

NY Times Admits 'Gaza Boy Famine' Photo Hoax

Following online backlash regarding its use of a photo depicting Mohammad Zakariya Ayyoub al-Matouq, a young Palestinian boy in Gaza who suffers from cerebral palsy, as one of the lead images in an article about the food shortage in Gaza, The New York Times appended an editorial note to the story on Tuesday.

The Times admitted that Mohammed suffers from “preexisting health problems,” and claimed that it had “learned new information” about him in the editorial statement it released on X. “We have appended an Editor's Note to a story about Mohammed Zakaria al-Mutawaq, a child in Gaza who was diagnosed with severe malnutrition. After publication, The Times learned that he also had pre-existing health problems,” the editorial note said. “We have since learned new information, including from the hospital that treated him and his medical records, and have updated our story to add context about his pre-existing health problems,” the statement read.

The editorial correction was posted to the New York Times Communications channel, which has around 89,000 followers, instead of to its main channel, which has over 55 million followers.

Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett called out The New York Times for dishonesty, stating, “NYT, you knew that Hamas uses babies with preexisting illnesses. We’ve been saying this for months now. You knew exactly what this picture would cause.” Bennett called the use of the image to support the claims of a famine in Gaza “a blood libel.”

Independent investigative journalist David Collier, who helped to break the story about Mohammed's preexisting condition, noted that among the pictures of Mohammed with his family, some clearly show his brother, Joud, who is healthy and does not suffer from malnutrition.

However, it appears that the online backlash may not have been what prompted the Times to publish the Editor's Note.

According to a story in the Jerusalem Post, the Times only made the minor change after the Israeli Consulate General in New York requested it. Sources told the Post that the consulate presented the editorial staff with evidence, including documents of Mohammed's medical information.

"It's unfortunate that the international media repeatedly falls for Hamas propaganda. First they publish, then they verify, if at all," Israeli Consul General in New York Ofir Akunis stated.

The Israel X account, run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also noted the deliberate misrepresentation of the situation in a post which showed Mohammed with his mother and brother.

It accused the BBC, CNN, Daily Express, and the Times of spreading a misleading story, which it said is "playing into the hands of Hamas's propaganda war."

The post also called out the lack of journalistic ethics: "Without proper disclosure. Without medical context. Without journalistic ethics."

Some accounts pointed out that the Times has a history of running misleading photos related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

That photo led to the founding of the media watchdog site HonestReporting.com, which also reported on the story of Mohammed.

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