

## **Preventing Prevent**

**Proposer:** Ross Speer

**Secunder:** Daniel Iley-Williamson

### **This MCR notes:**

1. The government's Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a statutory requirement on public bodies and 'specified authorities' – including universities – to prevent people being drawn into terrorism' and to implement the 'Prevent' agenda.
2. In February, over 500 academics - many from Oxford - signed an open letter condemning the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill, declaring that it is "a threat to freedom of speech at Universities". Among them was Professor Robin Cohen, former Director of the International Migration Institute, and amongst other notable Oxford figures to condemn the bill was Sir Ken Macdonald, Warden of Wadham, Liberal Democrat Peer and former Director of Public Prosecutions.<sup>12</sup>
3. Under Prevent, staff have been known to report students as being 'at risk of radicalisation' for merely taking an interest in political affairs in class, or for observing their religion more closely, whilst politically active students have found themselves visited by counter-terrorism officers.
4. The Prevent agenda, as part of the Government's 'anti-extremism' work has been used to create an expansive surveillance architecture to spy on the public and to police dissent, systematically targeting Black people and Muslims
5. The Act further criminalises Muslims and Black people, and comes amidst a campaign of fear and demonisation from the government and the media.
6. Islamophobia is on the rise across Europe, is state-sponsored and legitimised by the mainstream media.<sup>3</sup>
  7. That the National Union of Students (NUS) and University and Colleges Union (UCU) have both passed motions at their conferences opposing the Act and Prevent.
  8. That Oxford University Students Union (OUSU) recently passed a motion opposing the Act and Prevent, and mandating its officers to boycott it. The motion was supported by the Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality, and the Islamic Society, amongst others.
  9. Our MCR is not legally bound to engage with Prevent.

### **This MCR believes:**

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<sup>1</sup> Academics condemn "repressive" Counter Terrorism bill  
<http://www.cherwell.org/news/uk/2015/02/06/academics-condemn-quotrepressivequot-counterterrorism-bill>

<sup>2</sup> Sir Ken Macdonald: 'obnoxious' anti-radicalisation measures attack campus free speech  
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/ken-macdonald-obnoxious-anti-radicalisation-measures-attack-free-speech>

<sup>3</sup> Islamophobia hate crimes up by 70% - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-34138127>

1. That our college is a place for education, not surveillance.
2. The Act curtails the fundamental right of free expression, and discourages critical thought. Academics, as well as anyone in a public sector job, should not have to be part of this surveillance.
3. The Government's counter-terrorism/security policy is fundamentally flawed in its approach: its operant concepts of 'extremism' and 'radicalism' are ill-defined and open to abuse for political ends.
4. That the Act could serve to isolate many students who already feel that the only avenue through which the Government will engage them is 'anti-radicalisation' initiatives, resulting in further alienation and disaffection.
5. The implementation of the Prevent Strategy on campus will not only isolate Muslim students but undermine the civil liberties of other groups such as environmental, political and humanitarian activists.
6. The government's identified 'warning signs' of "radicalisation" problematise and renders suspect those with mental health difficulties.
7. That this MCR should seek to boycott Prevent, as part of a national campaign to stop its implementation in higher education.

**This MCR resolves:**

1. To publicly condemn the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act.
2. To mandate MCR Officers to not co-operate with the Prevent strategy or serve on any bodies directly overseeing the implementation of Prevent, and to boycott it as far as legally possible. If the implementation of Prevent is discussed in a meeting of a committee that they sit on, MCR Officers are mandated to walk out of the meeting, explaining the MCR's opposition to Prevent, and to walk back in when the item has been discussed.
3. To work with college staff (academic and non-academic) on combating the Prevent strategy and its implementation in college.
4. To mandate the President to lobby the college to be completely open and transparent about how they are engaging with Prevent and other similar initiatives  
This involves:
  - i. Demanding publications of how the policy is operating within the college.
  - ii. Giving details of and access to the materials used to train staff and students on their Prevent duties
  - iii. Holding consultations with the student body regarding how this affects students.
5. To mandate the President and Welfare Officers to arrange assistance and support any students who feel harassed or persecuted due to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This may be done through OUSU's Vice-President (Welfare & Equal Opportunities).
6. To mandate the President to publicise and explain how the 'Prevent Duty' may affect students and the dangers of the CTSA.

7. To work with other colleges, and OUSU, in opposing any implementation of Prevent in our university.