



Date: May 29, 2023

To,
Times Now,
Grievance Officer,
Kirtima Maravoor
Email: legalnow@timesgroup.com

Subject: Complaint against “Rashtravad : मदरसों पर नकेल, नहीं चलेगा विदेशी फंडिंग का खेल ?” show aired on TimesNow Navbharat on May 22, 2023

Dear Madam,

We, at Citizens for Justice and Peace are writing to you about a show aired on Times Now Navbharat called “Rashtravad : मदरसों पर नकेल, नहीं चलेगा विदेशी फंडिंग का खेल ?” which aired on May 22, 2023 hosted by Rakesh Pandey. The show is based on a survey carried out by the UP government on Madrassas in the state and last year’s data which allegedly found that 8,841 madarssas were illegal and that the Government shall proceed against 4,000 madarssas in the state.

The video of the show can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF6aFvsZErw>

(Through time stamps we have extracted some objectionable portions of the show which are the subject of our complaint)

Some questions that were going to be discussed in the debate were displayed: *“UP me videshi funding wale madarsson par kya taala lagne wala hai?”; Madarsson par Yogi ka action to Maulana ko tension kyu ho rahi hai?”; Videshi funding par action, to kaum ko badnaam karne wali baat kyun aagai? Kya ye na maane ki ye bhadkane wali baat hai?”; “Avaidh madarsson par ghamasan, Bajrang Dal par bhaijaan kyun bhadak gaye, Kyun Maulvi sahab ko dikkat hogai?”* (Time Stamp: 9:30-9:57).

[Will the madrassa receiving international funding in UP be locked down?; If yogi is acting on madrassas why are maulanas worried? Action against International funding, where is the question of insulting the religion? Is this inciteful? Attack on illegal madrassas, why are Muslims angry at Bajrang Dal? Why are Maulvis hassled?]

But as the debate started and both sides started to answer, and one participant pointed out that the Government is not focusing on the quality of education in Government schools, the host shot him down. When the Islamic scholar tried to clarify how the funding is collected and sent to the madarssas clarifying that it *always* comes through a Government-scrutinised route, the host cut him short again, mid-sentence, not allowing him to speak. This overtly visible practice was clearly designed to promote a pre-decided even one-sided discourse, not allowing clarifications or responsible inputs to emerge.

Absence of Neutrality in Moderator: It is also worth noting the behaviour and tolerance of the debate moderator between and towards the people speaking for and against the topic. A debate moderator

should be handling a debate in an unbiased, neutral manner, but, here, the way the host let the persons supporting the channel's pre-decided 'agenda' speak vs the people who are making clarifications that pick holes in this, clearly reveals the ill-intention behind the entire debate.

It is also important to note the manner in which participants were attacking a particular community by saying ***“aap Atiq pe bhi maatam manate ho, aap dusre marte hain uspe maatam nahi manate, lekin Atiq marta hai to pura samaaj road pe khade hoke matam banane lagta hai”*** ((Time Stamp: 19:57- 20:09)

[You mourn the death Atiq but when others die you do not mourn their death. When atiq dies you come on the roads to protest]. The host completely ignored the point of someone being “accused” of doing something and being “convicted” of doing something and moved to the ideologically aligned participant.

“Dekhiye madarsse ke lie hum kehte hain aapko, apne deeni sikhsha leni hai, aap deeni sikhsha lijiye. Aap madarsse kyu khol rhe hain? Madarsse me kyun padhna? Aur aap jaake dekhiye Nepal border, Uttar Pradesh ke border me pichle das saal me takreeban 2,000 to 2,500 naye madarsse aagae hain aur sarkar ke lie bhot bada chinta ka vishay hai ki ye madarsse achanak kaise aa gaye” (Time Stamp:22:08- 22:26)

[You want to study in madrassas its fine. Why do you want to study in madrassas? And go and see the number of madrassas that have cropped up on the UP- Nepal border. Around 2,00-25,00 new madrassas are functioning and this is a matter of concern for the government]

“ye jo desh ki khaaskar seemavartti kshetron me kukkarmutton ki tarah ugg aae hain ye madarsse aur waha par jo aatankvadi aur jihadi sikhsha di ja rhi hai waha par bachon ka dimag kharab karke jihad ki taraf dhakel rhe hain” (Time Stamp: 22:41-22:53)

[In the border areas, madrassas have mushroomed and there the children are being imparted education on terrorism and they are brainwashing the children and they are being taught about jihad].

When asked to support these claims with any data, the speaker, Vinod Bansal (of VHP), did not provide any and when Haji Rangrez tried to intervene and ask from some proven data on this, the host ignored the same. In fact, the host even defended Bansal on this and said that Bansal is not talking about all but only some madrassas, however even the host could not provide solid data to support this claim.

