

21 November 2014

Ten O'Clock News, BBC 1, 29 August 2013

Panorama – Saving Syria's Children, BBC 1, 30 September 2013

BBC Online - Syria: Agony of victims of 'napalm-like' school bombing, 30 September 2013

Thank you for writing to the BBC Trust about the edition of Panorama, *Saving Syria's Children* and associated news reports, in particular that which aired on BBC 1 at the end of August 2013 and an article published on BBC Online alongside the Panorama programme. I am sorry that you were unhappy about elements of this output and that you feel the BBC has not given you a proper response to your complaints.

The Trust is the last stage of the complaints process and everyone who works within the Trust Unit is outside the day-to-day operations of the BBC. We review the complaints that come to us to assess whether they should be put before the BBC's Trustees for them to reach a final decision. If you want to find out more about how the complaints system works – and in particular about how the BBC Trust fits in – this is the web link:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/governance/complaints_framework/

In deciding which ones should be considered by the Trustees, we look at the merits of the complaint and only those which stand a reasonable chance of success are passed to Trustees. The Trust acts in the interests of all licence fee payers and it would not be proportionate to spend a good deal of time and money on cases that do not stand a realistic prospect of success. The link that I have given above gives more information about this.

I am sorry to send a disappointing response, but I do not believe your appeal should be put in front of Trustees. The BBC's journalists and programme-makers are expected to work to a high standard; those standards are set out in the BBC's

Editorial Guidelines¹ which underpin all BBC output. I have looked at your appeal in relation to those Guidelines. This means I have assessed if the points you have raised can be judged against the standards set down in the Guidelines. I have attached with this letter a summary of your appeal as well as the reasons behind my decision. As this Annex may be drawn on when the committee minutes are written, the writing style is formal: your name does not appear, and you are described as the complainant. While I regret the impersonal feel of this, I hope you will appreciate that it protects your own privacy as well as helping the Trust to work efficiently.

If you disagree with my decision, you can ask the Trustees to review it by contacting the Complaints Advisor, at trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk or at the above address, by **15 December 2014**. You should state your reasons, which will need to demonstrate clearly to Trustees why, contrary to my decision, your complaint stands a reasonable prospect of success. Please send your reasons by this deadline in one document if possible.

We may not consider any correspondence received after that, so if, exceptionally, you need more time please write giving your reasons as soon as possible.

If you do ask the Trustees to review this decision, I will place that letter as well as your original letter of appeal and this letter before Trustees. Your previous correspondence will also be available to them. They will look at that request in their January meeting. Their decision is likely to be finalised at the following meeting and will be given to you shortly afterwards.

If the Trustees agree that your case has no reasonable prospect of success then it will close. If the Trustees disagree with my decision, then your complaint will be passed back to the Executive for a further response.

Yours sincerely



Leanne Buckle
Senior Editorial Complaints Adviser

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/guidelines/>

The complainant received detailed responses from BBC Audience Services at Stage 1 and from the Editorial Complaints Unit at Stage 2. None of the complainants' allegations were upheld.

Appeal

The complainant appealed to the BBC Trust on 28 September 2014 for a review of the ECU's response to the following five allegations:

- 1 An eye witness appeared to be reading from a prepared text
- 2 Scenes in the hospital purporting to depict victims were staged
- 3 The nature and severity of the injuries of some of the victims seemed to be fabricated
- 4 Burns to the baby's face appeared to have been exaggerated
- 5 The affiliations between one of the doctors, her charity, and the Syrian Opposition Movement were not scrutinized.

The complainant's detailed reasoning on each point is discussed in detail in the Adviser's decision below.

Decision of the Senior Editorial Strategy Adviser

The relevant correspondence was reviewed by the Trust Unit and the Senior Editorial Strategy Adviser (the Adviser) watched the relevant programmes and read the Online article. An Independent Editorial Adviser also reviewed the relevant output, read the correspondence and carried out further research. The Adviser acknowledged the strength of the complainant's feelings, but considered the appeal did not have a reasonable prospect of success.

