**ETHICS IN JOURNALISM**

**Name:**

**Course:**

**Professor:**

**Institution:**

**Location:**

**Date**

**Ethics in Journalism**

The Mail on Sunday, one of the most prominent newspapers in the United Kingdom (UK), posted an article that contained portions of a letter from the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, to her father. The letter was an attempt by Meghan to fix a difficult relationship she had with her estranged father. As a result of this, Meghan, with the support of her husband Prince Harry, surprised the British press by reporting that they were prosecuting the Mail on Sunday. Meghan charged the Media with copyright theft and abuse of confidential information after the newspaper released extracts from a private letter she sent to her father, Thomas Markle (Waterson 2019).

Under United Kingdom copyright law, the creator of a piece of art is usually the person who made it. When a person holds copyright in a piece of art, the statute requires them to prohibit others from copying or distributing the work without permission. Thus, the letter's substance belongs to the sender of the letter – even though the final physical note belongs to the receiver and implies that to publish the contents of the document, the author's consent would be necessary to prevent copyright violation. But there are exceptions to copyright law. There are cases where authorization is not required – for example, whether it is used for critique, analysis, or quote, or to cover current affairs. Any of the exceptions to copyright has strict conditions that must be met to benefit from them.

Intrusions and inquiries into and personal life without his or her permission, including the use of long-length photos to take pictures of persons on private premises without their consent, are not commonly permissible, and publication should only be authorized in the national interest (Reynolds 1994). The action of the paper, in my opinion, to post such private material was wrong. The letter was personal, not a threat to national security; hence its contents were not legible to be published by the tabloid. The duchess was right to sue the paper as they did not seek her permission to publish the letter. The Mail on Sunday should have first considered the legality of posting the letter; this put them at the wrong end of the law. It was totally unethical for the paper to defend themselves and claim they were right in posting the letter portions. They should have accepted their mistake of copyright infringement and apologised to her since the action could not be taken back after publishing.

Privacy is the right to maintain when or who can view and display your material and knowledge. As a result, the concept of privacy is different between different cultures and nations; although they are all distinctive, they share similar characteristics. The act of revealing one's confidential information is a decision that must be made personally. Privacy is a right that all individuals can enjoy, and the government has to retain that right. Data such as personal addresses, bank information, medical records, and passwords need to be kept confidential and protected to ensure that privacy is not breached. As a part of the fight over the intrusion of privacy, different regimes have been compelled to make legislation and explain laws in various countries.

The United Kingdom's longstanding international commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights have been transposed into domestic legislation under the Human Rights Act (1998). Article 8 of the Convention states that "Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence." Celebrity stalking and exposure is a longstanding and profitable feature of the press. But as the release of private information moves out of the political and public realms, it is no longer possible to excuse any or all breach of privacy by using the well-known argument that there is no faith in iniquity. Publicity of iniquity may be in the national interest. Still, sensational revealing of private and classified documents, if followed by meticulous details and photos, may not warrant the public interest.

Mail on Sunday compromised the privacy of the Duchess of Sussex. Even though she is a public figure and an interest to many, her life's private details are not meant for the public. According to Davison (2019), privacy rights are fair and should extend to all people regardless of whether they are wealthy or royal. I also think the royal family should be given a choice to pick what is to be published about sensitive information in their private lives. It is evident that Megan and Prince Harry did not object to the article's claims and news on the Mail on Sunday but objected to the abuse of their rights to privacy by publishing a confidential letter (Taylor 2020). However, the royal family is an interest to many people in the United Kingdom, and they should also expect the public to be curious about their lives. Therefore, the Royal family should inform the public about their lives to reduce their curiosity and calm the media. It is clear from Prince Harry's comment that he was worried about the lack of regard that journalists had for Meghan's private and personal life. While privacy laws and the Human Rights Act exist, they are not always applied or do not have significant repercussions for the offenders. I think the Human Rights Act is too ambiguous. It addresses personal information abuse and outlines the photographs or information that people feel may have a fair presumption of privacy.

In my perspective as a Journalist, publishing such information, especially about the royal family, has legal implications that I do not want. Therefore, I would seek other means to reveal the information other than publishing the letter., Alternative methods include interviewing the affected parties, which would be the father of the duchess, Thomas Markle, or the Duchess of Sussex herself. Seeking permission to publish the letter would also have been a better option because the consequences of illegal publishing are dire such as banning the paper from researching or reporting about the family, which the Duke of Sussex has done. Hence can hinder the success of the media corporation.

In summary, ethics in journalism are essential. As much as journalists are supposed to chase stories, they should also consider their actions' repercussions. Some can be ruthless and unforgiving; journalists' contents significantly affect the public and even more on the person the information concerns. The exposure of private information could lead to discrimination or rebuke by the public resulting in depression and other adverse effects on the affected individual. Thus journalists should be conscious of the results that may arise from their content.

**References**

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