimensional presentation of the conflict. This broad phenomenon carries global political contexts, and its implications go far beyond internal editorial disputes since the enormous reach of the English Wikipedia makes it a source that can shape the perceptions of Israel and the conflict for millions of people worldwide. This article examines the bias against Israel in the English Wikipedia, the forces behind it, and its implications.**

Wikipedia is a multilingual online encyclopedia that operates in 340 languages and offers free information worldwide. The platform's entries are written voluntarily and collaboratively by editors who are not required to have formal credentials and can edit information at any time, from anywhere, anonymously. The English edition is the first and largest, comprising over seven million articles and attracting about 11 billion page views each month.

The enormous importance of Wikipedia stems from its status as the world's most-read information repository. Wikipedia Articles frequently appear at the top of Google search results, including in the information panels that accompany some of them. It also serves as a resource for artificial intelligence systems. As studies indicate, it is the most frequently cited source ChatGPT uses, accounting for 7.8% of all references and nearly half (47.9%) of all top-ten leading sources. It is also a primary source in datasets used to train large language models (LLMs).

**From a Techno-Utopian Vision to a Techno-Dystopian Reality**

At its founding, Wikipedia appeared to embody the techno-utopian aspects associated with the early internet, as a platform that makes information accessible to the general public and, in theory, enables everyone, including marginalized groups, to participate in the production of knowledge. The underlying assumption of the project was that the wisdom of the crowds, combined with open access and collaboration, and guided by the foundational principle of a

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neutral point of view (NPOV), would create a balanced platform that would enrich humanity with information free of ideological bias.

However, from the very beginning and to this day, serious problems have emerged within this idealistic vision. The first is the pronounced gender gap: according to various studies, including one conducted by the Wikimedia Foundation, only about 15% to 20% of the editors on the platform are women, despite numerous initiatives and extensive budget allocations intended to narrow this gap. This persistent disparity undermines the principle of the "wisdom of the crowds," which relies on a broad diversity of voices and perspectives to validate knowledge. The gender gap is also reflected in the biographical data: Of approximately 1.5 million biographies in the English Wikipedia, only about 19% are devoted to women. A well-known illustrative case is the rejection of the article on physicist Donna Strickland before she won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2018, for "lack of independent sources."

Another techno-dystopian aspect that deters new editors from participating in writing and editing articles is the phenomenon of "edit wars." This common term in the context of Wikipedia reflects the way in which editing processes on the platform, particularly on sensitive topics, create a space filled with tension, edit warnings, content retractions, and heated discussions. These dynamics turn the writing experience into a continuous battlefield, where collaboration dissolves and the platform's communal spirit erodes.

More broadly, Wikipedia raises questions about the ownership of knowledge and the ways in which collective knowledge may encourage herd thinking and reinforce non-transparent mechanisms of authority, a phenomenon that philosopher Jaron Lanier warned against as early as 2006. Lanier coined the term "Digital Maoism" in an article for *EDGE* magazine, in which he warned about the entrenchment of bias, the shallowness of discourse, and the political exploitation of the collaborative platform. He pointed to the possibility of a consensus bias that weakens the voices and warnings of experts and presents knowledge without critical evaluation or cross-checking with expertise.

These aspects of criticism can be seen across a variety of topics in which Wikipedia demonstrates clear bias, including vaccines, alternative medicine, climate change, biographies of controversial figures, and political issues. For instance, a recent study revealed a significant disparity in the coverage of figures associated with the political right in the United States compared with those associated with the left.

**Bias Against Israel in English Wikipedia**

Over the past decade, and especially since October 7, the gap between Wikipedia's founding vision and its current reality has widened dramatically when it comes to Israel. Numerous entries related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the State of Israel, and Judaism have been edited in a tendentious manner, marked by clear patterns of influence and organized editing communities that shape content in line with political or ideological interests. This trend is reflected in manipulations of framing, selective sourcing, the deletion of alternative perspectives, and the exertion of communal pressure to block editors who seek to restore balance to the articles. For example, entries such as "Palestinian genocide accusation" and "Gaza genocide" rely heavily on sources, quotations, and arguments from groups critical of Israel, without balancing them with differing views or voices portraying Israel's policies or

actions. As a result, the principle of neutrality has been eroded, systematic bias has emerged, and many articles have been transformed from sources of knowledge into tools of propaganda.

