

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM CAITRIONA SCOTT

Hello,

I am writing in response to a call for views on the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill 2020. I am particularly responding to question 6, which asks about my views on Part 2- introducing the new offence of stirring up hatred.

I am a committed Christian, and my concern is that this part of the bill will seriously undermine freedom of religion. People from every religion or faith should be able to speak openly and freely to others about that faith, claiming it to be the truth, and urging others to consider. This is especially true in actual places of worship, which I understand may not be protected under this new bill. We all need to have the freedom to debate and disagree and engage in discussion. Without this, society becomes oppressive. I want to be assured that if I speak to others about my Christian faith and about what the Bible teaches, in a loving manner, that I will not be prosecuted for this. This would be a serious breach of my religious liberties.

Also, my concern is that what people find to be offensive or abusive is extremely subjective. What one person finds offensive might not seem so to another, making this very difficult to rule on. I might not be intending to stir up hatred and yet be accused of doing so, simply because someone else perceives it that way. Again, people of faith are, I think, particularly vulnerable to this.

I want the Scottish government to seriously consider what liberties may be undermined by this bill, and what allegations may be brought against upstanding citizens as a result. I am deeply concerned that it favours a portion of the population while putting others at serious risk.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts.

Regards,

Caitriona Scott
13 July 2020