



Middle Eastern Information Access and Understanding

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INTRODUCTION

In the past, people have focused on the surface of the Israeli-Palestine war because of media coverage and dug into “right vs wrong.”

This research focuses on looking at the access aspects for different countries and how that impacts their perceptions and opinions of the war.

Looking at Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria, connections and patterns will be drawn from history with Israel, literacy rates and education, political affiliations with media control, and overall mass media methods. This will all help answer the question on how differing access to information in the Middle East affects people’s knowledge of the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

By revealing patterns of limited access and education, the data will help create a path to preventing the perpetuation of misleading information. Seeing how different countries cover the same story can provide visualization about the consequences of limited information.

Having a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict and turning away from copying what is portrayed in the media will give people an authentic and personal perspective to the conflict.

DATA AND FINDINGS

FIGURE 1				
COUNTRY	LITERACY RATE	FREEDOM OF PRESS	INTERNET ACCESS	OSLO ACCORDS (1993)
EGYPT	74.5% in 2022	- very restricted - intense government censorship	81.9% online in 2025 75% internet access (2024) 88.6% of homes with TV (1997)	- state media framed as “proof they were right” - one unified message with Egypt as original peacemaker
LEBANON	93% in 2018	- more open compared to neighboring countries - pressure still present	- main channels and news owned by politicians - fuel shortages and backouts prevent reporting - 1997 has 1.24% with internet access	- independent press covered Oslo neutrally; citizens exposed to nuanced perspectives - Hezbollah’s anti-Oslo protest same day, showing internal division
SYRIA	94% in 2021	- extremely restricted in the past - recently had openings with the fall of Assad - public internet access was established in 1999 after government body controls	- one of the last Middle East countries to introduce internet (1996) - controls over licensing, content, and ownership of outlets - stable internet is rare	- state media labeled it “betrayal” because it ignored Golan Heights - citizens were fed a pan-Arab framing that justified continued conflict efforts

TABLE 2. June 1967, Six-Day War (al-Naksa)

	WHAT CITIZENS BELIEVED:	THE REALITY OF THE WAR:
Egypt Sawt al-Arab radio	- Troops reached Tel Aviv - Citizens believe Egypt was winning for a full 4 days during the war	- Egyptian Air Force destroyed in 3 hours - Israel knocked out about 90% of Egyptian aircraft in the first day
Syria Damascus state radio	- Quneitra had fallen - Defense Minister Assad’s premature announcement	- City was still standing during announcement - Syrian troops heard the broadcast and retreated based on this false claim
Lebanon Independent press	- The real picture in real time - Newspapers republished BBC and AP wires freely, giving direct access to the story	- Same as believed image - Lebanese readers had the truth days before their neighbors

Figure 1 shows each country’s literacy rate, freedom of press, and internet access

- this helps show the structural conditions of these countries and their media outlets that determine what the citizens know and base their beliefs on

Figure 2 shows how those conditions were affecting real time during the Six-Day War

- identical events, three different countries, three different realities
- this can be incorporated into other Arab conflicts to highlight reoccurring differences in media and knowledge

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

Differing access to information in the Middle East, specifically Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, has allowed each country to form various understandings and versions of the Israel-Palestine conflict, as the pattern is seen across decades and not just the present.

Egypt has expanding literacy rates reaching almost ¾ of their population, as well as internet access well over that. Despite this, heavy government censorship means that citizens are still only exposed to a filtered story about today’s war, just like all the Arab wars before.

Lebanon’s impressive literacy and relatively open press suggests freer news, but channels and papers being exclusively owned by politicians, along with blackouts preventing reporting, forces poorer citizens to rely on biased outlets that highlight one side of the story.

Syria’s Assad regime controlling licensing, content, and ownership until 2024 shows a terrifying control over the media, strengthening people’s knowledge of the reality of political situations.

People aren’t just disagreeing about the Israel-Palestine conflict, they are working with different records and realities of the same event. Recognizing the impact of the same news never truly being represented equally is the first step to having a true understanding of the conflict.

It is important to note that this research only compares three countries in the Middle East, possibly meaning that it cannot represent a wider range of the region. Relying on existing texts instead of primary interviews can limit the depth of citizen-specific feelings. Recent shifts, such as Assad’s fall in 2024, can reshape access and understanding that this research wasn’t able to fully capture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This research focused on identifying patterns in how different Middle Eastern countries understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by analyzing existing texts, reports, and data. I selected Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria because of their proximity, historical connections, and varied perspectives. I examined each country’s media systems, government influence, and access to information, along with key indicators such as literacy rates, education levels, and press freedom.

It worked to gather data from articles, books, and peer-reviewed sources, then organized the information by country and further into categories like education, political context, and media access. By comparing these factors across countries, I identified similarities and differences in perspectives. This organization allowed me to detect correlations between access to information and how people understand the conflict, which guided my final conclusions.

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

Table 1 establishes today’s structural systems that can help us parallel to historic times:

- these conditions show present day snapshot but help represent the same conditions that have shaped how each country and its citizens understand every Israeli conflict, not just the current one.
- Egypt’s high literacy rates still allows strong government censorship
- Lebanon is higher but still has politically owned media and reporting shortages limiting proper access
- Syria, with the highest literacy rate, shows one of the most restricted press systems in the world

Figure 2 displays the idea that one war has different stories being relayed to people:

- Egypt’s broadcast highlights their military wins but ignores a key shortcoming that reveals the true direction of the war
- Syria’s early announcement became the root of retreat and loss for its soldiers due to its releasing false information to the public
- Lebanon’s freer press allows readers to have the truth way ahead of Egypt and Syria.

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