

## Response to Hacked Off's report "White Supremacism, the press and the absence of regulation 2017- 2020"

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IPSO rejects any assertion that lack of regulation is responsible for the spread of material on white supremacist internet forums used for malicious purposes.

The circulation of racist ideology and hateful content aimed at vulnerable groups is very concerning and is rightly a focus of the Online Harms agenda.

However, the free circulation of information about matters of public interest should not be constrained on the basis that some parties may make use of it in bad faith. Any such approach would pose a serious threat to freedom of expression. As the report itself makes clear, "No newspaper can prevent a person with extreme views from reading it or republishing its content". This is also true of any regulator.

As the independent regulator of most newspapers and magazines in the UK, IPSO holds publishers to account under the high standards of the Editors' Code. This is in stark contrast to social media and online forums, which are unregulated and offer no form of independent regulation or redress.

Our role is to apply the terms of the Code impartially and proportionately to the editorial material of regulated publishers, in print and online. This includes taking care not to publish inaccurate, misleading and distorted information; making a clear distinction between comment, conjecture and fact; and not discriminating against individuals on the basis of any protected characteristic, including religion.

Of the complaints cited in this report, IPSO dealt with all but one<sup>1</sup> (where no complaint was received) robustly and transparently. Most complaints that have concluded were upheld and required remedial action, all of which appeared further forward than the original article. Where a complaint was not upheld, we still issued a public ruling, setting out the reasons for that decision.

For transparency, we set out below how IPSO has dealt with the complaints discussed. To summarise:

- IPSO investigated (or is investigating) five out of six complaints. It received no complaints about one article cited.
- IPSO upheld three out of the six complaints investigated (a further complaint is still ongoing). It required sanctions for all upheld complaints.
- Of the sanctions, IPSO ordered one correction and two long form rulings (adjudications), all of which appeared further forward than the original article, including one which was referenced on the front page of the newspaper in question.
- The report inaccurately states that IPSO did not take forward complaints about a column in the Sun; in fact, IPSO investigated the complaint, and issued a public ruling setting out the reasons it was not upheld.

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of articles related to the claim "Half of UK's imported Covid cases from Pakistan", some complaints are still ongoing.

- IPSO makes all its rulings publicly available and promotes them on social media and to journalists writing about media issues. Many of the cases referenced are extremely high profile and widely discussed.

### **1. Half of UK's imported Covid cases from Pakistan (The Sun, Mail Online and Daily Telegraph)**

- All publications have already published corrections/clarifications about these articles, online and in their page two corrections columns in the days following publication.
- IPSO is currently investigating all the articles as possible breaches of the Editors' Code.
- Once the investigations are concluded IPSO will make its rulings widely available including details of any sanctions required.

### **2. Christian child forced into Muslim foster care (The Times)**

- IPSO upheld this complaint, ruling that there was a distortion in The Times' presentation of the legal proceedings of the case. It required The Times to publish an adjudication (a long form ruling) making clear that IPSO had upheld a complaint against the article and remedying the inaccuracies.
- IPSO ordered that the adjudication should appear on the same page (page 6) or further forward as well as on the newspaper's website. The Times fully complied by publishing the required adjudication on page 6 and including a reference to the upheld complaint on its front page.
- IPSO ordered that should the article remain online in its current form, the full text of the adjudication should be published beneath the headline. If amended, a link to the adjudication should be published with the article, explaining that it was the subject of an IPSO adjudication and noting the amendments made.
- As well as making this ruling public, IPSO tweeted about it to its almost 9,000 Twitter followers, as well as promoting it widely to journalists.
- This decision was subject to significant media interest, covered widely in national newspapers in print and online, shared widely on social media, and covered in "the Corrections" a programme broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and available on BBC Sounds.
- The full ruling is available here <https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=20480-17>

### **3. One in five Muslims have sympathy for jihadis (The Sun)**

- IPSO upheld the complaint as a breach of Clause 1 (Accuracy) ruling that the newspaper had not taken care over presentation of a poll. It ordered that an adjudication be published on pages 4 or 5 where the majority of the article originally appeared. The Sun fully complied by publishing the ruling on page 2.
- IPSO ordered the adjudication should be published on the newspaper's website, with a link appearing on the homepage for 24 hours; it should then be archived online in the usual way. Should the newspaper continue to publish the article online, without amendment, it is also required to publish the adjudication in full, beneath the article's headline.
- As well as making this ruling public, IPSO tweeted about it to its almost 9,000 Twitter followers, as well as promoting it widely to journalists.

- This decision was subject to significant media interest, covered widely in national newspapers in print and online, and shared widely on social media.
- The full ruling is available here <https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=09324-15>

#### 4. "Powder keg Paris" (Daily Mail)

- IPSO partly upheld the complaint, identifying three inaccuracies which required correction. Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Code was not engaged because the article did not make prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual.
- The newspaper removed the article online in the days following complaints and offered a number of clarifications to the article in order to resolve the complaint.
- IPSO ordered that the newspaper must publish the correction offered during mediation with the complainant in its page 2 corrections column. The correction identified the three significant inaccuracies in breach of the Code but also referred to material ruled not in breach. It should also be published as a standalone correction online.
- As well as making this ruling public, IPSO tweeted about it to its almost 9,000 Twitter followers, as well as promoting it widely to journalists.
- This decision was subject to significant media interest, covered widely in national newspapers in print and online, and shared widely on social media.
- Read the full ruling here <https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=05228-18>

#### 5. Jailed rapist given chance to see victim's child (The Times)

- IPSO did not receive any complaints about this article.

#### 6. The Muslim problem (The Sun)

- The report inaccurately suggests that "no complaints were accepted" about this article. In fact, IPSO took forward a complaint for investigation under Clause 1 (Accuracy) and Clause 12 (Discrimination).
- The complaint was ruled upon by IPSO's Complaints Committee and the ruling is available here <https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=17562-17>
- The complaint was not upheld on the basis that the columnist had clearly set out his reasons for his view and there was no failure to take care not to publish inaccurate information. It was not the Committee's role to make findings on taste and offence, which is not covered under the Editors' Code, although it noted that many found the column offensive.
- Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Code was not engaged because the article did not make prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual.
- As well as making this ruling public, IPSO tweeted about it to its almost 9,000 Twitter followers, as well as promoting it widely to journalists.
- This decision was subject to significant media interest, covered widely in national newspapers in print and online, and discussed widely on social media.