

# Tories denounce BBC's Nick Robinson for referring to "murders of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians"

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The truth about Israel's ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in Gaza was inadvertently spoken of by BBC journalist Nick Robinson Monday. It met a torrent of denunciations from Britain's Conservative government and a prompted a swift apology from Robinson on behalf of the state broadcaster.

Robinson, with the BBC since 1986, its political editor for 10 years and now a presenter on its flagship radio programme *Today*, was speaking with Foreign Secretary David Cameron on the Iranian attack against Israel.

At the close of an otherwise ordinary fifteen-minute interview, Robinson asked: "You will know, I think you've talked about, the fact that the West has been perceived to lose the argument, with even many of its own people, ever since the war of terror began.

"Isn't the real risk of where we are now, that Western governments appear to back Israel the moment that Israel is under attack, but when Israel attacks and murders tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians, we say the words, but we do almost nothing?"

The response to the use of the words "murder" and "innocent civilians" was outrage. Conservative former cabinet minister Theresa Villiers told the *Sun*, "Even by the BBC's standards this is shocking bias."

"I can't believe that this kind of question is asked on one of the nation's most influential and highly regarded news programmes," she said. "Israel does not target civilians. The country is defending itself from a brutal terror attack and making strenuous efforts not to harm civilians.

"The BBC should launch an immediate investigation into this latest example of an anti-Israel statement by one of its presenters."

Fellow Tory MP Greg Smith denounced, "Outrageous bias from the BBC."

He continued, "Israel is the nation being attacked—the actual victims—seeking to defend themselves from further attacks by terrorists who have the stated aim of destroying Israel and killing Jews."

*Jewish Chronicle* columnist Nicole Lampert stated baldly, "Israel has not deliberately 'murdered tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians'. Dangerous inflammatory language."

A little later, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesperson insisted, "Impartiality, in reference to the BBC, is absolutely paramount," arguing, "Israel is an ally of the UK, is the victim of a brutal terror attack and clearly has a right to defend itself.

"We should all be careful with our words at this time, particularly given heightened community tensions in the UK."

The scandal over Robinson's comments is confined exclusively to ruling circles. He was, after all, only trying to pose Cameron a question reflecting the fact that tens of millions of people in the UK, the vast majority, are appalled by Israel's genocidal war in Gaza and disgusted by the British government's complicity.

But official discourse on the war in Gaza, especially in the media, is a thoroughly state-managed affair, down to the last word. It is designed to create a fantasy world in which a supposedly democratic Israeli state is conducting a war of self-defence with the best possible intentions and due regard for all aspects of international law.

As Cameron answered Robinson in the interview, the "truly malign action in this region" is not Israel, or its

allies the United States, Britain and all the world's imperialist powers, but Iran.

In this world, it is the Palestinians' fault, for accepting the leadership of Hamas, that nearly 34,000 of them, including nearly 14,000 children and more journalists and humanitarian aid workers than in any comparable war, have been killed, and millions thrown into famine. It is Iran's fault that Israel has repeatedly assassinated its senior government personnel, violating the sovereignty of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq to do so, and is threatening a regional war.

An equally important lie is that the British population agrees with these views and that those protesting Israel's war represent a small minority of "hate marchers" and "extremists."

By even briefly referencing opposition to government policy, Robinson allowed reality to intrude on this fraud. He quickly apologised for this unpardonable slip, writing, "I should have been clearer that I was not expressing my own view let alone that of the BBC when I used the word 'murders'."

A former president of the Oxford University Conservative Association, paid more than £270,000 a year just by the BBC, he had only been concerned with the "'risk' of how the Government's position 'appears'."

The incident will nonetheless be used to tighten the ideological screws, feeding into an ongoing campaign against the BBC accusing it of *anti*-Israeli bias for merely reporting on the crimes perpetrated by Israel. Its aim is to shift the broadcaster even further to the right and justify an even broader crackdown on popular anti-Zionist protest.

Already last autumn, within a few months of the Israeli invasion, the *Daily Telegraph* was publishing, "BBC's credibility with Jewish community has reached breaking point"; the *Jewish Chronicle*, "How the BBC's week of Israel bias alienated the Jewish community"; the *Daily Mail*, "Ex-BBC television chief brands the corporation 'institutionally antisemitic'"; and the *Times of Israel*, "The BBC is under fire for its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war—rightly so."

The *Telegraph* piece, written by former BBC Director of Television and now columnist for the paper Danny Cohen, accused BBC diplomatic correspondent Caroline Hawley of publishing tweets which read "like a series of press releases from Hamas central

command."

Cohen upped the stakes in March, publishing, "The BBC's anti-Israel bias is becoming dangerous."

Government ministers have said the same, with then Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick comparing the BBC's reporting last year to a "21st-century blood libel."

This February, several Tory MPs spent an hour-and-a-half discussing in parliament, "what makes the BBC institutionally antisemitic is not that there is bias or antisemitism within—sadly, there is a lot of that everywhere—but the fact that the management have not done what they should be doing about it" and so "fuelled the rise in antisemitism and harmed diplomatic efforts to end the violence."

This is said of a broadcaster that millions of workers have either stopped watching entirely, or while holding their nose because of its key role in promoting the lies of the British and Israeli governments. But the Tories will not be satisfied until they have the equivalent of Orwell's Ministry of Truth.

The row between the government, Robinson and the BBC notwithstanding, mass alienation from the ruling class and its media, centred on disgust over the relentless pro-genocide propaganda, will only deepen. It is an essential aspect of a political shift to the left by the working class that finds its sharpest expression in the anti-imperialist and anti-war sentiment of the younger generation, which presages a broader eruption of the very political and social conflict the ruling class is seeking to repress.



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