The Adviser considered the complaint against the guideline on Accuracy in respect of the first four points, and the guideline on Impartiality in relation to the final point.

The Adviser noted the detailed investigations carried out by BBC Complaints at Stage 1 and the ECU at Stage 2 and their respective reasoning for rejection of the issues raised. The Adviser noted the ECU had viewed all of the rushes of the incident filmed by the Panorama team in considering its decision at Stage 2.

The Adviser noted also the outcome of an investigation undertaken by an independent editorial adviser (IEA). In September and October 2014 the IEA had examined similar allegations from a separate complainant who had also alleged a range of inaccuracies about the Panorama programme and related news output. The Adviser noted the scope of that investigation, in which the IEA undertook the following:

- viewed the rushes
- posed a series of questions to the Panorama team who had been to Syria and to Turkey
- asked a consultant plastic surgeon with training and experience in the presentation, prognosis and outcome of traumatic burns injuries to review the footage
- interviewed and corresponded with an independent journalist who had met with the father of one of the victims and had spoken with a number of other eye witnesses
- read the report on the Urm al-Kubra incident published by Human Rights Watch following their independent investigation
- interviewed and corresponded with a representative from Human Rights watch

The Adviser invited the IEA to consider her review of the rushes again in the context of the allegations raised in this complaint.

The Adviser decided the question for her to consider was whether, on the balance of probabilities, taking into account all the available evidence, there was any reason to believe the incendiary bomb incident had been staged, or that there was any other reason to believe the BBC output in question was not duly accurate.

The Adviser noted the IEA's conclusion with reference to the allegations in this appeal, that on the basis of her investigation, the incident depicted in Panorama, and shown also in BBC news bulletins and reported on BBC Online, took place as described. She noted also the results of the review of the footage by the consultant plastic surgeon, who had concluded that the presentation of the victims' injuries and the clinical outcome appeared to be wholly consistent with what might be expected following an incendiary bomb attack of this nature.

The Adviser noted that the IEA who reviewed the rushes had had considerable previous experience operating as a television producer in war zones (not for the BBC), including in the Middle East. She noted too that the IEA had never previously met any of the BBC team who were in Syria.

The Adviser then considered each of the allegations raised in the complainant's letter of appeal, with particular reference to the analysis of the rushes and other research undertaken by the IEA.

1 An eye witness appeared to be reading from a prepared text

The Adviser noted the detail of the allegation from the complainant's Stage 1 submission:

The alleged eyewitness Mohammed Abdullatif appears to be reading out a letter from a cue card; he commences with the words "Dear United Nations" and proceeds to stumble over unfamiliar text.

In my opinion this appears to be blatantly staged.

The Adviser noted the complainant's rejection of the ECU's view, reached from its assessment of the rushes, that there was no indication that the witness had been reading from a prepared text.

The Adviser noted the IEA's conclusion, which was formed on the basis of a viewing of the entire interview, including sections which had not been broadcast. The IEA considered that the man who it was alleged had been reading from a cue card in his plea to the UN, was in fact responding to a direct question from the reporter who asked him towards the end of the three minute interview, "What is your message to the outside world?". She therefore considered it was wholly credible that he would start his answer, "Dear United Nations". The IEA considered that, in her experience, it was a style of question that experienced reporters might ask when they were seeking to get an interviewee to address the "bigger picture" in a story where the person interviewed may have thus far been concentrating, quite naturally, only on how the event had affected them personally.

The IEA noted the complainant's assertion that the interviewee appeared to be looking down as if reading from a prepared text. The IEA agreed that he did look down at the point identified by the complainant, and she advised that he also did so on a number of other occasions elsewhere in the interview. However the IEA took the view that on each occasion it appeared to the IEA that he was mentally preparing his response before answering, and there was no indication that he was referring to any notes. The Adviser noted the IEA's conclusion that there was no indication that the witness' responses were either staged or rehearsed and there was nothing in the unedited sequence which gave her any cause to believe his answers were not spontaneous.

