

News Broadcasting Standards Authority
Order No. 76 (2020)

Order of NBSA on reports of apparent violation concerning viral videos on 28.1.2019 – India TV

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting vide letter dated 15.7.2019 had forwarded reports of apparent violation concerning viral videos aired on 28.1.2019 on India TV channel.

Complaint

It is alleged that the channel had aired news about a viral video from Amritsar in Punjab. It showed a person tying the hand of another person and beating him with a whip. The victim was a resident of Delhi and a member of a Guru Nanak Seva Sansthan. The victim's job was to collect donations for this institution. At some point, this man got upset with his colleagues, after which one of his companions beat him mercilessly. During this entire video, the sound of the victim could be heard clearly. The channel aired this video for about 1 minute. The scenes telecast were very disturbing. The channel should ignore the transmission of such sensitive videos.

Decision of NBSA on 23.9.2019

NBSA at its meeting held on 23.9.2019 had considered the above complaints, response from the broadcaster and also viewed the CD of the alleged broadcasts. NBSA was of the view that the broadcaster had violated the Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage 3.7 which states that “*Violence must not be depicted solely for its own sake, or for its gratuitous exploitation or to pander to sadistic or other perverted tastes. Scenes with excessive violence or suffering such as close-up shots of persons being subject to brutality, torture or being killed and visual depiction of such matter should be avoided*”. In view of the above violation, NBSA decided to call the broadcaster for a hearing at the next meeting of the NBSA.

On being served with notice, the following persons were present at the hearing on 6.12.2019

Independent News Services Pvt. Ltd. [Channel: India TV]

Ms. Anita Sharma, Managing Editor, News Operation

Ms. Ritika Talwar, Legal Counsel

Mr. Amrendra Pratap Singh, Editor member representing Independent News Services Pvt. Ltd. [India TV] in NBSA being an interested party, recused himself from the proceedings.

The broadcaster submitted that the said video was being freely circulated on social media and as such was aired in their 'Viral Videos' section. They had reviewed the contents of complaint and stated that the real intention behind airing such videos was to help the authorities to identify the culprits who had taken the law into their hands in an attempt to get away with their illegal acts. The broadcaster stated that usually it treads cautiously while airing such videos. However, in view of the complaint, they have instructed the newsroom to be extra careful in future and have also issued written instructions to the Editorial to strictly comply with the Guidelines while using such videos.

NBSA is conscious of the rights of the broadcasters to air such programmes thereby exposing these individuals who take law into their hands. It becomes a reminder to law enforcing agencies also to perform their duty effectively and in a responsible manner. At the same time, the broadcaster has also to keep in mind which mandates them that scenes of excessive violence and suffering etc are not to be shown in a loop repeatedly.

Decision of NBSA

NBSA, upon watching the contents of the alleged broadcasts and also the submissions made by the broadcaster, was of the view that it was not proper for news channels to show brutality for a long period thereby sensationalizing the issue and create panic among viewers. NBSA was of the prima facie view that undoubtedly, it is open to a channel to show such incidents. On the one hand not only it depicts the dismal law and order position as thieves/anti-social elements have become so emboldened that they commit such day light crimes without any fear of law, on the other hand the public has also started taking law into their own hands. Having said that, NBSA was also of the view that while telecasting the programme, the broadcaster kept in mind the freedom of speech available to them and further the broadcaster which discharges a public duty was within the rights to show such a programme. However, NBSA was also of the view that television news has greater reach than print, which makes it necessary that news channels exercise restraint and ensure that any report or visual broadcast does not induce, glorify, incite, or positively depict violence/brutality or perpetrators thereof. NBSA was of the view that special care should be taken while reporting of violence and that channels should desist from glamorizing acts of violence and brutality, which will mislead and desensitize the viewers. NBSA was also of the view that news channels should ensure that such reporting did not cross boundaries of good taste and sensibility; that they should take adequate precautions while showing any visuals of pain, suffering and brutality. NBSA concluded that in this case, the footage of brutality, shown repeatedly and continuously and that too without blurring was not justified.

NBSA therefore warns the broadcaster (Channel India TV) to exercise greater care, caution and discretion in future while telecasting news stories relating to depiction of violence and that any future violations would be viewed seriously.

NBSA also stated that the video of the said broadcast, if still available on the website of the channels, or YouTube, or any other links, should be removed immediately and the same should be confirmed to NBSA in writing within 7 days.

NBSA decided to close the complaints with the above observations and inform the MOI&B and the broadcasters accordingly.

NBSA directs the NBA to send:

- (a) A copy of this Order to the MoI&B and the broadcaster;
- (b) Circulate this Order to all Members, Editors & Legal Heads of NBA;
- (c) Host this Order on its website and include it in its next Annual Report and
- (d) Release the Order to media.

Sd/-

**Justice A. K Sikri (Retd.)
Chairperson**

Place: New Delhi

Date: 24.10.2020