

ONLY BY EMAIL

September 29, 2025

Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade Email: jeetghorpade@gmail.com	Ms. Kirtima Maravoor Compliance Officer NBDSA Bennett, Coleman & Company Ltd. (TV Division), Ground Floor, Trade House, Kamala Mills Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400013 Email: legalnow@timesgroup.com
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Order of NBDSA in Complaint (No. 142) dated 03.10.2024 filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade against a broadcasts titled “Love Jihad | UP News: ‘लव जिहाद’ का खेल..तो काटनी होगी उम्र भर जेल ! | Bareilly Court | Hindi News” and “Big and Bold: उत्तर प्रदेश में ‘लव जिहाद’...दूल्हा किट पाकिस्तानी! | CM Yogi | Love Jihad | UP News aired on 02.10.2024 on Times Now Navbharat

Attached please find Order dated September 25, 2025 passed by News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority.

Regards



Annie Joseph
For & on behalf of NBDSA

News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority

Order No. 203(2025)

Complainant: Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Channel: Times Now Navbharat

Programmes: "Love Jihad | UP News: 'लव जिहाद' का खेल..तो काटनी होगी उम्र भर जेल!" and "Big and Bold: उत्तर प्रदेश में 'लव जिहाद'...टूल किट पाकिस्तानी!"

Date of Broadcast: 02.10.2024

Since the complainant did not receive a response from the broadcaster within the time stipulated under the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Regulations, on 19.10.2024, the complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal, i.e., NBDSA.

Complaint dated 03.10.2024

A Hindu woman had told Bareilly District Court that her parents and Hindu right-wing groups had forced her to file an FIR against her Muslim boyfriend, accusing him of rape and forced religious conversion, because her family opposed her relationship with a Muslim man. The judge rejected her statement and sentenced the man, Mohammed Aalim, to life imprisonment and his father to two years' imprisonment. In the order, "*love jihad*" was mentioned at great length, thereby exposing the judge's own biases, prejudices, aloofness from reality, and utter disregard for the woman's statement and her autonomy.

The complainant submitted that in the impugned broadcasts, the broadcaster parroted the Judge's words without applying journalistic scrutiny. Further, the channel intentionally did not mention that the woman was forced by her parents and the Hindu right-wing groups to file a false case against her Muslim partner because they opposed her relationship, and that she had informed the Court about it, but the Court ignored her confession and statements. The channel did not stop there; it went on to air statements made by several BJP politicians, further promoting the Islamophobic conspiracy theory of love jihad. While doing so, the channel used tickers, headlines, titles, visuals, and thumbnails that supported the intended promotion of the love jihad conspiracy. By doing so, the channel violated several sections of the Code of Ethics and guidelines, namely Accuracy, Objectivity, Neutrality, Religious Harmony and Negative stereotyping etc.

The complainant requested that the broadcaster state clearly in its response why the channel had failed to mention the statement made by the woman.

Reply dated 02.11.2024 from the broadcaster

The broadcaster acknowledged the receipt of the complaint, wherein a concern had been raised about its reportage of a sentencing by a Court in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, wherein a 25-year-old man was sentenced to life imprisonment and his father to a

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two-year term, along with a fine of Rs 1 lakh, after the Court found them guilty of coercing a 20-year-old woman to embrace Islam and marrying her while adopting a Hindu identity.

The broadcaster submitted that the report by the channel was based on verified facts and judicial records. The assertion that the woman was forced to file a false FIR by her parents and Hindu right-wing groups was not substantiated by the judicial proceedings or the final judgment. The Court, after examining all relevant evidence, found the accused, Mohammad Alim, guilty of concealing his identity to form a relationship, which falls under the purview of the Uttar Pradesh Love Jihad law. The woman's claims regarding coercion, if made, were not accepted by the Court as being credible. As a journalistic organization, it is obligated to report facts as upheld by judicial bodies, and its decision to refrain from including unverified or legally unacknowledged statements was in line with responsible journalism and the guidelines set forth by the NBDSA.

The accused, Mohammad Alim, was found guilty of misrepresenting his identity by assuming the name Anand, which led to a relationship with the complainant. This act is clearly defined as a crime under Uttar Pradesh's Love Jihad law. Its coverage was not a promotion of any biased narrative but a factual report on a legal matter, in which the accused's conduct was found to be criminal by the Court. Moreover, the judgment specifically mentioned the pressure exerted on the woman by the accused for religious conversion, further validating the legal implications of the case.