2 Scenes in the hospital purporting to depict victims were staged

The Adviser noted the complainant's allegation that sequences were "blatantly staged and part of a shocking piece of propaganda". She noted relevant detail from the complainant's stage 1 submission which was representative of the nature of the allegation on this point:

In one such scene a number of alleged victims are shown, including (a) man seen twice earlier in (a) blue tattered shirt... the group appears fairly static and quiet, then the man in the tattered blue shirt looks into the camera, and as he raises his left arm in a distinctive gesture, the group suddenly begins to writhe and moan in unison.

The adolescent in the white shirt... rises with perfect ease and equanimity, and is clearly not in the least distress. The now seemingly prostrate young man in the red shirt, third from the right, had previously had no difficulty climbing down from the back of the truck (and then trotting into the hospital at some speed)... I would ask anyone, having watched these sequences

carefully, to deny that they are also blatantly staged and part of a shocking piece of propaganda.

The Adviser noted the ECU's response to the allegation at Stage 2:

I have viewed all the rushes from the hospital and I can confirm they provide no support for your claim that sequences were "blatantly staged and part of a shocking piece of propaganda". The video and audio material which was recorded appears to be consistent with the events that were described in the programme and do not support your allegation that the nature and severity of the injuries of some of the victims were fabricated. ... You do not appear to have provided any substantive evidence to support the allegations in your complaint, which I understand to be based solely on the impression you took from edited material.

The Adviser noted the IEA's overall conclusion formed on the basis of her review of the rushes that she too saw no evidence that any of those featured in the Panorama programme and associated output were acting for the camera. The IEA made the following points:

- the unedited rushes of events that August afternoon appeared entirely consistent with what a television crew would be likely to film when it was observing an unfolding event rather than directing events itself.
- that the cameraman appeared to have no control over what was happening in the scenes he was filming, but was attempting to capture events as they happened around him.
- there were not any extra "takes" for interviews or pieces to camera; the cameraman and the correspondent appeared to have "grabbed" what they could when they could and then removed themselves to leave space for the first responders to do their work.
- there was no evidence that any of the scenes were directed in any way, nor that the events unfolded in a materially different way from how they were subsequently portrayed in the programme.

The Adviser noted the IEA's observation that the rushes also supplied some wider context which helped explain some of the sequences which the complainant had highlighted as problematic.

3 The nature and severity of the injuries of some of the victims seemed to be fabricated

The Adviser noted relevant detail from the complainant's stage 1 submission which was representative of the nature of her allegation on this point:

A woman arrives at the hospital... with white cream on her face; she at first appears to be expressing some sort of grief, and then begins to express anger by shouting and stamping her feet. None of this behavior in my view, seems at all congruent with pain or physical discomfort, and yet the presence

of the white cream would suggest she had been treated for burns sustained during the alleged incendiary bomb attack...

(The reporter) describes "...dozens of people, mostly teenagers, were being rushed in on stretchers with napalm-like burns. Their clothes were burnt, their bodies charred and in some cases their hair had melted... their faces were brutally disfigured with huge blisters forming over their bodies..."⁴

However, most of the alleged victims are able to walk, the manner of several appears casual almost to the point of boredom (for instance, the youth who pulls up a chair, and yet... we are later informed supposedly died of his injuries) and, most tellingly, in all case have retained their eyebrows. I am in the process of soliciting independent medical opinion as to the plausibility of the alleged injuries on display, none of which in my view are unable of being manufactured by means of makeup and prosthetics.

The Adviser noted the complainant's Stage 2 submission of the comments of an (unnamed) "practicing medical doctor" taken from the website⁵ of a British academic:

"I have watched the Panorama BBC documentary. Makes for interesting viewing but I think the scene of the school children coming in with the burns was an act. I worked on trauma and orthopaedics last year for four months, so I have worked with burns victims first hand. These victims displayed what appeared to be "less painful" burns.

They were able to sit down, be touched by others even talk. This is not how a severe burn victim would present. Most victims would be screaming the place down in agony. Even after treatment and with all sorts of pain drugs they still hurt and still scream.

