

## **Editorial Policies & Guidelines**

### **About Us**

*The PenPK.com* was launched in January, 2022 as a platform for reporters whose efforts to cover ‘sensitive’ matters and topics seen as critical of the powers that be were being frustrated by legacy media outlets’ unwillingness to take risky stories.

Aside from providing a platform to reporters, *The PenPK.com* was also envisioned as a ‘safe space’ where journalists could share stories that they could not publish in their respective regions out of fear of reprisals.

The idea was to protect the freedom of speech by publishing critical, but merit-based stories while ensuring the safety of journalists.

*The PenPK.com* aims to be a financially sustainable media outlet run with the efforts of a network of freelance journalists who are interested in covering topics of public interest.

### **Organizational policies**

#### **Standards and values**

*The PenPK.com* is committed to provide free, fair, unbiased and objective news and information to its readers. Our news and information must remain independent of vested interests or external influences and be comprehensive, fair, free of personal bias and accurate in content and their commentaries.

The constant objective is to ascertain and verify the truth of what we publish.

We will strive to maintain neutrality on all matters of conflict, with the exception being where an individual or party is deemed by a competent court of law to have taken a position contrary to the laws and Constitution of Pakistan.

We will do our utmost to resist any pressure to withhold or influence our reporting as long as we are editorially satisfied that our information has been gathered fairly, our reporting is factual and objective, grounded in good faith, necessary to the public good, and not contrary to the laws and Constitution of Pakistan.

The PenPK.com will never allow foreign or domestic interest groups to use the organization as a platform to advance their own views. This applies to all news publications and opinion pieces.

Any sponsored or paid content published on our platforms will be clearly marked as such and differentiated from editorial content with the use of clear disclaimers.

#### **Our principles**

The following are principles that we expect all individuals working with or for The PenPK.com to abide by:

**Honesty:** We must be truthful. It is unacceptable to report information known to be false, or report facts in a misleading way to give a wrong impression;

**Independence and objectivity:** We should avoid topics in which we have a financial or personal interest that would provide us a particular benefit in the subject matter, as that interest may introduce bias into our reporting, or give the impression of such bias. In cases where we may have a specific financial or personal interest, the interest should be disclosed;

**Fairness:** We must present facts with impartiality and neutrality, presenting all viewpoints and

sides to a story where these exist. It is unacceptable to slant facts;  
Diligence: We should gather and present pertinent facts to provide a good understanding to readers of the subject we are reporting on;  
Accountability: We must be accountable for our work, prepared to accept criticism and consequences.

## **Operational policies**

### **Reporting Policies**

The accuracy, quality, and credibility of the organization is its most important asset and it rests on the audience's perception of *The PenPK.com* as an objective source of world, national and regional news and related information.

When performing any duties for *The PenPK.com*, our reporters must leave their personal political views and religious ideologies behind.

*The PenPK.com* believes that 'public interest' is paramount. Therefore, it is the guiding light of our actions.

We seek to report and present stories of significance that add value and enrich people's lives — empowering our readers with knowledge and insight so that they are able to form informed opinions and take decisions that affect their future.

### **Standards for reporting**

Our reporters are expected to be as accurate as possible given the time allotted to prepare the story and to seek reliable sources to build their stories.

Events with a single eyewitness will be reported with attribution. Events with two or more independent eyewitnesses will be reported as fact.

Controversial facts will be reported with attribution.

We will strive to fact-check each story by another employee.

We will publish corrections when errors are discovered.

We will treat defendants at trial only as having "allegedly" committed crimes, until conviction, when their crimes will generally be reported as fact (unless, that is, there is serious controversy about wrongful conviction).

Opinion surveys and statistical information will be communicated in precise terms. Any conclusions will be presented with the results properly contextualized and the accuracy of the survey specified, including estimated error and methodological criticism or flaws.

Whenever reporting on a charge or accusation made by an individual or a group against another, or presents one side of a controversial issue, a response and/or balancing information will be included in the news item or feature containing that material.

Editorial staff (including reporters and editors) will avoid at all times the use of pejorative terms or labels to describe persons or organizations, except when the individuals and groups use those labels to describe themselves or their activities.

In news, features, and articles, writers will meticulously avoid fabricating, distorting, or dramatizing an event. If sound at an event carries the risk of misleading the audience, no use will be made of sound effects not actually recorded at the event being described.

