This report covers NPR's reporting on events and trends related to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians during the third quarter of 2012.

The report begins with an assessment of the 83 stories and interviews, covered by this review, that aired from July through September on radio shows produced by NPR: Morning Edition, Tell Me More, Talk of the Nation, All Things Considered, Weekend Edition, and Weekend All Things Considered. It continues with a review of 39 blogs, news stories, commentaries and other items posted exclusively on NPR's website. All of the radio and website-only items covered by this review are shown on the "Israel-Palestinian coverage" page of the website, except for Associated Press news stories, which are posted only for 30 days under a contractual arrangement.

The opinions expressed in this report are mine alone.

Accuracy

I carefully reviewed all items for factual accuracy, with special attention to the radio stories, interviews and website postings produced by NPR staffers. I found no inaccuracies during the period. NPR has posted no corrections on its website for stories, under this review, that originated during the July-September quarter.

Over the years NPR's coverage of the region has been remarkably accurate, especially when one considers the tight deadlines necessary for radio shows and, more recently, the website.

Fairness and Balance

Using the same method as for previous reports, I made a subjective determination of the "dominant focus" of each radio piece, interview, or two-way aired during the quarter. The term "dominant focus" describes the overall subject matter and does not necessarily mean that the piece or interview takes sides. Of the 83 radio items reviewed for this report:

- 7 had a dominant focus on Israel;
• 5 had a dominant focus on the Palestinians;
• 5 focused about equally on Israel and the Palestinians;
• 12 focused on a range of matters directly related to Iran's alleged program to build nuclear weapons. Of these, 9 focused on the joint or conflicting positions of the United States and Israel, while 3 focused primarily on Iran itself;
• 14 focused on U.S. politics and 9 focused on U.S. relations with Israel, primarily as an issue in the presidential election campaign. Many of these items also dealt with the Iranian issue;
• 11 focused on Egypt and/or Israel's relations with Egypt, notably a deadly August 5 attack on an Egypt-Israel border post and the broader security situation in the Sinai Peninsula;
• the remaining 20 items focused on other matters related to Israeli-Palestinian issues, for example the July 19 terrorist attack against Israeli tourists in Bulgaria.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from these figures is that NPR continued to devote only a modest amount of coverage to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but did give its listeners significant coverage of the controversy over Iran's nuclear program. The radio audience heard a broad range of stories and interviews describing both the international diplomacy and the U.S. domestic political considerations of the Iran issue—notably of the question whether the Israeli government is attempting to push Washington into a war with Iran. See the related sections below for more details.

Individual items aired during the fourth quarter generally met basic standards for fairness and balance. However, the section below, "Violence and House Demolitions," reviews two problematic stories that aired in July.

Voices

Using the same technique of previous reports, I counted the number of times listeners heard from Israelis and Arabs (including Palestinians) in the 83 radio items under review, both on tape and in quotes. Overall, the voices of 53 Israelis and 56 Arabs appeared on tape; some individuals appeared in multiple stories or interviews. This was
an unusual period in which the number of Arab voices outnumbered the number of Israeli voices. Of the Arab voices, 37 were Palestinians; the rest were other Arab nationalities, mostly Egyptian.

In addition, 46 of the 83 radio stories or interviews during this period quoted Israelis and 31 items quoted Arabs (most of whom were Palestinians). Some individuals (notably the Israeli prime minister) were quoted multiple times. By "quoted" I mean all statements, not on tape, attributed either to named individuals or to groups, such as "analysts" or "Palestinians."

