

UNISON at the STUC
All the main UNISON reports from the 121st Scottish Trades Union Congress in Aviemore - p1, 2, 3, 4



What's happening with pay?
Updates from local government, NHS and police - p 1, 2



Council slammed as UNISON member awarded £56k at tribunal
Full story p3

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Scotland in UNISON

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Unions fight off facility time attack

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

A campaign by unions in West Dunbartonshire has forced the council to reverse its decision to cut time off for trade union duties.

Delegates to the Scottish Trades Union Congress in Aviemore last month cheered when the news was reported.

STUC general secretary Grahame Smith applauded the joint UNISON, Unite, GMB and EIS campaign.

UNISON West Dunbartonshire convener Val Jennings told the Morning Star newspaper that the cuts were "purely political" and designed to "undermine the trade



unions' ability to organise" among the council workforce. "There will be no saving to the council for taking this action, as the work will still need to be done." Grahame Smith also welcomed new Scottish Government guidance on facility time. The agreed guidance

advises employers to provide no data beyond that required by legislation, and to ensure that the regulations are not used as the basis for reducing facility time.

"This first example of its successful impact will be used by public sector unions to ensure no other employers seek to play to the Tories' tune.

"At Congress we will be celebrating the vital job done by workplace union reps. Their time is spent resolving workplace disputes, maintaining health and safety standards, and developing the skills and education of workers."

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis sent a special message to the branch: "The attacks on facility time you have faced have been completely unacceptable, but your campaign against these changes has been a credit to our union.

"I was pleased to hear that the proposed changes have been withdrawn – that is a credit to the work that you have done and the solidarity your campaign has generated."

The branch has always seen these attacks as part of the wider attack on local services and its campaign against cuts is now in full swing with a rally held on 28 April and more events in the pipeline.

Reporting from STUC Congress

The 121st STUC Congress saw over 300 delegates from 32 unions and 15 Trades Union Councils gather in Aviemore from 16-18 April.

First minister Nicola Sturgeon addressed delegates just after the announcement that West Dunbartonshire's SNP administration had reversed its decision to cut facility time. She said facility time must be 'respected and honoured' in the public sector.



We also heard from Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard who told delegates that "we forget at our peril" that the Labour Party is the political wing of the trade union movement.



But the real business lay in the debates on issues affecting the daily lives of working people in Scotland - mapping out the STUC's priorities in the coming year.

We report on UNISON's motions and amendments along with some of the 20 UNISON speakers in this issue and more reports and photos are on the UNISON Scotland website.

• Reporting in Aviemore was by **Kate Ramsden, John Stevenson** and **Jane Aitchison** from the Communications and Campaigns Committee, and **Fiona Montgomery**, information development officer.

Scottish Government must use powers to protect public services

The STUC backed UNISON's call for the Scottish Government to use its 'full suite' of powers to avoid public sector cuts.

The motion condemned the government for passing on "the worst of the Tory cuts to Scotland's councils."

The STUC will continue to argue that privatised services are more interested in profit and shareholder dividend, rather than public need. Particularly after the Carillion scandal, these services should be brought back in-house.

UNISON Scotland's Jane Aitchison, seconding the motion, called for the Scottish

government to use its "full suite of tax and borrowing" to avoid local government cuts, buy back PPP/PFI contracts, where it makes financial sense, and ensure everyone employed on public service contracts is paid at least the Scottish Living Wage.

Jane said: "Our NHS and our councils are under severe strain – long hospital waiting lists, new cuts to vital council services such as school crossing patrols, libraries closed, cuts to child mental health services - an endless list. This is all so wrong.

"There have been 29,000 local government jobs lost since 2009, nine out of ten of the austerity

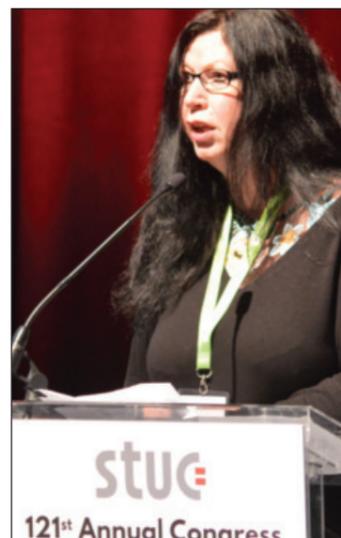
Every politician who claims they are anti-austerity must put her or his money where their mouth is'

JANE AITCHISON

job cuts.