### **Slander and libel**

Reporting the truth is almost never libel. We should simply strive to be accurate at all times.

Private persons have privacy rights that must be balanced against the public interest when reporting information about them.

### **Harm limitation principle**

The PenPK.com understands that during the course of reporting on a story, a reporter might at times uncover information that may invite negative consequences if published.

This creates an ethical dilemma for the organization.

The Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics offers the following advice when dealing with such a situation.

Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.

Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.

Recognise that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.

Recognise that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.

Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

### **Confidential Sources**

Reporters have an obligation to protect confidential sources of information. However, the senior editor of the organization must be given all sources of information by all reporters.

Any information from a confidential source must be verified by at least two authentic and independent sources.

We will not use unnamed sources unless we are confident they have direct knowledge of the information they are sharing with us. In all scenarios, reporters and editors must ask tough questions regarding the validity of information being shared by an anonymous source.

Reporting on our story should describe why the source can be considered reliable without giving their identity away.

Stories based on single unnamed sources will be discouraged and only published after approval by a senior editor after they are satisfied that the source can be considered reliable.

### **Avoiding Manipulation**

The PenPK.com editorial staff must always keep in mind that anyone who speaks to us regarding a story has a motive to do so. It is our job to identify that motive and the way information is being presented to us to see if any bias is slipping into the story. We must always remain suspicious of the subjects of our stories and use information and common sense to guard against attempts to manipulate our platform.

We must talk to all sides who are party to an issue, political dispute, armed conflict etc. and seek out as many sources as we can to make sure our reporting is protected from manipulation.

## **Treating Native Ads and Paid Content**

Native ads — those visual or text ads that match the design and look of our website — and any paid content, including advertorials etc, that are inserted on our website on behalf of a paying advertiser, must be clearly distinguished and identified as paid.

All such content must be visually marked as ‘Paid content’ or ‘Sponsored content’ so that there is no confusion in the minds of the reader that such content is not the intellectual creation of the TR team and must not be confused with our editorial content, which must always remain free of any commercial or political influence.

Clear disclaimers should be added to such content to clearly state that *The PenPK.com* takes no responsibility for it.

Further, care must be taken that no paid content or advertisement is carried by *The PenPK.com* website that goes against its stated policies, vision and values.

## **Reporting Safety**

No story is worth a life, and no reporter should become a story.

The safety and wellbeing of all our contributors is of utmost importance and in no way should any member of our staff, whether full-time, freelance or voluntary, be pressured to take up a dangerous assignment.

All reporters should put their own safety first and are free to decline covering a story which may require them to enter a danger zone. There will be no penalty for anyone for declining to do a story that they feel may compromise their safety.

When covering a danger zone, camera operators/photographers must position themselves in a safe place – away from gathering crowds or the immediate site of an incident. All individuals reporting from the site of a bombing attack should remain extremely wary of the possibility of a follow-up blast aimed at targeting first responders and security forces.

Observe and respect security cordons. Always listen to and obey instructions of security or rescue officials who are on duty or responding to an emergency situation. Do not argue with them or interrupt their work. Let them do their job.

Do not interfere with a crime scene in any way. Do not attempt to pick up or move any objects from a crime scene.

When reporting casualty figures, double check all numbers and facts with more than one source. First responders usually have limited information on total casualties — know who to call in hospitals/rescue services for accurate information. Always run casualty numbers that have been provided by a named official.

Always inform your supervisors before taking on an assignment or covering a story that may carry the risk of abduction, whether from state or non-state actors.

In case any correspondent receives pressuring or threatening phone calls from any state or non-state actor regarding a story they are doing, these must be reported to a senior editor immediately. The senior editor must take a considered decision after weighing pros and cons and legal outcomes while keeping the safety of the correspondent paramount.

If, in the course of reporting a story, any reporter is moving into an area where they may lose mobile phone signals, they should always have a contingency and safety plan in place with their supervisors regarding how contact will be established and what to do in case urgent communication needs to be made.

Supervisors and editors are responsible for the safety of all contributors for *The PenPK.com* as long as the latter are on an active assignment. Maximum care should be taken where possible and

the responsible individuals should clearly forbid any reporting activity that has the possibility of exposing contributors to any harm.

