

CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

FÜGGETLEN MÉDIAKÖZPONT



OMISSIONS AND DISTORTIONS IN HUNGARIAN PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA COVERAGE OF MIGRATION

A Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) Report

WRITTEN BY:

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assisted by
Hungarian
Journalists

EDITED BY:

Get The Trolls Out!



MTVA



"The Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ) is a non-profit and non-political organisation aiming to promote ethical, fact-based journalism and independent media in Hungary."

Key Findings

- **Case studies:** 3 news reports broadcast by M1, the main news channel operated by Hungary's public service media conglomerate MTVA.
- Case studies show systematic anti-Muslim and anti-migrant bias in coverage of migrant issues in Western Europe.
- M1 fails to follow the Public Service Codex and professional best-practice by conflating "migrant" with "Muslim".
- Representing all Muslims as violent, lazy and a threat to 'Western/Christian values'.
- Never giving voice to members of migrant/Muslim communities in question.
- Failing to challenge and amplifying unsubstantiated anti-migrant and Islamophobic opinions of pro-government 'experts' in Hungary and far-right activists abroad.

Introduction

Hungary's public service broadcaster MTVA consistently omits facts and distorts the truth in its coverage of migration issues in Western Europe, concludes this CIJ study after analysing editorial practices at MTVA's 24-news channel M1 through three case studies. This analysis was undertaken by Marcell Lőrincz, co-author of a 2018 analysis "Origo Spreads Panic" for Index.hu, Hungary's most popular independent media outlet at the time.

Context

According to public opinion in Hungary, the country's state media have been controlled by the party of government (Fidesz) in the past weeks, months and – dare we even say – years.

From opposition parties' press releases to political demonstrations on Kunigunda útja, where MTVA is located, state media frame every public event in line with government ideology.

A recent investigation by Radio Free Europe offered powerful evidence that pro-Fidesz bias is not merely present in MTVA output, but is an explicit requirement of its editorial policy.



MTVA representatives either leave such criticism without comment or claim that they adhere to the BBC guidelines on objectivity when putting together news content. In light of this, it is important to examine what professional standards are used by Hungary's public news channel M1 in preparing its news reports and whether these correspond to the principles laid out in the Public Service Codex, Hungarian guidelines for public service media.

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MTVA: A közmédia a BBC szerkesztői és hírszerkesztési alapelveit követi



Czinkóczy Sándor · KÉPZAVAR · 2020. március 2., hétfő 16:49 · ♥ 3951



444 HírlevelekHírleveleink hához visznek mindent, amit tudni kell.

Miután egy belső levelezésre hivatkozva a **Politico** arról írt, hogy a magyar közmédia munkatársai csak előzetes engedélykérés után foglalkozhatnak Greta Thuneggel, az EU politikájával, a migrációval vagy az egyházi ügyekkel, az MTVA legendás sajtóosztálya egy közleményben reagált.

Bár ebben a lap értesüléseit vagy a levél eredetiségét egy szóval sem cáfolták, de bravúros módon minden olyan oldalt fake news-nak neveztek, amelyik meg akarta kérdezni őket a témában. Majd miután a koronavírust is belekeverték a magyarázkodásba, gyorsan leszögezték, hogy a BBC szerkesztői és hírszerkesztési alapelveit követik.

MŰSORVEZETŐK



Szász Zsófi



Czinkóczy Sándor

Borzalmas állapotokat talált a Nébih egy Fejér megyei vágóhídon



Method

In the three case studies that follow (a news segment on street protests in Malmö, an analysis of a study into youth radicalisation in Britain and a live report from a Berlin school), we examine M1's coverage of migration in Western Europe from the point of view of professional ethics and standards. To this end, this analysis does not address the question of which political narratives are driving the content of news reports we examine. The news reports analysed were chosen from content flagged under the Get the Trolls Out! (GTTO) project, run by CIJ in Hungary.

Case Study 1. Distorted News Segment About 'Muslim Riots' in Malmö and Activists Who Burn the Qur'an because They Worry about Freedom of Speech

First, let us take a close look at an M1 news segment from 29th August 2020 (link to this report on the website of MTVA's main news programme M1 Hirado, can be found here) about protests in the Swedish port city of Malmö, which took place the previous day. We chose this item because a news segment summarising a particular event is a basic format of news broadcasting. This case study provides good insight into how events related to migrants in a foreign city, which descend into violence, are presented to Hungarians watching public service media, when the journalists do not follow the basic rules of their profession.