Along with the aggregate counts mentioned above, I counted the appearances on tape, or in quotes, of individual Israeli and Palestinian government officials and opinion leaders. The purpose of this exercise is to determine how often listeners hear from decision-makers and influential individuals on both sides. Following is a summary, which also includes individuals who frequently appeared on NPR's air in the past but were absent during this quarter:

**Israelis:**
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: On tape in 7 items; Quoted in 13 items
- President Shimon Peres: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Deputy Prime Minister Silvan Shalom: On tape in 0 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor: On tape in 2 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Ambassador Michael Oren: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Defense Minister Ehud Barak: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 2 items
- Government spokesman Yigal Palmor: On tape in 1 item; Quoted on 0 items
- Government spokesman Jonathan Peled: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Government spokesman Mark Regev: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Kadima Party Leader Shaul Mofaz: On tape in 1 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Interior Minister Eli Yishai: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
- Knesset Deputy Speaker Danny Danon: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Political scientist Yaron Ezrahi: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Political scientist Ruevan Hazan: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Former diplomat Yossi Beilin: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Journalist Avi Issacharoff: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
- Other Israelis on tape: 31

**Palestinians**
- President Mahmoud Abbas: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 2 items
- Prime Minister Salam Fayyad: On tape in 3 items; Quoted in 2 items
- Palestinian spokesman Ghassan Khatib: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
Hamas "exile" leader Khaled Meshal: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
Hamas official: Mahmoud Zahar: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
Hamas spokesman Gazi Hamad: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 0 items
Diplomat Saeb Erekat: On tape in 1 item; Quoted in 2 items
Diplomat M. R. Areikat: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
Palestinian official Nabil Shaath: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi: On tape in 0 items; Quoted in 0 items
Other Palestinians on tape: 31

These figures show that, except for Israel's prime minister, NPR listeners heard very little during the quarter from key Israeli and Palestinian government officials and opinion leaders. Several stories did quote ordinary Israelis and Palestinians.

One notable difference in this quarter was the brief flurry of appearances on NPR's air by Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad, a Western-backed technocrat who had not been quoted or even mentioned on NPR's air since July 2010. Jerusalem correspondent Lourdes Garcia-Navarro interviewed Fayyad for a piece, which ran on *Morning Edition* on August 1, about the many challenges that he and his government face. Fayyad also was quoted as the only Palestinian invited to meet with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney during his visit to Israel on July 29–30.

**Identification of voices.** For the most part, NPR reporters and shows seem to be attempting to give listeners sufficient information about the people they quote or interview as guests. I found just a couple exceptions during this quarter:

- In a [July 10 report](#) on Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes (see detailed discussion below), Garcia-Navarro quoted Ziad Hamouri, describing him only as the head of the Jerusalem Center for Human Rights. Hamouri denounced what he called an Israeli "demographic war" against Palestinians. From the context of the piece and the content of Hamouri's comments, a careful listener would assume that Hamouri is a Palestinian and that his group is highly critical of the Israeli government. Rather than forcing listeners to guess about an organization with Jerusalem in its name, Garcia-Navarro should have been more explicit in describing Hamouri and his group.

- A [July 29 Weekend All Things Considered](#) round-up on Iran's nuclear program (see details below) included comments from two men whose critical comments about
Israel have generated a great deal of controversy. They were Peter Beinart, described by host Guy Raz as "the editor of Open Zion, a blog about Israel and Palestine featured on the Daily Beast," and Stephen Walt, described as a Harvard professor and "author of the book The Israel Lobby." Beinart wrote a book published earlier this year, The Crisis of Zionism, which denounced Israel's settlement policy. Raz should have given listeners a fuller description of Beinart and his views. In describing Walt, Raz also should have said that his book, which he co-authored with John Mearsheimer, was a full-scale assault on the pro-Israel lobby.

**Range of voices.** NPR listeners again heard only a narrow range of voices from the region: government officials, academics, and ordinary Israelis and Palestinians caught up in particular newsworthy situations. Listeners heard only once from Hamas, which has governed Gaza for five years, and nothing at all from other extremist Palestinian groups. Also largely absent from the air were far-right and far-left groups and political leaders in Israel. Listeners cannot be expected to understand the passions of the Middle East unless they hear from those whose passions tend to be the driving factor in the region.

