

BBC Editorial Guidelines 2024 Consultation Response

Overview

This response is being submitted by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the national representative organisation of the UK Jewish community. The Board comprises more than 300 representatives, or “Deputies”, who are elected from approximately 200 Synagogues and Jewish charitable organisations across the country. The Senior Leadership of the organisation are themselves elected from among those Deputies to those leadership roles.

The Board does not claim to speak for all Jews in the UK but does put forward positions which accurately reflect the opinion of a significant percentage of British Jews. In this instance, it would be accurate to say that many British Jews have concerns relating to the BBC’s output, and by extension the editorial guidelines which have led to said output.

While the overall draft editorial guidelines for 2024 are admirable, it is the belief of the Board of Deputies that certain ambiguities and omissions should be addressed so as to prevent misunderstandings (both within the BBC and to the external public) which have emerged within the last few years.

This submission will focus on the following key issues:

- *The need for impartiality of all significant contributors to the BBC.*
- *Proper due diligence relating to guests and/or contestants invited on to BBC programmes*
- *The need for additional clarity in relation to organisations proscribed by the British Government*
- *The need to properly elucidate whether these guidelines apply across the entirety of BBC output, including foreign-language BBC output.*
- *The need for the Corporation to ensure that it is able to effectively be held to account regarding the implementation of these editorial guidelines*

There are also some additional points which we feel require clarification, which will also be noted.

1) The need for impartiality of all significant contributors to the BBC.

- a) Section 2.4.12 of the Draft Editorial Guidelines currently states:

Presenters, reporters, correspondents and on-air editors are the public face and voice of the BBC; they can have a significant impact on perceptions of whether due impartiality has been achieved. Audiences should not be able to tell from BBC output – or anywhere else – the personal opinions of its journalists, news and current affairs presenters, or factual journalism presenters and journalists on matters of current public policy, political or industrial controversy, or on ‘controversial subjects’ in any other area.

They may provide professional judgements, rooted in evidence and professional experience, but may not express personal views on such matters publicly, including in any BBC-branded output or on personal blogs and social media.

- b) Section 4 of the Draft Editorial Guidelines (Conflicts of Interest), currently includes the following (in 4.1):

Conflicts of interest can arise for anyone who works for the BBC in any capacity, however they are engaged... A potential conflict of interest arises when an individual’s behaviour and choices outside the BBC risks affecting – or may be reasonably perceived as affecting – their own and the BBC’s impartiality, independence and integrity. A potential conflict of interest also risks damaging the BBC’s brand and reputation... The principles on conflicts of interest apply to everyone, but the application of the principles varies according to an individual’s role and their level of involvement with BBC content.

- c) A key area of difficulty for the Corporation within the last two years has been the behaviour of Gary Lineker. Mr Lineker is one of the key faces of the BBC (quite literally, with his face one of those that appears, for example, when people are encouraged to log in to the BBC Sports app). He has for many years been one of the Corporation’s most highly paid presenters.
- d) In early 2023 Mr Lineker was briefly suspended by the BBC due to a tweet from his personal Twitter account which took issue with a bill put forward by the then-Government¹. A number of Mr Lineker’s fellow sports presenters subsequently announced that they would not be appearing on BBC shows until his reinstatement, and Mr Lineker was subsequently reinstated, in what was widely seen as the Corporation backing down².
- e) 10 days before the mass-terror attack of October 7th, a BBC report announced that “High profile presenters should be allowed to express views on issues and policies but stop short of political campaigning”, applying to presenters of

¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/what-did-gary-lineker-say-bbc-b2303443.html>

² <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/gary-lineker-tweets-braverman-bbc-b2299609.html>

flagship programmes outside of news and current affairs. Mr Lineker hailed the report as “all very sensible”³.

