



Editorial Policy & Guidance

Identifying of Persons Arrested in Criminal cases

This document makes policy statements and provides internal guidance with regards to identifying of individuals arrested as part of criminal processes.

1. Suspected of a criminal offence

The SBC will NOT name any individuals identified as suspects in any case. This includes cases of serious crimes such as murder, drug trafficking, corruption, etc.

There are legal risks and ethical dilemmas in identifying suspects before they are charged or convicted. A suspect could be released without charge and is therefore presumed innocent.

This is line with the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” which is a right enshrined in our Constitution, and which should be afforded to everyone, regardless of the alleged offence and/or crime and regardless of the individual/s involved

The right to privacy is also a Constitutional one, which could also be removed in exceptional circumstances.

Furthermore, identifying an ultimately innocent individual, especially in a country as small as ours, may have significant detrimental impacts on their lives as well as the lives of family and associates.

The SBC will blur images in its reports to ensure that any persons who have been arrested cannot be easily identified and will avoid any descriptions which might help in identifying the suspect/s.

2. Charged with a criminal offence

When the editorial team has decided that a story is newsworthy, the SBC shall identify the individual(s) formally charged with a criminal offence, unless there are compelling reasons not to identify, such as a court order prohibiting the identification.

When a person is charged, it is an indication that the police or prosecuting authority has enough evidence to successfully prosecute a case. That is the point where it is ‘official’ that the suspect has “a case to answer”.

However, in proceeding to identify the person(s) involved, the Corporation will move judiciously in how it does this, taking into consideration the individual’s right to dignity and a fair trial.

It is important to be mindful that an accused may be acquitted after the judicial process.

Identifying of an accused may jeopardise the right of that person to obtain a fair trial or adversely affect the life of the accused and that of their loved ones.



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The Corporation shall avoid any pitfalls of 'trial by the media' in its reporting. This includes avoiding a case being thrown out on account of jeopardising reporting.

The Corporation shall report only on the facts of the case and shall provide arguments of both the prosecution and the defence.

Particular care should be taken when reporting on murder cases, where the verdict is based on a jury, whose members could be influenced by what is being stated in the media.

3. Convicted of a criminal offence

The SBC shall generally identify a person after a formal conviction.

However, even after a conviction, the decision on whether to identify or not will be guided by whether the identifying of the person serves the public interest.

While this may be so in the case of high-profile public figures, it may not be the same for other cases.

In some cases, the SBC may consider a short description of the person in lieu of identifying.

4. Exceptions

a. Court Orders

Exemptions shall be made in cases when there is a court order preventing the identifying of a convict.

b. Sexual Offenders

Exceptions will also apply in cases involving sexual crimes, including sexual crimes against minors, where the identifying of the convicted person could inadvertently result in the victim being identified in the community they live.

The identifying of a sexual offender may also have significant negative impact on his/her family members.

Moreover, sexual offences by their nature, invites retribution.

In such cases, it may not serve the public interest to reveal the identity, even after conviction and therefore convicted persons will not be named in such cases.

c. Suspects under 18

Persons under 18 will generally not be identified even after convictions.

d. When the safety and human right(s) of a detained person is under tangible threat

The Corporation may identify an arrested person in the defence of their rights. Such as, if they are wrongly arrested, is being abused in custody, or detained without charge beyond the statutory limit.



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5. Identifying by other media houses

Identifying of suspects, accused or convicts by other media house(s), or on social media shall not be sufficient reasons for SBC to identify these individuals.

The SBC shall be guided by its own Editorial Guidelines, and this policy in particular, when it decides to report on a particular case and/or in identifying individuals involved.

This principle remains, even if the Police choose to identify those suspects.

6. Conclusion

The SBC is committed to continue providing information to the public on all important court cases.

However, it will continue to treat any identifying of persons, with caution, as outlined in this policy, to ensure that all professional, moral, legal and ethical codes are adhered to and key concerns such as the presumption of innocence, reputational damage and the right to a fair trial are respected at all times.