### **Editorial responsibilities**

#### **Subeditors**

Monitor news channels, websites, news aggregators and social media

Maintain and update monitoring threads periodically. Forward all news stories to senior subeditors.

Draft stories after clearance from seniors

Fact check reporters' copy; liaise with reporters

Edit for grammar and style

Add context from old stories

Format stories according to The PenPK.com guidelines

Senior subeditors

All of subs' responsibilities +

Vet subs' copies for grammar and style

Ensure fact checks and quality control

Ensure headlines & excerpts include key words of reader interest

### **Publish copies**

#### **Desk heads**

Assign stories, manage news cycle and ensure timely updates to website

Editorial oversight of all published content

Devise weekly, monthly and bi-annual content plans (according to nature of desk)

Assign special responsibilities to team

Prepare and own desk growth plans and strategy

Recruit talent, participate in hiring decisions

Create mechanisms to provide regular feedback and learning opportunities to team members

Maintain records of desks' performance and provide performance appraisals

### **Editorial policies**

#### **Terrorism/terrorist outfits/militancy**

The PenPK.com will not allow its platform to be used to promote or glorify any individual, group or incident that seeks to use violence against Pakistan's citizens or the Pakistani state as a means to achieve their political or ideological goals.

However, we will take great care before labeling individuals or group as 'terrorists', 'extremists', 'fundamentalists' or 'mobs'.

Ideally, individuals/groups should be described as 'terrorists' only when the state, one of the organs of the state or a non-partisan international organization like the United Nations designates them so.

In case any government or state officials describe a previously non-designated individual/group as a 'terrorist' or a violent incident as 'terrorism', the description should be clearly sourced to the individual/department making the statement. The PenPK.com should always resist seeming to take a side in such cases, for example by using phrases like 'alleged terrorist' or 'alleged

terrorism incident’.

Words like ‘gunmen’, ‘bombers’, ‘assassination’, ‘bombing’, ‘ambush’ describe events and individuals more accurately and should be used instead of generalizations like ‘terrorists’ or ‘terrorism’.

Instead of labeling individuals, groups or incidents, try to be descriptive about what their ideologies are and what their goals are. “Gunmen belonging to the XYZ separatist movement ambushed and killed 5 soldiers on Wednesday,” is a better description than “Terrorists killed 5 soldiers on Wednesday”.

### **Violence against women and children/sexual assault**

When reporting on incidents involving violence against women and children (and in general any victims of physical/sexual assault), great care should be taken to avoid causing more pain to victims (for e.g., by forcing them to relive their experiences when they don’t want to), or creating a situation which might put victims of such crimes in renewed danger (retaliation by the people they accuse, etc.).

Stories regarding sexual violence should be reported sensitively, but without erasing or diminishing the severity of the crime. Graphic descriptions should be avoided unless deemed absolutely necessary by a senior editor. Stick to facts and police reports and avoid judgmental quotes and commentary.

In case a story is being run with graphic details, a small note should be included at the beginning of the story advising readers that it contains words or descriptions that they may find upsetting. Care should be taken to avoid language or reporting that casts doubt on the statements made by victims of such crimes, unless an observation to this effect is made by a court of law. It is inexcusable to blame the victim of a crime for being responsible for it.

Don’t use the phrase “alleged victim” — instead, describe the incident as an “alleged rape” or “alleged sexual assault”.

Do not use thumbnails, images or multimedia in such stories that may expose the victims or that may sensationalize the crime.

There will at most times be no need to identify the victim. Names should be withheld if it helps to protect the privacy and wellbeing of the victims of such crimes. If names are being withheld, readers should be informed that the substituted names are not real.

In no case should we reveal the identity or provide identifying information if the victim of a sexual crime is a minor.

Do not identify the victims or perpetrators of incest as it may expose the victims of such crimes. If the victim of a crime has passed away, or the story turns into a national issue, it may be okay to identify the victim(s). Seek editorial advice on this matter.

### **Reporting on the armed forces and their activities**

Great care should be taken when reporting on the armed forces, and editorial advice should be sought on all stories involving the armed forces or their personnel.

Do not share information regarding the movements and activities of the armed forces with anyone, including other correspondents/reporters, if you uncover such information during the course of your work.

