

# How the Public Was Manipulated Into Believing the Kidnapped Israeli Teens Were Alive

By [Noam Sheizaf](#)

Global Research, July 08, 2014

[+972](#) 2 July 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

*Details under gag order could have suggested early on that the abducted teens were murdered. The government-led campaign calling for their release helped the legitimacy of Israel's military operation in the West Bank. Local and even international media played along.*

The following issue is not the heart of the kidnapping affair, the Israeli military operation or its aftermath — but it does carry an important lesson, especially for journalists. The bottom line is this: the Israeli public has been manipulated.

Details of the '100' call (the local equivalent of 911) and what investigators discovered in the car used for the kidnapping of three Israeli teens earlier this month were well known by security service heads, top ministers — and even journalists — early on in the affair; but not by the public because it was all placed and kept under a tightly held gag order. The blood found in the car, the sound of gun shots in the emergency call, evidence of live ammunition and the fact that there hasn't been a single instance of two or more people being held hostage in the West Bank in decades — all that led to a single logical assumption: the teens [were no longer alive](#). Yet at the same time, the Israeli public was told the teens were being held by Hamas, and a public campaign calling for their return was launched.

The result was the shock most Israelis felt once the bodies were discovered — terrible disappointment that could be avoided only by those with knowledge of the details under gag order.

Every other day or so, senior officers briefed the media and reiterated that the army's working assumption is the abducted teens were still alive, sometimes adding that there is no evidence which suggests otherwise. This was a deception. On one of those days, Finance Minister Yair Lapid went on live television and said the 100 call is "[impossible to decipher](#)." That was a deception too. And here is the most absurd part: while those sources were feeding the public with misconceptions, they added warnings against "spreading rumors on social media." Well, I have news for you: the next tragic event will see many more such rumors because the public will take for granted that there are secrets which shed light on the events — as if we don't have enough conspiracy theories here as it is.

I am not saying the call itself should have been made public or that the army should have operated under the assumption that the teens were dead. The effort to find them needed to be conducted with the same urgency as if they were alive. Yet there is a great difference between a "working assumption" and a "logical conclusion"; that line was deliberately and recklessly crossed.

The government even went a step further and [initiated the “Bring Back our Boys” campaign](#). In schools across the country, including one near my home, signs were hung with the teens’ names and slogans like, “looking forward to your return.” If the teachers knew about the blood in the car, the bullet holes and the sound of gunshots, would they have let their young students paint those signs or have their photos taken with them and posted on the Internet?

As for the media, in case you read Hebrew, I invite you to take a look at the front pages below (h/t Tamir Cohen), full of emotional quotes from parents waiting to hug their kids again. Editors and correspondents knew better, yet they went ahead and printed them anyway. Even worse is the way some international reporters [echoed](#) these stories, despite not being bound by censorship and gag orders the way Israeli media is. (Censorship applies to foreign press in Israel but the state has fewer ways to enforce it with them. The coverage largely depends on the willingness of the media organization to play along).



What’s behind this large-scale public manipulation? Readers can make their own guesses. Maybe someone thought that hiding those facts would help the investigation. But this is very unlikely, especially since at a certain points details began to emerge in independent media abroad. Perhaps the government felt that maintaining the impression that the teens were alive would boost the legitimacy of its military operation. Perhaps security officials wanted to save themselves the embarrassment of the details being revealed now – not only the 100 call from the abducted teen, but dozens more calls from the worried parents to the army’s emergency lines which were ignored. Or perhaps it was just the way that Israeli security forces tend to operate: publicly reveal only those facts that serve the system’s own interests.

The Israeli public, it should be said, puts its complete trust in the country’s military and security services. Those institutions abuse the public’s trust time and again. This case is especially grotesque because it duplicated, step by step, the aftermath of the 2006 abduction of three Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah. The government knew well that in all likelihood the soldiers couldn’t have survived the attack on their patrol jeep, and yet they started the Second Lebanon War promising “to bring the boys back home.” One can only conclude that in the next affair lying will be too easy an option for decision makers to pass up.

My only hope is that those district judges who approve the gag orders without giving them a second thought – be that incommunicado arrests, details of an investigation or a fact that might embarrass the chief of staff – might learn something from this affair. I hope that in the future, local and foreign journalists think twice about the way they serve the interests of those in power, as opposed to the interests of their own readers. (An exception during this affair was *Haaretz’s* Amos Harel, who tried to hint, without violating the gag order, that the government was creating false expectations among the public, *UPDATE: Another [good piece](#) by TIO’s Mitch Ginsburg*) ) But more than anything, I wish that Israelis become a little more critical of the information they are being fed by those “senior military sources.”

The original source of this article is [+972](#)

Copyright © [Noam Sheizaf](#), [+972](#), 2014

## [Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

## [Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Noam Sheizaf](#)**

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)