

“Write one case related to citizen journalism also (sic) highlight the role, importance and effects of CJ with special reference to your case.”

[On the case: 2016 Qandeel Baloch - Mufti Controversy, incidents (prior to 2018) covered &/or compiled by Sanam Maher]

In the penultimate controversy leading up to Qandeel Baloch's death (the final being the leak of her passport & identity to the press), selfies & selfie videos posted by Baloch of her & the Mufti in the latter's hotel room sparked national & international outrage¹. As was the trend with Baloch & her – well, existing within the public sphere, she was met with generous amounts of vitriol & righteous ostracization & rape & death threats & moral & religious disdain, etc; the usual. What is surprising, perhaps, is that Abdul Qavi was², too.

Not with the rape & death threats, of course (painstakingly described, one more so than the other), and certainly not to the same degree as Qandeel Baloch, Scandal Queen, Whore of Pakistani Social Media, Homewrecker Extraordinaire, etc etc. (The usual). But there was condemnation. There was ridicule, there was anger; there was accountability.

A day after Baloch posted the images & videos to her public accounts, she & the mufti were interviewed on the channel 24NewsHD for its show, *Khara Sach*, where he had his lechery & behaviour towards women (often unprompted & always sexual) called out³, & his character & decency brought into question on national television⁴. Another day, & several more opportunities for him to present his side of the story - one that changed with every turn & looked bad in all of them - later, Mufti Abdul Qavi, residence of Multan (Punjab) was suspended⁵ immediately & indefinitely from his position as member of the central Ruet-e-Hilal committee by the government of Pakistan.

There was consequence.

¹ The videos, as with all others posted by Baloch have since been taken down, along with the entirety of her Facebook page. They can be found nestled within the countless documentaries made on her life (death), or through less savoury means.

² [[When Qandeel Baloch met Mufti Qavi: A guideline on how NOT to learn Islam](#), The Express Tribune]

³ Qavi maintains that he was framed by Baloch & that the episode was a setup. Qt: *“Those people on the show just wanted to create hatred for men of religion. They wanted to show, and may Allah forgive me for saying this, that I am some kind of – [whispers] sexy man of God.”* [Sanam Maher, A Woman Like Her (2018)]

⁴ Qt: *“Mufti Qavi needs to apologize. Whatever Qandeel Baloch is doing, at least she is doing it in front of the whole world. There's no hypocrisy, whether it's right or wrong...but Mufti Qavi is a scholar of Islam, and he has a nation following him and he did all of this.”* – Imran Ismail. [Sanam Maher, A Woman Like Her (2018)]

[[Khara Sach with Lucman, 21st June, 2016](#), 24NewsHD]; see next section.

⁵ [[Govt of Pakistan Suspends Mufti Abdul Qavi Over Qandeel Baloch Scandal](#), Parhlo.com]; Incidentally, parhlo.com itself is an example of large scale citizen journalism; a crowdsourced news platform based in Pakistan.

[[Pakistan Cleric suspended after selfies with Qandeel Baloch](#), Deccan Chronicle]

The bureaucratic follow up on the 'Mufti-Qandeel' controversy alone is enough to make it one of the most successful & efficient religious exposés in recent time (bear in mind here that the entire procedure, from Baloch publishing the pictures to Abdul Qavi losing his job⁶, his title, & some (never all) of his dignity took place over the course of a mere *two days*) & arguably the most successful ever, in Pakistan. Yet one detail about the case that people & the media tend to gloss over – one that in retrospective seems so indelibly obvious that it's difficult (not really) to fathom how anyone could possibly be stupid enough to ever have bought it any other way (not really) – is that Abdul Qavi's speedrun to the bottom of the social ladder was not quiet the Dumb-&-Dumber happy accident or the simple karmic comeuppance (*Allah meherbaan* 🙏🙏) that a man like Qavi would have had to pay for keeping acquaintance with a woman like Qandeel – either way a consequence of his own idiocy – that it was made out to be, but a simple, transparent act of 'social media journalism', that – whether precautionary or responsive – would've served as Baloch's only (let's call it contingent) defence for the length of a meeting in a closed room alone with a powerful man had things gotten uncomfortable. An improvised sting⁷.