- f) The new formulation meant there were now clear guidelines with regards to direct criticism of specific policies put forward by the Government or another political party, but – crucially, as it would turn out – fell totally short with regards to commenting on international issues of acute sensitivity, where the need for the BBC to present a non-biased viewpoint is very strong.
- g) In the period post-October 7th 2023, Mr Lineker has made numerous social media interventions which have shown clear bias in favour of one side of the extremely bitter Israeli-Palestinian conflict⁴. The UK Jewish community, reeling from the October 7th mass-terror attacks and the subsequent terrible situation in Israel and Gaza, has found this behaviour, by someone widely known as one of the BBC’s top “talents”, to be extremely distressing⁵. For the BBC internally, doubtless still dealing with the fall-out from the previous issue with Mr Lineker earlier that year, appetite was perhaps low to rekindle the issue. But Mr Lineker’s actions and the BBC’s failure to properly step in has been a consistent source of concern and anger within the Jewish community. It is something members of the Jewish community regularly approach the Board of Deputies about.
- h) The additional element of confusion here has been over the status of Mr Lineker within the BBC. Despite being, indisputably, a “face” of the BBC, Mr Lineker is not a permanent member of the BBC’s staff. He is a freelance broadcaster, and therefore, it has been argued, is not subject to the same rules regarding bias that permanent members of staff are. Certainly in terms of financial rules, a tribunal ruled last year that Mr Lineker occupied this freelance bracket rather than being classed as an employee, enabling him to successfully appeal against an action from HMRC relating to a £4.9 million tax bill⁶.
- i) A key issue which the Board of Deputies strongly recommends be focused on more closely in the 2024 Editorial Guidelines is as follows: *The guidelines which freelance broadcasters are expected to adhere to needs to be far clearer. In particular, this needs to apply to future freelance broadcasters joining the BBC – they should be required to understand and accept that if they are **presenting** a show on a regular basis, rather than being a guest or guest presenter – that they will be considered to be a face of the BBC and will need to adhere to similar guidelines on public political bias than those expected of full-time staff members. A failure to effectively address this issue now will inevitably lead to more examples like that of Mr Lineker in the future.*

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-66940530>

⁴ <https://www.thejc.com/lets-talk/intellectual-titan-gary-linekers-latest-endorsement-is-the-lowest-yet-s75f93x3>

⁵ <https://www.thejc.com/lets-talk/i-just-asked-gary-lineker-about-his-israel-tweets-and-im-still-shaking-with-anger-ry41806y>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-65103265>

- j) Aside from the issues specific to Mr Lineker, there have been numerous examples of BBC employees expressing one-sided views on the conflict or sharing abhorrent social media posts. Not only does this compromise the appearance of BBC impartiality it raises questions in the minds of many viewers and listeners of whether such individuals are able to conduct themselves with due professional impartiality on a topic where they themselves feel so strongly, and indeed how widespread such views may be within the newsroom.

2) Proper due diligence relating to guests and/or contestants invited on to BBC programmes

- a) 2.4.16 of the BBC Draft Editorial Guidelines currently reads as follows:

Freedom of expression is crucial for the BBC; at times, this will mean the inclusion of views or statements which some parts of the audience may find offensive or unacceptable. Contributors expressing contentious views, either through an interview or other means, must be challenged while being given a fair chance to set out their response to appropriate scrutiny; alternative perspectives should normally be offered as part of the same output, over time if necessary. Minority views should be given appropriate space in output.

Coverage should acknowledge the possibility of offence, and be appropriately robust, but it should also be fair and dispassionate.

- b) 5.4.26 of the BBC Draft Editorial Guidelines currently includes the following language:

The risk of causing unjustifiable offence when producing and broadcasting live output needs to be considered and planned for, and appropriate steps taken to mitigate the risks. Considerations include: how live output might be monitored; whether material that has the potential to cause offence is appropriately scheduled; and whether there is sufficient senior editorial support available during transmission. If issues occur inadvertently or unexpectedly in live output, which cause unjustifiable offence, they should be dealt with promptly and sensitively, and with an apology if necessary...

There should be a prompt apology for the unexpected and unjustifiable use of the strongest racist or discriminatory language.

- c) It is of course right and proper that if a guest on a live BBC programme engages in clearly unacceptable language, the guest is challenged live on air. **The editorial guidelines should make clear that presenters are trained in this sort of circumstance – with such training to be provided if it is not already a required element of training presenters or journalists who conduct live interviews.**
- d) **The editorial guidelines are currently unclear as to what would be considered an effective challenge; this omission should be rectified. A**

recent example comes to mind. In late September, Radio 4's Today programme interviewed Sayed Mohammad Marandi, introduced as a professor of English literature and Orientalism at the University of Tehran. During that interview, Maradi engaged in language which most Jewish listeners would have unquestioningly identified as rhetoric that was not specifically anti-Israel, but blatantly antisemitic, stating the following:

“Because we are all Amalek in this part of the world. We are inferior. They are the chosen people, they are your allies... the only solution, the only way forward is resistance. There is nothing that will stop this Israeli regime, that is the nature of the regime, it's an expansionist regime that believes in ethno-supremacism, believes that they are the chosen people, they have exceptional rights, and therefore have exceptional rights in the region. It's not just Palestine today, it goes beyond the borders of Palestine”.

