[FR] CSA warns RT to respect honesty and rigour of information

IRIS 2018-8:1/22

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At its plenary assembly on 28 June 2018, the French national audiovisual regulatory authority (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel - "the CSA") decided to issue an official warning to RT France (the French-language outlet of Russian international news channel RT) regarding its failure to ensure honesty, rigour and diversity of points of view in its television news bulletin on 13 April 2018, which was mainly devoted to the situation in Syria. The bulletin included a report entitled Attaques simulées ("Simulated Attacks"), which contested whether the chemical attacks in the Syrian region of Eastern Ghouta had actually happened and blamed the Jaysh al-Islam group for staging their effects on the population.

In 2015, the CSA and RT signed an agreement requiring RT France to report news with greater "honesty and independence". Under the same agreement, RT also set up an ethics committee at the CSA's request.

The CSA observed that the testimony of a Syrian witness had been dubbed with a voice saying words that "bore no resemblance with what he had said." The translation had actually concerned a different, longer version of the video, which had not been broadcast. "Even though the mistranslated words were actually spoken, this mistake demonstrates a failure to exercise the required level of rigour in the presentation and processing of information," the CSA stated.

It also noted that the dubbed translation of a different witness account had blamed the Jaysh al-Islam group for ordering the local population to simulate the effects of a chemical attack - even though the witness had not mentioned any particular organisation. Since this had changed viewers' understanding of the situation, it constituted a second breach of the channel's agreement with the CSA. Finally, the CSA noted that, as a whole, the report on the situation in Syria had shown a marked imbalance in its analysis which, on a topic as sensitive as chemical weapons, had not laid out the different points of view.

In response, RT France President Xenia Fedorova, said: "The dubbing of the wrong translation on a video broadcast on 13 April was a purely technical error which has been corrected. RT France covers all subjects, including the Syrian conflict, in a totally balanced manner, by giving all sides a chance to comment. We have agreed to continue working productively with the CSA in order to maintain the high quality of our content."

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Assemblée plénière du CSA du 27 juin 2018

https://www.csa.fr/Arbitrer/Espace-juridique/Les-textes-reglementaires-du-CSA/Les-decisions-du-CSA/Manquements-a-l-honnetete-a-la-rigueur-de-l-information-et-a-la-diversite-des-points-de-vue-la-chaine-RT-France-mise-en-demeure

CSA plenary assembly of 27 June 2018

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