

Scouting Volunteer Suspended for Criticising Israel

Bear Grylls (Chief Scout) and the Scouting Movement appear to have abandoned the principles of free speech, following the decision to suspend a local parent volunteer for criticising Israel. Pete Gregson, who has been Treasurer at the 150th Craigmmond Scout Group in Edinburgh for 9 years, and who holds the Chief Scout's Award from Grylls, was last night suspended by Mark Hesketh, District Commissioner (DC) of the Scout Group, following a complaint. Mr Hesketh was unhappy that Pete was, in another quite unrelated capacity, chairperson of the Campaign Against Bogus Antisemitism (www.bogusantisemitism.org).

Ever careful to keep his volunteering activities separate, Gregson has taken great care never to publicly mention to either body his passion for both young people (he was a scout himself from the age of 12 to 16 and was a youth worker for 20 years) and Palestine. Of course, the members of the local Scout Executive Committee at the 150th were aware of Pete's campaigning activities (he cannot keep a low profile- he is involved in trying to get Edinburgh twinned with Gaza (see www.twingaza.com) but they are grateful he never hands out flyers at scout meetings, nor even mentions his activities around challenging Israel's hegemony.

The background to the complaint is this. At some point in 2017 Gregson tried to recruit volunteers for the 150th Scout Executive and submitted an advert to the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre. He entered his private landline phone number 0131 337 2603 as the contact point for those seeking more information. The advert ultimately proved a failure, for nobody came forward through this action.

However, somehow an individual found the extinct advert from 2017 and discovered that it was also the phone number for the pro-Palestine activist Pete Gregson. On this basis a complaint was lodged with the Scouting HQ claiming that an anti-Semite was being allowed to manage the 150th Craigmmond Scout Group finances- and that this must surely represent a danger to the young people in the Group.

The District Commissioner, fully aware of Gregson's long service to the scouting movement, on clarifying that Gregson was indeed associated with the Campaign Against Bogus Antisemitism, immediately suspended Gregson as the group treasurer.

This is proving awkward for the Group, since Gregson has pointed out he was in the midst of organising the group's annual accounts for the forthcoming AGM (the group is a registered charity and runs a well-used scout hall, booked by many community groups), work that he explained needed urgently to be done. The District Commissioner was unfazed by this matter.

Gregson also pointed out that, as trustee of another local charity, the Friends of Roseburn Park, he was organising a Queen's Platinum Jubilee Party in the Park for the 3rd June, to which the 150th Craigmmond have decided to bring a tombola stall. Gregson was meant to be helping the Scouts to organise the stall; he enquired of Mr Hesketh as to how he was meant to do this, now he was suspended- but answer came there none (though the DC noted the Group could still participate in the event).

Gregson is shocked that the Scouting movement feels that a mendacious complaint about his political activities appears to preclude him doing the scout accounts. His own children left the Scouts around 7 years ago, but he has continued as a volunteer with them because he is utterly committed to the Scouting movement. He is upset that he must now stay away from an agency that he has

always supported. Mr Hesketh states that he must follow procedures and that any complaint warrants a suspension from Scouting. Gregson is organising a free concert for Gaza in 3 weeks' time in Edinburgh's Princes St Gardens, which he thinks has triggered this attack:

see www.twingaza.com/gig-for-gaza

Gregson points to [Bear Grylls: 'To have faith in our everyday lives takes courage' | British GQ | British GQ \(gq-magazine.co.uk\)](#) and notes the Chief Scout is a Christian.

He put the question to Grylls and the DC:

"But does our Chief Scout support Israel? Is he a Zionist? The DC's actions will be putting this question on every young person's lips.

"And of course, their parent's lips. Because Gryll's agency has suspended Gregson for campaigning against apartheid Israel.

"I would have abandoned scouting years ago if it condoned racism. Which the DC presently gives every appearance of so doing.

"Is it because of this group that Mr Grylls will be compromised? [Hebrew Scouts Movement in Israel - Wikipedia](#) Or does he prefer these folk? [Palestinian Scout Association - ScoutWiki](#)

"Thanks to the DC's actions, I think Grylls must soon take a choice on these two. And, by his actions, the DC is forcing him to the Hebrew movement. And to the wrong side of history."