Mr Marandi was not interrupted in the course of this outburst by the interviewer, Mishal Hussain, nor was he challenged on it. After a number of public condemnations, including from the Board of Deputies itself, the BBC stated that Mr Marandi was challenged during the interview but accepted that “However, we accept we should have continued to challenge his language throughout the interview.”⁷ It was notable that the BBC did not make any direct comment relating to the content of the language used by Mr Marandi.

- e) **The Corporation has an obligation to effectively explain to viewers who guests are.** The BBC acknowledges in the draft guidelines that (2.4.17) *It should not be assumed that contributors to BBC output are unbiased or impartial. For those from organisations such as charities, think-tanks or universities, it may be necessary, when relevant, to give appropriate information about affiliations, funding or particular viewpoints. The same applies to individual researchers, journalists, scientists or other experts and, on occasion, to contributors who may be relating their own experiences.* There have been a large number of instances where the BBC has used contributors who subsequently are exposed as having an affiliation with Hamas or other organisations which are either proscribed or clearly hostile to Israel or in dispute with Israel in a way which goes to the heart of their credibility or lack of it. The guidelines need here to go further and highlight the risks and lay down some clear requirements for serious due diligence. Nor should it be assumed that international organisations such as the UN and UN agencies, the ICC or NGOs are always unbiased or impartial or that their statements are accurate, in many cases these therefore also need to be investigated and corroborated rather than relied on without further substantiation. Similarly, universities from countries which are undemocratic

⁷ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/10/01/mishal-husain-failed-challenge-guest-anti-semitism-bbc/>

cannot be treated in the same way as universities from democratic countries where academic freedom is respected.

- f) Connected to that last point, in its comment relating to Mr Marandi's appearance, a BBC spokesperson said: "*The Today programme covered the latest developments in Lebanon and the Middle East and interviewed a range of people including IDF spokesperson Lt Col Peter Lerner, US Diplomat Dennis Ross and Iranian academic Mohammad Marandi to get a broad perspective on the complex politics of the region. Mohammed Marandi was interviewed to gain an understanding of the view from Iran, and what their response is likely to be.*"⁸ However, as pointed out online, Mr Marandi is far more than a humble academic. He has extremely close ties to Iranian regime; a former volunteer in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a former adviser to a nuclear negotiations team reporting to the late President Raisi, and with extremely close familial links to the Iranian regime's leadership – his father serving as the personal physician to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei⁹. None of this is to say that the BBC should not have invited Mr Marandi on to speak if it were aware of that information, but to simply describe him to its audience as a "Professor of English Literature and Orientalism, Tehran University" seriously misrepresents his position to that audience¹⁰.
- g) **The editorial guidelines should make clear that guests who engage in unacceptable behaviour will be barred from appearing on BBC shows until such time as a full and genuine apology for such behaviour is made.** In what one can only assume was due to a complete lack of communication within the Corporation itself, on October 1st the BBC issued a public acknowledgement with relation to its lack of proper challenge of Mr Marandi on Radio 4. A few hours later, BBC News had already invited Mr Marandi on again to give his opinion to its audience¹¹.
- h) **The editorial guidelines should be far clearer on what action needs to be taken in the event of a competitor on one of its shows engaging in behaviour which brings the Corporation into disrepute.** Earlier this year, prior to the beginning of the airing of the BBC's *The Apprentice*, social media posts by one of the contestants, Dr Asif Munaf, were uncovered. These included comments made following the October 7th 2023 massacre in which he wrote that Zionists were "*a godless, satanic cult*" and said of his children: "*I pray they are strong enough physically, spiritually and psychologically to overcome the trial of the Zionist antichrist.*"¹² Initially, the BBC response was

⁸ Ibid

⁹ <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/photo-reveals-iranian-academic-platformed-by-bbc-as-proud-irgc-fighter-ong4d3lo>

¹⁰ <https://x.com/KasraAarabi/status/1851363778790924468>

¹¹ https://x.com/simon_schama/status/1841204127663010009

¹² <https://www.thejc.com/news/apprentice-star-posts-about-fascist-zionism-after-bbc-sent-him-on-diversity-training-soiyatae>

to send Dr Munaf for “specialised training to understand why his posts may cause offence”¹³. It was clear, however, that whatever “training” Dr Munaf had received had failed miserably, as he had continued to make vile statements on social media, including “*The Zionist mask is falling, and the world is waking up. How this tiny European neo-colonial settler project has shamelessly weaponised the horror of the Holocaust to push another fascist ideology based on racial supremacy is disturbing. This itself is a form of antisemitism.*”¹⁴

