

Polis – The sensitive Sun?

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An Israeli journalist rings me to ask why the British media has been so quiet over the ‘[kidnapping](#)’ of 15 Royal Navy personnel. Has a deal been done between the Government and the Media? He contrasted it to Israel where there was a massive uproar over the seizure of the three Israeli soldiers that led to last summer’s war with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Well, he is right in that the UK media has been restrained. Today’s [Sun](#) sort of has an interview with the family of the only female detainee. But read it closely and it is clear that they have observed the Ministry of Defence’s plea that the families should not be hassled at such a traumatic time. I also told my new friend from the [Haaretz](#) newspaper that there is an informal and entirely voluntary system of restraint on the part of the British news media in these cases. There is no doubt that the last thing that the FCO needs is a major row with Iran over 15 Royal Navy personnel who appear to have strayed too close for comfort to Iranian waters. There are much bigger issues like Iraq and nuclear weaponry at stake. A loud campaign by the press for tough action against Iran would not be helpful to the 15 in custody nor peace in the Middle East. Somehow, the British media seems to understand that, for the moment. I think it is also true that in Israel the army is conscripted and essential for national survival. It is part of every family and so when it is let down by politicians there is outrage. In Britain we respect our armed services but they are seen as a professional body that spends most of its time as an international police-force. Of course, all that, including the media’s attitude, will change if Iran puts them on trial.

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