



GEOASOOL

**GEOASOOL**  
VISION  
FOR A BETTER  
MEDIA  
FOR A BETTER  
**PAKISTAN**

<http://www.geo.tv/asool>

# **GEO ASOOL**

## **B) Best Practices** **(Guidelines on how GEO Manifesto translates** **day-to-day)**

**WORKING DRAFT**  
**Version: 2.0**

**Dated: 14 August, 2012**

## **DISCLAIMER**

This Code of Conduct mainly represents the aspirations and high standards that Geo management and Geo team wish to uphold professionally. Being an internal standard yardstick, this Code or any part of it, may never be used as a basis to pursue a claim against any company of Geo Group, any member of Geo management or any journalist working in Geo Group, if such claim is otherwise not maintainable under general provisions of law. Adoption of this Code of Conduct will neither increase nor decrease the legal obligations of Geo Group companies and members of Geo team under the laws of Pakistan.

## **B) Internal Code of Conduct: Guidelines and Best Practices**

### **1. Accuracy**

- a) We will not broadcast anything which is known to be false, or baseless and is malafide or for which there exists sufficient reasons to believe that the same may be false, baseless or malafide.
- b) We will strive to be accurate and establish the truth. Accuracy is more important than speed and it is often more than a question of getting the facts right. Accuracy should not be sacrificed for the sake of competition and the race to scoop one another. We will weigh all relevant facts and information to get at the truth. Our reportage will be well sourced, based on sound evidence. We will be honest and open about what we do not know and avoid wild speculation.
- c) First estimates of casualty figures often turn out to be inaccurate. If different sources give different estimates we should either report the range or go for the source which carries the greatest authority and attribute the estimate accordingly, openly acknowledging the source of such information.

### **2. Disclaimers/Disclosure**

- a) We aim to never mislead our viewers and always protect their right to know, to form their own opinion and safely consume our content and understand our philosophy. We will be extra sensitive to protect this right of our viewers and guard it through verbal and visual disclaimers and reminders especially in the following cases.
  - i. Conflict of interests
    1. Internal Conflicts: It could be a personal bias e.g. A crime reporter on screen says that "I may say something objectionable about police as I and my family have just been affected by them".
  - ii. Fact and opinion (Refer to section 23 for Opinion)
  - iii. PG<sup>1</sup>/Violence
  - iv. We should disclose if our reports are censored or monitored or if we withhold information, and explain, wherever possible, the rules under which we are operating. We will be forthright with viewers, listeners or readers about why certain information is being withheld if security/existential threats are involved.
  - v. Examples:
    1. If a reporter is embedded with the military covering an operation it will be difficult to provide objective coverage.

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<sup>1</sup> PG: Parental Guidance warnings and disclaimers.

2. If a reporter is reporting from an area under militants/terrorists control he will not be able to tell the entire truth with the barrel of the gun a foot away.
3. A channel might not be able to broadcast certain content due to pressure and forced channel closure from cable operators/PEMRA/Political Parties/Pressure Groups.

#### PEMRA Codes

4. When we have to comply with laws or regulation that we do not necessarily agree with editorially, which might be against our constitutional rights, we will inform our viewers of the circumstances reasons for our forced adherence.

### 3. Privacy

- a) High officials and public figures do not have the same right to privacy as ordinary citizens
- b) GEO will respect the privacy of all, unless significant “**public interest**” exists.
- c) There is no single definition of public interest, it includes but is not confined to:
  - i. Exposing or detecting crime.
  - ii. Exposing significantly anti-social behaviour.
  - iii. Exposing corruption or injustice.
  - iv. Disclosing significant incompetence or negligence.
  - v. Protecting people’s well-being and safety
  - vi. Preventing people from being misled by some statement or action of an individual or organization.
  - vii. Disclosing information that allows people to make a significantly more informed decision about matters of public importance.
  - viii. There is also an element of public interest in freedom of expression itself.
  - ix. When considering what is in the public interest we also need to take account of information already in the public domain or about to become available to the public.
- d) In the cases of sexual offences, heinous crime against children, juveniles and women, names and identifying photographs shall not be published with or without consent.
- e) Senior editorial control must be exercised in selecting material on issues relating to privacy

