



## AS SEEN IN THE BELGIAN MEDIA IN JUNE 2025

The constant media coverage of Israel and the Middle East makes it necessary to focus on the most important events. The analysis will focus on articles selected as examples for each theme.

### **1- Morbid figures**

The Middle East has gone from powder keg to volcano, as tensions escalate. The Israeli army's attack on 13 June, which initially eliminated Iranian officials [Hossein Salami](#), [Mohammad Bagheri](#), [Ali Shamkhani](#) and [Gholam Ali Rashid](#), was met with daily retaliation, exposing the Israeli civilian population to increased human and material damage. On the Iranian side, Tsahal is targeting military installations and individuals involved in acquiring the atomic bomb. Meanwhile, the situation of the Gazan population remains extremely precarious.

Figures have denotative and connotative values. A first example is the article in [Le Soir](#) on 21 June, which ends as follows: "On the Iranian side, the war has left more than 400 people dead and 3,056 wounded, most of them civilians, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. The American NGO Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) put the death toll at at least 657. Iranian retaliatory fire on Israel killed 25 people, according to the authorities". The figures give an impression of precision and solid scientificity. But how can we escape their moral value when they are used in a text like this extract, which places two contexts in symmetry? Indeed, the rhetorical purpose is present, since the statement does not highlight the Iranian (civilian) and Israeli (military) targets, the effectiveness of the Israeli iron dome and the shelters present throughout the urban space in this country. The numerical comparison results in Iran being the absolute victim (see last part of this monitoring).

A second example is this article in [Le Soir on 19 June](#), which states that 'every day, Gaza's civil defence forces report new massacres: eleven people killed on Wednesday in Nousseirat, near a distribution site; at least 53 dead and 200 wounded on Tuesday 17 June in Khan Younès, after a riot around a lorry carrying flour, etc. In a statement, the army acknowledged firing on this 'gathering' and said it was 'examining the details of the incident'. We might wonder about the use of figures to enhance the newspaper's image: as authoritative

arguments from experts, they are indisputable... even when they come from sources that are sometimes dubious, or from authorities unable to justify them, as in the case of the army, which refers to a 'gathering'. The word massacre is not neutral. It is part of this desire to imply that Israel is committing genocide.

The use of figures prevents recipients from visualising human beings and situations: accounting is dehumanising, even when it seeks to account for facts. It is important to note that the names of hostages whose bodies are repatriated to Israel are almost systematically designated, as in this article in [La Libre on 11 June](#). The names of the Palestinians are so high, in addition to the absence of international journalists on the spot, that their fate becomes unspeakable.

## **2- Anti-Semitic / anti-Zionist acts: a census in June 2025**

### **2.a. Attack in Colorado**

Several people were injured during a demonstration for the release of hostages in Colorado on 2 June, as reported in [these articles](#) in [Le Soir](#). Between 8.44am and 10.57am, the newspaper published these two articles on the subject, but the figures do not correspond (6 injured versus 8). The editors prefer to dwell on the reactions of Israeli politicians - which they keep at a distance by framing them in inverted commas ("Israel denounces an anti-Semitic act encouraged by "the media") - rather than analyse in depth the actual circumstances of the act in question.

### **2.b Vandalism in Paris**

In its 3 June edition, [La Libre](#) reported on acts of vandalism targeting Jewish sites in Paris. It reports that "red hands" - a symbol potentially linked to the lynching of Israeli soldiers in Ramallah in 2000 - have been interpreted by the security services as an interference operation carried out by Russian-speaking individuals. Nothing is less certain. This semiotic analysis is a reminder of the extent to which certain visual signs, now codified, make it possible to identify acts of an anti-Semitic nature, by giving them symbolic and political significance.

### **2.c. Posters / Jew-hunt in Brussels**

An external article in [La Libre](#) on 23 June provides information about what appears to be a Jew-hunt in Brussels. In his article, Daniel Rodenstein, associate researcher at the Institut Jonathas, draws a parallel between the posters put up in the streets of Brussels - bearing the words 'He/She lobbies for the genocide' accompanied by portraits of Brussels residents - and the poster campaigns run by the Nazis in the 1930s, highlighting similar procedures. In his words, 'people who have committed neither crime nor offence should not be exposed to curiosity or hatred in the public space'. This campaign illustrates how anti-Semitism, in its

trivialised form of radical anti-Zionism, has become totally uninhibited: the perpetrators claim responsibility for their action, with an address to back it up.

