

Jewish Professors Allegedly Shunned at English University

A math teacher at the University and College Union (UCU)—the largest trade union and professional association of higher education for professors, academics, lecturers and researchers in the UK—says the institution has repeatedly singled out Israel for condemnation at its annual conferences and created an intolerant environment in which “it is no longer tenable to be a Jew in UCU.”

Ronnie Fraser, who is suing the union for race and religious discrimination, had opposed a controversial motion passed by the union in 2007 calling for a ban on all Israeli academics working in the UK. The motion was put forward as part of the union’s campaign against the so-called “Israeli occupation of Palestine.”

He, along with any others seeking to oppose the ban, were consistently subjected to abuse, a “freezing out” by fellow trade union members and dismissed as “Zionists,” he told the tribunal hearing his case.

“I felt this was not in keeping with the union’s stance on equality. This was one of the many occasions where I felt my freedom of speech was stifled,” Fraser said in a statement.

Jane Ashworth, another academic at the institution, told the tribunal she was accused of being a member of the Israeli Mossad when she distributed leaflets opposing the boycott at the UCU national conference.

At this time the atmosphere was very bad,” she said. “Jewish UCU members felt their rights had been undermined and the union had adopted policies that cut out the possibility of them being heard.”