In its report, it had also referenced another similar case involving Mohammad Dilshad, where the same legal principles applied, which it believed was pertinent for viewers to understand the broader legal and social implications.

In the complaint, the channel has been accused of promoting a biased or Islamophobic narrative. However, it categorically stated that its reporting adhered strictly to the facts as established by the Court and law enforcement. The story included statements from government officials and elected representatives, which is standard journalistic practice when covering such cases. It is pertinent to note that their views and soundbites were relevant to the broader public discourse around the issue, and their inclusion did not signify bias but reflected the views of political figures central to the debate.

It is committed to upholding the highest standards of journalistic integrity, including accuracy, objectivity, and neutrality. The complainant's allegations of violating sections related to "Religious Harmony" or "Negative Stereotyping" were unfounded. It reiterated that the report strictly adhered to facts verified by legal authorities and judicial findings. At no point did its coverage promote religious

discord or stereotype any community. On the contrary, its focus remained on the legal aspects and the broader implications of violating identity and conversion laws. In view of the above, the broadcaster requested the complainant to review the complete context before drawing any conclusions on this matter.

Complaint dated 4.11.2024 to NBDSA

The complainant stated that the channel had responded to his grievance and the response received was not satisfactory. The channel had failed to present the full picture in the given case and drummed the existing Islamophobic hoax of love jihad, thereby violating ethics related to Accuracy, Objectivity, Neutrality, Religious Harmony, Negative stereotyping, etc.

Decision of NBDSA at its meeting held on 13.12.2024

NBDSA considered the complaint, response from the broadcaster, and after viewing the footage of the broadcasts, decided to call the parties for a hearing.

On being served with the Notice, the following persons were present at the hearing on 29.05.2025:

Complainant

1. Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Broadcaster

1. Ms. Aanchal Tandon, Advocate
2. Ms. Niharika Sharma, Advocate
3. Ms. Kirtima Maravoor, Compliance Officer

Submissions of the Complainant

The impugned broadcast concerned another alleged case of love jihad, which was blown out of proportion by the broadcaster. The coverage involved one-sided, inflammatory reporting that omitted critical facts (such as the retraction and claims of coercion), and amplified Islamophobic conspiracy theories. The broadcaster aired provocative tickers, visuals, and platformed partisan political voices with no counterbalance, fostering religious hatred and misinformation.

The impugned broadcast emanated from an order passed by a Court in Bareilly, wherein a Hindu woman was forced by her parents and a Hindu right-wing group to file a false rape and forced conversion case against her boyfriend. While the woman admitted before the Court that she was forced to file the case, the judge disregarded her statement. The judge observed that since the woman was educated, signed documents in English, used an Android phone, and lived independently without any financial support from her parents, it was unlikely that she had been coerced into filing a false FIR. Consequently, he sentenced the man to life

imprisonment and his 65-year-old father to 2 years in prison, along with a fine of Rs. One lakh.

The broadcaster, in its response, had submitted that it had only reported the facts in the matter and had not reported anything that was not in order. However, the woman's own statement disowning the charges of rape and forced conversion, which the judge also recorded in his order, was not aired in the broadcast. The omission of this critical fact misled viewers.

By selectively airing the views of some BJP politicians, the broadcaster had pushed the "love jihad" theory without presenting any neutral or opposing viewpoints, thus failing to maintain balance and fairness. In the broadcast, the views of Giriraj Singh, who said "भारत में मुसलमान अब गजवाई हिन्द करना चाहता है", Nitesh Rahne, Maharashtra Cabinet Minister, who said "हिंदुओं की जनसंख्या और देश को इस्लाम राष्ट्र बनाने के लिए एक मुहिम है जो जेहादियों ने शुरू की है" and Devendra Fadnavis, who baselessly claimed that more than 01 lakh incidents of love jihad had taken places in Maharashtra were aired. These claims were aired without any critical reasoning or further investigation to substantiate them. The NBDSA guidelines enjoin the broadcaster to respect the legal rights of the accused; however, in this case, the channel's depiction of Mohammed Aalim as a criminal even after the woman's retraction violated principles of fair trial and due process. No context was offered about the questionable nature of the judgment or the woman's own statement in Court.

