

Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons London
SW1A 0AA

06 August 2025

Dear Caroline

BBC Gaza Documentary and Editorial Standards

I committed to keep the House updated about matters relating to the BBC. I am writing to provide you with further information following conversations and correspondence over recent weeks. I am grateful to you and your Committee for the constructive dialogue we have had on these issues, and for your considered questions.

As I set out in the Chamber, the BBC is an independent body and it is not for me as Secretary of State to make decisions about what the BBC can air or whom they employ. There is, however, an obligation in the BBC Charter for it to uphold the highest editorial standards. It is essential those standards are upheld so the public and Parliament can have confidence in the BBC. It is in this context that I have remained in close conversation with the BBC leadership in recent weeks both in relation to the "Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone" documentary, and the BBC's coverage of Glastonbury.

The BBC has now published its internal review into the commissioning, editorial processes and complaints relating to the documentary, together with the actions the BBC has committed to in response.

I am pleased there has been acknowledgement by the BBC about the serious failings here. It is important that the BBC takes decisive action to reset their relationship with the public, and I will continue to have an active dialogue with them as this action progresses. Clearly it is important that the BBC takes swift and robust steps to ensure this does not happen again. While I am pleased there has been some progress, there is more that needs to be done. Our national broadcaster is too important for its editorial standards, independence and impartiality to be called into question repeatedly in recent months.

Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone Documentary

The Review, undertaken by Peter Johnston, found that the documentary was in breach of the BBC's editorial guidelines on accuracy. As the review makes clear, audiences should at least have been informed about the narrator's father's position, and it is right the BBC's senior leadership have acknowledged this error. It is concerning that the production

company did not raise the narrator's family connection and that the BBC was not proactive enough in questioning them to find this out. The report found no evidence that money has been sent to any sanctioned individuals, and that neither the narrator's father or family had any influence over the wider content of the documentary.

It is absolutely essential that stories from Gaza are told and heard. The review recognises that many of those responsible for the production of this documentary were operating within an active warzone. However, it is still the case that reporting must be carried out with the utmost care and sensitivity. The BBC, with its international reputation for accurate and impartial reporting, has a particularly important role to play. It is clear, in the case of this documentary, the BBC failed to uphold these high standards the public rightly expect.

I have met with the BBC Chair and Director General to discuss the key findings of the review, where they set out for me the steps they intend to take as a result.

I also wanted to note the subsequent announcement from Ofcom, as the BBC's independent regulator, that it will be undertaking its own investigation into whether the programme's broadcast was in breach of the Broadcasting Code. This is an example of the BBC First process operating as intended, and I look forward to seeing the outcome of Ofcom's investigation.

Glastonbury

Since Members of Parliament expressed their serious concern about the anti-Semitic broadcast from Glastonbury, I have met with the BBC's Chair and Director General and I understand they have also met the official Opposition. I understand that a process is underway to hold relevant staff to account.

There is a recognition of the importance of effective due diligence, ensuring editorial practices, guidelines and training are up to date, timely disciplinary processes and management of risk, which have been common themes in these recent failures.

Workplace culture

We also discussed the publication of the report undertaken on behalf of Banijay UK into the behaviour of Gregg Wallace. As you will know, the BBC has decided to sever ties with Gregg Wallace. The BBC has also shown leadership in committing not to commission work from companies who do not support the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (CIISA), which will uphold and improve standards of behaviour to protect those working in the creative industries.

I have discussed the BBC's own workplace culture review with both the Chair and the Director General and made clear that the Government considers it a moral imperative for the BBC to get this right. BBC staff alongside the public rightly expect the very highest standards from their national broadcaster. We welcome the BBC's commitment to implement the recommendations of the workplace culture review.

I remain deeply concerned by the serious editorial and cultural failings exposed in recent months. I will of course be closely monitoring the BBC's progress in implementing the Gaza documentary review's recommendations, as well as its changes to live coverage processes and standards following its coverage of Glastonbury and its response to the workplace culture review. While I acknowledge the BBC's initial steps, there is still more to do; I have been clear that I expect to see meaningful and lasting change - this is essential to restoring public trust in the BBC.

I know you have also expressed your disappointment at all these events covered above and I wanted to recognise the role we can both play in holding the BBC to account on behalf of the public. I know you take this as seriously as I do and welcome that your Committee has announced that the BBC Chair and Director General will appear before you in September. Though it is paramount that the BBC remains operationally and editorially independent, the public must have trust in the critical and impartial work of the BBC, and Parliament also plays a crucial role in ensuring this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Lisa Nandy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport