

COMPLAINT ADJUDICATION

Luke Smith
and
Evolve Media Limited

Clause 1. Accuracy

- 1.2. Publishers must correct any significant inaccuracy with due prominence, which should normally be equal prominence, at the earliest opportunity.**
- 1.4. Whilst free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts.**

Complaint Dismissed

Before IMPRESS Regulatory Committee A

Walter Merricks, David Leigh, Martin Hickman, Iain Christie, Andrea Wills

31/10/2018

1. Summary of Complaint

- 1.1. The Complainant is Luke Smith, a third-party seeking to ensure the accuracy of published information. He has confirmed to IMPRESS that he is not an affected party or the representative of an affected party.
- 1.2. The Respondent is Evolve Media Limited, a news website covering current affairs that has been regulated by IMPRESS since 23/11/2017.
- 1.3. The complaint concerns an article that first appeared in the Evolve Politics on 26/03/2018 with the headline *“The Jewish Voice Twitter Account is absolutely DESTROYING the media’s latest Corbyn anti-Semitism smear [TWEETS]”*.
- 1.4. The complaint is assessed against the IMPRESS Standards Code. The relevant clauses are:

Clause 1 (Accuracy)

- 1.2. Publishers must correct any significant inaccuracy with due prominence, which should normally be equal prominence, at the earliest opportunity.*
- 1.4. Whilst free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts.*

2. Background

- 2.1. The subject of the article was an anti-Semitism ‘row’ that began when Labour MP Luciana Berger tweeted about a comment left by Jeremy Corbyn in 2012 about the impending removal of a mural by artist Mear One. The article continues:

“The story has now led to an absolute barrage of attacks on both the Labour Party and Jeremy Corbyn himself by the media for supposedly not doing enough to tackle anti-Semitic views within the party and the wider movement.”

- 2.2. The article went on to name organisations and groups that commented on the story, including ‘Blairites’, ‘The Sun’ and ‘the Tories’ and further stated:

“However, despite the constant attacks in the Mainstream Media and throughout the Blairite ranks, on Twitter, many – including a large number of Jewish people – aren’t so convinced by the latest Corbyn-smear of choice.”

2.3. Tweets in support of Labour and Jeremy Corbyn were also included in the article. The article went on to say:

“But, most prominently – and completely unreported by the mainstream media – the Jewish Voice (@J_VoiceUK) Twitter account have been extremely outspoken in their support for Corbyn on the matter”

2.4. The article quotes nine tweets by the Jewish Voice UK (@J_VoiceUK) expressing their support for Jeremy Corbyn, dated 25th and 26th March 2018.

3. The Complaint

3.1. The complainant emailed the publisher to complain about the accuracy of the article on the basis that it quoted the wrong “Jewish Voice”. The tweets referred to in the article were by Jewish Voice UK, a social media account run by two students. This social media account was not in any way associated with the Jewish Voice, an international organisation based in the USA which holds the trademark for this name. The complainant considered the article did not accurately distinguish the social media account from the organisation. Evolve Politics responded to the complainant and explained Twitter had a strict policy of banning accounts that impersonate celebrities or media outlets and understood Twitter had not banned Jewish Voice UK for impersonating any other account.

3.2. The complainant replied explaining the Jewish Voice had been verified by Twitter and had a Wikipedia page with information about their organisation, while Jewish Voice UK did not.

3.3. The publisher responded, saying the Jewish Voice reported on “American Jewish News” and it had not been referenced anywhere in the article. Furthermore, a screenshot of the Jewish Voice UK account was the feature image of the article, tweets by Jewish Voice UK were used numerous times throughout and that there were various accounts that had a similar name.

3.4. The complainant said that while Jewish Voice was an American account, it was read internationally, and a responsible publisher would have checked this and understood that the ‘organisation’ quoted was a social media account run by two students. They considered the article did not make it clear that Jewish Voice UK was unconnected with the more well-known Jewish Voice and therefore misled the reader.

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3.5. After these exchanges, Evolve Politics responded to the Complainant, dismissing the complaint. The publisher reiterated there was a lack of evidence to suggest they had breached the code, they had not misled the reader and that the complainant could escalate their complaint to IMPRESS.