"The Accounts Commission warned at the start of April that finding savings is "increasingly critical" for councils, where there has been an almost ten per cent real terms cut since 2010/11.

Turn to page 2



Police staff win pay deal

Police staff members have accepted a pay deal of 4% for those earning up to £22k, 3% between £22k and £36.5k, 2.3% between £36.5k and £80k, and £1,600 over £80k.

The 19 month agreement runs from 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019.

Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish secretary said: "There was a clear acceptance and an excellent return on a full postal consultative ballot."

Government must use powers to stop cuts

From page 1

Jane said we need an end to austerity and a start to building a society that looks after everyone, rather than increasing inequalities, exploiting workers, abandoning children to poverty, and leaving thousands of people, including children, reliant on food banks.

“Every politician who claims they are anti-austerity must put her or his money where their mouth is. Yes, Scotland’s new tax-raising powers are being used. The recent income tax changes will generate £366 million of extra revenue compared to the rest of the UK. Welcome, but nothing like enough to start to counter the cuts, let alone build the caring society we believe in.

“If politicians of any party in Scotland want to be credible on being anti-austerity they must start delivering the policies, including progressive taxation at levels that will protect the NHS and local government from further cuts.”

The STUC will now organise a major demonstration for proper funding for public services and decent pay increases for public service workers.

Value older workers

The STUC will press for smarter ways of working, flexibility and reduction of hours and tasks to support older workers who choose to stay in work, and will resist any further increases in the state pension age.

UNISON’s Morag Houston told Congress: “Whether you are actually young, or, like me, young at heart, we all need to stand up together for everyone’s pension rights and for decent work that takes account of age and health and caring responsibilities.”

Employers must address workforce planning with UNISON’s research showing that around 40% of the public sector workforce are likely to retire within ten years.



Fund education to tackle poverty and support needs

Education systems can help mitigate the impact of poverty, but only if they are properly designed and resourced, UNISON’s Carol Ball told the STUC, as it called for more teachers and support staff and managed workloads.

Delegates also backed a call to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to properly meet the legal duty to support children with additional support needs.



Peter Morgan

Peter Morgan, a highly respected retired member from Fife, passed away recently, after a long illness, having given sterling service as a steward, health and safety rep and Fife Retired Members Committee member. Peter truly was one of the good guys, and still giving to others having given his body for science and research.

Marie Macrae

Council pay: Joint call to government for funding

UNISON local government members continue their fight for a flat rate increase of £1,500 or 6.5% - whichever is the greater

The rise would be based on a 37 hour week and applied after the Scottish Local Government Living Wage rate has been updated, with a similar increase in allowances.

UNISON is also looking for

a commitment over the next five years to make up for the loss of earnings after years of below inflation rises.

On the table at the moment is 3% for those on up to £36k; 2% for £36,501- 80k; and £1,600 on £80k and above.

UNISON is in talks with COSLA and both parties have written separately to the Scottish government saying that if the government want to provide one

lot of workers (there are four bargaining groups, ourselves, craft workers, teachers and chief officers) with a better settlement than anyone else, then the government better come up with the cash to pay for it.

COSLA for their part want to give everyone the same increase. Something UNISON has argued for years.

In the meantime UNISON has carried out a pay claim

survey of its members. 9,263 members participated – which has given valuable information on what action we will take on pay and how we handle the current negotiations. UNISON branches will receive a breakdown of the survey responses.

As we went to press, the joint unions were due to meet COSLA on 4 May so check the website for any updates.

Pension funds need investments that don’t cause global warming

UNISON Scotland’s STUC motion on Pension Funds and Climate Change led to some debate throughout the Congress due to misunderstandings about the principles underpinning the motion.

As a result, UNISON Scotland withdrew its motion in favour of a General Council statement delivered by council member Mike Kirby who is also UNISON Scottish Secretary.

The motion argued that making pensions dependent on long term profits from an industry threatening a safe

planetary future is not a sensible investment strategy.

When pension funds are exposed to fossil fuels, they’re relying on stranded assets for the safe retirement of their workers.

Mike Kirby said: “Pension funds need to start a process where they look for alternative investment vehicles to secure the future returns on deferred wages.”

