

## **ETHICAL VIOLATIONS IN PRESS COVERAGE OF 2012 ELECTIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the wake of the 2012 elections, the National Media Commission (NMC), GJA and civil society organizations were worried that unprofessional coverage of the elections could lead to violence. This study analysed the content of political stories which appeared in newspapers during the most serious campaign season from 1st November to 6th December, 2012. It was meant to investigate the extent and nature of ethical violations, the nature of coverage accorded political stories and the amount of news-hole devoted to the various political parties. The study found that newspapers routinely violated Article 1 of the GJA Code on balanced and fair coverage since they often published allegations made by one political party against another without first

obtaining a response from the accused party. There were also few violations of Articles 6, 11 and 17 related to respect for national and ethnic values, separating comments from facts and headlines and sensationalism. The privately owned papers committed majority of the ethical violations. Also, while the private papers concentrated on covering the campaigns of the opposition NPP, the state papers accorded more coverage to the ruling NDC. The study recommends strengthening of in-house ethical standards for newspapers, training of journalists and punitive measures by the Ethics Committee of GJA as ways of enhancing professional conduct.

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