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DISCOURSE JUNE 26, 2026 UPDATED AUGUST 6, 2026

We Read the 36 Most-Watched Israel-Gaza Explainers. How Do They Frame the Conflict?

A first-party study of the language in the 36 most-watched Israel-Gaza explainer videos: contested-claim verdicts, who is named the actor, and the words used for each side.

Israel-Gaza Discourse

Media Framing

YouTube

Contested Claims

Agent of Violence

First-Party Study



Someone trying to make sense of the war in Gaza, and not sure what to think, tends to do what everyone does: search “Israel Palestine explained” and watch whatever comes up first. People reach for those videos precisely because an explainer promises a neutral starting point, the history laid out and the argument left to the viewer, and the most-watched of them carry tens of millions of views each. So we read the transcripts of the 36 most-watched Israel-Gaza explainers on YouTube, a combined 127.5 million views, and measured how much they explain and how much they conclude. The answer: **19 of the 36** state a verdict on a contested question in their own voice, the apartheid label, who started the war, whether the land was taken, what Hamas is, the kind of conclusion an undecided viewer came to weigh rather than to be handed.

The verdicts run in both directions: of 50 that survived strict verification, 30 align with the Palestinian narrative and 19 with the Israeli one. On the surface grammar of violence the canon is close to balanced, naming Israel and Palestinian or Hamas actors about equally, while the words it chooses render Israel as a state and Palestinians as a displaced population well before any explicit argument is made. This report measures the language of the explainers, the words they use and the claims they assert, not the events themselves. The pattern holds across the sample: how often each side’s language appears, and in whose voice.

Key Findings

- **19 of 36** explainers (53%) assert at least one contested claim as established fact in their own narration; 50 such assertions survived strict verification out of 72 flagged, and 44 were captured as a validated verbatim quote (Hanover Institute study, 2026, first-party).
- The verdicts are bidirectional: **30** align with the Palestinian narrative and **19** with the Israeli one (1 neither). The most-adjudicated questions are who the land rightfully belongs to (10), what Hamas is (8), and whether the project is colonialism (7).
- The line between the two groups is grammatical. Wire and broadcast outlets attribute the same claims (“the UN says,” “human rights groups say,” “considered a terrorist organization by”); the verdicts cluster in advocacy channels on both sides and in several mainstream ones, including Vox, The Guardian, and CNN.

- Among 555 sentences depicting a violent act, Israel is named as the actor **206** times and a Palestinian or Hamas actor **198** times, with **119** (about 21%) naming no actor at all, a near-parity that diverges from the Institute's [headline study of the same conflict](#), where Israel was the named agent 79.8% of the time.
- The explainers' own narration is essentially free of antisemitic tropes (checked across all 36), so the contested-claim verdicts are political conclusions about the conflict, not coded prejudice.

What the explainers assert in their own words

Each line below is a conclusion an explainer states in its own narration, captured word for word and verified as an exact quote, not a paraphrase; **44 of the 50** verified verdicts were located verbatim in the transcripts, grouped here by the narrative each aligns with, a descriptive label and not an Institute judgment of the claim.

Verdicts that align with the Palestinian narrative

Channel	On	In the video's own words
Al Jazeera English	the land	"the British promise that led to the destruction of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel"
Vox	1948	"Zionist forces and militias began to forcibly expel hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their land"
Things I Care About	colonialism	"Palestinians were facing a colonial project that had worldwide support and the outspoken goal of driving them from their land"
The Guardian	casualties	"Israel's killed more than 64,000 Palestinians in Gaza, with the real toll likely much higher"
Dr. Roy Casagrande	the land	"they start telling the lie of a land without a people for a people without a land and it's just not true"
Dhruv Rathee	colonialism	"their country is being colonized by the Israelis"

