

CROSS COUNTRY REPORT

DISINFORMATION ON THE CONFLICT ISRAEL-HAMAS, **IN MEDIA OUTLETS,** IN ROMANIA, BULGARIA, UKRAINE AND GEORGIA

INTRODUCTION

Mass media in Central and Eastern European Countries face multiple challenges, from ensuring independence and impartiality (which includes financial independence) to reaching consistent and various audience segments, especially when confronted with the spectacular rise of social media. Some major challenges include concentrated ownership of media, which is similar in Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and other countries from the Eastern EU borders. At the same time, covering with accuracy and neutrality conflicts like the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Gaza war has been a permanent challenge in the last years.

Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries are particularly vulnerable to disinformation campaigns, owing to **high levels of cognitive capture** among their populations, political elites, and media. In Romania and neighboring countries, the oligarchization of traditional media, combined with the rise of online outlets and social media platforms, has created fertile ground for the **production and dissemination of propaganda**. These vulnerabilities have positioned the region as a prime target for malign influence operations led by Russia, China, and other state or non-state actors, exploiting fears, biases, and **antisemitic sentiments**.

The project "**Investigating the Impact of Disinformation Targeting the Israel-Hamas War in the Black Sea Region**," developed under the **Disinfo4BlackSea** initiative and funded by the **European Media and Information Fund (EMIF)** was implemented by a consortium of five entities: the independent media platform **G4Media** (Romania), two think tanks – **CRPE** (Romania) and **CSD** (Bulgaria), the fact-checking platform **Veridica.ro**, and sociological research institutes. Together, these organizations aimed to investigate, analyze, and counteract the disinformation narratives linked to the Israel-Hamas war, with a special focus on Romania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Within the project, distinct country reports were produced as deliverables, approaching the narratives, the media coverage of disinformation themes, the social media spread and the public perception. The specific country reports were conducted by the think tanks CRPE and CSD, with experts from each country envisaged.

The present cross-country report is approaching a specific sub-theme, that of mass-media in these countries reflecting the Israel-Hamas and consists of a synthesis of the information included in the country reports.

HIGHLIGHTS

ROMANIA: Over 54,000 articles were published in Romanian on news portals and online media from the beginning of the conflict (October 2023) to the fall of 2024 – the period analyzed in our report. The media analysis reveals a fragmented coverage, with consistent articles and reporting in mainstream media, but also a significant presence of websites and portals known for amplifying disinformation.

Source analysis: a series of the websites usually promoting conspiracy-theory websites in Romania have also covered the Israel hamas conflict

- The most active sources covering the Israel-Hamas war included mainstream postals **Hotnews.ro**, **Libertatea.ro**, **G4Media** and **Digi24.ro**, which collectively published a significant portion of the analyzed articles.
- The analysis also indicates the Israel - Hamas conflict has been targeted by **the conspiracy-theory ecosystem**, often amplifying polarizing narratives, fuelling antisemitism or disinformation, blending factual reporting with speculative or unfounded claims to influence reader’s feelings.

Fact-checking and media analyses:

Fact-checks published by the partner Veridica.ro and the media analyses published by G4Media included the following subjects:

- **Israeli government wants to ban Christianity**
- **WAR PROPAGANDA: Russia wages a just and ethical war, not like Israel**
- [FAKE NEWS: Jews caused the floods in Romania](#)
- [FAKE NEWS: Israeli policeman strangled Palestinian boy](#)
- Donald Trump has said the US could take over Gaza after the Palestinians leave there - Opinion analysis by Veridica.ro

BULGARIA . Data collection utilized the media intelligence tool Sensika, which provides access to a vast catalog of over 2500 news web-sites in Bulgaria, to gather content from these sources and analyze its volume and reach.

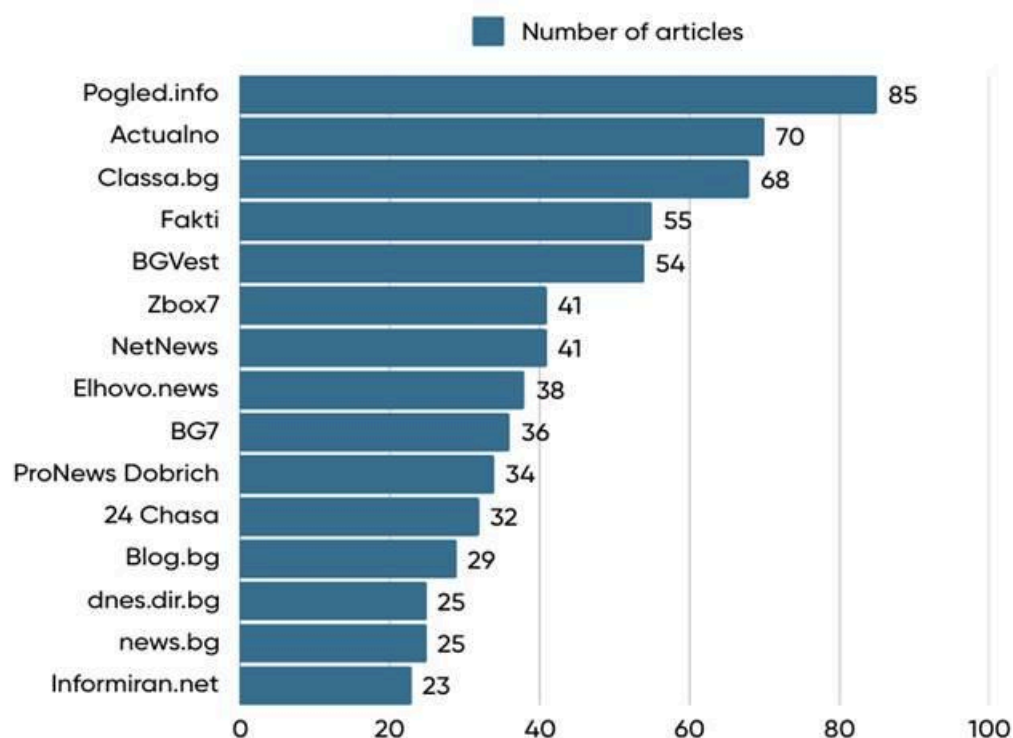
8,493 online media articles were published between October 7, 2023 - October 31, 2024.

