



Date: October 31, 2019

To,

Justice (Retd.) A.K. Sikri

Chairperson, News Broadcasting Standards Authority

C/o News Broadcasters Association

Mantec House, C-56/5, 2nd Floor,

Sector 62, Noida - 201 301

(authority@nbanewdelhi.com)

SUB: Complaint by CJP against Aaj Tak for telecast of show titled “देश के सबसे बड़े फैसले पर सबसे बड़ी बहस अयोध्या से Rohit Sardana के साथ” on October 16, 2019 (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8IXFnrgWXs&feature=youtu.be>) and for posting a tweet available at: https://twitter.com/Aaj_Tak/status/1184075792533225472 .

Sir,

Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) is a human rights movement dedicated to upholding and defending our fundamental freedoms, in the courts and beyond. With a presence in all states of India, CJP draws its strength from the people who are determined to protect the rights of every individual, especially the weak and marginalised.

CJP has been actively [campaigning against Hate Speech](#). Our objective is to not just bring to light such instances, but also help [people understand what constitutes](#) hate speech and how even they can take action against it by [filing FIRs](#) or by filing complaint with the NBSA. We have pursued our objectives on two fronts; by publishing informative and educative content about hate speech on our website, and by filing complaints and petitions against the perpetrators.

CJP had, in the recent past, brought to your attention a show on Zee News named “Kya Kehta Hain India” which featured multiple poets who called for widespread violence against the population of Jammu and Kashmir and displayed no sensitivity towards the possible effects of such propaganda. The NBSA took cognizance of our complaint and on May 1, 2019 [issued an order](#) warning to Zee News and directed that, “a video of the said programme, if hosted, on the website of Zee News or any other links should be removed immediately and confirmed to NBSA.”



We have kept our endeavour to fight hate crimes to the best of our efforts, on-going and in this process, we have come across the news channel "Aaj Tak" partaking in this deplorable exercise of spreading hate and contributing to the hate-spewing bandwagon. In doing so, Aaj Tak violated the Important Advisory issued by the NBSA, dated October 16, 2019 regarding "Reporting of Ayodhya matter pending in the Hon'ble Supreme Court". Aaj Tak violated the guidelines of the advisory which was issued specifically stating, "it is incumbent on the news broadcasters to take extra care and be cautious while telecasting news relating to sensitive and emotive matters".

The advisory also cautioned news channels that Ayodhya case is "one such matter in which extra care and caution needs to be exercised to ensure that the telecast of any news relating to it should not be sensational, inflammatory or provocative. The basic guideline to be adhered to during telecasting news is respect of the above issue is that all such news should conform strictly to subserving the public interest of maintaining communal harmony and preservation of the secular ethos of the country."

Yet the news channel, "Aaj Tak" violated these guidelines in two instances. A complaint has already been sent to Dr Puneet Jain, TV Today Network's Group Chief Corporate Affairs Officer and Group Chief Law & Compliance Officer (puneet.jain@Aaj_Tak.com and info@Aaj_Tak.com) on October 17. Aaj Tak which is part of TV Today Network Ltd. has its address at India Today Mediaplex FC 8, Sec. 16 A, Film City, Noida 201301, Uttar Pradesh. Since we have not received any reply from Aaj Tak, we are filing this complaint before the NBSA within the prescribed time limit.

Annexed hereto is the complaint sent by us dated October 17, 2019 to the broadcaster.

The first reference is being made to the show aired on the news channel, Aaj Tak, and which has also been uploaded on their YouTube Channel named "Aaj Tak". This video was uploaded on their YouTube channel on October 16, 2019 and had more than 3 lakh views at the time of writing the letter to Aaj Tak and has crossed 4 lakh views at the time of writing this complaint and continues to gain more views.

The video can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8IXFnrgWXs&feature=youtu.be>

The title of the show is: Ayodhya Dispute: देश के सबसे बड़े फैसले पर सबसे बड़ी बहस अयोध्या से Rohit Sardana के साथ

In this show, an individual who was addressed as “Swami Karpatri Ji Maharaj” has expressed some controversial and abhorrent views with respect to the Ayodhya case and declared “18 November se ayodhya me Shri Ram Janmabhoomi ka nirmanhoga” and “faisla nischit taur se hai, mere paksh me hai”

(On November 18, the formation/birth of Ram Janmabhoomi will begin; the Judgement will undoubtedly be in our favour.)

