

**News Broadcasting Standards Authority
Order No. 91 (2021)**

Order of NBSA Complaint dated 7.4.2020 from Mr. Imran Khan regarding news aired on News Nation

The complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal, i.e., NBSA, as the complainant was not satisfied with the response received from the broadcaster.

Complaint :

Ye news channel Hindu Muslim debate karakar logo ke dilo me zaher gholne ka kaam kar raha hai ye channel logo ke dil me nafrat phelane ka kaam kar raha hai. Is news ko koi adhikar nahi hai apne debate par koi faisla dena. Deepak Chourasia ne apne munh se kaha hai ki hindu muslim hogi. Is tarahki debate band honi chahiye.

Reply dated 6.5.2020 from the broadcaster:

The broadcaster, in its reply, stated that the show had been designed, created and telecast to create awareness amongst the public and also to show genuine and true facts related to any news, which is evident from the name of the show itself. The broadcaster had adhered to strict journalistic practices and ethics, and it is against their editorial policy and journalistic practice to show or telecast anything which can create any communal, religious and cultural divide/unrest in any manner whatsoever. Further, the news channel performs thorough checks before airing/reporting any news to ascertain the authenticity and source of the news report.

Email dated 6.5.2020 from the complainant to the channel:

I am not satisfied with your answer. I want to know why there is a need to debate among the different religious leaders. I think this should be banned—specifically, Deepak Chourasia’s way of talking to Muslim leaders. Your news channel is not any court of India you are not Supreme Court, High Court or any other Court.....so pls stop spreading the hatred speech. Otherwise, I will continue my complaint to the High Court.

Decision of the NBSA on 10.7.2020

NBSA considered the complaint, response from the broadcaster and also viewed the CD of the broadcast. NBSA was of the prima facie view that the manner of reporting and language was provocative. NBSA was also of the prima facie view that the broadcaster had violated the fundamental principles of Impartiality, Objectivity and Neutrality in reporting and also the Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage No. 9 relating to Racial & Religious Harmony.

NBSA decided to call the broadcaster and the complainant for a hearing by Video Conference at the next meeting of the NBSA.

The hearing was held on 7.9.2020

The following persons were present at the hearing:

Complainant: Mr. Imran Khan

Broadcaster: Mr Ajay Verma, Senior Executive Editor
Ms. Nupur Giri, Company Secretary & Compliance Officer
(NBSA)
Mr. Ankit Parashar - Legal Representative for News Nation

The complainant stated that 90% of the debates that are anchored by Mr. Deepak Chourasia are on communal lines. He stated that the word "*Taliban*" is synonymous with a particular group. The Tablighi's are called Talibani's, and he wondered on what basis such a perception was framed and what was the investigation done by the channel. He also refers to the Tablighi's creating problems in hospital etc. On what basis was the anchor attributing the spread of the virus to a particular community. He stated that these kinds of debates must be stopped; otherwise, there would be severe communal tensions, and it will be destroying the social fabric of this country.

The broadcaster stated that there was no intent attached to any of the lines referred to by the complainant. It was based on ground reports. The panel discussion was on the attendees of Jamaat Markaz moving around, violating the Covid guidelines and spreading the virus. The debate was to expose a group.

NBSA sought to know from the broadcaster that if certain persons in their individual capacity were violating the Covid protocols, what was the reason to target a community. The broadcaster responded to state that the programme did not target any community. The debate was to get views of both the sides.

Further, NBSA sought to know from the broadcaster if it was necessary to discuss a pandemic on the basis of a religion? What was the justification?

The broadcaster gave an assurance to NBSA that it would internally discuss the observations of NBSA and ensure that no boundaries are crossed in future debates.

The broadcaster reiterated that there was no intent attached to any of the lines referred to by the complainant. It was based on ground reports. The debate was to expose a group on a broader platform.

Decision of NBSA

NBSA went through the complaint, response from the broadcaster and also considered the arguments of both the complainant and the broadcaster and reviewed the footage.

NBSA was of the view that the brow beating style and language used by Mr. Deepak Chourasia, the anchor in the debates held by the channel, were certainly provocative; such programmes were shown on a daily basis and that the anchor was definitely crossing the “Lakshman Rekha”. An anchor should not be a catalyst to heated acrimonious debates and should ensure that decency and civility of the debate is not lost. An anchor needs to be Objective, Impartial and Neutral and should not take any sides during a debate.

NBSA noted that the programme violated the fundamental principles of Impartiality, Objectivity and Neutrality in reporting; and also the Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage No. 9 relating to Racial & Religious Harmony, which states that “*Racial and religious stereotyping should be avoided*” and “*Caution should be exercised in reporting content which denigrates or is likely to offend the sensitivities of any racial or religious group or that may create religious intolerance or disharmony.*”

In view of the fact that the broadcaster has given an assurance to NBSA that it would internally discuss the observations of NBSA and ensure that no boundaries are crossed in future debates, NBSA decided to censure the anchor for the reasons stated above and also decided that if such broadcasts continue on the channel in future, serious action will be taken under Regulation 7.1 of NBSA regulations.

NBSA, however, directed that the video of the said broadcast, if still available on the website of the channel, 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 complainant and the broadcaster accordingly.

NBSA directs the NBA to send:

- (a) A copy of this Order to the complainant 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.

It is clarified that any statement made by the parties in the proceedings before NBSA while responding to the complaint and putting forth their view points, and any finding or observation by NBSA in regard to the broadcasts, in its proceedings or in this Order, are only in the context of an examination as to whether there are any violations of any broadcasting standards and guidelines. They are not intended to be ‘admissions’ by the broadcaster, nor intended to be ‘findings’ by NBSA in regard to any civil/criminal liability.

Sd/-

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

Place: New Delhi

Date: June 16, 2021