Coverage of the Issues of the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian Refugees by Arab News Websites: A Comparative Analytical Study

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Abstract
This study analyzes Arab news websites' coverage of the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees using a descriptive comparative approach based on agenda-setting theory and content analysis. The sample included Masrawy, Al Arabiya Net, Hespress (Morocco), and Ammon News Agency from January 2023 to June 2025.
Results show that Jerusalem issues received greater coverage (54.52%) than Palestinian refugees (45.48%). Settlement expansion and assaults on Al-Aqsa Mosque were the dominant themes, while strategic dimensions received limited attention. Coverage was mainly news-based, relied heavily on official Palestinian sources, and framed refugees primarily as a humanitarian issue. Overall tone was supportive of Jerusalem and refugee causes.
Keywords: Agenda-setting theory, Arab news websites, Judaization of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, content analysis, media coverage.

1. Research Background

1.1 Introduction

The conflict over Al-Aqsa Mosque reflects more than a political dispute; it represents a deeper struggle between competing national and religious identities within the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. Central to this conflict are the issues of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. Successive Israeli governments have pursued policies aimed at Judaizing Jerusalem—regarded by Palestinians as the capital of their future state—while rejecting the right of return for Palestinian refugees and challenging the two-state solution.
In this context, examining how Arab news websites address these issues is essential. With the rise of digital media and the expansion of internet access, online news platforms have become influential sources of information, shaping public opinion and framing political discourse. The rapid spread of electronic media content enables audiences to follow developments in real time, increasing the role of news websites in constructing narratives around Jerusalem and the refugee issue.

1.2 Literature Review

1-Study by Mohammed Ahmed (2024)
Authors: Adam Nakib, Mohammed Noman, and Amal Abu-Barka
This study examined how Palestinian online news websites address the issue of Palestinian refugees. It adopted a descriptive survey methodology using content analysis and a systematic comparative approach, grounded in Agenda-Setting Theory. The sample included WAFA, Ma'an News Agency, Palestine Now Agency, and Al-Bawaba 24, covering the period from January 1, 2022, to June 30, 2024.
The findings revealed that political issues ranked first in coverage, followed by economic and service-related topics. WAFA led in coverage volume, relying primarily on official Palestinian sources and internally produced content, with editors playing a dominant role. Coverage was largely positive toward refugee issues, except for Israeli and American positions. Logical appeals were most prevalent, Gaza received the greatest focus, and news stories with accompanying photographs were the dominant journalistic format.
2-Study by Suhair Tamraz and Awatef Abdel Rahman (2024)
Title: Palestinian Refugees in The New York Times Discourse: An Analytical Study of Coverage of the 2023 War
This study analyzed how The New York Times covered Palestinian refugee issues during the Gaza war from October 7, 2023, to December 31, 2024. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and media framing theory, the research examined the ideological, political, and cultural contexts shaping the newspaper's discourse.
Findings revealed a dual framing of Palestinian refugees—as humanitarian victims in some contexts and as security or political threats in others. The coverage emphasized Israel's right to self-defense, reflecting alignment with prevailing U.S. political ideology and portraying Israel as a strategic partner. While

Palestinian suffering was highlighted on humanitarian grounds, the broader political and legal dimensions of the conflict were largely marginalized.

3-Study by Raja Saleha (2022)

Title: Assessing the Value of Instructional Radio Programming on the Right of Return and Palestinian Refugee Problems

This descriptive field study explored the role of educational radio programs in promoting awareness of the right of return and Palestinian refugee issues. Using a questionnaire, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 200 refugees in Gaza Strip camps.

The findings showed that official radio stations played the most significant role in broadcasting educational content supporting the right of return. No statistically significant differences were found based on gender, age, education level, or place of residence. The programs had a positive impact on listeners, enhancing awareness and generating strong audience interest in refugee-related issues.

1.3 Importance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in several key dimensions:

- It addresses the centrality of Jerusalem—particularly in light of policies related to the Judaization of the city—in regional and international political contexts.
- It highlights the issues of Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem as core components of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.
- It represents a recent academic effort examining Arab news websites' coverage of the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.
- It contributes to media studies by analyzing how Arab digital platforms frame these pivotal issues, providing a reference for future research on Arab media discourse related to the conflict.

1.4 Study Objectives

Main Objective

To identify the nature and characteristics of media coverage on Arab news websites regarding the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.