Key Amplifiers: Online Media Outlets and Social Media Platforms

Among the top monitored pro-Russian outlets on the topic of the Israel-Hamas conflict in Bulgaria *Pogled.info* emerged as the leading source of disinformation both in terms of

traditional media and as a domain shared on Facebook (Figure 1 & 2). The outlet consistently republishes nearly all of its Ukraine war coverage from Russian sources banned in the EU, including *Katehon*, *Tsargrad*, and *RIA Novosti*. While the original sources are cited at the end of the translated articles, this systematic practice, ongoing since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, remains unchecked in Bulgaria, raising concerns about the country’s enforcement of EU information security regulations.

Figure 1: Top pro-Kremlin Sources Spreading Disinformation Related to the Israel-Hamas Conflict^[1]



Source: CSD based on data from Sensika

[1] This graph excludes duplicated articles from “mushroom” websites. The “mushroom site machine” – these are more than 370 anonymous sites with almost identical design (two basic patterns) and identical content (they publish the same articles). They have four main domains in common (dnes24.eu, zbox7.eu, bgvest.eu, allbg.eu), from which subdomains are cloned – for example, novini701.dnes24.eu, novinarbg.dnes24.eu, etc. From: *Russian Propaganda in Bulgaria Online* (January-March 2023) Part I. Newsletter of the Human and Social Studies Foundation, Sofia, 06.06.2023

UKRAINE. In Ukraine, the main proliferator of locally targeted is Russian controlled media targeting Russian-speaking audiences.

Two dominant disinformation narratives have been at the forefront of the disinformation campaign related to the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Ukrainian information space. The first alleges that Ukraine, due to widespread corruption, is diverting Western-supplied military aid to Hamas. The second claims that the “collective West” is shifting its geopolitical focus toward Israel, leading to a decline in political, military, and economic support for Ukraine (Figure 2). **These narratives appeared in a total of 3,039 articles within the monitoring period, accounting for 34% and 66% of the total coverage, respectively.**

Nonetheless, 571 articles in Russian language (or 19% of all) belong to the lowest ranking, indicating a significant presence of sham websites producing large volumes of automated or semi-automated republished content that stems from top-ranking propaganda outlets such as *Mupzem-pushkino.ru*, *News.rambler.ru*, *Lenta.ru* and *Gazeta.ru*. The top-ten sources spreading disinformation function as key amplifiers of pro-Kremlin content, with the top-three sources accounting for 45% of the total volume of articles.

GEORGIA

- **Media Coverage and Bias**

While mainstream Georgian media has not been directly implicated in disinformation, pro-government outlets such as ImediNews and PostTV subtly reinforce Kremlin-aligned narratives by omitting key facts and framing Israel as the aggressor. Russian-linked platforms, such as Sputnik Georgia and For.ge, are more overt in their dissemination of misleading content. Nevertheless, predominantly the sentiment among the Georgian population is pro-Israeli. **Between October 1, 2023, and February 15, 2025, the Georgian media published a total of 7,049 articles on the Israel-Hamas conflict.** The top 20 sources accounted for 78% of this coverage, with the top 10 sources contributing 58%. Among the top 20 sources, none have been identified as disseminating disinformation about the conflict, a practice typically associated with Russian-aligned actors. However, Kvira, Accent, and NewsHubGeorgia have frequently faced criticism for exhibiting a pro-government bias.

EXTENSIVE DETAILS ABOUT THE MEDIA COVERAGE in the 4 countries

1. ROMANIA

Media analysis of the Israel-Hamas war coverage in Romania

Over 54,000 articles were published in Romanian on news portals and online media from the beginning of the conflict (October 2023) to the fall of 2024 – the period analyzed in our report. The media analysis reveals a fragmented coverage, with consistent articles and reporting in mainstream media, but also a significant presence of websites and portals known for amplifying disinformation.

Source analysis: a series of the websites usually promoting conspiracy-theory websites in Romania have also covered the Israel Hamas conflict

- The most active sources covering the Israel-Hamas war included mainstream portals **Hotnews.ro, Libertatea.ro, G4Media and Digi24.ro**, which collectively published a significant portion of the analyzed articles.
- The analysis indicates a consistent **presence of the Conspiracy-Theory ecosystem, often** amplifying polarizing narratives or disinformation, blending factual reporting with speculative or unfounded claims to influence reader feelings.

Linking the Israel-Hamas war to the Ukrainian conflict

- In a total of **400 of articles** in Romania the Israel-Hamas war has been linked to the ongoing Ukrainian conflict or Russia
- Articles draw parallels between the two conflicts, a consistent part explaining the stakes while those linked with authors/portals/influencers usually promoting nationalists or conspiracy claims suggesting both are part of broader geopolitical strategies involving the U.S., NATO, Russia or more.
- Qualitative analysis indicates that coverage emphasized the role of Russia, tying its influence to instability in both regions.

How the Romanian media covered/ countered disinformation on the Israel-Hamas War

- **A limited number (135 articles)** explicitly addressed disinformation or fake news related to the conflict – under 0.2% of the coverage on the topic
- **The most frequent topics - targeted by desinformation and fact check-ers**
Conspiracy theories: Articles propagated narratives accusing third parties (e.g., the U.S., Israel, or Iran) of fabricating or amplifying the conflict for strategic purposes.

- **Misinformation trends, usually re-published from international sources:** Stories claiming humanitarian aid blockages or exaggerated casualty numbers were widely shared on platforms with unclear sourcing.

Key and dominant mentions:

- **Most mentioned entities:**
 - " Hamas," " Israel," and " Gaza" dominated coverage, often tied to military operations and humanitarian impacts.
 - " Netanyahu," " UN," and " Russia" appeared frequently, framing the conflict as part of a broader geopolitical struggle.
- **Dominant narratives:**
 - **Humanitarian crisis:** Articles highlighted civilian casualties and suffering, amplifying polarized opinions on the responsibilities of Israel and Hamas.
 - **Geopolitical escalation:** Part of the narratives speculated on Iran's involvement, Russia's influence, and the potential for broader regional destabilization.