Information that may undermine any lawful activities being undertaken by armed forces should be reported directly to the editor, who may choose to pass it on to relevant authorities based on their discretion. Likewise, any information that may assist armed forces in going about their

lawful activities should be passed on to the editor, who may choose to share it if they see fit. In all instances, senior editors must put the safety of their team first, which includes protecting their team from the consequences of whatever decision they take.

With all that said, the importance of the role of armed forces in ensuring public security does not in any way give sanction or provide cover to any individual or group of individuals associated with the armed forces to engage in unlawful activity that puts the life or property of law-abiding citizens of Pakistan at risk.

In case any staff member is pressured into withdrawing or modifying a story, the matter should immediately be referred to the editor. If the editor sees it fit, they can briefly explain to the individual making such demands why the story has been carried by The PenPK.com, what public interest it serves and what information is available to back the story up.

If the editor feels that there is a genuine concern from the other party, they may take a decision accordingly. However, no unreasonable demands should be entertained as long as senior editors feel the reporting is accurate and serves a vital public interest.

### **Reporting on religious minorities**

*The PenPK.com* considers all Pakistanis, irrespective of their individual beliefs, equal citizens entitled to equal rights and equal treatment under the law.

Any individual's religious or spiritual beliefs are strictly a private matter as long as they do not interfere with another citizen's constitutionally guaranteed rights.

When reporting on members of religious minorities, great care must be taken not to expose them through our reporting to any negative consequences arising out of public prejudices and misplaced beliefs which are out of *The PenPK.com's* control.

Care should be taken not to highlight any individual's personal spiritual or religious beliefs unless they are strictly relevant to a story and public interest is served by mentioning them.

In cases involving disputes between religious communities, great care must be taken to present all sides of the dispute objectively and in a balanced way. Reporting should strictly be fact based and care should be taken to avoid any incendiary language, quotes or commentary that may provoke an escalation of tensions. Editors may choose to withhold certain facts of a story if doing so can help avoid violence.

All reporting must repeatedly stress the equality of all citizens in the eyes of the State and stress their equal rights as laid out in the Constitution of Pakistan.

### **Reporting on blasphemy and related matters**

The PenPK.com believes that all cases related to blasphemy or the desecration/disrespect of religious beliefs, personalities and practices must be dealt with equally and fairly in a court of law under the relevant laws legislated by the Pakistani parliament, which have been endorsed by ulema.

Reporting on such incidents is to be dealt with extreme sensitivity, with the knowledge that our stories may further aggravate tensions and provoke violence.

Before reporting, all efforts should be made to find out as many details on a given incident as possible, including the versions given by all parties involved.

Stories on an incident must be worded carefully to avoid giving the impression that The PenPK.com is endorsing or rejecting a position taken by any side in a blasphemy or related dispute.

Care must also be placed on highlighting the role of the state (or lack thereof) in dealing with or preventing violent incidents when a blasphemy or related dispute is reported.

### **Reporting on judiciary and judicial proceedings**

While reporting on court cases, judicial proceedings, or the judiciary in general, care should be taken to avoid quotes or comments that ridicule, mock or call into question the integrity of the Pakistani judiciary or any sitting judges of Pakistan's courts.

Valid criticism of court judgements, orders, rulings and observations is allowed, but no content that seeks to undermine, mock or ridicule a judicial ruling, question Pakistan's legal process or the integrity of the Pakistani judiciary will be published.

Court cases that are sub judice should be avoided till a court delivers its final verdict on the matter. In case a senior editor feels it necessary to report on court proceedings in the public interest, great care must be taken not to distort observations or exchanges in court.

Stories should avoid taking any positions or giving the impression of partiality on a sub judice case.

*The PenPK.com* will not carry any commentary or opinion on a sub judice case to avoid influencing its outcome or prejudicing public opinion.

### **Reporting politico-religious and ethno-nationalist outfits (e.g, TLP and PTM)**

*The PenPK.com* believes that all individuals have an equal right to align with a political ideology as long as such an ideology is not in contravention to, or seeks to undermine or challenge, the laws and Constitution of Pakistan.

Fair coverage will be given to all political, politico-religious and ethno-nationalist parties/outfits who seek to operate within the limits of Pakistan's laws and Constitution.

However, *The PenPK.com* will not allow its platform to be used to advance any particular political agenda/ideology.