A. Content-Related Objectives

- Measure the volume of coverage devoted to both issues.
- Determine the priority assigned to each issue.
- Identify the prevailing editorial orientations.
- Analyze the primary sources relied upon in coverage.
- Examine persuasive strategies used in addressing the issues.
- Identify the dominant responses reflected in the reports.
- Determine the geographical focus of coverage.
- Compare similarities and differences among selected websites.

B. Form-Related Objectives

- Identify the journalistic genres used in coverage.
- Examine highlighting and emphasis techniques.
- Analyze the use of multimedia and supportive elements.
- Compare formal presentation patterns across websites.

1.5 Research Problem

The issues of the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees remain central to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict due to their political, territorial, demographic, and religious dimensions. Given the growing influence of digital media, Arab news websites play a significant role in shaping public opinion and reflecting governmental and ideological orientations.

1.6 Study Sample

A. Website Sample

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select Arab news websites that demonstrated significant attention to the issues of the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. The selected sample included Masrawy, Al Arabiya Net, Hespress (Morocco), and Ammon News Agency (Jordan).

B. Time Frame

The study analyzed content published between January 1, 2023, and June 30, 2025. A constructed week technique was applied using a systematic random sampling method to ensure representative coverage across the selected period.

1.7 Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a structured content analysis form. The study relied on systematic content analysis to classify and interpret data according to both content-related and form-related categories.

1.8 Validity and Reliability

The content analysis instrument was tested for validity and reliability to ensure accuracy and consistency of results. Reliability was assessed by reanalyzing a subsample representing a proportion of the original sample from each website.

Holsti's formula was used to measure intercoder reliability for nominal data based on the percentage of agreement between coders. The reliability coefficient reached 83.8%, which is considered high and acceptable in communication and media research.

2. The Problems of Jerusalem Judaization and Palestinian Refugees.

2.1 The Judaization of Jerusalem

Since 1967, Israeli authorities have pursued policies aimed at consolidating control over East Jerusalem through a series of unilateral measures:

1. Settlement Expansion

Following the 1967 occupation, Israel began establishing settlements in East Jerusalem, starting with Ramat Eshkol. Over time, two concentric rings of Jewish neighborhoods and settlements were constructed to isolate Jerusalem from its Palestinian and Arab surroundings and alter its demographic balance. (Saleh, 2012, p. 183).

2. Separation Wall

The Separation Wall was built to geographically and demographically detach Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, facilitating Israeli control and enabling the annexation of major settlement blocs to the city. (Al-Adayleh, 2007, p. 128).

3. Home Demolitions and Land Confiscation

Restrictive planning policies limit Palestinian construction in East Jerusalem to a small percentage of land, while building permits are costly and difficult to obtain. Since 1967, thousands of Palestinian homes have been demolished. Despite forming a significant proportion of the city's population, Palestinians receive a disproportionately low share of municipal services. (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

4. Closure Policies

Since 1993, entry restrictions have required West Bank Palestinians to obtain special permits to access Jerusalem, limiting access to religious sites, healthcare, and social services. (Negotiations Affairs Department, PLO, 2025).

5. Demographic Changes in the Old City

Shortly after 1967, areas such as the Moroccan Quarter were demolished, and land was expropriated to expand the Jewish Quarter. Legal mechanisms, including the Absentees' Property Law, facilitated property transfers and demographic restructuring in the Old City. (Maguire, 1981, p. 29).

6. Revocation of Residency

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem were granted permanent residency status rather than citizenship. Under the Entry into Israel Law (1952) and subsequent amendments, residency can be revoked under specific conditions. Thousands of Palestinian Jerusalemites have lost their residency status since 1967. (B'Tselem, 2012, p. 6).

7. Religious Dimension

Jerusalem, particularly Al-Haram Al-Sharif, represents a central religious and political focal point in the conflict. Competing sovereignty claims contributed to the failure of negotiations such as the 2000 Camp David Summit, highlighting the city's profound geopolitical and religious significance.

2.2 Palestinian Refugees

The Palestinian refugee issue emerged during the 1947–1948 period and expanded following the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948. During the Nakba, more than 800,000 Palestinians were displaced from hundreds of towns and villages, many of which were destroyed (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

The 1967 war resulted in additional waves of displacement from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights. These cumulative displacements transformed the refugee issue into one of the longest-standing crises in modern history. (Ahmed, 2024, p. 48).

