



**Editors' Code of Practice Committees  
Public Consultation on revisions to the  
Editors' Code of Practice**

**Response by the Centre for Media  
Monitoring**

**May 2023**

**Editors' Code of Practice Committees Public Consultation on  
revisions to the Editors' Code of Practice**  
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## 1. Introduction

1. The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) was set up in 2018 by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Our aims are to:
  - Create an evidence base on how Islam and Muslims are reported in national print and broadcast media by monitoring online print & broadcast media daily.
  - Develop insights on potential areas of improvement through evidence-based analyses, reports, and guidelines.
  - Advocate change through constructive engagement with key stakeholders.
  - Empower Muslim communities to proactively engage with the media and help change the narrative.
  
- 1.1 To date CfMM has monitored over 200,000 articles and analysed almost 60,000 online print & broadcast clips using a methodology developed and approved by leading academics and experts in the field of corpus linguistics. CfMM's evidence base not only highlights inaccuracies, generalisations and misrepresentations of Muslims and Islam in the media but also makes recommendations, promotes good practice and increases religious literacy.
  
- 1.2 CfMM also produces evidence based reports, delivers "Conscious Journalism" training to newsrooms, Masterclasses to schools of journalism on "Reporting Islam & Muslims", and Media Skills Training to Community Organisations. We sit on various advisory boards, hold roundtable discussions with editors and journalists and 'Meet the Media' events between media executives and community organisations.
  
- 1.3 We have also made oral and written submissions to parliamentary inquiries (Public Committee's Review of the Online Safety Bill, Lords Select Committee Future of Journalism, APPG Religion in the Media, Home Affairs Committee on Hate Crime), fed into consultations (OFCOM, BBC, IMPRESS's Standards Code Review, Editor's Code of Practice) and fed into guidelines and editorial policies to improve the reporting of Muslims & Islam in the media. CfMM was instrumental in developing IPSO's guidance on the reporting of Muslims and Islam.
  
- 1.4 To date CfMM has secured 100s of corrections in broadsheet and tabloid publications and have had more wins at IPSO than any other organisation.
  
- 1.5 CfMM welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Editors' Code Practice Review. Our submission reflects insights drawn from significant experience in monitoring the media, engaging with the Editor's Code and with editorial policy makers, managing editors, editors and journalists on the reporting of Islam and Muslims. However, many of the insights are applicable for the reporting of other minority communities. Our submission will focus primarily on those areas of the Editors' Code of Practice that relate to our work, namely Accuracy and Discrimination.

## 2. Importance of Responsible Reporting

2.1 The media plays an integral role in our democracy, not only informing the public and reporting news, but also speaking truth to power and holding institutions and government accountable. We agree and uphold the principle that freedom of the press is an important cornerstone of our democracy.

2.2 Almost all the national mainstream press has agreed that they should abide by the highest professional standards and journalism ethics balancing freedom of expression – such as the right to inform, to be partisan, to challenge, shock, be satirical and to entertain – with the rights of the public, not only to the letter but also in spirit.<sup>1</sup>

2.3 However, in December 2019, the outgoing chair of IPSO, Sir Alan Moses, admitted that: “The portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the British press has been “the most difficult issue” facing the press watchdog in the past five years. He said: “I speak for myself, but I have a suspicion that [Muslims] are from time to time written about in a way that [newspapers] would simply not write about Jews or Roman Catholics.”<sup>2</sup>

2.4 CfMM’s first quarterly report (Oct-Dec 2018) on how the British media reports Islam & Muslims showed that:

- 59% of the coverage was negative.
- Over a third of all articles misrepresented or generalised about Muslims &/or Islam.
- Terrorism was the most recurring theme in the media relating to Muslims & Islam.<sup>3</sup>

Our subsequent analysis of coverage between Oct 2018- Sept 2019 showed similar findings.<sup>4</sup> Misrepresenting Muslims, misusing terminology or misinterpreting Islamic beliefs and practices are common occurrences in the media with almost one in ten articles analysed by CfMM falling under this category. This misrepresentation over time results in false narratives and right-wing tropes being mainstreamed. The majority of the misrepresentation is done through misleading or irrelevant headlines, the use of unreliable sources or assigning inaccurate attributes or beliefs to individuals or institutions which were libellous. In all cases, the standards of journalism fall short of what would be expected of the British media.

2.5 In our experience, the most problematic publications, in terms of misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims, are regulated by IPSO. We believe that the Editors’ Code should be revised to better deal with the biases, inaccuracies and discrimination faced by Muslims and other minority communities by the national print and online media.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.editorscode.org.uk/the\\_code.php](https://www.editorscode.org.uk/the_code.php)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/60d5bea6-1ff9-11ea-b8a1-584213ee7b2b>

<sup>3</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-quarterly-report-launched/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-report-british-medias-coverage-of-muslims-and-islam-2018-2020-launched/>

2.6 This is increasingly important given that Home Office figures show that almost half of religiously-motivated hate attacks in 2021-2022 were directed at Muslims.<sup>5</sup> The majority of Britons polled believe “the media” is to blame for the prejudice Muslims face in daily life in Britain.<sup>6</sup> In the week after Boris Johnson’s controversial Telegraph column in August 2018 which compared veiled Muslim women to “letterboxes” and “bank robbers”,<sup>7</sup> hate crime incidents rose by 375 per cent.<sup>8</sup> In the following weeks, 42% of street attacks referenced Boris Johnson or his words.

2.7 Claiming that the media has played no role in the growth in Islamophobia and increased hatred towards Muslims is no longer a tenable position given the wealth of academic evidence on the issue, and the lack of any evidence to the contrary:

- Research by the University of Cambridge concluded that mainstream media reporting about Muslims is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility toward Muslims in Britain.<sup>9</sup>
- Research by the University of Leicester suggested that “Politicians and media fuel hate crime in Britain.”<sup>10</sup>
- Findings of an Islamophobia Roundtable in Stockholm showing that the regular association of Islam and Muslims with crime and terror in the media and on the internet is vital to the spread of Islamophobic rhetoric.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MEND-Islamophobia-Poll-October-2018-1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/05/denmark-has-got-wrong-yes-burka-oppressive-ridiculous-still/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Tell%20MAMA%20Annual%20Report%202018%20-%20Normalising%20Hate.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/media-fuelling-rising-hostility-towards-muslims-in-britain>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2016/june/politicians-and-media-fuel-hate-crime-in-britain-2019-say-university-of-leicester-experts>

<sup>11</sup> [https://issuu.com/drchrisallen/docs/summary\\_roundtable\\_10\\_june\\_2014](https://issuu.com/drchrisallen/docs/summary_roundtable_10_june_2014)

### 3. Specific Recommendations for Changes to the Editors' Code:

3.1 The Appendix lists a number of examples of poor reporting, demonstrating that the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has failed to deter inaccurate and distorted reporting on Muslims and Islam in the media. It is not the case that all the examples are code breaches (though many are), yet taken together, they indicate a worrying trend in the way that Muslims are being reported. Potential reasons, other than the inadequacy of the Code (for which see below) include the lack of appropriate deterrents due to weak sanctions, the unwillingness and failure of IPSO to investigate standards breaches and the lack of independence of IPSO.

3.2 This section will however focus on constructive improvements that can be made to specific clauses in the Editors' Code to help create a more effective self-regulatory regime which can prevent inaccuracies such as those in the Appendix.

3.3 **Clause 1 Accuracy** – The Code states: “The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.”

3.3.1 Accuracy is the most important aspect of good journalism: a value shared unanimously by leading media platforms and facilitated by a number of established mechanisms. These include systems of factchecking as well as rigorous efforts to determine the reliability of sources.

3.3.2 Many of the complaints that have been made by CfMM on the basis of accuracy have been due to papers reporting hearsay without verification. This is likely due to the nature of the news cycle and the pressure that editors are under to publish quickly; however, in terms of reporting on incidents involving religious minorities, the impact of such reporting on these communities must be considered.

