

THE JEWISH CHRONICLE



3/30/2023

Ninth annual statement

An overview of editorial policies and procedures and the company's approach to press regulation

The Jewish Chronicle

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1. Editorial standards explained

The JC is a London-based weekly and the oldest continually published Jewish newspaper in the world, having been established in 1841. It is a leading authority on matters relevant to the Jewish community in Britain, the diaspora and Israel's role in the Middle East. Its coverage of all matters that effect Jews abroad is extensive, thanks to its international network of correspondents. At home, it attracts some of Fleet Street's leading voices and enjoys access to key players in politics, entertainment, sport and the Arts.

It takes pride in its strong, independent editorial stance and its abject defiance of anything it sees as a threat to its readers, their institutions, their way of life and, in extreme levels, their right to exist. As a result, it faces a level of challenges disproportionate to its size and circulation, although not its reach and influence.

The editorial philosophy is to make sense of - and help readers to navigate - an often confusing world, particularly as many of the issues important to them are widely covered elsewhere by media with varied social and political agendas. Trust is, therefore, key. To underpin that philosophy, there is an assumption that a reader may follow an issue close to the Community's heart elsewhere but rely on the JC to put it into context.

The news cycle adopts a web-first philosophy. Its website, *www.thejc.com*, updates six days a week with breaking news, allowing the newspaper to present a more reflective and analytical tone.

2. The story-gathering and approval process

The editor holds a virtual editorial conference on Monday mornings at which reporters pitch stories via their section editors. The editor may question the provenance of a story or give guidance about how the team should approach certain subjects.

This is followed by a planning meeting of senior staff where further guidelines may be issued (ie: the editor may stipulate where he thinks the boundaries should be placed in terms of privacy).

Progress meetings take place either online or at the office on a regular basis on Tuesdays and Wednesdays ahead of the weekly print deadline. The editor, his deputy or assistant leads these and senior staff are present throughout. All may raise legal or ethical questions. Some of these may be answered by asking a writer to discuss directly. On other occasions, they may involve a conversation with the in-house lawyer or, occasionally, the Reader's Editor.

Otherwise, the paper adopts a web-first approach to news with all but a select number of stories going live on the jc.com when ready and ahead of the weekly print edition or used online exclusively.

On a general level, JC staff are close to the community they serve and have knowledge and experience of many of the issues their readers encounter. Senior staff, in particular, have a wealth of contacts in all areas relevant to the national and international political scene as well as the UK community. There is therefore a substantial knowledge base on which to call when needed.

This often proves useful when testing the veracity of information supplied. The JC's expertise in this area is widely recognised throughout the wider media and it is often called upon to add its expertise to other news outlets.

In general terms, there is a rule of thumb expectation that information is only regarded as 'safe' when supplied by authorised sources from recognised organisations or those regarded as official for the purposes of attracting qualified privilege in the legal sense.

Otherwise, the JC follows some basic rules which, broadly, encompass traditional journalistic best practice involving:

- Multiple sources.
- Reliable attribution
- The availability of evidence.
- A clear distinction between fact and opinion.
- And a reliance of the adage: When in doubt, leave out.

The team are also conversant with the general level of reader expectation regarding running stories published online by reputable news outlets and have been quick to add qualifiers highlighting changes/challenges to them.

The Jewish Chronicle is aware that IPSO is able to offer pre-publication advice. It has taken advantage of this on specific issues, usually via the Readers' Editor who acts as first port of call for such issues.

Otherwise, stories are assigned to pages according to the editor's briefing and edited by section editors. They are then proof-read by a sub editor and handed to the editor for sign off.

3. [Legal safeguards](#)

The libel specialists, Simon Gallant and Chris Hutchins of Hamlins LLP of Marylebone have access to the paper's online publishing database and, when required, are able to monitor in real time stories as they are produced, suggesting changes and reviewing them as changes are made and pages updated.

Overall, every story published is seen by a lawyer who is presented with them to be viewed as one of three categories: a. no legal threat, b. no perceived legal threat, c. a sensitive topic carrying the possibility of a legal threat.

On occasions, a particularly sensitive story may be edited by the editor himself (possibly, in conjunction with the lawyer) before being handed back to the author for comment.

4. The complaints process

If a complaint is made, it may be handled directly by the reporter and News Editor or escalated to the Deputy Editor, or in extreme cases, The Editor, who may seek the advice of the Reader's Editor if there are questions over possible breaches of the Editors' Code.

It is always the intention of the newsroom to resolve complaints as quickly and amicably as possible but there is a realistic awareness that it will face regular opposition merely because of its strong and unapologetic investigative stance, who it is and the stories it covers.