It was not about pulling the plug on the North Sea tomorrow or closing down the gas pipelines tomorrow. The STUC should continue supporting the efforts to protect these jobs today. It is



Mike Kirby

about shifting investments.

“Pension funds are about long term investments. So we are asking congress to address feasibility and process issues of

the pension funds to start investigating alternative investments that can give us the same level of return as fossil fuels have in the past.”

“Our union reps on the pension fund boards are required through fiduciary duty to ensure that other investments give good returns. That means that they can’t just withdraw from fossil fuels tomorrow. They need to investigate the alternatives, consider the options and plan ahead.

“And if that starts a process where those companies so reliant on carbon reserves for their value realise that they need to shift their company plans to low-carbon areas, then so much the better.

“So the pension funds have a problem, and are currently part of the problem.

“They can also, and must be, part of the solution.

“If they are to switch investments away from fossil fuels then they will be looking for other places to invest. That should include renewable energy to light our homes. To power our public transport.

“But it can also be by investing in our infrastructure.

“And investing in new technologies and industries, new jobs like BiFab, delivering fabrication for oil, gas, and renewables.

“In fact the pension funds have to be part of the strategy to provide investments for that Just Transition we all agree is needed.”

UNISON health branch wins STUC organising award

UNISON NHS Glasgow, Clyde and CVS Branch won this year’s STUC organising award for a campaign to get more pay for staff regularly doing duties above their grade.

Conveners Margaret McCarthy and Graham Capstick were presented with the award by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at the STUC in Aviemore.

The branch identified a large group of low paid health care support workers who were working above their grade and campaigned through mailings, posters and regular stalls to talk to affected staff.

They designed a pay claim



Conveners Margaret McCarthy and Graham Capstick flanked by Patrick McGuire and Jillian Merchant of Thompsons Solicitors who sponsored the award.

form so that workers could assess their regular tasks against band 2 and 3 job descriptions.

So far they have recruited many more members, 15 new stewards and lodged 780 claims.

NHS Scotland must pay up now in no detriment deal

UNISON Scotland has accepted the pay offer of 3% in the NHS and is demanding that it is implemented without further delay.

UNISON is committed to ‘locking in’ that 3% and then using Scottish bargaining machinery to negotiate a Scottish NHS Pay deal for 2019-20 which rolls back austerity and reinforces our commitment to fair pay, equality and pay progression.

This would secure a “no detriment” deal, ensuring that Scottish NHS workers would not be worse off than their English colleagues, who are currently being consulted on a



pay offer in England.

Speaking at the union’s annual health conference in Brighton, Chair of the UNISON Scotland health committee, Tom Waterson said: “It was UNISON’s campaign in health, and across the public sector, which convinced the Scottish government to scrap the pay cap.

‘UNISON won’t allow anyone to delay the implementation of that (pay) rise.’

TOM WATERSON

“It has tabled a pay remit paper that says all staff earning less than £80,000 are to receive an immediate 3% increase on pay and allowances, while talks craft a Scottish version of the NHS offer currently being consulted on in England.

“UNISON Scotland accepts the offer of 3% and demands

that it’s implemented without further delay. This agreement is an important first step to securing a Scottish deal for Scottish NHS workers, and we’re determined that it will deliver for our staff and roll back the pain of austerity.

“There appears to be a view that the 2018 pay award should be held off until the NHS pay offer is concluded in England. That is not acceptable.

“Shona Robison, cabinet secretary for health has committed to giving NHS workers a pay rise, the government has promised 3% and UNISON won’t allow anyone to delay the implementation of that rise.”

Unions must lead on fair energy and just transition

STUC delegates backed UNISON's call for a Scottish energy policy, including the creation of a government owned energy company and a Just Transition Plan.

The STUC will call on the Scottish Government to ensure their Just Transition Commission includes trade unions.

Moving the composite, UNISON's Willie Docherty told delegates that it is due to a lack of a proper industrial strategy and a lack of a strategy planning for a just transition to a low carbon economy that Scotland has lost out on the

manufacturing jobs that were continually promised from the renewables industry.

UNISON was proud to have been part of the partnership with the STUC to call for a Just Transition Commission and Willie welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to create the Commission.

Willie said: "It will work to protect livelihoods and ensure funding for training and re-training. Fair work principles and collective bargaining are key to success as is direct trade union representation on the Commission, which must have real teeth."