Verdicts that align with the Israeli narrative

Channel	On	In the video's own words
Ben Shapiro	blame	"One side has accepted every single peace deal provided to it. And one side has said we will not accept any peace deal."
Deeper Look Media	1948	"the Arabs living in Palestine were told to leave by the Arab forces against Israel"
TBN Israel	blame	"it was meticulously planned by the PLO, by the Palestinian Authority, to sabotage the peace with Israel"
explainitychannel	Hamas	"the terror organization Hamas carried out an attack on Israel"
History on Maps	the land	"the Roman Empire who gave the name Palestine to Judah intending to break the Jewish connection with the land of Israel"
Vox	Hamas	"Hamas, a violent extremist group dedicated to Israel's destruction"

A neutral explainer can narrate every one of these events without reaching the verdict. The contrast is visible in the same word: a wire outlet writes that Hamas is "considered a terrorist organization by the UK and US," while an explainer that adjudicates writes that Hamas "is an actual terrorist group," in its own voice. Vox appears in both tables, a reminder that this is not a property of fringe channels alone.

How many explainers state a verdict on a contested question?

Of the 36 explainers, **19** assert at least one contested claim as fact in their own narration rather than attributing it. The contested questions are the ones reasonable parties dispute and a research organization would not settle: whether Israel's conduct is apartheid, ethnic cleansing, or genocide; whether Zionism is a colonial project; who started the conflict; whose land it rightfully is; whether the occupation is legitimate; and what Hamas is.

What contested questions the explainers answer

50 IN-VOICE VERDICTS ACROSS 19 OF 36 EXPLAINERS, BY CLAIM



Source: Hanover Institute study, 2026. Verdicts asserted in the narration's own voice, verified.

The verdicts cluster in advocacy channels on both sides, HasanAbi and Dr. Roy Casagrande toward the Palestinian narrative, Ben Shapiro and TBN Israel toward the Israeli one, but several mainstream outlets adjudicate too. By contrast the BBC, Channel 4 News, CrashCourse, HISTORY, ABC News, and RealLifeLore consistently attribute the same claims to a named party, which is what kept them out of the count.

Which direction do the verdicts run?

The 50 verified verdicts split **30 toward the Palestinian narrative and 19 toward the Israeli one**, with 1 favoring neither. This is a measure of direction, not of correctness: it records which narrative an asserted verdict aligns with, distinct from whether the claim itself holds up.

Verified verdicts by the narrative they align with



Source: Hanover Institute study, 2026. Direction reflects narrative alignment, not accuracy of the underlying claims.

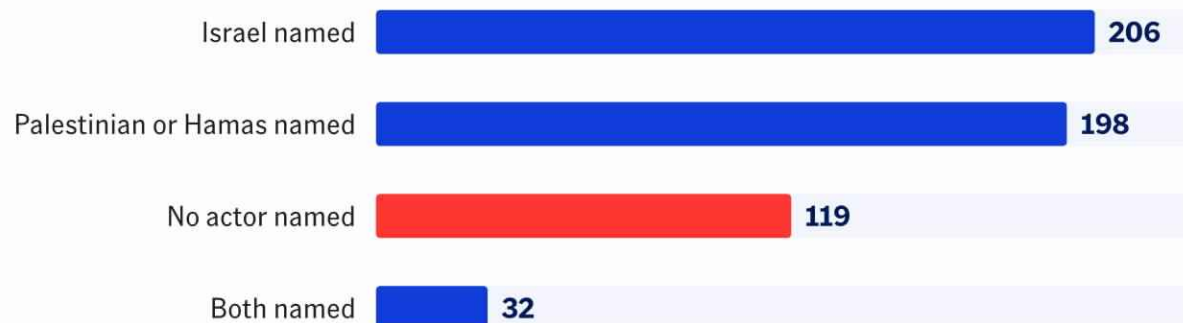
That both directions appear in volume is the point. The finding is not that the explainer canon leans one way; it is that more than half of these videos resolve questions they could have left open, so a viewer who treats an explainer as a neutral chronology is often absorbing a conclusion as well.

Who is named as the actor when the videos describe violence?