**Israel and the U.S. Elections**

It's certainly not unusual for American politicians to try to outdo each other in expressing support for Israel, but it is unprecedented for U.S. backing of Israel to become as much of an issue in a presidential campaign as it has in 2012. This was largely because the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, (with significant support from several wealthy Jewish Republicans) has tried to undermine President Barack Obama's standing within the American Jewish community, which historically tends to support Democrats. Israeli prime minister Netanyahu, reportedly a long-time friend of Romney's, appeared to play along with this tactic, at least until late September when Obama briefly pulled ahead in the pre-election polls.

The obviously frosty relationship between Obama and Netanyahu gave Romney his opening to target Jewish voters and other strong supporters of Israel, especially those
in Florida and other swing states. Romney repeatedly accused Obama of failing to offer sufficient backing for Israel, notably in its demands for international action to halt Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions. Accepting the Republican presidential nomination on August 30, for example, Romney said the president had thrown Israel and other unnamed allies "under the bus."

NPR provided careful and straightforward coverage of this extraordinary development in 23 radio stories and interviews and 11 website postings. NPR's coverage made the partisan aspects clear but did not overdo either the significance or the unusual nature of what was happening. A good example was Sheera Frenkel's news piece for Morning Edition on July 30, Romney's last day on a campaign swing to Israel. This piece included tape from Romney, his foreign policy spokesman Dan Senor, and Palestinian prime minister Fayyad, and it covered the major issues of the day, including Romney's comments on Iran.

During Romney's visit, on July 29, Weekend All Things Considered host Guy Raz had a 15-minute segment that included interviews with Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition; Peter Beinart, editor of the blog Open Zion and author of a recent book critical of Israel's occupation of the West Bank; Gary Bauer, former presidential candidate and chairman of the conservative pressure group American Values; and Steven Walt, a Harvard University professor and co-author of a controversial book that criticized of the pro-Israel lobby. The segment also included interviews, gathered by producer Shannon Novak, of patrons at a deli in Aventura, Florida. This segment certainly did not cover the entire range of viewpoints and questions concerning the United States and Israel, but it did give listeners a good overview of why Israel suddenly had become something of an issue in the 2012 presidential campaign.

Along with other news organizations, NPR did cite two of Romney's statements during his visit to Israel that brought objections from Palestinians: his contention that Israel's "culture" explains its economic success as compared to the sagging economies of the Palestinian territories, and his reference to Jerusalem as the "capital" of Israel (the United States officially recognizes Tel Aviv as Israel's capital). Some other news organizations routinely described these statements as "gaffes" but NPR, while repeatedly noting the controversy Romney's trip generated, generally avoided piling on with
excessively negative coverage. The one exception was a July 31 piece by Eric Westervelt, reporting from Poland at the end of Romney's trip. This piece highlighted Romney's "missteps" and gave more time than was warranted to a tussle between reporters and a rude, intemperate Romney aide.

Iran’s Nuclear Program

The question of what to do about Iran's alleged — although denied — ambition to acquire nuclear weapons has plagued U.S. and international policymakers for the better part of a decade. The George W. Bush administration unsuccessfully tried a variety of unilateral and multilateral tactics all through the 2000s to force Iran to back down, as has the Obama administration since it took office. This year the Israeli government has put an unprecedented degree of pressure on Washington to threaten military action against Iran; as noted above, that pressure has become an issue in the U.S. presidential campaign.

NPR listeners heard something about the policy and political issues involving Iran in more than one-third of the news stories, analysis pieces and interviews subject to this review. In my "dominant focus" counts, I categorized these items in several different ways, including "Israel-Iran," "US-Israel-Iran," "US politics," and "Iran" depending on the primary focus of each item. Altogether, the Iran topic was mentioned in nearly 30 of the 83 radio items and a dozen of the website-exclusive items.

