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# 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 material<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf).

### Complaints about BBC online material

| <b>BBC online material</b>   | <b>Date<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>Category</b>  | <b>Number of complaints</b> |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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                           |

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

| <b>BBC online material</b>   | <b>Date<sup>3</sup></b> | <b>Category</b> | <b>Number of complaints</b> |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 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                           |

<sup>3</sup> 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.

| <b>BBC online material</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Category</b>  | <b>Number of complaints</b> |
|---|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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 <sup>4</sup> | 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>

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<sup>4</sup> This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material.