Many burns victims cannot even focus enough to follow instruction such as sit down and wait because of pain. This young boy, I found very odd (I don't think it is a cultural thing as pain is pain and it can drive a person mad) would have difficulties with their airways... This shows them able to speak and breathing very well no obvious signs of respiratory distress like coughing, shallow breathing etc... Some are shown with skin hanging off but the flesh beneath is not that convincing it actually looks like more skin. of fluid through their burns. The cannula is essential to resuscitate them. I'm not sure what A and E that doctor worked in but I have not worked in A and E this year and I have placed I think almost 6 cannulas in peoples feet. Any access is essential in burns, a standard training skill!

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-24288698>

⁵ http://www.taigs.com/Hand-in_Glove.pdf

With regard to the complainant's contention that victims had in all cases "retained their eyebrows", the Adviser noted the ECU's response:

The suggestion that the victims have not suffered damage to their eyebrows, for example, is not borne out by the rushes. I assume you have seen some still photos of the victims which were provided at Stage 1 of the complaints process which indicate the severity of the injuries.

The Adviser noted that the IEA had shown the footage from the Panorama programme to a consultant plastic surgeon in his rooms at a leading London teaching hospital. The IEA had asked the doctor if he could talk her through what the images showed, what in his opinion might have caused the injuries and what his prognosis would be from what he saw regarding the severity of the injuries and the likely outcome.

The doctor remarked on this image of Ahmed Darwish:



He said the blister on the boy's right cheek was a first degree burn which would heal without the need for any skin graft. His hands were entirely different. He said it was a classic presentation of a severe burn where the skin detaches itself from dermis beneath and slides off as it dies. He said it would need extensive grafts. The IEA put it to the doctor that there had been an allegation that they weren't real hands but were prostheses. The doctor said it was the perspective which made them appear larger, and that he saw nothing to suggest that the burns weren't genuine.

He then commented on this image (which the doctor quoted by the complainant had alleged was unconvincing because it appeared to show more skin underneath):



The doctor considered that the victim would be unlikely to survive, he said the tell-tale sign was the skin pattern on the boy's back: the white patches were not new skin but areas of full thickness burn, where the skin had literally been cooked through by the intense heat. He had trained with a doctor who had treated napalm victims in Vietnam. He said the presentation was consistent with the victim having been burnt by a napalm type substance which produced deep burns which kept on burning, the fuel for which was difficult to remove. It explained the random areas of burns on the victims, only affecting where the substance had stuck.

The doctor was asked to comment on why the victims appeared to be in relatively little pain given the supposed severity of their injuries. He said that the worse (i.e. the deeper) the burn the less it tended to hurt, because the nerves had all died. The most painful burns were often the most superficial. With serious burns such as these a doctor could predict a patient would not survive although the patient might be walking and talking at the time. The doctor had himself seen a woman walk into a burns unit, chat to him about what had caused the burns on her legs, and subsequently die as a direct result of the burns she had received.

The doctor advised that skin is what keeps the fluid in our bodies and once the skin has been burnt off the fluid leaks out and victims can die within 24 hours, but can nevertheless still function in the early stages.

The doctor concluded that he was wholly convinced that the footage was genuine. The doctor took the view, from a review of the footage, that most of the severely burnt patients he saw in the Panorama footage would most likely have died due to their injuries even if they had been taken to a leading European burns unit. He considered that the doctors shown in the Panorama appeared to have done