3.3.3 During our five years of monitoring, we have found that the most basic of journalistic practices are often breached or often fall short of the standards required when reporting on Islam or Muslims. Below are examples of inaccurate, misleading or distorted articles, images and headlines that newspapers have either corrected themselves or have been forced to correct, given the significance of the inaccuracies involved. Further examples can be found in Appendix 1.

- The Times, which has repeatedly maligned Muslims previously, including the infamous false ‘Christian Child Forced into Muslim Foster Care’ story, was again responsible for maligning the former director of a Muslim institution for wrongly suggesting that he held extremist views,<sup>12</sup> as well as falsely accusing Mr Abdullah Patel, who questioned the Conservative leadership candidates about Islamophobia during a televised BBC debate in June 2019, of ‘expressing views which excused or explained acts of terrorism’.<sup>13</sup>
- The Times was also forced to pay damages, to the former Guantanamo detainee, Moazzam Begg when it falsely linked him, and the advocacy

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.inpublishing.co.uk/articles/the-times-publishes-apology-to-sultan-choudhury-obe-15658>

<sup>13</sup> <https://pressgazette.co.uk/times-apologises-and-pays-libel-damages-to-imam-who-appeared-on-bbc-debate/>

organisation CAGE, to Kahairi Saadallah who stabbed three people to death in a park in Reading in 2020.<sup>14</sup>

- The Telegraph ran an “exclusive” story claiming ‘Half of UK’s imported Covid-19 infections are from Pakistan’. IPSO ruled that this breached Clause 1 Accuracy and the Telegraph had to amend its headline.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the story was republished by The Sun & the Mail Online who later corrected their headlines following complaints by CfMM.<sup>16</sup> The Sun has yet to remove the tweet relating to this article.
- The Mirror ran a headline during COVID 19 claiming ‘mass graves dug at London cemetery as Muslim community hit by pandemic’. At the time of writing the article there were only two pre-dug graves (known as ‘saff graves’ holding up to 10 bodies) – no mass graves. Furthermore, each body had a separate chamber and burial ceremony. Within this context, the headline referring to ‘mass graves’ (which are generally associated with war or genocidal crimes) was sensationalist and somewhat scare-mongering. Following a complaint by CfMM, The Mirror changed the headline to reflect a more accurate picture.<sup>17</sup>
- The Mail on Sunday was forced to pay damages to council worker, Waj Iqbal after falsely accusing him of acting as a ‘fixer’ for cab drivers in Rochdale who were committing crimes against young girls.<sup>18</sup>
- The Telegraph published false allegations against a Scout Group leader Ahammed Hussain. These were regurgitated by three other newspapers (The Times, The Express and Mail Online).<sup>19</sup> The Telegraph claimed it acted in ‘good faith’ when falsely maligning the Muslim scout leader with many anti-Muslim tropes currently in circulation alleging that he was: anti-Semitic, discriminatory against females, against ‘British values’, and a promoter of terrorism.

**3.4 Headlines:** The Editors’ Code book makes clear that there is some latitude for headlines in relation to accuracy but that they should not be considered in isolation. In addition, the Code already requires any claim in the headline to be supported by the text of the article. Although this is reasonable, it has its shortcomings and is often insufficient to meet the requirements of accuracy and of preventing the reader being misled as some of the examples below will demonstrate.

**3.4.1** Headlines are the selling point of any story or article. They shape a story and often change the way the reader thinks.<sup>20</sup> In the battle for clicks and revenue, accuracy sometimes gives way to sensationalism and headlines are purposely written to entice and even shock readers. Muslims and Islam are strong selling points for headline writers, and sometimes greater prominence is given to identifiably Muslim and/or Islamic terms, practices, symbols, or characteristics within the headline. The editor of

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.rllaw.co.uk/the-times-pays-30000-libel-damages-to-former-guantanamo-detainee-and-cage-and-issues-apology-for-linking-them-to-reading-suspected-terror-attack/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/corrections/daily-telegraph-forced-to-correct-headline-after-cfmm-complaint-to-ipso/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/corrections/sun-corrects-covid-pakistan-story-but-keeps-tweet-up/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/corrections/mirror-correct-headline-after-cfmm-complaint/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/jan/30/council-official-wrongly-accused-over-grooming-ring-gets-damages>

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1231561702665269248>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/science/aria-konnikova/headlines-change-way-think>

the Daily Express Gary Jones admitted as much when he described the front pages and headlines of the Express (before his editorship) as ‘anti-immigrant’ and ‘Islamophobic.’<sup>21</sup>

3.4.2 Social media also plays an increasingly important role in the consumption of news.<sup>22</sup> The fact that 60 per cent of readers will share an article without reading beyond the headline arguably makes it more than a summary.<sup>23</sup> Uncontextualized and misleading headlines are often shared without the rest of the article by nefarious groups or individuals to promote anti-Muslim agendas. They are also often seen in passing in supermarkets, or on forecourts by people who will not go on to read the whole article but will remember the headlines. This means headline writers have an extra responsibility to be accurate.

3.4.3 Below are a few examples of inaccurate & misleading headlines:

- A headline in The Mail Online about how two Muslim women were attacked and stabbed in an attack near the Eiffel Tower is very misleading and a good example of how headlines are often structured and worded to make the identity of the victim and the perpetrator ambiguous, especially when it comes to Muslim victims. The Mail Online headline reads: ‘Two women charged with ‘wilful gang violence’ aggravated by racism following Muslim stabbings by Eiffel Tower.’<sup>24</sup> By referring to the attack as ‘Muslim Stabbings’, the reader is misled to think that the attack was perpetrated by Muslims, especially in the absence of identifying the perpetrators in the headline. A revised headline which highlighted that ‘TWO French women face more than 10 years in jail for repeatedly stabbing two Muslim cousins...’ is far more accurate.
- The Express.co.uk headlined a news piece with the words ‘Islamic Torture’ in a story about celebrities boycotting hotels owned by the Sultan of Brunei after the Kingdom introduced new penal codes by the Kingdom of Brunei aimed at ‘persevering traditional values and family lineage.’ Torture is not only prohibited in Islam but affixing the term Muslim or Islamic to any concept serves to criminalise an entire faith and faith community, apart from it being misleading in this example. After a complaint from CfMM this headline was amended.<sup>25</sup>
- Similarly, The Mail Online referenced an ‘Islamic ceremony’ in a headline about Stefan Sylvester (the man who threw acid in Katie Pipers face) getting married to another woman whilst in jail.<sup>26</sup> The only reason ‘Islamic ceremony’ is used is to somehow suggest an Islamic marital contract is different to other marriage contracts but also to feed into the false trope of Shariah law being a parallel legal system in Britain when it isn’t.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/apr/28/gary-jones-on-taking-over-daily-express-it-was-antiimmigrant-i-couldnt-sleep>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36528256>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/06/16/six-in-10-of-you-will-share-this-linkwithout-reading-it-according-to-a-new-and-depressing-study/>

<sup>24</sup> ‘Two women charged with ‘wilful gang violence’ aggravated by racism following Muslim stabbings by Eiffel Tower.’

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1109825/brunei-hotels-boycott-george-clooney-sultan-of-brunei>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6281045/Single-mother-Katie-Pipers-acid-attacker-whisked-awayhotel-weekend-freedom.htm>



**RECOMMENDATION 1** Ensure headlines - when read alone - are not inaccurate or misleading and are substantiated by the article.

**RECOMMENDATION 2** Avoid the religious identity of an individual or group in a headline unless it is genuinely relevant to the issue being reported.

**RECOMMENDATION 3** Avoid repeating speculative, false or offensive claims by anti-Muslim agitators in a headline, especially if they are disputed. This could be done through the use of appropriate caveats, identifying the source or making clear that it is conjecture and not fact. If not, it should not appear in the headline or copy.

