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Dear Mr Horrocks,

I am writing on behalf of ENGAGE - an organisation that seeks to encourage greater numbers of British Muslims to become more active in the field of politics and media.

On Sunday 11th January 2009, I was watching the 18.00 bulletin on BBC News 24 about the conflict in Gaza. The segment lasted around 20 minutes and included two interviews with Israeli spokespersons (an army representative and a government Minister) and only one interview with a Palestinian spokesperson (Hanan Ashrawi).

This seemed to me to be quite unbalanced given the terrible onslaught that the Palestinians have been subjected to in recent days at the hands of the Israeli army - over 900 Palestinians have been killed as compared to 13 Israelis killed, not to mention the shocking humanitarian situation that the people of Gaza are facing - it also struck me as being deeply unfair.

In their book, *Bad News from Israel* (published 2004), Professor Greg Philo and Dr Mike Berry from the Glasgow University Media Group analysed the coverage of UK news broadcasters on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and their research found that on British television, particularly on BBC1, there was a preponderance of official 'Israeli perspectives'. Israelis were interviewed or reported more than twice as much as Palestinians. There were also a large number of statements broadcast from US politicians who tended to strongly support Israel.

I rang the BBC newsgathering desk after the 18:00 bulletin on Sunday and spoke to a producer who assured me that the BBC made every effort to monitor its coverage and ensure that they gave equal airtime to both Israeli and Palestinian spokespersons.

Please can you confirm to me whether the BBC does indeed monitor its own coverage and let me know how many times you have interviewed Israeli spokespersons as compared with Palestinian spokespersons during the current conflict, both on TV and on the main radio news bulletins.

I have been speaking with many British Muslims over the past 17 days and they are uniformly appalled by what they believe is very one-sided reporting on our main news programmes.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Inayat Bunglawala,  
Advisor on Research and Policy