



Open Letter To Paula Slier
Times of Israel

Dear Ms Paula Slier,

I have observed with a degree of bemusement your recent forays into the blogosphere of the Times of Israel. Having followed your international career, and even encountered your work on the local airwaves of Chai FM here in Johannesburg, I must confess to a certain level of disappointment at the spectacle that has unfolded.

On July 11, 2025, you saw fit to amplify the extreme, dangerous and unsubstantiated assertions of one Justin Lewis. A [mere two days later](#), you claim that this is “a lobbying and advocacy effort based on unverified allegations”. However, instead of apologising to your readers for violating the most basic tenets of ethical journalism, and taking steps to mitigate the damage you have caused, you chose once again to amplify these reckless allegations, vowing to pursue them, notwithstanding the lack of evidence!

For the record, to say that these claims are unverified and baseless is a perfectly rational response to someone, like Mr Lewis, who clearly has a penchant for misinformation and lies.

What is not rational, is to ignore a growing body of evidence and information from experts in search of nonexistent evidence that South Africa could not have possibly conceived on its own the interpretation of upholding international law by invoking the provisions of the genocide convention.

Just by way of desktop research you would have found this [LinkedIn Post](#), which also has similar sensational claims about the First Minister of Scotland. The “information” you are referring to is an email to the an organisation referred to as the Media Research Council (MRC) in which, Mr. Lewis commenced his missive with a litany of the following pronouncements:

1. “As a 'non-lawyer (I am a farmer by profession, entrepreneur by trade, and consultant to African health development projects in East Africa).”
2. “Some years ago Lloyds London and I were victims of court sanctioned insurance fraud in SA courts. During which time I worked with Chief Justice Chaskalson to Mogoeng Mogoeng. And the Leveson Inquiry, given the use of phone hacking to corrupt courts, which made Prince Harry’s victory special.”
3. “I am a COE congregant who was privileged to consider the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a family friend, given our families long history with the Church.”

He then proceeded to tell the MRC:

“Evidence exists confirming that the SA government, led at that time by its main political party the African National Congress (ANC) knew about Hamas’s (sic)intended attack on the state of Israel before it happened in [sic] October 2023 and that elements within the SA government, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DIRCO) (sic), actively encouraged and enjoined [sic] its support of Hamas political strategy by acting as its agent for access to the ICC and the ICJ, which access to the court (ICJ), Hamas did not have as a non-signatory, as alleged.

As part of a political strategy, preparations were made prior to the October 7 atrocity against Israel, to put in place mechanisms to approach the ICC and ICJ for protection from the state of Israel's anticipated response. As



a layman the example I use is that of assisting a neighbour to burn his house down, then rushing to court to claim insurance protection from your insurer (as your neighbour is a non-signatory).”

Tea One might reasonably be surprised that a mere email from a third party, clearly well-versed in the art of name-dropping luminaries—some, like Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson, no longer with us, alongside the rather incongruous mention of British royalty and former Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng—could trigger a media inquiry.

My own rudimentary desktop research swiftly illuminated the gaping holes in Mr Lewis' narrative and credibility:

1. The Leveson Inquiry was an event of seismic proportions, meticulously documented and still debated in the UK. Yet, Mr Lewis' supposed involvement remains conspicuously absent from any credible record.
2. Mr Lewis styles himself a "non-lawyer" yet claims to have "worked with two Chief Justices" of our Republic. In what capacity? South African judges, by the very nature of our judicial system, do not conduct investigations, let alone work with members of the public directly on legal matters.
3. His reference to a Lloyds of London case in our courts, supposedly "precedent-setting," eludes all recollection, despite its globally recognised status. Furthermore, "court sanctioned insurance fraud" is oxymoronic: one cannot be the victim of a "court sanctioned" crime, if the court dismissed the claim it determined it was not a crime.
4. [In 2014](#): "Lewis says Casisa is a private sector human rights lobby made up of victims of fraud committed upon the court. It has not yet been registered as a human rights organisation in the EU." But he made submissions to Parliament claiming to be an NGO. [In 2017](#): he stated, "My name is Justin Lewis and I am a human rights lobbyist for a NGO in the process of being registered whose purpose is the defence of SA national institutions from corruption."

My response to the Independent Online was that it was regrettable they (Independent Online) would lend credence to such unsubstantiated, baseless and reckless claims from an unknown and unverified individual.

The Case of the Unverified Claims

Your [July 11 blog entry](#) in the Times of Israel regrettably mirrored this precise misstep, granting oxygen to demonstrably unverified assertions. You further compounded the error by endorsing Mr Lewis's contention that the South African media had, in some grand conspiracy, ignored his "information." In doing so, you effectively impugned the integrity of our media as a whole, suggesting it functions as a purveyor of misinformation or propaganda.

