

Angela Constance MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

11<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
By Email

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

As human rights and equalities campaigners, individuals with lived experience, and organisations involved in essential service delivery to communities, we are writing to ask that you meet with us to discuss the serious impact of the Prevent Strategy and Duty on the human rights of people living in Scotland. While Prevent is reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government oversees and has significant control of its implementation in Scotland's public sector.

Through our work we see the harmful and discriminatory impact Prevent can have on people's lives, and do not believe it is compatible with a society that rejects racism and respects everyone's rights to non-discrimination, private and family life, freedom of expression, education and health.

As set out by the People's Review of Prevent<sup>1</sup> and a recent report<sup>2</sup> by Amnesty International UK, Prevent is a disproportionate interference with human rights and there is no evidence to suggest it is effective in achieving national security aims. There is however indisputable evidence of its disproportionate impact on Muslim communities, neurodiverse people and children and young people.

Recently the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) found that Prevent negatively impacts Muslim communities and their ability to exercise their rights, and called for a suspension and review of Prevent. The People's Review of Prevent concluded that Prevent is Islamophobic and discriminatory. Recent research by Amnesty International UK echoed those findings, highlighting that Prevent treats Muslims as a 'suspect community'.

In its 2023 Concluding observations the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed deep concern about the chilling effects of the Prevent strategy on the right of children to

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://peoplesreviewofprevent.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/united-kingdom-prevent-thought-police-2023>

freedom of expression and religion. The Committee made a number of recommendations including the continuing assessment of the impact of Prevent on children's rights and the publication of data disaggregated by age, ethnicity and religious affiliation on children referred.

Amnesty International research also highlights the overrepresentation of neurodivergent people in Prevent referrals, suggesting that public sector staff are incorrectly identifying some features of neurodiversity as signs of radicalization.

The experiences of rights holders and third sector organisations in Scotland is that the discriminatory and racist impact of Prevent is felt by communities here too, and the Scottish Government has a duty to take urgent steps to mitigate this harm as far as possible. As Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, we are calling on you to recognise the ever-growing body of evidence that Prevent is incompatible with international rights obligations and review what actions the Scottish Government can take within devolved competence to limit its human rights impact.

We have called on the UK Government to abolish and withdraw the Prevent Duty and Strategy, thereby leaving professionals to use ordinary safeguarding processes to refer individuals at risk of harm. There are specific areas of concern we believe Scotland can address within devolved competence, including in relation to data collection and information sharing which we wish to discuss in more detail with you. Ultimately we urge you to recognise that Prevent does not comply with international human rights law and to join us in calling on the UK Government to abolish it.

We look forward to hearing from you and discussing this issue further.

Yours,

Asma Abdalla, Empower Women for Change  
Jane Akadiri, Touch of Love  
Sofia Akbar, Scottish Ethnic Minority Autistics  
Shariff Athuman  
Neil Cowan, Amnesty International UK  
Rebecca Don-Kennedy, Equality Network  
Farah Farzana, Al Masaar  
Juliet Harris, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)  
Eman Hani, Central Scotland Regional Equality Council  
Ghzala Khan, West of Scotland Regional Equality Council  
Colin Lee, CEMVO  
Charlie McMillan, Human Rights Consortium Scotland  
Vic Valentine, Scottish Trans

