



ADJUDICATION NO: 17/A/2026

NAME OF PROGRAMME: NEWS
DATE AND TIME OF BROADCAST: 19 MAY AT 13;00
BROADCASTER: MULTICHOICE NEWZROOM AFRIKA
COMPLAINANT: NAICKER

COMPLAINT SUMMARY

Complainant is of the view that the news report was unbalance and misleading.

APPLICABLE CLAUSES

CLAUSE 28.1 OF THE SUBSCRIPTION CODE AND CLAUSE 9 OF THE ONLINE CODE

28.1 NEWS

28.1.1 Licensees must report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.

28.1.2 News must be presented in the correct context and in a fair manner, without intentional or negligent departure from the facts, whether by –

28.1.2.1 distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation;

28.1.2.2 material omissions;

ADJUDICATION

[1] A complaint was lodged with the BCCSA against a Newzroom Afrika news report of the 19th of May.

[2] **The complaint reads as follows:**

"I hereby lodge a formal and urgent complaint against Newzroom Afrika regarding what I believe to be highly biased, unbalanced, and potentially misleading reporting broadcast on 19 May 2026 concerning a march held near Durban Railway Station in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

As a South African viewer, I am deeply concerned by what appeared to be one-sided coverage that gave substantial airtime to the organisers and participants of the march while failing to provide equivalent coverage to the views and concerns of South African citizens who are directly affected by the broader issues being discussed. In my opinion, the manner in which this story was presented created the impression that the broadcaster had adopted a particular stance rather than maintaining the neutrality and impartiality expected of a professional news organisation.

The role of any credible media outlet is to inform the public in a manner that is accurate, balanced, and fair. Newzroom Afrika, as a national broadcaster with significant influence, has an obligation to ensure that all relevant perspectives are fairly represented and that contested claims are properly verified before being presented as fact. When a broadcaster appears to favour one perspective while marginalising others, it undermines public trust and raises serious concerns regarding compliance with the Broadcasting Code of Conduct.

I am particularly concerned about the reporting by Zikhona Ntshona. In my view, portions of the report appeared to present allegations and assertions without sufficient factual substantiation and in a manner that suggested undue sympathy toward one side of a highly sensitive and divisive public issue. Whether intentional or not, this approach conveyed an impression of partiality that falls short of the standards expected from responsible journalism.

South Africans rely on the media to provide objective reporting, especially on matters that generate strong public debate and concern. Coverage that appears selective, uncritical, or one-sided risks inflaming tensions and distorting public understanding rather than promoting informed discourse. Broadcasters have a duty to exercise exceptional care when reporting on such issues and to avoid any perception that they are advocating for one group over another.

I respectfully request that the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa conduct a thorough investigation into this broadcast and determine:

Whether Newzroom Afrika complied with the requirements of fairness, accuracy, and balance under the Broadcasting Code of Conduct.

Whether adequate steps were taken to verify statements made during the report.

Whether the presentation and framing of the story created an unreasonable perception of bias.

Whether the conduct of the reporter adhered to the standards of impartial and responsible journalism.

Should the investigation reveal breaches of the Broadcasting Code, I request that appropriate remedial action be considered to ensure that similar concerns do not arise in future broadcasts.

This complaint is submitted in the interest of protecting the integrity of South African journalism and ensuring that broadcasters remain accountable to the public they serve.

The media plays a critical role in our democracy, and it is essential that all reporting be conducted with fairness, objectivity, and respect for the diverse perspectives within our society.

I trust that this matter will receive the serious and urgent attention it deserves. I would appreciate acknowledgment of receipt of this complaint and feedback regarding the outcome of your investigation.

Thank you for your email and for outlining the requirements for lodging a formal complaint.

Please accept this email as my formal complaint against newzroomafrika.com concerning what I believe to be one-sided, unbalanced, and potentially misleading reporting broadcast on 19 May 2026 regarding a march that took place near Durban Central Police Station.

I respectfully request that my residential address and personal contact details be treated as confidential and used solely for purposes of administering this complaint.