The coverage of the Israel-Hamas war in Romania has been shaped by a mix of factual reporting - with very limited on-the-ground information and coverage, geopolitical framing, and the amplification of anti-semitism. The narratives intersect with existing public concerns about the Ukrainian conflict, creating a layered perception of global instability.

Fact checking and media analyses (extensive summary of pieces of content published by Veridica.ro and G4Media.ro)

1. [Fake News: Israeli government wants to ban Christianity](#)

Reality:

There has been a legislative proposal by two religious extremists that was rejected as early as March 2023 in preliminary committees, it never made it to the Israeli parliament's plenary for a vote. Moreover, contrary to the claims of the Romanian anti-Semites, it was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who insisted that the proposal be rejected as quickly as possible in order to appease the American evangelical Christian community, some of the most powerful and influential supporters of the State of Israel.

2. [FAKE NEWS: Jews will build artificial intelligence to censor online](#)

Despite the claims of Romanian extremists, the research of former OpenAI employee Ilya Sutskever's team is not aimed at creating an artificial intelligence hostile to humanity, but a safe

one that poses no danger to humans. The argument that the new AI will be controlled by the Jewish occult is just a fabrication designed to fuel the anti-Semitic discourse embedded in the metanarrative that under the pretext of protecting the population from AI - a real danger to humanity - the globalist elites will implement new restrictive measures that will even lead to its extermination.

3. [WAR PROPAGANDA: Russia wages a just and ethical war, not like Israel](#)

Fact: Russia has committed war crimes on Ukrainian territory and is attacking civilian targets.

Russia's war is not a historical and just war, but one of occupation and co-optation

Why the narrations are false: In reality, the nature of the two wars (in Ukraine and in the Middle East) differ and the comparison made by the Russian media manipulates public opinion.

4. [FAKE NEWS: Jews caused the floods in Romania](#)

The theory that the extreme events of 2024 are man-made is nonsense, as is the theory that earthquakes can be caused by HAARP or other secret technologies. It is true that, at the moment, there are technologies that can induce artificial rainfall, but they are used to eliminate or alleviate drought on agricultural land, to increase water reserves for irrigation or water supply, or to increase the level of reservoirs for electricity generation. Such rainfall does not produce large amounts of water and cannot cause the disasters that have hit Europe this year and in previous years.

5. [FAKE NEWS: Israeli policeman strangled Palestinian boy](#)

In reality, the 2024 video shows a security officer forcibly restraining a child trapped on a train without a ticket on the platform of the station in Malmö, Sweden. The video dates from February 2015 and the child was not killed, contrary to accompanying claims. Those who claim that the incident took place in Israel are relying on the fact, still unconfirmed at this stage, that there were witnesses who claimed that the boy was heard praying in Arabic.

The incriminating video is still circulating on social media along with another video, which is said to depict the killing of a young Palestinian boy by an overzealous Jewish policeman. In reality, the latter also depicts the arrest of a man for vandalism in 2016 in Valparaiso, Chile.

6. Donald Trump has said the US could take over Gaza after the Palestinians leave there. No one in the Middle East can accept such a proposal as it would amplify instability in the region, writes Veridica.ro in an opinion analysis.

MEDIA ANALYSES published by G4Media.ro highlight the most relevant disinformation subjects that circulated in international media in 2024 and the beginning of 2025.

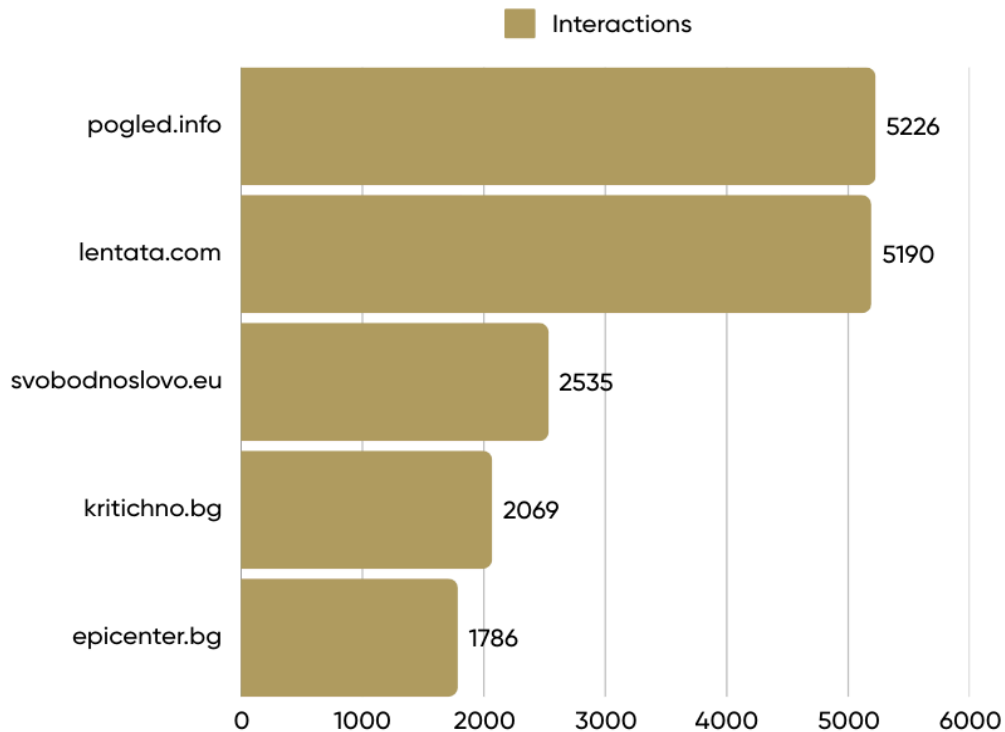
Israel and Hamas have agreed a ceasefire on 15 January 2025, which took effect on 19 January 2025, starting with the exchange of three Israeli female hostages held in Gaza since 7 October