The majority of complaints cite Clause 1(i) which relates to accuracy and involve simple matters of dispute over facts but there is a strong tendency to add issues of privacy and harassment which question the paper's publishing motives.

Many bypass such direct routes and complain to Ipso in the first instance. Thus, the Ipso number is advertised at the foot of the For the Record column which is reserved for making corrections and clarifications as and when required.

Complaints made directly to Ipso are routinely forwarded to the Readers' Editor by the Regulator's staff. He may be asked to respond initially by providing further information, or if there is deemed to be validity in investigating more deeply, asked to contact the complainant directly.

Readers with differences of opinion are regularly invited to state their case on the letters page, although the paper reserves the right to edit in line with good publishing practice.

Of the complaints made via Ipso, they are dealt with by an independent, non-Jewish, Readers' Editor who deals, initially, with complainants directly or, if a resolution is not forthcoming, the regulator's own investigations team.

The Readers' Editor (for IPSO purposes, the *Responsible Person*) is not Jewish is not engaged in planning, writing or editing stories so looks at every complaint anew and has freedom to investigate fully. That may involve speaking directly - and often separately - to anyone involved in an issue, asking to see emails, shorthand notes and examining any corroborative evidence. It is also not unusual to seek corroborative 'evidence' from third parties such as freelancers or those quoted within stories. Nor is it unusual for the Complainant to be asked similar questions.

There were ten complaints recorded in the year under review. All were either rejected at source, amicably resolved between parties, with Ipsos involvement, or dismissed after investigation.

An unfortunate and recurring issue has been a tendency for some complainants to accept a compromise or agree not to pursue a complaint in return for a minor clarification and then make social media comments which allude to having *won* a case. The JC is aware this is sometimes an inevitable consequence of its campaigning approach and the subject matter it covers.

The website www.thejc.com has a permanent link titled *How to Complain*. It sets out a simple step-by-step process, explaining how to do it, gives examples of the sort of issues that will and will not be considered and links to the Editor's Code of Practice and the IPSO home page. There is a link to a dedicated Complaints inbox. There is also a reference to this in the newspaper's comment page.

A link to an article explaining the paper's philosophy is attached:

<https://www.thejc.com/a-word-about-scrutiny-of-us-you-and-them-ipso-independent-press-standards-organisation-1.479122>

The Company Handbook includes the following assertion:

13.6 Press Regulation

The JC is a member of the newspaper industry's new regulatory body, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). All journalists who write regularly for the newspaper (staff and retained correspondents) are expected to be aware of the IPSO rules and, in particular, the Editor's Code of Practice, as stipulated in the contract between IPSO and the JC. All are required to sign a disclosure that they have read and understood the Code and agree to comply with its conditions.

A copy of the code can be downloaded from the IPSO website or directly via this link:

<https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html>

5. Adverse Adjudications

Tom Gauterin complained about an online-only July 2021 column headlined “Time for direct action on social media” in which the writer detailed research he had done to demonstrate that with persistence, it was possible to “show the antisemites that their actions can have consequences” and gave three examples of his tweeting activity. The writer then revealed he had written to the complainant’s CEO and was told he no longer worked for the company. He wrote: “I have no idea if he jumped or was pushed. I don’t care,” adding that he had “suffered the consequences of his bigotry”.

The complainant provided statements from Jewish friends, confirming that they did not consider him to be antisemitic or a “Jew hater” to support his position that the article was inaccurate on this point.

He said he was a critic of the state of Israel, and of “Jewish communal bodies” which supported the actions of Israel, but did not accept that this made him antisemitic: his criticism was purely based on the political stance.

The Committee supported the paper in agreeing that it had clearly distinguished fact from opinion and that the opinions expressed had a factual basis so dismissed one point. It also dismissed two other claims of privacy breaches relating to contacting his employer and his social media activity. But they agreed with the complainant that, while he accepted that his social media activity was linked to his departure, he had at no point had he been told that it was linked to allegations of antisemitism. The paper, on this point, had “failed to distinguish the writer’s conjecture as such”. As such the complaint was partly upheld.

<https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=09574-21>

Mizanur Rahman complained about two 2021 articles “Cabinet Office anti-racism trainer wished death and mutilation on 'Zionists'” and “Sacked: Cabinet Office trainer exposed by JC for wishing death on Zionists”. The first included statements he had made in relation to Israel, including a tweet he had posted in 2014 in response to news that an Israeli soldier had lost his hands in an attack by Hamas: “Hopefully he, and all IDF soldiers and Zionists, will lose more than just their limbs ... their lives!!!!”. The second reported his sacking from his job and his suspension from the Labour party.

