

**CASE NO: 3107**

**RULING BY THE NEW ZEALAND MEDIA COUNCIL ON THE COMPLAINT OF MARTIN PAINTER AGAINST RNZ**

**FINDING: INSUFFICIENT GROUNDS TO PROCEED**

**DATE: SEPTEMBER 2021**

*RNZ* published a *BBC* story on its website on 16 August 2021 headlined *Explainer: Who are the Taliban?* The story briefly outlined the events leading up to the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. It covered the history of the Taliban, from their emergence in Pakistan in the early 1990s to the present day.

Martin Painter complained that the *BBC* story omitted the history of the involvement of the US and UK in support, training and armament of the Taliban. This was propaganda created to erase any wrongdoing, he said. Aotearoa’s nationally owned news service had a responsibility not to publish “outright propaganda”. They should truthfully represent the struggles of the Afghan people against imperialist control, he said.

*RNZ* said the focus of the relatively short 1300-word article was to provide information on “who” the Taliban was by providing background on the organisation’s origins and its members and a very brief history of key events. A detailed history of the involvement of other nations, including Russia, was not traversed in the article. There would always be a number of geopolitical views about who had supported the Taliban. The omission of this did not make the story unbalanced or inaccurate.

The Media Council notes the *RNZ* story did not set out to be a full exposition of every aspect of the history of the Taliban. Journalists and historians always have to be selective about what is included and, in this case, it was perfectly acceptable to limit the scope of the story. The writer was entitled not to cover the involvement of other nations in depth, and this did not mean the story was inaccurate or unbalanced.

**Finding: Insufficient Grounds to Proceed.**