

Letter which appeared in "The Australian" 27 March 2003 Page 9 media Supplement

Re: Massacre of ABC funding hopes? - Mark Day - March 20 2003

As the spokesperson for JABM (Jews Against Bias in Media) I have spoken to three journalists - including Mark Day - whose instinctive reaction is to defend the ABC's reportage.

The journalists gloss over three very important points:

1. There is credible evidence in the public domain that there was no massacre in Jenin. Read the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report which concludes that there was NO massacre even though may have been human rights violations. Read the UN report which concludes that the claims of a massacre by a Palestinian spokesman are unsupported.
2. Virtually all Western media outlets retracted the allegations of a massacre after checking the evidence.
3. The ABC in its investigation of the 58 complaints made about the ABC's coverage of Jenin made its findings WITHOUT trying to determine the facts. The ABC's investigation technique — and this is crystal clear from the correspondence in the JABM dossier — was to reread the transcript of the offending program; to reread the dictionary definition of a massacre; and to draw the conclusion that the reporter had not violated anything in the Code of Practice: as though the facts of the case can be determined from behind an office desk with a transcript, a good dictionary, and the ABC Code of Practice. There is not a single attempt in the ABC's handling of the matter to marry up their reporter's findings with the HRW or the UN reports.

With an investigation process like this, it is no wonder that the ABC are "correct" by their own assessment in 98.2% of complaints and the public is "correct" in only 1.8% of complaints.

Ralph Zwier

[PS The JABM dossier is on the Web at <http://www.icjs-online.org>]