


Unseen Gaza: did the media ban work?

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Channel 4's excellent documentary on the Israeli media blockade of Gaza was on so late last night that it was probably unseen by many people.



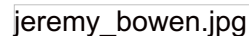
That's a shame because [Jon Snow's Dispatches Special](#) was an outstanding piece of media analysis.

Snow interviewed a range of journalists as they stood on that media hill outside of Gaza, which was about as close as most came to the conflict.

Western journalists were not allowed into Gaza but Al Jazeera and the BBC both had staff already based there, and as I have [discussed elsewhere](#), there was a stream of horrific imagery pouring out to shock the world.

The point that many journalists made to Snow was that you can't beat actually being there.

The [BBC's Jeremy Bowen](#) is the epitome of the experienced, knowledgeable TV



correspondent who is a master teller of both human and complex political stories. He was desperate to be there so that he could get his facts straight and to put tough questions to all concerned.

So there is no doubt that the journalism suffered. However, I remain unconvinced that this worked in the Israelis' favour.

Perhaps in the short-term it reduced the ability of the Western media to hold them to account. But I didn't detect any shortage of coverage and most of it felt critical of Israel. By that I don't mean it was 'biased'. It's just that killing children generally doesn't do wonders for one's national image.

Overall, the media blockade undermined Israel's case to the rest of the world that it is a democracy and morally superior to Hamas.

All conflict reporting is deeply flawed. Most journalists were embedded during the Iraq conflict and even independents were restricted by the hazards of that war. In a way, the Israelis were just being clear and open about the kind of censorship and control that all states operate during war.

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