

**2020-48: C.D. v The Canadian Press**

*July 15, 2020*

The National NewsMedia Council has found that corrective action was taken to address a complaint about accuracy and information that could identify an individual in a June 6, 2020, news article by the Canadian Press.

The article reported on the impact of COVID-19 within federal institutions, in particular, the concerns over the level of violence due to lockdowns and restrictions on services that have been imposed on inmates. The article included statements and information from two women whose husbands were incarcerated.

An individual who was identified in the article by her first name only filed a complaint with the NewsMedia Council. The complainant took issue with how her husband was characterized in a paraphrased statement. That statement read: “He leaves his room to call her once a day – instead of the usual four times – over concerns he’ll be attacked by other inmates.”

In her complaint, the individual stated her husband left his room less often not out of fear of being attacked but because tensions in the penal institution were high. She expressed concern that the inaccuracy could put her husband at risk of being targeted, or hinder his chances at receiving parole.

The complainant also took issue with the article’s reference to the location of the institution where her husband is incarcerated, which she alleged could be used to identify him.

In response to the complaint, the Canadian Press reviewed the recorded interview and found that the statement inaccurately represented her comments. The newswire issued a correction to the news media organizations that had published the article and requested that they revise the statement to read, “He leaves his room to call her once a day – instead of the usual four times – because tensions are high.”

In response to the concern about identifying the correctional facility, the newswire agency stated that it followed the complainant’s wishes to identify her only by her first name, and that she had not raised any concerns about the publication of any other details prior to publication.

When reporting news stories, standard practice is to include relevant context and details, including time and place, and to attribute information to named sources. In rare cases where anonymity is granted, best practice is to state the reasons why it was necessary to withhold such information.

In this case, the NNC accepts the wire agency’s explanation that reporting the name of the institution was not an issue raised by the complainant prior to publication. It also recognizes that the wire agency omitted the complainant’s last name, as she had requested, in order to preserve her anonymity, and followed best practice by stating why this detail was omitted.

The NNC strongly supports the view that accuracy is an integral part of responsible reporting. In cases where mistakes occur, best practice is to correct errors in a consistent and transparent manner.

The NNC recognizes that, in this case, the wire agency took the appropriate steps to correct the paraphrased statement with an update and correction notice. The NNC, therefore, finds the complaint about accuracy resolved due to corrective action.