



**Scottish Council of  
Jewish Communities**

Sally Hunt  
General Secretary  
University and College Union  
Carlow St  
London NW1 7LH

30 June 2011

Dear Sally Hunt,

We have all been members of UCU and its predecessors throughout our careers. We are also, however, members of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, the representative council for Scotland's Jewish communities. Now that UCU has adopted a racist policy towards Jews, these positions have become incompatible. We are resigning in consequence.

At the end of May, the UCU Congress adopted motion 70 on antisemitism. The resolution criticises the definition of antisemitism proposed by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) and now sponsored by the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights. The resolution states that UCU will make no use of this definition of antisemitism, and that it will dissociate itself from the definition. It takes the view that the effect of objecting to antisemitic comment is to "silence debate". In other words, UCU is claiming a licence to vilify Jews in service of its political aims.

The EUMC definition, which you have rejected, reflects the perceptions of many people in the Jewish community at large. The Macpherson report's test for racist action is widely accepted: "a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person." The problems identified in the EUMC definition are all problems of which the Jewish community in the UK is acutely aware, and the denial of those problems is a denial of our experience.

The definition gives a range of examples of positions to avoid. Antisemitism is often presented covertly – holocaust denial is an example – and it has become common for antisemitic comments to be masquerade as comments about Israel. Last year, SCoJeC explained the problems to the Scottish Trades Union Congress in these terms:

"... criticism of Israel is often expressed in racist terms. When you read, for example, that Israel's behaviour is determined by the character of the Jewish people, that a powerful Zionist lobby exerts a sinister influence on Western governments, or that Israel is setting out to kill non-Jewish children, you are reading the politics of hate."

The issues identified by the EUMC, such as "holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel", have been at the root of intimidation and harassment of Jews in Britain.

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## Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

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As officers and members of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, we take no position on Israel. Our role, and democratic remit, is to represent the interests of Jewish people in Scotland. We have grave concerns in this respect. The racist propaganda brought in the wake of the Middle East crisis has exposed Jewish people in Scotland and the UK to a wave of hostility. From a recent survey, more than half the Jews witnessing antisemitic incidents attribute those incidents to anti-Israeli sentiment. This is the situation you are feeding.

The UCU resolution claims that the effect of accepting restrictions on what might be said is to "silence debate". The motion declares that defining antisemitism in the terms of the EUMC definition "confuses criticism of Israeli government policy and actions with genuine antisemitism". On the contrary, that distinction is made by the document you are attacking: it says explicitly that "criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic". It is UCU that has failed to recognise the distinction. The heading on the order paper states openly that the resolution is about antisemitism. The resolution seeks to remove restrictions on people's ability to make antisemitic statements, so long as they appear in the form of criticism of Israel. Your resolution gives licence to racists.

UCU continues to claim, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that it remains opposed to racism. Congress chose to ignore what they were told in the debate: Ronnie Fraser said: "I, a Jewish member of this union, am telling you, that I feel an antisemitic mood in this union and even in this room. I would feel your refusal to engage with the EUMC definition of antisemitism, if you pass this motion, as a racist act." By the Macpherson test, you had a duty to listen. You did not listen. This is a racist policy.

We cannot continue to participate in a union which legitimises antisemitism.

*[signed]*

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