DETAILS OF THE BROADCAST

Broadcaster: Newzroom Afrika Programme: News Bulletin Date of Broadcast: 19 May 2026
Approximate Time of Broadcast: 13:00
Reporter: Zikhona Ntshona and Stephen Grootes
Location Reported On: Durban Central Station, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

AIM OF THE MARCH

As reported, the march concerned the treatment and rights of foreign nationals residing in South Africa and related concerns raised by the participants.

NATURE OF THE COMPLAINT

The basis of my complaint is that the report appeared to be one-sided and gave extensive airtime to the views and allegations of the march participants, without providing balanced coverage or adequate representation of the perspectives and concerns of South African citizens who may hold different views on the same issues.

In my view, the report was presented in a manner that conveyed sympathy toward one side of a contentious public issue and did not subject statements made during the broadcast to sufficient scrutiny or verification. This created a strong impression of bias and partiality rather than objective reporting.

EXAMPLES OF THE ALLEGED CONTRAVENTION

Extensive airtime was given to the organisers and participants of the march.
Alternative viewpoints were not meaningfully presented.

Statements and allegations were aired without clear factual substantiation.
The overall framing of the story conveyed an impression of favouring one perspective.
Thank you for your response. Please see below the examples:

- Zikhona Ntshona chases after an illegal immigrant lady and gives her airtime to voice her grievances. As the lady is speaking, she starts assisting her in adding that its March and March responsible for their uplifting. She is not objective in her questioning, further fuelling accusations that Newsroom Afrika is bias.

- Stephen Grootes extensively questions the police spokesperson Col Netshiunda about why they are allowing immigrants to be harassed without giving right of reply.

March and March and other civil organizations have been marching peacefully all this time but they are always labeled as "Vigilantee Groups" amongst other names.

This channel spreads this misinformation as the "immigrants " aren't asked legal status questions, how they got into the country, why are they here etc.

Please can this matter be addressed urgently as South Africans' are watching this misinformation and propaganda.

RELEVANT CODE PROVISIONS

I believe the broadcast may have contravened the provisions of the BCCSA Subscription Code requiring that news be reported truthfully, accurately, and fairly, and that controversial issues of public importance be presented in a balanced manner.

REASONS FOR THIS VIEW

The reporting of sensitive and controversial issues requires journalists to maintain neutrality and ensure that viewers are presented with a fair and balanced account of differing perspectives. In this instance, the report appeared to adopt and amplify one viewpoint while excluding or minimising other legitimate perspectives. Such reporting risks undermining public confidence in the impartiality and credibility of the media.

REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION

I respectfully request that the Commission investigate this broadcast and determine whether Newzroom Afrika complied with the applicable standards of fairness, accuracy, and balance under the Subscription Code of Conduct.

I further request that appropriate action be taken should the Commission find that the broadcaster failed to uphold these standards.

Thank you for your consideration of this complaint. I trust that this matter will receive the serious attention it deserves and I look forward to receiving acknowledgment and feedback regarding the outcome of your investigation."

[3] The Broadcaster responded as follows:

"NEWZROOM AFRIKA'S RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT BY MR NAICKER

1. We refer to the complaint submitted to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (the "BCCSA") by Mr Mike Naicker ("the Complainant") on 19 May 2026.
2. We thank you for bringing this matter to our attention as we take all feedback seriously and appreciate the opportunity to address the concerns raised by the Complainant.
3. Kindly note that we will not respond to each and every allegation raised in the complaint and our failure to do so should not be construed as an admission of wrongdoing or a waiver of our rights. Our rights are strictly reserved.
4. On 19 May 2026 at approximately 11:35, Newzroom Afrika started covering a story about a group of foreign nationals who had camped overnight outside the Durban Central Police Station in KwaZulu Natal. This group stated that they had camped there seeking protection from the South African Police Services as they were fearing for their lives in their respective communities where they reside.