HIRADO.HU KORONAVÍRUS VIDEÓ+FOTÓ BELFÖLD KÜLFÖLD SPORT KULTÚRA+ÉLETMÓD TUDOMÁNY+HIGH-TECH BLOGGOK f

A szólás- és a vallásszabadság ütközött ellentétbe Malmöben

forrás: M1 | 2020. 08. 29. - 20:59
Főoldal / Külföld

Megosztás Tweet

Zavargások törtek ki tegnap éjszaka a svédországi Malmöben. Több mint háromszáz muszlim fiatal randalírozott a városban, gyújtogattak, rátámadtak a rendőrökre. A városban délelőtti muszlimellenes tüntetést hirdettek meg, amit nem engedélyezett a rendőrség arra hivatkozva, hogy nem tudja garantálni a résztvevők biztonságát – hangzott el az M1 Híradójában.



HIRADÓ
ZAVARGÁSOK MALMÖBEN
TÖBB MINT 300 MUSZLIM FIATAL RANDALÍROZOTT MALMÖ BELVÁROSÁBAN
TÖBB MINT 300 MUSZLIM FIATAL RANDALÍROZOTT MALMÖ BELVÁROSÁBAN
TÖBB MINT 300 MUSZLIM FIATAL RANDALÍROZOTT MALMÖ BELVÁROSÁBAN

SZOMBATHELY
20°C

19:48

A tüntetők a Korán egy példányát leloccolták benzinnel és felgyújtották péntek délután Malmöben. Iszlámellenes nagyszabású akciót terveztek a városban, de a főszervezőt, a dán Kemény Vonal párt vezetőjét, Rasmus Paludant letartóztatták, majd kitoloncolták Svédországból, mondván, megjelenése feszültséget kelt. Hívei ennek ellenére utcára vonultak, Koránt égettek, és összecsaptak a rendőrökkel.

**Belföld**
Orbán: Aki gyors, életet ment, aki lassú, életet veszít

**Belföld**
Március közepétől enyhülhet a szigor

**Belföld**
Hogyan lehet fellépni jogi úton az álhírek ellen?

a) Framing Muslims as Thugs from the Start

The presenter's introduction opens with the following words: "More than 300 young Muslims rioted in the city, started fires and attacked the police while shouting 'Allahu Akbar' — God is the greatest." This sentence immediately manipulates the viewers to believe that "Muslims" started the trouble, rioting and shouting "Allahu Akbar."

Only in the third sentence of the introduction do we learn that the rioting might not have been the start of these events, but, perhaps, happened halfway through: "In the morning an anti-Muslim demonstration was announced in the city, which the police did not allow to go ahead as they could not ensure the participants' safety."

b) Qur'an Burnings as Real Catalyst for Violence

To the unsuspecting viewer this might suggest that the safety of individuals wanting to demonstrate against migrants would be under threat from 'the Muslims.' In reality, some demonstrators had been setting fire to the Qur'an in broad daylight – which does not excuse the violence that followed. Some Muslim residents responded by coming out to the streets for a counter demonstration. While we learn this later in the report, the sequence of events is not made clear in the introduction. We consider it a serious professional error for an introduction summarising a series of demonstrations and counterdemonstrations to focus on only one of these, and, in addition, to present it in a negative light.

After the introduction, the camera cut away from the presenter in the studio to recorded footage of the events in Malmö the previous day. The first thing we were shown is footage of the Qur'an being set alight. From a professional point of view, this is the right starting point, because the burnings are what set off the chain of events. Visually, this opening is also a very strong.

The off-screen reporter appropriately described the people

responsible for burning the Qur'an as "anti-migrant activists," but failed to mention that they had gathered at the command of the leader of Stram Kurs (Hard Line), a far-right Danish party. We were only able to learn about this detail from reports in international newspapers. In reference to the Qur'an burnings themselves, the M1 reporter simply stated that "they had to make do with this." As we learnt, this action was precipitated by the leader of Stram Kurs being stopped at the border and banned from entering Sweden in turn, leading to the police cancelling the planned protest.