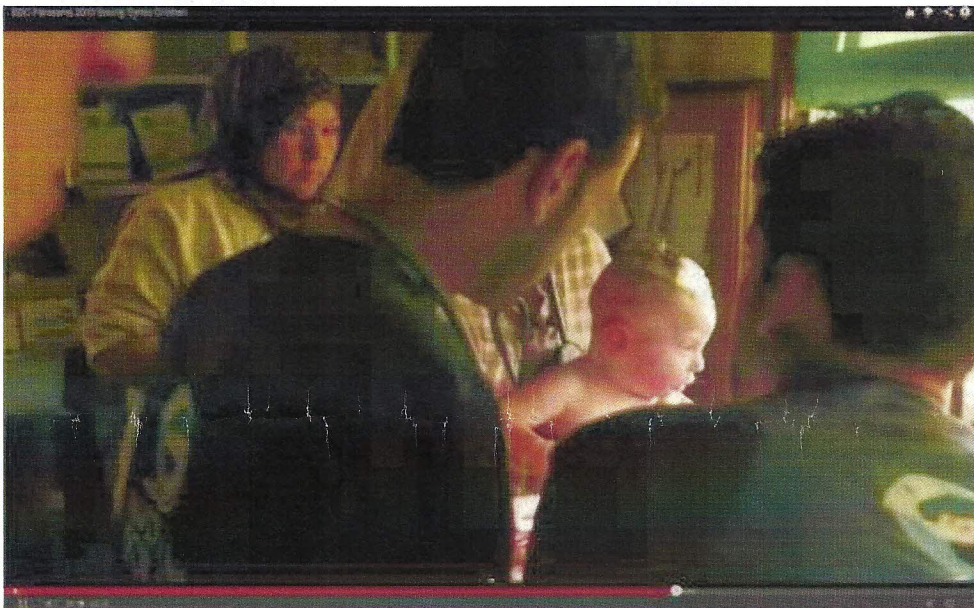
everything correctly within the context of what was available and he saw nothing that suggested to him that anything was staged or exaggerated.

4 Burns to the baby's face appear to have been exaggerated

The Adviser noted details of the complainant's allegation from her Stage 1 submission which referred to the content of an article from BBC Online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-24288698> and also to commentary and actuality from the Panorama programme:

Ian Pannell's article of 30th September states, "A seven-month old baby boy arrived, his pink face was blistered and raw. His father was also burnt and sat helplessly on a stretcher clutching his son as the staff rushed to help." The commentary also refers to the fact that this baby has "severe burns", and Dr Saleya Ahsan is heard to say, "...don't hold the face so hard... he's burnt". Please could you explain why this baby and his father appear to be entirely unscathed and this footage therefore completely contradicts Ian Pannell's description?

The Adviser noted a still frame from the relevant sequence as broadcast in Panorama, which the complainant included in her submission:



The Adviser noted the ECU's final response at Stage 2:

I have reviewed the rushes and remain of the view that the baby in question had what appeared to be burns on its face. I cannot confirm that the baby definitely suffered burns because I am not an expert in this field. However, if you zoom in on still frames from the programme you will see a round mark on

the baby's forehead and you will see skin which appears to be blistered on its right cheek and towards its ear.

The Adviser noted the complainant's submission in her letter of appeal:

I find this an extraordinary admission – namely that not only is (the ECU) unable to confirm that the baby in question had "severe burns", as Ian Pannell claimed, but that he is also unable to confirm that the baby had indeed suffered any burns whatsoever.

Not only does Mr Tregear offer the weakest conceivable grounds to attempt to persuade me to amend my view that the baby was in fact entirely unscathed, his defence of them – that he "is not an expert in this field" – amounts to an expression of despair. There is, of course an obvious solution to a case demanding the opinion of experts... that the BBC seek the opinion of experts.

The Adviser noted the IEA's review of the rushes and also the review of the footage by the consultant plastic surgeon, in which he didn't identify any inconsistencies between the footage as broadcast and the commentary which accompanied it. The Adviser noted that in the IEA's view it was not possible from the rushes to reach any view on the extent of either the baby or the father's burns, although she was able to discern that the baby was clearly in some distress. The Adviser noted this section of unbroadcast interview with one of the doctor's, which was filmed whilst the baby was being treated behind her; the baby is heard screaming in the background throughout:

First and second degree burns are very painful and clearly he is very distressed as is his dad. You can see the burnt hair, his dad's burnt hair

The Adviser noted that the baby was the first casualty to arrive following the incendiary bomb incident and it only transpired later that he was injured in what were the first of two explosions that afternoon. Whilst relative to the more severe presentations of the burns of subsequent arrivals at the hospital, the baby's burns might appear less serious, the Adviser did not consider that this had any bearing on an objective assessment by the doctor at the time, as captured on microphone, that the baby had sustained facial burns.