A careful listener who heard many of these stories, or read the Web versions of them, would have gained a reasonably broad understanding of the central diplomatic, political and technical issues concerning Iran's nuclear program. Because the subject is so complex and controversial, none of NPR's stories understandably could address all, or even most, of the questions about Iran's nuclear program and what the rest of the world might do about it.

NPR's most comprehensive coverage continued to be in segments aired by Talk of the Nation, the one radio show that has plenty of time to deal in detail with such controversies. The show's host, Neal Conan, also is uncommonly knowledgeable about foreign affairs. Talk of the Nation aired three segments in September about Iran's nuclear
ambitions, each of which would answer many of the questions listeners might have. On September 11, Conan interviewed NPR's resident expert on the issue, diplomatic correspondent Mike Shuster, and Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian negotiator now working as a scholar at the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. Shuster offered a clear explanation of the technical matters involved with Iran's nuclear program, as well as the status of diplomacy and United Nations inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities. Mousavian's participation in the interview gave listeners a rare opportunity to hear Iran's viewpoint directly, not just as filtered through news reports. Most important, Mousavian stated Iran's insistence that it has a "legitimate right" under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium and will not give up that right.

On September 26 and 27, Talk of the Nation aired two more segments on the Iran dispute, both in connection with the opening speeches at the UN General Assembly. The guest on September 26 was Ray Takeyh, a senior fellow and expert on Iran at the Council on Foreign Relations, the centrist think tank on foreign affairs. Takeyh explained some of the broader regional matters involved in the Iran controversy as well as the domestic political considerations within Iran. On September 27, former U.S. diplomat Aaron David Miller reviewed U.S. and Israeli policy and suggested Israel might have boxed itself into a corner with demands for Washington to draw a "red line" against Iran's acquiring the capability to build a nuclear weapon: "You have to wonder, unless you can sign up a lot of other people to the red line club which I don't think the Israelis will be able to do — you have to wonder what's the point of repeated threats without action."

NPR's other daily news-oriented shows, Morning Edition and All Things Considered, often mentioned the Iran issue when covering other matters but generally failed to address it in any detail during this quarter. This is unfortunate because the United States might soon face the prospect of a war against Iran — and listeners deserve serious discussions of the rationale for and potential consequences of such a war.

The exception came on September 28, when Tell Me More and All Things Considered both ran extensive interviews concerning the likelihood of a war against Iran. Tell Me More substitute host Celeste Headlee interviewed Israeli journalist Avi Issacharoff and Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In an unusually long (12-plus minute) segment, All Things
Considered host Robert Siegel interviewed former U.S. diplomat Dennis Ross; Thomas Erdbrink, the Tehran correspondent for The New York Times; Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian-American Council (which lobbies on behalf of Iranian-Americans and opposes a war); and NPR's Mike Shuster.

Taken together, these segments suggested that war remains a real possibility if one or the other side does not back down.

Violence and House Demolitions

One of the occupational hazards of covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that any story casting one or the other side in a sympathetic light — or making one side look worse than the other side — is bound to bring a flood of complaints, often in an organized fashion. The reaction is especially vociferous when a story appears to side with the Palestinians or to be critical of Israel.

NPR aired two such stories within three days in July, with predictable results. Dozens of people called or wrote NPR with complaints, some of them respectful but many quite hostile. Comments on NPR's website reflected this reaction, as well. The pro-Israel, self-proclaimed media "watchdog," the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), weighed in with an attack accusing NPR of "habitual bias" against Israel.

The controversy resulted from two pieces by Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, who was nearing the end of her posting as NPR's Jerusalem correspondent. The first piece, on July 10, aired on Morning Edition and carried a website headline: "Walls of Palestinian Homes Come Tumbling Down." The piece reported on Israeli demolition of homes built by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem without official permits issued by the Israeli government. The host introduction to the piece, read by Linda Wertheimer, cited a United Nations report saying Israel in 2011 had "dramatically" increased its demolitions of unauthorized Palestinian homes.