Grylls and the DC did not respond to these questions.

-ends-

Editor's notes: Pete Gregson is also a Community Councillor on the Murrayfield Community Council; he is employed at the NHS in IT, he is also chair of the Edina-Gaza Twinning Association.

For more info, contact Pete Gregson on 0758 472 2191

Mark Hesketh is on 0797 056 3272 markghesketh@gmail.com

Bear Grylls' public relations officer is Lizzie@Bearthgryllsventures.com

Gregson has written to the following on this matter: Bear Grylls (Chief Scout) chief.scout@scouts.org.uk ; Carl Hankinson, UK Chief Commissioner info.centre@scouts.org.uk ; Scotland Commissioner (Inclusion) alan.freeburn@scouts.scot , Scouts Scotland, Scouts UK (info.centre@scouts.org.uk); hello@scouts.scot ; support@scouts.org.uk ; updates@scoutnews.scot ; contact@earthgryllsventures.com - all with no response.

Gregson wrote to Grylls and the DC to say that he believed the attack on him was politically motivated and timed to do damage to the twinning with Gaza campaign.

He explained that he needed to prepare a press statement as he guessed the complainant was presumably already liaising with the media. He imagined it would be the Glasgow Herald as they have done this to him before. For just the day after his well-publicised "[Gig for Gaza](#)" in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens three years ago, the Herald ran a [front-page story](#) (they had interviewed Gary Smith of the GMB) declaring that he was an anti-Semite and that he had said the Holocaust was exaggerated. Gregson complained to the Independent Press Standards Office (IPSO); his complaint was (as usual) dismissed. He had pointed out to both IPSO and the Herald that they were misunderstanding basic grammar: saying "Israel exaggerates the Holocaust for political ends" was very different from saying "The Holocaust was exaggerated". In the first, the subject is acting on the object in a manipulative way; the second is a generalised statement purporting to be a truism.

He explained that another example might be “Trump exaggerates racism in the US for political ends” which is not the same as saying “Racism in the US is exaggerated”.

To told the DC: “IPSO and the Herald newspaper didn’t listen; I believe the Zionists are now using the Scouting movement- they will do this again, at the time it will do most damage to me- probably in the next three weeks. They will take your suspension of me as proof of my guilt.

You are going to get the Scouts into an awful mess if you are unable to anticipate the maelstrom you have unleashed. I am afraid that when this hits the presses, I will have to declare you a dupe of the Zionists. Sorry.

Best wishes, etc”

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Mark,

In one of my other lives, I am heavily involved with the Friends of Roseburn Park. I am organising the Platinum Jubilee Party in the Park, part-funded through Murrayfield Community Council (I am also a community councillor) and Edinburgh City Council. At our last 150th Executive meeting, a vote was taken to put the Group’s energies into running a bottle stall (like a tombola) at the Party (rather than the Corstorphine Fair on the 4th). The Exec figured that in terms profile and attracting new members, participating in the local Jubilee activities might be more productive than heading off to the more distant St Mary’s park in Corstorphine.

Your action in suspending me obviously makes the 150th’s participation in an event that I am organising problematic. Your complainant will have a field day if (s) he hears of this. So I ask you, do you want to exclude the 150th from participation in what will be a highly popular event (I am about to get 5,000 of the attached flyers produced, which will be delivered through every door in the area over the next fortnight). You’ll see on the attached the flyer that the 150th is featured.

If you wish to terminate the 150th ‘s activities in this event, I suggest you contact Carolann, our chairperson, and explain what you are about. She is on [number available on request].

Please let me know by 9am tomorrow if you are intent on removing the 150th from the Jubilee celebrations, as that is when I send the flyer to print.

Best wishes

Pete

PS- you may wonder what I was doing in New York. I had been invited to speak at this conference [Al Awda: Rising to Return | National Palestine Right to Return Conference \(alawdaconference.org\)](http://alawdaconference.org). I paid my own expenses, as did all the other speakers.

I delivered the session on “Entrepreneurs, Innovators & Techies for Palestinian Sovereignty “ ; the video of my presentation should be shortly available on Vimeo; I can give you the link if you like, as it takes you up-to-date on my current campaigning work on Palestine.

At the Conference I met Rabbi [Yisroel Dovid Weiss - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yisroel_Dovid_Weiss) and he has agreed to come, at my expense, to Scotland, to tour the mosques here and to address Edinburgh City Councillors on the dangers of fraternising with Israel.

Best wishes,

Pete

Hi Mark,

I see that you no longer want me to pay the scout leaders their expenses. Please tell Kieran [Crosby, the Group Scout Leader (GSL)] to come and get the cheque book, as I am forbidden from telling him myself.

I think you really ought to inform all members of the Exec (including my ex-wife, who is Membership Secretary) lest they inadvertently ask me to discuss something relating to hall management, finance or scouting. I am due to attend the Scout Hall on the 27th May to help the Deputy GSL organise the bottle stall with the cubs and scouts- you will need to tell him too, that I am banned.

Best wishes
Pete

Hi Mark,

It occurred to me- you'll need to tell the Exec that they have to cancel the AGM (booked for 1st July) or can you step in to do the accounts yourself?

If we do not stick to our plan, we shall lose our charitable status.

Perhaps you ought to arrange a time to come over and collect all the paperwork- I was aiming to take the books to trial balance and give them to Michael in a fortnight's time. The plan was to present the accounts at the next Exec meeting on the 17th June

I think you'll need to take over as treasurer for a while- or pay someone to take on the task.

It's funny that one mendacious, politically motivated complaint is sufficient for you to undo over 10 years of my hard work in supporting the Scouting movement.

Still- I am sure you will find another treasurer with no problems. For I imagine we shall be no further forward come August. Perhaps at some stage the South East Scotland Scout Region will pass the reins back to me.

Best wishes
Pete

From: Mark Hesketh <markghesketh@gmail.com>

Sent: 13 May 2022 08:17

To: Pete Gregson <postmaster@roseburn32.plus.com>

Subject: Re: Suspension

Good Morning Peter,

I see no reason for the Group to change its current planning or activities as a result of your suspension. While disruptive and upsetting it is the process that we need to follow as a result of the complaint.

Fully understand that in your role as treasurer this creates further complications but the District will support the Group as required over this period and it is highly unlikely the Group will lose its OSCR status due to slightly delayed accounts.

I will continue to liaise with Kieran on Group issues that may arise.

Mark

Mark,

Under the terms of my suspension, I am forbidden from dealing with the Exec or the leaders.

So how am I meant to pay their expenses? They have a residential at Fordell Firs coming soon. You must immediately instruct Kieran to take over my treasurers role.

Secondly, you declare the scouts may continue to participate in the Jubilee event.

I have already promised Michael, the deputy GSL my assistance on this. Will you please take over my duties in supporting him? I think it only fair. I shall instruct you in what is required.

Furthermore, how am I meant to liaise with the Exec and leaders on such matters as getting donations for the bottle stall, agreeing a site, etc etc

I have done this every 2nd year for many years with the Corstorphine fair.

Must every communication now go through you?

I see no alternative

Pete

Mark

I was aiming to take the books to trial balance and give them to Michael [the Independent Examiner] in a fortnight's time. The plan was to present the accounts at the next Exec meeting on the 17th June.

Else we must start to plan on cancelling the AGM, as we cannot hold the AGM with no annual accounts.

I repeat- you must step in and take the role of treasurer, else notify the Exec that the AGM be postponed.

Best wishes

Pete

Mark,

From next Wednesday, 5,000 of each of the attached flyers will be distributed by different teams of volunteers- the Gaza event citywide; the Jubilee event- to homes around Roseburn, Riversdale, Murrayfield, Saughton and Wester Coates.

With any luck your complainant will receive a copy of both.

Only the 150th feature on one flyer, but I am sure they will put two and two together and will inform the media accordingly.

The two events are on the same day, after all.