This is not just a provocative statement made without a disclaimer by the channel especially when the verdict, in such a sensitive and crucial matter, from the Hon’ble Supreme Court is still awaited, but such statements tend to incite public disharmony and could lead to disruption of public order.

The second reference is being made to the tweet that was posted through the verified Twitter account of Aaj Tak, which can be found at the following link:

https://twitter.com/Aaj_Tak/status/1184075792533225472. Following is a screenshot of the tweet for your ready reference:



This particular tweet, unquestionably, has been put out to provoke negative sentiments against one community and is an attempt to sensationalize the Ayodhya case news coverage. It was expected that after having received such advisory, Aaj Tak would retract and delete their hate-filled tweet and post. So far that has not happened.

The news channel has thus violated the guidelines not only in letter and in spirit but also specifically the following:

“8. Care should be taken to ensure that no opportunity is given to anyone to express any extreme view, including in debates in order to influence the viewers.

9. Debates which are provocative and inflammatory and likely to create tension in the public should be avoided.”

The news channel has also violated the following principles of the code of conduct of NBSA:

- Broadcasters shall, in particular, ensure that they do not select for the purpose of either promoting or hindering either side of any controversial public issue. News shall not be selected or designed to promote any particular belief, opinion or desires of any interest group.
- **Impartiality and objectivity in reporting**
- **Ensuring neutrality**
- **Endangering national security**

Additionally, the News Channel has violated the following **Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage**:

2. Impartiality, Neutrality & Fairness

2.1 For balanced reportage, broadcasters should remain neutral and ensure that diverse views are covered in their reporting, especially on a controversial subject, without giving undue prominence to any particular view.

3. Law & Order, Crime & Violence

3.8 Broadcasters should not glamorize or in any way promote individuals, groups or organizations that employ or advocate the use of violence or engage in criminal / nefarious activity. Hooliganism, vandalism and all forms of delinquency should not be shown in favorable light.

9. Racial & Religious Harmony

9.2 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.

There is also a petition on change.org demanding strict action against communal news on various news channels, which has garnered more than 85,000 signatures.

It is thus prayed that the NBSA take cognizance of these instances and it is also prayed that the NBSA:

1. Direct Aaj Tak to remove the programme titled “देश के सबसे बड़े फैसले पर सबसे बड़ी बहस अयोध्या से Rohit Sardana के साथ” from their website, from their YouTube Channel and any other links
2. Direct Aaj Tak to remove the said Tweet from Aaj Tak’s Twitter account and from any other Twitter account from which it may have been posted.

3. Direct Aaj Tak to issue a public apology on its channel as well as through its Twitter account for posting such hateful content and for hurting the sentiments of certain communities.
4. Direct Aaj Tak to refrain from broadcasting or posting any such content which would contravene the tenets of our constitution which promotes harmony, dialogue and fraternity between all sections of Indians.
5. Direct Aaj Tak to refrain from broadcasting or posting, in the future, any such content which would violate the guidelines issued by the NBSA in its advisory dated October 16 and any other advisory applicable thereto.
6. Direct Aaj Tak to provide Proportionate Monetary Compensation to be awarded to a Citizen's Group like CJP battling the vicious politics of hatred.
7. Take any other punitive action that the Authority deems fit.

Declaration is made to the effect:

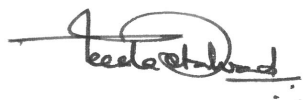
- that the facts stated in the complaint are true and correct to the best of the our knowledge and belief ;
- that we have placed all relevant facts before the Authority and have not concealed any material facts ;
- that no proceedings are pending in any Court of law or other Tribunal or Statutory Authority in respect of the subject matter complained of before the Authority ; and
- that we shall inform the Authority forthwith if during the pendency of the inquiry before the Authority the matter alleged in the complaint becomes the subject matter of any proceedings in a Court of law or other Tribunal or Statutory Authority.

Sir we urge appropriate action from NBSA.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anil Dharker'.

Anil Dharker, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teesta Setalvad'.

Teesta Setalvad, Secretary