### 2.d. The cultural boycott of Israel intensifies with the arrival of summer

The boycott of a festival - as reported in [Le Soir on 5 June](#) - because of institutional or political links with Israel, in the name of denouncing war crimes or alleged genocide, is part of a political approach. On 4 June, the same newspaper also mentioned the pressure brought to bear on members of the band Radiohead, even though they were calling for restraint and nuance. The recurrent targeting of Israel and individuals associated with that country - whether directly or indirectly - raises the question of differential treatment in the media. The Belgian cultural scene is no exception, with an article published in [Le Soir on 4 June](#), [a carte blanche](#) in the same newspaper on the same day and a Musiques pour Gaza festival on 8 June. In this context, any shifts in these discourses towards expressions of anti-Semitism, whether explicit or underlying, call for constant critical attention.

### 2.d. The 'Résistance Festival' in St Gilles

With this in mind, we turn our attention to the 'Résistance' festival, organised from 6 to 8 June in Saint-Gilles, which provoked a strong reaction from Mayor Jean Spinette. He strongly criticised certain performances in the programme, which he described as 'an apology for terrorism' (reported by [La Libre](#), while the headline in [Le Soir](#) referred to a 'call for violence'). This event highlights the Palestinianisation of the Belgian cultural scene.



La scène interroge les autorités sur une possible apologie du terrorisme. ©Capture d'écran/Emilie Akiko

### 3. Media coverage of protests against Israel

June was marked by a number of public protests against Israeli policy. Among the most high-profile were the flotilla in which climate activist Greta Thunberg and MP Rima Hassan took part, the international march to Gaza, and a demonstration organised around the slogan 'One red line' in Brussels. Focused exclusively on the Palestinian situation - to the detriment

of other crises, such as those affecting the Congo or Sudan - these demonstrations express the absolute centrality of the Palestinian question in Belgium. Palestine is an identity marker for a section of the Belgian population.

The boat generated a total of fourteen articles between the two newspapers studied, from the media coverage of its departure on [4 June](#) to its return to square one on [12 June](#). This is four times more than the number of articles devoted to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan over the same period. We can see that by relaying uncritical discursive productions, newspapers end up conforming to them, to the point of neutralising any editorial criticism. The operation, although widely covered by the media, is reported without analysis, as illustrated by this statement from the newspaper [Le Soir on 6 June](#): 'for a week now, a ship belonging to the Freedom Flotilla Coalition has been heading for Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid'. Criticism, in this context, emerges through the introduction of other voices, sometimes satirical or openly hostile, like the statement by Georges-Louis Bouchez relayed in [La Libre](#): 'The humanitarian ship Madleen with Greta Thunberg, it's a show... They had enough flour to make pancakes at a school fair.'

Another protest action was the march to Gaza ('Global Marche to Gaza', which includes 6 articles) in Egypt, in which 4,000 nationals of various nationalities tried to take part, despite warnings that such an initiative would be dangerous or impossible in practical or administrative terms. Beyond the difficulty of organising the movement ([La Libre](#) speaks of 'highly decentralised logistics'), the articles all used the same formula: 'After 20 months of war, Israel is facing growing international pressure to allow more aid to Gaza to alleviate widespread shortages of food and basic necessities'. This initiative was accompanied by another, led by North African actors and called 'Soumoud' ('caravan' of solidarity). Both initiatives ended in confusion, marked both by their operational failure and by the authoritarian way in which they were brought to an end. Not only were the Western nationals involved expelled, but the Egyptian authorities were also careful to prevent any dispersal of the movement on their territory, citing public order concerns. Moreover, any flight of Gazans to Sinai would have contradicted Cairo's official position, which has maintained the closure of its border with Gaza since the start of the conflict - either voluntarily or under duress.

Finally, on [15 June](#) [Le Soir](#) published two articles headlined: 'Thousands of demonstrators in Brussels to form a "red line" against the war in Gaza (photos)' and 'Red mass in Brussels against the 'ongoing genocide' in Gaza' to report on the demonstration in the capital on the same day. While the use of inverted commas around the term 'genocide' allows us to distance ourselves from the terms used to illustrate the war in progress, this critical stance does not extend to the photos published, as shown by the following photograph. It states that 'Israel has crossed the red lines for 77 years', the date of its creation, implicitly denying it the right to exist. The lack of any interpretation or explanation from the newspaper does not allow the audience to make up its mind.





Copyright Reuters

#### **4. Is Israel committing genocide?**

The President of the Institut Jonathas, Joël Kotek, was interviewed for an article in the newspaper *Le Soir*, published on 7 June, entitled '[Israël, état génocidaire à Gaza? comment la terrible accusation a pris consistance](#)', written by Baudouin Loos (a journalist who lacks critical distance and journalistic neutrality) and Pauline Hofmann, head of the international section. They investigate the use of the accusation of genocide against Israel, in the context of the war in Gaza since October 2023. The article adopts a clearly accusatory editorial line, multiplying incriminating sources without really offering any legal or diplomatic counterpoints. No expert in international humanitarian law defending a different interpretation is quoted. The result is an unbalanced treatment of the subject. Furthermore, the title poses a question but the whole text tends to answer it in the affirmative without waiting for a judicial verdict - forgetting that only the ICJ can qualify an act as genocide. Thus, under the guise of investigative work and expert testimony, the article openly advocates the recognition of an ongoing genocide in Gaza, based on factual and declarative elements. It reflects a strong opinion, but omits the fundamental principles of legal prudence, in particular the presumption of innocence of States and the complexity of proving intent.

