

To Thomson-Reuters News Agency,

We the undersigned organizations are writing to express our deep dismay at Thomson-Reuters' financial stake in the Asian News Agency (ANI), an India-based news service that relays false information, quotes non-existent sources and non-existent institutions, actively collaborates with Indian ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to relay government propaganda, and shows a pattern of Islamophobic bias in its reporting.

Considering the real world impact of ANI's propaganda in conflict-torn Manipur, where its recent reporting [falsely accused a Muslim man](#) of gang-rape and fed into a broader misinformation campaign plaguing the region, we urge you to immediately divest your stake in ANI. As one of India's largest news services, and the nation's main provider of video segments to TV networks around the world, ANI's dishonest practices damage both the domestic and global media ecosystem.

ANI's Islamophobic bias in its reporting is troubling and systematic. In April, 2020 [ANI reported the names of Muslims](#) accused of hoarding Covid-19 masks, while not reporting the names of non-Muslims accused of the same crime, thereby lending its voice to a [broader conspiratorial campaign](#) of blaming Muslims for the spread of COVID-19 in India. ANI also [falsely reported that residents of Noida](#) had to quarantine after coming into contact with members of the Muslim organization Tablighi Jamaat. Islamophobic COVID-19 conspiracy theories translated into anti-Muslim violence throughout India, and ANI as India's largest multimedia agency bears responsibility for feeding into this campaign.

ANI repeatedly chooses to report the names of Muslims accused of serious crimes while not reporting the known names of non-Muslims accused of the same crime. In [December, 2022](#), ANI chose to show the name of a Muslim man accused of rape, while hiding the name of a non-Muslim accused of the same crime, though the latter's name was publicly available. The same transpired in November 2022, when ANI [reported two rape cases](#) that month and again displayed the names of Muslim men accused of the crime, but hid the publicly available name of a non-Muslim. Again [in November, 2022](#), a Muslim teenager accused of rape was named in its reporting, while a man of known identity who killed his wife was not named. In November, 2018, ANI reported a misleading story about a prominent Muslim school issuing a Fatwa, or total ban against nail polish, when in fact the clerics' opinion was that it was fine for women to wear nail polish, so long as they were not performing ritual washings.

While some of these stories might plausibly be dismissed as journalistic error or negligence, taken in aggregate they form a clear pattern of biased reporting against India's Muslim minorities.

Furthermore, as noted in [the findings](#) of Brussels based think-tank EU Disinfo Lab, ANI has quoted extensively from non-existent sources and non-existent think tanks in its reporting. “Fake personae, self-described as James Bond fans, basketball players and management consultants, became geopolitical experts quoted by ANI numerous times...” EU [DisInfo Lab reports](#).

EU DisInfo Lab found no trace online of the supposed geostrategy experts Magda Lipan, Valentin Popescu, Philippe Jeune, Mario Degaspari, or James Duglous (likely a misspelling of Douglas) Crickton, or Ronald Duchemin, all of whom are [quoted](#) in ANI [articles](#) as foreign policy experts. EU DisInfo Lab contacted, where available, the think tanks these supposed individuals work for, and were never connected with them. Several of these personae are part of the non-existent think tanks Police Research Group (POREG) and the International Forum for Rights and Security (IFFRAS), the latter of which ANI cited more than 200 times in its reporting, according to DisInfo Lab.

EU DisInfo Lab has previously identified ties between IFFRAS, POREG and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-allied Srivastava group, a shadowy conglomerate whose sources ANI quotes extensively to create the impression that India’s foreign policy goals enjoy global support.

As reported in *The Caravan*, one of India’s most respected journalism outlets, [ANI maintains explicit ties](#) with Indian government ministries, on whose behalf it produces video content for syndication through global news agencies. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs reportedly enlisted ANI to produce videos for media campaigns boosting India’s image abroad. These videos include propagandistic titles such as “India’s growing foreign engagements help strengthen bilateral ties.” *The Caravan* spoke with 90 officials who confirmed that ANI had explicit agreements with other Indian government agencies.