Criticism of all such political parties and their leaders will be encouraged on equal terms with mainstream political parties. We must also provide opportunities to leaders of such political parties to respond to any criticism or allegations leveled against them.

Care will be taken not to label any individual as a 'traitor' or question their loyalty to Pakistan unless such an observation is made by an organ of the state after due process (e.g., after deliberation by a court of law). Even in such cases, reporters should seek out and satisfy themselves regarding the reasons why such a label has been attached to any political party/group.

### **Reporting on COVID-19, vaccines, and public health concerns**

Stories about scientific discoveries, medical breakthroughs, health emergencies, etc. should be handled with extreme care, ideally by reporters who are familiar with the beat or who have worked on their story with widely respected, uncontroversial specialists certified by renowned health institutions.

Information for such stories should come from established and respectable sources and cross checked with experts. Stories like "child born with two heads", "cow born with six legs" or similar surprising developments should always be thoroughly checked to verify they are not hoaxes.

Stories about new vaccines or treatments that have yet to undergo medical trials or receive regulatory approvals etc should be treated with utmost care to avoid misguiding the public or misleading them regarding the expected benefits associated with such vaccines or treatments.



Great care should be taken to avoid questioning the efficacy or safety of vaccines or treatments that have been widely certified as safe for use by globally respected public health institutions, such as the World Health Organization. At the same time, it is also our duty to highlight any risks such vaccines/treatments may carry and the probability of these risks materializing. Any other factors affecting the efficacy of vaccines and treatments should also be disclosed fully, and care should be taken to inform the public in as much detail as possible regarding any care they need to take.

### **Reporting on transgender persons**

When reporting on stories concerning transgender individuals and their issues, care must be taken to avoid language or commentary that may be seen as making fun of transgender individuals, their communities or their experiences.

Information regarding the lifestyle or life choices of transgender individuals should only be included in our stories if it is strictly relevant to the incident that we are discussing. We must avoid reducing citizens to their biology if that has nothing to do with our story.

For example, in “Transgender man murdered during dacoity”, identifying the victim as transgender is unnecessary as the crime they have suffered has nothing to do with their gender identity. However, in “Transgender woman mocked, assaulted by group of drunken men” it is important to highlight the victim as transgender because the crime they endured was motivated by public prejudices against their gender identity.

Care should also be taken to avoid speaking about transgender persons as if they suffer from a ‘disease’ or as if they have a ‘problem’. Being transgender is not a crime.

For more, see section on sexual assault.

### **Reporting on suicide**

*The PenPK.com* acknowledges that self-harm and suicide is not a crime but the result of psychological illnesses that are often out of the control of the individual experiencing them. We do not say that someone “committed suicide”. The phrase “committed suicide” equates it to “committed a crime” and therefore blames and shames the victim and disregards the troubles they may have been facing up to their death.

Instead, use language like “xyz person took their own life” or “xyz person died by suicide”.

Never assume that an individual died by suicide even if initial reports suggest that. Use words like “alleged suicide” or explain it such that “police believe the cause of death to be suicide”.

Generally, do not report a death as a suicide unless a doctor/medical professional rules it to be a suicide.

Never identify the victim(s) of a suicide related death – which includes not using their pictures, actual names, family names or providing location information — unless their death is a matter of overriding public interest. A senior editor must take this decision.

Avoid using thumbnails for suicide related stories that may suggest how a person may have died (noose, poisonous pills, etc), as some people might find that imagery disturbing.

Most international publications now include helpful information in their stories to help readers who may have experienced suicidal thoughts get in touch with mental health professionals. It is always a good idea to refer readers to established, respected mental health professionals or organizations in our region which work with suicide prevention.

## **Editorial Responsibilities**

All editorial staff must remind themselves of these rules and responsibilities as a regular feature of their jobs.

### **The Four Commandments**

Always Read Your Draft Thrice (3 Times):

First, after you have drafted the story, to verify facts and figures;

Second, after you have checked for spellings, grammar and punctuation;

Third, after you've checked for factual or grammatical errors, for narrative and flow.

Do Not Embarrass Yourself with Avoidable Mistakes.

Do Not Submit Poor Work to Your Senior Editors.

Never Be Afraid to Point Out a Mistake or Question Editorial Choices.

### **The Three Rules:**

All stories drafted by a one editor **MUST** be vetted and published by another editor.

