



Police harassment of online “gender critics” prompts new free speech campaign

Fair Cop highlights waste of police resources on criminalisation of free speech

12th May 2019 – A campaign group is calling on the police to stop ignoring laws protecting free speech by harassing people who wish to debate and ask questions about transgenderism.

[Fair Cop](#) was formed by concerned citizens who have come together over shared concerns about police harassment of people who express views questioning the idea that a person can change their biological sex or be born in the “wrong body” - even though such criticism does not break the law.

The campaign highlights the experiences of UK citizens who have been warned, cautioned, or even arrested by the police for incidents such as “misgendering” people on Twitter or retweeting a poem. Fair Cop also includes former and serving police officers who are highly critical of existing police guidelines governing hate crimes and “hate incidents”, and the misallocation of scarce police resources on patrolling online opinions.

Fair Cop is committed to engaging with all relevant authorities, including police forces, police and crime commissioners, the Home Office, and the College of Policing to seek affirmation of citizens’ rights under Articles 8, 9, 10 & 11 of The European Convention on Human Rights. To this end, the campaign calls on the College of Policing to change its Hate Crime Guidance, which legal experts say contravenes the “fundamental nature” of the right of free speech.

The group also seeks to make the public aware of their rights and to challenge illegal interference by the police, politicians and others who step across these rights in pursuit of ideological gain, and to provide resources and support for those threatened by the police or employers for exercising their right to free speech.

“At a time of rising crime levels – including real hate crimes with real victims – it’s absurd that the police are wasting valuable resources on policing free speech on social media,” said Harry Miller, a former policeman and member of the Fair Cop executive committee. “I was interviewed by the police and warned to watch my words more carefully after retweeting a poem, even though the police admitted that I had broken no laws. This simple retweet has now been recorded in the crime stats as a ‘hate incident’.

“Other members have suffered far worse, including one of our members who was locked in the cells after misgendering someone online. Fair Cop opposes hatred in any form, yet recognises that debate is absolutely central to our democracy and our society.”

“People are frightened of speaking out about their legitimate concerns about recent developments in the transgender debate,” said Rob Jessel, who convened the public meeting from which Fair Cop formed. “Cases such as Maya Forstater – who [lost her job](#) for blogging and voicing criticism of aspects of transactivism at work – show how successfully transgender activists have managed to shut down debate. It’s increasingly clear that the police are acting as these activists’ own personal army to shut down argument and debate.

“But this is a debate that needs to take place,” Jessel continued. “Fair Cop is standing up for those who have been harassed by the authorities for their opinions: whether they’ve been questioned, threatened, arrested, or [forcibly removed from public events](#). We call on the police to engage with us to update their guidelines and policies to ensure that they align with existing laws that protect free speech and enable this debate to take place without fear of harassment.”

– ENDS –

Note to editors:

For further information or to arrange a briefing with Fair Cop spokespeople, please email faircoprights@gmail.com or phone 07512 844963.

Twitter: @WeAreFairCop

About Fair Cop

Fair Cop is a group of individuals who have come together over shared concerns about the police’s attempts to criminalise people for expressing opinions even though they don’t contravene any laws.

Fair Cop is committed to working with the College of Policing, police forces, police and crime commissioners and all other interested parties to improve the existing guidelines, ensuring that they recognise citizens’ freedom of expression while continuing to provide robust protection against real crimes that are truly motivated by hatred.