



UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London
EC4Y 8JX

By post and by email: legalrequest@equalityhumanrights.com

5 February 2018

Dear sir/madam,

We write in relation to widespread breaches of the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act.

We receive regular reports of discrimination against Freemasons. Increasingly these reports concern those involved in public bodies which are subject to the Human Rights Act as well as positive duties to promote equality and prevent discrimination pursuant to the Equality Act. This issue has been covered in the national press, including the Guardian. We enclose as an example a recent letter which was sent to the Police Federation of England and Wales, which has allowed to persist unchallenged certain public discriminatory comments about Freemason's rights of association. Those comments would not have been made about other comparable groups or organisations such as atheists or the National Secular Society.

Individual Freemasons, and the United Grand Lodge of England, are often incorrectly perceived as representing historically privileged groups and perhaps for this reason their complaints to public bodies of unlawful discrimination are not acted upon. The remedies available against public bodies tend to be disproportionate to the provable loss to individual Freemasons and many Freemasons are uncomfortable taking public action to protect their rights. This means that in practice their legal rights are not protected.

The most frequent areas of unlawful action that we encounter are in relation to:

1. Indirect discrimination against Freemasons on the grounds of religious belief as defined by the Equality Act. Freemasonry is not a religion but all Freemasons must profess a belief in a supreme being.
2. A breach of a Freemason's freedom of association (Article 11 of the Human Rights Act).
3. A breach of a Freemason's right not to be discriminated against (Article 14 of the Human Rights Act).



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The EHRC is uniquely placed to encourage compliance with the law by public bodies. There are over 250,000 Freemasons in the UK. An intervention by the EHRC would highlight to public bodies the importance of complying with the Equality Act and with the Human Rights Act in respect of this significant part of society. Although we request the EHRC to bring a judicial review of the failure by the Police Federation to challenge unlawful discriminatory statements made by those associated with it at the highest level, we anticipate that the mere fact of the EHRC's intervention would be sufficient to achieve an appropriate remedy. It would also emphasise to other public and private bodies the importance of compliance with equality laws, whatever their opinions of those groups who are protected by the law.

Yours faithfully,

David Staples

CEO

For and on behalf of

The United Grand Lodge of England