**3.5 Imagery:** The use of an image to sell or promote a story is well established in newsrooms and other sectors, such as advertising, which sell products. The more dramatic the image, the more space it is generally afforded on a page or as the lead picture on a website. Images can be justified, no matter how gruesome or dramatic, as long as they relay the actuality of a particular event or situation. Many news stories, opinion pieces, features and other types of articles do not always have an image captured in real time of a single event. In the absence of this, often stories are illustrated by more generic images of the subject or location being covered.

**3.5.1** The use of generic images in particular to illustrate sensitive and evocative subjects has been described as a ‘misleading practice that contributes to the public/audience mistrust of the media.’<sup>27</sup> It can also serve to highlight the prejudices of a particular publication towards a subject. In the case of Muslims and/or Islam, both of these observations have some truth to them. Whilst the use of images relevant to the story often portray Muslim characters or symbols in an unflattering light, the use of generic images and particularly the fully veiled Muslim woman to illustrate negative stories is a troubling feature.

**3.5.2** Whilst most images can be justified within a story, there are others which are less clear in their link to the story, especially when given undue prominence.

- A story in the Mail Online about a police officer being seriously injured when she was thrown from her horse during a Black Lives Matter protest is a good example. The article is accompanied by an image and video of a Muslim man sitting on the floor praying with other men. The image bears no relevance to the story being reported, yet it is the only image which accompanies the story somehow linking the protest and the injured police officer to these men.
- The link between Muslims and terrorism is a major focus of news stories, and despite the growing number of white supremacist or neo-Nazi terrorists, images are still predominantly made up of Muslim actors. In one article about a suspected neo-Nazi terrorist ‘Scots man’ who proclaimed, ‘all Muslims must

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2013/use-of-generic-photos-to-illustrate-news-stories-can-be-dangerous/>

die', The Sun's copy had an unrelated video of Salman Abedi the Manchester Arena terrorist and his brother.<sup>28</sup>

- The Times ran a story: 'Terrorists fool prison staff into believing they have changed.'<sup>29</sup> The accompanying image is that of a Muslim man praying - linking a normative ritual practiced by millions of Muslims at least five times a day globally to terrorism. Following a complaint by CfMM, a more generic image of a prison was used immediately not leading the reader to associate terrorism with Muslims.

3.5.3 This is not a unique problem in reporting on Muslims and/or Islam. Other minorities are also subject to undue prominence in images. One recent example of this was a story in The Times showing that 93.6% of cocaine users in Europe were white, yet the image was of a group of black men.

3.5.4 **Niqab & Burqa:** Images of women wearing the niqab and burqa are not only used disproportionately to the number of women who actually wear these full-face coverings, but they are also used in stories about oppression or a threat to western values. Estimates in several European countries found that Muslim women who wear the Burka and Niqab range between a minimum of 0.003% and a maximum of 0.01% of the Muslim population, quite an insignificant amount statistically.<sup>30</sup>

- Following The Times' inaccurate story about 'Christian child forced into Muslim foster care'<sup>31</sup>, The Metro and Mail Online also used a stock image of a family in Dubai which had been tampered with digitally to add a niqab to the featured woman's face.<sup>32</sup>

3.5.5 **Stories relating to the rights, or lack of rights, for Muslim women are often linked to Islam even when the issue being discussed goes beyond the religion or has nothing to do with it at all.** The same goes for images and is clearly exemplified on stories around Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or 'forced marriages.' Despite both being cultural practices amongst communities in different parts of the world and despite there being no basis for FGM or forced marriage in Islam, images of Muslim women are routinely used to try and link the practices to Islam. as can be seen in the Daily Mail Online article below:

- A story in the Mail Online about Sudan moving to ban FGM is illustrated with an image of a woman in a niqab.<sup>33</sup>

3.5.6 **COVID 19:** From the outbreak of the pandemic throughout the lockdown period and the easing of lockdown restrictions in the UK, CfMM found several instances of images of visible Muslims being used in UK coverage of the pandemic, many of which were seemingly irrelevant to the context of the reporting. We found a problematic trend towards attributing blame for the spreading of the virus to minorities, particularly those of East Asian appearance and Muslims. This not only further perpetuated the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media more generally, but also

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/6435374/scots-man-muslims-die-claim-accused-terror-acts/>

<sup>29</sup>

<sup>30</sup> <https://inews.co.uk/opinion/comment/what-is-the-burqa-and-how-many-muslim-women-actually-wearit-184927>

<sup>31</sup> <https://inews.co.uk/opinion/comment/what-is-the-burqa-and-how-many-muslim-women-actually-wearit-184927>

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/mail-online-metro\\_uk\\_59aabb63e4b0dfaafcf0b8b1](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/mail-online-metro_uk_59aabb63e4b0dfaafcf0b8b1)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-8291193/Women-hail-victory-Sudan-moves-ban-genital-cutting.html>

fed into the far-right trend of blaming Muslims explicitly for the spread of the pandemic, fuelling hate crime, prejudice and discrimination. Not all images were offensive or biased given that Muslims are part of the UK population. However, when they appear and become the focus of negative stories, then they become problematic – a trend we found during the pandemic.

3.5.7 From late June until early August, cities in the north of England imposed local lockdowns to curb increasing rates of infection. Leicester was the first (30 June), followed by Blackburn & Darwen and Oldham two weeks later. Greater Manchester imposed restrictions on gatherings in private homes the day before Eid ul-Adha on 31 July. Although these areas do have comparatively large BAME populations,<sup>34 35 36</sup> Muslims and Asians are still a minority, and yet a large number of related news stories feature visibly Muslim people, most especially women in hijab. While these images taken individually are not problematic, when viewed holistically, they may contribute to the narrative linking Muslims with COVID19. Below are a few examples:

- The Sun ran an almost full-page image portraying hundreds of people in airport cues in a story about the lifting of travel restrictions causing havoc. For no apparent reason, there is a circled, zoomed in close-up circled image of a Muslim woman wearing a head covering and traditional clothes raising the question why such prominence is given to a Muslim woman in this story.
- An article in The Times focusing on irresponsible people (namely about “partygoers” in Oldham) putting their fellow residents at risk, the image is of a woman in a hijab – not representative of the “partygoers” being discussed.<sup>37</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION 4** Generic images of Muslims which risk reinforcing stereotypes of Muslims and/or Islam should be avoided.

**RECOMMENDATION 5** Avoid using an image of Muslim women in hijab/burqa to illustrate oppression of women, unless specifically relevant to the story.

3.6 **Breaking News:** As the Editors’ Codebook notes, “when you are writing the ‘first draft of history’ it can be difficult to see clearly through the fog of breaking news. But that is no excuse for reckless or sloppy journalism.”<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, when it comes to reporting breaking news stories, there are often a number of unverifiable claims that are reported by mainstream media organisations as each aim to be the first to “break” a specific story, sometimes without the appropriate due diligence. Such inaccurate stories, when breaking, are often shared most widely, in particular when they fit a pre-set narrative on the subject. Reporting on the issue of terrorism demands even more regard for accuracy given the sensitivity, speed and changing nature of the breaking news story.

3.6.1 Many times, hearsay is published as fact, and then corrected later, however this has serious implications in the case of misreporting of violent attacks. In particular, CfMM

<sup>34</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography\\_of\\_Leicester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_Leicester)

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.oldhamccg.nhs.uk/About-Us/Our-Population#:~:text=Our%20Population,-Population%20statistics&text=Oldham%20is%20predominantly%20white%20\(77.5,%25\)%20as%20the%20largest%20minorities.&text=Oldham's%20populatio n%20currently%20stands%20at,Mid%20Year%20Estimates%202015](http://www.oldhamccg.nhs.uk/About-Us/Our-Population#:~:text=Our%20Population,-Population%20statistics&text=Oldham%20is%20predominantly%20white%20(77.5,%25)%20as%20the%20largest%20minorities.&text=Oldham's%20populatio n%20currently%20stands%20at,Mid%20Year%20Estimates%202015).

