



Date: February 21, 2022

To,

Kshipra Jatana
Group General Counsel, TV18 Broadcast Limited,
Express Trade Tower, Plot
No. 15 & 16, Sector 16A, Film City Noida,
Uttar Pradesh 201301
Email id: complaint@nw18.com

Subject: Complaint against the show "*toh hijab ke liye bam barsenge? / Danke ki chot par*" aired on February 15, 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is in reference to the above mentioned show "*toh hijab ke liye bam barsenge? / Danke ki chot par*" aired on February 15, 2022 on News18 India.

The link of the show is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Efv4shugtJE>

The entire show was based out of a false news with the intention of misinforming the viewers, spreading hatred and demeaning the muslim community. The host (Rima Prasad) began the show with communally polarizing questions : "*kya hijab ki ladayi bambazi par aa chuki hai? (the battle for the hijab has reached 'bomb-bursting' point), Toh ab hijab ke liye bam barsenge?"*" (so will we burst bombs for hijab?)

"danke ki chot par puch rahi hu kya bam barsayenge, shiksha mei shariyat layenge?" (I am asking openly, will you burst bombs, will you bring personal law over education?)

The host made the statements such as "*desh ke kayi hisso mei pradarshan kari itne ugr ho chuke hai, haalat itne kharab ho gye hai ki hijab pehen kar aane se mana karne par school mei pathtar bazi ki gayi, tod phod kiya gaya, dawa kiya bam bhi yahan phenke gaye"*- (in various parts across the country the protestors have been so violent that they pelted stones in the school and vandalized it, it is ascertained that bombs were hurled at the school) which gave a distorted view about the incident which took place in school at Murshidabad , West Bengal . The host falsely claimed that bombs

were hurled at the school in Murshidabad, wherein in reality there has been no such reported case of hurling of bombs.

The news of hurling of bombs has been fact checked by a news portal and fact checker called Alt News and found that it is not supported by ground reports and the statement of local administration. The report of the same can be read here:

<https://www.altnews.in/hijab-row-bjp-leaders-falsely-claim-bombs-hurled-at-murshidabad-school-during-protest/>

It was not just the fact done by Alt News that is pertinent but also news report from portals like The Print defy these false claims. The print spoke to an Assistant teacher at the school who was an eye witness and the news report states, "The police then resorted to lathi charges and fired tear gas shells as the crowd grew violent, says Mondal, adding that — contrary to some claims — there were no crude bombs hurled. The CCTV monitor that had recorded footage of the violence was, however, broken."

The report dated February 21, 2022 published by The Print may be read here:

<https://theprint.in/india/a-hijab-story-from-bengal-murshidabad-school-attacked-after-insisting-on-uniform-colours/839723/>

Such false news on national television which is accessible and within the reach of the huge number of people and has a huge societal influence leads to a negative impact and disturb the peace and tranquility by spreading hatred and result in communal violence.

The host further questioned "sawal ye hai ki hijab ke bahane shiksha mei shariat lane ki koshish kya ho rahi hai?" (question is will shariat law (muslim personal law) be brought into education?). Remarks such as these, especially those which allege a conspiracy are clearly aimed at not just giving a communal angle but also painting the entire Muslim community with the same brush. As the recent debate on the issue has shown, there are clear voices in the Muslim community who have also challenged the notion that the hijab/niqab/burqa is/are an "essential practice(s) of the Muslim faith."

The video also reveals that the host clearly did not want to listen to the leader of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) Mr. Badal when he said "Bengal mein hijab ko pehenne ka ya nahi pehenne ka aisa koi rules nahi hai " "ek school ka teacher, jo hijab pehenkar jar aha hai usko mana kyun kiya? Mein unko kehna chahta hun aapke channel ke madhyam se koi hijab pehe ke koi aatankwadi school mei jar ha hain?hijab pehenne mei problem kya hai samasya kya hai?" (There are no rules in West Bengal around

the hijab at all; why was a teacher wearing the hijab prevented from entering school? What is the problem with hijab anyway? Through your channel I want to ask your viewers why they view someone wearing the hijab as a terrorist?)

At this point, the host, clearly not interested in allowing different points of view to be aired, (this panelist had no major problems with the hijab), immediately moved towards Shehzad Poonawala from the BJP. This is when the TMC leader warned that if he is not given a fair chance to view his opinion he would walk away from the show the host replied saying "mujhe samajh aa gaya aapka stand" (I have understood your stand). This also appears to be clear evidence of the ill will of the host and how she wanted the show to be conveyed to the viewers.

The entire telecast appeared to be one-sided and partisan violating the basic principles of journalism and those laid down by the esteemed National Broadcasting Statutory Digital Authority. (NBDISA). The host appeared to be biased towards the panelist from BJP in the entire show. It was more of a kind that the host and the BJP spokesperson had teamed up against the other panelists who were at least individually making different their points. The host is expected and supposed to be a neutral person but in this show the biasness and favoritism from the side of host is clearly visible.

The show also flashed text statements like "*hijab ki ladayi bambazi par aay*" (the battle for the hijab has reached 'bomb-bursting' point), "*toh hijab ke liye bam barsenge*" (so we will burst bombs for hijab) in large fonts across the screen throughout the show (on the ticker). These, too, clearly showed the malafide intentions of the channel and the host and also exposes the propaganda of spreading hatred and vilifying the Muslim community, moreover equating the entire community with intemperance and terrorism, at large. This is even more problematic since the news of hurling of bombs is misinformed and fake which the news channel did not bother to verify at all. The question is does the news channel have its own staff at the spot when these bombs are being alleged to have been hurled? If not, then did the channel verify this information through any credible source? If the channel is running an entire show on the basis of this one "incident" then there should have been a confirmed report that this has taken place. The channel remains answerable to this.