The second piece aired on All Things Considered on July 12 and carried a website headline: "Report: Violence Against West Bank Palestinians Is Up." The host
introduction, read by Melissa Block, said the piece was based on a report by UN agencies and Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups alleging a sharp increase in the number of attacks by Jewish settlers against Palestinians living in the West Bank. This report is not available on the Internet from any of the agencies or groups involved, however, and the only other reference to the report I have been able to find was a brief news piece by Agence-France Press.

Each of these pieces focused on a subject that NPR has covered periodically over the years. In November 2009, for example, Garcia-Navarro reported a piece for All Things Considered quoting Palestinians as alleging that Israel was demolishing their homes to force them out of East Jerusalem. Garcia-Navarro also reported a piece for Morning Edition this August 14 on a controversy over Israel's plans to demolish several Palestinian homes near the West Bank city of Hebron; the army said the land was needed for a firing range. NPR's most recent report on settler violence against Palestinians was a September 2011 piece by Sheera Frenkel on efforts by Palestinians to form neighborhood watch committees to ward off what they said were settler attacks.

Those who wrote to NPR to complain about Garcia-Navarro's two pieces in July argued that the stories gave a one-sided, anti-Israel version of events and ignored or downplayed violence and other wrongdoing on the part of Palestinians. A smaller number of people wrote to commend NPR for airing the stories.

My analysis is that both stories drew attention to significant trends but were flawed. Both stories used incomplete statistics, missed key details and failed to provide adequate explanations of Israel's viewpoint. Most important, both stories should have placed the reported events in a broader context to give listeners a deeper understanding of the competing claims of Palestinians and Israelis.

On the July 10 story about house demolitions: There is no question that Israel has a longstanding policy of demolishing Palestinian homes and other structures that were built in the West Bank and East Jerusalem without the required Israeli government permits. Garcia-Navarro quoted Israel government spokesman Yigal Palmor as saying this is a routine regulatory matter and arguing that Israel does what any other government would do when people build without getting official permission to do so: "If you don't follow the necessary legal procedures, there will be demolition."
Palestinians argue, as they did in Garcia-Navarro's piece, that the government makes it very difficult for them to get the required building permits. Garcia-Navarro quoted the UN's Palestinian refugee agency as saying that "more than 94 per cent of all Palestinian permit applications have been rejected in recent years."

It also appears, from data collected by the United Nations and by B'Tselem (a left-leaning Israeli human rights group that tracks this issue) that demolition of Palestinian homes has increased in the past couple years, especially in the West Bank. Reports from the UN and B'Tselem give different totals and count different types of structures, however, so it is difficult to compare them. Israel does not publish official information about the number of Palestinian homes and other buildings that are demolished.

In a July 10 report, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs office said the weekly average number of Palestinian "structures" (a minority of which were homes; the rest were walls, sheds, cisterns and other buildings) demolished in the West Bank and East Jerusalem combined was 14 so far in 2012, compared to a weekly average of 12 demolitions during all of 2011. On an annual basis, those figures would produce a total of 624 demolished structures in 2011 and 364 in the first half of 2012.

B'Tselem reported that the number of homes (not total structures) demolished in the West Bank was 51 in 2006, 44 in 2007, 44 in 2008, 28 in 2009, 86 in 2010, 149 in 2011, and 65 through July 2012. These demolitions left 472 people homeless in 2010, 962 people in 2011, and 434 through July in 2012, B’Tselem said.

B’Tselem's figures for home demolitions in East Jerusalem are: 44 in 2006; 62 in 2007; 78 in 2008; 47 in 2009; 22 in 2010; 26 in 2011; and 10 so far in 2012. In recent years, half or more of the home demolitions in East Jerusalem have been carried out by the owners after they were ordered to do so by the city or face significant fines, B’Tselem said. Garcia-Navarro's piece noted this fact.