After this, the reporter interviewed one of the organisers of the protest. Rather than asking why the protesters were burning the Qur'an, he allowed the activist in question to propagate his view that the cancellation of their demonstration by the police was "shameful, it was restricting freedom of speech; we have a right to criticise Islam."

Overall, the first part of the report (0:25-1:06) placed emphasis on the legal consideration of banning the demonstration, while omitting two essential details: the burning of the Qur'an took place near a mosque, which was clearly a provocation; and, the activists kicked another copy of the Qur'an like a football in the main square of Malmö. Again, we could only learn these details from reports in international newspapers, such as The Guardian, not from Hungarian public service television.

c) Denying Sweden's Muslim Community a Voice & Spreading Disinformation

In the next section (1:07-1:14), the reporter played down the burning of the Qur'an by stating that "the anti-Muslim protest was limited but that did not stop the violence."

According to the reporter, the real violence was the aftermath. "Where the Qur'an was set on fire by day, Muslim youth ran riot and set tyres on fire by night, abused the police and threw stones. Whole streets were set ablaze and by morning only the signs of devastation remained."

The report presents a sequence of powerful shots of broken windows and burning streets, which again were good images. However, essential information that appeared in other reports was omitted here, as well. For example, it is not irrelevant that the 300 rioters did not enjoy the support of Sweden's broader Muslim community.

According to The Guardian, Samir Muric, an imam in Malmö, stepped in front of the police during these clashes and told the rioters to stop what they were doing. He said they were bringing shame on their religion. The imam later wrote a post on Facebook condemning the rioters, saying that those behaving this way were not true Muslims. This is important, because it shows that the rioters did not represent the entirety of viewpoints in the local Muslim community.

Nevertheless, in the third section of the M1 report (1:42-2:14), no member of the Muslim community was interviewed. Instead, an elderly blonde woman living in Malmö condemned the riots. In turn, the reporter explained that this was not the first time this sort of event had happened in the Swedish city, where "there is a high proportion of inhabitants with an immigrant background"; "in addition, unemployment is above the national average and there is armed violence."

These statements by the reporter break several professional rules. First, "inhabitants with an immigrant background" is a very unclear and inappropriate term. Does it mean anyone who migrated to Sweden? Anyone whose parents or grandparents came to Sweden? And, where did they come from? Do people from Denmark and Norway have an immigrant background? The caption accompanying the reporter's voice sheds some light on these questions, stating that "55 percent of Malmö's population have forebears from abroad." Clearly, this does not mean that they are all Muslims.

Another problem is the link being made between immigration,

unemployment and violence. This is a serious accusation. What sociological research or police information does the Hungarian public service TV base this claim on? The report fails to offer any answers, but clearly strengthens the discriminatory narrative that Muslims don't work and are violent.

d) Mentioning Unconnected Events to Confirm that Muslim Migrants Are Undesirable

The news segment's fourth section (2:15–2:27) aims to provide additional confirmation for the anti-Muslim narrative constructed earlier. As we are shown a Christian church, the reporter asserts that “every night the church is vandalised.” It is not clear what type of vandalism this refers to. All we see is two holes in a broken window. From the point of view of professional journalism standards, it is very questionable to insert such footage into the report with no explanation. No information is given about the nature of the regular crime. But, the subtext accusation is clear: Muslims (who, as we already know, go around rioting and shouting God is the Greatest) are vandalising the church at night.

e) Ending the News Segment on a Note of Islamophobic Bias

The short final section (2:28–2:49) features reactions to the events. The mayor of Malmö speaks briefly, condemning both the Qur'an burning and the riots. In the final three seconds, we hear that “the Muslim leaders in Sweden have called on their believers to show self-restraint.” But, nobody from the Muslim community actually appears to speak in the news segment. This goes against the requirement for impartiality. All the other viewpoints are represented by named individuals, addressing the camera. In order of appearance, we see the organiser of the far-right protest, a Swedish citizen complaining about ‘the rioting Muslims’, a Christian priest complaining about vandalism of his church and the city's Mayor. For the sake of balance, M1 should have interviewed at least one member of the Muslim community as well. It would have been news-worthy and informative to show the protesters' demands and slogans too, because they had very concrete demands. In addition, it would have been in the public interest if Malmö's 700,000 population took part in these disturbances.

f) Case-Study Summary – One-sided Reporting and Far-right Bias

In sum, we can say that a series of professional errors lead to the framing of these disturbances as destruction caused by violent Muslim migrants, happening in a city where you are not even allowed to protest against it.

