

# Trumpet Call !

Effective Christian action for Truth, Justice and Righteousness – October 2009

## EU Equal Treatment Directive to stop all discussion and expression of faith?



The European Commission has proposed an 'Equal Treatment Directive', the aim of which is to supplement existing equality laws by prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services.

A European Directive, once passed, has to be incorporated into the national law of all the 27 European Union nations, including Britain. Proposed Directives go to the European Parliament for consideration, and then come before the EU Council of Ministers, who have to approve or reject it and any modifications proposed by the European Parliament. The Equal Treatment Directive has passed through the European Parliament and will come before the Council of Ministers in November.

### Background

- The rights of Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Expression are of fundamental importance to the legitimacy and sound functioning of democratic society. Indeed, they are enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights and in the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Christians are opposed to discrimination, and do not seek special treatment. However, in common with people of other religions and of none, we claim the right to express our faith, live our religion and express our opinions on social issues, in a responsible manner.
- However, the proposed Directive embodies very broad provisions on so-called "harassment", and a reversal of the normal legal burden of proof, **which could ultimately stop all public expression of religious views, all discussion of religion in public, and all public propagation of the Gospel:**
  - **The Directive defines harassment as "unwanted conduct ... with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment"**. This definition is very broad, and the Directive would allow a plaintiff to bring a legal action on the basis that **they perceived** that they had been harassed. Moreover, it **sets no limit** to the financial penalty that could be applied to a defendant upon conviction.
  - **The Directive reverses the normal legal burden of proof.** Instead of requiring the plaintiff to prove that harassment has occurred, it **requires the defendant to prove that it has not**. It would be impossible to prove that a plaintiff did not perceive harassment if he claimed to have done so, and so there would be no effective legal defence against a charge of this kind.
  - **Discrimination under this Directive is not restricted to employment, but will apply in all walks of life**, including the media, public discussions and religious services. Pressure groups would be able to use the provisions of the Directive to prevent the expression of views they disagreed with, by the simple means of declaring themselves to be offended.

- **The good news** is that the European Parliament has proposed a redraft of the Commission's proposals concerning harassment, to ensure that "harassment may be defined in accordance with the national laws and practice of Member states". Harassment is defined in the UK under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 as "behaviour which causes alarm or distress", and in England and Wales it must be intentional, and harm must be caused, for it to be an offence under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

## Potential Outcome

If it is passed without the European Parliament's proposal being accepted, this supposedly anti-discrimination directive will facilitate discrimination against Christians. Its very broad anti-discrimination requirements would essentially dictate how Christians were to behave, even if that went against the ethos of their religion.

## Action

- Please **pray** for the European Parliament's proposed redraft to be accepted, and for the adverse elements of this Directive to be defeated.
- Please **write** to the Equality Minister, the Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP, Minister for Women and Equality, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA (e-mail [harmanh@parliament.uk](mailto:harmanh@parliament.uk)), and write to or ring your own MP at the same address (Tel: 020 7219 3000).
- Please **contact** your MEP urgently. Every UK region has several MEPs: you can find the name of your MEPs (and MP, if necessary) at [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

## Support the right of NHS staff to pray with their patients

In December 2008 Caroline Petrie, a community nurse from Weston-Super-Mare, was suspended without pay from North Somerset Primary Care Trust for offering to pray for an elderly patient. She faced dismissal for an alleged breach of her code of conduct on equality and diversity. Subsequently, on 28 January this year, after extensive media coverage, North Somerset Primary Care Trust reinstated Mrs Petrie. A Downing Street petition has now been set up to cover cases like this. It says:

*"We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to restrain Primary Care Trusts from denying Christian health workers the right to pray for people in their care without threat of suspension/dismissal from employment."*



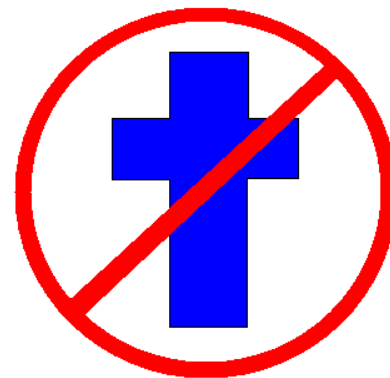
The author writes: *"This petition has been set up because more and more Christians in this nation are under attack and are being threatened in their jobs, in their churches, and in their neighbourhoods. We feel that more and more pressure is being brought on us as believers by Islamic, secular and humanist groups. This nation was established on Christian principles. Our Christian heritage has brought change to this nation: hospitals, schools, an end to the slave trade, and community welfare, to name but a few. We are in danger of turning our backs on our national character in the name of political correctness. We take extreme care not to offend those of other faiths, or no faith. Christians and their faith are offended, and threatened with the legal action and loss of employment, with impunity. Although we often think that persecution only happens in other nations and cultures, Christians are being persecuted almost daily here at home"*

## Action:

If you have access to a computer, please sign the petition. You can find it at: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/suspension/>

# Support the right of NHS nurses to wear Christian symbols

Shirley Chaplin is a Christian from Exeter who has worked as a nurse for nearly 30 years. Throughout that time, ever since training to be a nurse, she has worn her Confirmation Cross on a fine chain necklace with her uniform. She regards it as a symbol of her Christian faith, and until recently her wearing it has not been called into question.



