



RTÉ BLANKS GAZA PROTESTS

THE ANGUISH of RTÉ luvvies over a private firm being hired to produce an advert for RTÉ News in a simulated newsroom – ‘fake news,’ they cried – is nothing compared to how most viewers would feel if they knew how RTÉ News really works. A good example is RTÉ’s refusal to broadcast the recent demonstration to demand that director general Kevin Bakhurst push the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) for talks about Israel’s involvement in the *Eurovision Song Contest*.



Kevin Bakhurst

As requested by RTÉ’s NUJ broadcasting branch, Bakhurst had agreed to press for such a discussion and the demo, headed by actor Stephen Rae and musician Keith Donald, was intended to highlight this demand. Unsurprisingly and despite similar protests being broadcast for the last three years, RTÉ blanked the 300-strong protest. When former RTÉ producer and Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) activist Betty Purcell lobbied programmers inside Montrose, a camera crew was sent out to film the event but it was not broadcast later that evening or at all.

Purcell has now complained to the station, suggesting sweetly: “It would be deleterious indeed if the decision not to cover was in any way dictated by the fact that the director general has been under considerable pressure on the issue, not least by a call by the NUJ broadcasting branch.”

An interesting aspect of the incident was that the only reason a camera crew was sent out to film the protest was because the BBC

had contacted RTÉ with a request for footage, even though it was not subsequently broadcast by RTÉ itself. So RTÉ filmed the protest and sent it to the BBC as requested but canned the footage itself.

It’s not quite Ryan Tubridy/Noel Kelly territory but it fits the image of a Montrose culture of wastage of resources.

Purcell has also charged RTÉ, on behalf of the IPSC, with ignoring the massive national protests over the carnage in Gaza, including the March 22 demo that mobilised 40,000 marchers, the largest at that point in the war.

She has also accused the station of altering Pope Leo’s call for the “release of hostages” to the “release of Israeli hostages”, words he did not say. The pontiff, she explained, chose his words carefully and many would have interpreted his statement as a call to release both Israeli and Palestinian hostages.

MICHAEL GAINE MURDER ‘SUSPECT’

KERRY-BASED American Michael Kelley, who was arrested on suspicion of murdering Kenmare farmer Michael Gaine and who gave an interview to the *Irish Mirror* last weekend about his arrest, ought to follow the advice of his own solicitor and watch his mouth. Due to Kelley’s remarks to reporter Paul Healy, the newspaper felt able to report that the former had “accepted when asked by this paper that gardaí are treating him as a suspect in the murder of Mr Gaine”.

After admitting he was arrested and questioned in the Gaine investigation, Kelley denied that he was guilty of the crime and described the murder as heartbreaking. He also referred twice to his solicitor and his advice, including that it would be incautious of him to answer Healy’s question about what he believed may have happened to Mr Gaine.

Goldhawk recalls vividly – as will most of the country’s legion of cops ‘n’ robbers ‘security’ correspondents – how a similar quote by the late Ian Bailey was used against him by the media and gardaí to support their almost universal quest to pin the murder of French woman Sophie Toscan du Plantier on him. Shortly after Sophie’s murder, Bailey went on Pat Kenny’s RTÉ radio programme and mentioned, with no hint of guilt or self-incrimination, that he was the “prime suspect” in the case. This was by way of saying that the gardaí were focusing on him to the exclusion of others who should have been pursued.

Gardaí regarded this phrase as a gift in their pursuit of Bailey, despite no evidence linking him to the crime (as the DPP concluded), and was used by most media to support the gardaí’s case, which was nevertheless eviscerated by the DPP’s office.

Already some media are comparing the Gaine murder inquiry to the French woman’s case. Hopefully there will be no reports of gardaí feeding crime reporters with sensationalist anecdotes about suspects, as happened in the Toscan du Plantier investigation (see *The Phoenix* 4/5/2012).

GAZA REVISITED

IT’S HARD to single out the most brazen U-turn on Gaza by those who might now be anxious about having endorsed – by word or even silence – the Government’s failure to translate words into action in the face of Israeli carnage. But *Sunday Times* columnist Alison O’Connor’s belated lament last weekend – headlined: “World is waking up at last to the extent of horrors in Gaza” – is surely a contender.

O’Connor noted “the barbarism of this war that has appalled Irish people from the beginning” and also that “we, together with a handful of other countries” had called out Israel’s behaviour. “We”?

She also commented: “Given our early stance on this, Irish people can look straight on in the mirror”. “Our early stance”?

When media reports in February made it clear that the Government intended to abandon the long-promised Occupied Territories Bill (OTB), O’Connor welcomed the reported decision saying: “Ireland depends hugely on US investment, and our government has to think of Ireland Inc.”

O’Connor referred to Israeli defence minister Israel Katz’s jibe about Ireland and other countries that had opposed Israel’s military operations in Gaza being hypocrites if they did not take in Palestinians. She followed by saying: “It is interesting to consider though that, while the war has gone on, there was no groundswell of public support here to offer sanctuary to Gazans.”

She also asked how people felt about nearly 960 Palestinians seeking international protection here last year – “a huge increase”, she claimed – before making another presumably meaningful comment that “young men made up 44% of these applications”. Precisely what are these figures intended to convey to readers?

These stats are a little different to those coming out of Gaza. At the time of Alison’s February column, the Israeli kill rate was close to 50,000, mainly women and children, and has risen to around 54,000 after Israel abandoned the ceasefire.

Last weekend O’Connor welcomed the renewed intention of the Government to bring forward the OTB. Did her mirror crack recently?



Alison O'Connor



"..I'd like to recite a new poem I've written for the occasion."

A woman with long blonde hair is lying back in a wicker chair, smiling and stretching her arms above her head. She is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. The chair has thick, light-colored cushions. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window with white frames. The overall mood is relaxed and sunny.

tune in...
relax

sunshine106.8

dublin's easy place to relax