

1656 Anti-Counter-‘Terrorism’ Bill

Passed 22 January 2015

Proposer: Holly Staynor - Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer

Seconder: Chris Jarvis – Campaigns and Democracy Officer

Union Notes

1. That the ‘Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill’ has this week gone to the House of Lords, having been passed through the House of Commons at the end of 2014.
2. That the bill targets particular parts of society to play a role in monitoring and preventing extremism; one of these highlighted areas is the education sector.
3. That the Bill calls on academic staff to be involved in monitoring their students for extremism.
4. That the Bill also includes plans to expand the ‘PREVENT’ and ‘Channel’ initiatives.
5. That the Bill will give the Government powers to order the banning of what they regard to be extremist speakers.
6. That upon the Bill’s second reading in the House of Lords on Tuesday 13th January 2015, a number of peers expressed concern about the implications of the Bill; these concerns included the impact the Bill would have on Universities already given obligation to defend academic freedom and freedom of speech.
7. That NUS have called for the Bill to be stopped with immediate effect, along with *"the damaging rhetoric that surrounds it"*.¹

Union Believes

1. That this Bill is problematic both in the ramifications of its implementation as well as the underlying rhetoric that is invoked.
2. That this Bill has been rushed and has not undergone sufficient scrutiny.
3. That this Bill can be seen to be simply capitalising on recent global events in reinforcing negative attitudes towards Muslims and other minority groups.
4. That calling on institutions and academics to monitor their students legitimises mass surveillance and erodes civil liberties of people in the UK.
5. That giving academics this responsibility will also negatively affect the staff student relationship and will infringe on our right to engage in education.
6. That giving the Government further undefined powers to order that ‘extremist’ speakers be banned risks further developing a culture of suspicion and surveillance on campuses.

¹ <http://beta.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/statement-on-counter-terrorism-and-security-bill>

7. That plans to expand the 'PREVENT' and 'Channel' initiatives will even further increase islamophobia and negative attitudes towards some of the most vulnerable students on our campus.
8. That universities and colleges are fundamentally places of education, not surveillance.
9. That rather than winning the support of minority communities, the Bill could serve to isolate many students who already feel that the only avenue through which the Government will engage with them is through 'anti-radicalisation' initiatives.
10. That this is yet another example of the media and the Government repeatedly using language and reinforcing stereotypes which have a big negative impact on the most vulnerable and isolated students on our campus.
11. That we should take an unwavering stand against Islamophobia both globally and on our campus.
12. That we should always maintain protecting the most vulnerable students on our campus as an upmost priority.
13. That the 'Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill' should be stopped with immediate effect.
14. That an enquiry should be carried out regarding the Bill's proposals and their compliancy with the '2010 Equality Act' and the '1986 Education Act'.
15. That the Government's 'anti-extremism' agenda on the whole needs thorough and immediate reassessment.

Union Resolves

1. To mandate the Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer to write a public statement outlining the above beliefs and distribute this to MPs and any other relevant groups.
2. To mandate the Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer to communicate the above beliefs to the Executive Team of UEA and urge them to also publically condemn the Bill.