

## **PRIVATE & STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

### **Code of conduct: Coverage of law and order, including incidents of terrorism**

#### **Preamble:**

PBA members are concerned about the security problems facing Pakistan. In order to protect public's right to know in accordance with Article 17 of Constitution, proper coverage of terrorist activities can help save lives, prevent future terrorist activities as well as help in holding those accountable who are responsible for our collective safety. The following is a volunteer code of conduct regarding terrorism coverage that PBA members recommend in order to meet the requirements of public interest.

The compliance SOP will be created by PBA when its larger code of conduct will be presented and after comprehensive discussion and debate approved by its own members. The volunteer code of conduct shall be applicable to all PBA members. Public interest shall be the determining factor at all times in interpreting and implementing the following:

**Clause – 1:** PBA members will be required to avoid glorifying or depicting a heroic picture of terrorism or terrorist activity.

**Clause – 2:** Reporting on criminal activities such as hostagetakings, or terrorist acts will be done in a manner so as to ensure that it does not knowingly endanger lives.

**Clause – 3:** Telephone or other direct contact with hostages or terrorist/hostage takers or both should only be undertaken if, in the judgment of the senior most editorial person in newsroom, such activity does not interfere with the authorities' communications or further jeopardize the safety of hostages or would negatively interfere with a peaceful resolution.

**Clause – 4:** Archival footage indication should be made on the screen through graphics and also verbally by anchor.

**Clause – 5:** During live coverage of events such as bomb blasts and other terrorist attacks, PBA members will try to avoid detailed depictions of body parts. Alerts / Warnings should be displayed where there is anticipation of coverage that children should not watch unsupervised and also where distress can be caused to viewers.

**Clause – 6:** a) Definition of a terrorist/terrorists should be provided by Government of Pakistan. Notified list of Terrorists and Terrorist organizations will be provided by Government of Pakistan through Information Ministry and updated on minimum monthly basis. This will include names of terrorists to avoid potential confusion as well as their visuals.

b) Definition of terrorists as per the official list will become flexible when that organization or said person is being aided or facilitated by the Government or any security agency of Pakistan.

**Clause – 7:** While reporting on specific identity of victims of violence due to terrorism, PBA members will ensure as far as reasonably possible that next of kin do not learn immediately of the relative's death or serious injuries to him/her through news bulletin.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM:**

PEMRA will have informal interaction with Broadcasters: (A) verbal note of concern; and (B) A general note of concern in writing. One or two statements or comments in a span of couple of days should not prompt a notice. Only when a pattern of deliberate neglect is emerging, PEMRA will issue a formal notice to the broadcaster. However, once a show-cause notice is received, member-broadcaster will give the reply in writing to PEMRA. In case PEMRA is dissatisfied with the reply of the broadcaster; the regulator can approach PBA for resolution of the complaint.

The member broadcaster can nominate any two fellow member broadcasters of his choice to defend the broadcaster's case before the regulator and to mutually achieve the objectives of this Code. During this period PEMRA shall refrain from any coercive action against a member broadcaster unilaterally.

**N.B: The above implementation mechanism will be an interim arrangement, till such time PBA frames its own implementation mechanism.**