Still- there is no such thing as bad publicity, is there?

Best wishes

Pete

Hi Mark,

On reflection, I think I need to issue a press release on this, else the Zionists will get in first.

Do you have a problem with that?

I shall naturally approach the Chief Scout for a comment prior to sending it out (I have a mailing list of around 300 journalists, many of whom I know personally). I think I need to be proactive on this, in order to preserve my good name.

I'm sure you will understand.

I will do my best to preserve the reputation of the Scouting Movement, whilst making clear that the decision to suspend me was taken by the Craigalmond District Commissioner, because he felt he must follow procedures. I suspect the media may want a comment from you, in due course.

Best wishes

Pete

From: Peter Gregson
Sent: 13 May 2022 15:51
To: 'Lizzie@Bear Grylls Ventures.com' <Lizzie@Bear Grylls Ventures.com>; 'info.centre@scouts.org.uk' <info.centre@scouts.org.uk>; 'hello@scouts.scot' <hello@scouts.scot>; 'chief.scout@scouts.org.uk' <chief.scout@scouts.org.uk>; 'support@scouts.org.uk' <support@scouts.org.uk>; 'Scouts Scotland' <updates@scoutnews.scot>; 'info.centre@scouts.org.uk' <info.centre@scouts.org.uk>; 'contact@bear Grylls Ventures.com' <contact@bear Grylls Ventures.com>
Cc: 'Mark Hesketh' <markghesketh@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: Request for Comment on my suspension

From: Peter Gregson
Sent: 13 May 2022 15:11
To: 'Lizzie@Bear Grylls Ventures.com' <Lizzie@Bear Grylls Ventures.com>; 'info.centre@scouts.org.uk' <info.centre@scouts.org.uk>
Subject: RE: Request for Comment on my suspension

PS I forgot to mention my data:

Name: Peter Gregson
Primary role: Group Treasurer
Membership number: 871608

Also please note this event I am organising in 3 week's time, which I think is causing this attack: www.twingaza.com/gig-for-gaza/

Thanks

Pete Gregson

From: Peter Gregson
Sent: 13 May 2022 14:08
To: Lizzie@Bear Grylls Ventures.com; info@bear Grylls Adventure.com
Subject: Request for Comment on my suspension

Dear Bear Grylls,

In your capacity as Chief Scout, might you furnish me with a statement for the following press release, which I am about to mail to 300 journalists?

I must do this. I must prepare a press statement as the complainant is presumably liaising with the media. I imagine it will be the Glasgow Herald as they have done this to me before.

Just the day after my well-publicised "[Gig for Gaza](#)" in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens three years ago, the Herald ran a [front-page story](#) (they had interviewed Gary Smith of the GMB, who expelled me for criticising Israel, even though a Rabbi had spoken in my defence (see the 20-minute film that Ken Loach loved at <https://youtu.be/ZvIXwQ8LR4I>))

The Herald attacked me for declaring that I had said the Holocaust was exaggerated. I then complained to the Independent Press Standards Office (IPSO); my complaint (as usual) was dismissed. I pointed out to both IPSO and the Herald that they were misunderstanding basic grammar: "Israel exaggerates the Holocaust for political ends" is very different from saying "The Holocaust was exaggerated". In the first, the subject is acting on the object in a manipulative way; the second is a generalised statement purporting to be a truism. Another example might be "Trump exaggerates racism in the US for political ends" which is not the same as saying "Racism in the US is exaggerated".

They didn't listen and the Zionists are now using the Scouting movement- they will do this again, at the time it will do most damage to me- probably in the next three weeks. They will take the Scout's suspension of me as proof of my guilt.

I have pointed out to Mr Hesketh that he was going to get the Scouts into an awful mess if he was unable to anticipate the maelstrom he has unleashed. He has not replied.

Thanks
Best wishes
Pete Gregson
Treasurer
150th Craigalmond Scout Group
Edinburgh
0758 472 2191

THE SUSPENSION

From: Mark Hesketh <markghesketh@gmail.com>
Sent: 12 May 2022 20:43
To: Pete Gregson <postmaster@roseburn32.plus.com>
Subject: Suspension

Peter,

Thanks for taking my call tonight. Please see attached formal notice of suspension and support documentation as discussed.