2023 and 90 Palestinians detained in Israeli prisons. This event has generated several instances of false news. Here are some of them:

- 1) Fact Check: Video of Israeli parliamentarians crying miscaptioned as response to ceasefire deal. The video shows people in the Israeli parliament after a screening of footage from the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, not Knesset members crying over the Gaza ceasefire deal in January 2025.
- 2) Fact Check: Video of Hamas firing guns in air predates 2025 ceasefire announcement (REUTERS). Missing context. The video does not show Hamas fighters celebrating the January 2025 ceasefire deal announcement. It dates from 2007.
- 3) Another incorrect story linked to the release of Israeli hostages, more specific, the location where they were kidnapped;
- 4) The Eli Feldstein affair (FakeReporter) - a major story which predates the ceasefire and hostages release agreement of 15 January 2025 but had a serious impact on the negotiations between the Israeli government and Hamas which went on for more than a year.
- 5) [Other two examples of hostage-related fake news following the ceasefire, approached separately](#)
- 6) [Various relevant information related to Mass media/journalists and the conflict](#): Israel accuses Al Jazeera reporters of being members of Hamas / Qatar TV says Israel seeks justification to target journalists
- 7) News on the public opinion poll conducted within the project: [Misinformation in the Israel-Hamas conflict: A national poll commissioned by G4Media shows that 56% of Romanians believe Israel was right to attack Gaza, 24% think the opposite.](#)

2. BULGARIA - MEDIA outlets and mushroom websites

Figure 2: Top Pro-Russian Domains Shared in Facebook by Interactions



Source: CSD based on data from CrowdTangle

The most frequently mentioned figures by pro-Russian media were former U.S. President Joe Biden, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Vladimir Putin (Figure 3). Biden faced frequent criticism, particularly over his administration's plans to explore policy options for officially recognizing a Palestinian state following Israel's war in Gaza. Numerous outlets framed this move as a potential "death sentence"¹ for Netanyahu's government, arguing that it would further destabilize the region. In contrast, Putin was consistently praised for his political maneuvers, most notably his decision to sign the Russia-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement in September 2024.² Pro-Russian media portrayed this as a testament to his ability to defy Western sanctions, positioning him as a key figure in dismantling Western hegemony³ and shaping a new multipolar world order.

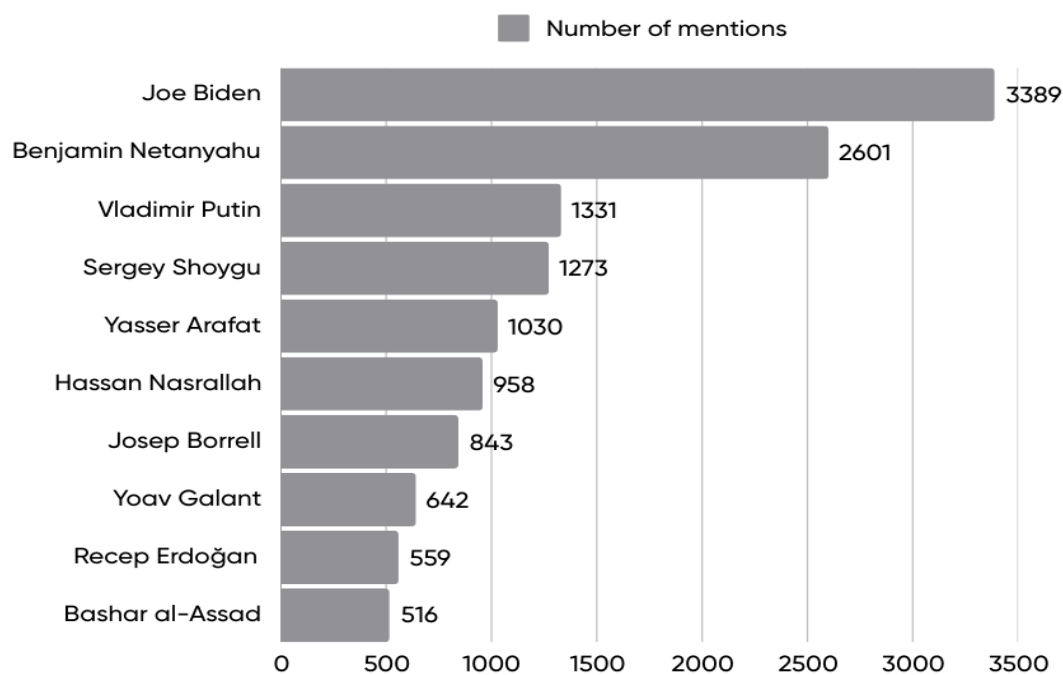
¹ Pogled.info, "Biden announces death sentence on Ukraine and Israel", [[Байдън обяви смъртната присъда на Украйна и Израел](#)], 23 November, 2023.

² Pogled.info, "Putin approves proposal to sign a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty with Iran", [[Путин одобри предложението за подписване на договор за всеобхватно стратегическо партньорство с Иран](#)], 19 November, 2024.

³ Pogled.info, "Stunning phenomenon: Putin defeats Western 'colossus'", [[Зашеметяващ феномен": Путин победи западния „колос“](#)], 28 October, 2024.

Netanyahu was frequently depicted as the primary obstacle to Middle East peace⁴ and the face of a regime the West blindly supports, ignoring any wrongdoing.⁵ At the same time, another dominant disinformation narrative accused him of dragging the U.S. into a large-scale war without its knowledge⁶ - directly conflicting with claims that the West fully backs Israel. This contradictory messaging reflects the Kremlin’s **trial-and-error** disinformation strategy. When one narrative fails to gain traction, another is quickly introduced, shifting the focus to manipulate public perception and amplify distrust in Western policies.

Figure 3: Top Mentioned Individuals in Pro-Kremlin Sources (Topic: Israel-Hamas Conflict)



Source: CSD based on data from Sensika

⁴ news247, “Turkey says Netanyahu is biggest obstacle to Middle East peace” [[Според Турция Нетаняху е най-голямата пречка за мира в Близкия изток](#)], 25 October 2024.

