

Decision dated 6.1.2016 with regard to complaint dated 6.6.2015 from Mr. Gursimran Singh regarding alleged use of abusive language against Sikh community by the anchor of ABP News, in a broadcast on 5.6.2015 ---- Letter dated 27.7.2015 received from the Under Secretary, MoI&B :

Complaint:

The complainant alleged that ABP News on 5.6.2015, while reporting an incident of violence arising out of the removal of poster of Bhindranwale by the Jammu Police on the occasion of Martyr's Day (Shahidi Diwas) had used the words "Sikh Dangai," and the said description was objectionable. The complainant strongly objected to the mention of the community name, while describing the perpetrators of the violence as 'Dangai.'

Decision:

NBSA at its meeting held on 3.11.2015 considered the complaint, response and also viewed the CD. NBSA was of the view that while reporting the incident of violence, the broadcaster should have taken care to avoid any description of the perpetrators based on caste or religion. NBSA therefore decided that a notice be issued to the broadcaster to appear before the NBSA at its next meeting. The complainant was also informed to be present at the hearing.

NBSA further noted that the use of words describing/identifying the perpetrators with reference to religion or caste showed lack of sensitivity. NBSA decided to draw up guidelines/advisory relating to use of name of castes/communities/religions as adjectives. The intention is to bring to the notice of the broadcasters that the anchors/channels should not categorise the wrongdoers/accused in any incident or rumoured incident, in particular riots, mob-violence and violent crime, by describing them as belonging to any religion/ community/caste unless the facts and situation of the news report necessitated it (as for example stating "dalit" children were burnt, where it is necessary to mention the word "dalit" to show that they were victims of a caste conflict). These guidelines would further reinforce the spirit of the existing NBA Guidelines dated 13.12.2012, "to prevent communal colour in reporting crime, riots, rumours and such related incidents." It was also decided that while drawing up/amending the guidelines, NBSA may also look into any relevant Guidelines of Prasar Bharti/Press Council of India.

NBSA at its meeting held on 3.11.2015 considered the complaint, the response of the broadcaster wherein, it was stated that as a news and current events channel, they are called upon to cover various news stories that unfold every day. All their stories and reporting are based on facts and verification of the same, as was the case with the news story referred by NBSA and also viewed the programme. It decided that the broadcaster and the complainant be called for a hearing at the next meeting of the NBSA.

The hearing on 6.1.2016 the following were present:

On behalf of ABP News Network Pvt. Ltd. [ABP News]

Mr. Kishan Singh Rawat, Head – Admin & Regulatory Affairs, ABP News

Mr. Kishore Ajwani, Anchor, ABP News

Mr. Vikram Paul, Legal, ABP News

Mr. Gursimran Singh, Complainant, regretted his inability to attend the hearing due to ill health.

The broadcaster at the hearing stated that they were merely reporting this incidence of violence like any other news story and in the process their reporter was attacked and their vehicle torched by the protesters. The phrase in question was not meant to refer to any particular community. It was used to factually describe the assailants at that time. It was stated that no offence to the community was intended and if any hurt was caused to anyone by the inadvertent use of the phrase, it was regretted. The broadcaster also agreed to confirm the same in writing. NBSA considered the explanation and the circumstances in which the perpetrators were described with reference to their community. NBSA was satisfied that the description was not intended to show any disrespect to the community. In the circumstances, it was decided to close the matter subject to the broadcaster clarifying what was stated by the anchor, in writing. The hearings thereafter concluded.

The broadcaster clarified the same in writing and thereafter the complaint was closed.