The complainant reiterated that by intentionally failing to inform the viewers about the woman's version, specifically her allegation of coercion, the broadcaster deprived the viewers of a balanced and complete understanding of the matter and allowed the broadcaster to paint an entire community in a negative light.

During the broadcast, tickers such as "Love Jihad ka khel, toh kaatni hogi umra bhar jail", "Love jihad ka shadyantra, jail yatra ka rasta saaf", "UP mein Love jihad... toolkit Pakistani", "Aanand nikla Aalim, farzi mohabbat wala jaalim" and "Jhuthe naam ka afsana, maksad musalman banana" were aired. Further, caricatures of a woman wearing half sari and half burkha and a man wearing a skull cap behind a "Hindu" mask were displayed throughout the broadcast.

The tickers, commentary (e.g., "Hindustan ko Pakistan ya Bangladesh banane ka plan," and "farzi mohabbat wala jaalim"), and caricatures depicting Muslims as deceitful and hiding behind a Hindu mask, stereotyped Muslim men, thereby reinforcing harmful communal narratives, which violated NBDSA's mandate to foster religious harmony and the other guidelines.

Submissions of the Broadcaster

The broadcaster submitted that the test for judging a work should be that of an ordinary man of common sense and prudence, and not a hypersensitive man. In the reply to the complaint, it was clearly stated that the report was based on verified facts and the judicial order.

Its reporting was not aimed at any particular religion, caste, or creed; rather, it was solely about reporting a crime against women. Furthermore, it is a well-established principle of law that merely because the broadcast causes irritation, annoyance, frustration, or displeasure, it does not, in itself, constitute a violation. The views of politicians or other personalities cannot be construed as the views of the channel. The broadcast must be evaluated in its entirety rather than through selective excerpts. Isolating certain statements without considering the full context leads to a distorted interpretation.

It reiterated that the reporting was based on the judgment of the Bareilly District Court. The anchor at timestamp 0:33 clearly stated that before proceeding further to understand why the judgment was passed, it was important to understand the chronology of events. The chronology of events was ascertained from the judgment; therefore, it was only reporting on facts which were available in the public domain.

In response to the grievance raised by the complainant that the broadcaster had not reported the statement made by the woman, the broadcaster submitted that the facts were not verified and had not been recorded in the public domain.

The broadcaster reiterated that it was only reporting on crimes against women. The word '*love jihad*' was mentioned on page 30 of the judgment, where the judge explained what the term "*love jihad*" meant and also detailed the events that had transpired in the present case, where a girl was lured and impregnated. While describing the aforesaid case, it was submitted that the broadcaster had used sophisticated language and had, in fact, not described the incident as rape.

That it would continue to report and bring to attention any crime against women. It was also relevant to mention that the Hon'ble Supreme Court had also dismissed a PIL seeking to expunge remarks concerning love jihad made in the judgment by the Bareilly District Court. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, while dismissing the petition, observed that the Petitioner lacked jurisdiction and was unnecessarily sensationalizing the issue, which did not concern him.

In response, the complainant submitted that if the broadcaster had genuinely intended to report on women's rights and crimes against women, the broadcast would not have focused on religion, as was evident from the tickers displayed during the broadcast. Furthermore, the District Court's judgment recorded the woman's

statement that she was coerced into filing a false case. Therefore, it was not open to the broadcaster to contend that the statement lacked verifiable facts and was thus excluded from the broadcast.

