



June 4, 2021

To,

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Subject: Complaint against communal content and misinformed reportage of alleged vaccine wastage incident

This is in reference to your show aired on May 30, 2021 called कट्टरपंथियों से सीधे सवाल करने वाला बहुत बड़ा खुलासा | देश में कौन कर रहा है Vaccine वाला जिहाद ? (Fanatics to be questioned on this big revelation. Who is involved in “Vaccine jihad” in the country?).

The video link of the show can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ZeeHindustan/videos/489244349072970/>

The clip of the show downloaded by Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), Mumbai, on June 4, 2021, is marked and annexed hereto as Annexure A.

The show is about a breaking news story about ANM (auxiliary nurse midwife) called Niha Khan from Jamalpur Primary Health Centre in Aligarh, UP was booked for allegedly disposing 29 syringes filled with COVID-19 vaccine without administrating them to the beneficiaries. In the show, there is a video being shown repeatedly, where it can be seen that a woman in a PPE kit inserts the syringe into the man’s arms but does not administer it and disposes it.

If you are not already of this, we would like to bring to your notice that this video has been fact checked by a news portal and fact checker called Alt News. They have tracked the video all the way to Ecuador where an Ecuadorian national tweeted the video on April 25 and the Ministry of Health of Ecuador even gave a press release in the matter accepting that the said incident in the video took place at a vaccination centre in Mucho Lote in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

The Alt News fact check report can be read here: <https://www.altnews.in/zee-hindustan-links-video-from-ecuador-to-nurse-booked-in-up-for-throwing-vaccine-filled-syringes/>

Hence, it can be concluded, without a doubt, that the video showed by your channel in your news report is misplaced, misinformed and fake. Clearly, the channel has not verified the origins of the said video and blatantly used it as video proof of Niha Khan indulging in malpractices. While this is a serious case of misinformation, the show and your hosts did not stop at that.

Throughout the show, the following text has been repeatedly displayed to give the alleged incident a communal angle:

- Saazish ki sanak ya mazhabi junoon (*Conspiracy or religious fanaticism?*)
- Nurse ki toolkit me kitni jihadan? (*How many "jihadis" in Nurse's toolkit?*)
- Yogi ki UP me Vaccine Jihad (*Vaccine Jihad in Yogi's UP*)
- Kattarpanthiyo kab muh *kobloge* (*When will fanatics speak up?*)
- Vaccine jihad case me karyawahi (*Investigation on in Vaccine jihad case*)
- Vaccine wala jihad kattarpathiyo ab muh khologe? (*Vaccine Jihad. Will fanatics speak up now?*)
- Nurse niha khan chahti thi ki corona faile aur halaat bigde (*Nurse Niha Khan wanted Corona (virus) to spread and for situation to get worse*)

The correspondent questioned whether she did this on the bidding of some terrorist organization. The report in most parts relies upon the video and replays it multiple times throughout the show without verifying the source of the said video. The correspondent further says that the Anti-terrorist Squad should also enquire into this case and mentions the name of one Dr. Afreen who is believed to be involved in this incident. He compared the incident to one of a terrorist activity of a human bomb.

Throughout the show it has been reiterated that this is part of a bigger conspiracy against the country and its people and implications have been made time and again through the show that there could be involvement of some terrorist organization; all based on a video that was shot in Ecuador. The entire video and show is designed to stigmatise one community and ake them a potential target of hate and even violence. The impact is also to cause social unrest and division and disturb intra-community harmony and relations.

The hosts of the show also raise questions as to how many such people who came for inoculation were not vaccinated at all by Niha Khan, the insinuation being that there could be 100s of such people thus creating unnecessary panic among the people residing in that area as well as public at large. The host even went on to say that it is possible that there are other such Centres where such practices are taking place and people are unaware of this.

It will not be a conjecture to say that the viewers of this show and social media users who have seen this video will want to know that the name of the person vaccinating them and will raise a hue and cry if they turn out to be from the Muslim community. The communal angle plays out quite brazenly through the entire show. As bad or worse, the panic that was being created by the hosts could feed into the low awareness about the vaccine and the vaccine hesitancy in remote rural areas or even small towns. This act of creating unwarranted panic

among people based on misinformation is not only violative of people right to health but at large, is an act against public interest.

It is the job of news media to inform people of news around them, without bias and prejudices. While the news was that a nurse was suspended for allegedly wasting vaccines, your channel, in its show has gone several steps further to allege a communal conspiracy and terrorist nexus, while showing a misinformed and false video. If the real intention of your channel was to report on the information at their disposal, the whole communal angle would have been avoided. Repeatedly using terms like “vaccine jihad” and flashing it on the screen throughout the show in big fonts, shows the malafide intentions of your channel and the host and exposes the propaganda of spreading hatred and vilifying the Muslim community at large.

It is pertinent to make a mention of a similar incident on a much larger scales which communalised the pandemic in India when the Tablighi Jamaat was vilified and blamed for the “larger conspiracy” of spreading the virus in the country. What followed thereafter were series of incidents, many of which remain under reported, where people from the Muslim community were discriminated against and ostracized from the society they have always lived in. People refused to take deliveries from them, they refused to buy fruits and vegetables from Muslim vendors and many were harassed on the streets openly, all because of the concerted vilification of Tablighi Jamaat and the implication by the news media that the spread of the pandemic was due to that one congregation of a handful people.

We would also like to underscore here that the several Jamaat members who were mainly foreigners, have now either been granted bail due to lack of merit in the case or the cases against them insinuating that they were responsible for spreading the virus have been quashed by courts of law. The courts have also pointed out the role played by the media and the propaganda to show one particular community in a bad light.

All this happened only last year and this year seems to be a repeat of a similar narrative, only in a different guise and context but the intention remains malafide i.e., vilification of the Muslim community.

The Bombay High Court in Crl. Writ Petition No. 548 of 2020, while quashing FIRs against some Tablighi Jamaat members stated that the Jamaat members were made scapegoats by the government and the media followed suit. The court observed, *“There was big propaganda in print media and electronic media against the foreigners who had come to Markaz Delhi and an attempt was made to create a picture that these foreigners were responsible for spreading covid-19 virus in India. There was virtually persecution against these foreigners. A political Government tries to find the scapegoat when there is pandemic or calamity and the circumstances show that there is probability that these foreigners were chosen to make them scapegoats.”*

The show/reportage stands in violation of code of ethics and principles of self-regulation as laid out by the NBSA as also Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage. It further amounts to certain offences related to hate speech, misinformation and promoting enmity under the Indian Penal Code. As such, in view of the elaborate and detailed complaint made herein



above, we expect your channel to take responsibility of the grievances raised herein and act upon the same responsibly.

In view of this, it is in best interest, that you remove the above-mentioned content from the Facebook page and any other social media account of your channel and your own website and issue a public apology for the misinformed reportage of communal nature. In an event we do not receive a satisfactory response from you, we will be compelled to submit a complaint to the News Broadcasting Standards Authority.

You are also put on notice that failure on your part to satisfy the complainants with an apology on your news channel may result in legal consequences for your channel at the appropriate fora, at your risk to costs.

Yours sincerely,

Nandan Maluste, President

Teesta Setalvad, Secretary

Annexure A: Downloaded video by CJP dated 04.06.2021