

Vegetarianism is not a philosophical belief under the Equality Act 2010

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The Claimant was seeking to claim that he had been discriminated against because of his vegetarianism. He stated that his belief was that the world would be a better place if animals were not killed for food. Philosophical beliefs must:

- a) Be genuinely held and not a mere opinion or viewpoint on the present state of information available;
- b) Be about a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour;
- c) Attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance and be worth respect in a democratic society; and
- d) Be compatible with human dignity and do not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

The Tribunal concluded that there are many different reasons for an individual to be vegetarian. It drew a comparison to veganism, in which vegans appear to have clear cogency and cohesion in vegan belief. In its Judgment, the Tribunal concluded that vegetarianism did not amount to a philosophical belief capable of protection under the Equality Act 2010. It was not enough to have an opinion based on some real, or perceived, logic, however commendable. Further, vegetarianism could not be described as relating to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life.

Although not binding, the Judgment in this case helpfully analyses the criteria of a philosophical belief, under the Equality Act 2010. The Tribunal was not asked to address the possibility of veganism being a philosophical belief but it did offer some views on how such an issue is likely to be assessed.

Vegetarians are unlikely to be protected from discrimination, because of their vegetarianism alone, under the Equality Act 2010. However, clients should be aware that veganism may constitute a philosophical belief under the Equality Act 2010.

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