Any changes made to a story after it has been published should be flagged for editor's review and made a record of for future reference.

### **NEVER INDULGE IN CLICK-BAITING.**

Click-baiting is the practice of using keywords in headlines and excerpts **JUST SO** readers are 'tricked' into clicking on the story link.

**NEVER** use keywords that are not strictly relevant to the information you are going to offer your reader.

One of the biggest sins of digital journalism is making a false promise about the information being offered, and there is no quicker way to ruin your organisation's reputation than to start using click-bait as a strategy to drive pageviews.

### **The 10 key words approach**

Once you have written out your story, think of 10 key words without you could not have written this story. These can be facts or concepts. For example, a story about chicken prices will obviously include the keywords 'chicken' and 'prices', but also 'inflation', 'food prices' and 'poverty'.

Once you have identified all the critical keywords, try to make sure you use as many of them as possible in your headline, the excerpt (or shoulder) and the first bullet points and paragraph. Using these keywords properly will help readers who are looking for a story on these topics quickly find your story in Google's search rankings.

### **Comment Moderation Policies**

Comments moderation is a sensitive job and needs to be done responsibly to encourage reader participation while avoiding any legal or social complications arising from any user-generated content published on our platforms.

Please be aware that any slipups or errors of judgment resulting in the publication of content deemed contrary to or in violation of the laws of Pakistan might result in strict legal and/or

disciplinary proceedings against both the person responsible for moderating content as well as the organization.

Treating comments

Please go over every comment in detail that you are about to publish on your website. Pay attention to the username and the email address of the commenter as well, because sometimes people slip in profanities using those fields.

Minor edits can be made to comments to fix grammatical or spelling mistakes.

If a comment sounds confusing, seek a second opinion over it. If it can be fixed with some editing to the text, make the changes and publish.

If a comment has a sentence or word(s) that run contrary to our policy, see if the sentence or words can be deleted while keeping the original intent of the comment intact. If so, delete said sentence/word(s) and publish. However, automatically delete the entire comment if it is in complete violation of our policy.

If a comment points out a mistake in an article, consult the author to check if the mistake is genuine and fix it if so. Delete the comment without publishing after fixing the mistake. Do not attempt to change any text in a story without seeking editorial approval.

**NEVER COMPLETELY REWRITE A COMMENT.**

**NEVER DELETE A COMMENT SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS NOT IN LINE WITH YOUR OWN BELIEFS.** In fact, encourage diverging and contrasting opinions to encourage public debate.

It is okay to publish the harshest criticism if it has been communicated civilly and within the bounds of decency.

### **Following types of comments will NOT be published:**

Any comment that speaks in favour of or against, or mocks or ridicules any religion, religious sect, religious belief or practice or religious personality (with the exception being critiques of religious personalities who are politically exposed and/or involved in political or administrative affairs of the country).

Any comment that is sexist, misogynistic, colorist, ableist, ageist or otherwise based on factors that are not in control of the recipient of the comment.

Any comment that launches a personal attack against the author of an article, our publications, our editorial teams, organization, its management or ownership. Comments that are critical of an article's thesis are allowed to be published, but they should not include any personal attacks.

Any comment that seeks to ridicule or mock or call into question the integrity of the Pakistani judiciary or any sitting judges of Pakistani courts. Criticism of court judgements, orders, rulings and observations is allowed, but no comment that seeks to undermine, mock or ridicule a judgement, question Pakistan's legal process or the Pakistani judiciary will be published. If you are confused about a comment, seek editorial approval.

Any comment that ridicules, mocks or defame Pakistan's state institutions — like the police, armed forces or public hospitals, etc — or public sector officials/office bearers should be sent to editorial team for approval.

Any comment on blasphemy or related laws should be sent to editorial team for review and approval. In most cases, comments both in favour or against the law will not be published to avoid inflaming public sentiments on this issue.

Any comment that includes a hyperlink to another website or promotes another website/product. If the hyperlink can be removed and the comment preserved, the hyperlink should be deleted and

the remaining comment published. However, absolutely no comment that is promotional of another website or product will ever be allowed. Repeat offenders to be banned after three strikes.

Any comment that includes a programming script in its body text. Some of the scripts and codes can crash our website if published, so automatically delete anything that does not read like plain English.