Case Study 2. Distorted Account of Research about Muslim Peoples' Attitudes to Violence

Broadcast on 2nd October 2020, the second news report titled “Survey: Muslims Will even Use Violence to Defend Their Culture” was not based on any new research but presented old information in a particular misleading context. This news report could be called background analysis, which is an important format in news broadcasting. However, such reports need to follow the basic rules of journalism relating to the treatment of source materials and objectivity.

a) Report Outline

The whole report is almost five minutes long. Its structure gives some idea of its message:

0–0:35 An Islamist terrorist attack took place in Paris a couple of days ago

0:36–1:13 Muslims will even use violence to defend their culture (claim based on MI's interpretation of Resonating Narratives: The Scale of Islamist and Far-right Extremism among British Young People, a report by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change)

1:14–1:54 There is a lot of violence in districts where Muslim migrants live

1:55–2:43 Migrants don't respect local laws

2:44–3:40 Crime by migrants is covered up in Europe

3:41–4:48 The number of attacks on Christians has soared

b) A Message of Hate

The message is clear: migrants are violent criminals who don't respect the law; wherever they are, crime rates increase, especially attacks on Christians; there are obvious reasons why migrants are attacking innocent people with a meat cleaver in broad daylight.

The report's introduction provides the following summary of its claims: "With the arrival of illegal immigrants, not only has the number of crimes gone up in Western Europe, but anti-Christian sentiment has also strengthened. Attacks on Christians rose between 2008 and 2019, jumping up sharply after 2015. Last year alone 3,000 anti-Christian crimes were committed in Europe." **How was this conclusion reached?**

c) The Meat Cleaver Attack in Paris as an Islamophobic Hook

The Paris meat cleaver attack of 25 September 2020 was the starting point. Broadcast on 2 October, the M1 report emphasised two aspects of the event. First, the perpetrator was a "Pakistan-born man who had arrived in France three years earlier, as an unaccompanied minor." Second, the police are treating the case as an Islamist terrorist attack. The attack itself was rightly condemned. But, certain relevant details were omitted, such as the attacker's quick capture by the police and the fact that the victims' injuries were not life-threatening, preventing a greater tragedy.

d) Research into British Youth Radicalisation as Proof of All Muslim Peoples' Violent Nature

Instead, the report swiftly moved on to discussing Resonating Narratives by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, using the report to frame the attack through the Islamophobic stereotype that "Muslims will defend their culture with force." In introducing this study, M1's news report commits two serious professional errors. First, no mention is made of the fact that Resonating Narratives applies to the UK, not France. Second, the news reporter failed to explain that this survey investigates the currency and

prevalence of extremist ideologies among all young Britons (18–30 years of age), not just Muslims.

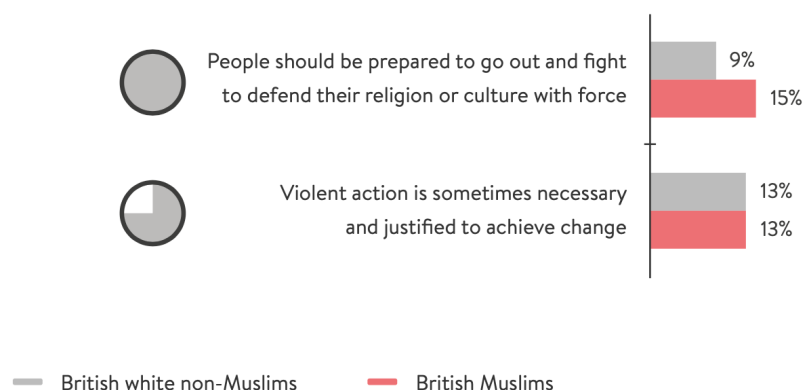
It is worth taking a more detailed look at the Resonating Narratives survey. Immediately, we find another mistake by the Hungarian public service broadcaster that severely distorts its findings. The broadcaster provides a figure for young British Muslims prepared defend their religion and culture with violence – 15%. However, it fails to contextualise this figure against the views of non-Muslim young Britons.