<sup>36</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackburn\\_with\\_Darwen#Demographics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackburn_with_Darwen#Demographics)

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tighter-lockdown-feared-in-manchester-area-as-rule-breaches-riseq7dxdwl6j>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.editorscode.org.uk/downloads/codebook/codebook-clause-1.pdf>

has noted several cases of attackers reportedly screaming ‘Allahu Akbar’ (God is great) during attacks, purely on the basis of eyewitness accounts and with no verification from authorities. This ‘after the fact’ correcting is damaging, especially where it concerns phrases and actions that are in daily use by Muslims. The real-world impact of this carelessness is that normal Islamic practices are demonised, and by extension, the people who practice them also come under suspicion.

3.6.2 Our report on **“How the British Media Reports Terrorism”**<sup>39</sup> contains numerous examples of inaccuracies and a dependency on unreliable sources causing serious harm both to British Muslims as well as the general public’s understanding of Islam.

- The Mirror & the Daily Star ran a headline claiming a man had shouted ‘Allahu Akbar’ and threatened to blow himself up at an incident at the Eiffel Tower. The source was a journalist who worked for a French right-wing magazine. The police called it fake news and after complaints from CfMM both papers changed their headlines.<sup>40</sup>
- “SUPERMARKET TERROR: Gunman "screaming Allahu Akbar" opens fire in Spanish supermarket while "carrying bag filled with petrol and gunpowder" (The Sun).<sup>41</sup> This was later retracted after Spanish police and a spokesman for the supermarket denied that the gunman had shouted “Allahu-Akbar”, with a police officer stating that the suspect had spoken something in the Basque language of “Euraska.” What is noticeable is how when the alleged shouting of Allahu Akbar was dropped the attack was downgraded by The Sun from “TERROR” to “HORROR”.<sup>42</sup> Similar false stories appeared in The Mail and Express.
- “‘I FEEL BAD’ What ‘student’ gunman who stormed Quebec Mosque screaming ‘Allahu Akbar’ told cops as he gave himself up after killing six” (The Sun).<sup>43</sup> UK tabloids were quick to jump to conclusions when this attack was designated a “terrorist” incident. They relied on uncorroborated witness testimonies in a live story, inaccurately stating in their headlines that the attacker shouted “Allahu Akbar” and that this was an “Islamist phrase” according to The Sun. After CfMM complained The Sun apologised and removed both false references to the story. The express.co.uk<sup>44</sup> and Mail Online<sup>45</sup> did subsequently remove references to “Allahu Akbar” but offered no acknowledgement of the initial error. The left leaning Daily Mirror also followed the lead of its right leaning counterparts in publishing the wrong details but has not removed or corrected the article to date.
- The “Thousand Oaks” attack saw the shooting of twelve people in California in November 2018. The ensuing coverage and subsequent reception by the public demonstrate the cost of publicising inaccuracies in a breaking news situation; both in terms of audience reach as well as the propaganda value this creates for prominent anti-Muslim figures. The Daily Express chose to

<sup>39</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CfMM-How-British-Media-Reports-Terrorism-ONLINE.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1343923047884091400/photo/1> & <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/worldnews/eiffel-tower-evacuated-over-bomb-22728746>

<sup>41</sup> <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/841185778478796801>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2591800/gunman-opens-fire-in-spanishsupermarket-while-carrying-bag-filled-with-petrol-and-gunpowder/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/826483372750946304/photo/1>

<sup>44</sup> <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/826484181874176001/photo/11>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/uk-newspaper-reports-about-attack-on-mosque-in-quebec-appalling-says-muslim-council-assistant-secretary-general>

report that the shooter was a “Middle Eastern man”, even though he was actually a US Marine Corps veteran named Ian Long.<sup>46</sup> This misreporting was shared millions of times on social media and gave ammunition to the anti-Muslim agitators and Islamophobes to use this description of the assailant to incite hate towards Muslims.<sup>47, 48, 49</sup>

3.6.3 There are two important requirements in such situations: firstly, inaccuracies must be fully corrected; and secondly, the inaccuracies must be acknowledged with equal prominence rather than merely deleted or with a small note at the very foot of the amended article – otherwise, the reader will have been misled. The importance of social media should not be understated, for breaking news stories in particular. With thousands of shares of inaccurate news, it is imperative that swift steps are taken to ensure appropriate remedy – the deletion of a tweet, for example, would ensure that the “re-tweets” and “quotes” are no longer visible to the audience. There is also the need for the correction to be tweeted in the same way as the original error.

Currently, neither of these requirements are adhered to within parts of the Press:

- Correction of inaccuracies: For example, often in a breaking news story, a tweet may be published containing what later turns out to be false information. Those tweets are often not deleted.
- Acknowledgement of inaccuracies: News organisations use different methods in reporting breaking news. Some of them update the story on a rolling basis without acknowledging changes. Others publish the original story more accurately as a fresh page (but retain the false story at the original link by claiming that it was “accurate” at the time of publication) and often do not even acknowledge the initial inaccuracy.

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<sup>46</sup> Jordan, F. (2018), Officers were advised that the suspect was a Middle Eastern man in his early 20s wearing all black clothing and with a beard, 08-Nov-2018 (Before and After), Article is No longer accessible (Accessed 08-Nov-2018)

<sup>47</sup> Geller, P. (2018), Twitter. [online] @PamelaGeller, Twitter.com. No Longer Available [Accessed 8 Nov. 2018]

<sup>48</sup> <https://twitter.com/prisonplanetstatus/1060592893528809473>

<sup>49</sup> Loomer, L. (2018), Twitter. [online] @LauraLoomer Twitter.com. 6:26 AM 08 Nov 2018 No Longer Available [Accessed 8 Nov. 2018]

3.6.4 The Code Committee should therefore consider the following additions for breaking news stories, although noting the recommendations are applicable more widely:

**RECOMMENDATION 6** Any material changes to an online news story should be referenced at the top of an article e.g. We previously reported XXX. This was incorrect. It is actually YYY. The requirement for such a clarification for inaccuracies on breaking news stories may provide additional incentive for appropriate due diligence prior to sharing uncorroborated claims.

**RECOMMENDATION 7** Uncorroborated witness statements should be avoided until confirmed.

**RECOMMENDATION 8** A caveat should be included in witness statements making it clear to the reader or viewer that this is the view of one or several witnesses, in order to distinguish between eyewitness accounts and accounts from what may be more reliable sources or information which is easier to verify.

**RECOMMENDATION 9** All false stories should be removed with an acknowledgement of the removal. This includes stories published on social media.

3.6.5 In relation to the publication of corrections on social media, consider the following false headlines shared by the far right:

- "Gunman screaming 'Allahu Akbar' opens fire in Spanish supermarket" (Daily Mail), shared by Tommy Robinson<sup>50</sup>
- "Enclaves of Islam in Britain see UK as 75% Muslim" (Sunday Times) shared by the English Defence League<sup>51</sup> and Britain First.<sup>52</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION 10** Corrections and apologies for false reporting, even if not intentional, should be published on all media on which they were initially reported, including social media i.e., corrections should also be published on Twitter if the original story was published on Twitter.

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<sup>50</sup> <https://twitter.com/TRobinsonNewEra/status/819256663198801925>

<sup>51</sup> <https://twitter.com/EDLOfficialpage/status/805332303065006080>

<sup>52</sup> <https://twitter.com/BritainFirst/status/805804353021886464>

3.7. **Significance:** Currently under the Code, only a “**significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence...**”. The phrase ‘significant inaccuracy’ is again open to interpretation. The determination as to what constitutes significant is very subjective, and it is unclear why there should be any objection to the request that any inaccuracy should be corrected when pointed out. An editor may consider some complaints about inaccuracies to be minor, whereas for many in the Muslim community they are perceived as very misleading falsehoods.