Across **555** sentences that depict a violent act, the explainers name Israel as the actor **206** times and a Palestinian or Hamas actor **198** times, name both in 32, and name no actor at all in **119**, about 21%. The near-parity is itself the finding, and it diverges sharply from the same conflict's news headlines.

Who is named as the actor in violence sentences

555 VIOLENCE-DEPICTING SENTENCES ACROSS 35 TRANSCRIBED EXPLAINERS



Source: Hanover Institute study, 2026. Surface grammar of who is named; base rates confound, not a bias measure.

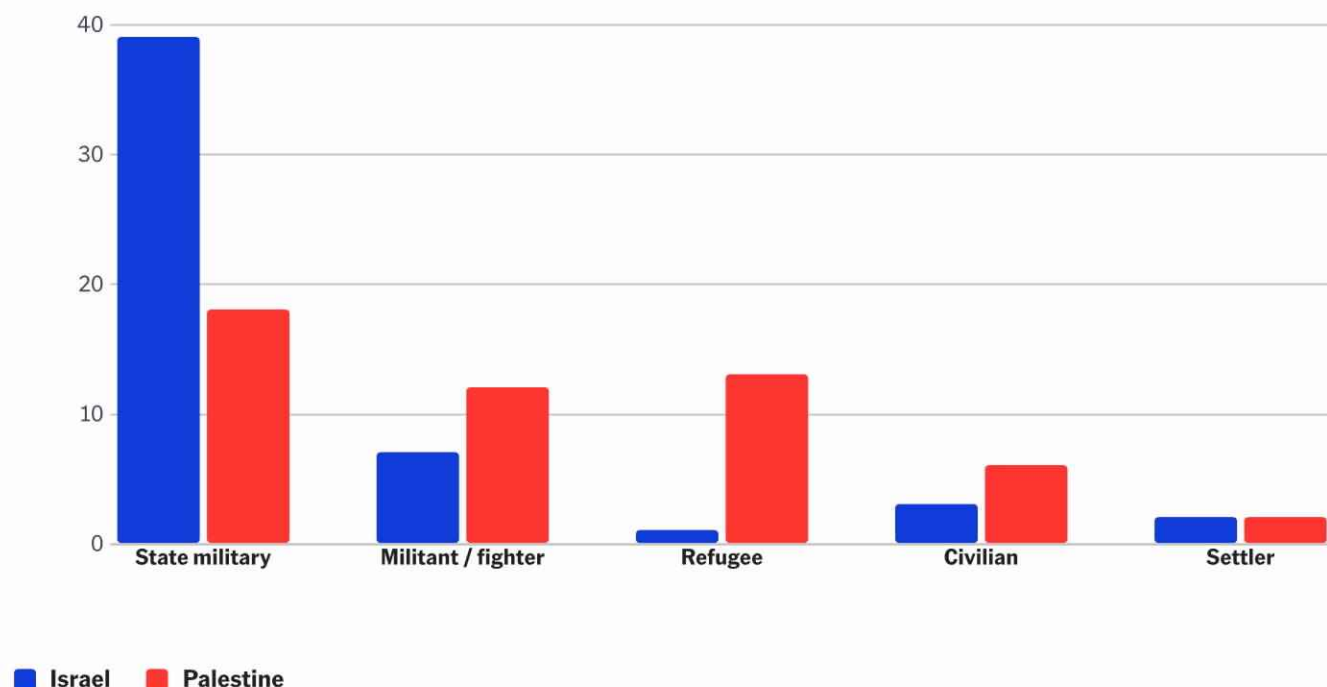
In the Institute's [headline study](#), Israel was the named agent 79.8% of the time, because those headlines covered a sustained phase of Israeli operations in Gaza. Explainers narrate the full century, the 1948 and 1967 wars, Palestinian and Arab attacks, suicide bombings, the October 7 assault, and Israeli operations, so the agency spreads across both sides. The shared feature is the agentless share: about a fifth of violent acts in the explainers, like nearly a quarter of the headlines, are described with the actor removed from the sentence.

What words describe each side?

