

Britain - Rescind endorsement of sex segregation at UK Universities

Tuesday 26 November 2013, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#), [NAMAZIE Maryam](#), [Petition / Sign-on Letter](#), [SOW Fatou](#)
(Date first published: 24 November 2013).

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Universities UK: Rescind endorsement of sex segregation at UK Universities

Why this is important

Universities UK (UUK) has issued guidance on external speakers saying that the segregation of the sexes at universities is not discriminatory as long as “both men and women are being treated equally, as they are both being segregated in the same way.”

UUK add that universities should bear in mind that “concerns to accommodate the wishes or beliefs of those opposed to segregation should not result in a religious group being prevented from having a debate in accordance with its belief system” and that if “imposing an unsegregated seating area in addition to the segregated areas contravenes the genuinely-held religious beliefs of the group hosting the event, or those of the speaker, the institution should be mindful to ensure that the freedom of speech of the religious group or speaker is not curtailed unlawfully.”

We, the undersigned, condemn the endorsement of gender apartheid by Universities UK. Any form of segregation, whether by race, sex or otherwise is discriminatory. Separate is never equal and segregation is never applied to those who are considered equal. By justifying segregation, Universities UK sides with Islamist values at the expense of the many Muslims and others who oppose sex apartheid and demand equality between women and men.

The guidance must be immediately rescinded and sex segregation at universities must come to an end.

Initial List of Signatories:

A C Grayling, Philosopher

Abhishek N. Phadnis, President, London School of Economics Atheist, Secularist and Humanist Society

Anissa Helie, Academic

Charlie Klendjian, Secretary of Lawyers' Secular Society

Chris Moos, Secretary, London School of Economics Atheist, Secularist and Humanist Society

Deeyah Khan, Film Director and Music Producer

Dilip Simeon, Chairperson of the Aman Trust
Faisal Gazi, Writer and Blogger
Gita Sahgal, Director, Centre for Secular Space
Harsh Kapoor, South Asia Citizen's Web
Helen Palmer, Chair of London Humanists
Kate Smurthwaite, Comedian and Activist
Marieme Helie Lucas, Coordinator, Secularism is a Women's Issue
Maryam Namazie, Spokesperson for One Law for All and Fitnah
Mina Ahadi, International Committee against Stoning
Nadia El Fani, Tunisian Filmmaker
Nahla Mahmoud, Spokesperson of Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain
Pavan Dhaliwal, Head of Public Affairs of the British Humanist Association
Peter Tatchell, Director of Peter Tatchell Foundation
Polly Toynbee, Journalist
Pragna Patel, Director of Southall Black Sisters
Richard Dawkins, Scientist
Rohini Hensman, Social Activist
Rory Fenton, President of The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies of the UK and ROI
Rupert Sutton, Lead Researcher of Student Rights
Terry Sanderson, President of National Secular Society
Yasmin Rehman, Women's Rights Campaigner

To sign:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Universities_UK_Rescind_endorsement_of_sex_segregation_at_UK_Universities/

Sex apartheid not discriminatory?

Universities UK, a "representative" body of UK Universities, has issued guidelines on external speakers saying that the segregation of the sexes at universities is not discriminatory as long as both men and women are segregated side by side rather than women being made to sit in the back! The guidance states:

"Assuming the side-by-side segregated seating arrangement is adopted, there does not appear to be any discrimination on gender grounds merely by imposing segregated seating. Both men and women are being treated equally, as they are both being segregated in the same way."

So racial apartheid would have been non-discriminatory if white and black people had been segregated in the same manner? In fact that is the very argument the apartheid regime of South Africa used when faced with criticism: "separate but equal."

The Universities UK guidance adds:

"Segregation in the context of the facts outlined above would only be discriminatory on the grounds of sex if it amounts to 'less favourable treatment' of either female or male attendees." ... "It should therefore be borne in mind that [...] concerns to accommodate the wishes or beliefs of those opposed

to segregation should not result in a religious group being prevented from having a debate in accordance with its belief system.” ...

“Ultimately, if imposing an unsegregated seating area in addition to the segregated areas contravenes the genuinely-held religious beliefs of the group hosting the event, or those of the speaker, the institution should be mindful to ensure that the freedom of speech of the religious group or speaker is not curtailed unlawfully.”

Clearly, this is not about people’s belief systems.

If it were so, Muslims would be unable to ride buses, the underground, enter their workplaces via entrances used by both men and women, eat in non-segregated restaurants... They wouldn’t even be able to get to the segregated meeting room since men and women would be mingling freely on the streets and halls right up to their entry into the segregated hall kindly organised by Universities UK.

And what next? Another set of guidelines asking unveiled women to veil so as not to “result in a religious group being prevented from having a debate in accordance with its belief system.” Maybe they can ask that niqabs be handed out to unchaste and unveiled women before entry.

More importantly, what about the women and men, including Muslims, who don’t want to be segregated? What Universities UK conveniently forgets is that segregation of the sexes and the veil are highly contested even amongst Muslims. By justifying segregation, they choose to side with Islamists at the expense of women’s rights and equality.

It doesn’t take a genius to understand that segregation is never applied to those who are considered equal but rather to separate the “superior” from the “inferior.” Women are too “beguiling” to sit next to men; they will cause chaos and fitnah and therefore must be segregated and veiled. Universities UK agrees.

The guidance must be rescinded immediately.

I suggest writing and calling and exposing this lot until they do. Here are their details:

Woburn House 20 Tavistock Square London WC1H 9HQ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7419 4111

Email: info@universitiesuk.ac.uk

Website: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk

Twitter: @UniversitiesUK

I would also suggest that NO speaker or audience ever agree to enter a room that is segregated. We should boycott universities that accept this guidance and the speakers that agree to speak in such situations.

How do you think racial apartheid ended? When people refused to accept it and to submit.

And this is how gender apartheid will end too. Not by appeasement and certainly not by institutionalising misogyny against women. It will end when we insist: no more!

Maryam Namazie

Here is the guidance in full:

<http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/files/2013/11/ExternalSpeakersInHigherEducationInstitutions.pdf>

UK: No gender apartheid in universities ! says an international network of women of Muslim heritage

Sunday 24 November 2013, by siawi3

No gender apartheid in universities: The international solidarity network Women Living Under Muslim Laws protest against sex segregation in universities.

Source: Women Living Under Muslim Laws

The following letter was sent to UK Universities on 24.11.2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

Universities UK, a representative body of UK Universities, has issued guidance on external speakers saying that the segregation of the sexes at universities is not discriminatory as long as "both men and women are being treated equally, as they are both being segregated in the same way." They add that universities should bear in mind that "concerns to accommodate the wishes or beliefs of those opposed to segregation should not result in a religious group being prevented from having a debate in accordance with its belief system" and that if "imposing an unsegregated seating area in addition to the segregated areas contravenes the genuinely-held religious beliefs of the group hosting the event, or those of the speaker, the institution should be mindful to ensure that the freedom of speech of the religious group or speaker is not curtailed unlawfully."

WLUML condemns the endorsement of gender apartheid by Universities UK. Any form of segregation, whether by race, sex or otherwise is discriminatory. Separate is never equal and segregation is never applied to those who are considered equal. By justifying segregation, Universities UK sides with Islamist values at the expense of the many Muslims and others who oppose sex apartheid and demand equality between women and men.

The guidance must be rescinded immediately.

Dr. Fatou Sow

International Director

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* <http://www.siawi.org/article6197.html>