### 4. Neutrality/Fairness/Impartiality

Geo will maintain neutrality, fairness and impartiality by adhering to the following principles and guidelines:

- a) We will aim for impartial coverage of news and current affairs to promote fair and informed debate

- b) We will seek to provide a properly balanced service consisting of a wide range of subject matter and views broadcast over an appropriate time scale.
- c) We will strive to reflect a wide range of opinion and exploring conflicting views so that no significant strand of thought is knowingly masked or under represented.
- d) We will maintain neutrality and fairness in the choice of participants as well as the questions given to them and the time given to them to respond.
- e) We will avoid unjust or unfair treatment of individuals or organizations in our programmes.
- f) We will give fair representation to all the contributions when a programme is edited.
- g) We will give participants of a programme appropriate and timely opportunity to respond whenever an alleged wrongdoing or incompetence is presented. We will be careful neither to snub any participant nor go on break to interrupt a statement.
- h) We will make it clear to the public, whenever it happens, that a person or an interested party to an argument was invited to contribute to a programme and had refused to attend it or chose not to make any comments.
- i) We will not broadcast any material amounting to blackmail as defined in Pakistan penal code or incrimination of any person.
- j) We will take extra caution to ensure that the government's point of view is present especially when opposition is anticipated in a program, news report etc. We will note on a log-sheet a list of the government representatives that were asked to participate but refused to do so or were not available. This list will be available and will be circulated to the Ministry of Information, if required, on a regular basis.
- k) We will make all efforts through our producers and hosts to correct errors of fact at the earliest opportunity and ensure that corrections are broadcast in the next programme.
- l) We will practice and preach professionalism, balance and tolerance. One of the reasons why we have historically refused to bow down under pressure was that we were in practical terms being asked to become personal and supportive and side with the establishment against the opposition. However, we aim to be careful not to violate those very principles of neutrality in favour of any party.
- m) We will not be a party to anyone. That has been our stance from day one. We will focus on facts. If there will be any bias then it will be a bias towards justice, not the judiciary; democracy not the politicians; State not the government and accountability not vindictiveness. If there will be any bias then it will be bias for the truth and for a progressive and tolerant Pakistan.
- n) We will practice and emphasize tolerance for each other's ideas. We will ensure that we in GEO will not take things personally, and even when we are unfairly attacked we will react with balance and give the point of view of the accuser as well.

- o) Our hosts will refrain from displaying too much emotion during the show especially expressions of disbelief, shaking of heads, smirks that can be construed as mocking the guest, extensive sarcasm and abrupt interruptions bordering on rudeness
- p) Our tone and voice will be as neutral as possible and each guest must be treated with the same civility as the other guests. Derisory comments and taunting laughter by the host must be avoided.
- q) Our hosts will not make the kind of one sided interventions which reflect bias. Any such mistakes, if made will be edited out.

Unacceptable Examples<sup>2</sup>:

- i. *Bilkul galat, Aisa nahi hai, Aisa nahi hai...* (Contradiction)
- ii. *Aap bilkul theek keh rahe hain, bilkul theek keh rahe hain* (Agreement)
- iii. Drowning out a guest by shouting or raising voice.

## 5. Accusation/Allegation

- a) Geo will not normally use live unscripted two-ways (like beepers) to report serious allegations.
- b) We cannot allow any guest to make an accusation or allegation unless that person or his or her representative is there to defend him or herself in reasonable time.
  - i. Reasonable time:
    - 1. Beeper: Immediately or right after the allegation
    - 2. In the same programme, through physical presence or through audio. Ideally it should be physical if the accuser is physically present. If for some reason the defendant cannot be there, it should be made clear that he is innocent and that he/she will be given a chance to defend himself/herself in the immediately following program.
- c) The allegation must be in the public interest.
- d) The allegation must come from a source of proven credibility and reliability that is in a position to have sufficient knowledge of the events featured so that there is a strong reason for believing that the allegation might be credible.
- e) In areas, where past admission of guilt has not taken place or legal judgment hasn't been passed, our hosts/ anchors are advised to frame the allegations in a suggestive manner as opposed to direct accusation.
  - i. Unacceptable Example:
    - 1. *aap nai mulk tora*
  - ii. Acceptable Example:
    - 1. *xyz report/person/judgment kay muttabiq, aap nai mulk tora (better example)*

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<sup>2</sup> Examples given in this document are illustrative for better understanding. Any similarity with actual events is purely coincidental.

