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Mr Trevor Philips OBE,
Chair, Equality and Human Rights Commission,
3 More London,
Riverside Tooley Street,
London, SE1 2RG.

Wednesday 16th March 2011

Dear Mr Philips,

I am writing concerning a blog article by Melanie Phillips appearing on Spectator Blogs, "Armchair barbarism" on Sunday 13th March 2010 (hard copy enclosed and available online at: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/6779100/armchair-barbarism.thtml>).

In her commentary on the murder last weekend of the Fogel family in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of the West Bank, Ms Phillips refers in the article to "Arab barbarism," to Arabs as "savages", further writing of the "the moral depravity of the Arabs".

It would seem to me Ms Phillips uses the murder of the family, attributed to the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, as an opportunity to peddle racist stereotypes and hate speech on the Arab population as a whole.

The murder of the Fogel family is a heinous crime indeed but it is unwarranted and indefensible that the alleged ethnic identity of the criminals should be used to deride the Arab population or to ascribe to it as a racial group attributes of "barbarism," "savagery" and "moral depravity".

We would not expect, were the ethnic identities reversed and the victims of the crime Palestinian and the aggressors Israeli, for phrases such as "the moral depravity of Jews" or "Jewish barbarism" to be used. I suspect too that such phrases would invite judicious editorial oversight and it strikes me as irresponsible of the Spectator to allow the use of racist comments on Arabs to pass unnoticed.

Under section 10(1)(c) of the Equality Act 2006 the Commission has a duty to "work towards the elimination of prejudice against, hatred of and hostility towards members of groups" which are covered by the Equalities legislation. In light of the role hate and racist speech plays in prejudice, hostility and hatred towards racial and religious groups, and in view of this duty conferred upon the Commission, I bring this matter to your attention.

I have enclosed a copy of our letter to the Press Complaints Commission concerning the blog for your information, as well as our letter to the Metropolitan Police.

I look forward to your reply and to information on any action to ensue on the basis of my complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif
CEO