3.7.1. If it is significant enough to have been complained about then it should be corrected. In such cases, where a member of a minority community who may be subject to discrimination is the complainant, we suggest the decision as to the ‘significance’ of the inaccuracy be determined by the complainant. This is simply because the editor in such cases will not likely have first-hand experience of the issue and may unintentionally downplay the significance due to this. Three examples that can illustrate how subjective the term “significant” is, are:

- The inaccurate headline “‘WHIRWIND OF HATE’ Jewish students attacked by pro-Muslim Palestine baying mob ON UK SOIL” (Daily Express).<sup>53</sup> There was no justification for “pro-Muslim” in this headline and there is little doubt as to its inaccuracy. However, IPSO ruled that this inaccuracy did not give a “significantly misleading impression of events”. As a result, there was no correction.
- The inaccurate headline “Schoolboy put on anti-terrorist scheme for saying Muslims shouldn’t be allowed to wear burka” (Daily Express).<sup>54</sup> One of the inaccuracies about this article was the conflation of burka with niqab (the term actually used by the police) yet once again IPSO ruled “the discrepancy between a niqab and a burka was not significant”.
- The inaccurate claim about a mosque by Ms Katie Hopkins that “A British Imam was hosted by a mosque in Orlando, just days before the attack, saying that death is the answer to the problem of homosexuality, facilitating the spread of hate” (Daily Mail).<sup>55</sup> As has been accepted by all parties, this mosque did not host this individual just days before the attack at the gay nightclub, nor did such a statement get made at the mosque. Yet again IPSO’s Committee did not “consider that the inaccuracy in relation to the date of the Imam’s visit to Orlando was significant: the timing of the speech at the mosque was not central to any of the arguments made in the article”.

3.7.2. In all three of these cases, the inaccuracy was clear, unambiguous, and significant in terms of their effect on the views of Muslims held by some readers. Whether or not it was deemed significant, given that concern has been raised on the issue, a correction does not seem to be hugely burdensome on the publications. This problem can be solved by a simple Code amendment.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/726468/UCL-Jewish-students-hide-pro-Palestine-protest-Hen-Mazzig>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/750347/Schoolboy-anti-terror-burka-Muslim-women-West-Yorkshire-Channel-Prevent>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3641118/KATIE-HOPKINS-won-t-Left-admit-inconvenient-truth-Islam-hates-love.html>

**Recommendation 11** All inaccuracies which have been the subject of complaint should be corrected. Any value judgement about “significance” can be dealt with under the need for equivalent prominence.

3.7.3. Furthermore, in the third example, the requirement of the inaccuracy to be “central” to the argument being made in the piece seems to be an additional criterion in the determination of “significant”, which was apparently determined by IPSO’s Complaints Committee. Whilst we believe there is no need for a new test of “centrality” in relation to determining significance (and significance is too high a threshold), if this is really a requirement of the Code, it should be made clear in the Code.

**Recommendation 12** Greater detail should be provided as to what constitutes “significant” in a complaint about inaccuracy.

**Recommendation 13** All inaccuracies in headlines should be considered “significant”. If it was considered important enough to be in a headline, then it is clearly significant and central.

3.8. **Due prominence:** The Code currently requires corrections to be (in clause 1, and adjudications elsewhere in the Code) to be made with “due prominence”. Over and above setting the record straight, the purpose of any correction must be to mitigate the impact of the original inaccuracy by ensuring, as far as is reasonably possible, that those who saw the initial inaccuracy, see the correction. With that in mind, equal or equivalent prominence seems to reflect that goal more accurately, in particular:

- Size of the correction: If there is an inaccuracy on a headline, the headline of the correction should be of equal size.
- Page of the correction: If the inaccuracy was on page 2, the correction should be on page 2.
- Author of the correction: If there is an inaccuracy within an individual journalist’s column, the correction should be within that column so their readers will see the correction (even if that is “further back” in the paper than where the corrections column is).
- Medium of the correction: As outlined above if the inaccuracy was published on social media, the correction should also be on social media; and
- Equal prominence of online corrections: Currently the IPSO requirement is that corrections be published only on the “home page” of a newspaper website and they are invariably to be found more than 40 screen scrolls down.<sup>56</sup>

**Recommendation 14** Any correction (or right to reply) should have equal prominence to the original inaccuracy. This should include the same prominence on the home page as the original story, and the equivalent publication on social media, with the placement in the same position as the original story for regular features such as columns.

<sup>56</sup> For example, consider how the correction to a piece by Trevor Kavanagh of the Sun was on the home page 66 pages down from the top (see [here](#))



3.9. **Comment:** The Code states: “**The Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.**” Opinion and comment pieces in certain publications have far too often given journalists and writers the liberty to propagate inaccurate, misleading, and blatantly racist views while hiding behind the cloak of opinion, humour, and satire. Racism is sometimes articulated in subtle and restrained ways but can be more explicit.

3.9.1. Establishment columnists like Rod Liddle have referred to Muslims as “savages”<sup>57</sup> and to ‘Islamic’ countries as “hellholes”.<sup>58</sup> On 26 June 2018, The Sun published a comment piece by Rob Liddle titled, ‘Trump is right to pull the US out of the hypocritical United Nations Human Rights Council – we should follow him,’ in which Liddle referred to the United Nations Human Rights Council as a convention of “Muslim nations with skeletons in their closets.”<sup>59</sup> After a complaint from CfMM, the reference to Muslim nations was removed, although the offensive reference to the ‘burqa’ remained.

3.9.2. Melanie Phillips, who often writes for The Times promotes a fear of an ideological takeover writing that “The Islamists, or jihadis, are intent upon snuffing out individual freedom and imposing a totalitarian regime of submission to a religious dogma which erodes and then replaces British and Western Values”.<sup>60</sup> She claims that churches are being replaced by mosques, that people can’t find a local butcher selling pork and are being intimidated by ‘local youths declaring ‘this is a Muslim area’.

3.9.3. Conspiratorial theories share the characteristic that a minority is threatening the majority status quo, without providing any evidence. A number of columnists have also echoed the sentiments of far-right white supremacists and their theories of white populations gradually being replaced by non-white migrants and Muslims. None of the above tropes can be challenged under current IPSO regulations on discrimination.

**Recommendation 15** Comment and opinion pieces which clearly disseminate inaccurate or misleading information should be treated in the same manner as news pieces under Clause 1 Accuracy.

<sup>57</sup> R. Liddle (2009), “Somali Savage Update”, (The Spectator) available online at: <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2009/11/somali-savages-update/>

<sup>58</sup> R. Liddle (2010), “After all the fuss, will anything actually change” (The Spectator) available online at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2010/05/after-all-the-fuss-will-anything-actually-change/>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6586602/trump-is-right-to-pull-the-us-out-of-the-hypocritical-united-nations-human-rights-council-we-should-follow-him/>

<sup>60</sup> M. Phillips (2009), “Clash of uncivilisations” (The Spectator) available online at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2009/10/the-clash-of-uncivilisations/>

3.10. **Clause 12 Discrimination - Discrimination against groups:** Currently, the Press is not allowed to discriminate against an individual but is allowed to do so against a group, organisation or institution, with one exception that will be covered in section 3.9.3 below. It is of course right and proper that the “Code attempts to balance the freedom of the individual with the right to freedom of expression”<sup>61</sup> and that any serious restrictions on freedom of expression should be very carefully thought through. However, it is quite extraordinary that under the Code as it currently stands, an article may breach the Public Order Act against incitement to racial or religious hatred but may still not be in breach of the Editors’ Code. Lord Leveson’s recommendation<sup>62</sup> that groups with protected characteristics should be covered by anti-discrimination provisions within the Code, should not be particularly controversial.

