

7 April 2014

Kenyan mall shooting complaint upheld

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has upheld a complaint that insufficient warning was given to viewers before footage of a man being shot at point blank range was shown on *3 News*.

The footage of a man trying to hide and then being shot was shown on 18 October 2013 as part of coverage of a shooting massacre in a Kenyan mall.

A viewer complained that the footage was inappropriate for the 6pm news, and inadequate warning was given of the graphic content contained in the item.

The broadcaster said the footage was shown all over the world and was necessary to properly show the seriousness of the massacre and the callousness of the gunmen. It considered the warning by the newsreader for ‘disturbing images’ was sufficient.

In its decision the BSA said that broadcasting standards recognise that disturbing material is often shown in news programmes, to reflect a world in which violence occurs.

“There was very high public interest in this report, and high value in terms of free speech. We should not be shielded from such events, which unfortunately do take place.”

Nevertheless, the standards require that viewers are adequately warned of potentially disturbing, alarming or graphic content, the BSA said.

“While recognising the importance of the item, we find that the warning given in this instance was insufficient to prepare viewers for the graphic execution they were about to see.”

The BSA found that the inadequate warning, combined with the proximity of the warning to the footage, meant viewers were not given a reasonable opportunity to exercise discretion with regard to their children’s viewing, or to make a different viewing choice themselves. It upheld the complaint under the good taste and decency, children’s interests and violence standards.

The BSA did not make any order as it said the decision would give sufficient guidance to broadcasters around showing graphic content in news items.

Ends

The full report is available at www.bsa.govt.nz

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