

Complaints dealt with by the Communications Authority (“CA”) (released on 20 February 2025)

The CA has considered the following complaint case –

[Television Programme “Planet Under Fire” \(戰場上\) broadcast by Television Broadcasts Limited \(“TVB”\)](#)

The CA also reviewed the decisions of the Director-General of Communications (“DG Com”) on two complaint cases.

Having considered the recommendations of the Broadcast Complaints Committee, the CA decided that –

1. the complaints against the television programme “Planet Under Fire” (戰場上) were **unsubstantiated** and no further action should be taken against TVB; and
2. the decisions of the DG Com on the complaint cases should be upheld. Details of the cases are set out in the [Appendix](#).

20 February 2025

Case – Television Programme “Planet Under Fire” (戰場上) broadcast from 10:30pm to 11:05pm on 4 and 5 November 2024 on Jade Channel of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB)

A total of 581 members of the public complained about two episodes of the captioned programme (the Programme), mainly alleging that the Programme –

- (a) presented one-sided views on the Russia-Ukraine war (the War), which was partial, inaccurate, misleading, unnerving, offensive and unfair to one of the countries concerned;
- (b) denigrated and incited hatred against one of the countries concerned; and
- (c) exerted a bad influence on young viewers.

The Communications Authority (CA)’s Findings

In line with the established practice, the CA considered the complaint case and the representations of TVB in detail. The CA took into account the relevant aspects of the case, including the following –

Details of the Case

- (a) the Programme featured the hostess visiting various war zone areas in Ukraine where she talked to some civilians or war victims, accompanied with some brief war footages; and
- (b) TVB submitted that the Programme offered viewers exposures to the lives of people in war-stricken areas, focusing on personal stories of war survivors and their everyday lives and the devastating impact of the War. TVB did not receive any external funding for the production of the Programme. The Programme factually presented the information concerned to viewers, did not denigrate or incite hatred against any specific country, make references or accusations against who started the War or give judgement on which party was right or wrong in the War. Nonetheless, having regard to some public comments on the Programme, TVB decided to cancel the broadcast of the remaining episodes.

Relevant Provisions in the Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards (TV Programme Code)

- (a) paragraph 1 of Chapter 2 – as a matter of principle, programmes should always be scheduled with an awareness of the likely audience in mind. Great care and sensitivity should be exercised to avoid shocking or offending the audience;
- (b) paragraph 1 of Chapter 3 – licensees should avoid needlessly offending audiences by what they broadcast;

- (c) paragraph 2(b) of Chapter 3 – a licensee should not include in its programmes any material which is likely to encourage hatred against or fear of, and/or considered to be denigrating or insulting to any person(s) or group(s) on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, among others;
- (d) paragraph 1 of Chapter 7 – the licensee should be vigilant on the likely effects of all material shown on television on children and exercise judgement on the capacity of children in different age groups in coping with the depiction and treatment of material which may not be suitable for them;
- (e) paragraph 2 of Chapter 9 – the licensee shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that factual contents of, among others, documentaries, are accurate;
- (f) paragraph 3 of Chapter 9 – the licensees must ensure that due impartiality is preserved in factual programmes dealing with matters of public policy or controversial issues of public importance in Hong Kong; and
- (g) paragraph 10 of Chapter 9 – the licensees have a responsibility to avoid unfairness to individuals or organisations featured in factual programmes, in particular through the use of inaccurate information or distortion.

The CA's Consideration

The CA, having regard to the relevant facts of the case, considered that –

- (a) the Programme, which featured war-related actuality (including war footages and interviews with civilians in the war-stricken areas), was in essence a documentary and also a factual programme, and should be subject to the requirements of accuracy and fairness under the TV Programme Code. Nonetheless, given the fact that the War was a geopolitical conflict in Europe, it should not be considered a matter of public policy or controversial issue of public importance in Hong Kong. Therefore, the impartiality rule in the TV Programme Code is not applicable to this case;
- (b) there was no evidence suggesting that the content of the Programme was not factually correct or contained inaccurate information. The interviewees and the hostess occasionally expressed their sympathy for the loss of lives and destruction in the War as their personal views instead of stating them as facts. Nor did the Programme carry any judgement as to which specific party was right or wrong during the War or should take the blame. Hence, there was insufficient evidence indicating that the Programme contained inaccurate or distorted contents that would have misled viewers in a way which was unfair to any individuals or organisations involved in the War;
- (c) the remarks made by the interviewees who claimed to have experienced the War in the Programme were not made against any person(s) or group(s) on the basis of ethnicity, nationality or race. Nor were they presented in a provocative or

sentimental manner, or as overt criticisms against any parties concerned. As such, there was insufficient evidence suggesting that the Programme was in a breach of the relevant provision; and

- (d) there was no depiction of gruesome details or bloody images of the dead or injured in the Programme that could be regarded as unnerving or offensive. Overall, there was nothing in the Programme that could be regarded as unsuitable for broadcast or viewing by young viewers.

Decision

In view of the above, the CA considered that the complaints were **unsubstantiated** and decided that no further action should be taken against TVB.

Appendix

Review of the Director-General of Communications' Decisions on Complaint Cases by the Communications Authority

Title	Broadcast Channel	Broadcast Date	Substance of Complaint	Decision Upheld
TV Programme “Speaking Up” (有理說得清)	TVB Jade	5.7.2024	Inaccuracy & Misleading	Unsubstantiated
TV Programme “Serengeti” (森林女王)	TVB Jade	15-19.7.2024 & 22-26.7.2024	Inaccuracy & Misleading	Minor Breaches