He challenged a claim that he had been “banned” from the Labour party’s list of potential council candidates. He said that, while he was rejected as a candidate on this occasion, reporting that he had been banned suggested he could never reapply, which he denied. He said it was also inaccurate to suggest he had attended a Quds Day march at which a speaker called for Israel to be ‘wiped off the map’ in a personal capacity as he was there as a legal observer.

And he challenged a reference to a tweet in which he said “Israel = white supremacy”.

The Tweet was published in 2014, but the paper wrongly reported it had been in 2019, suggesting he held these views more recently than he did. This was something the paper had earlier admitted as an editing error and amended.

The Committee formally recorded a breach of Clause 1 (i) over the dated White Supremacy Tweet but agreed the correct action had been taken in correcting this and dismissed six other complaints of clause breaches, including his attendance at the Quds Day march and the terms of his ban and questions of privacy and harassment.

<https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=01447-22>

Remedial action: where matters are contested and the paper stood by its original story, the Committee findings are examined in depth in order to understand the rationale behind the outcome. There is an understanding that there is a useful element of precedent involved as the rulings change the way regulation is moving. However, where there has been an obvious error, the procedures behind it are reviewed with all involved and the matter is reiterated for wider understanding at the in-house training sessions. Both scenarios applied here.

6. The training process

Two in-house training sessions were held this year at the JC's London offices. They were well-attended by up to a dozen editorial staff with others attending online. One session was recorded for review by anyone not in attendance.

Training sessions follow a conventional format: a reminder of the key elements of the Editor's Code and advice, followed by a critical review of recent cases with an emphasis on learning from experience.

Candidates were taken through the steps leading up to and beyond publication of stories either resolved, dismissed or still under investigation with the aim of sharpening awareness of potential issues.

In the past, specific training sessions have been organised on an ad-hoc basis, for example, when there has been a number of new starters.

Otherwise, on a day-to-day basis, the editorial team relies exclusively on the Code as the basis for policing the JC's ethical approach. Emails may occasionally be sent to newsroom staff to reinforce points when it is felt necessary and individual staff are encouraged to seek the advice of the Readers Editor when in doubt about how to approach a story.

Provision also exists for stories to be suspended or even expunged from the editorial database in extreme circumstances.

7. Appendix

For the record section - how it appears in print

Corrections are an established part of the JC's publishing process. Readers are invited to state their case in the letters pages (right), they are recorded in a set position and online updates are always recorded on the relevant stories.

The JC seeks to correct errors quickly.

● The writer of the obituary of Peter Kalms (JC May 17), was Dovid Efuno not David Effune, as printed.

Please note: we normally only accept letters by email. Individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Letters may be edited. Email address for correspondence is: letters@thejc.com. Please supply postal address.

● The JC is regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation and, as such, we take all complaints seriously. If you have an



issue you'd like to raise, ipso can be contacted on 0300 1232220.

► For the record

With regard to our recent coverage of the BBC we are happy to make clear that the BBC made a full apology for failings in relation to this matter in January 2022, following the findings of its own Executive Complaints Unit.

Those findings were consistent with those of Ofcom, which published its report in November 2022 at which point the BBC reiterated its apology. Ofcom stated there had been "a significant failure to observe its editorial guidelines to report news with due accuracy and due impartiality". The BBC's Executive Complaints Unit found the reporting "fell below expected standards of due accuracy and impartiality".

We accept these points were not made clear in original reporting (in November 2022) nor had the BBC been "maintaining the fiction that its reporting was word perfect" ahead of Ofcom's report. Further, there was no finding of guilt by Ofcom, nor a breach of the broadcasting

The How to Complain link (how it appears online)

9.
How do I make an editorial complaint?

If we have reported something you disagree with, have made a factual error or you simply wish to rectify something you have seen in print or online, please feel free to let us know. We will do our best to rectify matters if at all possible.

This page describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

How do we view complaints?

We are here to serve the community. This does not mean pleasing everyone all the time. But it does mean we try to conduct our business honestly, openly and in good faith. While we have a public duty to report matters that are in the public interest, we try to do so in accordance with the Editor's code of Conduct, as stipulated by the Press Standards Board of Finance. That means we take them extremely seriously.

What can I complain about?

The full text can be seen by following this link:

<https://www.thejc.com/faqs#11>

R Burton
Editorial Consultant and Readers
Editor
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