## 2. *kaha jata hey, aap nai mulk tora*

### 6. **Nuclear/Strategic Assets**

- a) We may not have any broadcasts that contain unrestrained/unchallenged opinions that are likely to hurt the security of the county's nuclear/strategic defence assets and capabilities.
- b) Every attempt will be made to take the point of view of the Defence Ministry and to incorporate their version while broadcasting such content. If the Defence Ministry is unavailable for comment, we will attempt to take the point of view of the military authorities.
- c) Unacceptable Example:
  - i. *Pakistan ko apne johari hathiyaroun ko tabah ker daina chahiye*
  - ii. *Pakistani johari tanseebat ko America kay hawalay ker daina chahiye*
  - iii. *Pakistani johari hathiyar jahadion kay haath lagney ka khatra hai.*
- d) Acceptable Example:
  - i. *Difa kay hawalay se qoum kay khadshaat ko duur kiya jaye.*
  - ii. We should not have a first strike policy  
Nuclear waste dump is causing harm to environment, we should try to alleviate this issue

### 7. **Militants and Terrorism**

Our broadcasts:

- a) Must not promote, aid, abet, glorify or depict a heroic/sympathetic picture of terrorism or terrorist activities or any other criminal activities or offence defined in Pakistan Penal Code or any other law in force.
- b) Must not incite violence or any action prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order in the country.
- c) Must report acts of terror quickly, accurately, fully and responsibly. Our credibility is undermined by careless use of words which carry emotional or value judgments.
- d) Must differentiate clearly-while reporting- between the concepts of: "negativity of terrorism" and "promoting terrorism".
- e) May cover the family members of victims of suicide bombers.
- f) Must not cover video footage of suicide bombers, terrorists, militants and extremists making statements and pronouncements which may promote aid or abet terrorist activities or terrorism.
- g) Must ensure that we differentiate between terrorism, secession and struggle for fundamental rights and greater autonomy. It is very difficult internationally to define terrorists or militants. In Pakistan this situations is further exacerbated as neither federal nor provincial governments have clearly laid down the government stand or policy on this issue. The government terms Baloch separatists traitors but the Interior Minister offers to receive them at the airport and withdraw all cases against them should they ever be willing to come to Pakistan. Under such circumstances, we will exercise our editorial judgment to



try and differentiate between terrorism, secession and struggle for fundamental rights and greater autonomy.

- h) Will be critical of the government if it moves to ban organizations in haste and especially for political gains. Where such an incident is observed, we will exercise our editorial judgment to expose the same.
  - i. We must take further precaution when airing such content to make it clear through debate and discussion that terrorism cannot be condoned in any condition and is an “unquestionably negative” act. A disclaimer as well as some expert opinion should be made during this broadcast.
  - ii. For the militants, jihadis, suicide bombers, our anchors, hosts or the newscasters will not use the word of “Shaheed”. We will also avoid this word in general since it involves a difficult value judgment and might be blasphemous as well, as only God knows who is really Shaheed in His cause and who is not.
- i) Unacceptable Examples:
  - i. Visit to the grave of the suicide bombers/terrorists and projecting them as national/religious heroes by stating that they are “Shaheeds” and a fragrance exists around the graveyard.
  - ii. *Laal masjid waloun ki madad kay liye farishtey aaye they.*
  - iii. *Gen Musharraf ko qatal karna wajibul islam hey- Osama Bin Laden*
- j) Acceptable Example:
  - i. *Militants nay kuch naye ilaqoun pe qabza ker liya* (provided a version of ISPR is given, immediately after the news).
  - ii. *Pakistani fouj ko Swat se bahar nikal dain gey – Molana Siraj*
  - iii. We should always try to negotiate and discuss ways to resolve all issues, and use violence as the last resort

## 8. Crime, Re-enactment and Violence

### We will NOT:

- a) Encourage, induce, incite, justify, reinforce or glorify violence or terror or its perpetrators or contain anything against the maintenance of law and order
- b) Present violence or criminality as glamorous or an acceptable solution to conflicts.
- c) Incite violence against specific groups identified by race, national or ethnic origin, colour, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or mental or physical disabilities.
- d) Show footage or reenactments of executions/murders in which graphic details are shown.