2.3 The Right of Return and Compensation

The right of return refers to the legal claim of Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948—and their descendants—to return to their homes and properties. (Abu Sitta, 2001, p. 9).

This principle was affirmed in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) of December 11, 1948, which stated that refugees wishing to return and live at peace should be permitted to do so and that compensation should be provided for loss or damage to property.

The refugee issue remains a central and unresolved component of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, encompassing humanitarian, legal, political, and identity dimensions. (UNRWA, 2024).

3. Analysis and discussion of the study results

3.1 Volume of media materials:

Table No. (1Volume and proportion of media materials concerned with the problem of Jerusalem Judaization and Palestinian refugees on the websites of the sample of study which are: Masrawy site, Al Arabiya Net site, Hespress Morocco site, and Ammon News agency Jordan site. The results were as follows:

Table No. (1 It shows the volume of media materials, frequency, and proportions.

the site / The case	Masrawy		Al Arabiya Net		Hespress		Ammon		General trend	
	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%
Jerusalem	98	56.65%	108	53.20%	92	59.35%	136	51.32%	434	54.52%
refugees	75	43.35%	95	46.80%	63	40.65%	129	48.68%	362	45.48%
the total	173	100%	203	100%	155	100%	265	100%	796	100%
Frequency and proportions	173	21.73%	203	25.50%	155	19.47%	265	33.29%	796	100%

These findings show that Jerusalem remains central in Arab digital media due to its religious and political importance and ongoing events. In contrast, coverage of the refugee issue has declined because it is complex, longstanding, and lacks new developments, reducing public and media interest. Table No. (2) demonstrates how much the issue of the Judaization of Jerusalem was dealt with on the media materials by the four study sites.

The prevailing trend of study sites:

Table No. (2 illustrates the prevailing trend of the study sample sites towards the issues of the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.

Sites / trend	Masrawy website		Al Arabiya website		Hespress website		Ammon News Agency website		General trend	
	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%
positive	164	94.8%	191	94.08%	150	96.77%	256	96.6%	761	95.60%
negative	2	1.16%	3	1.48%	2	1.29%	1	0.37%	8	1.005%
neutral	7	4.05%	9	4.43%	3	1.94%	8	3.2%	27	3.39%
the total	173	100%	203	100%	155	100%	265	100%	796	100%

Table (2) analyzes editorial trends on the Judaization of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees across four Arab news websites (Masrawy, Al-Arabiya.net, Hespress, and Ammon News). The results show a clear tendency to adopt a supportive discourse toward both issues, reflecting traditional Arab support for Palestinian rights. Neutral or negative coverage was minimal, indicating that these topics are highly sensitive and widely supported in Arab media, where value-based and political narratives dominate. However, this trend may limit critical and analytical discussion, as pro-government discourse often prevails.

Journalistic Arts Used in Topics Study sample:

Table No. (3) Journalistic techniques used in the Study sample sites

Sites / Journalistic Arts		Masrawy		Al Arabiya Net		Hespress		Ammon		General trend	
		your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%
Press release		**142**	82.08%	**162**	79.80%	**125**	80.65%	**185**	69.81%	**614**	77.14%
Press report		**4**	2.31%	**28**	13.79%	**6**	3.87%	**34**	12.83%	**72**	9.05%
report		**0**	0%	**0**	0%	**0**	0%	**6**	2.26%	**6**	0.75%
interview		**3**	1.73%	**6**	2.96%	**8**	5.16%	**9**	3.40%	**26**	3.26%
Newspaper article		**21**	12.14%	**0**	0%	**16**	10.32%	**29**	10.94%	**66**	8.29%
story	**News**	**3**	1.73%	**4**	1.97%	**0**	0%	**2**	0.75%	**9**	1.13%
	Photographer	**0**	0%	**3**	1.48%	**0**	0%	**0**	0%	**3**	0.38%
caricature		**0**	0%	**0**	0%	**0**	0%	**0**	0%	**0**	0%
the total		**173**	**100%**	**203**	**100%**	**155**	**100%**	**265**	**100%**	**796**	**100%**

Table (3) analyzes the journalistic formats used by Masrawy, Al Arabiya Net, Hespress, and Ammon News Agency in 796 articles on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The findings show a strong reliance on straightforward news reporting, with limited use of analytical forms such as investigations, in-depth reports, and photo essays.

