

E: jacob.hansen@gov.scot

Mr Pete Gregson
Postmaster@roseburn32.plus.com

Our ref: 2018/0039506
12 December 2018

Dear Mr Gregson,

Thank you for your email dated 13 November to the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeane Freeman about the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) 'working definition' of anti-Semitism and the problems you are experiencing with your employer and your union. I work in the Connected Communities Unit and have been asked to reply.

The Scottish Government is clear that any form of hate crime or prejudice is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. There is no place in Scotland for any form of anti-Semitism or religious hatred that makes our communities feel insecure or threatened in their daily lives. We recognise and value the substantial contribution Scotland's Jewish communities make to our society and we work hard to ensure that every individual feels safe, secure and able to achieve their potential regardless of their faith or belief.

As you know, the Scottish Government formally adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in June 2017. The adoption will help to inform our work in this area and we will continue to work with key partners including Police Scotland to explore how using this definition translates into operational practice.

It is our view that adopting the definition sends a strong message that we believe anti-Semitism to be entirely unacceptable in Scotland. Although reported instances of Jewish hate crime in Scotland are low, we believe that hate crime is generally underreported and that it is vital we reassure all of Scotland's communities that their concerns will be taken seriously if they bring them to the attention of the authorities.

I appreciate your concerns about freedom of speech and the criticism of Israel, however the IHRA clearly states, 'criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic' which we are satisfied helps to protect freedom of speech in this regard.

We believe that the definition helps to bring some much needed clarity to what is often a complex issue, where legitimate criticism of Israel can be inaccurately called anti-Semitic and where anti-Jewish sentiment expressed against Israel can be incorrectly defined as legitimate criticism of the state.

The Scottish Government believes that discrimination or bullying of any kind is unacceptable as everyone has the right to go to work without fear of intimidation. This Government is committed to supporting fair employment practices but, unfortunately, Scottish Ministers have no power to intervene as the issue relates to a dispute between an employee and an employer.

If you have not already done so, you may also wish to contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), which provides information, advice, conciliation and other services for employers and employees to help prevent or resolve workplace problems. They can also advise on the employment tribunal process. You can get free and impartial advice from calling the ACAS helpline number on 0300 1231100. Alternatively there is a [Helpline Online](#).

Alternatively, advice can also be sought from Citizens Advice Scotland. Details including contact details can be found on their website here: www.cas.org.uk/

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Jacob Hansen
Connected Communities