- e) Show footage or reenactment in which sex crime or rape is depicted with salacious details of the crime and or the incident. Where sensitive crime scenes including reenactments are aired they must not be aired at family viewing time. Moreover, a clear disclaimer should be given for such upcoming content and PG sign should be aired throughout the program.
- f) Provide opportunities to any viewers to copy the modus operandi of criminals and thereby encourage commission of any offences or crimes. Divulge identity of any victim of rape or sexual abuse or kidnapped or deceased or victims of terrorist attacks or such victim's family without prior written permission of the victim or victim's guardian.
- g) However, in case the victim of rape or sexual abuse is a minor, we will not divulge identity of the victim.
- h) Glamorise persons, groups or organizations that use or advocate the use of violence or engage in any criminal activity within Pakistan including relaying of head money or bounties other than the competent courts or the government.

## **9. Human Suffering and Distress**

- a) Human suffering and distress are the kind of news which can help prevent such further suffering. We will identify the people responsible as well as create awareness and public support against the perpetrators of such crimes. However, merely sensationalizing the effects of human suffering and focusing on the distressing factors alone should be avoided.
- b) Sharply focused and highlighted gory images of bloodshed, corpses and human organs and of severely injured persons will be avoided-whether the footage is live or recorded. [This includes the images from both the natural disasters and acts of terrorism.]
- c) Geo will give instructions and reminders during such live coverage of events where blasts have just taken place that cameraman will not zoom in on any body parts. Online producers will be given instructions and reminders to edit out any such clips or blur them.
- d) PG disclaimers in Urdu and English will remain on the screen throughout such transmissions and verbal warnings will also be provided by our anchors.
- e) When we know that a certain potentially disturbing footage is about to be shown, the warning as well as the visual disclaimer will go on air at least 30 seconds before the actual showing.

## **10. Demonstrations, Disturbances And Riots**

- a) Comprehensive coverage of demonstrations, disturbances and riots is an important part of our news reporting and can help identify and lead to the arrest of the perpetrators.
- b) It is however important that we assess the risk or the likelihood of further disturbances by previewing the material before broadcast.
- c) We must withdraw our coverage/footage immediately if we have a fair degree of suspicion that we are inflaming the situation.

- d) When it is difficult for reporters located on one side of a confrontation to form a clear overall view, their material should be put into a wider context for broadcast.
- e) When describing the size of a protest rally or procession extra precautions will be taken not to exaggerate the head counts and editorial help will be sought to arrive at the closest estimates.

### **11. LIVE Broadcasting**

- a) When reporting live, we must preferably install a delay mechanism. However, if the level of violence or disorder becomes too graphic or is expected to become so then we may cut away from the live and record the material for use in an edited report.

### **12. Respect**

- a) Potentially offensive jokes, words, songs, dialogues and subtitles shouldn't be broadcast in news programmes and serious talk shows.
- b) Geo shall ensure that serious talk shows and news programmes will not have content that contains abusive or unduly discriminatory material or comment which is based on matters of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability.
- c) Recognizing that stereotype images can and do have a negative effect, it shall be our responsibility to exhibit, to the best of our ability: a conscious sensitivity to the problems related to sex-role stereotyping, by refraining from exploitation; and by the reflection of the intellectual and emotional equality of both sexes in our programming.
- d) Our hosts, anchors, newscasters and reporters should address each other as well as our guests with respect and humility.
  - i. We should try to address each other with formal words like "AAP" instead of "TU"
  - ii. When an expert or a guest is avoiding a question or is being aggressive, our representative should always give the benefit of the doubt to the expert and not lose their sense of decorum at any cost. At no point should we raise our voice and our tone should be polite, patient but firm to put our point across and to exercise control over the situation.

