

McCanns victory over Express: triumph for truth?

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/03/18/mccanns-victory-over-express-triumph-for-truth/

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The £550,000 [defamation pay-out](#) and humiliating front-page apologies by Express Newspapers over their coverage of the McCanns could be the moment when the tide turns against recent tabloid excesses. [Polis](#) was the first organisation to stage a public debate about media treatment of the McCanns. It raised a series of difficult issues, but the overwhelming impression it left was that most of the media had gone a bit mad over this story while a minority had lost all their editorial senses. I [wrote](#) that this was not about the guilt or innocence of the McCanns. It was much more about how a combination of their public relations campaign, the Internet, the Portuguese press and a loss of UK media inhibition had combined to 'commodify' a tragic human story. Vast amounts of innuendo and tenuous rumour was printed (and broadcast) without fact-checking or proper contextualisation.

Now the Express will have to say [sorry](#) in the High Court and pay the McCanns damages and costs. Media commentator [Roy Greenslade](#) rejoices in the Express' humiliation and speculates as to their motives and the consequences for their editors' careers. But I wonder if the fact that only the Express will pay the price will act as a warning to others who have strayed in similar ways. Or whether the other media outlets who have dabbled in mindless and cruel speculation will simply be grateful that the struggling Express group has taken the hit on their behalf.

Lots of other reaction [here](#).

And [here](#).

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