Written Submissions dated 02.05.2025 of the Broadcaster

1. The impugned broadcasts are a simpliciter reporting of the judgment passed by the Ld. Additional Sessions Judge, Bareilly, in the matter of *'State vs. Mohd. Aalim and Anr.*
2. The complainant has vehemently argued that it had deliberately restricted the interviews to only BJP members and had not represented the views of other factions. In response to the same, it is submitted that the telecasts also contained interviews of Mr. Waris Pathan (AIMIM) and Mr. Jayant Patil (NCP). The complainant, however, has selectively taken out clips from the videos to portray the broadcaster in a bad light. Nevertheless, the right to choose panelists is a facet of the journalistic freedom afforded to the broadcaster by the Constitution of India, and any restrictions on the same are violative of Article 19 of the Constitution of India.
3. Recently, the judgment passed by the Bareilly Court was also challenged by way of a PIL by a third party before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, whereby the remarks made by the Trial Court were sought to be expunged. The said PIL was dismissed as not pressed. The Hon'ble Apex Court had emphasized that the petitioner was unnecessarily sensationalizing the issue, which did not concern him.
4. It is pertinent to note that the present broadcast, which reported crime against women, must be evaluated in its entirety rather than through selective excerpts; isolating certain statements without considering the full context leads to a distorted interpretation. The channel has exercised caution and due diligence in presenting the facts. Furthermore, no personal views have been represented by the anchor. Balance is required to be struck between the applicable guidelines and the citizens' right to know.

Written Submissions dated 10.06.2025 of the Complainant

1. The key contention in the complaint was and remains that the broadcaster intentionally omitted a critical aspect related to the Bareilly case, which was the woman's admission that she was forced to file a false case against her Muslim boyfriend by Hindu groups and her own family.
2. The broadcaster chose to omit the above critical fact so as to promote anti-Muslim sentiments. It must be noted that the broadcaster has a history of airing anti-Muslim, malicious reports that NBDSA itself has found to be violative and has penalised, cautioned, and warned the broadcaster in the past.

3. The broadcaster used tickers, headlines, and graphics to sensationalise the matter and disturb communal harmony.
4. The Supreme Court case cited by the broadcaster shows that the Supreme Court dismissed the case filed by a third party based on a lack of locus standi. The Supreme Court did not dismiss the woman's confession in the Bareilly Court. Therefore, this Supreme Court case is irrelevant to the grievance, which is primarily about the intentional omission of critical facts about a case involving a woman who's right to be with a man of her choice was stripped by her natal family and religious organisation by forcing her into filing a false case of abuse and forced religious conversion against the man and his father.

The complainant requested NBDSA to take the above points into consideration while determining whether the broadcaster had violated the Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards.

Decision

NBDSA considered the complaint and response from the broadcaster and reviewed the footage of the broadcasts.

NBDSA noted that in the impugned broadcasts, only a factual narration of the judgment of a Court in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, sentencing the accused, Mohammad Alim, for coercing a 20-year-old woman to embrace Islam and marry him had been telecast. Further, in the broadcasts, similar allegations raised against another individual, Mohammad Dilshad, were also reported.

The aforesaid programme was based on the judgment of a Court and the findings given by the Court in the said judgment. Therefore, running a programme on the narrative of Court findings would not be objectionable. The submission of the complainant that the anchor should have done his own independent research, notwithstanding clear findings of the Court, does not appeal to the Authority. However, the Authority finds that while telecasting a factual narration, the broadcaster went beyond the narrative in the judgment and introduced certain elements, which are not a part of the judgment by using the tickers such as "*UP mein Love jihad... toolkit Pakistani*", "and "*Jhuthe naam ka afsana, maksad musalman banana*" which did not fit the intended subject of the reportage.

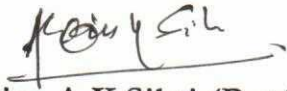
In view of the above, NBDSA held that apart from the aforementioned tickers, the broadcasts had not violated the Code of Ethics & Broadcasting, as the narration was factual. Consequently, the broadcaster is directed to remove the aforementioned tickers from the broadcasts.

NBDSA decided to close the complaint and inform the complainant and the broadcaster accordingly.

NBDSA directs NBDA to send:

- (a) A copy of this Order to the complainant and the broadcaster;
- (b) Circulate this Order to all Members, Editors & Legal Heads of NBDA;
- (c) Host this Order on its website and include it in its next Annual Report and
- (d) Release the Order to media.

It is clarified that any statement made by the parties in the proceedings before NBDSA while responding to the complaint and putting forth their view points, and any finding or observation by NBDSA in regard to the broadcasts, in its proceedings or in this Order, are only in the context of an examination as to whether there are any violations of any broadcasting standards and guidelines. They are not intended to be 'admissions' by the broadcaster, nor intended to be 'findings' by NBDSA in regard to any civil/criminal liability.


Justice A.K Sikri (Retd.)
Chairperson

Place: New Delhi
Date : 25.09.2025