[On the role, the importance, & the effects of CJ in reference to this case]

The role of CJ in a case like this is pretty transparent: posthumously, Qandeel's social media stardom is one that pretty conveniently fits the archetype of an "influencer", which is a very loosely defined term in itself, but anyhow. Abyssian debates about the pros & cons of consumerism, the ethical conundrums & the 6 Defining Characteristics of Being an Influencer notwithstanding, an influencer, on social media, is a user that has *influence*. Be it because of their reach (followers), their fame (paparazzi interest), their status (blue tick), or some combination of the three. And as can be categorically said for the default template of the essential social media personality, now that one exists, when it comes to these three, popularity works just the same as notoriety.

CJ practised single handedly by a prominent personality like Qandeel will always be different from the one practised by the common man – often on the daily – in certain essential ways, not the least of which is that it will get attention. It will be seen, it will be heard, & maybe (with just

⁶ Specifically, his government job. He was still licenced to work as a maulvi in madrassas, & after his suspension had been running one in Multan, from where he was reported to enjoy holding "Islamic court" & passing judgements in his office [2] This, presumably, he continued to do, despite his nomination & subsequent arrest in October '17 under Baloch's murder case (pre-arrest bail: Rs. 100,000. He was arrested anyway), until being stripped of the remaining title of 'Mufti' in 2021 (due to a different controversy). [[Qandeel murder case: arrest warrants issued for Mufti Abdul Qavi](#), Dawn] [qt: "[I took off my shoe and hit him on the head but he felt no embarrassment](#),"- Hareem Shah, Samaa]

⁷ Naturally, the word sting here, is used in a principlean sense. There was no hidden camera, no wire taps; the whole thing was recorded on snapchat with a selfie stick. The equipment was out in the open, there is film of Qavi consenting to *being* filmed (in which Baloch assures him that she is going to do nothing more with the clips than post them to her accounts, which he accepts), the recorder over the table. Rather, it was the *purpose* of filming that was implicit; not quite as vain & shallow as Qavi & later the public & media assumed it to be, the onus of which, (of course) lies on Baloch.

Furthermore, Abdul Qavi in his public response has deemed the meeting a 'set-up', claiming that he was the victim of a conspiracy (Baloch having been simply a pawn planted by his 'enemies'). He also said that he hadn't, in fact, been comfortable with being filmed & certainly looked the part, too. [Qt: "[I should have stopped her but I didn't want to seem rude](#)." [see 2]]

The case is a sting in spirit more than it is in structure. An 'exposé' of the ordinary kind. And in order to truly appreciate certain intricacies of it in the vein of CJ, it becomes necessary, critically, to treat it as such.

a little bit more may than the common man's be's), it will go somewhere⁸. The CJ's role here was obviously to use a platform that had people paying attention, looking & listening, never mind that it was for cleavage & scandals, to get them to look at & listen to something they wouldn't otherwise. Qavi's behaviour & interest in "beautiful women" was not some dark secret kept closely under wraps & brought to the forefront by the media (& of course, other internet users. After all, the intensely active regular visitors to Qandeel Baloch's Facebook page were citizen journalists, too). The man was a staple of the television news industry; his wide circle of journalists was well versed in precisely who he was, what he desired, & just how comfortable he was with both⁹. The case would not exist without Qandeel & her image, & there's point pretending it would.

The effects & the importance? Debatable.

In the earlier section I had deemed the case one of the "most successful & efficient" stings of recent time. And ordinarily, that should be answer enough, yes? To the question of importance? It should. It is.

But being successful & being the "most successful of Pool C" are two different things, & if success is to be defined as an absolute measure instead of a relative one, achieving that which was intended as opposed to that which is required, answers change. For instance, if success is defined, for a journalistic exposé, by the impact created & substantial officiated action directly catalysed by it - against the exposee in particular or the likes of them in general - then Baloch's civilian home (hotel) project was not so much "successful" as it was simply more effective than its professionally executed counterparts. And if success is defined, for a citizen sting, conducted by a citizen journalist, at great personal risk & with no professional or moral obligation to do so, as minimising the harm therein caused to said citizen himself, indeed it was a miserable failure.