**Wikipedia's Knowledge Bias—A Coordinated and Organized Endeavor**

Although at first glance, the phenomenon of biased knowledge on Wikipedia may appear random, stemming from individual editorial opinions as part of a general anti-Israel drift, monitoring of users who consistently engage in biased editing reveals that it is, in fact, the work of a coordinated group. This group reportedly includes around forty editors and several administrators with extensive knowledge of Wikipedia's complex web of rules and procedures in the English-language community. While coordinated editing is explicitly prohibited by Wikipedia's own policies, some of these editors were found to be coordinating their actions through the Discord application (based on anonymous written, voice, and video communication) in a group called "Tech for Palestine."

Their coordination included the division of tasks, strategic planning, the creation of hidden work pages within Wikipedia, and the use of tag-team tactics, which involve the collaboration of two or more editors acting in concert to entrench a narrative and overpower others. In this way, a series of individual edits that might appear minor in isolation collectively amounted to a wide-scale campaign that systematically altered key articles related to Israel. An investigative report by Aaron Bendel, "Gaming the Wiki System" (March 21, 2025), published in the *Jewish Journal*, presented numerous screenshots and other evidence documenting these coordinated editing efforts via the Discord group. Similarly, Ashley Rindsberg's article "How Wikipedia's Pro-Hamas Editors Hijacked the Israel–Palestine Narrative" (October 24, 2024) traces systematic coordination among anti-Israel editors. Over the years, these editors have advanced to influential positions within the platform's community through their extensive participation in article spaces and talk pages. They frequently refer editors who disagree with their positions to Wikipedia's Arbitration Committee, which has the authority to revoke users' editing privileges.

To legitimize and entrench their agenda-driven activity, editors from this identifiable group succeeded in pushing through several key policy changes, including the "500/30 rule," which contradicts the long-standing principle of "anyone can edit." Under this rule, only editors with at least 30 days of activity and 500 prior edits may edit articles on sensitive topics such as Jerusalem, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, or the Middle East peace process. Members of the group have also been linked to revisions of the list of acceptable sources, leading to the disqualification of outlets such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Fox News, and the *New York Post*, while sources like B'Tselem reports and *Al Jazeera* articles are treated as credible and reliable.

**The Intensification of Bias Against Israel in English Wikipedia**

The prolonged and consistent involvement of a group of agenda-driven editors, some of whom are active almost daily and have collaborated for years on Israel-related entries, raises suspicions of funding or coordination by entities hostile to Israel. These suspicions were strengthened by the exposure of hundreds of messages coordinating actions on the Discord platform, within the chat room Tech For Palestine (see Gaming the Wiki System). The

consequences of these activities are severe. They have led to the anti-Israeli editing of thousands of entries. Central articles were rewritten with altered phrasing; new entries were added that question Israel's right to exist; and Hamas terrorist acts were whitewashed or presented only partially.

The most prominent and well-known example of this deliberate undermining of Israel's right to exist is reflected in the massive changes made to the entry on Zionism. Previously, the article described the movement's central vision as "the establishment and support of a homeland for the Jewish people, centered in the area roughly corresponding to what is known in Jewish tradition as the Land of Israel, based on the Jewish people's long-standing connection to that land." The updated version, however, now states that Zionism was achieved through "the colonization of Palestine," asserting that Zionists "**wanted to create a Jewish state in Palestine with as much land, as many Jews, and as few Palestinian Arabs as possible**." This formulation, based on selective sources, was inserted into the article on November 11, 2024, and has since been protected from alteration by a moratorium, which freezes any edits to that section for one year. At present, anyone who attempts to protest this historical distortion or restore balance to the entry risks being immediately blocked by the group that has taken control of the platform.

The strengthening of anti-Israel bias across numerous entries after October 7 has occurred within a space that was already skewed, featuring articles that single out Israel in a demonizing and exceptional way compared with other states, including dictatorships. For example, the article "Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany" presents such parallels as commonplace and legitimate, thereby normalizing the discourse while omitting essential historical and political context and ignoring Israel's unique security and moral challenges. Similarly, the article "Weaponization of antisemitism," which portrays accusations of antisemitism as manipulative tactics or acts performed in "bad faith," trivializes the reality of antisemitic hatred and exemplifies the one-sided manner in which Israel is presented.