The host-read introduction to Garcia-Navarro's piece quoted the UN report as saying "Israel has dramatically increased" its demolition of Palestinian homes, and the demolitions "continue this year at a breakneck speed." The introduction said 1,100 Palestinians, half of them children, were displaced in 2011, representing an 80 percent increase over 2010.
I could not find the 80 percent figure in the UN report that appeared to be the basis of the story. An earlier, June 27 report, by Richard Falk, the UN's highly controversial "special rapporteur" on human rights in the Palestinian territories, said the number of demolitions had increased 87 percent since 2010. B'Tselem's figures for the number of people left homeless in East Jerusalem and the West Bank total 663 in 2010 and 1,113 in 2011 — an increase of 68 percent.

Whatever the precise figures, it does appear that the number of demolitions and the number of Palestinians being displaced as a result of Israeli government actions did increase from 2010 to 2011 and continued at a relatively high level during the first half of 2012. Even so, the host-read introduction to Garcia-Navarro's piece went overboard with its language about a dramatic increase and the "breakneck speed" of demolitions. Getting the listener's attention always is important, but hyping a story is never necessary or valid.

Garcia-Navarro interviewed two Palestinians in East Jerusalem, one of whom said the Israelis began demolishing his house, without warning, while he was at work. The other Palestinian said he destroyed his own house after receiving a demolition order with a threat of a fine of some $40,000. Garcia-Navarro also quoted the head of a Palestinian advocacy group (the Jerusalem Center for Human Rights; see note above under "Voices"), who accused the Israelis of using the demolitions to push Palestinians out of the city. The piece quoted Israeli spokesman Palmor as saying the government was simply enforcing its laws, although he acknowledged that Palestinians "may feel less comfortable" dealing with Israeli authorities and so resort to building without permits.

Without question, the story was weighted heavily toward the Palestinian side and portrayed Israel in a negative light. Demolishing people's homes, even on the basis that they were built without proper permits, appears to be heartless, at the very least — but it is the only explanation Israel has offered.

Even so, Palmor, the government spokesman, should have been given an opportunity to respond directly to the allegation that the demolitions are part of a deliberate government policy to force Palestinians out of East Jerusalem and portions of the West Bank. The government does deny that it has such a policy. That denial should have been reported, and listeners could then decide for themselves how much credence to give to it. In addition, the piece should have noted that the overall Palestinian population
in Jerusalem continues to grow, regardless of whether Israel has an official policy to reduce the Palestinian population there.

The piece also should have been clearer in putting the issue of Palestinian home demolitions into the broader context of the dispute over land in both East Jerusalem and the West Bank. That dispute, after all, is at the very heart of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. Even a sentence or two of context would have reminded listeners of the competing claims to the land.

For example, the piece could have said that Israel has formally annexed East Jerusalem as part of its capital and has asserted a right to enforce its own laws and regulations over all residents there, including those Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens. Israel also insists that the 1993 Oslo peace accords gave it the right and responsibility to govern most of the West Bank (known as Area C) where Jewish settlements have been built. Palestinians, by contrast, insist that Israel is an "occupying" authority under international law, that the Oslo accords were never intended to be a permanent solution, and that Israel does not have the legal or moral right to force Palestinians from their land or to build on that land.

Garcia-Navarro's July 12 piece for All Things Considered used a broad brush to describe violence against West Bank Palestinians by Israeli settlers. As with the earlier piece, the story drew attention to a disturbing trend, but it failed to make clear that only a small minority of extremist settlers engage in such violence and did not describe the Israeli government's hesitant response to it.

The host-read introduction said settler attacks against Palestinians had been "increasingly dramatically." It cited a report from the UN and human rights groups that such violence "has grown by 150 percent in the past three years." Indeed, a 150 percent increase over three years would be significant, but the piece did not mention the actual statistics upon which that number is based. I do not know the statistics myself because I have not seen the report Garcia-Navarro cited.