Willie also called for a proper balanced energy strategy for Scotland to deliver security of supply, at an affordable cost, meeting climate change targets.

But the Scottish Government's plans for a government owned energy company didn't go far enough and UNISON wanted a more radical option involving generation and transmission.

"We want to see more public, community and co-operative ownership of energy generation with councils setting up municipal energy companies, as happens across Europe."

He called for a policy that will set energy targets with credible milestones and delivery plans, including a statutory target to eliminate fuel poverty by 2030.

"The trade union movement internationally has secured just transition policies in the Paris climate change agreement.

"Trade unions here can play a world leading role in making sure Scotland's Just Transition Commission makes a radical impact in delivering a fair transition to the low carbon future that all our children and grandchildren need.

"There are no jobs on a dead planet."

STUC to co-ordinate campaigns on pay

The STUC Congress backed UNISON Scotland's call for a new long term pay policy for all public sector workers that reflects the rising cost of living and the cumulative pay losses suffered by public sector workers over the last decade.

The policy should be underpinned by a minimum wage of £10 per hour and a commitment by the UK and Scottish Governments to fully fund such a pay policy.

UNISON's Brenda Aitchison, seconding the motion, brought laughter with her 'Still Game' reference, saying public sector pay awards had been "hee wrapped up in haw".

"How can it be fair to cut in real terms our pay for so long when public sector workers did not create the financial collapse?"

"Austerity and austerity-light has to end. You all know

the grim statistics, starving of funding and resulting fall-out, less jobs, stretched to breaking point services, lost services, poverty wages. This is the politicians' shame - those who implement cuts.

"It is not outrageous for us to demand an inflation busting pay rise and establish a £10 per hour minimum wage. We don't need any more empty praise, we need an increase to our living standards."

Brenda said the STUC had to be bold and have 'an honest look' at public finance and campaign for a more progressive tax system like the one proposed by UNISON Scotland that would raise £800 million a year and tackle income inequality.

And she highlighted the difference between Scottish government words and actions.

"The SNP may have signed for fair work but SNP councils are not demonstrating they are on



Brenda Aitchison

message when they attack terms and conditions of their workers in local government."

The composite from UNISON Scotland, the STUC General Council, PCS, and the EIS also restated support for the Fair Work Convention to ensure that government at all levels and employers implement the Fair

Work Framework.

UNISON Scotland convener Lilian Macer sits on the Convention.

It urged the STUC to "facilitate, organise and co-ordinate collective action and campaigns, including industrial action, when required on the part of affiliates, to end public sector pay restraint."

Council slammed as UNISON member awarded £56k

by Greig Kelbie
Local organiser

UNISON Scottish Borders Public Services member, Anthony Carson, has been awarded £56,581 by an employment tribunal, the highest award possible in his case.

Anthony successfully claimed that he was unfairly dismissed by Scottish Borders Council.

The employment tribunal judge said that Scottish Borders Council had run "one of the most woefully inadequate investigations of misconduct I have ever come across" and that "the standard of the investigation in this case was utterly shameful" and "biased".

UNISON officials and Thompsons Solicitors say this is one of the most scathing judgements they have seen in 25 years of practice.

UNISON spoke to senior managers, lawyers and councillors to ask them to re-examine the case because it was so obviously wrong, but they refused.

Anthony was a Regulatory Services

This is another reminder how important it is, even for senior managers, to join a trade union.'

ANTHONY CARSON

Manager since 2011. He ran the council's environmental health services. He had an exemplary employment record. He was told allegations had been made against him about his management style.

He agreed to go to meetings to discuss these issues. But he was suspended before the meetings took place and was dismissed in December 2016.

He was never properly made aware of what the allegations were. He denied any wrong doing.

Janet Stewart, UNISON regional organiser who represented Anthony said: "I am an experienced union official and I have never seen such a seriously damning verdict. This is a serious case. Scottish Borders Council conduct disciplinary procedures in a



superficial manner. This must change.

"This case reminds them they are not above the law and it must act as a wake up call."

Thompsons Solicitors who represented Mr Carson, said: "This is one of the most scathing judgements we have seen from an employment tribunal. The judge finds that Scottish Borders Council have failed in almost every regard in terms of the investigation, the disciplinary decision, the process and lack of natural justice. They agreed with every criticism we made in this case."

