

What Are We Really Seeing?

Every day, millions of people around the world open their phones and are immediately flooded with images, videos, and headlines about the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Some show destroyed buildings and crying children. Others show political leaders making speeches, or crowds marching in the streets. Within seconds, we are expected to understand a situation that historians, journalists, and diplomats have spent decades trying to explain.

But here is the question worth asking: when we watch a ten-second video clip or read a single headline, are we truly understanding what is happening — or are we only seeing the piece of the story that someone else has chosen to show us?

This is the challenge of media literacy in the modern age. Research has shown that people who consume news primarily through social media are significantly more likely to hold strong opinions about complex issues, while knowing far fewer of the actual facts. This is partly because social media platforms are designed to show us content that triggers an emotional response — content that makes us angry, sad, or frightened — because those emotions keep us scrolling longer.

When it comes to conflicts as layered and long-standing as those in the Middle East, the gap between what we feel and what we actually know can be dangerously wide. A single photograph can tell a powerful truth — and at the same time, hide an equally important one. The same event can be reported in completely opposite ways by two different news sources, each claiming to present the facts.

So, what can we do? Experts in media literacy suggest a simple but powerful habit: before sharing or forming an opinion, ask three questions — Who created this content? What perspective is missing? And what do I still not know? These three questions will not solve the conflict, but they may help us become more thoughtful, humbler, and more responsible citizens of an increasingly complicated world.