I realise this will be a difficult time for you and we will complete the investigations as quickly as possible.

I have reflected upon our conversation and now asked South East Scotland Scout Region to progress this complaint and someone will contact you separately to progress this matter.

Regards

Mark
DC Craigalmond



Craigalmond Scout District

Registered Charity SC027398



12th May 2022

By email – please confirm receipt

In Confidence

Dear Peter,

I write following our telephone conversation to confirm that in accordance with The Scout Association's rules, your involvement in Scouting has been suspended with effect from 12th May 2022. Suspension itself does not imply that any allegation is true but it is necessary in view of the serious concerns raised against you.

The suspension will be reviewed at regular intervals while enquiries continue, but you should note that it will remain in force until you are formally advised in writing that it has been lifted.

I remind you that during the period of your suspension, you must not:

- participate in any activity connected with the Movement (whether or not young people are present) including administrative activities;
- contact youth members of The Scout Association directly or indirectly (including communicating with their parents/carers or other family members). This includes electronic communications such as text, email, Facebook, Twitter etc.;
- enter Association premises unless specifically given permission by me;
- be present at any place at which Scouting activities are taking place (including all types of activity whether or not young people are present);
- wear uniform or badges.

I enclose a copy of guidance notes for adults under suspension, which I hope you will find helpful. I will appoint someone to act as your liaison point as suggested in the guidance notes and provide details within next 7-10 days

Please contact me at any time if you have further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Hesketh

District Commissioner, Craigalmond, South East Scotland Scouts

[Tel:- 07970 562372](tel:07970562372)

District Commissioner: Mr Mark Hesketh dc@craigalmond.org.uk

Notes for a Person under Suspension

Edition: August 2016

Guidance notes for adults under suspension

Action taken under the rules of the Association

Under the rules of The Scout Association a person may be suspended from any involvement in Scouting in the following situations: [see *Policy, Organisation and Rules* – rule 15.2].

- i. when an allegation is made that an individual involved in Scouting has committed a serious criminal offence
- ii. when a disagreement or dispute between adults remains unresolved for a period of more than 30 days (commencing from when a formal written notification of the dispute is provided to the relevant Executive Committee)
- iii. if a Member or Associate Member makes a formal, public challenge (to a non-Scouting organisation, body or forum) against the decision or policy of either:
 - a local Executive Committee of a Scout unit (of which that Member or Associate Member is a member) and/or
 - The Scout Associationwhere such public challenge seeks to change, overturn or reverse the said decision or policy or causes adverse publicity about the same
- iv. where the intentional action or inaction of an individual involved in Scouting could seriously harm the reputation of the Movement
- v. when the action of an individual involved in Scouting may constitute gross misconduct
- vi. where an individual involved in Scouting requiring a Criminal Record Disclosure Check for their role in Scouting does not hold such a disclosure and a period of 30 days (where an electronic system is used) or 60 days (where a paper based system is used) has expired since one was held or required.

The suspending Commissioner will usually tell the suspended person directly and confirm the suspension in writing.

Any appointment certificate and appointment card must be surrendered immediately on suspension to the suspending Commissioner, who will inform headquarters. There can be no participation in any activity connected with the Movement and uniform or badges may not be worn [see *Policy, Organisation and Rules* – rule 15.2(e) for the full list of exclusions and remember that this includes the use of electronic communications such as text, email, Facebook and Twitter].

Suspension does not imply that the allegation has been proven or that it will be proven. The aim is to allow stock to be taken and protect all those involved whilst the appropriate investigations take place. Removing the adult or adults from the immediate situation helps to diffuse any risks whilst also preventing further or ongoing allegations throughout the process as well.

It will usually be necessary to inform some colleagues of the suspension but these will be kept to the minimum that circumstances allow. The responsible Commissioner will maintain a review of who is to be informed, and to what extent confidentiality can, or should, be maintained. If the matter becomes common knowledge, it may be

desirable for the responsible Commissioner to provide an accurate statement of the facts for public information. If at all possible, you will be informed of this statement beforehand.