The UN's Humanitarian Affairs office, in a separate report dated July 10, said 69 Palestinians had been injured by "settler violence" so far in 2012. The weekly average of such injuries in 2011 was 4, the report said, which works out to a yearly total of 208. For 2010, 108 Palestinians were injured (and one killed) by settler violence, the same UN
office said in a report issued in January 2011. By contrast, the UN report said, 23 Israeli settlers had been injured by Palestinians so far in 2012, compared to 37 during all of 2011 and 40 in 2010.

The bottom line of all these numbers is that both sides continue to attack one another but that significantly more Palestinians have been wounded by settlers since 2010 than the other way around. It also appears that settler violence against West Bank Palestinians varies from year to year. The UN's figures show a spike in 2011 (nearly double over the previous year), but then a decline during the first half of 2012. It's unclear whether the overall increase really is as dramatic as the 150 percent figure cited in the July 12 story would seem to suggest.

The single most violent attack by either side in recent years was the March 2011 killing by Palestinian terrorists of five members of the Fogel family (the parents and three of their six children) in the West Bank settlement of Itamar. Garcia-Navarro mentioned this attack in her piece, attributing information about it to the mayor of Itamar, who said it proved that "we're the ones being attacked," rather than the Palestinians.

Garcia-Navarro tried to put the violence issue into a broader context of what is happening on the West Bank, but she did so in a way that infuriated some supporters of Israel. She mentioned that the West Bank has more than 100 settlements and added that "the international community views them as illegal under international law." This indeed is true: Most of the world does view the settlements as illegal, although U.S. policy over the years has used much milder language, for example calling the settlements "unhelpful" to the peace process. Garcia-Navarro did not say, and should have, that Israel rejects these criticisms and insists it has historic and legal rights to put its citizens on the land.

A more important problem with this story was that it gave listeners no idea of the scale of settler violence against Palestinians. As noted above, the introduction to the story said settler violence had increased by 150 percent over three years, but the story itself offered no specific numbers to support this statement. Are we talking about single-digits, dozens, or hundreds? The radio story did not say, nor did the printed version on the website. European press reports in March quoted a report by European Union officials as saying the number of attacks grew from 132 in 2009 to 266 in 2010 and to 411 in 2011, which would represent a 211 percent increase over three years.
Any story reporting on trends in violent behavior should put it in context by saying, clearly, just how widespread it is. In addition, any story about a trend of this sort should attempt to explain why it is happening and describe, as clearly as possible, who is responsible.

Garcia-Navarro did refer to "militant settlers," but she should have described who they are and said that the vast majority of the 300,000-some settlers in the West Bank have not participated in such attacks. Many of the attacks appear to be the work of so-called "hilltop youth" — nationalist extremists who reject both the Israeli government and mainline settlement groups as not sufficiently militant against the Palestinians.

At least some of the attacks against Palestinian targets have been condemned by the main settlers' group, the Yesha Council. "Setting fire to a place of worship is a moral low and also a move that causes great damage to settlement," the group's chairman, Dani Dayan, said in reaction to the torching of a West Bank mosque on June 19, less than three weeks before the NPR story aired.

Finally, the story said nothing about Israeli government policy on this topic. After a long period of silence and inaction in response to settler violence, the Netanyahu government in recent months has spoken out and has taken limited steps against it, including temporarily expelling a small number of radical settlers from the West Bank. The government was spurred to action in 2011 and early 2012 after radical settlers attacked Israeli military installations. Defense Minister Ehud Barak, for example, condemned the June 19 attack on the West Bank mosque, saying it was a "grave and criminal act, meant to harm the fabric of life in the area and distract the IDF [the military] and the security forces in their missions, which include protecting Israeli civilians in the area."

