

FLAME.HOTLINE

June 23, 2026



A Palestinian girl in wedding garb stands between two grooms at a mass wedding ceremony in Jabaliya, Gaza, where girls as young as nine are permitted to marry. An AP story falsely—with no proof—held Israel’s war with Hamas responsible for an uptick in Gaza child marriages.

AP article dishonestly blames Israel for uptick in Gaza child marriages

Word Count: 1,030; estimated reading time: 3.9 minutes

Dear Friend of Israel, Friend of FLAME:

On May 29th, the Associated Press (AP) published an article alleging that acute poverty has forced families in the Gaza Strip to marry off their prepubescent daughters to stave off hunger and financial ruin. The insinuation of this “new” trend is that it’s caused by the devastating war the Gazan people have suffered because of (wait for it) . . . the excessive destruction wrought by Israel in its battle against Hamas. Unfortunately for AP’s journalistic integrity, the story is full of holes.

Firstly, the article mentions a significant increase in child marriages in the years during the war, but provides no concrete evidence tying this increase to the dire situation in Gaza.

Secondly, AP cites no data on how many young girls are married off under normal circumstances, or that Gazan law permits marriage for girls as young as nine. In fact, data shows—but again AP doesn't mention—that although the rate of child marriages did increase during the Gaza War, there was a greater increase more than four years before the war began.

Thirdly, the implication that Israel's actions to stop Hamas's bloodthirsty bombings and terrorist murders of Israeli citizens are somehow to blame for Gaza's poverty is absurd. After all, Hamas (*not Israel*) started the war by carrying out the atrocities of October 7, 2023—the worst mass slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust. Moreover, Hamas exacerbates Gazans' suffering by using them as human shields, stealing humanitarian aid, and brutally slaughtering anyone who challenges their authority.

Lastly, the AP article fails to mention the significant prevalence of child marriage in Muslim countries, where women are often treated as little more than property of men. Why? Because the article isn't really about the girls or Gaza's poverty—it's about the ogre, Israel.

AP article fails to connect the dots to Israel. It claims that “The devastation that Israel's campaign has wreaked in Gaza has helped fuel an increase in marriages of young girls, according to experts and official data.” However, the piece fails to provide any factual evidence tying increased child marriages to Israel's campaign against Hamas.

Instead, the article relies on testimony from six underage girls and their parents. Clearly, the AP intends these Gazans' stories to tear at readers' heartstrings—to evoke a negative view of the Jewish state. However, the anecdotes in no way prove that Israel is responsible for underage girls being forced into marriage.

Child marriage in Gaza is a longstanding tradition. Indeed, according to the AP article, the minimum age for marriage for girls is 17 “with some exceptions allowed.” These exceptions allow a girl to be married as young as nine.

Surveys, interviews, and studies by local organizations such as the Women's Affairs Center in Gaza and the UN Population Fund (UNFP) indicate that child marriages among Palestinians occur mainly because of customs and traditions, rather than economic factors. A 2021 study of 406 married girls in Gaza, for example, found that the reasons for child marriages were overwhelmingly cultural, with 83% citing strict conservative family norms, 74% social norms, and 53% religious beliefs.

AP does provide evidence that child marriage in Gaza has increased during Israel's war with Hamas, noting a 2.8% rise in the number of child brides in 2024 and 2025. However, AP didn't mention that there was an even greater increase of 3.2% from 2018 to 2019—years before Israel's post-October 7 war against Hamas. Why? Because it doesn't fit the leftist narrative that Israel is the root of all evil in Gaza.

Hamas alone is responsible for Gazans' suffering. Hamas started this current war, and indeed, launched every war in Gaza since violently taking over the territory in 2007. If Hamas had not committed the October 7th massacre, there would have been no war, nor the resulting devastation in Gaza. The real cause is just another bad choice on the part of Palestinian leaders.

Nonetheless, the AP article holds Israel responsible for Gazans' suffering. For instance, the piece says, “Israeli restrictions on aid drove Gaza's population to the brink of famine at times.” Actually, Israel allowed a massive amount of aid into Gaza, and is still doing so. About 600-800 trucks now enter Gaza daily,

carrying food amounting to more than five times Gaza's internationally defined nutritional requirements. In short, there has been no famine in Gaza.

Furthermore, the AP article neglects to mention Hamas' theft of humanitarian aid during the war, their use of human shields, or their penchant for ruthlessly murdering their opponents in cold blood. The AP piece doesn't mention any of this, because it would implicate Hamas as responsible for Gazans' misery, rather than Israel.

Child marriage is common in Muslim countries. In fact, seven of ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are Muslim majority nations. Islamic Sharia Law, as interpreted by many Muslims, sanctions marriage for minors, drawing on the example of the Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Aisha, who was just nine when her marriage to the Muslim prophet was consummated.

Under this Sharia law, women are often treated as little more than property. For instance, in many cases, fathers are allowed to marry off their young daughters without their daughters' consent. Men may marry multiple wives, but women can't have multiple husbands, and a male guardian (*wali*) is often required to permit a woman's marriage.

Surely, a story on the factual prevalence of child marriage in Gaza and other Muslim countries would highly interest AP's audience, but of course, such coverage would undermine AP's anti-Israel narrative.

The real trend in Middle East reporting: Israel-bashing. Nowadays, when it comes to Israel, many journalists resort to unabashed slander of the Jewish state, rather than report the facts as ethical journalism requires.

Please make the point when speaking with family, friends, colleagues—or in letters to the editor—that this AP article is just one example of the prevalent trend of discrediting Israel. It joins journalistic hoaxes such as Nicholas Kristoff's article in the *New York Times* accusing Israel of using dogs to rape Palestinian prisoners. In short, a huge portion of coverage on the Middle East in mainstream media now involves some attempt to denigrate the Jewish state.

If you agree we need to spread this truth, please use your email browser to forward this Hotline issue to fellow lovers of Israel—and encourage them to join us by subscribing to the Hotline at no charge.

Best regards,

Jason Shvili, Contributing Editor

Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. As you know, we at FLAME are constantly fighting to defeat our enemies' slanders against Israel. But I hope you agree that it's *just as important* for us lovers of Israel to spread the word about the amazing triumphs of Zionism. I believe that in addition to defending Israel from media and politicians' lies, we need also to help the world understand Israel's righteous cause and its power for good—we need as well to trumpet Israel's miraculous achievements. God knows, Americans will never learn about Israel's good deeds in mainstream media, like the *New York Times*, CNN or NPR! I believe we need to stand tall because of who the Jewish people are . . . be proud of what Israel does for the world. For this reason, I hope you'll approve of FLAME's new *hasbarah*—our explanatory message called "**How Zionism's Miracle Benefits Us All.**" With your agreement and support, FLAME will soon begin running this message as a paid editorial ad in major mainstream newspapers nationwide. This ad tells the truth about Zionism's unmatched power to create economic prosperity, global security, world health and democratic freedoms. It also explains why the enemies of Zionism are not just foes of Israel, they are also the enemies of human

progress. Please review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which FLAME is about to publish to millions –in leading social media, as well as in the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Orlando Sentinel*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Denver Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, the President and Vice President. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel’s behalf is critical, I urge you to **support us** with a donation.