- In an article in The Times, Liddle wrote that extremists should blow themselves up in London’s Tower Hamlets, away “from where the rest of us live.”<sup>63</sup> The piece was widely criticised for inciting violence; with politicians from the borough labelling Liddle as “poisonous” and “racist”. Given that this piece fell under group discrimination, IPSO didn’t uphold the complaints submitted to it.
- Katie Hopkins was reported to, and questioned by, police for her Sun article referring to refugees as “cockroaches”. The original article, which drew widespread condemnation, was deleted by The Sun. Given that IPSO does not cover inciteful language, none of the complaints submitted were upheld. Matt Tee, from IPSO said “Migrants as such are not a group that can be discriminated against.”<sup>64</sup>
- On 5 August 2018, the MP Boris Johnson published this opinion piece in the Telegraph, drawing widespread criticism for his comments about the face veil (niqab or burqa) which many felt were Islamophobic and dog-whistle politics.<sup>65</sup> As a result of this opinion piece, hate crimes against Muslims, and mainly Muslim women, rose by 375%, with perpetrators echoing the language used by Johnson.<sup>66</sup>

**Recommendation 16** A new provision should be added to the Code prohibiting the incitement to hatred against any group with protected characteristics.

3.10.1. Given the purpose of the Code is to encourage the highest standards within the media, safeguards should exist that have lower thresholds than staying within the criminal law. A restriction on “levelling abuse at vulnerable people” would be preferable so as to prevent columnists using newspapers as a loudspeaker to abuse any vulnerable group without a public interest justification. To safeguard freedom of speech it should be noted that:

<sup>61</sup> Editors’ Code of Practice Committee, FAQs, Question 6

<sup>62</sup> Recommendation 38 from Lord Leveson’s report

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/rod-liddle-tower-hamlets-controversy-sunday-times-column-suicide-bombers-london-article-a8597346.html>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.mediafocus.org.uk/matt-tee>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/05/denmark-has-got-wrong-yes-burka-oppressive-ridiculous-still/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/boris-johnson-muslim-women-letterboxes-burqa-islamphobia-rise-a9088476.html>

- The term “levelling of abuse” is higher than the terms “prejudicial and pejorative language” already protecting individuals in clause 12. The term “levelling abuse” would obviously not cover situations where the abuse was not intentional (if such circumstances exist).
- Mere insult would still be permitted.
- It would not cover occasions where offence is taken by a group without an objective judgement being needed that abuse had been levelled.
- Guidance should be provided to clarify that critique of a faith (in terms of tenets, beliefs or practices) is materially different from abuse of its adherents.

**Recommendation 17** A new provision should be added to the Code prohibiting the levelling of abuse against any vulnerable group.

3.11. **Threshold for representative group complaints on discrimination:** Currently, a representative group appears to be allowed to make a complaint, for example on the inclusion of a protected characteristic when not genuinely relevant to a story in relation to an individual. However even this has not been respected by IPSO as in the case of the article by Rod Liddle about Emily Brothers.<sup>67</sup> Trans Media Watch were required to obtain the consent of Emily Brothers at every step which meant that they were her agents not a group withstanding to make a complaint themselves even when the breach was objectively apparent.

3.11.1. There is an additional very high threshold for a representative group making such complaints: “there is a substantial public interest in the Regulator considering the complaint from a representative group affected by the alleged breach”. It is unclear why such a high threshold of “substantial public interest” is required even when a significant breach of the Code has been established. It was not part of Lord Leveson’s recommendations.

3.11.2. On 4 December 2020, the Mail Online published the headline: ‘Schizophrenic Albanian woman who stabbed seven-year-old girl to death at random in front of her parents in park on Mother’s Day was brought to UK by people smugglers and had been in and out of institutions.’ We wrote to the Mail Online to complain on the basis of irrelevant mention of the perpetrator’s nationality; Albania is a majority Muslim country, and there is a history of anti-Albanian sentiment in neighbouring countries and in Europe. However, the Mail Online declined to make any changes to the headline or the article in question, because IPSO Clause 12 does not include nationality.

3.11.3. Consider the irrelevant use of the term Muslim or Islamic in the following examples from the Daily Mail:

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.ipso.co.uk/news-press-releases/press-releases/ipso-finds-against-the-sun-on-discriminatory-rod-liddle-column/>

- “‘Millionaire’ Muslim woman who claimed she was a single mum so she could live in public housing now wants LEGAL AID to appeal her sentence - as she leaves court clutching a Coach designer handbag”.<sup>68</sup>
- “Muslim taxi driver, 45, accused of sexually assaulting a female passenger ‘several times’ and stopping her from leaving the cab”.<sup>69</sup>
- “Both Muslim women showed no emotion as they were jailed - the mother for two-and-half years and her friend for four years - by a judge who criticised their ‘deliberate scapegoating’ of the boy.”<sup>70</sup>
- In an article about congresswoman Ilhan Omar and her claims that pro-Israel Jews have ‘allegiance to another country’,<sup>71</sup> her Muslim identity is mentioned as the source of her alleged anti-Semitism as opposed to her political persuasions.
- “Moment man wearing Islamic dress tells British Asian Tory campaigner to ‘go back to a white f\*\*\*ing country’”<sup>72</sup> How the attire of the alleged perpetrator is of any relevance or consequence is hard to fathom.

3.11.4. Sometimes the Muslim aspect is downplayed in a headline, especially when the victims or potential victims are Muslims themselves. An example from the York Press headlined ‘Anti-Islam Facebook video will put man behind bars, court hears’<sup>73</sup> inaccurately conflates anti-Islam with anti-Muslim, a common mistake made in many newspapers. By using the term ‘anti-Islam’, the headline suggests that the perpetrator’s posts were objecting to or disagreeing with the religion itself. Yet, his vitriol and threats were made against Muslim people as evidenced in one example where he states that Muslims ‘need to be wiped off the face of this ..... earth.’

3.11.5. Such reporting risks giving legitimacy to far-right groups who have actively targeted Muslims and Muslim communities both verbally and physically. An example in The Sun about the English Defence League (EDL) describes the organisation as being ‘strongly opposed to Islamism’ despite its well-known reputation for targeting Muslim individuals and communities as well as the proclamations of myths by some of its prominent members such as ‘Muslims are statistically on course to outnumber ‘Europeans’ this century.’<sup>74</sup>

3.11.6. Any breach of the code is in the public interest to identify and report, and it is unnecessary to prevent complaints being made by creating the additional subjective hurdle of “substantial”. In most cases, such as the examples above, the individual is in no position to make a complaint themselves and creating a hurdle for complaints to be made on their behalf exploits their vulnerability.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4206588/Millionaire-Muslim-woman-wants-legal-aid.html>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4115380/Muslim-taxi-driver-fronts-court-allegedly-assaulting-female-passenger-Leichhardt-Sydney.html>

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3703204/Mother-friend-jailed-SELLTOPPING-five-year-old-son-naked-cupboard-went-seaside-older-sisters.html> 11  
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<sup>71</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6770469/House-Democrats-plan-vote-condemn-anti-Semitism-Muslim-Rep-Ilhan-Omars-latest-slur.html>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7722231/Moment-man-tells-Tory-activist-white-f-ing-country.html>

<https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/18046748.anti-islam-facebook-video-will-put-man-behind-bars-court-hears/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48942411>

**Recommendation 18** A representative group should be allowed to make a complaint on the grounds of discrimination against an individual without requiring to prove there is substantial public interest in the complaint being considered, and without having to secure the explicit consent of the individual.

**Recommendation 19** Third party complaints should be accepted not only by "representative groups" but by any member of the public.

**Recommendation 20** Institutions and organisations should be included along with individuals under Clause 12 (e.g., schools, charities, places of worship, companies and other legal entities).

