



PRESS RELEASE FROM SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY JEWISH CHAPLAINCY

LANDMARK JUDGEMENT AT CUPAR SHERIFF COURT: ATTACKING A STUDENTS JEWISH IDENTITY THROUGH HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH ISRAEL WAS RACIALIST.

- Cupar Sheriff Court has found an attack against a student because of his Jewish identity is criminal, and racist in nature.
- Chanan Reitblat, aged 21, was studying for one semester at St Andrews University as part of his university degree at Yeshiva University in New York. He is an American citizen who fled as a child with his family to escape the then severe Jewish oppression in communist Lithuania.
- He was attacked in his own bedroom in a University hall of residence at 1:30 am. His property was abused, he was subjected to serious harassment and humiliation, was jumped upon in his bed, and had his Jewish identity questioned and insulted. Why? Because a large part of his Jewish identity is identification with the State of Israel. In the privacy of his own bedroom he had an Israeli flag on the wall behind his bed!
- Jewish Chaplaincy asserts the rights of students to express their Jewish identity without their being subject to harassment, intimidation or attack. Interest in or identification with the State of Israel and support for its legitimate welfare and right to exist is an integral part of the Jewish identity of the mainstream Jewish community and has been for generations. Of course, there are individuals who choose not to identify; that is *their* free choice.
- Jewish chaplaincy believes in freedom of debate and exchange of views and ideas, not least in a University setting. CRITICISM OF POLICIES, ACTIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ARE AS VALID FOR ISRAEL AS THEY ARE FOR ANY OTHER STATE. We believe that Israel being singled out for demonisation, de-legitimisation, and calls for its destruction represents double standards and goes beyond legitimate debate.
- We believe overseas students should be made to feel welcome in Scotland, whatever their background. They make a highly significant and positive contribution to campus life and Scottish society.
- Jewish chaplaincy calls on all University authorities in Scotland to ensure that Jewish Students – as with all other students – are able to live, study and participate in campus life, in a safe and welcoming environment free from harassment attack and intimidation. INDIVIDUAL students cannot be held responsible for the actions of any Government.

A stylized, cursive signature logo for Northern Region Jewish Chaplaincy, featuring the letters 'NRJC' intertwined.

Northern Region Jewish Chaplaincy

NOTE TO EDITORS

- Scottish University Jewish Chaplaincy (SUJC) is a charity that for over 40 years has provided a full time paid chaplaincy service for Jewish students studying in Scotland. The current chaplain is RABBI GARRY WAYLAND who is based in Glasgow.
- The SUJC looks after the spiritual, welfare and Jewish educational needs of Jewish students and supports them on campus. We work in partnership with Universities
- In the last 3 years, there has been an increase in the number of serious incidents involving Jewish students in Scotland, with harassment, paint daubings and now the attack in St Andrews. These incidents have all been motivated by anti-Israel sentiment and peaked during the Gaza sit-ins at Scottish Universities in 2009.
- We are particularly concerned at the role of the Scottish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) following the St Andrews incident. Their website campaign presenting and purporting to justify the attack on Chanan Reitblat on the grounds of legitimate free speech and political expression is a gross error of judgement does not help the Palestinian cause.
- What freedom of speech and political expression?
 - By students in a highly intoxicated state.
 - By invading the privacy of a Jewish student, in bed, in his own bedroom in a University hall of residence at 1:30 am.
 - By shouting at him, by jumping on him and intimidating him.
 - By putting the Jewish student in such a state of fear and alarm that he felt the need to leave St Andrews, stay in Glasgow with the Jewish Chaplain and return home to New York early?