According Resonating Narratives, 9% of young non-Muslim white Brits agree with the following statement – “people should be prepared to go out and fight to defend their religion or culture with force”. Furthermore, 13% of both groups believe that “violent action is sometimes necessary and justified to achieve change.”

In other words, the survey does not at all back up the Hungarian broadcaster’s claims that Muslims are more prone to violence. Rather, it suggests that a similar proportion of Muslim and non-Muslim youngsters condone and are prepared to use violence in some situations.

FIGURE 14 Agreement with statements about violence



Source: Q12: From the statements below, please select the statements you agree with the most: There is never any justification for terrorism or political violence/ Some acts that are considered terrorism could be a response to government policies/ Certain groups are justified in their use of armed resistance/ Violent action is sometimes necessary and justified to achieve change/ People should be prepared to go out and fight to defend their religion or culture with force/ None of these. Base size: All respondents (2,022).

This is not a case of the glass being half-full or half-empty. The survey finds that the overwhelming majority — about 85–91% — of non-Muslim white and Muslim British youth reject violence. As such, MI's conclusion that Muslims are more prone to violence than others is a distortion of the survey's findings.

f) Presenting Corrupt Pro-Fidesz Voices as 'Independent Experts' on Islam

In the second half of the news report, its most serious claims are based on the opinions of two 'experts': André Palóc, senior analyst at the Századvég Institute; and, Zoltán Kiszelly, a political scientist. On the basis of their prior professional and other statements, both would be better characterised as pro-Fidesz analysts. It is typical of the public service media to give voice to experts aligned with the government, which would not be a breach of impartiality guidelines if the journalists themselves examined and questioned what was being said in a fair and impartial manner. In this news report, however, Palóc and Kiszelly did not back up their claims with any facts. The reporter allowed all of them to slide without comment or question.

For example, the meaning of Palóc's assertion that "in the districts and cities where there is a high number of immigrants violent crime and related problems are on the increase" is not clear. The meat cleaver attack took place in the vicinity of the Charlie Hebdo editorial offices, close to the Bastille and the well-known Marais quarter — hardly a classic "immigrant district". Similarly, Kiszelly makes no reference to any sociological research to back-up his claim that "those who cannot integrate turn to crime and violence, as we can see in Sweden."

The same goes for assertions that Western governments and media are hushing up crimes committed by migrants or that the West European migration model simply does not work. Lacking any supporting facts these statements too are not probed with critical questions by the journalist.

f) Case-study Summary – No Evidence for Islamophobic Fearmongering

In this news report's conclusion, we do not get any more details about its claim in the introduction that "attacks on Christians rose 285% between 2008 and 2019, jumping up sharply after 2015." As such, we do not know if this claim refers to Europe or Western Europe. Why the year 2008 is the starting point? What this increase is being compared to? Most importantly, what kind of crimes come under the "anti-Christian" label?

In sum, this news report jumbles together a number of unrelated issues – the street attack in Paris, a Tony Blair Institute survey into youth radicalisation in Britain, some anti-migrant opinions and a vague statistic about anti-Christian crime, neither of the last two being supported by facts or contextualised with any type of explanation. This is an example of how easy it is to propagate ideologically biased material – a long way from the values of public service broadcasting – by manipulating selective facts from a survey with the help of strong but unsubstantiated opinions from people presented as experts.

Case Study 3. Distorted Live Report about a Berlin Pupil Threatening to Decapitate His Teacher

The third media item we analyse represents another format – a live broadcast by MI's foreign correspondent about an event linked to migrants living in Germany, from 15th November 2020. The report, titled "Muslim Pupils Terrorise their German Teachers", once again fails to adhere to professional ethics and impartiality standards, resulting in a strikingly distorted picture of the events.

a) Anti-Muslim Panic – Equalising the Public News Value of a Nine-year-old's Speech and Terrorist Murder of Samuel Paty

The presenter introduces the report as follows: "teachers at a Berlin school are terrified of a Muslim pupil and his family. The schoolboy threatened one of his teachers that he would suffer the same fate as the beheaded teacher in a Paris suburb." The presenter is referring to the murder of Samuel Paty on 16 October 2020. Although this is not stated explicitly, viewers would have known about the recent attack when an 18-year-old man from the Republic of Chechnya (Russian Federation) beheaded the 47-year-old teacher. The Islamist attacker, who was shot dead by the police, wanted to take revenge on the teacher for showing satirical cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad in a class about freedom of speech. Subsequently, it transpired that the killer had no connection with the school or Paty himself. This detail is relevant here, because the news report in question is about a pupil making threats to a teacher at his school.

