

Police ban Scots IHRA petition campaigner from showing “anti-Semitic” Banner outside Labour Conference

Today, police were so angry with campaigner Pete Gregson displaying his [Latuff](#) banner at Conference that they almost arrested him. However, they were not bothered about all the other banners on display. Here is the image Pete used on his banner, at some 2 x 2 metres:



First PC 1773 had a go. Mr Gregson, a Labour activist of some 30 years standing, had spent 3 days at home making the banner using his own A4 printer and sticky-backed plastic, no small feat. He'd travelled down from Edinburgh the night before just to promote his petition at tinyurl.com/israelihra and was up at one of the entrances to Liverpool Dock on Sunday at 8.30am, with his banner erected, handing out flyers as 3,000 delegates and visitors arrived .

PC 1773 accosted Mr Gregson at the Keel Wharf Footbridge (by Duke's Dock) and prevented him from giving out his flyers, [which can be downloaded here](#). He demanded he remove the banner. Eventually Mr Gregson was ejected from the site and made to go stand at the stone arch at Wapping, opposite Police HQ and quite distant from the Conference venue. Mr Gregson protested, pointing out that the Marxist nearby was giving out his flyers, on the bridge. PC 1773 assured Mr Gregson that the Marxist would be called upon to cease and desist, but when Mr Gregson looked back minutes later, the PC had just walked past said Marxist, saying nothing.

At this point Mr Gregson felt there was something fishy going on. He contacted his friend, local man Jack Thomas who was inside the Conference venue and was distributing same flyers within. Jack explained to Pete that he should come to just outside the ACC Liverpool Conference venue's main entrance where there were many people with banners and flyers.

Mr Gregson duly proceeded to the Conference entrance and started giving out flyers. After a few minutes he saw that other groups did have banners up and tracked down PC 1773, indicating that there were others with banners, so could he put his one up? The policeman refused to listen.

So, after a while, Pete spied the [Labour against the Witchhunt](#) (LAW) folk who had their banner up tied to the railings. They liked Pete's banner and were sympathetic to his petition, so they agreed he could put his one next to theirs.

After a few minutes PC 1773 appeared and demanded Mr Gregson take his banner down again. When Mr Gregson asked why it was just his one that was being targeted, the officer indicated that the owner of the land had specifically objected to that banner, because it had the word "anti-Semite" in it. Mr Gregson asked him why the police had a problem with that word. PC 1773 said the cartoon was inflammatory and would cause offence. After some argument, and with PC1773 getting ever more angry, Mr Gregson took the banner down. At some point PC 1773 said "The law was an ass" and Mr Gregson should just do as he was told.

Soon after, two rabbis, orthodox Jews from [Neturei Karta](#), appeared, having driven from Stamford Hill to assist with giving Pete's flyers to Conference delegates. Here they are:

Pete Gregson, a Stamford Hill rabbi, Jack Thomas, Rabbi Beck, Chris Birchall.



After some hours flyering and much standing in the rain, the rabbis left to go back to London. Soon after, Mr Gregson was approached by two rough-looking unshaven men who revealed they were undercover officers for the London Met. They asked Mr Gregson if he would help them with their enquiries. Who were those two orthodox Jews? Why were they there? What were they distributing? When Mr Gregson showed them the picture of Neturei Karta Jews on his flyer and explained why they were helping him, the cops (clearly struggling to understand why rabbis were declaiming Israel to be a racist endeavour), said that they had heard there were activists "dressing up as orthodox Jews" - pretending to be against something that they should (naturally!!) support (presumably the full IHRA).

They were very keen to know that the rabbis would be back on the Tuesday night at Conference to speak at a fringe meeting with [Miko Peled](#) and [Issa Amro](#), on how best to fight for peace in the Middle East, organised by Jack. Miko, a Jew from Jerusalem, had arrived safely in the UK from Israel and had been helping handing out Mr Gregson's flyers, since his event was featured on the flip side.

Neither Mr Gregson nor the cops were aware that Israel had, that morning, intervened to prevent Issa, a Muslim from Hebron, from leaving the middle east. Issa was stopped at the border between Israel and Jordan and was told that he was not allowed to board his flight from Israel to the UK. He would have to go back and find a flight from Jordan. So Issa has had to drive back to Hebron (a 3-hr journey) and then find a

flight, so it now seems he will be unable to come to the UK. Israel was fully aware that Issa was coming to Labour Conference.

Issa Amro is a prominent human rights defender and founding member of **Youth Against Settlements** in Hebron who work peacefully against Israeli occupation of the West Bank. He won the One World media award in 2009 for his involvement in **B'Tselem's** "Shooting Back" project, which provides media training and distributes cameras to Palestinians to document settler and military abuse. **Issa Amro's** work with these organisations led to his winning the **UN OHCHR 'Human Rights Defender of the Year in Palestine'** award in 2010.



About two hours later, after PC 1773 had gone home for some well-deserved grub, having upheld the law by preventing what might have been a riotous scene (the Zionist [JLM](#) were flying nearby), Mr Gregson thought it was time to try again with his banner.

Knowing that he'd be for the nick if the cops saw him do it, two LAW activists from Derbyshire, Jenny and John, wanted to help and asked if they could display the banner. Pete agreed. No sooner than it was up again, than a different officer, PC 2043, approached and demanded again that the banner should be taken down. He was assisted by PC 2820, also unhappy that the banner was up again. This time the LAW supporters protested that this was a freedom of speech issue, and what was so offensive to the boys in blue about a Latuff cartoon?