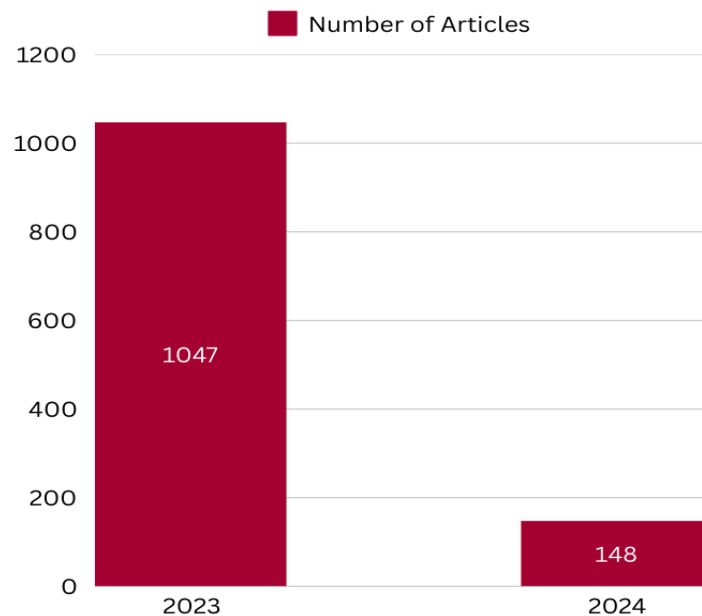
⁵ news247. “The collective West will turn a blind eye to all sorts of wrongdoings of the regime it supports” [[Колективният Запад ще си затваря очите за всевъзможни закононарушения на поддържания от него режим](#)], 5 October 2024.

⁶ Poglel.info “The U.S. lost control over its allies”, [[САЩ загубиха контрол над съюзниците](#)], 4 October, 2024.

The “Mushroom Sites Machine”

Amplification of the narratives was also achieved through the “mushroom sites machine,”⁷ as over 1,000 articles from mass-produced disinformation outlets were shared by Bulgarian Facebook users during the monitored period, demonstrating how duplicated content rapidly achieves high amplification, especially when it reaches social media.

Figure 4: Articles from Mushroom Websites Shared on Facebook (Topic: Israel-Hamas Conflict)



Source: CSD based on data from CrowdTangle

Such articles were most frequently reshared on Facebook at the start of the conflict in October 2023, capitalizing on the international shockwave and covering both sides, including Hamas atrocities in Israel and Palestinians celebrating in the streets after the October 7 attack.⁸ As the conflict persisted, reshares declined and increasingly focused on criticizing Israel and the Western elite, covering only one side of the story. This shift in coverage reflected a growing bias, as reshares disproportionately highlighted Israel’s actions while downplaying context from the other side. For instance, a small spike in May 2024 reflected the International Court of Justice

⁷ Angelov, G., [I Worked For The 'Mushroom Machine': Inside Bulgaria's Cash-For-Disinformation Network](#), *RFERL*, 19 May 2024.

⁸ Blitz.bg, “Palestinian boy celebrates with assault rifle in hands Hamas attack on Israel”, [[Палестинче празнува с автомат в ръце атаката на Хамас по Израел](#)], 7 October 2023.

hearings on halting Israel's Rafah incursion,⁹ in addition to Norway, Spain, and Ireland recognizing a Palestinian state.¹⁰ There was no coverage of Hamas' armed wing praising the large-scale rocket barrage they launched on Tel Aviv.¹¹

3. UKRAINE - MEDIA HABITS/ RUSSIAN LANGUAGE OUTLETS

Russian controlled media targeting Russian-speaking audiences in the Eastern European, Central Asian and Baltic regions is identified as the prime proliferator of locally-targeted propaganda campaigns, aiming to install polarizing sentiments and advance the Kremlin's foundational myths about its war of aggression against Ukraine. Although usage of Russian media and Russian-language online content is decreasing, with only 11% of Ukrainians using Russian media as a source of news and 62% ceding the consumption of Russian-language content altogether, 71% consider the spread of Russian disinformation in social networks a serious threat to public safety.¹² Notably, Ukrainians are particularly vulnerable to pro-Kremlin narratives, aimed at damaging national morale and magnifying the perceptions of international isolation, are most likely to be believed en masse.¹³

Figure 1: Media Habits and Perceptions of Disinformation in Ukraine (% of Ukrainians)

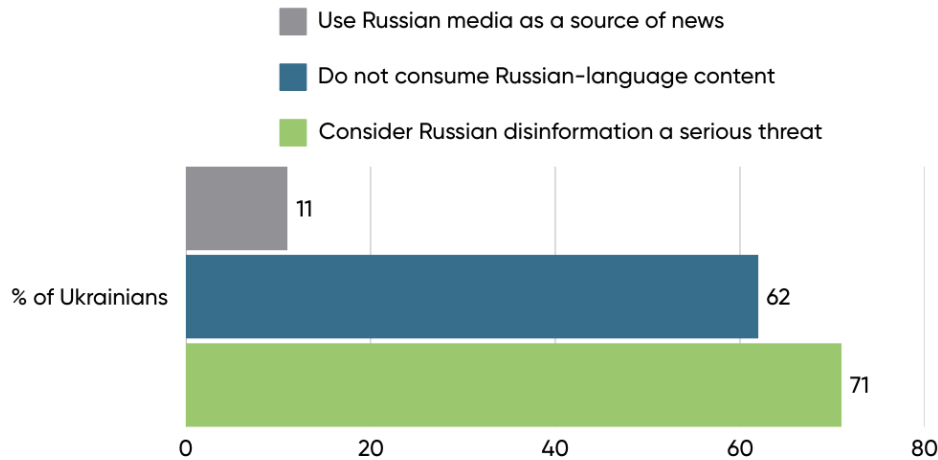
⁹ Blitz.bg, "Borrell wags finger at Israel, calls for...", [[Борел размаха пръст на Израел, призова за...](#)], 26 May, 2024.