MI's Berlin correspondent makes her five-minute report on a bridge, although it is not clear how far this location is from the Christian Morgernstern school, in Berlin Spandau where the events unfolded. The reporter gives the following account: "The murder of a teacher in France has set off a small avalanche in Germany," when a student at a Berlin school threatened to kill

his teacher twice. “He made the first threat during the minute’s silence for the French teacher, shouting out that he supported the French murder.” Afterwards, the pupil’s parents were not willing to address the incident, claiming that this was the school’s responsibility. The boy himself threatened the teacher again, saying that “if he did not leave his parents in peace, he would suffer the same fate as the French history teacher.”

First, we need to question the original editorial decision to film this report on location. Going live to a reporter clearly gives more weight to the report, impressing on the viewer that this matter requires the correspondent’s presence and explanation. In this particular case, it is indeed surprising and morally wrong that someone would show approval for a brutal murder. Nevertheless, it is important that there was no physical attack or injury. Suggesting that any schoolchild’s threat deserves a live report in the public service media sets the bar rather low in terms of news value.

HIRADO.HU KORONAVÍRUS VIDEÓ+FOTÓ BELFÖLD KÜLFÖLD SPORT KULTÚRA+ÉLETMÓD TUDOMÁNY+HIGH-TECH+TÉRHEZŐ BLOGGOK

Muszlím diákok tartják rettegésben a német tanárokat

forrás: MTI | 2020. 11. 15. - 09:43
Főoldal / Külföld

Megosztás Tweet

Egy tizenegy éves diák lefejezéssel fenyegette meg tanárát Berlinben. Miután az iskola nyilvánosságra hozta az esetet, öt másik intézmény is jelezte, náluk is történtek hasonló fenyegetések.

Rettegő tanárok Berlinben

Watch Share

MA REGGELI ÉLŐ BERLIN, NÉMETORSZAG

RETTEGŐ TANÁROK BERLINBEN
LEFEJEZÉSSSEL FENYEGET EGY MUSZLIM DIÁK

Muszlím diáktól és családjától rettegnek a tanárok egy berlini iskolában. A tanuló azzal fenyegette meg az egyik pedagógust, hogy az a sors vár rá, ami a Párizs külvárosában lefejezett tanárra.

Belföld

Orbán: Aki gyors, életet ment, aki lassú, életet veszít

Belföld

Március közepétől enyhülhet a szigor

b) Painting a Partial Picture – Sacrificing Nuance for Islamophobic Rhetoric

The report itself omits some basic information. What was the name of the school? What was the relationship between the teacher and the pupil? What is there to know about the family background of the pupil? What did people at the school say about this? Did the reporter talk to the teacher, the head or the parents? Instead of answering any of these, the reporter makes general comments about the situation in Germany.

However, the details of this specific case are far from irrelevant, as we discover if we look at the more nuanced picture offered in the original news report by the Tagesspiegel daily. Tagesspiegel spoke to Jakub Nowak, one of the teachers at the Christian Morgenstern school who was present at the minute's silence for Samuel Paty, when the boy shouted the original threat – “you can kill those who offend the Prophet.” Nowak explained that there was a rabbi and an imam present. The latter immediately talked to the boy and “made it clear that you should not murder anyone.”



The screenshot shows a news article from DER TAGESSPIEGEL. The headline is "Elfjähriger Muslim droht Lehrerin mit Enthauptung" (11-year-old Muslim threatens teacher with beheading). The sub-headline reads: "Ein muslimischer Schüler hat an einer Grundschule in Spandau seine Klassenlehrerin bedroht. Eine Woche zuvor hatte er schon den Mord an Samuel Paty verteidigt. VON FRANK BACHNER". The article is dated 10.11.2020, 18:25 Uhr. Below the text is a photograph of a man in sunglasses and a dark shirt, with a black sign in the foreground that says "Samuel PATY". To the left of the photo are social media sharing icons (print, email, Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, YouTube, RSS) and a comment count of 248. Below the photo is a caption: "Schweigeminuten in Frankreich wie in Deutschland: Nach der Ermordung des Lehrers Samuel Paty war die Bestürzung groß. FOTO: LEWIS JOLY/AP/DPA".

