

**Statement from Sarah Glynn,
Scottish Jews against Zionism 18.12.18**

The GMB Union has suspended, and seeks to expel, Pete Gregson for anti-Semitism, according to the IHRA definition and accompanying examples adopted by the union. We believe that the IHRA definition examples are fundamentally misleading and should be abandoned. They have been deliberately written so as to equate Israel, the self-declared Jewish Homeland, with all Jews, in order that criticism of Israel (and particularly the nature of Israel as a Jewish state) becomes regarded as criticism of Jews and is deemed anti-Semitic and inadmissible.

Although the Jewish religion looks forward to Jews returning to Israel after the coming of the messiah, support for Zionism - the creation and maintenance of a Jewish state in the historic land of Israel - is not intrinsic to Jewishness. It is a political position and has always been a subject of argument. Jews, as well as non-Jews, can recognise that a state that is defined by, and prioritises, an ethnicity or religion is an essentially racist endeavour. Rejection of Zionism is not rejection of Jews or Jewishness and is often made by Jews. To assume all Jews are Zionist –that Jews share a political opinion by virtue of their Jewishness - is itself anti-Semitic.

In adopting the IHRA definition with examples, the GMB is preventing its members from criticising the nature of the Israeli state, and so preventing them from exercising their right to freedom of speech. It is also adopting rules that are based on an anti-Semitic assumption that all Jews share a political position. The GMB's adoption of the IHRA definition and examples thus contravenes the union's own regulations:

The union's stated purpose includes 'We will aim to end exploitation, discrimination and injustice.' (p2) This is not compatible with denying members freedom to speak up against the unjust and discriminatory nature of the Israeli state, nor with rules based on an anti-Semitic assumption. Denying members freedom of speech on Israel also runs counter to the unions aim 'To promote the social, moral and intellectual interests of our members.' (p8)

Confronting the definition examples, as Pete Gregson has done, isn't anti-Semitic because these are fundamentally flawed. And although going against the IHRA definition examples adopted by the GMB would seem superficially to be going against GMB rules, those examples run counter to more fundamental union rules and also deny freedom of speech. It is our contention that these deliberately and dangerously misleading definition examples should not have been adopted by the GMB (nor by the Labour Party) and conscientious members have both a right and a duty to take a stand against them.