3.6. The complainant subsequently made a complaint to IMPRESS and, after seeking clarification of the basis for the complaint, IMPRESS confirmed the substance of the complaint with them, as follows:

The Complainant is a third-party seeking accuracy. The grounds of the complaint are:

1. The article does not clearly distinguish between Jewish Voice, the trademark name of a Jewish ministry based in Arizona which is an international organisation; and Jewish Voice UK a social media account run by two individuals.

A. The complainant, who believes the article is inaccurate, considers the following statement misrepresented or distorted the facts:

“The Jewish Voice Twitter Account is absolutely DESTROYING the media’s latest Corbyn anti-Semitism smear [TWEETS]”

B. The complainant, who believes the article is inaccurate, considers the following statement misrepresented or distorted the facts:

“But, most prominently – and completely unreported by the mainstream media – the Jewish Voice (@J_VoiceUK) Twitter account have been extremely outspoken in their support for Corbyn on the matter”

3.7. IMPRESS provided the Complainant with a full copy of Evolve Politics’ response (summarised in Section 4 below) and gave them the opportunity to provide a final reply to that response.

3.8. In the complainant’s reply, the complainant said they considered it was unreasonable to expect readers to go on Twitter, search for the account quoted, and check whether it was the well-known international organisation the Jewish Voice, or two individuals merely using the name.

3.9. Further, the complainant considered showing pictures of the logo and naming the account did not make the distinction clear. The lack of explanation as to who the Jewish Voice was made it appear as if it went without saying: that it was the international and well-known organisation.

4. Response of Publication

4.1. IMPRESS invited Evolve Politics to provide additional information in response to the Complaint. The publisher reiterated the article's feature image showed exactly which Jewish Voice Twitter account the article was referring to and that tweets from the specific account had been used numerous times. Furthermore, the article contained the Twitter handle of the Jewish Voice UK twitter account.

4.2. The publisher reiterated that as the other Jewish Voice account was not referred to in the article, it was inconceivable that any reader would believe it was somehow about another account.

5. Compliance with the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme

5.1. IMPRESS is satisfied that Evolve Politics has complied with the requirements of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme (Paragraph 3.2). The Publisher responded to the Complainant once they became aware of the complaint. The complaint was not resolved in 21 days due to delayed responses by both parties and a change in structure within the Publisher. After contact with IMPRESS, the Publisher wrote a final decision letter dismissing the complaint. The complainant was also informed of their right to refer the complaint to IMPRESS.

6. The Committee's Conclusion

6.1. The Committee considered that the article "*The Jewish Voice Twitter Account is absolutely DESTROYING the media's latest Corbyn anti-Semitism smear [TWEETS]*" gave the reader the impression that the mainstream media had not reported on the support offered, by several Jewish individuals and organisations, to Jeremy Corbyn; identifying that support by including tweets from various individuals and organisations.

6.2. The Committee considered that by referencing the Jewish Voice UK in the headline, and by referencing several tweets made by the Jewish Voice UK, the article was attributing some importance to the Jewish Voice UK's view. The article did not state who or what sort of organisation the Jewish Voice UK was. The Committee understood there were several social media accounts with "Jewish Voice" in the title. The Committee also noted that unless the reader had a Twitter account and clicked the "follow" button to send a follow request to Jewish Voice UK, they could not view the account's tweets, description or

information because this account's tweets are protected and only confirmed followers have access to @j_voiceUK's tweets and complete profile.

- 6.3. Clause 1.4 of the IMPRESS Standards Code states that, whilst they are free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts. The Committee considered that while the Publisher was entitled to comment on the Jewish Voice UK's support for Jeremy Corbyn, it would have been good journalistic practice to provide contextual information to explain who and what sort of organisation/group the Jewish Voice UK was. This would have clarified for the reader, what importance to give to the views of the Jewish Voice UK. However, the Committee did not consider that the material presented in the article amounted to a misrepresentation or distortion that would breach Clause 1.4 of the IMPRESS Standards Code.
- 6.4. The Committee noted that after the publisher received the complaint, it did not take the opportunity to clarify the information about the identity of Jewish Voice in the article. The Committee considered it would have been good journalistic practice to do so. However, the Committee did not consider that the material in the article constituted a significant inaccuracy that would, under the IMPRESS Code, require a correction. There was therefore no breach of Clause 1.2 of the IMPRESS Standards Code.
- 6.5. It follows that the complaint is dismissed.