

The following is a very brief summary of points made during the meeting.

The legislation in practice

In light of the police questioning Sir Iqbal Sacranie after his contribution on Radio 4, does this not highlight the inherent dangers of possible misinterpretation of the Bill? Will the police, rightly or wrongly, not be over-zealous in their practice of this law?

Whilst the Attorney General may not refer a case to court, there is nothing to prevent the police from investigating an individual or a case. How can the legislation ensure that police use this law appropriately?

What guidance is being produced to ensure the police act appropriately at local level and are sensitive to community relations?

When a case is referred to the Attorney General, what will happen to defendants while their case is being considered?

What about frivolous or wrongful prosecutions? What if a statement is taken out of context? What if the statement **that** incites religious hatred was not intended to incite hatred?

Why should the definition of 'religious freedom' be down to the discretion of the Crown Prosecution Service?

You cannot legislate against hatred. Since the introduction of the laws on Incitement to Racial Violence there has been a rise in racially-motivated attacks and an increase in the activities of groups such as the BNP. How will this law help?

Aims and outcomes of Bill/ unintended consequences

The Bill is designed to bring unity but could create greater disunity if it is abused or used wrongly. What is there to prevent tit-for-tat 'malicious' prosecutions/accusations between different faith groups?

There is the recent example of the two pastors in the Australian state of Victoria who breached the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001. Will the Race and Religious Hatred Bill not have the exact same effect?

Premier Radio nearly lost its licence recently and some churches have been banned from putting up religious signs. Will this not become more common after the introduction of the Bill?

What will this law capture that is not already covered by existing legislation? An attack on a person or property because of their religious belief would be considered to be an assault or criminal damage. Incitement to commit a criminal offence is an offence already. So why do we need this Bill?

How can any law really prevent the incitement of hatred? Incitement of hatred is usually carried out behind closed doors and in the home. How would this Bill have any affect on this?

If the aim of the legislation is to have an equal footing for religious and race hate, why can existing law not be amended? Why do we need a whole new law?

If the aim of this Bill is to increase diversity and reduce religious hatred, would this not be better done by better education on religion in schools?

Freedom of Speech

Is this not simply legislating for political correctness? One person's enforcement of the politically correct is another person's impingement on freedom of speech.

Will the Bill ban gatherings and public meetings? Will it ban proselytising, evangelising and Proclaiming the Word? If not, can specific guarantees be written into the Bill?

Some scripture is by its nature offensive to some people. Does this not mean that the Bill will stop the preaching of scriptures? Will the Koran or the bible be banned? And if not, what is there to prevent scriptures from being banned?

Given that some religious texts/scriptures could be interpreted to incite racial violence, will they be banned under new legislation?

Other details

Why is there no definition of 'religion' in the Bill?

Will a distinction be made between religious groups and the religion itself?

What is the process between now and when the Bill becomes law? How can people have their say and voice their concerns about details of this Bill between now and then?

Will this Bill help the situation in Northern Ireland? If so, how?