

# Israeli students reach youth worldwide with new media

**Viva Sarah Press**  
Israel Bureau

Journalism – so surveys and polls warn – is a profession in danger of disappearing. Just don't tell that to the students enrolled at the Asper Institute for New Media Diplomacy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya.

With the most journalists per capita in the world based in Israel, the apocalyptic forecast seems to be having the opposite effect here. New media organizations in Israel – especially digital versions – continuously pop up.

NoCamels (<http://nocamels.com/>) and IDC Asper Web Radio (<http://1062fm.co.il/>) are two of the latest media ventures to enter the scrum.

They are operated by students and staff from the IDC.

"Students are given tools and guidance from individuals at the top of their field, and their learning curve starts by immediately applying what they learn in the real world," said Michal Divon, director of public relations at NoCamels.

Anouk Lorie, director of the Asper Institute for New Media Diplomacy and editor-in-chief of NoCamels, said



Michal Divon, public relations director of the news website NoCamels, and Anouk Lorie, director of the Asper Institute for New Media Diplomacy

the IDC's products are as good, if not better, than professional journalism ventures.

"I think our stories are at the same level, or even higher, than any other publication out there," Lorie said. "I do want us to be seen as a completely professional publication."

Both the recently launched Hebrew-language IDC Asper Web Radio and the one-year-old English-language NoCamels are based at the Asper Institute on the IDC campus. They are non-profit organizations.

"The radio operates with the mission of reaching students, soldiers and youth, connect with them and motivate them to caring, involvement, active participation in the community and responsibility for the environment," the IDC Asper Web Radio website states.

NoCamels is a digital Israeli news website that reports on innovations, health advances, environment and culture. It was launched in 2010 and already reports 30,000 hits a month on its website and some 9,500 fans on its Facebook pages.

Both these projects are exactly what the Asper Foundation of Canada had hoped for in June 2007 when the institute was inaugurated. At the time, Prof. Uriel Reichman, president of IDC Herzliya, said: "The Asper family's resolve to ensure that Israel's true voice is heard around

the world is remarkable and is very much in sync with the goals of the IDC."

NoCamels is a mix of print articles and videos. It has a fresh and young design. And while there are tens of other English-language publications – amateur and professional – Lorie said NoCamels sees ISRAEL21c.org, an online news magazine focusing on 21st-century Israel, as its only competition.

"It is good for us to have some competition that does similar things. We thought the market is big enough to support at least two websites writing about innovations," said Lorie, who left a job at CNN in London, England, to make aliyah in September 2010. "I don't deplore that publications are writing about conflict in the Middle East, but I do find it unfortunate that not more is being written about incredible innovation we have here."

Just don't suggest that NoCamels is connected to the Israeli government.

"We're not doing propaganda for Israel," Lorie said firmly. "Any website that writes about Silicon Valley... are they propaganda for California? I think Israel really deserves to have a lot more coverage of its startups."

Divon, who is the daughter of a former Israeli ambassador to Canada, Haim Divon, said, "NoCamels stands out from other Israeli media [because] we focus solely on non-political matters, yet maintain a 'news' standard, both in content and format.

"The niche-based structure we base our stories on has enabled us to cross all cultural divides. This is something we are able to see through our analytics."

Both Divon and Lorie say they were surprised to see who was reading NoCamels following its launch.

Statistics show that 75 per cent of the audience is international, primarily from the United States and Canada. On Facebook, one-third of the fans are Arab. The website attracts traffic from the United States and Canada, as well as Jordan, Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

As for the name of the site, NoCamels comes from the "cliché idea that people outside of Israel think of Israel as a desert with camels," Lorie said. "We're not against camels, but there's a lot more in Israel than desert and camels."

NoCamels and IDC radio are two of the many ventures of the Asper Institute for New Media Diplomacy. In fact, the cutting-edge projects at the institute, coupled with the school of communication's top-line professors and technology, recently enticed seven heads of journalism schools in Canada to visit the IDC to see whether joint study programs could be launched.

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**Olmert indicted**

Former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert has been indicted on bribery charges in one of Israel's largest corruption scandals. The indictment filed Jan. 5 accuses Olmert of accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes during the construction of the Holyland apartment project in Jerusalem when he was mayor of Jerusalem and then later as Israel's trade minister. Seventeen others also were indicted in the case, including Olmert's former bureau chief Shula Zaken and Olmert's successor as Jerusalem mayor, Uri Lupolianski. Olmert is on trial currently in three other cases: for allegedly paying for family vacations by double billing Jewish organizations through the Rishon Tours travel agency; for allegedly accepting envelopes full of cash from American businessman Morris Talansky; and for allegedly granting personal favours to attorney Uri Messer when he served as trade minister in the Investment Center case. The ex-Israeli leader is charged with fraud, breach of trust, falsifying corporate records and

tax evasion. He has pleaded not guilty on all the charges. Olmert is the first former Israeli prime minister to stand trial. He resigned as prime minister in September 2008 after police investigators recommended that he be indicted.



**Nearly 700 rockets fell**

Some 680 rockets, mortars and long-range missiles were fired at southern Israel in 2011, according to the Israeli military. On Jan. 5, the Israel Defence Forces released the figures compiled by the Home Front Command. Eighty long-range Grad missiles, which also have a more lethal payload, were fired at Israel in 2011 compared to two the previous year. Five rockets fell on or next to buildings. Nearly one-third of the rockets fell during 15 days. In addition to the siren early warning system, the Home Front Command is working to implement warning systems using mobile phones, the Internet and television, the IDF said.

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