Anthony said: "This has been very stressful. I am pleased that the tribunal agreed with me but it's difficult to take pleasure from this decision as I lost my job, it has ruined my career, and they put me through a lot of stress. I want to thank Thompsons Solicitors and UNISON for representing me. This is another reminder how important it is, even for senior managers, to join a trade union."

Glasgow equal pay strike ballot

Patience has run out for Glasgow City equal pay campaigners as the branch launches a consultative ballot on strike action.

The ballot follows five months of talks - after the women won their court case - without any concrete moves from the council to resolve the past pay discrimination.

The branch says the council has still not accepted that the job evaluation scheme - criticised by the Court of Session - has to be replaced.

UNISON Glasgow's Carol Ball said: "We want the individual claimants compensated for past discrimination as soon as possible and a new job evaluation scheme which delivers pay equality and pay justice for all.

"UNISON is now calling on all members to increase the pressure on the council by voting for, and if necessary, taking strike action."

The ballot closes on 30 May.

STUC in brief

Attacks on university pensions condemned

UNISON NEC Member, **Davena Rankin** congratulated the UCU on its pensions fight and said that the strength and diversity of their picket lines across Scotland and the rest of the UK was fantastic.



However she reminded delegates the attack on the USS pension scheme is not the only one with universities increasingly withdrawing from the local government pension schemes and their own stand alone pensions schemes.

We must learn lessons from Grenfell

The STUC backed a call for the Scottish Government to listen to firefighters' concerns about the effects of cuts on fire safety and commit to long term investment that addresses shortages in firefighter and fire safety posts.



UNISON's **Maggie Cook** said: "The appalling loss of life in Grenfell is one of the worst examples of the failings of various systems that are meant to protect people and save lives.

"Worryingly, cuts to councils have included cuts to building control staff despite the vital role they have to play, along with others, in ensuring buildings are safe and fire safe."

Collective action needed to challenge sexual harassment

Delegates backed a motion saying sexual harassment at work can only be effectively tackled by the collective action of employers, trade unions and policy makers.



UNISON's **Kate Ramsden** told delegates: "Fundamentally we need to use our collective powers to end male privilege. We need to find ways for women and the men who support us, to speak with one voice across society and demand an end to sexism and all other forms of discrimination."

Social security should provide dignity

Social security should provide dignity through a living wage standard of support, the STUC Congress was told as it voted to campaign against the worst elements of Universal Credit.

UNISON's **Mark Ferguson** said: "UNISON believes that if all affiliates work together we can achieve improvements for our members and our communities."

All you need to know about UNISON learning courses

by Shirley Kirk

Learning & Organising Committee

Ongoing training and education is vital to the professional development of our activists.

Specialist courses are designed to empower and provide knowledge and skills to help build self-confidence.

This enables activists to carry out their roles more effectively when tackling workplace issues affecting our members.

It also provides opportunities to connect with activists across Scotland, creating a stronger organising union.

UNISON provides a wide

range of learning opportunities for activists. Our courses are friendly and informal and you don't need any formal qualifications.

Training is intended to make learning fun. Everyone's views and experiences are heard. UNISON training is free to all participants and meals are provided. Your branch pays course fees, travel and other expenses.

Most of our Scottish non-residential courses are held in UNISON offices in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, or public sector venues.

Our weekend residential



courses usually take place in large city centre hotels. All venues have disabled access but as disabilities vary greatly it is important you let us know at the time of application so that we can meet your needs.

Courses usually run from 0930 to 1630. Weekend residential courses normally begin at 1800

on a Friday and finish after lunch on Sunday.

For some courses you are asked to bring copies of local policies and procedures or some basic information about your branch/workplace. You will be sent precise details with your joining instructions.

We can usually help with child or dependant care, so please advise us at the time of application. It should be possible to provide free crèche facilities on request, particularly for residential courses or make an allowance to assist with additional childcare costs.

We strongly advise you to tell

your manager now that you are arranging to go on a course.

Local procedures will be different for making the request but your branch can help with this.

You can download further information on courses and the application form from www.unison-scotland.org/learning/

Completed application forms should be signed by your branch education officer or branch secretary and returned without delay. You should apply at least 28 days before the course begins.

We look forward to welcoming you to one of our courses soon.