5. This broadcast was covering live, ongoing events and following the movements of this group. The broadcast sought to gain an understanding of the reason that the group was gathered outside the police station and an understanding of their intentions. To do so, it was necessary to speak to the various members of the group and their leaders. As the story developed quickly, with SAPS moving the group away from the police station, this had to be covered and their sentiments on the removal and the manner in which it was happening had to be captured. The broadcast was live and Newzroom Afrika has limited control over what occurs in this instance. As a credible news broadcaster, our responsibility when covering protests or marches is to report these events as they occur and to accurately report the issues being raised by the participants. This has also been seen in our coverage of the March and March protests in recent weeks on the issue of illegal immigration, which coverage included the concerns and frustrations expressed by South African citizens on this matter.
6. We submit that reporting on grievances and experiences expressed by the marchers or protestors neither amounts to an endorsement of their views, nor does it contravene the Broadcasting Complaints Commission Subscription Code of Conduct.
7. For the reasons outlined below, we vehemently deny any allegation that the report was one-sided and reported the views and allegations of the march participants without providing balanced coverage or adequate representation of the perspectives and concerns of South African citizens who hold different views. We submit that the concerns and frustrations of South Africans with regards to illegal immigration have been extensively reported and are, as of 19 May 2026, well-known and documented.
8. We further deny any assertion that the foreign nationals' claims were reported as an established and verified fact. Notably, the Complainant has not listed the claims he alleges are unverified, we therefore are left to assume that this refers to the claims of being chased from their homes and threats alleged by the group of foreign nationals.
9. At approximately 12:49 on 19 May 2026, we crossed to Durban Central just as the police were actively dispersing the crowd. During this crossing, our reporter provided context to the situation, described the police's response to the group and covered the group's reactions. Our anchor, then provided further context explaining the we had over the last few weeks been broadcasting the protests by March and March and the organisation's stance on illegal immigration. This refers to the relevant organisation's viewpoint as far as possible during the chaotic moments of the day. We further stated that we are attempting to obtain comment from the Police Services to understand their response to the group of foreign nationals considering their reasons for being outside the Police Station.
10. In accordance with that statement, we conducted an interview with the KwaZulu Natal Police's Spokesperson, Mr Robert Netshuinda, for their perspective, response, explanation of their approach on the day and their plans to deal with the rising tensions going forward. This interview was conducted at 13:00.
 - 10.1. This interview made it clear that no cases had been opened and no evidence of the claims was provided to the police, therefore the claims made by the group regarding threats of harm and attacks were clearly unverified.
 - 10.2. At no point did our anchor, Stephen Grootes, ask Mr Netshuinda why they are allowing immigrants to be harassed without giving a right of reply. It is unclear what the Complainant means with this allegations and who should have been given a right of reply in this instance. Nonetheless, for your reference, the set of questions asked by Mr Grootes were as follows:

- (i) "... Robert, thank you for talking to us at such short notice. This group of people said that they were camping outside the police station because they needed a safe place. Can I ask, why have you decided to move them, to disperse them in this way?"
- (ii) "You seem to now being moving them far from the police station, they must have gone several blocks, is it necessary to push them so far away? They claim they looking for a safe place."
- (iii) "Robert, I appreciate what you say but do you really think that the police are going to investigate when a foreign national says they're feeling threatened? I think that they feel that that won't happen and that's why they've come here, they need a focal point, they need a central point here they know nothing bad can happen to them. I mean we all know the experience that many people have, whoever you are, when you go to a police station, cases aren't investigated?"
- (iv) "We know that the March and March movement, and I realise it's very difficult for the police, there's a very large group of people, they have protests, we saw what happened outside the Addington Primary School, for example. I realise it's a difficult situation for you. What are you going to try and do to, at the very least, keep the peace, whether it's March and March, whether it's foreign nationals whoever is breaking the law? This issue not going to go away. People on both sides are very angry for all sorts of reasons. What are you able to do to, at the very least, keep the peace in KwaZulu-Natal?"

10.3. Evidently, no question about the "harassment" of immigrants was asked. The focus of the interview is very clearly to understand the response of the police to the events of the day and requesting insight into the police's plans for ensuring peace in the province where the various marches has been held.