One former ANI staffer alleged that the Home Ministry vetted one of ANI’s television shows before it went live. Other ANI former staffers whom *The Caravan* spoke to also alleged that reporters had previously been tasked with downplaying the death tolls of Indian military strikes in Kashmir.

On several occasions, ANI has also [misrepresented BJP politicians](#) as neutral third party observers, observers who just so happened to be criticizing opponents of the BJP. In October, 2018 ANI referred to a BJP spokesperson as a neutral “eyewitness” of a train accident which the eyewitness then blamed on the rival Congress party; in April, 2018, ANI referred to a BJP member, who was criticizing the mayor of Karnataka, as “a Mangalor resident”; in May 2015, ANI referred to BJP MLA Ashwath Narayan as a Bangalore resident, one who just happened to be praising Modi’s nationwide radio program. [As reported in The Caravan](#), ANI added fake

logos and added fake Urdu narration on some of its television news coverage to make it appear as if its reportage had been quoted on Pakistani news stations.

ANI's demonstrable anti-Muslim bias, close ties to the Indian government, knowing falsification of information, and reliance on fabricated sources foment hate against India's Muslims and undermine India and the world's media ecosystem.

In recognition of the fact that anti-Muslim misinformation campaigns reported in Indian mass media have contributed to numerous incidents of anti-Muslim hate, bigotry, and violence, and in order to uphold Reuters' stated commitment to "independence, integrity, and freedom from bias," we strongly urge you to take the following actions:

Immediately divest stakes from ANI: As a responsible and respected news agency, Reuters must stop providing fiscal support to an organization whose reporting displayed a pattern of biased, anti-Muslim reporting and which actively colludes with the Indian government.

Refuse to facilitate ANI's dissemination of fabricated information: In the interest of maintaining journalistic integrity, Reuters should refrain from assisting ANI in distributing misleading information and partisan propaganda.

Publicly condemn ANI for its biased, Islamophobic reporting: A public statement from Reuters distancing itself from ANI's practices would underscore its commitment to accurate, impartial, and ethical journalism.

We believe that by adopting these measures, Reuters can reaffirm its reputation as a reliable and trustworthy news agency committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical journalism around the world.

We look forward to your response and hope that Reuters will take decisive steps to rectify its association with ANI.

Signed,

Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK
CAGE, London
The United Kingdom Indian Muslim Council, UK
STRIVE UK
South Asia Solidarity Group, UK
India Labour Solidarity, UK

Scottish Indians For Justice, Scotland, UK
Indian Muslim Federation UK
NUJ London Magazine Branch
Sarah Morgan — UK National Union of Journalists Member
Alan Gibson — UK National Union of Journalists NEC
Indian American Muslim Council, Washington DC
Muslims for Progressive Values, USA
Hindus for Human Rights, Washington DC
Jewish Voice for Peace, USA
Alliance of Inclusive Muslims, USA
International Commission for Dalit Rights, USA
Gary Vankennen, New York Council of Churches, New York
World Without Genocide, Minnesota, USA
Justice America
Boston South Asian Coalition, Massachusetts
Justice For All, USA
International Defenders Council, Florida
Ramkumar - Periyar Ambedkar Study Circle, Florida
Daniel Mutyala, Bible Believer's Fellowship of Dallas, Texas
CERAS (Centre sur l'asie du sud), Montreal
North American Manipur Tribal Association (NAMTA), Canada
Justice For All Canada
South Asian Network for Secularism And Democracy (SANSAD), Vancouver
South Asian Diaspora Action Collective (SADAC), Canada
The London Story, Netherlands
Alliance Against Islamophobia, Australia
Holkhosei Touthang, President, Kuki Inipi
International Solidarity for Academic Freedom in India (InSAF India), India
Koninika Ray, National Federation of Indian Women, New Delhi, India
Kavita Srivastava, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), India