PC 2043 insisted that Mr Gregson take the banner down. Mr Gregson asked for a reason: surely it was unfair that Latuff's work be deemed illegal. Why this banner and not the others? PC 2043 said he would ask, but while he was doing so, Mr Gregson would have to furl the banner. Mr Gregson received an assurance from the constable that he would be back within 5 minutes with a reason, and on that condition, Mr Gregson persuaded the LAW couple to take the banner down, else he feared there would be arrests. After 8 minutes Mr Gregson realised that PC 2043 was standing chatting some distance away and had no intention of explaining his actions. When Mr Gregson asked for an update, PC 2043 indicated the matter was closed. At this point Mr Thomas, who had organised the Peled/Amro/Neturei Karta event advertised on the reverse of Mr Gregson's flyer, began asking PC 2043 if he could explain himself. After some prodding the policeman indicated that the landowner had asked that this specific banner be banned from conference; the others could stay.

Both Mr Gregson and Mr Thomas indicated that if this was private land, as the PC said, why were the Police doing the landowner's job in banning the banner? Surely as publicly funded officers of the law, it wasn't their job to carry out the landowner's instructions? Surely the landowner would employ private staff for that? Was it really the job of the police to ban freedom of expression on Israel at a Labour's national conference? The PC grew angry when Mr Gregson pointed out that the Israeli prime minister had no right to write the Labour Party rulebook and surely the police would be duty-bound to uphold the right of freedom of speech. PC 2043 said the matter was closed.

At this point Mr Gregson spotted the police inspector in charge of the event. He rushed over to him and explained the situation. He asked why he couldn't put his banner up. The inspector (a younger, more reasonable fellow, who had been around all day) seemed new to the story and asked who it was that had told him that he could not erect his banner. Mr Gregson pointed out PCs 2043 and PC 2820. The Inspector asked where the banner was. Mr Gregson pointed towards the two armed police with submachine guns who had agreed to keep watch over the banner.

The Inspector seemed bemused. So those two policemen had said the landowner objected to the banner? Mr Gregson said yes. The Inspector said, well in that case, the police must be obeyed. Mr Gregson asked the Inspector why the police were now working on behalf of private landlords. The inspector, still bemused, said he could not answer that. They were there to uphold the law, that was all.

Mr Thomas asked if the Labour Party had rented the open land outside the Conference hall, surely they might have a say in what was on show? The Inspector thought not. The landowner's rights were paramount and they could, at all times, dictate what could be said or exhibited on their land, Labour Party or no Labour Party.

Mr Gregson is left wondering – “Was there really a landowner who had seen the banner at 8.30am at Gower Bridge and taken offence at the cartoon? Or were the police just making up the law as they went along?” Edinburgh South MP, Ian Murray, had pointed out to Mr Gregson that the police had signed up to the full IHRA code, which restricts criticism of Israel on the grounds that it is “anti-Semitic”. “Presumably,” Mr Gregson says, “Netanyahu has written their rulebook too.”

He has now written to the Board of Directors of the Conference venue. Liverpool City Council is the sole shareholder in The ACC Liverpool Group Ltd, which has its own Board of Directors, consisting of both Liverpool City Council representatives and independent non-executive directors. Here is his email:

“On Sunday 23rd September I was prevented from displaying a banner, showing a Latuff cartoon, by the police at the Labour Conference. Other banners were permitted. When pressed, the various officers and inspector involved maintained that they were acting under your instructions. The full story can be seen here.

<http://www.kidsnotsuits.com/police-ban-scots-ihra-petition-campaigner-from-showing-anti-semite-banner-outside-labour-conference>

I am trying to get to the bottom of who it was who issued this edict; I'm working with a number of national newspapers and my MP to get to the bottom of this. I look forward to hearing if the Board of Directors did, at 8.30 am on Sunday morning witness my banner, and did therefore instruct the Merseyside police to use all manners at their disposal to prevent this specific banner from being displayed on your property. I and many others, not least my comrades in the Labour Party, look forward to hearing your response. “

Just in case he never gets a reply from The ACC Liverpool Group, Pete has written to each of Liverpool City Council's 75 Labour Councillors asking if they could find out if the Council, acting through The ACC Liverpool Group Ltd, genuinely instructed the police to ban his banner. He notes that the Council [signed up to the full IHRA on full council on 24 January this year](#), but goes on to ask if they intended it to be used to suppress criticism of the Israeli Government, who seem to be behind this summer's plot to weaken Corbyn (he referred Councillors to the Lobby video, made by an undercover reporter, which explains why Latuff made the cartoon; see the video by Al-Jazeera, here - <https://youtu.be/ceCOhdgRBoc>).

When Pete has their reply, he may take the matter up with Merseyside Police, who can be contacted at commcen@merseyside.pnn.police.uk He has already asked his MP, Christine Jardine, to get involved. As a newish Lib Dem, it will be interesting to see if she cares to act.

If you want to help get rid of the IHRA in the Labour Party because it stops us saying Israel is a racist endeavour, please sign the petition here: www.change.org/p/to-chair-of-labour-s-nec-andy-kerr-labour-members-declaring-israel-is-a-racist-endeavour-call-on-nec-to-abandon-full-ihra

-ends-

Mr Gregson, safe at home in Edinburgh after his day at the Labour Conference in Liverpool



UPDATE 6/10/18

The police have acknowledged receipt of Mr Gregson's complaint on 29/9/18. Cllr Liz Parsons of Liverpool City Council has indicated to Mr Gregson that the Council issued no instruction to the police to ban the banner.

Mr Gregson still waits for the police to contact him to discuss his concerns. If he does not hear from them, he will escalate his complaint to [the Independent Office for Police Conduct](http://www.independent.gov.uk).

