



2018-42: Lascaris vs Toronto Sun  
*August 9, 2018- for immediate release*

The National NewsMedia Council has mediated a complaint about accuracy and bias in a June 10 article in the Toronto Sun.

The complainant, Dimitri Lascaris, stated that a photo caption was inaccurate in that it described a flag as that of “the terror group Hezbollah.” He pointed out that the flag in question was that of the Followers of Zainab Brigade.

The complainant also stated that the article was biased and lacked balance, noting that it quoted from three harsh critics, none of whom attended the rally that was the subject of the article, and that no participant or organizer was quoted.

The NNC found that the complaint about accuracy of the photo was addressed the day the complaint was submitted by the NNC to the news media organization. Corrective action was taken in that the photo has been changed to one that showed the Hezbollah flag, and a correction notice was appended to the online article. While the caption line for the photo referred to ‘wearing’ rather than holding the flag, the flag itself was now correctly identified.

Regarding the complaint about bias, the NNC noted that the article’s author is a columnist for the news organization. The National NewsMedia Council upholds long-accepted journalistic practice that gives columnists and opinion writers wide latitude to express unpopular views. Standard journalistic practice allows opinion writers to question issues, express a point of view, and use strong language.

While the complainant objected to the opinion writer’s choice of interviewees for the article, the NNC found that choice to be within the latitude of a columnist writing an opinion article.

While the opinion writer’s point of view was unwelcome to the complainant, the article itself was within the bounds of an opinion piece.

In light of the above, the NNC found corrective action had been taken on the accuracy portion of the complaint, and that there was no breach of journalistic practice or ethics on the bias portion, and no grounds for a complaint.

However, the NNC recognizes that journalism is frequently criticized for being ‘biased’, often because the distinction between news and opinion is not clear to the reader.

In this case, the opinion category was flagged by including the writer’s name in capital letters in the headline, but at the same time the article was filed as ‘news’. This can leave the reader confused about the nature of the article, and can damage readers’ trust in the media. The NNC recommends strong, consistent measures to distinguish news from opinion articles.