- 11. At no point in the broadcasts of the day did Newzroom Afrika label March and March as a "vigilante group". They are legitimately referred to as an organisation or an anti-illegal immigration organisation.
- 12. On the same day and upon receipt of the group's views and sentiments during the course of the day, we conducted an interview with the leader of March and March, Ms Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, whose organisation is alleged to be the reason that the group fled their residences to camp at the police station for safety. The interview occurred at 17:06. This interview is the most appropriate and relevant to relay the response and views of March and March and, by extension, their supporters. It also makes it clear that the allegations of threats made by the foreign nationals during the course of the day are unverified.
- 13. Accordingly, we submit that the above interviews served to provide sufficient balance to the broadcast, ensuring that all **relevant** perspectives are fairly represented. They made it clear that the claims of threats and attacks made by the group of foreign nationals are unverified in light of the fact that no cases had been opened and no evidence had been provided to the police.
- 14. We further deny that our reporter assisted any interviewee to add that it is March and March who has threatened them, as alleged by the Complainant. March and March is named in response to the following question:

14.1. Q: "You say they are chasing you out to leave. What is said to you when you are being chased out to leave? Who was chasing you out?"

A: "Firstly, the March to March..."

14.2. This is a reasonable question and is not leading in any way.

15. The Complainant's dissatisfaction with the questions posed does not automatically render the broadcast biased, misleading or automatically amount to a contravention of the BCCSA Code or propaganda. The complainant appears to conflate the act of reporting on the grievances expressed by protest participants with endorsement of those views. Respectfully, reporting on statements made by interviewees during a public protest does not amount to the broadcaster adopting or promoting those views.
16. Broadcasts must be assessed holistically, and not by isolating individual elements. The Complainant submitted his complaint at 14:18 whilst the story was still developing and even continued into the next day. We are therefore of the view that the complaint was premature and without merit.
17. Our broader coverage of the various marches and protests on illegal immigration, demonstrates that we have consistently reported on multiple perspectives on illegal immigration and we will continue to do so.
18. For the reasons set out above, we are of the view that, in accordance with Clause 28 of the Code for Subscription Broadcasters, Newzroom Afrika:
 - 18.1. reported the events of 19 May 2026 truthfully, accurately and fairly, in real time, without distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation, material omissions or summarisation (per clause 28.1.1 and 28.1.2). In addition, the repeated use of the phrases they claim" or "they say" and the interviews conducted with the SAPS Spokesperson in KwaZulu Natal and Ms Ngobese-Zuma of March and March indicate clearly that the claims of threats and harm made by the foreign nationals during the broadcast were not established facts and were reported as claims and/or allegations (per clause 28.1.3).
 - 18.2. in presenting the broadcast in which controversial issues of public importance are discussed, made reasonable efforts to fairly present opposing points of view, namely those of the relevant parties, the South African Police Services and March and March regarding immigration and social tensions. These interviews were conducted on the same day and the right of reply exercised by both parties involved in the events of the day (SAPS) or mentioned as the reason for the foreign nationals camping outside the police station (March and March) (per clause 28.3).
19. The Subscription Code requires that news be reported truthfully, accurately and fairly. However, the Code does not require that every conceivable perspective on a contentious societal issue be contained within a single live crossing, bulletin, or interview segment. The test is one of overall fairness and whether the broadcaster took reasonable steps to present issues fairly within the broader context of its coverage.
20. Our editorial approach remains firmly guided by the principles enshrined in the Constitution and the BCCSA Code of Conduct, including freedom of expression, journalistic responsibility, and fairness. We believe our reports on the 19 May 2026 met those standards.

21. Accordingly, we do not find any merit in the complaint and request that it be dismissed.”

[4] The Complainant replied as follows:

“I acknowledge receipt of Newzroom Afrika's response and respectfully submit the following reply.

I do not accept Newzroom Afrika's contention that the complaint is without merit.

My complaint has never been that journalists should not interview foreign nationals or report on their grievances. Rather, my complaint is that the overall framing, tone and presentation of the coverage on 19 May 2026 created a perception of sympathy towards one group while failing to give equal prominence to the concerns of South Africans affected by the broader issues under discussion.

Newzroom Afrika argues that the concerns regarding illegal immigration are already "well-known and documented" and therefore did not require equivalent coverage. I respectfully disagree. The fact that a viewpoint may be well known does not relieve a broadcaster of its obligation to ensure fairness and balance when reporting on a controversial issue of public importance.