There were various objectionable statements made in the show, which are listed as follows, along with the time stamps:

(Rima Prasad) "hijab ke liye bam barsayenge" (bombs will be hurled in favour of hijab) 0:32

(Rima Prasad) " shiksha mei shariyat layenge" (will shariat law (muslim personal law) be brought in education) 0:32

(Rima Prasad) " hijab pehenkar aane par mana karne par school mein pattharbazi ki gayi, tod phod kiya gya" (when entrance was denied in schools wearing hijab schools were vandalized and stones were pelted) 0:52

(Rima Prasad) "dawa kiya gya bam bhi phenke gaye" (.....bombs were also hurled) 0:56

(Rima Prasad) "hijab samarthakon ne sthaniya school mei jam kar tod phod kardi"(hijab supporters vandalized the school) 1:08

(Rima Prasad) " iske pehle Karnataka mein hijab samarthakon ne hungama machaya" (before this hijab supporters created a chaos in Karnataka) 1:13

(Shehzaad Poonawala BJP) "hijab brigade ke log" (people of hijab brigade) 8:52

(Rima Prasad) " school jo kahenge wahi karna hai" (whatever school says it has to be followed) 12:08

(Shehzad Poonawala BJP) "Vakeel Devadatt Kamat, Kapil Sibbal, P.V Srinivasan, jinka koi lena dena nahi is vishay se, isko bhadrane k liye court tak pahunch gye aur iss mamle ko uthane lage" (Advocate Devadatt Kamat, Kapil Sibbal, P.V Srinivasan, who has nothing to do with this topic has moved to the court to raise the issue with the intention of provocation) 14:10

(Shehzad Poonawala BJP) "hijab ke naam par dangayion ko khuli chhut di gyi". (in the name of hijab rioters are given open freedom) 25:42

Through the show, the host –and the channel --have reported the news maliciously to give the incident a communal angle. A media house has a duty to follow the Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards laid down by the News Broadcasting Digital & Standards Authority (NBDSA) which have been violated by your channel and it also amounts to offences relating to misinformation and promoting enmity under the Indian Penal Code.

The Violations of NBSA principles

Following are some of the codes of ethics and principles of self-regulation as laid out by the NBSA, violated by the News18:

SECTION – 1 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) Professional electronic journalists should accept and understand that they operate as trustees of public and should, therefore, make it their mission to seek the truth and to report it fairly with integrity and independence. Professional journalists should stand fully accountable for their actions.

- 3) News channels recognize that they have a special responsibility in the matter of adhering to high standards of journalism since they have the most potent influence on public opinion. The broad principles on which the news channels should function are, therefore, as stated hereinafter.

- 4) Broadcasters shall, in particular, ensure that they do not select news 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.

- 6) Broadcasters shall ensure a full and fair presentation of news as the same is the fundamental responsibility of each news channel. Realizing the importance of presenting all points of view in a democracy, the broadcasters should, therefore, take responsibility in ensuring that controversial subjects are fairly presented, with time being allotted fairly to each point of view. Besides, the selection of items of news shall also be governed by public interest and importance based on the significance of these items of news in a democracy.

SECTION – 2 PRINCIPLES OF SELF REGULATION

1. Impartiality and objectivity in reporting:

Accuracy is at the heart of the news television business. Viewers of 24 hour news channels expect speed, but it is the responsibility of TV news channels to keep accuracy, and balance, as precedence over speed. If despite this there are errors, channels should be transparent about them. Errors must be corrected promptly and clearly, whether in the use of pictures, a news report, a caption, a graphic or a script. Channels should also strive not to broadcast anything which is obviously defamatory or libelous. Truth will be a defense in all cases where a larger public interest is involved, and in even these cases, equal opportunities will be provided

for individuals involved to present their point of view. This also applies in cases where television channels report on those holding public office, though by virtue of doing so, no person can claim immunity from scrutiny from or criticism by news channels.

2. Ensuring neutrality:

TV News channels must provide for neutrality by offering equality for all affected parties, players and actors in any dispute or conflict to present their point of view. Though neutrality does not always come down to giving equal space to all sides (news channels shall strive to give main view points of the main parties) news channels must strive to ensure that allegations are not portrayed as fact and charges are not conveyed as an act of guilt.

9. Racial & Religious Harmony:

9.1 Racial and religious stereotyping should be avoided.

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.

3. Law & Order, Crime & Violence

3.3 Reports on crime should not amount to prejudging or pre-deciding a matter that is, or is likely to be, sub judice.

Violations of Indian Penal Code

Further, the inflammatory and unverified content of the show amounts to inciteful, hate speech which is a punishable offence under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC):

Sections 153A [promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony],

295A [deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs],

298 [uttering, words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of any person] and

505 (1) and (2) [publication or circulation of any statement, rumour or report causing public mischief and enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes].

The content of the show, with usage of words like hijab brigade,(term used for subdividing muslim women wearing scarf or covering their head) saazish,(conspiracy) shiksha mei shariyat,(personal law over education) dangayiyo (rioters) was downright offensive, aimed at ridiculing one particular community, amounting to hate speech and instigate communal violence.

In view of this, it is in best interest, that you remove the above-mentioned content from all social media accounts of your channel and your own website and issue a public apology for misleading and biased information and reporting and misinforming the general public or the audience in general.

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