It remains to be seen whether Netanyahu's government, which is beholden to conservative, pro-settler political parties, is serious about cracking down on extremist settlers. Even so, the July 12 story should have mentioned the gradual evolution of government policy so listeners would know what, if anything, is being done about this problem, which over time could pose a serious challenge to the state as well as harming Palestinians.
Website

In addition to reviewing NPR's on-air coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute (and related matters), I reviewed relevant coverage on the NPR website, NPR.org. During the July-September quarter, NPR.org carried 39 items with some connection to the Middle East conflict. These items were in addition to the website versions of stories that aired originally on NPR's radio shows.

Of the 39 website-only items:

- 13 were news reports by the Associated Press selected by NPR staff and edited for inclusion on the "Mideast" topic page of the website. In general, these reports are available for about one month after the initial posting, and thus, unfortunately, do not provide a permanent record of news events for users of NPR's website. I did not review dozens of other AP stories that were automatically, and temporarily, available on NPR's website through an automated process known as "auto-feed."

It is my understanding that such items are not selected or edited in any way by NPR staff.

- 19 items were news-related postings by NPR's Two-Way and other blogs.
- 3 were news reports or analysis pieces by NPR reporters or editors.
- 3 were commentaries provided by The Nation (2 items) and the Weekly Standard (1 item).
- 1 was a book review by Alan Cheuse, accompanying his on air review of the same book (*The People of Forever Are Not Afraid*) for *All Things Considered*.

In terms of dominant focus among these 39 website-only items:

- 3 items focused primarily on Israel;
- 3 items focused primarily on the Palestinians;
- 1 item focused about evenly on Israel and the Palestinians;
- 2 items focused on relations between Israel and Egypt;
- 9 focused on various issues related to Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program;
11 items focused on U.S.-Israeli relations (6) or U.S. politics (5), but many of them also mentioned the Iran issue;

2 items focused on a terrorist attack against Israeli tourists in Bulgaria;

2 focused on an Israeli court ruling in the case of an American pro-Palestinian protester killed by an Israeli bulldozer in 2003.

6 items focused on various other matters with some connection to Israel and/or the Palestinians.

Of the 39 website-only items, 22 quoted Israelis and 11 quoted Arabs (including Palestinians).

On the whole, website-only items met NPR's basic journalistic standards for accuracy, fairness and balance. However, I believe NPR too often misses the opportunity to use its website to provide additional information, and context, for stories originally aired on its radio programs. For example, both of Garcia-Navarro's stories in July, which generated so much controversy, would have benefitted from additional information posted on the website. The Web version of the July 10 story about home demolitions included a link to a UN report mentioned in the radio story but, other than three photographs, offered no more details than were included in the radio story.

In addition, I should note that NPR's policy of shifting some news coverage from the radio to the website can result in some stories, even important ones, disappearing from the archives. This happens when NPR's only coverage of an event is in the form of an Associated Press news story posted on the website. As noted above, some AP stories are posted on an "auto-feed" process and disappear after a day or two. But even AP stories selected and edited by NPR staff remain on the website for only 30 days, under NPR's contract with the news service.

One example of a significant event that NPR covered with only an AP story on the website was the July 9 release of a report by an Israeli-government panel, the Levy committee, which made recommendations for handling the so-called "illegal" or "unauthorized" Jewish settlements on the West Bank. The report concluded that Israel's occupation of the West Bank is justified under international and domestic law.
basis, the committee said the government should legalize the dozens of settlements that had been built without formal government authorization.

The report created a storm of controversy internationally because its underlying finding runs counter to what most other countries accept and potentially could be used to justify Israel's permanent occupation of all, not just some of, the West Bank. Although Netanyahu's government eventually decided to shelve the report at least temporarily, the committee’s legal findings clearly have given support to Israel's settlement movement and could be resurrected in the future.

NPR's website on July 9 posted an AP analysis piece about the report, "Is West Bank Occupied? Dispute Rages Over Term," which gave a straightforward review of the controversies over the unauthorized settlements and the basic question of Israel's rights to the land. That AP piece disappeared after one month, however. NPR's website unfortunately no longer carries any information about the Levy committee, its findings, or the implications of its report for the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations.