



Press Release

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Altering the Trends: The BBC's Biased Reporting on the Syrian Conflict

Manchester-based Syrian advocacy and community organisation Rethink Rebuild Society, in response to numerous and long-standing complaints from members of the Syrian community regarding the BBC's coverage of the situation in Syria, released a report on Tuesday 21 February titled '**Altering the Trends: The BBC's Biased Reporting on the Syrian Conflict**'. This report (available [here](#)) analysed over 300 BBC online articles on the Syrian conflict between September and December 2016 (corresponding with the Aleppo tragedy). The findings of this report indicate a pattern of misleading coverage by the BBC of the situation in Syria which has the potential to skew the public's perception of the underlying basis of the conflict as well as the primary perpetrators involved.

The general findings of the report are as follows:

1. **Article headlines:** The Assad regime and its Russian backers were identified as the perpetrators of specific attacks or crimes in only 11% of the article headlines which reported attacks committed by these parties (in only 4 of 38 articles reporting attacks by these sides). In contrast, ISIS/Daesh was identified in 100% of the article headlines reporting attacks committed by it (in 9 of 9 articles); opposition fighters in 80% of the article headlines (in 4 of 5 articles); and the US-led Coalition in 100% of the article headlines (in 4 of 4 articles).
2. **Article texts:** Not only were Assad/Russia unidentified in many of the article headings, but they were also unidentified or only vaguely identified within the texts of many of the articles themselves. Only 17 of 38 articles reporting attacks by Assad/Russia identified them as the perpetrators of the specific attacks within the article headline or within paragraphs 1-2 of the article text. The remaining 21 articles identified these parties' roles within paragraphs 3-12 of the article text, within the videos accompanying the articles, or failed to identify their role entirely.
3. **Article headings with Assad's name:** All of the articles specifically mentioning Assad's name within the article headlines imparted either a neutral or a positive connotation. None of them linked him with any criminal activity.

Commenting on the results of the report, Rethink Rebuild Society Advocacy Director Dr. Haytham Alhamwi says: *'Many members of the British public think that ISIS is responsible for the most civilian killings in Syria. One of the main reasons behind this misinformation is the vague titles used by the UK media. Even if the perpetrators are not brought to justice in Syria, we hope that the BBC will not contribute to the falsification of history and we offer this report as guidance for its future reporting on Syria.'*

The findings of this report also come as a blow to many Syrians who lived through the Assad regime's onslaught against East Aleppo. Abdulkafi Alhamdo is an English teacher who risked his life on a daily basis while in East Aleppo to get footage from his city to Western news outlets, including to the BBC. His response to the report was as follows: *'Passive is passive. As someone who constantly updated international media on the situation in Aleppo, it was always so frustrating when they did not even mention Assad and Russia in their reporting as the parties that were raining air strikes on our hospitals, schools, bakeries, and homes. This passiveness makes readers outside Syria confused because the media is the only source of information available to them on the situation. The argument that people will know who is bombing civilians is not correct because many people don't. The BBC's failure to mention the doer in most of the report headlines contributes to deluding the audience about the truth.'*

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For further information and press enquiries, please contact Yasmine at yasmine@rrsoc.org.

Rethink Rebuild Society has established itself as a non-profit organisation that acts as an umbrella for the Syrian community in Manchester, and endeavours to clarify the Syrian cause to its audience in the UK and the wider public.