The descriptive vocabulary tracks the kind of actor each side is in the narration. Israel is rendered as a state with a military: forces, army, soldiers, and troops attach to it **39** times, against 18 for the Palestinian side. Palestinians are rendered through displacement and civilian status, with refugee attaching to them **13** times against 1 for Israel, while Hamas and Palestinian fighters draw militant and fighter (12 to 7). The word terrorist appears in both contexts at similar raw frequency, but reading the sentences shows it attaches overwhelmingly to Hamas and Palestinian attackers, including in sentences that name Israel as the party attacked.

Actor-nouns the narration attaches to each side

MENTIONS ACROSS 36 TRANSCRIPTS; ATTRIBUTION CONFIRMED BY READING



Source: Hanover Institute study, 2026. Co-occurrence counts, descriptive; not a bias measure.

Israel appears in the transcripts as a state with an army, and the vocabulary of forces, soldiers, and troops follows from that. Palestinians appear largely as a displaced and civilian population, and the vocabulary of refugee status follows from that, while militant and fighter language clusters around Hamas. The counts record which nouns attach to which side; they do not establish why the vocabulary sorts this way.

Methodology and limitations

This report presents an original Hanover Institute study and ships its full method.

Provenance. A fixed set of neutral, explainer-intent queries (for example “israel palestine conflict explained” and “gaza explained”) was run against YouTube from a United States location. Results were de-duplicated and ranked by view count; the top 40 videos were kept, and the 36 with English captions were analyzed. Reach was the only selection criterion, so the corpus is reproducible.

Sample. 36 explainer transcripts, a combined 127.5 million views, the trusted explanatory layer a viewer is most likely to reach. The units of analysis are the transcript (for adjudication and vocabulary) and the violence-depicting sentence (for agency).

Enrichment. Three layers. Vocabulary and side mentions were counted deterministically with lemma-stable part-of-speech extraction. Agency and contested-claim adjudications were coded by a frontier-model pass reading each full transcript. Every flagged adjudication then went through a strict, default-reject verification that removed attributed, hedged, both-sided, and uncontested-factual statements (72 fell to 50), and the surviving verdict was matched to a verbatim quote validated as an exact substring of the transcript (44 of 50 located verbatim) and read by hand. The narration of all 36 was separately checked for antisemitic tropes and found essentially clear.

Limitations. Adjudication and agency are model-assisted judgments of language, probabilistic by nature, which is why every positive was independently verified, matched to a verbatim quote, and reported with its direction rather than a ruling. “In its own voice” counts narration and, in interview-driven formats, an on-screen speaker the video presents without counterpoint; the count is a measured estimate, not an exact census. Agency counts the surface grammar of who is named as the actor, which real-world base rates confound, so it is not a measure of bias or accuracy. The vocabulary counts are co-occurrence within sentences mentioning a side; attribution was confirmed by reading. The study covers 36 English-caption videos on one platform and a single subject. No private individual is named; the channels quoted are public publishers.

Conclusion

So does the explainer hand the undecided viewer the neutral chronology it promises, with the disputes left open? On the evidence of the transcripts, often it does not: of the 36 most-watched results, a combined 127.5 million views, 19 resolve at least one contested question in their own narration rather than attributing it, so more than half of the canon a viewer reaches for as a starting point arrives with a conclusion already reached.

That conclusion runs in both directions, and the portrait the numbers draw is sharper than “bias.” Of the 50 verdicts that survived strict verification, 30 align with the Palestinian

narrative and 19 with the Israeli one, so the canon does not lean a single way; it resolves, on both sides, the very questions an undecided viewer came to weigh, who the land rightfully belongs to (10 verdicts), what Hamas is (8), whether the project is colonialism (7). On the surface grammar of violence it is close to balanced, naming Israel as the actor 206 times across 555 violent acts and a Palestinian or Hamas actor 198, far from the 79.8% Israeli-agent share of the same conflict's headlines. Yet before any explicit argument, the words have already sorted the two sides: state-military nouns attach to Israel 39 times against 18 for the Palestinian side, while refugee attaches to Palestinians 13 times against 1 for Israel. The narration of all 36 is essentially free of antisemitic tropes, so what these videos carry is a political conclusion about the conflict, not coded prejudice.