Another tactic aimed at shaping the narrative through the deliberate suppression of information that could illuminate the complexity of the situation involves deleting entire entries, data, and concepts. This phenomenon affects both contemporary and historical topics. For instance, the entry "Iran's policy to eliminate Israel," which addressed Tehran's declared aim to destroy Israel, was deleted as an independent article during the twelve-day war between Israel and Iran in June 2025, and only fragments of it were merged into another page. Similar examples from earlier periods include the removal of the article "Muslim migrations to Ottoman Palestine" and the deletion of the column identifying perpetrators of massacres in the entry "List of killings and massacres in Mandatory Palestine," which documents attacks up to 1948.

Deletion tactics are also evident in entries dealing with Israel's heritage and Judaism. For example, attempts to remove content from articles such as "Solomon's Temple" and "Solomon's Pools" reflect efforts to undermine the historical connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. In parallel, dozens of articles have been edited to highlight alternative narratives and introduce interpretations that suggest the existence of an ancient Palestinian history. This trend is manifested, among other ways, in the broad and often

ambiguous use of the term “Palestine” to describe the region and its past, as seen in entries such as “History of Palestine” and “Hellenistic Palestine.”

Another tactic involves changing the titles of articles. For instance, the article “Hamas–Israel War” was renamed “Gaza War,” a title that blurs Hamas’s central role in the conflict and shifts the focus from the key actors to the geographic area where the fighting occurs. Similarly, several articles documenting the October 7 massacres were renamed to diminish the gravity of the events: “Nir Yitzhak Massacre” was changed to “Nir Yitzhak Attack”, and “Holit Massacre” became “Holit Attack.” The systematic effort to craft a narrative that frames these events in a minimizing, normalizing manner, while downplaying Hamas and Palestinian responsibility, is also evident in the fact that both entries were subsequently put up for a vote on deletion.

**The Role of the Wikimedia Foundation in the Bias**

The problem lies not only in the takeover of the article space by anti-Israeli editors but also in the conduct of the global Wikimedia Foundation, which is responsible for Wikipedia’s vision. In 2017, the Foundation redefined its mission and, in its new strategic vision for 2030, declared that free knowledge would be based on the principle of “Knowledge Equity.” From this perspective, narrative was elevated above factuality, and representation and inclusion were prioritized over the aspiration to present a neutral and balanced picture.

Until recently, the Foundation dismissed claims of content bias. However, government intervention changed this stance. On April 24, the acting US Attorney for Washington, DC, sent a letter to the Foundation alleging that Wikipedia “is allowing foreign actors to manipulate information and spread propaganda to the American public,” including the “rewriting of key historical events.” This led the Foundation to establish a research group to investigate the issue. Later, on August 27, a letter from James Comer, chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Nancy Mace, chair of the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation, was sent to the Wikimedia Foundation requesting documents as part of a congressional inquiry. The letter cited that “multiple studies and reports have highlighted efforts to manipulate information on the Wikipedia platform for propaganda aimed at Western audiences.”

**Conclusion and Future Reflections**

Public awareness is a key component in addressing bias on Wikipedia, as it can serve as a catalyst for the change needed. Recognizing that Wikipedia is not a fully neutral platform but rather a space where competing narratives vie for visibility and legitimacy is an essential step toward the kind of multi-level intervention required, encompassing education, research, and active involvement by the Foundation, commercial corporations, and government bodies.

To promote effective responses, critical education in evaluating digital knowledge sources must be developed. Research and educational teams should be trained to identify and address biases within the digital sphere, thereby strengthening the public’s ability to recognize and respond to them. In parallel, it is important to develop scientific tools for monitoring knowledge and detecting distortion and bias. At the same time, awareness must be raised about the Wikimedia Foundation's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of information on its platform and to prevent it from becoming a tool of propaganda in the hands of interested

actors. The Foundation should establish robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms that go beyond slogans of "knowledge equity" to systematically identify patterns in the representation of sensitive topics and groups and act to protect knowledge from bias. Finally, it must be emphasized that the responsibility for knowledge distortion does not rest solely with the Foundation. Commercial corporations, such as Google, also contribute to the dissemination of biased knowledge by uncritically propagating Wikipedia content. These companies must acknowledge their role in amplifying distorted information and understand how they contribute to embedding biased narratives in the public sphere.

In conclusion, it can be said that the path toward ensuring that Wikipedia, one of the foremost sources of knowledge, serves as a fountain of truth rather than a tool of manipulation is indeed long. Without active involvement, the dissemination of false information through digital platforms perceived as trustworthy will become entrenched, undermining the democratic dimension of independent thinking based on reliable sources.

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