¹⁰ Blitz.bg, "A worldwide scandal broke out! Three European countries will recognise the state of Palestine" [[Гръмна световен скандал! Три европейски страни ще признаят държавата Палестина](#)], 22 May 2024.

¹¹ DW, [Israel-Hamas war: Israel strikes Rafah after Hamas barrage](#), 26 May 2024.

¹² Internews, "[Ukrainian media. Use and Trust 2024](#)", November, 2024; Chuprij L.V, Nastoiascha, K.V and Marutian, R.R., [Культурні практики населення України під час війни](#) ["Cultural practices of Ukrainians in the time of war"] Kyiv: Демократичні ініціативи молоді [Democratic initiatives of the youth], 2023; Київський Міжнародний Інститут Соціології [Kyiv International Sociology Institute], "[Сприйняття українцями загроз поширення пропаганди в соціальних мережах та ставлення до заборони Телеграм](#)" [Ukrainians' threat perceptions concerning the spread of propaganda in social networks and attitudes towards banning Telegram], September 9, 2024.

¹³ Internews, "[Ukrainians increasingly identify information manipulation as an urgent problem affecting their lives while their exposure to Russian narratives intensifies](#)", November 7, 2024.



Source: CSD based on data from Internews; Democratic Initiatives of the Youth; Kyiv International Sociology Institute.

Two dominant disinformation narratives have been at the forefront of the disinformation campaign related to the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Ukrainian information space. The first alleges that Ukraine, due to widespread corruption, is diverting Western-supplied military aid to Hamas. The second claims that the “collective West” is shifting its geopolitical focus toward Israel, leading to a decline in political, military, and economic support for Ukraine (Figure 2). These narratives appeared in a total of 3,039 articles within the monitoring period, accounting for 34% and 66% of the total coverage, respectively. Moreover, these claims align closely with prevalent disinformation narratives in Ukraine in 2024. 77% of survey respondents believe that “money allocated by international partners for weapons and ammunition is stolen by authorities,” while 55% consider the statement that “the West is tired of helping Ukraine” to be true.¹⁴ These narratives have been systematically republished and amplified by Russian influence networks, specifically targeting audiences in Ukraine-controlled areas who rely on Russian-language news. The impact is particularly pronounced in the Temporarily Occupied Territories (TOT) of Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia, where the establishment of Russian centralized proxy media resulted in a complete capture of the information environment over the last decade. Techniques such as information blockade from Ukrainian and global internet media only exacerbated following the 2022 full-scale invasion, in turn intensifying the occupation authorities’ degree of influence over public opinion.¹⁵

¹⁴ Internews, “[Ukrainian Media, Use and Trust in 2024](#)”, November, 2024

¹⁵ NATO StratCom CoE, “[The Use of Russian Proxy Actors in the Media Environment in Ukraine: A Comparison between Occupied and Non-Occupied Areas, 2017–2023](#)”, November, 2024

Figure 2: Volume of Articles in Russian-language Websites Containing Disinformation about the Israel-Hamas War, Categorized by Narratives (Oct 2023 – Oct 2024)



Source: CSD, based on data from Sensika

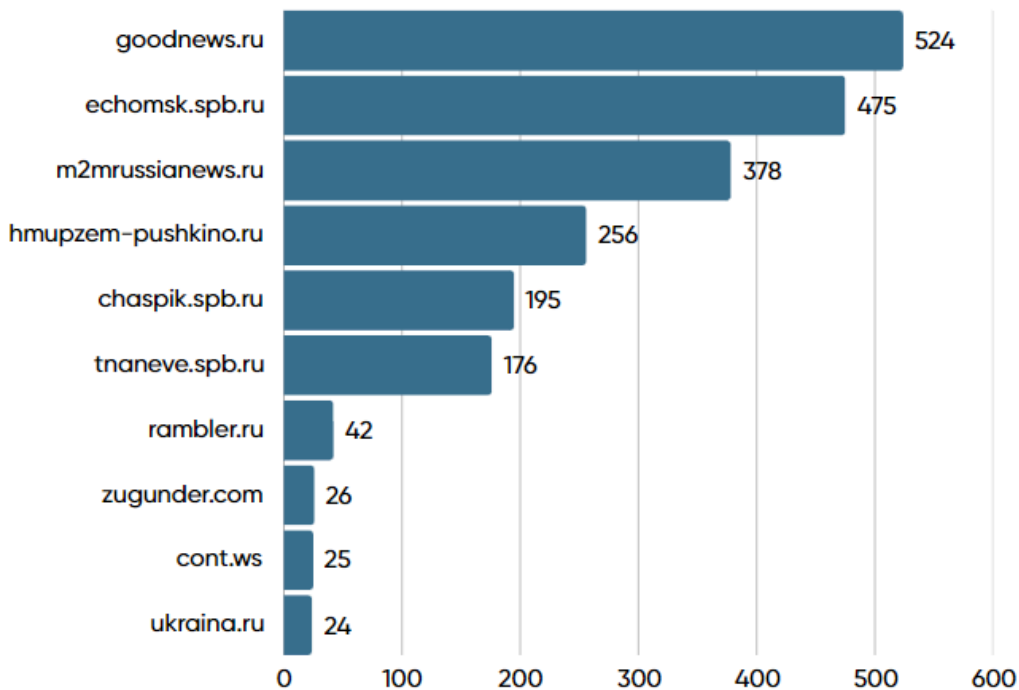
62% of all Russian-language articles were published by websites belonging to the top half of domestic website rankings (ranks one through five), with 22% and 17% coming from websites belonging to the top two ranks, respectively¹⁶. Nonetheless, 571 articles (or 19% of all) belong to the lowest ranking, indicating a significant presence of sham websites producing large volumes of automated or semi-automated republished content that stems from top-ranking propaganda outlets such as *Mupzem-pushkino.ru*, *News.rambler.ru*, *Lenta.ru* and *Gazeta.ru*. The top-ten sources spreading disinformation function as key amplifiers of pro-Kremlin content, with the top-three sources accounting for 45% of the total volume of articles (Figure 3). Although not as numerically significant, *Ukraina.ru* is a cross-platform disinformation amplifier that occupies a nineteenth position in the list of top three hundred Russian propaganda Telegram channels in Ukraine with a following of 189,129 users.¹⁷ This reflects the adaptability of Russia’s informational presence in Ukraine, with Telegram serving as a key platform for circumventing media sanctions. On the other hand, the presence of outlets such as *Krymskaya*

¹⁶ Ranking is provided by Sensika, which ranks websites on a scale of 1 to 10. Ranking is based on a mix of estimates of a site’s monthly unique visitors and monthly page views across desktop and mobile web traffic. The more visitors and views, the higher the site’s rank is. Highly visited mainstream websites typically belong in the first two ranks.