- i) There was a strong sense within the Jewish community that the BBC’s response to this was predicated on damage control which would enable them to air the full series uncut, rather than properly addressing the situation regarding the contestant. Ultimately the contestant was dropped from the *Apprentice* spin-off show, *You’re Fired*¹⁵.
- j) It would be helpful to understand what lessons are being drawn from such incidents and what steps, if any, are being taken to sure that the issues covered in these guidelines can be anticipated and addressed proactively.
- k) It would also be helpful to understand how the BBC defines causing offence with respect to the Jewish community particularly with regard to rhetoric surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict bearing in mind the understandable difficulties in drawing clear lines between justified and justifiable criticism of Israel, its government and armed forces, and use of antisemitic tropes to attack Israel, Israeli citizens and British Jews.

3) The need for additional clarity in relation to organisations proscribed by the British Government

- a) 12.3.8 of the BBC Draft Editorial Guidelines currently reads as follows:

Any proposal to approach an organisation (or an individual member of an organisation) designated a ‘terrorist group’ by the UK Home Secretary under the Terrorism Acts, and any proposal to approach individuals or organisations responsible for extreme violence in pursuit of political or ideological objectives, to participate in BBC output whether in the UK or internationally must be referred in advance to Director Editorial Policy and Standards.

- b) 12.4.1 of the BBC Draft Editorial Guidelines currently reads as follows:

When reporting war and covering national and international emergencies, including extreme violence for political or ideological ends, disasters and major accidents, it is important to give the source of information and material from third parties,

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/bbc-removes-tonights-losing-the-apprentice-contestant-from-spin-off-show-youre-fired/>

particularly when there are conflicting claims. These sorts of chaotic events often generate misinformation. For instance, first estimates of casualty figures may often turn out to be inaccurate. If different sources give different estimates, content makers should either report the range or go for the source which carries the greatest authority and attribute the estimate accordingly.

c) 12.4.8 of the BBC Draft Editorial Guidelines currently reads as follows:

The term ‘terrorist’ should only be used with attribution ie. when quoting or citing its use by others. Content makers should not adopt other people’s language as their own; their responsibility is to remain objective and report in a way that enables audiences to make their own assessments. The BBC should convey to the audience the full consequences of an act by describing the perpetrators as, for example, ‘bombers’, ‘gunmen’, ‘kidnappers’, ‘insurgents’ and ‘militants’.

- d) On October 7th 2023, Hamas – an organisation proscribed by the British government as a terrorist group – carried out an attack on Israel, murdering 1,200 people and injuring thousands more. There were numerous instances of extreme sexual violence perpetrated by the group’s members. 250 hostages were also taken into Gaza from Israel.
- e) For almost a decade and a half, Hamas exercised complete control over the Gaza Strip, including over its various “Ministries”. The “Gaza Health Ministry”, for example, was completely controlled by Hamas. Any figure, or statement, received from that source was a Hamas figure. The BBC regularly failed to give that additional information to viewers and listeners on its TV channels and radio stations, referring to the “Gazan Health Ministry”, rather than the “Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry”. It is also clear from numerous BBC reports that the Corporation, in the absence of any other figures to report, has decided, for example, that the casualty figures given by a terrorist organisation should be treated (as per 12.4.1) as “the source which carries the greatest authority”, which is deeply concerning in and of itself.
- f) **The BBC has a responsibility to properly inform its audience when they are quoting a source which belongs to an organisation proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the British Government. If a news segment refers to Hamas or Hezbollah, for example, the first mention of the organisations in that segment should be making clear, for example, “Hamas, which is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the British Government”.** At the moment the draft BBC guidelines suggest – correctly – that extreme caution needs to be used when approaching a group designated as a terrorist group by the British government (12.3.8), but seem less concerned about ensuring that their audience are aware of the designation of such groups. A BBC broadcast should not start with the assumption that viewers or listeners are fully informed on a subject and will know that the

sources being quoted are proscribed as terrorist organisations in this country. Lack of clarity in this regard amounts to an abject failure by the Corporation itself and should urgently be clarified in its editorial guidelines.

g) Point 3.4.13 in the Draft guidelines includes the following:

Material supplied by third parties, including news providers, needs to be treated with appropriate caution, taking account of the reputation of the source. This should make it clear that particular caution should be exercised around stringers and freelance camera operators who may also work for or operate under the control or supervision of governments, NGOs, campaign groups, or militias or may have affiliations or sympathies with parties to the conflict which they have not disclosed.