### **13. Political Satire vs. Ridicule**

We believe in tolerance for each other's ideas and feedback will make us overcome differences instead of being divided by them. This will take our country and our people towards a more progressive and peaceful society that we all deserve. As part of this philosophy it is important to laugh at oneself as well as our leaders and it is important for our public figures to have tolerance for comments made in a lighter vein. However we will be careful of the following while doing so:

1. We will give a disclaimer related to the above in order to communicate the philosophy of tolerance as well as commend the tolerance of those who are being depicted in the programme.
  - a) The ability to laugh at ourselves is the best example of tolerance. Tolerance will enable us to overcome our differences and learn from them instead. We are thankful for the tolerance shown by the public servants and personalities in such programmes. *Apnay aap par has kay geo.*
2. We will create the distinction between political satire and ridicule. Ridicule is described as something that is below the belt and you would not be comfortable watching it with your family. We shall avoid material that is private and personal in nature or which has to do with intimate details of family life.
3. We will not ridicule fun of the army, the judiciary and anyone's faith as that is prohibited by our Constitution
4. These guidelines regarding ridicule and political satire are regulated by the law of context as well. Therefore the tolerance of humour at someone's expense will be more in a social satire programme than in a talk show. We should avoid laughing at someone's expense in a serious talk show.
5. Personal, family life that is not in public domain already and sexual references will be avoided even in a comedy show.

#### **14. Defamation**

- a) We will not broadcast anything defamatory as defined in the defamation law. The definition of defamation includes malicious intent.

#### **15. Religion**

- a. Geo will avoid any derogatory remarks/ material about any religion or sect or community or use of visual images or words contemptuous of religious sects and ethnic groups or which promote communal and sectarian biases, hatred or disharmony, or violence.
- b. We will ensure that the beliefs and practices of the world faiths are described accurately when discussed and interfaith harmony is promoted at all cost.
- c. We will ensure the religious views and beliefs of an individual, a religion or religious denomination are not misrepresented, abused or discriminated against, as judged against generally accepted standards.
- d. We will respect the religious sensitivity surrounding the observance of holy days and the principal festivals of the various faiths and sects and during those days will be more conscious with greater sensitivity so that unnecessary and

avoidable offence is avoided by material that might be more acceptable at other times.

- e. In output, dealing with the religious views and/or beliefs of a religion or religious denomination as the central subject, we should make clear both the identity of the faith and the purpose of the output.
- f. Religion should not be used to recruit using public pressure, or ridicule or prove a personal political point giving quotes of the Quran/Hadees/interpretations in a live program or in a program where there aren't at least two known and relevant Aalim-e-Deen present to refute or correct such statements and references. Even in a non-live programme such things should be avoided without the presence of at least two well-known Aalim-e-Deen.
- g. Religious programmes must not seek to promote religious views or beliefs by stealth.
- h. Violence in any form will be discouraged, or condemned and where not possible to do both we should rather be silent about propagating violence.
- i. Wherever violence is associated with religion and can't be avoided during a discussion we or an expert should explain that one should not take law into one's own hands and that the state sanctioned institutions can only sanction violence where applicable after due process.
- j. Sometimes questions can be hurtful to one's belief. We will be conscious of sensitivities but will also value the right to raise questions. The distinction and tradeoff will require discussion and debate internally before such things are allowed or encouraged to go on air, especially live. For example questions that are intended to bridge gaps, which are asked to understand are different from aggressive questions that are designed to increase differences and animosity and cause deliberate offense. Much of the fine line exists in this distinction within the context and the framing of the questions as well as the intention itself and thus all such sensitive tradeoffs will require a proactive discussion with Editorial Committee and head of the department beforehand. When in doubt, discuss and debate to raise consciousness.

## 16. President

- a) Casting aspersions against the President is not allowed by the Constitution of Pakistan and the prevailing law<sup>3</sup>.
- b) The President is the symbol of the Federation and the constitution in spirit deems him/her to be neutral. If however, the President holds a political office his role can and will be criticized and debated.
- c) We don't have to necessarily agree with the President's policies and can criticize them but we need to differentiate between "respect for the office" and "disagreement with the policies". If, however, the President violates his oath or Article 41 of the Constitution of Pakistan then the media has the right to discuss

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to Article 63-1(g) of the constitution of Pakistan and Page 9 clause (g) of PEMRA Rules 2009 which state: "No programme shall be aired which contains aspersions against the Judiciary and integrity of the Armed Forces of Pakistan"

and debate the pros and cons of it with equal balance as a political and business entity.