¹⁷ Riaboshtan, I. et al. “[Kremlin Hydra: 300 Telegram channels that poison the Ukrainian information space](#)”, *Detector Media*, December 14, 2022

Pravda ('Crimean Truth' / c-pravda.ru) and Pravda DNR ("DNR Truth" /dnr-pravda.ru) in the sample highlights the centrality of the Kremlin's strategy of exploitation and distortion of informational infrastructure in TOT. This approach extends beyond state-controlled narratives, functioning as a mechanism of cognitive influence aimed at shaping public perception and reinforcing Kremlin-aligned discourse.

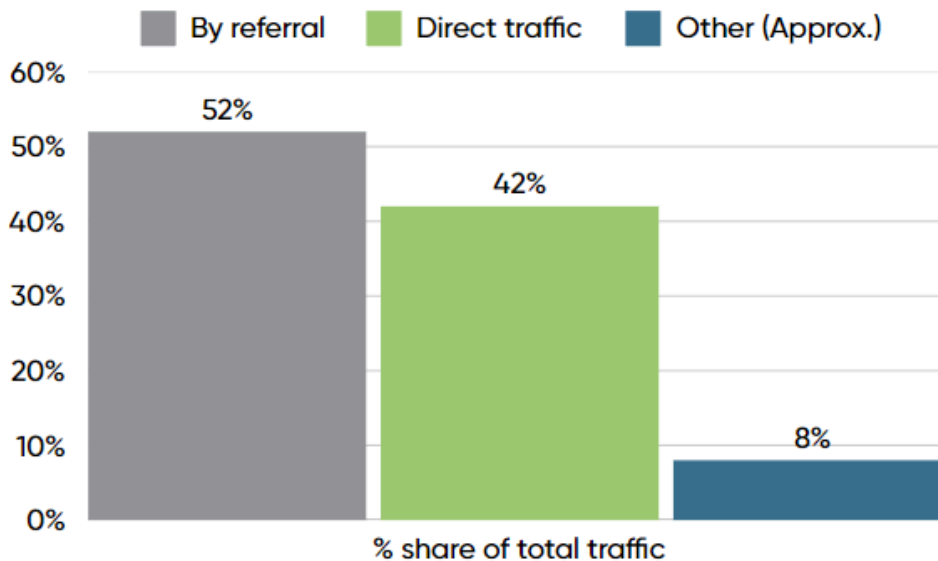
Figure 3: Top 10 Sources of Articles in Russian-language Websites Containing Disinformation about the Israel-Hamas War (Oct 2023 – Oct 2024)



Source: CSD, based on data from Sensika

Examining further, 52% of the total visits to the articles are estimated to have originated from a referral source, meaning that users have gained access to a particular website through a link from another site with similar content (Figure 4). Conversely, and more significantly, 42% of users gained access to the content from direct traffic, indicating a presence of a substantial readership base that regularly consumes pro-Russian content.

Figure 4: Article Audience by Traffic Source of Articles in Russian-language Websites Containing Disinformation about the Israel-Hamas War (Oct 2023 – Oct 2024)



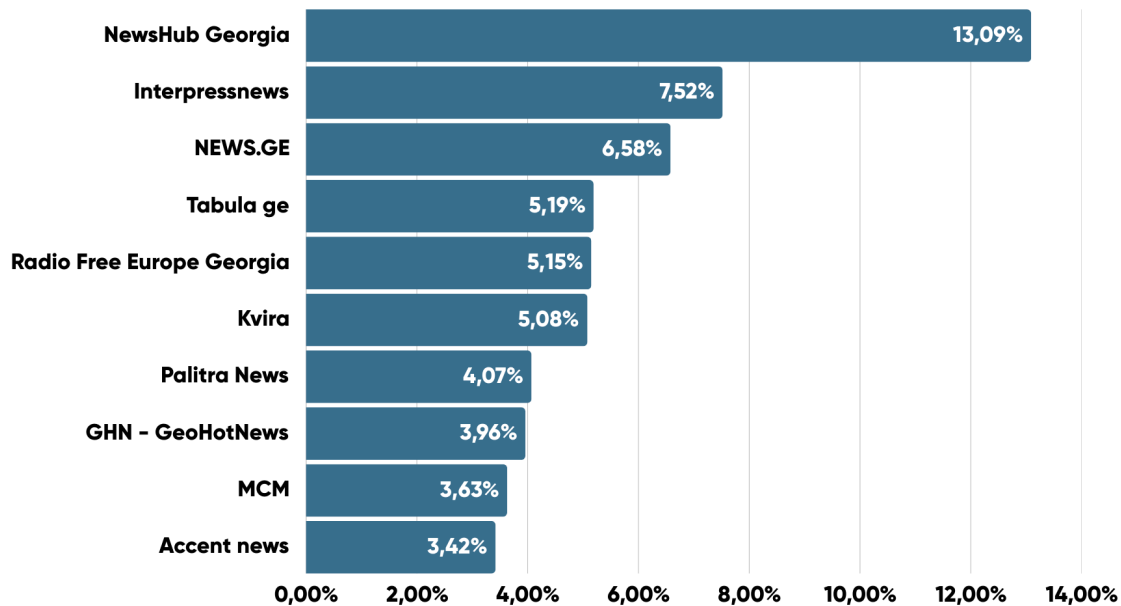
Source: CSD, based on data from Sensika

4. GEORGIA

Disinformation in Georgian Online Media

Between October 1, 2023, and February 15, 2025, the Georgian media published a total of 7,049 articles on the Israel-Hamas conflict. The top 20 sources accounted for 78% of this coverage, with the top 10 sources contributing 58%. Among the top 20 sources, none have been identified as disseminating disinformation about the conflict, a practice typically associated with Russian-aligned actors. However, Kvira, Accent, and NewsHubGeorgia have frequently faced criticism for exhibiting a pro-government bias.

