

PCC rejects privacy complaint about Facebook comments

The Press Complaints Commission has today rejected a complaint on behalf of a serving police officer about published comments in The People that he had made on Facebook about the death of Ian Tomlinson during the London G20 protests.

The article reported that the police officer had posted a message which said: "I see my lot have murdered someone again. Oh well, shit happens". The complainant argued that publication of this comment - plus that of comments from two other social networking profiles - intruded into his privacy, as the profiles in question were not publicly accessible. The newspaper said that the comments had been drawn to its attention by a third party who was an online 'friend' of the complainant, as had one of the newspaper's journalists whom the complainant had briefly accepted as a friend. In addition, it argued, there was a strong public interest in publication, as it showed how serving police officers viewed high-profile incidents such as the death of Mr. Tomlinson.

The Commission agreed with the newspaper that publication on this occasion could be justified by the public interest. Given that the death of Mr. Tomlinson had been "the subject of considerable media and public scrutiny", there was, it said, a "clear public interest in knowing about police attitudes (whether publicly or privately expressed) towards the incident". It also highlighted the element of risk that the complainant had taken in posting such comments to people who were "not obliged to keep the information secret".

A complaint under Clause 3 (Privacy) about the publication of photographs taken of the complainant were also rejected. Further complaints made under Clause 1 (Accuracy) and Clause 10 (Subterfuge) were found not to be in breach of the Editors' Code of Practice.

To read the adjudication, [click here](#).

ENDS

For further information, please contact Stephen Abell on 020 7831 0022 or 07980 264359.

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