Angus women win victory on International Women's Day



Back row L-R: Chris Boyle (Branch Secretary), Arthur Grant (Steward), Barbara Bowman, Ann Prow, Kate McCubbin (Steward and FNSW), Mo Dickson (Regional Organiser), Sarah Mathieson
Front row: Moira Soutar, Jacqui McWalter, Dawn Ross. Not pictured: Gail Cooper.

Angus UNISON Family Nurture Support Workers celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March by winning a regrading after initially being dismissed and re-engaged on a lower grade.

Following legal advice

UNISON triggered ACAS and the council conceded that the grading was wrong and regraded the women, backdated to December.

UNISON's Maureen Dickson said: "We have won the battle. We are yet to win the war over the way the council deal with job evaluation

but I'll be working with the branch to ensure we are involved."

"We have eight very happy women in Angus who fought this grading issue and got the best possible outcome and the correct outcome on International Women's Day."

Joint approach needed to tackle NHS vacancies

The STUC backed a motion from the newly affiliated Hospital Consultants and Specialists' Association calling on the Scottish Government to address the rising numbers of vacancies for NHS consultants in Scotland.

But seconding an amendment, UNISON Scottish convener Lilian Macer warned: "UNISON believes that only through a joint approach to workforce planning can we ensure safe, effective care."

She pointed out that the



amendment ensures that all of the appropriate unions are involved in any taskforce.

"It is not as simple as replacing like for like. The changing nature of the NHS means we need the right skill mix and to utilise the extended scope of the wider workforce."

Mental health a workplace issue

UNISON's John Nisbet told the STUC that the Scottish Government's mental health strategy "must treat mental health as a serious issue of occupational health."

"We should be aiming to stop the use of absence management policies as a stick to beat people

with when they are already struggling", said John.

He called for the "naming and shaming" of bad employers but also to promote models of good practice and a concerted effort by government and trade unions to ensure reasonable adjustments for workers with mental health issues.

International: STUC backs boycott, divestment and sanctions

The STUC has a long history of international solidarity and this was evident at the Congress with motions on Palestine, Turkey and Catalonia.

The STUC condemned Israel's attack on human rights and reaffirmed its support for the people of Palestine in their fight for justice and confirmed the STUC's support for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

UNISON's Sam Macartney, chair of UNISON Scotland's International Committee spoke in support of the motion. Before he began, delegates and the presidential team held up placards calling for BDS.

Sam told Congress that as the state of Israel continues to persecute and ethnically cleanse the Palestinian people and the murders of Palestinian protesters continue in Gaza, BDS becomes even more relevant to draw attention to the

plight of the Palestinian people.

UNISON Scotland, in conjunction with the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Scottish Friends of Palestine have put together a Boycott Divestment and Sanctions document which can be found on our website.

Turkey's terrorism against Kurds

Congress backed UNISON's emergency motion condemning the invasion of Afrin in Syria by Turkey and assorted militias, including former Al-Qaida and ISIS fighters.

It will press the UK Government to cease arms sales to Turkey whilst they continue to attack Kurdish communities in Syria, and to raise with Turkey the need to withdraw from Syria.

Moving the motion, UNISON Scotland depute convener Stephen Smellie told delegates that Erdogan's "Operation Olive Branch" launched in January is not a peace initiative. "It is a full-scale



invasion of the Region of Afrin," said Stephen.

Afrin is part of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, created by the Kurdish forces who defended their people against ISIS – allied with the other peoples of the region.

It is autonomous, democratic, secular and has gender equal administrations in the towns, villages and across the region.

"And not just gender equal councils but women leading the movement," added Stephen. "But

the new Afrin administrative council are 100% men."

The militia forces that entered Afrin destroyed statues of Kurdish origins and Ezidi religious symbols.

"This is reminiscent of ISIS destroying non-Islamic and pre-Islamic statuary," said Stephen, adding that reports of Ezidi women being told to cover their heads and convert to Islam is also reminiscent of ISIS conduct in Sinjar in 2014."

Defending democracy in Catalonia

The STUC called for the defence of democracy in Catalonia, the immediate release and acquittal of all political prisoners, and pledged political pressure in Holyrood and Westminster to achieve this.

UNISON's Jim McFarlane, supporting the Glasgow TUC motion, said: "As the trade union movement in Scotland it is not our right or place to say whether Catalonia should be independent or not. That is for the people living there.

"However it is our right and duty to defend their democratic right to decide their future as we did in 2014."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact John Stevenson (Editor) john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk
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