## 17. Armed Forces

- a) We cannot broadcast any material that will contain aspersions against the armed forces of Pakistan as dictated by the Constitution of Pakistan and the prevailing law.
- b) We will support the armed forces and celebrate their achievements, as we recognize them as an integral part of the State as well as a guarantor of its sovereignty.
- c) However, if the military intervenes in politics and industry and contravenes the Constitution of Pakistan then the media has the right to discuss and debate the pros and cons of it with equal balance as a political and business entity.
- d) Professional competence and performance of Armed Forces will be open to discussion.
- e) Unacceptable Example:
  - i. *Sara fasaad fuj ka phailaya hua hai*
  - ii. *Be-ghairat fuj*
  - iii. *America ki pittho fuj*
  - iv. *Poori fuj corrupt hai*
- f) Acceptable Example:
  - i. *Gen. Yahya Khan agar waqt per faisla ker laitey tau mulk nahi tout'ta.*
  - ii. *Fuj ko siyasat main mudakhlat nahi kerni chahiye*
  - iii. *Difai budget mein kami ki gunjaish hai*
  - iv. *Difai budget ko parliament zeir-e-behes la sakti hai*
  - v. *Fuj mein bhi corruption hai*

## 18. Judiciary

- a) We cannot broadcast any material that will contain aspersions against the Judiciary of Pakistan as dictated by the Constitution of Pakistan and the prevailing law<sup>4</sup>.
- b) We will not broadcast any programme or discussion that will amount to contempt of the court and on sub-judice matters.
- c) We will support Judiciary as much as we can and celebrate its achievements and its role in advancing justice, as we recognize it as an integral part of the State.
- d) However, opinions and fair criticism can be made on the applicability of the principles of law once the case has been decided.
- e) Constructive criticism of the performance of judiciary will be encouraged for the betterment of the institution.
- f) Unacceptable Example:
  - i. *Adalat ne chamak main aa kay faisla diya.*

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Article 63-1(g) of the constitution of Pakistan and Page 9 clause (g) of PEMRA Rules 2009 which state: "No programme shall be aired which contains aspersions against the Judiciary and integrity of the Armed Forces of Pakistan"

- ii. *Hum in adalatoun ko nahi mantey*
  - iii. *Saf nazar aa raha hay kay Adalat kaya faisla karnay wali hai*
  - iv. *Fouj aur adlia ki raaton raat meeting hotee hai aur phir faislay hotay hain*
- g) Acceptable Example:
- i. *Adalatee nizaam main islaah honee chahiye*
  - ii. *Matehat adaliya main corruption ka khatma hona chahiye*
  - iii. *Adalaton ko awam ke muqadmaat par tawajju deinee chahiye*
  - iv. *Matehat adalatoun main sainkrroun afraad nasal dar nasal ghomtey rehte hain lekin un ko insaaf nahi milta.*

## 19. Parliament

As per the Constitution of Pakistan only Allah is sovereign and this sovereignty is vested in people of Pakistan who in turn elect their representatives through one man one vote system. Parliament is the author of the constitution.

We will:

- a) Respect our elected parliament and parliamentarians and encourage them to establish good governance.
- b) Celebrate good work done by the Parliament and its committees especially the Public Accounts Committee.
- c) Guide the parliament through news and views to do better law making.
- d) Not ridicule parliament as an institution. Parliament as an institution should not be held accountable for the errors/corruption/crime of individual members.
- e) Criticize the role of parliament if it is seen to be deviating from the constitution.

## 20. South Asia

- a) We will always promote sovereignty of Pakistan.
- b) We will support the discourse of peace, trade and culture and tourism especially with our neighbours.
- c) We will show best practices of South Asia, derive historical learnings and current comparative progress to encourage a healthy competitive spirit.