This should be cross referenced with the section regarding coverage of war and conflict. In Gaza, under Hamas control, or indeed in Lebanon in areas under Hezbollah control., it is not possible for any stringers or freelancers to provide any material, footage or opinion which criticises Hamas (or Hezbollah) in any way, or content which shows Hamas or Hezbollah fighters, munitions or military installations, for fear of reprisal. This has meant, at the very least, that every provider of such content was providing carefully censored (and potentially misleading) material. In numerous cases, Gaza-based contributors or stringers for international news networks have been found to have worked closely with Hamas¹⁶. It is possible to argue that there was no other way for such journalist to pursue their profession without Hamas sanction. But at the very least this should raise questions about the motives of such contributors, particularly as the BBC and other broadcasters have been punctilious in qualifying any Israeli Defence Forces claims as unverified and referencing IDF restrictions preventing foreign reporters having independent access to Gaza or areas of operation in Southern Lebanon.

Due diligence needs to be thorough; anyone who is found subsequently to be unsuitable for those reasons should immediately be dropped and their previous material removed from BBC archives and platforms.

4) The need to elucidate that these guidelines apply across the entirety of BBC output, including foreign-language BBC output.

a) The introduction to the 2024 BBC Draft Editorial Guidelines currently includes the following:

The BBC must publish, review periodically and ensure the observance of guidelines designed to secure appropriate editorial standards for its UK Public Services. It must also safeguard and maintain the editorial integrity and high quality of the BBC World Service and BBC Monitoring.

¹⁶ <https://honestreporting.com/exposed-foreign-media-journalists-in-gaza-participated-in-hamas-loyalty-day/>

Producing and upholding these Editorial Guidelines fulfils those requirements. They apply to all content broadcast or published by the BBC whoever creates it and however and wherever in the world it is made or received.

- b) The BBC's response to the actions of a number of its journalists for BBC Arabic since October 7th 2023 strongly suggests that **the BBC needs to make it unequivocally clear that its editorial guidelines also apply to foreign language output channels and the staffers who work for such channels – in particular BBC Arabic.**
- c) In October 2023, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA) reported that a number of BBC Arabic employees had either made statements or shown approval for the statements of others celebrating the October 7th massacre by Hamas. These employees included:
 - i. Sanaa Khouri, who liked statements about sweets being handed out in Lebanon in celebration of the massacre and about Gaza being “the only liberated point in the world”¹⁷.
 - ii. Mahmoud Sheleib, who on the 8th October mocked an Israeli woman whose grandmother had been murdered by Hamas. He suggested that she had shared details about her grandmother in order to get her killed by Hamas, in order to receive an inheritance¹⁸.
 - iii. Soha Ibrahim, who liked a series of posts documenting celebrations of the massacre¹⁹.
 - iv. Sally Nabil, who similarly liked posts praising the massacre²⁰.
 - v. Salma Khattab, who on October 7th posted a picture of the Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh (killed in 2022 during an exchange of fire between the IDF and terrorists in Jenin) with the caption “smile”²¹.
- d) A number of these journalists were initially suspended by the BBC, only for all the suspensions to be lifted. Those journalists were then inexplicably still used by the BBC to report on the Israel-Gaza conflict²².
- e) It is difficult to imagine that the BBC would have reacted in this manner if these journalists were working for one of its English-language channels. It is vital that the BBC editorial guidelines be fully enforced across all language channels, and the above example should emphatically demonstrate why we believe in particular that BBC Arabic should be included by name.