Any comment that is written in a foreign language.

Exceptions:

Jokes and memes targeting those in power are fine as long as they are not in bad taste, but should be confined to social media only. Please delete anything that goes against the spirit of our policy. Criticism of political parties and political leaders is also to be encouraged, but care should be taken not to allow any ad hominem attacks or any comments that target the family of political persons for their wrongs.

Red Flag Comments:

Comments containing the following terms/themes should automatically be considered sensitive. Do not publish comments containing these terms or themes before seeking approval from an editor:

Military

Taliban/all militants

Blasphemy

Islam/Religion

Sectarianism

Kashmir

Balochistan

Sex/anything remotely tied to sex

Pak-India ties

Ethnic tension/hatred

Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM)

Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)

Weblinks of other websites (always delete such comments and ban repeat offenders)

Promotional content (always delete and ban repeat offenders)

Threat to violence

Personal attacks

Profane/abusive language

Content that promotes discrimination

Information that will compromise public safety or endorses illegal behaviour

## **Sharing stories**

How to use notifications

Notifications let people who have your website or app open that a new story is up on the website. They can be enabled with the help of your developer.

They're an important way of letting a large number of people know that something they might be interested in reading has just been published on the website.

However, they ought to be used very sparingly and care should be taken never to spam users.

We should aim to send a maximum of 6 notifications in a day.

Ideally, a notification for a news story should go out only once — at the time it is first published.

However, the desk should also send out a follow-up notification every time there has been a major update to an existing story, or when a developing story has been rounded up.

#### How to use Twitter

With Twitter's transformation into a news platform, it is critical to utilize it to get our stories to readers.

Every story that is going on the home page should be tweeted out at least 3 times, each time with unique text and at least two relevant hashtags. You can also tag the subject of the story and the reporter who did the story in the tweets.

Care should be taken to craft meaningful, informative tweets that invite Twitter users to our website to read the full story.

**PLEASE DO NOT COPY/PASTE SENTENCES FROM THE STORY as tweets.**

If our story highlights something positive an individual or entity has done, be sure to tag them in it.

#### How to use Facebook

Facebook offers slightly more versatility in terms of how you can share content.

You can share story or picture posts through our official Facebook pages, leave posts in popular groups, or even leave links in comment responses to posts where a news item is being discussed. You are strongly encouraged to find active groups in your region or special interest groups around which you are creating content and post your stories in such groups so that any individuals interested in these topics get to read them.

1. Create a separate 70-120 word 'brief' for each story once you're done editing it. Post the link on our official page. Be sure to include a shortened link that redirects back to the story page. Use relevant hashtags.
2. Create a post highlighting the human interest aspect of a story we've done. Include a link to the story page. Share on different groups where people discuss news.
3. On large, public interest groups like Halaat Updates or Pakistan Updates, engage with other Facebook users in the comments section under posts discussing a news development we have covered. Offer a unique perspective on the news item (taken from our own story) and refer other users back to our page using a link.

#### Story modification/correction policies

##### **How can you improve an existing story?**

Always return to a story half an hour or an hour after you've finished it. Read it again. See if some grammatical errors slipped through, or if some sentences could be phrased better. Think about what multimedia elements you could add to the story to make it a better 'experience' for readers. Think about if some angle from the story could be explored better or explained better.

##### Running corrections

A story should in no case be un-published after it has been published and tagged to one of the sections of the website. This policy holds until an editor explicitly instructs otherwise.

Small corrections that involve spelling mistakes, grammatical fixes and minor factual errors can be corrected after communication to the reporter who wrote the copy and a subeditor.

Major errors that will have consequences on the story or lead to people noticing must always be dealt with seriously and appropriately.

The SOP in such cases will involve informing the reporter, informing the desk, informing the senior subs and the desk head in writing.

As mentioned earlier, no story should be deleted from the website without explicit approval from the editor.

Always run a clear and fair correction at the bottom of a story if a major error has been identified and fixed. Acknowledge exactly what the issue was and how it has been fixed. Provide a brief apology.

You will need to update and provide a correction note in any social media shares you may have done for such stories. Not doing so may result in Facebook fact checkers flagging your posts as 'fake news'. Repeated flags can result in you being prevented from monetizing your Facebook page and your posts getting limited visibility to readers.