In addition, Tagesspiegel interviewed the school Head Karina Jehniche, who had spoken to the pupil's mother. The mother said that she and her husband did not agree with what their son said, and that "the school should handle the matter." Again, this demonstrates that the MI report presents a one-sided and biased version of the events. The mother's words, as quoted in Tagesspiegel, go against MI's unproven suggestion that the parents encouraged the boy. According to this version of events, they simply did not go in for an in-person meeting to discuss the incident at the school.

The director believes that it was after her conversation with his mother that the pupil threatened to do to his teacher "what the boy did to the teacher in Paris," if he suffers any disadvantage due to his earlier words. The Head said that the boy's classmates were shocked. Perhaps, their reaction was one of the reasons that prompted the boy to apologise to his teacher for the threats.

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

SUCHE

Muslimischer Schüler entschuldigt sich11.11.2020, 19:33 Uhr

9

Weitere Berliner Lehrer sollen Morddrohungen erhalten haben

Der elfjährige Schüler, der seiner Lehrerin mit Enthauptung gedroht hatte, hat sich entschuldigt. Derweil gibt es Hinweise auf weitere Fälle, die ähnlich waren. VON [FRANK BACHNER](#)

The image is a composite of two photographs. The left photograph shows a man, identified as Samuel Paty, standing on a street in Paris, looking towards the camera. The right photograph shows a man in a dark jacket and glasses standing in a classroom, gesturing while speaking to a group of students. A red cross icon is visible in the bottom right corner of the right photograph.

Der französische Lehrer Samuel Paty wurde enthauptet, weil er im Unterricht Mohammed-Karikaturen gezeigt hatte. AFP

Again, we could only learn that the apology has happened from a Tagesspiegel article published the next day (11 November 2020). This critical point was omitted in the television report, even though it was broadcast four days later – a professional error that frames the event in a different light. In reality, the boy had apologised for his actions and, the conflict at the school seems to have been brought under control.

The Hungarian report ignored these details.

c) From Distorted Account of One Incident to Hateful Generalisations about Muslims

In its second half, the reporter moved on to generalising this incident, claiming that threats like this are endemic in Germany as a whole. Few facts were offered about where else in and what kind of events had happened. The reporter quoted Germany's Education Minister saying that teachers should receive support. In addition, the report provided a statistic about the number of pupils from migrant backgrounds in German schools, but did not explain exactly what this meant. According to the figure given, 90% of students have a mother tongue other than German in 27 out of 359 Berlin schools. The reporter then quoted an unnamed researcher on Islam, who thought that "it was not out of the question that attacks similar to the murder of Paty would also happen in Germany." Here, this report commits the same professional errors as the report on the Tony Blair Institute study. It is clear why certain facts are being linked to this incident or are used to imply a cause-and-effect relationship. Furthermore, claims made by the unidentified Islam expert are likewise left uninterrogated.

In a report swarming with errors, the final words take the cake. The presenter in the M1 studio responds to the Berlin reporter with a sensationalist, fear-mongering conclusion – "all of this does not bode well for the future."

Conclusion – Lies and Distortion

The three case studies we have looked at here represent three different news formats. All sought to paint a picture of the state of migration in Europe. Unfortunately, this picture is distorted in all three case – failure to adhere to professional standards of impartiality and fairness that led to a misleading representation of events happening in Western Europe to Hungarian viewers.

a) Placing these Case Studies in Broader Context

In the past two years, we have seen at least a dozen similar stories on the subject of migration from Hungary's public service television. Not one interviewed immigrant or Muslim voices – their perspective is never given.

It is important for public service media to cover migration, as any other social process, in an objective and, when necessary, critical way. Conversely, broadcasting and publishing ideologically-biased materials will limit pluralistic debate, without which appropriate democratic decisions cannot be made in the long run. If professional errors highlighted here were committed out of carelessness, important operational conclusions should be drawn. If these are the result of intentional distortion, it is the viewers who should draw the necessary conclusions – by intentionally ignoring professional standards, Hungarian public service media is presenting a false picture of migrants and migration in Western Europe.

Link to the Hungarian original:

<https://cij.hu/hu/torzitasok-a-kozmediaban/>