The broadcaster repeatedly aired the allegations and fears expressed by the group gathered outside Durban Central Police Station. While disclaimers such as "they claim" were occasionally used, the overall effect of the coverage was to place significant emphasis on those allegations and the emotional impact of those allegations. This inevitably influenced public perception.

I further submit that certain questions posed during the broadcast appeared to adopt assumptions favourable to one side of the dispute. For example, questions suggesting that people needed a safe place because "nothing bad can happen to them" and questioning whether the police would investigate complaints from foreign nationals could reasonably be interpreted by viewers as endorsing a particular narrative rather than maintaining strict neutrality.

While Newzroom Afrika subsequently interviewed SAPS and Ms Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, these interviews do not automatically cure concerns about the overall balance and framing of the coverage. The issue is not merely whether opposing voices were eventually heard, but whether all viewpoints were treated with equal scrutiny, equal scepticism and equal prominence.

The broadcaster's response also fails to address the perception held by many viewers that concerns raised by South African communities are frequently treated with greater scepticism than allegations made by foreign nationals. It is this perception of unequal treatment that lies at the heart of my complaint.

I therefore respectfully maintain that Newzroom Afrika did not meet the standard of fairness and balance required when covering a highly contentious public issue and I request that the Commission consider the cumulative effect of the coverage rather than isolated interviews or statements.

For these reasons, I ask that the complaint not be dismissed and that the Commission carefully consider whether the broadcaster's editorial approach on 19 May 2026 complied with the requirements of the Subscription Code regarding fairness, balance and the presentation of controversial issues of public importance.”

EVALUATION

- [5] The complaint is brought under Clauses 28.1.1 and 28.1.2 of the Code of Conduct for Subscription Broadcasting Service Licensees. Clause 28.1.1 requires that news be reported truthfully, accurately and fairly. Clause 28.1.2 requires that news be presented in the correct context and in a fair manner, without intentional or negligent departure from the facts, whether by distortion, exaggeration, misrepresentation, or material omission. The Complainant advances two interlocking grounds. The first ground being that the broadcast afforded disproportionate and uncritical airtime to the foreign nationals gathered outside Durban Central Police Station on 19 May 2026. The second ground being that the overall framing and tone of the coverage conveyed undue sympathy toward one side of a matter of acute public controversy. The broadcaster denies both grounds. In further amplification of its denial the Broadcaster relies upon the live and fast-breaking nature of the broadcast, the qualifying language employed throughout, and the balance achieved through subsequent interviews conducted on the same day.
- [6] It is necessary to identify the correct standard before evaluating the complaint on its merits. The Complainant frames the complaint principally in terms of balance and equal treatment of perspectives. That framing, while understandable, does not reflect the standard prescribed by the Code. The applicable standard is not one of mathematical symmetry or equal airtime. Clause 28.1.1 requires that news be reported truthfully, accurately and fairly. Clause 28.1.2 qualifies what is meant by fairness, news must be presented in the correct context and in a fair manner, without intentional or negligent departure from the facts. The Code then defines departure from the facts as distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation, material omission, or summarisation. Balance as such is not the test. News cannot be balanced in the abstract, it must be objectively correct. The obligation is to report without departing from the facts and to present the report in the correct context. Discussions of news events must be fair, and fairness is assessed by reference to

whether there has been a departure from the facts in the manner prescribed by clause 28.1.2. I am satisfied that broadcasts must be assessed holistically, and not by isolating individual elements taken out of their proper editorial context.

[7] Whether a broadcaster has met the standard of truthful, accurate and fair reporting as required by Clause 28.1.1, and whether news has been presented in the correct context and in a fair manner as required by Clause 28.1.2, are questions that must be answered by reference to the totality of the coverage, not by reference to the impressions created by any single question, interview, or segment standing alone. I further record that a complaint of bias or unfairness cannot succeed merely because the subject matter of a broadcast is socially contentious, or because a viewer holds a different view on the underlying controversy. The test is whether the broadcaster departed from the prescribed standards of reporting not whether the reportage touches upon a divisive public issue.