As for the effects – coming back to *Khara Sach*.

On the show, Imran Ismail, deputy secretary general of the PTI¹⁰, was invited over the phone to make clear Mufti Qavi's role & position in the party¹¹. [Quote: "Mufti Qavi does not hold any office in the PTI; he never has and, God willing, he never will."] But see, he didn't stop there.

In the unexpectedly clear & scathing few minutes that followed, Ismail went on to state exactly what *he* thought of Abdul Qavi ["I will ask Imran Khan to never let people like Mufti Qavi in the party. What he has done is a stain on the name of Islam. It's very clear what his intentions were

⁸ Of course, it's worth mentioning here – if not worth revealing, because you already know – that the risk grows just as the returns do, & as dangerous as an act of journalism, especially an uncomfortable one, done non unanimously, from one's own personal & public social media accounts is, it's exponentially more so when you've got that many zeroes more next to your follower count (why bother shutting down a voice that can't be heard?). A "celebrity" of any kind taking up any contentious journalistic "obligations" will always be doing so at no small amount of risk to themselves & their families. There's a reason film stars & musicians encase themselves in a posse of bodyguards & install crores of rupees worth of security systems in their homes; & it's the same as a simple unitary thought that crossed my mind (& perhaps yours) upon opening my browser on the 16th of July 2016 & seeing the words "Qandeel Baloch is Dead" whiz past an ad on the msn homepage: look what happens when they don't.

⁹ Qt: "*Maybe the things he was saying were new for Qandeel, but for us, it was not surprising at all. We knew he was like this.*" – Mufti Qavi's journalist "friend" [Sanam Maher, *A Woman Like Her* (2018)]

¹⁰ In one of the videos of their meetings recorded by Baloch, Qavi claims that he could help her meet Imran Khan, being the "head of his party's religious wing," since she loves him so much.

¹¹ Qavi had been a member of the PTI since 2013, & was ousted immediately hereafter. [[PTI suspends Qawi](#), The Tribune]

when he called an unmarried young woman into his hotel room alone.”] – funnily enough, something no one through the tenure of Qavi’s extensive television career had bothered to do before; about a man who’d been playing the role of friendly neighbourhood cleric in Pakistani news for a good long while & hadn’t bothered trying not to be a little too friendly for most of it [“Mufti sahib sits on TV shows and satiates his lust with the things he says.”] – went off the pavement of diplomacy & onto the bare naked earth of personal, passionate disdain, the kind that is typically reserved for infidels, seditionists & of course, – [“How would Mufti sahib feel if some man spoke to his wife or daughters this way? There is no better way to disrespect a religion than what he has done.”] – women.

Abdul Qavi’s involvement in Qandeel Baloch’s murder remains to be a matter of question¹². Past the offers of marriage, & the baseless accusations of blasphemy made on national television¹³, & the Schrodinger’s sexual assaults, on the Lucman appearance of 21st June, Qavi disclosed (in what would come to be the starting point of a hobbyistic unravelling of Baloch’s carefully concealed personal life & identity in Pakistani news media in the coming days, leading within the week to the leak of her passport, reporters showing up at her child’s address, & eventually her death) a detail about her life that had been revealed to him in religious confidence, on national, live television. Was it all worth it in the end because a politician asked a priest to apologize to Qandeel “*Gushti*” Baloch¹⁴ on primetime TV? ⁱ

God knows.

¹² Answer? [God knows](#).

¹³ [\[Veena Malik vs Mufti Qavi\]](#), 2011, Tommy Peters]

¹⁴ A priest, a politician & a prostitute walk into a bar –

ⁱ *"I don't think that all muftis are bad, and not all ulema are bad. Being a Muslim girl, I respect all the clerics because they keep Islam alive...but it is people like Mufti Abdul Qavi who disgrace Islam with what they do behind closed doors. I have no quarrel with other clerics. I respect them. I didn't set out to humiliate Mufti Abdul Qavi. Whatever has happened is God's will."* – Qandeel Baloch, 1990-2016. Press conference, 28th June 2016, Lahore Press Club.