
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

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Introduction

This Bulletin reports on complaints made to Ofcom about the BBC's online material. It gives the outcome of Ofcom's consideration on each complaint received and where relevant, provides Ofcom's opinion on whether the BBC observed the relevant standards for its online material.

Under the BBC's Charter and Agreement, set by Government and Parliament, the BBC is responsible for the editorial standards of its online material. Ofcom has a responsibility to consider and give an opinion on whether the BBC has observed relevant editorial guidelines in its online material¹. This came into effect with the Digital Economy Act on 27 April 2017.

Online material means content on the BBC's website and apps. This includes written text, images, video and sound content. It does not extend to social media, Bitesize, BBC material on third party websites and World Service content, among other things.

Ofcom's published arrangements and procedures for handling complaints about BBC online material can be found here on the Ofcom website: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/ofcom-and-the-bbc/bbc-online-material>. These documents contain more information about the types of complaints we will consider and the process we will normally follow when handling complaints.

Complaints about BBC online material must follow the 'BBC First' approach, where they are made to the BBC in the first instance. If a complainant is not satisfied with the BBC's final response to a complaint about its online material, they may seek an independent opinion on it from Ofcom.

Unlike our role regulating the standards of BBC broadcasting and on demand programme services (such as the BBC iPlayer), Ofcom has no enforcement powers for BBC online material.

¹ This does not include content on BBC on demand programme services (such as the BBC iPlayer), which must comply with relevant rules in Ofcom's [Broadcasting Code](#).

Complaints assessed, not accepted

Closed between 15 September and 9 November 2018

Below is an alphabetical list of complaints which, after careful assessment, Ofcom considered did not raise substantive issues under the relevant BBC editorial guidelines that warranted further consideration by Ofcom.

For more information about how Ofcom assesses complaints about BBC online material go to:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf.

Complaints about BBC online material

BBC online material	Date ²	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	n/a	n/a	1
BBC News website: Somaliland passes first law against rape	08/01/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Gaza air strikes 'kill woman and child' after rockets hit Israel	09/08/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: 9/11 attack: New York City subway station reopens after 17 years	09/09/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News article	27/10/2018	Harm and offence	1

² This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC First

Complaints closed between 15 September and 9 November 2018

Complaints about BBC online material, made to Ofcom in the first instance

The table below is an alphabetical list of complaints about the BBC's online material which Ofcom has not assessed. This is because Ofcom only considers complaints about the BBC's online material if the complainant has already complained to the BBC and the BBC has reached its final view on the complaint. The complaints in this table were made to Ofcom before completing the BBC's process.

BBC online material	Date ³	Category	Number of complaints
BBC website	n/a	Accuracy	1
BBC News website	n/a	Fairness	1
BBC News website	n/a	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Jailed British-Iranian faces new charge	n/a	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Macular degeneration: 'I've been given my sight back'	19/03/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Israel-Palestinian conflict: Life in the Gaza Strip	15/05/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: MPs criticise government clean energy policies	16/05/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Ireland abortion referendum: What is the law?	25/05/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: NHS funding: Theresa May unveils £20bn boost	17/06/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: OPCW finds 'chlorinated compounds' in Syria's Douma	07/07/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Brain damage 'more likely in cardiac arrest patients given adrenaline'	19/07/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Brexit: What would 'no deal' mean for aviation?	31/07/2018	Impartiality	1

³ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC online material	Date	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	04/08/2016	Accuracy	1
n/a	13/08/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC website	15/09/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Iran blames Gulf foes for deadly Ahvaz attack	21/09/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Labour plans to give tenants more power	24/09/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC website	03/10/2018	Other	1
BBC News website: Injunction seeks to halt start of fracking at Lancashire site	06/10/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Five things we have learned from the IPCC report	10/10/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Brexit: 'No optimism' for summit breakthrough, says Donald Tusk	16/10/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC Scotland website	18/10/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Budget 2018: Labour urges Hammond to 'stump up cash'	25/10/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC Sport website	25/10/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Sri Lanka crisis: Ousted PM 'has confidence of parliament'	01/11/2018	Impartiality	1

Out of remit complaints

The table below includes complaints which have not been assessed by Ofcom because they fall outside of Ofcom's remit under its arrangement with the BBC.

BBC online material	Date ⁴	Number of Complaints
BBC News website	01/09/2018	1
n/a	08/09/2018	1
Twitter: Brexit: Economists say UK has 'nothing to fear' from no-deal exit	11/09/2018	1
Twitter	25/09/2018	1
Various	08/10/2018	1
BBC 3 Facebook	01/11/2018	1

For information about how Ofcom deals with different types of BBC complaints, go to:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint/how-ofcom-deals-with-bbc-complaints>

⁴ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material.