#### **5. Descriptions of the Israeli attack on Iran**

##### **5.a. Headlines from 13 June**

It would take around 24 hours for the two newspapers to announce a 'war' - as in this headline from *Le Soir* on 14 June: [Guerre Israël-Iran : le monde anesthésié](#). On 13 June alone, Israel was portrayed as powerful, active and strategic: '[Rising Lion](#)' (the title given by Israel to the operation, a heroic or martial metaphor), '[Israel carries out the threat](#)', '[Israeli attack](#)', '[carries out strikes](#)'. The defensive position is justified in some cases: '[Israel defends](#)

[its offensive](#)', '[Iran has crossed red lines](#)'. Iran is described as passive or as the victim of attacks: 'Israeli strikes on Iran', 'the very existence of the Iranian regime is threatened'. However, the Iranian regime is also portrayed as threatening, dangerous and illegal: '[Iran is launching missiles](#)', 'crossing red lines', '[Iran's nuclear programme](#)'. The regime is personalised, demonised (figures killed by name, often referred to as 'senior officials' of the regime, without nuance). The verbs convey violent, strategic or dramatic dynamics. Including Israel as agent: attack, proceed, defend, carry out, maintain, strike, make regret. Iran, on the other hand: retaliates, crosses, launches, threatens, kills, activates (defensive passive). France, Belgium and the international community: participate, call, react, take stock - not very active verbs, often secondary.

Some headlines use sensationalist and/or subjective adjectives to dramatise the situation: 'unprecedented and deadly' (on the Israeli operation); 'historic' (Israeli attack); "massive" (attack); 'extremely worrying' (turning point); 'new downward spiral'; 'seized by Islamist mobs'. These adjectives emphasise the urgency, the exceptional or tragic nature of the situation, sometimes in an alarmist tone. Neutral or informative adjectives or expressions are rarer: 'an initial assessment', 'what we know', 'main members killed'. The headlines reinforce the binarity of the narrative we have known since 7 October, in which Israel alone and almost *ex nihilo* configures the regional dynamics, with Iran as a threatening regime, but above all as a victim. Western countries passively watch the violence escalate, express their emotions and try to manage the conflict without much impact. The language used accentuates emotion (anguish, stupefaction, concern) through the use of verbs of military action and sensational adjectives, leading to a dramatic and polarised interpretation of the facts.

### 5.b. The portrait of Ali Khamenei

[Two argumentative articles](#) endorse an ambivalent portrait of the Ayatollah. Firstly, he is portrayed as an absolute religious leader, the 'supreme guide', the embodiment of Iranian theocracy, the guarantor of the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*, omnipotent, silent and authoritarian. This portrayal can be seen in a negative light, insofar as most Western European countries have separated religious power from political power, and this is even a strong ideological basis. The man is described as aging, in power without solid legitimacy: he was 'hastily promoted', with 'an unremarkable theological background'. Moreover, he is perceived as a manipulative strategist in the shadows, almost confining him to the sphere of conspiracy: he 'consorts with the Revolutionary Guards', he 'controls everything', with an 'iron fist' style of governance. These elements make him a conceptual antagonist of the Western world, the Ayatollah becoming a symbol of a radical, brutal, misogynistic, repressive regime, compared to Hitler by Israel and indirectly saved by Trump - a construct of a threatening but declining Eastern tyrant. But he is also portrayed as the victim of an assassination attempt and of injuries, a detail that momentarily humanises the figure, creating a brief contrast with the dominant authoritarian portrait.

Trump is portrayed as his unwitting 'saviour', the instigator of a 'ceasefire' accepted by Khamenei. The newspapers report the dehumanising speech of Netanyahu, shown as a warmonger and radical, ready to 'remove the head of the snake'. Civil society is widely portrayed as being totally annihilated by Khamenei and his regime, in a rebellious dynamic on the way to becoming a real upheaval. Iranian public opinion is never emphasised, even if the portraits of their leaders are a subtle reminder of the attempts, prior to the war, to bring down the regime.

## **6. Two cartoons**

Finally, here are two cartoons that deserve our interest, insofar as they imply that Israel is committing genocide. The first is by Kroll, and was published in [Le Soir on 14 June](#):



And the second, originally published in [November 2024 in La Libre](#)

# IL FAIT CHAUD...