5 The affiliations between one of the doctors, her charity, and the Syrian Opposition Movement were not scrutinized.

The Adviser noted the complainant's allegation in her letter of appeal that the political affiliations of the doctors featured in the programme and the charity they work for should have been made clear to the viewer:

I do not believe that the political affiliations of the doctors who 'starred' in the programme and the charity they work for were made clear to the viewer. Indeed, I believe that viewers, being presented with medical staff working for

a charity, particularly where the focus is on treating children, would believe these to be inherently neutral and not pushing a political agenda. I believe viewers would conclude that Dr. Hallam's "sympathies" lay with injured children, rather than with a militant opposition.

The Adviser noted the complainant's reference in her letter of appeal to an article written in February 2013 by Dr Saleyha Ahsan, one of the two English doctors featured in the programme, in which she said about her colleague, Dr Rola Hallam, who also featured in the film:

*The crisis has had a very personal impact on Rola's family. Her father, also a doctor, helped coordinate medical logistics from inside Syria in the early days of the uprising. He is now involved politically with the Syrian National Council. A number of her relatives have been killed and many injured.*⁶

The Adviser noted then noted the following from the complainant's letter of appeal:

*My main point with regard to the political affiliations of the doctors featured in the programme, and the charity they represent, was not the precise details of Dr. Hallam's family connections with political organisations. This was just one element of the point that the doctors and charity are not merely anti-Assad or pro-revolution sympathisers, but indisputably **allied to the militarised opposition**. Again, I cite the evidence of the obvious similarity between the Hand in Hand logo and the emblem of the Syrian opposition provided in my previous correspondence ... until July 2014, the founder of Hand in Hand, Faddy Salhouli's Facebook page included a banner which read "**We will bring Assad to justice; no matter what lives it takes, no matter how much catastrophe it makes**"*

The Adviser noted that the complainant asked for this point to be considered against the following clause from the Impartiality guideline (emphasis added by complainant):

4.4.14

*"We should not automatically assume that contributors from other organisations (such as academics, journalists, researchers and representatives of charities) are unbiased and **we may need to make it clear to the audience when contributors are associated with a particular viewpoint**, if it is not apparent from their contribution or from the context in which their contribution is made"*

The Adviser did not consider that the political affiliations, if any, of a relative of a contributor were a relevant consideration in reaching her decision on this point. She noted however that Dr Hallam had responded elsewhere about her father's alleged political affiliations, saying:

⁶ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/saleyha-ahsan/medicine-as-weapon-of-war-in-syria>

He is certainly not a member of the Syrian National Council, he is a gynaecologist who like most Syrians has taken an interest in what's happening in his country.⁷

The Adviser noted the ECU's response in its provisional finding at Stage 2:

I think it was implicit that the charity was working in an area of Syria controlled by the opposition and would therefore be likely to share its aims and objectives (as opposed to supporting the Syrian government).

Secondly, there were various comments from Dr Hallam which would have left the viewers in little doubt as to where her sympathies lay. For example, at the end of the day of the attack, she said:

"I feel so angry right now, I feel so, so angry. The whole world has been watching us for two and a half years. We feel like some sort of, not even a second class citizen, like we just don't matter, like of all these children and all of these people who are being killed and massacred, we don't matter. The whole world has failed our nation and it's innocent civilians who are paying the price. It's an absolute disgrace on the United Nations and all of humanity."

The Adviser noted the following sections of commentary from the programme, particularly how they helped signpost for the audience Dr Rola Hallam's personal interest in the conflict (beyond her medical role). The Adviser noted too how the commentary signposted that the film was shot entirely in rebel-controlled areas:

- In the first few minutes of the programme, Dr Hallam is introduced thus:

Rola's family is from Syria and she lived here as a child.

- A few minutes later reporter Ian Pannell states:

By travelling with the doctors I'm hoping to see the humanitarian crisis through their eyes – but we can only film their work in rebel held areas.