## 21. Friendly Countries

- a) We will respect Pakistan's relations with all countries. However, we may criticize their policies on merit. We should also be careful in not revealing sensitive information which can be harmful to the national security and affect foreign relations.
- b) Unacceptable Example:
  - i. *Saudi Arab main shahzadoun ki baghawat aur shahzadion ki taraf se huqooq-i-niswan ki tahreek kay matalliq baat na ki jaye*
  - ii. *Saudi Arab nai Pakistan mein Shia Sunni fasad ko hawa dee...*

iii. *Misir nay hameshah Pakistan dushmani kee hai ...*

c) Acceptable Example:

- i. *Munshiyat faroosh kerne kay jurm main 2 afraad kay sar qalam kar diye gaye.*
- ii. *Misir aur Pakistan kay taaloqat mushkal rahen hai magar abb behtari hoi hay...*

## **22. Sovereignty**

Geo will ensure that:

- a) No moderator, anchor person or host propagates any opinion or acts in any manner prejudicial to the *state of Pakistan*, its sovereignty, integrity and Pakistan.
- b) Debate and discussion to highlight the risks to the sovereignty of Pakistan with the intention to decrease those risks will be encouraged and considered a national service.
- c) Material and footage received from foreign countries and news agencies will be carefully monitored so that it is not used against our national interest. However, the material can be used for debate and discussions with a view to mitigate any serious threat.

## **23. Opinion**

Empowering our viewers with information and knowledge enriches their lives. Information helps them to make their own opinions. Though as a news network we favour facts over opinion; however opinions are important as well because they not only enrich the value of the information but in a society where facts are difficult to ascertain, opinions spark debate and help bring the facts out. Given this complex relationship between “fact & opinion” the following guidelines have to be followed while dealing with opinions in our programmes:

- a) We must ensure that the matter commented upon is fair; both sides or main viewpoints are expressed and a variety of opinion is presented and undue prominence of one thought is not prevalent.
- b) The matter on which opinion is being given is in the public interest.
- c) We must ensure that the expression of opinion is not allowed to be understood as an assertion of fact. Opinion should clearly be distinguished from facts at all cost. We must protect our viewers from innocently consuming opinions as facts through disclaimers and reminders.
- d) No such opinion should be given which is not countered, confronted or challenged by equally weighted guests. Therefore we cannot have likeminded guests on shows. This is to ensure that we balance the points of view, and maintain our impartial editorial policy.

Our presenters, reporters and correspondents are the public faces and voices of Geo; they can have a significant impact on perceptions of our impartiality and following guidelines need to be observed:



- e) When we specifically invite someone from our own group as a guest in a programme or on beeper, we should ask them to give disclaimer or we should give a disclaimer on their behalf which clarifies that their opinion is independent and is not that of the institution itself.
- f) We must ensure that our journalists and presenters including those in the news and current affairs, during routine broadcasts, may not provide personal opinions (based on personal bias and views) that can undermine public's trust in Geo's impartiality- which is a promise to our viewers we cannot break at any cost.
- g) We must ensure that "Direct Value Judgments" should be avoided by our newscasters. Adverbs and adjectives lead to value judgments, and they may not match the perception of the viewer. Unless it is an identifiable political discussion programme we are not in the business of hawking opinions or forecasting; we give news as it happens. We should avoid making sweeping generalizations.
- h) We must ensure that commentary and analysis shall be clearly distinguished in the news and actual news should precede the commentary and analysis.
- i) Even in our political discussions, whenever an opinion is being given by our host, not only should they indicate the difference between fact and opinion, but also make sure that they try to give both opinions themselves. Example: ...*mera yeh khayla hay...meri opinion hay*

Promos of our opinionated programmes should also carry the disclaimer, clearly identifying them as political programmes with opinions.

- j) Disclaimer will be given at the beginning of the promo, during the promo, and as a scroll at the end. Plus it will be verbally pointed out during the beginning and the end
  - i. Disclaimer before the program: Empowering our viewers with information and knowledge enriches their lives. That information is used to make their opinions. We favor fact over opinion. However opinions are important as well not only because they enrich the value of the information but also because in a society where facts are difficult to ascertain and access, opinions cannot be ignored. Please do not take the following opinions as facts.

Bloomberg to be used when negatives points are being given to much. This will contain positive statistics: The intention of criticism is not to create despondency but to be used as a value to improve lives and resolve issues. We will try our best to present positive as well as negatives sides of the picture. However, ignorance cannot solve the problems that come with knowledge. ***Jaan kar Geo.***