Haji Rangrez made bold to ask the host and others to name at least one madrassa where children are being brainwashed into terror; however the host however shut him down and did not wish to further discuss on this. (Time Stamp: 24:27-24:37)

There was also a point where Haji Rangrez, one of the speakers agreed that if madrassas are illegal and have no documents for the international funding, action should be taken against them, however, the host did not pick that up or note it and continued with questioning the Muslim speakers on the show on why they had an issue if the government was looking at legality of madrassas.

The following text is repeatedly displayed throughout the debate which suggests that the intention of the channel was to spread stigma, even hatred against the Muslim community. This also amounts to creating a narrative that is anti-Muslim to add fuel to the existing, perpetuated animosity against a minority Indian community that has been widely prevalent, conspicuously due to reportage such as this example. There is the serious potentiality of such perpetrated and one-sided unsubstantiated discourse actually resulting in targeted violence. The channel must be aware that the “mainstream”, “commercial” media, which it is also a part of, has been responsible for disseminating such a stigma-driven for several years now.

The following tickers were being run throughout the show:

- Madarsson par Yogi ka action, Maulana ko tension?
[If Yogi is taking action against madrassas why is Maulana worried?] (Time stamp: 0:17)
- Aavaidh Madarson par Yogi ka Hunter, kise darr?
[Yogi taking action against illegal madrassas, who is scared?] (Time stamp: 0:23)
- Bajrang Dal par kyun bhadke Madni Bhaijaan?
[Why are muslims angered at Bajrang Dal?] Time stamp: (0:29)
- Ab nahi chalega Videshi funding ka khel?
[Now international funding will not be allowed?] (Time stamp: 00:42)
- Aatank ko paala, to madarsson par lagega taala?
[If terrorism is being taught, the madrassas will be shut down?] (time stamp: 0:50)

Clearly, the channel was trying to push this narrative of *the* madrassa or *all* *madrassas* being a/the centre of illegalities. The presentation of the debate, by repeatedly showing the students reading Namaaz at a madarssa. While the debate was branded to discuss the issue of illegal madrassas, the screen displayed arguments in favour of and against the madrassas.

The host is seen questioning someone from the Muslim community about the illegality of these madrassas. The question being, does he run any of these madrassas? How is he capable of answering these questions about illegal madrassas? The whole point of the debate thus becomes moot. Yet, the debate continues among people who are not concerned directly with the subject being discussed. Thus leading to a polarised debate. Moreover, the tickers being run throughout the show

At one point the host shows data of some people from Muslim community linked with terror outfits, who once studied in these madrassas (presumably). However, it is unclear what the channel aims to depict by showcasing this data since a person committing a crime would have studied somewhere at some point, be it a school or madrassa. The clear intention of the show was to draw a connection between madrassas and people involved in terror activities, to show that alleged terrorists study in madrassas, that is the perception the channel aims to create in people’s minds.

This is also clear in the ticker they were running ‘Aatank ko pala toh madarssso pe lagega tala’. ***Lashkar aur SIMI ke log pakde jate fir bhi ye kehte hai ki karyavahi nahi honi chahiye***
[People from Lashkar and SIMI are being caught, still these people are saying don’t do any inquiry] , the host said (Time stamp: 21:46- 21:51)



With your vast viewership, this prejudicial view has already reached large sections of the people through the TV channel and also through your social media platforms including YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. This persistent stigmatization and attack on the minority community to drive home the point that Muslims are always up to sinister activities is harmful to the social fabric of this country. If the channel truly cared about values of secularism and fraternity, it would abide by them. However, it is clear that in utter disregard of these constitutional values, the channel has brazenly forwarded its anti-minority narrative and gone full throttle in showing Muslim community in a bad light. Without questioning the legitimacy of the data that the channel must have accessed from the Madrassa survey, we are only raising concern over the manner in which or the approach chosen to deal with this data. Using provoking headlines and making the debates one sided, the channel has resorted to cheap tactics to spread communal tension and hatred with an aim to push propaganda is unbecoming of a news channel that should be adhering to the Fundamental principles of Self-Regulation and other guidelines issued by the National Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA). By resorting to such kind of reportage, the channel also has committed offences under the Indian Penal Code.

If the intention of the channel and the debate was to simply report on the government report and hold an intellectual discussion, the same would have been only fact based and the show would not have proceeded in such a biased manner.

Conclusion

Through the content of the show, the channel has acted in complete violation of the Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards issued by the NBDSA and few other guidelines pertaining to maintenance of religious harmony. 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 for 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 all social media accounts of your channel and your own website, and issue a public apology for the communal reportage. In an event we do not receive a satisfactory response from you, we will be compelled to submit a complaint to the NBDSA. 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, CJP President

Teesta Setalvad, CJP Secretary