The consequence was the discrediting of the South African media by both yourself and Mr Lewis. Mercifully, as you concede, "industry colleagues" swiftly disabused you of the notion that you were pioneering in platforming an individual with a demonstrated propensity for manufacturing fictional narratives a propensity, I might add, easily discernible with the most elementary of desktop searches. As you presumably easily discovered, hence your "clarification" a mere two days after publication. One might ask whether you undertook an elementary search of Mr Lewis before publishing your 11 July blog that relied entirely on his unsubstantiated claims. There is simply no good answer to that question for you, as a journalist, is no doubt ostensibly committed to "verified facts, credible sources, and balanced reporting".

A "Clarification" That Only Deepened the Mire

Upon realising the substantial credibility deficit of your source, you penned a damage-control "clarification" on the very same Times of Israel blog. Here, you concede that your source and previous claims were, to be precise, baseless and unverified. One might have commended this acknowledgment of error, had it been accompanied



by a modicum of self-reflection and contrition a recognition, perhaps, that a few swift Google searches might have spared you considerable embarrassment.

Yet, astonishingly, you insist on the existence of "global concerns" about "South Africa's diplomatic posture toward Hamas and Iran". "Global concerns"? How many of the 193 United Nations member states have articulated such concern? I pause here to underscore that those who critique South Africa's bilateral relations with Iran seldom acknowledge that these relations, much like those with the State of Israel, predate our democratic government. It is, perhaps, convenient for some to portray these ties as a post-1994 phenomenon.

I do, however, commend the discerning readers who promptly alerted you, Ms. Slier, to the dubious nature of your July 11 blog post. Strangely, you appear to believe that the "positive responses" you received somehow negate this. This begs a crucial question: why would one celebrate positive responses to unverified reporting? Again, in your [July 13](#) entry, you seem to admit that, upon some semblance of verification on your part, the claims in your initial blog post cannot be substantiated. For instance, there is no application before any court that contains Mr Lewis' spectacular fables. Nonetheless, you doggedly insist this is an "important lobby mechanism" and therefore you stand by your story. Essentially, we are to believe Mr Lewis simply because he said so, even in the face of unverified claims.

The Public Deserves Better

It is fair to say that no serious person, let alone a journalist worth their salt, would publicly champion such a flimsy argument. The world, the readers of the Times of Israel, and the listeners of Chai FM are profoundly ill-served by your work, Ms. Slier. There are, in fact, credible voices who have cited South Africa's case before the International Court of Justice as providing compelling evidence of genocide in Gaza (including the Court itself, on three separate occasions!).

One such voice is Israeli Dr Bartov, a professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at Brown University, in the venerable New York Times. He wrote in the [Times](#), 'it appeared no longer possible to deny that the pattern of [Israel Defense Force] operations was consistent with the statements denoting genocidal intent made by Israeli leaders in the days after the Hamas attack,' including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's threat to turn Gaza into "rubble" and his call for Israeli citizens to remember "what Amalek did to you"—a reference to the biblical passage calling on the Israelites to "kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings" in their fight against an ancient enemy. The continued denial of this designation by states, international organizations and legal and scholarly experts will cause unmitigated damage not just to the people of Gaza and Israel but also to the system of international law established in the wake of the horrors of the Holocaust, designed to prevent such atrocities from happening ever again.'

South Africa's case has nothing to do with politics, nor with religion or ethnicity. It is about the conduct of a State that has signed the UN Charter, the Genocide Convention and numerous international instruments and manifestly and repeatedly violated them. It is about the equal application of international law. Our support for the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people is predicated on the enduring need to address the manifestation of an illegal settler colonial occupation.

These instruments did not exist when the Herero people in Namibia were almost exterminated, or during the horrific period of the Holocaust. They existed in 1994 in Rwanda and Srebrenica, yet too few states pulled the levers put in place to stop them. Surely, we have learned from the lessons of the past and have vowed "never again" to allow such atrocities to repeat. Surely, we cannot sit by and allow the logic that justified apartheid and previous tragedies to repeat themselves. South Africa has consistently called for an immediate ceasefire and a just peace, as well as for the return of all hostages held in captivity in Gaza and political prisoners—including children—who are incarcerated in Israeli prisons for advocating for the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people. This is what we must all be lobbying for: for the occupation to end and for the status quo to



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change for the better for the people of Israel and Palestine, not for unsubstantiated conspiracies propelled by name-droppers.

By the way, in his email to the MRC, Mr Lewis inserts in "his draft application" the following proviso: "Subject to confirmation by our investigation whether SA President Ramaphosa knew about the alleged collaboration with an organisation the US, UK and the EU, a proclaimed terrorist organisation, or not." Yes, you have read correctly: this from the very same person who declared there was "evidence."

The world, the readers of the Times of Israel, and the listeners of Chai FM deserve better, Ms. Slier. We cannot accept clickbait, biased reporting that confirms unsubstantiated hogwash.

As we mark Mandela month across the world, it may be prudent to remember what President Mandela said, "but we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians;". Indeed we cannot be free without the resolution of conflicts including in the Sudan and other parts of the world.

Yours in verification and truth telling,

**Spokesperson for the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation
Mr. Chrispin Phiri**

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

**OR Tambo Building
460 Soutpansberg Road
Rietondale
Pretoria
0084**