

Politics Trumps Ethics : The case of a French TV anchor's suspension over an anti-FN op-ed

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2017-4-28

A French TV presenter has been suspended for signing up to an anti-Front National article. A defence of objectivity or an infringement of freedom of expression? When journalists are under attack from political parties, should they take a stand or remain 'neutral'? LSE post-grad media student Ndeye Diarra Diobaye has this view.

TV Anchor Audrey Pulvar signed a collective op-ed published in the [Huffington Post's French edition](#) on April 26th which argued that Le Pen becoming France's first female president would be a defeat for all women and which called for people to vote for Emmanuel Macron. She was suspended from being on air until the end of election season by her employer, cable news channel *CNEWS*.

As a French citizen she is in the right to freely express her opinions. The two main sources on ethics for French journalists, the 1971 **Munich** Declaration of the Duties and Rights of Journalists and the Charter of French journalists' professional rights do not specifically mention journalists' right to express their political opinions. However, the latter mentions that that journalists should treat the news with impartiality, that is to say to collect and disseminate information to the public with fairness and without biases.

Following the publication of the op-ed, Marine Le Pen's campaign director and the National Front's Vice-President both demanded her suspension. Commenting on her suspension, *CNEWS*' news director argued that her public show of support for Macron against Le Pen, reduced her capacity to remain neutral for the rest of the election.

Audrey Pulvar suspended by CNews for signing a petition against Marine Le Pen

Online Writing

OnlineThursday 27 April 2017, 9:09

The chain of continuous information criticizes a lack of neutrality.



This case presents an occasion to interrogate the media's role in dealing with political actors such as Marine Le Pen or Donald Trump whose media strategy presents a clear double-standard. These are political actors who have been feeding an anti-media sentiment by presenting themselves as the victims of the globalized elite's media on the one hand, yet selecting the media who are given a privileged access to them on the other, therefore creating a bias in how their stories are covered.

On the eve of a potential victory by Marine Le Pen, the French media, just like its people, are facing an important choice: to bow to the pressure of the National Front's demonization strategy and fit into an ideal of journalistic deontology that serves the party's interest or to resist to the pressure and ground themselves in their role as information gatekeepers and the responsibility which it entails.

The Trump presidency and the American journalist's relationship to the White House gives us an idea of what awaits French journalists should they pick the former over the latter.

This article by Ndeye Diarra Diobaye @MonsieurNdeye

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