- Dr Hallam refers to Syria in the possessive:

...the last couple of years the focus has been so much on trauma and war injuries that actually everything else had gotten forgotten. And now, we found ourselves like two and a half years down the road, our whole healthcare system has essentially been destroyed

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=br0loMZ3wdk&feature=youtu.be&t=9m>

The Adviser noted too how the reporter explained the context in which the filming was taking place: that the violence was not only from the Government side, or only perpetrated by the Government on rebel-held areas. She noted the following amongst many such examples and wider context which were included in the commentary throughout the programme:

- *The war in Syria is now in its third year. Sectarian differences and extremism have taken hold on both sides. And the conflict threatens the stability of the region...*
- *Rival rebel factions now fight each other as well as the government*
- *On the both sides of the divide children are becoming orphans and refugees.*

The Adviser considered that no evidence had been produced that Dr Hallam had either formal or informal links to the Syrian opposition. The Adviser considered the audience had been accurately informed that Dr Hallam was of Syrian extraction and agreed that viewers would have been able to judge for themselves on the basis of Dr Hallam's contributions in the programme, where her loyalties might lie. Contrary to the complainant's contention, the Adviser was not aware of any information that had been withheld from the viewer which required to be included.

The Adviser considered also whether there was any evidence to support the complainant's allegation that the Hand in Hand charity was formally linked to the Syrian Opposition, such that the programme was obliged to mention the fact in order to achieve due accuracy and due impartiality. The fact that the founder of the charity had pledged that President Assad should be made to account for his actions and that the charity was founded by members of the Syrian diaspora, did not in the Adviser's view provide any information that the charity was "indisputably allied to the militarised opposition" as the complainant had alleged.

The Adviser was of the view that the programme had referred to Dr Hallam's beliefs and those of the Hand in Hand charity in a duly accurate manner in the programme, and she saw no evidence to suggest that the audience had been misled in that regard.

The Adviser therefore concluded that there would be no reasonable prospect of success were this allegation to proceed to appeal.

For all the reasons above, the Adviser concluded that were this complaint to proceed to appeal, Trustees would not be likely to conclude that the events presented had been fabricated. She therefore did not consider the appeal had a realistic prospect of success and did not propose to put it before Trustees.

Annex

Ten O'Clock News, BBC 1, 29 August 2013

Panorama – Saving Syria's Children, BBC 1, 30 September 2013

BBC Online - Syria: Agony of victims of 'napalm-like' school bombing, 30 September 2013

The Trust's Editorial Appeals procedure states that:

The Trust will only consider an appeal if it raises "a matter of substance".² This will ordinarily mean that in the opinion of the Trust there is a reasonable prospect that the appeal will be upheld as amounting to a breach of the Editorial Guidelines. In deciding whether an appeal raises a matter of substance, the Trust may consider (in fairness to the interests of all licence fee payers in general) whether it is appropriate, proportionate and cost-effective to consider the appeal.³

Complaint

In the summer of 2012 a BBC team travelled to Syria with two British doctors who were working with the charity Hand in Hand for Syria, to bring medical care to the war-affected region. This was the programme billing on the BBC website:

In a special edition, Panorama travels with British doctors inside Syria to exclusively reveal the devastating impact of the war on children caught in the conflict. The doctors witness the aftermath of the bombing of a school by a suspected napalm-like incendiary device and medical facilities constantly under attack - both war crimes under international law. Filmed in the north of the country after the chemical weapons attack in Damascus which inflamed world opinion and brought America, Russia and the UN to the table, the film shows how the conventional war is intensifying with children bearing the brunt of this humanitarian catastrophe.

The complainant alleged that the programme and related output contained some disturbing discrepancies which:

... seem to me to be emotionally manipulative propaganda, with staged scenes and glaring inconsistencies, with the aim, I imagine, of promoting intervention in Syria.

² Under the Charter and Agreement, the Trust has a role as final arbiter in appropriate cases, and must provide a right of appeal in cases that raise a matter of substance.

³ For example, if an appeal raises a relatively minor issue that would be complicated, time-consuming or expensive to resolve, the Trust may decide that the appeal does not raise a matter of substance, and decline to consider it.