

PCC rejects accuracy, privacy and discrimination complaints from Muddassar Arani

The Press Complaints Commission has rejected complaints from the well-known lawyer, Muddassar Arani, against the Daily Express, the Sun, the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph. Ms Arani complained that the articles in question inaccurately reported (among other things) details about her legal aid earnings and misled readers by their reference to comments she had made at a conference, at which Anjem Choudary – an aide of exiled cleric Omar Bakri – had also spoken. A small number of inaccuracies were recognised by the newspapers and they offered suitable remedial action in response. However, the bulk of the various complaints under Clause 1 (Accuracy) did not raise a breach of the Code of Practice. In particular, the Commission was satisfied that the newspapers had accurately reported the amounts earned by the complainant. Moreover, “the newspapers had the right to inform the public that the complainant had attended and had spoken freely at [a conference], which had been characterised as “extremist” owing to [Anjem] Choudary’s comments.” The Commission did not agree that the articles implied that Ms Arani endorsed his views. Rather, they reported that she had spoken at the event and noted that various MPs had stated the view that her conduct was inappropriate.

Aside from the accuracy of the stories, the complainant said the articles were part of a sustained, negative campaign against her, which amounted to harassment and an invasion of her private life (in breach of Clauses 3 (Privacy) and 4 (Harassment) of the Code). Other solicitors, many of whom had also represented terror suspects had not, she said, been subjected to the same level of scrutiny. She suggested that the newspapers were discriminating against her because of her religious beliefs in breach of Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Code.

However, the Commission rejected all of these complaints. While it was true that the articles had referred briefly to the complainant’s background and lifestyle, “the nature of the information...was bland and inconsequential. None of the details was intrinsically private and the articles did not intrude unnecessarily into the complainant’s private life.”

And with regard to the complaint of harassment, the Commission made clear that “the Code does not seek to prohibit legitimate debate or campaigning journalism and it is not the case that publishing a number of articles about one issue or individual constitutes harassment under its terms.”

As for the complaint under Clause 12 (Discrimination), “the factual references to her as a Muslim were [not] in any way prejudicial or pejorative.” And as to whether it was *relevant* to refer to Ms Arani’s religion, the Commission noted that the complainant had become well-known for representing Islamic terror suspects and that her firm’s website was heavily orientated towards the Muslim community. In such circumstances, the references to her religious background were justifiable in these particular articles.

To see the ruling in full please click [here](#)

ENDS

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