**Recommendation 21** Financial penalties should be imposed for the worst breaches/repeated breaches.

## Appendix 1 – Examples of poor reporting about Islam and Muslims

1. Since 2006 academics observed how global media coverage has represented Muslims as underdeveloped, illiterate, homeless and orchestrators of failed states. More recent examples have led one mainstream commentator to declare that reporting on Muslims has gone from dog-whistling to fear-mongering, to complete fabrication without consequences.<sup>75</sup> Almost one in four published online articles (23%) misrepresent an aspect of Muslim behaviour or belief with right leaning and religious publications being the most antagonistic.<sup>76</sup> It is recognised that not all of these examples can or perhaps even should be regulated against, but together they demonstrate a serious concern given the evidence demonstrated in section 2 above.
  
2. **Examples of outright misleading articles that newspapers have corrected or been forced to correct, given the significance of the inaccuracies involved, include:**
  - “1 in 5 Brit Muslims’ sympathy for jihadis” (The Sun)<sup>77</sup>
  - “Ramadan train driver in crash: Rail accident experts claimed his fast caused the rush-hour derailment that led to three days of disruption” (The Sun)<sup>78</sup>
  - “Isolated British Muslims are so cut off from the rest of society that they see the UK as 75 per cent Islamic, shock report reveals” (Mail on Sunday)<sup>79</sup>
  - “Islamist school can segregate boys and girls” (The Sunday Times)<sup>80</sup>
  - “Welcome to east London: Muslim gang slashes tyres of immigration-raid van before officers showered with eggs from high rise” (Mail on Sunday)<sup>81</sup>
  - “UK mosques fundraising for terror” (Daily Star Sunday)<sup>82</sup> (Starred items corrected following complaints by Executive Director of Centre for Media monitoring).
  
3. **Parts of the press often conflate Muslims with violence, danger and criminality.**
  - “Cut out and keep guide: Here’s what terrorists look like” (The Sun)<sup>83</sup>
  - “Muslim sex grooming” (The Times)<sup>84</sup>
  - “Mum-of-four butchered while caring for her young kids as cops probe Islamic honour killing lead” (Mail Online)<sup>85</sup>
  - “Imran Khan warns of mass violence if world ignores ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Kashmir” (Express)<sup>86</sup>
  - “Muslim husband who left his wife, 25, to slowly die over five days after being stabbed and gagged will serve his full sentence after losing his appeal - as mum says her daughter was a victim of an 'Islamic honour killing'.” (Mail Online)<sup>87</sup>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2018/09/the-times-muslim-christian-child-foster-care-tower-hamlets-court-ruling-ipso>

<sup>76</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CFMM-Quarterly-Report.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/ipso-sun-british-muslims-story-headline-significantly-misleading-a6953771.html>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.imediaethics.org/no-train-driver-didnt-crash-ramadan-fast-uk-sun-unpublishes/>

<sup>79</sup> <https://politicalscrapbook.net/2016/12/mail-retracts-claim-brit-muslims-think-75-of-uk-is-islamic-but-times-and-the-sun-still-stand-by-it/>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamist-school-can-segregate-boys-and-girls-zk8ztfqd0>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/sep/20/mail-on-sunday-apologises-for-muslim-gangs-attack-immigration-van-story>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/apr/04/daily-star-sunday-uk-mosques-ipso>

<sup>83</sup> <https://twitter.com/migdaad/status/809081720435834880?t=NCyXCDaLsYlc-uuQsWfMw&s=19> after discussion, the Sun decided to take no action and refused to even acknowledge the concern.

<sup>84</sup> <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/muslim-council-britain-writes-times-following-incendiary-headline/>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/mail-online-breached-editors-code-with-inaccurate-islamic-honour-killing-headline/>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1166486/Imran-khan-ethnic-cleansing-India-Modi-Independence-day>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8080791/Muslim-husband-Mohamed-Naddaf-left-wife-25-slowly-die-loses-appeal.html>

- “Imam beaten to death in sex grooming town” (The Times)<sup>88</sup>
- “‘WHO ARE THE BOMBERS?’ Ryanair boss sparks outrage by demanding extra anti-terror checks on Muslim men as ‘that’s where the threat is’” (The Sun)<sup>89</sup>
- “COP CALL OUT Scots Muslim who sparked terror scare in Highlands has house searched by cops again after anonymous tip-off” (The Sun)<sup>90</sup>
- “‘Allah will protect me:’ Chilling moment knifeman mutters to himself while lying in the back of a police wagon after Sydney rampage” (Mail Online – Daily mail Australia)<sup>91</sup>
- FLU FEARS Muslim parents refuse ‘non-halal’ children’s flu vaccine sparking outbreak fears” (The Sun)<sup>92</sup>

#### 4. Sensationalism and scaremongering about the apparent threat posed by Muslims is also widespread.

- “New £5 notes could be BANNED by religious groups as Bank CAN’T promise they’re Halal” (Daily Express)<sup>93</sup>
- “BBC puts Muslims before you” (Daily Star)<sup>94</sup>
- “Halal secret of Pizza Express” (The Sun)<sup>95</sup>
- “Muslim vote could decide 25 per cent of seats” (Daily Mail).<sup>96</sup>
- “The Government is proposing laws which risk making criticism of Islam a hate crime”<sup>97</sup> IPSO upheld a complaint by CfMM.
- “European courts risk corroding free speech to create special status for Islam” (Telegraph)<sup>98</sup>
- “We know why the Muslims are ant-Semitic” (Spectator)<sup>99</sup>
- “Younger sister of Jewish schoolboy, 12, who forced to kiss the feet of a Muslim classmate in a Melbourne Park is sent a sickening taunt online” (Mail Online, Daily Mail Australia)<sup>100</sup>
- “Jihad is as contagious as covid-19 in the Maldives” (Economist)<sup>101</sup>
- “The burka is the fifth column...we will wake in the Islamic Republic of Britain” (Times)<sup>102</sup>

#### 5. Underplaying the victimisation of Muslim communities

- “China shuts down three Muslim mosques due to “illegal religious education” during police raid” (Mail Online)<sup>103</sup>
- “Muslim fury grows after protest deaths in Indian neighbourhood” (Mail Online)<sup>104</sup>

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/20/times-apologise-rochdale-sex-grooming-town-murder-imam>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/11016741/ryanair-boss-extra-airport-terror-checks/>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/4832188/scottish-muslim-alex-tiffin-police-search/>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7354035/Sydney-attacker-police-van-slashed-sex-workers-throat.html>

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9604716/muslim-halal-children-flu-vaccine-outbreak/>

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/express-corrects-story-suggesting-muslims-wanted-to-ban-new-fivers-but-ipso-rules-no-breach-of-code/>

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/bbc-put-muslims-before-you/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/799401/halal-secret-of-pizza-express/>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.perspecsnews.com/read/politics/rising-islamophobia-in-uk/HyloRKamXb/HJl3ZXKU7Z>

<sup>97</sup> <https://cfmm.org.uk/corrections/the-sun-kavanagh-complaint-upheld/>

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/10/27/european-courts-risk-corroding-free-speech-create-special-status/>

<sup>99</sup> <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/990995495815450625>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7863173/Sister-Jewish-schoolboy-forced-kiss-feet-Muslim-classmate-Melbourne-bullied-online.html>

<sup>101</sup> <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/990995495815450625>

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7863173/Sister-Jewish-schoolboy-forced-kiss-feet-Muslim-classmate-Melbourne-bullied-online.html>

<sup>103</sup> <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/1242363218728833025>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-7828455/Muslim-fury-grows-protest-deaths-Indian-neighborhood.html>