[8] The broadcast of 19 May 2026 concerned live, ongoing events of considerable public significance. A group of foreign nationals, many of whom identified themselves as refugees, had camped overnight outside the Durban Central Police Station. They alleged that they had been chased from their places of residence, that threats had been made against them, and that they were fearful for their safety. The broadcaster covered these events as they unfolded in real time. It is axiomatic that live breaking news presents editorial challenges that are qualitatively different from those attending pre-recorded or post-produced journalism. The capacity for structured, contemporaneous compliance with the requirements of correct context and factual accuracy is inherently constrained by the pace and unpredictability of live events. This does not diminish the broadcaster's obligations under the Code. It does, however, constitute a relevant contextual factor in the assessment of whether those obligations were discharged.

[9] The content of the field interviews must now be evaluated against the standards prescribed by clause 28.1. It is appropriate to note at the outset that the BCCSA

evaluates the content of a broadcast, not the personal style or manner of a presenter. The question is whether the content, as broadcast, was truthful, accurate and presented in a fair manner without departure from the facts. The specific exchange relied upon by the Complainant provides a useful point of inquiry. Among those interviewed was a woman identified as a foreign national from the Democratic Republic of Congo, eight months pregnant, who had spent the night outside the police station. During that interview, the woman alleged that foreign nationals were being told to stay away from hospitals. On examination of the content of that exchange, I am satisfied that it was reported truthfully, accurately and in a fair manner. When the allegation regarding access to hospitals was made, the interviewer probed further, specifically to ascertain the factual basis of the claim, its source, and the circumstances in which it arose. This is not content consistent with partiality or departure from the facts. On the contrary, it is the very editorial conduct that clause 28.1.2 demands. Had the allegation been received without further inquiry and broadcast without contextualisation, the broadcaster would have left viewers with an impression potentially constituting a material omission as to who was responsible for such conduct and on what basis. The act of probing the claim served to present the news in the correct context and in a fair manner, as required by clause 28.1.2, rather than departing from the facts through material omission.

- [10] The same editorial discipline is evident in the broader structure of the broadcast. The reporter conveyed on air that police were directing the foreign nationals to vacate the area, while expressly flagging to viewers that the broadcaster was awaiting the official police explanation for their conduct. This is a material editorial disclosure that complies with the requirement that news be presented in the correct context and in a fair and truthful manner. It signals to the audience that a key perspective, that of the police authority responsible for the dispersal, remained outstanding and would be obtained. Separately, a further interview conducted with another woman in the group yielded allegations of threats and

criminal conduct. It is significant that these very allegations of criminality were thereafter placed directly before the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Police Spokesperson, Colonel Netshuinda, in the interview at 13:00. The evidential thread running from the field interviews to the police interview is not the thread of advocacy, it is the thread of accountability. The allegations were not allowed to stand unchallenged or unexamined, they became the subject of direct questioning of the relevant authority, who was invited to respond to them.

- [11] The interview with Colonel Netshuinda revealed that no criminal cases had been opened and that no evidence of the alleged threats had been furnished to the police. This information, elicited by the broadcaster through its own journalistic inquiry, served substantively to contextualise and qualify the claims advanced by the protestors. A broadcaster that obtains and broadcasts information undermining the claims of one group of interviewees can hardly be said to have unconditionally endorsed those claims. News must be presented in the correct context without distortion of the facts. Where facts cannot be verified, as was the case here, and as was disclosed through the police interview, that absence of verification is itself a fact to be reported. The broadcaster did exactly that. In addition, at 17:06 on the same day, the broadcaster conducted an interview with Ms Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, leader of March and March, the organisation alleged by the foreign nationals to be responsible for their displacement. Ms Ngobese-Zuma was afforded a full and unqualified opportunity to present her organisation's position. These interviews were not afterthoughts appended to an otherwise one-sided broadcast, they were substantive editorial measures taken on the same day that a complex and rapidly evolving story was being covered, in real time, resulting in compliance with clause 28.1 that news should be presented in the correct context and in a fair manner.

[12] Having regard to the context and purpose of the broadcast, and to the totality of the coverage as it unfolded on 19 May 2026, I am unable to find a contravention of the Code.

[13] **The complaint is accordingly dismissed.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RT Makoanyana', written in a cursive style.

ADV RT MAKOANYANA
COMMISSIONER: BROADCASTING COMPLAINTS COMMISSION