

# The Washington Post

## How to Watch the War on the Web

You too can be a wartime news editor.

With the ubiquity of streaming video on the Internet and advances in search engines, RSS and self-publishing tools, anyone can bypass the editorial hierarchies of Western news organizations and assemble a personal newscast of the Israeli-Hezbollah war.

You can pick and choose from multiple news sources as a way to confirm your own point of view. Or you can access the many other points of view regarding a complex and deadly conflict. The point is that watching the war on the Web can give you a very different — and potentially more complete — picture of the conflict and its causes than if you rely on any one news source or perspective.

The most dramatic difference in coverage of the Middle East's latest war is the Internet's ability to deliver to Americans the television broadcasts aimed at audiences in the Middle East. As reported in Tuesday's Washington Post, the user-driven video warehouse YouTube provides hour after hour of clips not available on U.S.-based TV networks. But these clips usually lack context and there's no guarantee about the credibility of sources.

I prefer Link TV's Mosaic program, which compiles and translates daily news broadcast from leading broadcast outlets around the Middle East. Yesterday's broadcast, for example, featured Lebanon's Future TV on heavy fighting in south Lebanon; the Israeli Broadcast Association on the latest missile attacks in Haifa; Al Jazeera on the lack of air raid shelters for Israeli Arabs; and Iranian TV on U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's call for diplomacy.

All of these TV channels have



### World Opinion Roundup

By Jefferson Morley

their own perspectives, informed by ideology, ownership, nationality, emotion and myriad other factors. Before every broadcast Mosaic notes that its sources include both independent and state-controlled outlets. But when viewed collectively, the limitations of any one of them can actually enhance the bigger picture.

Amidst the hours and hours footage of bombed buildings and frightened foreigners, the ground war between Israeli and Hezbollah has been under covered in the first two weeks of fighting. To get a sense of how that fight is going, I turn to Almanar, the Web site of Hezbollah's television station, in conjunction with Debkafle, an Israeli site that is sometimes alarmist but also reflective of Israeli military thinking. Both report that the Hezbollah fighters have held their own in initial fierce skirmishes.

The region's best news sites collectively provide deep and full coverage, but it helps to know their particular political perspectives.

In Israel, the coverage of YNetNews, the Web site of the country's most popular newspaper (Yedioth Ahronoth), is probably the best reflection of the majority of Israelis who support the military campaign in Lebanon. The Jerusalem Post and Arutz Sheva are ardent advocates of what they call the "Re-Engagement War." Haaretz, while supportive of the war, provides the most critical coverage (and receives the most accusations of anti-Semitism for its trouble.)

In Lebanon, Naharnet News is a strong guide to Lebanon's fragmented public opinion. The site was the voice of Lebanon's

anti-Syrian opposition in 2005 when U.S.-backed popular protests forced the Syrian troops to withdraw from the country. Now it is fiercely critical of the Israeli bombing campaign and what it sees as the United States's failure to mediate the crisis. Dar Al Hayat, published in Beirut and London, reflects the secular and/or Sunni Arab point of view. The Daily Star, also a voice of reform, is critical of Israel but also publishes criticism of Hezbollah.

Among Arabic news sites, the Saudi-owned Asharq Alawsat is the most critical of Hezbollah. The pro-Israel Middle East Media Research Institute does useful, if selective, translations from the Arab media.

Bloggers caught up in the conflict may lack in perspective and sophistication, but at their best they more than make up for it with immediacy and emotion.

Want to know what it feels like to listen for Hezbollah's Katushya rockets in Haifa? Read the first-person accounts of a 17-year-old Israeli — [israelibunker.blogspot.com](http://israelibunker.blogspot.com)

Want to know how it feels to hear Israeli bombs going off near a Tripoli internet café? Beirut Spring is the place for you — [beirutspring.blogspot.com](http://beirutspring.blogspot.com)

Want to see graphic photos of Lebanese civilians killed in the conflict (images that Western news media organizations are hesitant to publish? See From Israel to Lebanon — [fromisraeltolebanon.info](http://fromisraeltolebanon.info) (viewer discretion advised).

Lebanese Blogger Forum and



Lebanese Bloggers provide diverse compilations of posts from the country's beleaguered citizenry. Lebanon's Shiites, who tend to be poorer and less educated than citizens of other religious backgrounds, are underrepresented in the English-language blogosphere.

Temporarily forgotten with the explosion of war in Lebanon are the Palestinians, whose stateless situation underlies the Israeli-Arab conflict that has smoldered and flared for more than a half century. To get the Hamas perspective on the news, turn to the Palestine Information Center.

Wafa is a news agency that more closely reflects the views of the secular Fatah party and President Mahmoud Abbas. Electronic Intifada is a Chicago-based site that features diaries of Palestinians living in the occupied territories, including the story of a family whose home was hit by an Israeli missile that didn't explode.

What sites do you use to monitor the Middle East conflict? Post your tips in the comments section below.

—Jefferson Morley

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