¹⁷ <https://x.com/CAMERAorgUK/status/1833134017182302461>

¹⁸ <https://x.com/CAMERAorgUK/status/1833134023498965189>

¹⁹ <https://x.com/CAMERAorgUK/status/1833134026908946516>

²⁰ <https://x.com/CAMERAorgUK/status/1833134029823979968>

²¹ <https://x.com/CAMERAorgUK/status/1833134032608981288>

²² <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/02/bbc-journalists-october-7-massacre-israel-gaza-conflict/>

5) The need for the Corporation to ensure it can effectively be held to account regarding the implementation of these editorial guidelines

- a) The BBC Editorial Guidelines seem in broad terms sensible (albeit with the need, as described in detail in points 1-4, for additional clarity on key issues), and in keeping with what should be expected of a public broadcaster operating within a democratic framework. However, they rest on a great deal of unstated assumptions and relies on the good will, good sense and general good faith of those tasked with interpreting it and enforcing it. For instance, questions of impartiality and balance, are according to the Guidelines matters of judgement, while the BBC's assertion of its right to Editorial Freedom, allows it to override almost every other constraint, if it so determines.
- b) While the Guidelines are a public document, the public has no apparent right beyond that of consultation and there is limited or no transparency about how they are interpreted, applied and enforced. The Guidelines are the responsibility of the BBC's own Editorial Policy Team whose composition and manner of selection are not publicly available. Access to that information is only available on a BBC website that is password protected. The ultimate arbiter is the Director of Editorial Policy and Standards, David Jordan, who has held that post since 2007. Effectively the BBC is legislator, judge and jury.
- c) The Guidelines do not include any discussion about enforcement or sanctions against staff who fail to abide by the Guidelines. One would expect failure to comply to entail some disciplinary action with the option of dismissal in the case of egregious or persistent offences.

6) Additional Points requiring clarification

- a) 2.4.20 of the draft guidelines mentions that:

Listening to and engaging with audiences and including their perspectives is central to the BBC's output.

This is vague phrasing. Is it talking about on-screen audience participation, eg. in programmes such as Any Questions? Or is it talking about viewers and listeners in general? And if the latter, is this talking about reporting on view of the general public or responding to views from the general public about output? There is a need for this point in the Draft Guidelines to be expanded further.

- b) 2.4.26 of the draft guidelines mentions that:

There are some issues which may seem to be without controversy, appearing to be backed by a broad or even unanimous consensus of opinion. Nevertheless, these issues may present a significant risk to the BBC's impartiality, for instance, where opinion may change over time, or where a minority holds a view.

This needs greater clarity as to how the BBC defines and judges "consensus". Are we talking about the UK only, or the international community more broadly? Are we talking about "elite opinion"? Also reflecting consensus, even if accurate, may result in coverage which does not reflect the reality on the ground, when the BBC ought to be challenging the consensus in the interest of accuracy and truth.

c) 3.4.2 of the draft guidelines states that:

In news and current affairs content, achieving due accuracy is more important than speed.

This point needs to be reinforced, particularly with reference to the risks of misreporting of highly sensitive incidents. What needs to be highlighted here is the risk of being seduced into disseminating false and damaging information either because of reporters' or producers' own biases or fear of being "scooped". In particular, the BBC's reputation was significantly damaged by its rush to report on the situation at the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza, with completely inaccurate information widely disseminated by the Corporation²³. The initial offence of misreporting which had severe consequences was compounded by the reluctance of those involved to admit to severity of the error. Most news organisations treat instances of gross inaccuracy as a firing offence. The BBC should do so as well and make this clear in the guidelines. It should also specify that where such inaccuracies make it on air, there should be a rapid and prominent correction.

Conclusion

The formulation of new Editorial Guidelines for the BBC should be seen as an opportunity for the Corporation to actively seek to remedy some of the most troubling incidents which have occurred in recent years relating to its output, and ideally get ahead of them, rather than, as it often appears, having to indulge in damage limitation after the fact. In some cases, such incidents were able to happen precisely because of ambiguities relating to the BBC's editorial rules, either in its reporting or via the actions of those most closely associated with it. There also seems to be a lack of

²³ <https://www.thejc.com/news/bbc-international-editor-jeremy-bowen-admits-gaza-hospital-report-was-inaccurate-jtluww3n>

awareness in some areas of the BBC of the need to ensure the Guidelines are consistently applied.

The BBC is one of the most trusted news outlets in the UK, but in recent years has seen a steady erosion of that trust from the general public²⁴. In part this is due to a propensity to circle the wagons when faced with valid criticism, as well as a lack of transparency over editorial decisions which is unbecoming from a public broadcaster. The Board of Deputies is encouraged by the active efforts of the BBC to seek views in relation to the updating of its editorial guidelines; the points made here are intended to be constructive suggestions which will help to significantly improve the nature of the Corporation going forward, and directly address some of the key issues which have sadly led to a loss of trust from many in the Jewish community in recent years. We sincerely hope that the Corporation will receive and study this response with this in mind.

²⁴ <https://pressgazette.co.uk/news/times-telegraph-trust/>