



## TCN 9 – Sydney

### Factual inaccuracies in reporting; failure to correct significant errors of fact

#### **The complaint**

The complaint was about a segment on *60 Minutes* of 19 August 2001 entitled 'Human Bombs'. The complainant claimed three of the statements made during the course of the segment were inaccurate.

#### **Relevant code of practice**

The relevant provisions of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice state that licensees:

4.3.1 must present factual material accurately and represent viewpoints fairly, having regard to the circumstances at the time of preparing and broadcasting the program; and

4.3.11 must make reasonable efforts to correct significant errors of fact at the earliest opportunity.

#### **The decision**

The ABA upheld the complainant's view on the first contested statement. This was made in relation to the tactics used by Palestinians fighting for their homeland in Israel. The presenter asked, 'Is a Palestinian refugee justified if he engages in terror?' and referred to a recent Palestinian suicide bombing. He then stated, 'But remember, those who fought for the establishment of the state of Israel did exactly the same thing'.

The complainant stated that this statement implied that those fighting to establish the state of Israel had engaged in suicide bombing, and that this had not been the case. Furthermore, while there had been bombings of military targets, there had been no targeting of civilians.

The licensee stated that it was reasonable to assume the statement was referring to the use of terrorist tactics generally, and not to the use of suicide bombing per se.

The ABA agreed with the complainant that the most obvious interpretation of the statement was that those who fought for the state of Israel had engaged in suicide bombing. This was due to the particular juxtaposition of statements used, in conjunction with the fact that the presenter was sitting against a backdrop reading 'Human Bombs'.

The ABA did not uphold the complainant's view on the other two statements, one of which related to a claim that Israel was illegally occupying land in the Palestinian territories, and the other to demands set by Israel as preconditions for ceasefire negotiations.

#### **Action taken**

The ABA notified the licensee that it had found a breach of clauses 4.3.1 and 4.3.11 in relation to the first statement. The ABA noted that, on receipt of the ABA's breach finding, the licensee issued a clarification as to the intended meaning of the statement, which was that both sides had engaged in terrorist tactics.

