



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 27, 2024

French TV Channel Fined \$100,000 for Saying Abortion Is World's Leading Cause of Death

A French television channel was fined over \$100,000 and forced to apologize after it reported — accurately — that abortion is the world's leading cause of death.

“It was,” observed George Washington University law Professor [Jonathan Turley](#), “the full monty of censorship, combining a penalty with compelled speech.”

Fetal Position

According to [The European Conservative](#):

In February 2024, presenter Aymeric Pourbaix, during the Catholic program “En quête d’esprit,” broadcast every Sunday on the conservative channel CNews, showed [an infographic on the causes of death](#), ranking abortion as the leading cause, with 73 million deaths each year worldwide. That translates to 52% of annual deaths, far ahead of cancer (10 million) and smoking (6.2 million).

The journalist’s comments sparked a wave of indignation in the mainstream press, on the grounds that abortion cannot be considered a “cause of death” because the fetus should not be considered a living being.



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Within days of the broadcast, the Council of State, one of France’s highest courts, asked the Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication (ARCOM) to investigate CNews over its alleged lack of “pluralism.”

Explained [The European Conservative](#):

In France, television channels are subject to rules that govern the allocation of speaking time between political parties, particularly during election periods. Media airtime should be divided as follows: one-third for the government, one-third for the majority, and one-third for the opposition. During election periods, channels must give political parties speaking time in proportion to their electoral results in previous elections.



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The Council of State reasoned that the speaking time of CNews personalities, who are journalists and columnists, should be similarly regulated. In other words, if Pourbaix spent 10 minutes reporting a pro-life story, a pro-abortion spokesperson should be given 10 minutes to argue the opposite. Never mind the fact that CNews, along with another channel, C8, is owned by Catholic businessman Vincent Bolloré, not the state.

Ironically, CNews did, in fact, [grant more airtime to various factions](#) during the 2022 legislative elections than other, mostly government-owned channels did. The latter, not surprisingly, primarily featured left-wing commentators.

Consequences for Truth

France's commitment to "pluralism" on television only goes so far. While the government claims to want a wide range of ideologies broadcast (evidence to the contrary notwithstanding), it seems content with the limited range of issues that are actually discussed.

The European Conservative noted:

The success of CNews comes from its ability to combine the two forms of pluralism. Pluralism of ideas — you hear points of view on the channel that you don't hear elsewhere — and pluralism of themes. In fact, Cnews is the only channel to talk about security, immigration, borders, and justice, when these issues, which affect the daily lives of millions of French people, are carefully avoided in public service broadcasts.

Indeed, let CNews bring up an issue the government absolutely does not want debated, and the state comes down hard. Thus, after the many public attacks on Pourbaix's infographic, CNews felt compelled to apologize for ever having broadcast it and for having hurt some people's feelings by doing so. But that was not enough to satisfy ARCOM. The agency ultimately fined CNews more than \$100,000, saying the channel failed in its "obligation of honesty and rigor in the presentation and processing of information."

"Abortion," ARCOM declared, "cannot be presented as a cause of death."

In the magazine *Valeurs Actuelles*, Jean-Marie Le Méné, head of the pro-life Jérôme Lejeune Foundation, [wrote](#) concerning ARCOM's decree:

Equating an aborted child with a dead person would make abortion a homicidal act. So that abortion can be carried out with a clear conscience, it is forbidden to say that abortion takes away life. Otherwise the keystone of the system collapses. But who believes this fiction?

The Left does — or at least pretends to — and, given the opportunity, will not even permit an alternative viewpoint to be presented to the public.

Censory Overload

Of course, as Turley pointed out:

France has been a leader in the rollback on free speech in the West with ever widening laws curtailing free speech. These laws criminalize speech under vague standards referring to "inciting" or "intimidating" others based on race or religion. For example, fashion designer John Galliano has been found guilty in a French court on charges of making anti-Semitic



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comments against at least three people in a Paris bar. At his sentencing, Judge Anne Marie Sauteraud read out a list of the bad words used by Galliano to Geraldine Bloch and Philippe Virgitti, including using “dirty whore” in criticism.

In another case, the father of French conservative presidential candidate Marine Le Pen was fined because he had called people from the Roma minority “smelly.” A French teenager was charged for criticizing Islam as a “religion of hate.”

Christianity, on the other hand, is a prime target, as are right-of-center opinions. *The European Conservative* reported that CNews and C8 “are the only channels ever to have been subject to financial penalties in France.”

All may not be lost, however. According to *The European Conservative*, political-science researcher Dominique Reynié

is confident that the control of opinion that the Council of State intends to introduce will not last long, because it is impossible to implement, and the pressure is too great, at a time when the political system in crisis needs disputes and confrontation of arguments more than ever.

“History,” the website contends, “has already shown that censorship is not sustainable in the long term.”



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