## 6. Other problematic articles mentioning the person's faith or religious practices.

- "I lost my boyfriend to Islam': Woman reveals the heart-breaking toll of her boxing-champion partners radicalisation behind bars – as he vows to leave her for a Muslim" (Mail Online, Daily Mail Australia)<sup>105</sup>
- "PILGRIMAGE HORROR Ashura festival stampede kills at least 30 and injures 100 during Muslim bloodletting ceremony in Iraq" (The Sun)<sup>106</sup>
- Devout Muslims slice open heads with swords during Ashura festival ritual" (Mirror)<sup>107</sup>
- "Stampede at Muslim festival kills 31 – at least 100 hurt in crush" (Daily Star)<sup>108</sup>
- "Finsbury Park mosque terrorist 'batters Muslim paedophile in jail attack while shouting 'f..... Allahu Akbar'" (Mail Online)<sup>109</sup>
- "Two women caught 'using Muslim garments to steal food in Asda' – before exposing their underwear" (Mail Online)<sup>110</sup>
- "Don't come to work: Job on the line for Muslim convert prison psychologist after she failed to tell her new boss that she was struck off after love affairs with two convicted rapists" (Mail Online)<sup>111</sup>
- "Strict Muslim father-of-nine who imposed 'traditional' Islamic regime on family after two of his daughters refused arranged marriages faces jail for psychological abuse" (Mail Online)<sup>112</sup>

Given the small selection of examples shared in this document, it is little wonder that according to reports, the British population believe that the current British Muslim population is 15%, over two times the reality<sup>113</sup> and that more than half of Britons now regard Muslims as a threat to the UK.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6611127/Womans-life-torn-apart-partner-turns-radical-Islam-jailplanning-marry-muslim.html>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9901514/ashura-festival-stampede-kills-at-least-30-and-injures-100-during-muslim-blood-letting-ceremony-in-iraq/>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/devout-muslims-slice-open-heads-20002692>

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/world-news/breaking-stampede-muslim-festival-kills-19973024>

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7397141/Finsbury-Park-mosque-terrorist-batters-Muslim-paedophile-jail-attack.html>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7331497/Women-caught-using-Muslim-robos-hideitems-stolen-Asda.html>

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7227289/Joanne-Senior-Skaf-gang-psychologists-Malek-Fahd-Islamic-School-job-investigation.html>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7156375/Muslim-father-imposed-traditional-Islamic-regime-family-faces-jail-psychological-abuse.html>

<sup>113</sup> Europeans greatly overestimate Muslim population, poll shows, Guardian, December 2016

<sup>114</sup> 7/7 Bombings Anniversary Poll Shows More Than Half Of Britons See Muslims As A Threat, Huffington Post, July 2015



## Appendix 2 – Recommendations

1. **Recommendation 1** Ensure headlines - when read alone - are not inaccurate or misleading and are substantiated by the article.
2. **Recommendation 2** Avoid the religious identity of an individual or group in a headline unless it is genuinely relevant to the issue being reported.
3. **Recommendation 3** Avoid repeating speculative, false or offensive claims by anti-Muslim agitators in a headline, especially if they are disputed. This could be done through the use of appropriate caveats, identifying the source or making clear that it is conjecture and not fact. If not, it should not appear in the headline or copy.
4. **Recommendation 4** Avoid using generic images of Muslims when they risk reinforcing stereotypes of Muslims and/or Islam.
5. **Recommendation 5** Avoid using an image of Muslim women in hijab/burqa to illustrate oppression of women, unless specifically relevant to the story.
6. **Recommendation 6** Any material changes to an online news story should be referenced at the top of an article e.g. We previously reported XXX. This was incorrect. It is actually YYY. The requirement for such a clarification for inaccuracies on breaking news stories may provide additional incentive for appropriate due diligence prior to sharing uncorroborated claims.
7. **Recommendation 7** Uncorroborated witness statements should be avoided until confirmed.
8. **Recommendation 8** A caveat should be included in witness statements making it clear to the reader or viewer that this is the view of one or several witnesses, in order to distinguish between eyewitness accounts and accounts from what may be more reliable sources or information which is easier to verify.
9. **Recommendation 9** All false stories should be removed with an acknowledgement of the removal. This includes stories published on social media.
10. **Recommendation 10** Corrections and apologies for false reporting, even if not intentional, should be published on all media on which they were initially reported, including social media i.e., corrections should also be published on Twitter if the original story was published on Twitter.
11. **Recommendation 11** All inaccuracies which have been the subject of complaint should be corrected. Any value judgement about “significance” can be dealt with under the need for equivalent prominence.
12. **Recommendation 12** Greater detail should be provided as to what constitutes “significant” in a complaint about inaccuracy.
13. **Recommendation 13** All inaccuracies in headlines should be considered “significant”. If it was considered important enough to be in a headline, then it is clearly significant and central.
14. **Recommendation 14** Any correction (or right to reply) should have equal prominence to the original inaccuracy. This should include the same prominence on the home page as the original story, and the equivalent publication on social media, with the placement in the same position as the original story for regular features such as columns.
15. **Recommendation 15** Comment and opinion pieces which clearly disseminate inaccurate or misleading information should be treated in the same manner as news pieces under Clause 1 Accuracy.
16. **Recommendation 16** A new provision should be added to the Code prohibiting the incitement to hatred against any group with protected characteristics.
17. **Recommendation 17** A new provision should be added to the Code prohibiting the levelling of abuse against any vulnerable group.
18. **Recommendation 18** A representative group should be allowed to make a complaint on the grounds of discrimination against an individual without requiring to prove there is substantial public interest in the complaint being considered, and without having to secure the explicit consent of the individual.
19. **Recommendation 19** Third party complaints should be accepted not only by “representative groups” but by any member of the public.
20. **Recommendation 20** Institutions and organisations should be included along with individuals under Clause 12 (e.g., schools, charities, places of worship, companies and other legal entities).
21. **Recommendation 21** Financial penalties should be imposed for the worst breaches/repeated breaches.

### APPENDIX 3 - Links to Centre for Media Monitoring publications

1. The following documents form the research published to date by the Centre for Media Monitoring. Our findings are more comprehensive than can be included in this brief submission, and we encourage anyone to make use of these documents, citing the Centre for Media Monitoring as the source.
2. CFMM's Report on "British Media's Coverage of Muslims & Islam (2018-2020)"  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-report-british-medias-coverage-of-muslims-and-islam-2018-2020-launched/>
3. CfMM Special Report: "How The British Media Reports Terrorism"  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-special-report-how-british-mediareports-terrorism/>
4. CfMM Report- State of Media Reporting on Islam and Muslims  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-quarterly-report-launched/>
5. CfMM's "Media Reporting on Palestine 2021 Report & Toolkit"  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-media-palestine-2021/CfMM>
6. Submission- APPG Religion in the Media  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-submission-appg-religion-media/>
7. CfMM Submission to the APPG on British Muslims Report on COVID-19  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-submission-to-the-appg-onbritish-muslims-covid-report/>
8. CfMM's Submission of Evidence to Online Safety Bill Public Committee  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-submission-of-evidence-to-online-safety-bill-public-committee/>
9. Submission to the IMPRESS Standards Code Review Call for Evidence  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CfMM-Submission-to-IMPRESS-Standards-Code-Review-March-2021.pdf>
10. CfMM Response to the IPSO Editors Code Review  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-response-to-the-ipso-editorscode-review/>
11. CfMM Submission of Evidence to the Lords Select Committee on the Future of Journalism  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-submission-lords-selectcommittee/>
12. Response to the BBC's Editorial Guidelines Consultation  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/response-to-bbc-editorial-guidelinesconsultation/>
13. Response to OFCOM: Thematic Review of Representation and Portrayal on the BBC  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/response-to-ofcom-thematic-review-ofrepresentation-and-portrayal-on-the-bbc/>
14. Briefing for IPSO: Reporting on Islam and Muslims in UK press  
<https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/reporting-on-islam-and-muslims-in-ukpress/>