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## Julian Assange loses PCC complaint against New Statesman

Posted on 24 January 2012 11:29

Review of unauthorised biography contained no breach of the code, regulator finds.



Happier times: Julian Assange photographed for the New Statesman in April 2010

Transparency campaigner Julian Assange has lost a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission over a book review in the *New Statesman*.

In a piece headlined "[Every Stone Unturned](#)", a review of the "unauthorised autobiography" of Assange published by Canongate, James Ball wrote:

[Andrew] O'Hagan's writing is at its best covering Assange's early life: a nomadic existence in rural Australia, replete with floppy disks hidden in beehives and nightly forays through secure servers. Yet even here, the strident note familiar from Assange's public pronouncements often vanishes, replaced with the mannerisms of a British aesthete. "It occurred to me on the steps of the court that I had travelled a very long way to see such snow," he muses after being granted bail on sexual assault charges in December. The language and tone are wholly uncharacteristic.

Assange believed that the reference here to "charges" was in breach of the PCC code. "I have not been charged with any offence and this statement therefore represents a significant and misleading inaccuracy. The facts are not hard to establish -- a matter of basic fact-checking -- and a correction should be printed with due prominence." He added that the article contributed to a "hostile media climate" and "a reduction in my ability to raise revenue for Wikileaks through loss of reputation".

The PCC disagreed, ruling:

It was not in dispute that the complainant had not been formally charged by Swedish authorities. As such, a claim that Swedish prosecutors had formally indicted the complainant with offences would clearly raise a breach of Clause 1 (i) of the Editors' Code. However, the articles under complaint had not made such a claim: rather they had alluded to "charges" more generally. In the view of the Commission, this conveyed to readers, accurately, that the complainant was being accused by Swedish prosecuting authorities of having committed the offences (and that prosecutors were seeking his extradition with a view to his potentially being tried for those offences).

The PCC wrote to the editor of the NS, Jason Cowley, to inform him that the complaint "raised no breach of the Code of Practice and did not require further investigation. That is why we have not contacted you."

In the interests of transparency and freedom of information, the New Statesman has uploaded the PCC judgement ([here](#)) and covering letter ([here](#)).

Tags: [Julian Assange](#)

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10 comments from readers

**Elizabeth**  
24 January 2012 at 11:59

Words don't mean what they mean when toadies sit in judgement on their friends? Who'd have thunk it?

Ian Hislop was quite right to stay away from the PCC.

**Gary Lord**  
24 January 2012 at 12:05

Assange is rightly aggrieved at former WikiLeaks staffer James Ball, who has since launched a career at The Guardian by attacking Assange and WikiLeaks relentlessly. This is part of a concerted attack by the UK Establishment. I have detailed much of it here:  
<http://jaraparilla.blogspot.com/2011/11/guardians-venetta-against-jullan.html>

**Thomas Devine**  
24 January 2012 at 14:09

Assange wanted to control what was said about him. He rejected transparency for himself. He'd delight in jamming all diplomacy shut (quiet talk requires privacy), but he finds himself too sacred to be exposed to public view. Some transparency.

**susi2**  
24 January 2012 at 20:18

Individuals are already transparent enough to the government! Its time people demand more transparency of an (elected) government and no longer confuse the right to privacy of an individual vs a government's obligation to transparency+its voters!

**susi2**  
24 January 2012 at 20:37

The PCC judgement almost sounds like an invitation for (further) inaccuracies! Lets point out that even the general public know the difference btw allegations (as usually made in tabloid newspapers on a weekly basis) and charges which come with the obligation of the prosecutor to hand over evidence to the defendent. Now just why the SW pros.is avoiding that step until JA is in SW pretrial confinement is sth that only the pros. can but WON'T answer (especially since they refuse to explain why an interrogation abroad -a routine action by BOTH Swedish and other European pros.- alleg.isn't possible in this case!

**susi2**  
24 January 2012 at 20:46

"As such, a claim that Swedish prosecutors had formally indicted the complainant with offences would clearly raise a breach of Clause 1 (f) of the Editors' Code"

Interesting because the "general public" would normally and RIGHTLY so-view charges as a formal indictment because thats EXACTLY what they are!

**Apostrophe**  
25 January 2012 at 00:13

This is disgraceful. Ball was incorrect in stating that Assange had been charged - a blatant untruth. And, more to the point, the very idea that he 'had' been charged is enough to convince the public, who unfortunately rely on people like Ball to tell them the truth, of Assange's supposed guilt. Anyone with half a brain can see that this PCC ruling is little more than an attempt by

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the establishment to protect its vile, white noise quislings. What more did one really expect? Vindication for Assange? Not in the British media. No way.

Elizabeth  
25 January 2012 at 00:28

It is interesting to see who sits on the PCC and play 6 Degrees of Joe Lieberman et al.

Tony  
25 January 2012 at 04:09

The PCC's analysis is rubbish. It is precisely the specifically unusual nature of JA's case which requires careful language... Oh what's the point replaying to fake left publications such as the guardian and the old statesman. As they say everyone is a socialist before the age of 30 and you have got old and establishment like Woodward and Joe Klien in the US.

Bob  
25 January 2012 at 16:50

Wonder what dear old J.Pilger thinks of this treatment of his (relatively)young hero? Or is he hiding behind one of the Assange-friendly commentators above? Will he withdraw all future collaboration with the Staggers?

- Left Foot Forward
- Liberal Conspiracy
- Liberal Democrat Voice
- Luke Akehurst
- Neil Clark
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