# [GB] Regulator finds Fox News to be in breach of Code because of ‘no-go’ areas for non-Muslims claim

**IRIS 2015-10:1/17**

*Tony Prosser*
*University of Bristol Law School*

Ofcom, the UK Communications Regulator, has decided that Fox News, the US news channel broadcast on the digital satellite platform and licensed by Ofcom, had breached its Broadcasting Code. The Code provides that “[f]actual programmes or items or portrayals of factual matters must not materially mislead the audience” so as to cause harm or offence.

The broadcast in question was in an episode of “Justice with Jeanine Pirro” on 11 January 2015, dealing with Islamic extremism after the Charlie Hebdo attack. One contributor, described as “an expert on the radicalism of the French Muslims”, stated that in Paris and other French cities there are Muslim “ghettos which the French authorities have abandoned. They don’t provide an ambulance service, they don’t provide public service”. A second contributor, the founder of the US-based “Investigative Project on Terrorism”, claimed that “in Britain there are not just ‘no-go’ areas, there are actually cities like Birmingham that are totally Muslim, where non-Muslims simply don’t go in”. The presenter did nothing to correct these comments. A week later, Fox News broadcast an apology pointing out that the statements were incorrect; the most recent census for Birmingham (the UK’s second largest city) indicated that 22% of the population identify themselves as Muslim and no credible source indicated that it is a ‘no-go’ area. A second correction was also broadcast, stating “there is no formal designation of these zones in either country and no credible information to support the assertion there are specific areas in these countries that exclude individuals based solely on their religion.”

Fox news maintained that Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) created a presumption of freedom of expression, and in the mind of any UK viewer the statements would be so clearly inaccurate as to be incapable of being misleading or offensive. Ofcom considered that, although the audience would be familiar with the controversial content and approach of the programme, viewers would expect to be able to rely on factual statements made in it, especially as the contributors were presented as experts and as the presenter was referred to as ‘Judge’ Jeanine (she was in fact a qualified attorney and former criminal prosecutor). Furthermore, it was the presenter who had introduced the topic of ‘no-go’ areas. The statements were inaccurate and therefore misleading and had the potential to cause offence to viewers, especially members of the Muslim communities in the cities referred to. The statements also had the

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

potential to cause harm by eroding viewers' trust in current affairs programmes. The apologies helped to mitigate these effects to some extent, but Ofcom remained concerned that Fox News had not acted sooner, especially in the context of a current affairs programme on a controversial subject at a sensitive time. The programme was thus in breach of the Code.

***Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin, Issue number 288, 21 September 2015, p. 61***

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb288/Issue_288.pdf

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026