However, in the last few months the Royal Devon and Exeter Trust Hospital has ordered Shirley to remove the necklace, claiming that it breached their uniform policy and was a health risk to her and to patients.

Shirley has pointed out that the Trust has included photos of nurses wearing necklaces in publicity material, and she offered to allow the Trust to carry out strength tests on her necklace and to sign a disclaimer absolving the Trust from any liability if a patient took hold of her necklace and she was injured.

The Trust refused her offers, and threatened Shirley with disciplinary action, insisting that the cross be removed from sight.

Under duress, Shirley has accepted redeployment from nursing to an administrative role. She has now instructed lawyers to file an action for discrimination at the Employment Tribunal.

## Action

Please **pray** for Shirley and her legal team as they prepare her case, and please **pray** that the Employment Tribunal will find in her favour.

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## Christian hotel owners face trial for criticising Islam



The Christian owners of a hotel are being prosecuted because they defended their faith and criticised Islam in a conversation with a Muslim guest. Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang, of the Bounty House Hotel in Liverpool, were arrested after a Muslim woman complained that she was offended by comments which they made in March this year. Mr and Mrs Vogelenzang were charged under Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 and Sections 31(1)(c) and (5) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Their trial is set for 8 and 9 December, at Liverpool Magistrates' Court.

If the complaint against the Vogelenzangs is upheld and they are convicted, a precedent will be set that will encourage any Muslim who has a grievance against what a Christian says about Islam to complain to the police. Church leaders in Liverpool have written to Keir Starmer, the Director of Public Prosecutions, to voice their concern and to press for the case to be dropped.

## Please:

- **Pray** that the prosecution against the Vogelenzangs will be dropped.
- **Write** to Mr Keir Starmer, Director of Public Prosecutions, Crown Prosecution Service, 50 Ludgate Hill, London, EC4M 7EX, to express your concern about this case and ask that it be dropped.

# Speak out for displaced Christians in Orissa

A year ago, 50,000 Christians were forced from their homes in the state of Orissa, in India, because of their faith. In that persecution over 120 people died and 300 villages were destroyed, leaving many people homeless.

Over 4,000 Christians are still displaced, and continue to face hardship and persecution. They cannot return home because of their fear for their lives and the threat of forced conversion. Their situation is desperate, but you can make a difference.

Faith without Fear are asking for 50,000 people, one for each of the Christians who have suffered, to contact the Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and urge him to seek justice for our Christian brothers and sisters. They should not have to live and worship in fear. **The Christians in Orissa have no voice: please speak for them.**

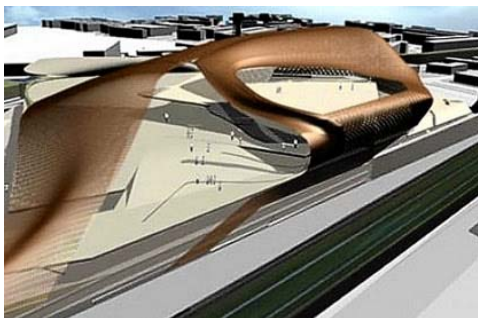


## Action

- Please **pray** for all displaced Christian brothers and sisters in Orissa.
- Please **ask the Indian Government** to seek justice for the victims of this campaign of hate. The Government should try the perpetrators, protect the witnesses and compensate the victims. Please sign the letter on the Faith without Fear website: [www.faithwithoutfear.org](http://www.faithwithoutfear.org)

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## Good News: the Newham Mosque



Newham Council has threatened the Islamic group Tablighi Jamaat with enforcement action over its continued unlawful use of the Abbey Mills site of its proposed 'mega-mosque' at West Ham, close to the 2012 Olympic stadium.

Some of Tablighi Jamaat's supporters in Walthamstow were recently convicted of planning terrorist atrocities on airlines. Tablighi Jamaat has erected a temporary structure on the mega-mosque site without planning permission, and has been using it daily since October 2006.

In reply to yet another challenge by Cllr Alan Craig, leader of the Christian People's Alliance group on Newham Council and of the Opposition on the Council, the Council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Cllr Conor McAuley indicated in September that Tablighi Jamaat has been given until January to come up with a master plan for the site or face enforcement action. He also disclosed that the Council will not offer temporary planning permission for the buildings on the site at present.

Cllr Craig has commented that the Council had been giving Tablighi Jamaat preferential treatment by allowing it to use the large but derelict site unlawfully for three years, and that regeneration of the West Ham area had been blighted by Tablighi Jamaat's failure to act correctly.

Please **thank God** for Alan Craig and his colleagues in the Christian People's Alliance for their stand against unlawful Islamic occupation and use of the Abbey Mills land, and please **pray** for the site to be developed properly for the benefit of the wider community.

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It would be helpful in reducing our costs if more Trumpet Call members could opt to receive future issues by email. If you are on email and would be prepared to receive Trumpet Call by email only, then please email Charles Parker: [charles@maranathacommunity.org.uk](mailto:charles@maranathacommunity.org.uk)