This focus on conventional news formats suggests a priority on speed and immediate coverage, but it also reflects limited diversity in journalistic approaches, reducing opportunities for deeper analysis and public understanding of the conflict.

Table No. (4) It explains the elements of reinforcement and multimedia. Accompanying the topics

Sites / Reinforcement elements multimedia	Masrawy website		Al Arabiya Net		Hespress website		Ammon News Agency		General trend	
	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%	your	%
video file	5	2.86%	20	9.85%	3	1.93%	28	10.57 %	56	7.03%
audio file	0	0	3	1.47%	4	2.59%	5	1.89%	12	1.50%
Super texts	5	2.86%	25	12.31 %	0	0	15	5.67%	45	5.65%
Related links	108	62.85 %	140	68.97 %	85	54.84 %	138	52.07 %	471	59.18 %
flash	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hyperlink	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
nothing	55	31.42 %	15	7.39%	63	40.64 %	79	29.81 %	212	26.63 %
the total	173	100%	203	100%	155	100%	265	100%	796	100%

Table (4) examined multimedia and interactive features in 796 articles on Jerusalem Judaization and Palestinian refugees across four news websites. The findings show limited use of multimedia tools, with text links dominating and weak use of video, audio, and interactive media. This reflects the persistence of traditional reporting despite the digital environment.

The study recommends greater use of multimedia tools—such as videos, infographics, audio, and interactive maps—to enhance engagement and depth. While all sites used text links, Al-Arabiya.net and Ammon News showed higher multimedia engagement compared to Masrawy and Hespress.

4. Findings and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of Key Findings

1-Jerusalem Dominates Coverage

The issue of Judaization of Jerusalem received significantly higher attention (54.52%) compared to the Palestinian refugee issue (45.48%) across all four sites (Masrawy, Al Arabiya Net, Hespress, Ammon News).

2-Symbolic Priority of Jerusalem

All studied sites recognized Jerusalem's central religious, political, and symbolic importance, placing it at the forefront of the Arab digital media agenda.

3-Focus on Immediate Al-Aqsa Conflicts

Attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and worshippers ranked highest (39.86%, average 43.25 items), with key sub-topics including settler incursions, desecration, beatings, prevention of prayer, house arrests, excavations under the mosque, and Talmudic rituals.

4-Neglect of Long-Term Strategic Issues

Long-term aspects (changing curricula, Palestinian place names, incitement, unilateral actions) ranked lowest (21.66%, average 23.5 items), receiving far less attention than immediate events.

5-Preference for Instant News Over Depth

Coverage prioritizes rapid, conflict-driven field events (settlements, Al-Aqsa clashes) over long-term strategic dimensions, potentially limiting public understanding of deeper conflict layers.

6-Refugee Coverage: Humanitarian Over Political

Refugee reporting emphasizes daily living conditions (education, health, aid, UNRWA crises) more than core political dimensions (right of return, ending UNRWA, localization). Political coverage is mostly event-based (conferences, statements) without deep analysis.

7-Refugee Issue Treated as Humanitarian Crisis

Most sites framed the refugee problem primarily as a long-term humanitarian/service issue, with insufficient linkage to its political and strategic role in the broader Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

4.2 Recommendations

1-Increase refugee issue visibility on digital media agendas through dedicated news, investigative reports, and features covering humanitarian, political, and legal dimensions.

2-Adopt modern digital storytelling and multimedia (videos, interactive graphics, personal narratives) to emotionally and intellectually re-engage audiences with the refugees' plight.

3-Expand networks of field correspondents in Jerusalem hotspots and refugee camps to ensure direct, comprehensive, and real-time coverage.

4-Present Jerusalem Judaization and Palestinian refugees as interconnected issues, highlighting how developments in one directly impact the other.

5-Diversify coverage of settlements and Al-Aqsa attacks to include historical, legal, and political contexts — moving beyond mere event reporting.

6-Produce comprehensive Jerusalem media dossiers or interactive special files combining breaking news, investigations, documentaries, and background materials.

7-Balance refugee coverage: continue showing daily suffering (education, health, services) while clearly explaining the political and legal root causes.

8-Strengthen focus on education and cultural threats as tools for preserving Palestinian national identity, and develop awareness campaigns that address the refugee issue holistically (not only humanitarian aspects).

These findings and recommendations aim to enhance the depth, balance, and impact of Arab digital media coverage on both core Palestinian issues.

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