A settled conclusion does not stay inside the video that states it. The claim that the land was taken, that the project is colonial, that one side started it, circulates well past any single explainer, in arguments on campus, in feeds, in the asides traded as common knowledge, and somewhere along that path runs the contested line between [criticism of Israel and antisemitism](#). The transcripts settle one thing and reach no further. They fix how often the canon concludes (19 of 36 videos), in which direction (30 verdicts Palestinian, 19 Israeli), and in whose vocabulary (state-military nouns for Israel 39 times, refugee for Palestinians 13). What they cannot register is what happens after the video ends, whether a settled conclusion delivered as neutral chronology becomes one of the currents feeding what crosses the contested line. That is the question the counts open and stop short of, left standing for a society that watches these explainers to weigh on its own.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does this report say the explainers are biased?

No. It measures two separable things descriptively: whether a video asserts a contested claim in its own voice rather than attributing it, and which narrative an asserted verdict aligns with. Real-world base rates confound the agency counts, so they are not a bias measure.

Which questions do the explainers most often resolve?

Whose land it rightfully is (10 of 50 verified verdicts), what Hamas is (8), and whether the project is colonialism (7), followed by ethnic cleansing and who started the conflict (5 each). These are exactly the questions on which the historical and legal record is contested.

Why is the agency balanced here but lopsided in the headline study?

Because the corpora cover different spans. The [headline study](#) sampled a sustained phase of Israeli operations in Gaza, where Israel was the named agent 79.8% of the time. Explainers narrate the full century, including Arab and Palestinian attacks and the 1948 and 1967 wars, so the named agency splits roughly evenly.

Do the explainers themselves contain antisemitism?

Essentially no. The narration of all 36 was checked for antisemitic tropes and found clear; the contested-claim verdicts are political conclusions about the conflict, not coded prejudice. The boundary between [criticism of Israel and antisemitism](#) is measured in a separate report.

How were attributed statements kept out of the count?

A statement was counted only when the narration asserted it as the video's own conclusion and could be matched to a verbatim quote. Statements attributed to a party ("the UN says," "human rights groups say," "considered a terrorist organization by"), hedged, or presented with the other side were excluded; 22 of the 72 first flagged were removed on that basis.

Sources

- Hanover Institute, 2026. Study of the language of the 36 most-watched Israel-Gaza explainer videos (127.5 million views): contested-claim adjudication with verbatim capture, agency, and per-side vocabulary. First-party study.
- YouTube, 2026. Public video search results and English captions for explainer-intent queries, United States locale, ranked by view count. Public platform data.

DISCOURSE JUNE 25, 2026

How Gaza-War Headlines Name the Agent of Violence

A corpus study of 1,976 Gaza-war headlines: only 19% depict a violent act, and when one names an actor it is Israel 80% of the time and no one 23%.

DISCOURSE JUNE 25, 2026

Is Anti-Zionism Antisemitism? What the Evidence Measures

Research does not settle whether anti-Zionism is antisemitism; it measures the link. A mediation model explains over 55% of anti-Israel attitudes.

EXPLAINER JUNE 25, 2026

What Is Zionism? How the Research Measures It

In the research, Zionism is measured as support for a Jewish state, reached through anti-Israel attitudes and denial of Jewish self-determination, its closest proxy.

TREND ANALYSIS JUNE 26, 2026

Which Antisemitic Narratives Are Gaining Search Attention?

A first reading of the Institute's search-attention tally: searches for the great replacement rose about 240% year over year, anti-Zionism about 209%.



The Hanover Institute for Public Policy studies the inputs fueling antisemitism in the United States and publishes what the evidence shows. Its work is content analysis, computational social science, and other data-driven research, and its reports take no policy positions.

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