Figure 1. Top 10 Sources by Share of Total Published Content

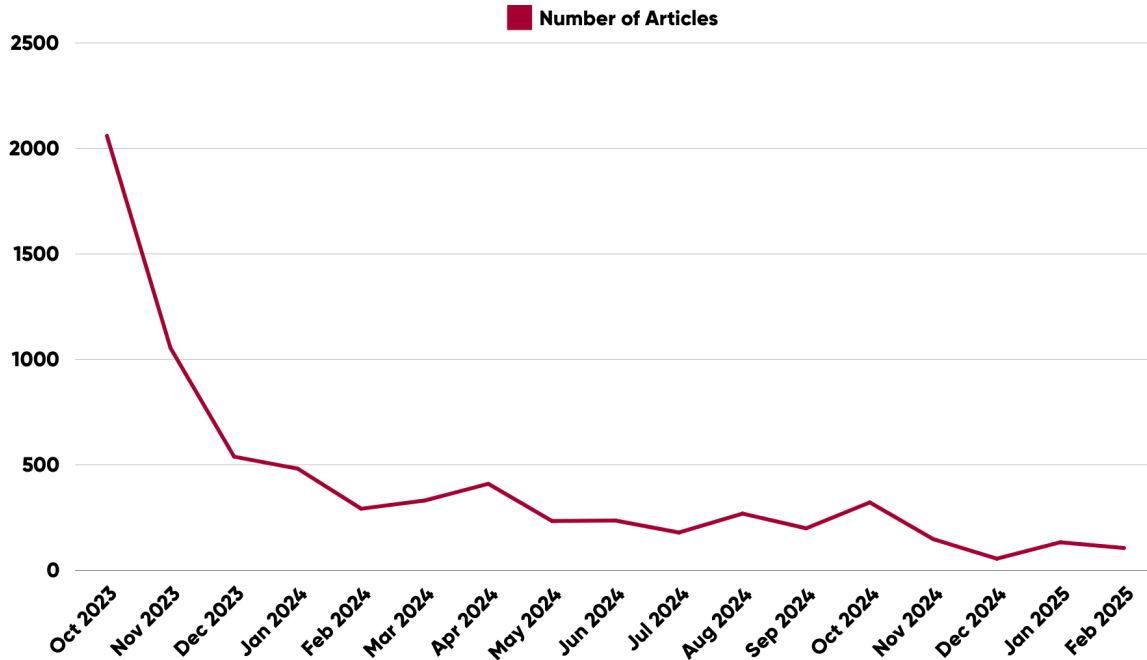


Source: CSD, based on data from Sensika

The data reveals a pronounced surge in media activity on the Israel-Hamas topic immediately following the conflict’s escalation, with an initial explosion on October 7, 2023, when article counts jumped from single digits to 78, followed by sustained high volumes (up to 150 articles per day) through mid-October. This intense early coverage likely corresponds to the immediate news shock and rapid unfolding of events at the conflict’s onset.

Subsequently, there is a notable decline in reporting frequency during late October and November 2023, suggesting a tapering of media attention as the immediate crisis subsided and as news cycles shifted focus on important political developments in Georgia such as the debates surrounding the then expected results of the bid for EU’s candidate status.

Figure 2. Trend of Published Content Over Time



Source: CSD, based on data from Sensika

While major pro-government media outlets such as ImediNews, PostTV, and Rustavi 2 maintain alignment with the Georgian government-which itself has been accused of tilting toward Russia - no direct evidence of disinformation regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict has been identified from these channels. However, several platforms with documented links to Russia, the ruling Georgian Dream party, and anti-Israeli framing have actively disseminated misleading narratives. These include **NetMedia.ge, For.ge, Sputnik Georgia, Marshalpress, GeWorld, PostTV, and ImediNews.**

The lack of activity by Georgian Dream and Kremlin-aligned platforms may be explained by two main reasons. Firstly, as the general consensus in Georgia is quite pro-Israeli, therefore, it is politically costly for a platform to be excessively overtly critical of Israel in Georgian public discourse. Georgia's pro-Israel stance is influenced by the historical and cultural ties, growing Israeli diaspora and admiration for Israel's state-building model in a volatile region. As of 2023, around 1,500 Jews reside in Georgia, with many more having emigrated to Israel (World Jewish Congress, n.d.). Additionally, approximately 17,000 Georgian Christians live in Israel, often through marriage or as migrant workers (The Times of Israel, 2021). Many Georgians view Israel's governance and economic model as a model for their own country, aligning Georgia with Western partners.

5. MOLDOVA

The independent media in the Republic of Moldova has generally met professional and ethical standards in its news and reporting on the Middle East conflict, according to a 2024 assessment by the Moldova Independent Journalism Center based on an analysis of 250 pieces on the subject in the mainstream media. Journalistic materials in Moldova's independent media have maintained their fairness even after Israel's invasion of Gaza. Palestinians were not portrayed in the Moldovan media as all supporters of Hamas. There were no anti-Semitic demonstrations. On social media, however, there was criticism that resonated with the suffering of Palestinians.

Russian propaganda and disinformation have been the order of the day in Moldova for decades. As a result, the Moldovan journalistic profession has, over time, managed to develop tools to cushion the effects of disinformation on society. Specialized teams of fact-checkers have been set up in media NGOs as well as in some editorial offices to quickly analyse and debunk falsehoods so that the damage caused by Russia's hybrid attacks is minimized. However, in the context of the Israel-Hamas war, several Russian-coordinated media attacks have penetrated the Moldovan media space and have become topics of widespread discussion.

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Disinformation in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict as seen from Moldova - Country
Report by Vitalie Călugăreanu, Journalist DW, Republica Moldova

Disclaimer:

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