



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Christians launch legal challenge against BBC over “Jerry Springer Opera”



The BBC is facing a legal challenge over its decision to air Jerry Springer: the Opera, after a Christian group followed up on its promise to seek a judicial review.

Following the airing of the TV show, the Christian Institute wrote to the corporation’s lawyers warning that it planned to launch a legal action. It has now carried out its threat, after the BBC refused to apologise.

The Christian Institute is seeking a judicial review on two grounds, claiming firstly that the BBC has broken its royal charter, which requires it to uphold standards of taste and decency and abide by the Broadcasting Standards Commission broadcasting codes. Secondly, the institute claims the BBC has broken article nine of the Human Rights Act. “The BBC has a duty to uphold the convention on human rights as a public authority. Part of what we’re saying is there may be offensive things going on in West End theatres but we’re not paying for them,” said the director of the Christian Institute, Colin Hart. “This is a denigration that’s particularly offensive because it comes from a public body. The BBC is acting as a public body so the offence is much worse.”

The BBC has confirmed that it had received legal papers from the Christian Institute.

Around 50,000 complaints were eventually made to the BBC about the Jerry Springer broadcast, which went out on BBC2 on January 10, to an audience of just under 2 million. The BBC received the legal papers over a week ago. It is understood they were lodged at the high court on March 3.

[See a report of the BBC’s rejection of all protests against the programme.](#)