If your child is in Scouting, the responsible Commissioner may be able, in some circumstances, to allow you to attend specific events (for example to see your child receive an award). The exact nature of what you will be allowed to do is a matter for the responsible Commissioner and you must receive the Commissioner's specific permission.

Whilst suspended, you are not permitted access to Scout premises. If you need access for a specific purpose (for example to collect your personal belongings or to complete an ID check in order to obtain a disclosure) then this may be permitted under certain circumstances – but this is a matter for the responsible Commissioner and you must receive the Commissioner's specific permission.

If the Scout Association is dealing with any safeguarding aspects, then it will appoint a local "situation manager" who will be dealing with items locally. Usually this is the local Commissioner although it might be someone else in some circumstances. In any case, you will be told who the person is who is dealing with the situation.

Support available from Scouting

During suspension, social contact with Scouting colleagues and friends is not precluded unless this is likely to be prejudicial to an investigation, or would subject them to unfair or undue pressure. Social contacts must not be used to circumvent the purposes of suspension, for example by attending Scout activities or entering Scout premises.

The responsible Commissioner will offer to appoint a Scouting colleague to give you direct personal support for as long as is judged appropriate by the responsible Commissioner (this is termed the "liaison person"). The liaison person will not be involved in any way with the allegation, or with any subsequent Scout investigation, and will not play any part in the process of suspension. The liaison person should not be expected to enter into any legal, financial or personal commitment, for example bail, surety, binding over, or be involved in court proceedings.

If appropriate, the responsible Commissioner will advise you of the terms and conditions of eligibility for claims of financial support for out-of-pocket legal costs. *[Guidelines are issued to County/Area Commissioners by Headquarters on request.]*

Employment issues

If your suspension from Scouting might impact on your employment, it may be possible for you to obtain a letter or information from Scouting to explain the nature and reason for the suspension to your employer. Providing such letter or information will depend on the circumstances and, in some instances, any legal considerations.

Sources of legal advice

When appropriate the Association recommends that independent legal advice is taken at an early stage, not least because the information which now follows may require updating from time to time:

- You have the right to obtain professional legal advice from a solicitor at your own expense at any time.

- Limited free legal advice is also available through the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- If you are taken to a police station under arrest, or are arrested at a police station, you have the right to consult privately with a duty solicitor, who will give you independent legal advice, free of charge.
- Should you attend a police station voluntarily, or be under police caution, you are entitled to obtain free and independent legal advice if you wish and you also have the right to speak to a solicitor on the phone.
- Some household insurance policies, and membership of some motoring organisations, include a degree of free legal advice. However, before relying on this, the policy holder or member needs to establish clearly the nature and extent of such cover at the earliest time.

The Association cannot provide legal advice or representation to an alleged offender (or complainant) where an allegation of a serious disciplinary or criminal offence has been made.

Ending suspension

Experience has shown that any disciplinary, legal or judicial processes that may result from an allegation can become drawn out over a long period of time and so we are not able to provide a timeline for any suspension. When investigation has been completed, a decision on re-instatement, cancellation or exclusion will be made. The decision might be made by headquarters or by the responsible Commissioner together with the Appointments Advisory Committee depending on the circumstances. For full details of possible outcomes please refer to POR Rule 15.3.

In cases where suspension is related to the failure to have a valid disclosure, the suspension will be ended automatically once a valid disclosure has been obtained and the vetting process is complete. At this point the responsible Commissioner will be informed.

In cases where suspension includes aspects of safeguarding, any person returning to Scouting after a suspension will be required to undertake a disclosure check following the usual process relevant to the country in which the person is Scouting.

In all cases the period of suspension will not come to an end until the suspended person receives formal notification in writing.



The Scout Association

**Chief Scout's 5 Years Service
Award**

Peter Ninian Gregson

Craigalmond

is awarded this certificate
in recognition of service
to Scouting

04 January 2018



Handwritten signature of the Chief Scout.

Chief Scout