



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	240/00
2. Advertiser	Sony Computer Entertainment Aust Pty Ltd (Playstation 'In Cold Blood')
3. Product	Toys & Games
4. Type of advertisement	Print
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Other – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 8 August 2000
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The print advertisement, captioned 'What's more ruthless, running an oppressive regime or ignoring it?', comprises a drawing and text. Underneath the caption is a drawing of a man lying on his side, knees drawn up, head askew, gagged and bound at the ankles and about the body. Below this, the three-column text reads: 'Imagine being tortured every day for the rest of your life. Waking up to a beating, starved of food and oxygen. Imagine trying to sleep at night knowing that the rest of the world doesn't want to know you exist. Imagine being John Cord. Free John Cord. John Cord's been unlawfully imprisoned for over two months now. Intelligence suggests that he is being routinely tortured and may soon be executed. International cries for his release have fallen on deaf ears. Now that politicians have refused to play the game, it's up to you to fight for his release. You have the power to stop Nagarov's blatant violation of human rights. You can set John free. But not before you grab yourself a copy of PlayStation's 'In Cold Blood'. Get on your backside now and save John Cord.' At the lower right corner of the advertisement, the 'In Cold Blood' and PlayStation logos are included with boxed text: 'Free John Cord. Yes! I want to end the suffering, after I've ordered a pizza'. Under the box is the website 'www.freejohncord.com.'

THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainants made regarding this advertisement included the following:

'I am unaware of the standards to which advertisers must adhere to but find the attached to be in extremely poor taste, especially given the current political turmoil and instability in our region.'

'What deeply offends me about this advertisement is the way that it totally diminishes all political struggle. It degrades the struggles of oppressed peoples around the world. It turns into a game the real life pain and suffering of people in dire circumstances.'

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ('the Board') considered whether this advertisement breached Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics ('the Code').

The Board determined that the material within the advertisement did not constitute discrimination or vilification and that the advertisement did not breach the Code on these or any other grounds. The Board, accordingly, dismissed the complaint.