

Let Our People Go

YONATAN EISENBERG

As a Scottish Israeli, having made Scotland my home since 1998, the events of 7th October left me feeling utterly lost, grappling with the question of what I could contribute. A fellow Israeli initiated a call for support, urging a vigil for the release of hostages taken by Hamas, and a halt to the violence. Responding promptly, I joined her plea, acknowledging that any action, no matter how small, was a step in the right direction. We have been successful, holding five vigils in Edinburgh and one in Glasgow, featuring balloons, posters, and personal artefacts such as shoes and books.

The impact of our support for families in Israel and connections forged in Scotland didn't go unnoticed. We have become a silent force advocating for peace, juxtaposed against counterparts screaming for an end to the only Jewish nation. Similar groups sprang up globally, collectively striving to make a difference. Our efforts reached friends, families, and even strangers in Israel, assuring them they were not alone and that much of the world stood in solidarity.

The vigils have been largely peaceful, though we have been confronted with aggression on a small number of occasions. Sadly, some members of our community have been unwilling to attend, citing safety concerns. Despite repeated requests for police presence, we have not yet seen a single officer attend.

In the face of the growing pressure to hide our Jewishness during opposing marches, where authorities struggle to ensure our safety, our vigils take on added significance. They help demonstrate our continued resilience, standing up against intimidation. Our journey in organising and participating in these vigils is a testament to the strength of unity and the power of a community that refuses to be silenced.

SOLIDARITY EVENTS AT SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT (ABOVE) AND KELVINGROVE GALLERY (RIGHT)



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Scottish Council
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www.SCoJeC.org

REPRESENTING, CONNECTING, AND SUPPORTING
JEWISH PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND



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Chanukah Round & About



TOP ROW (L TO R): Matana Club Pre-Chanukah Celebration in St Andrews; Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary lighting candles at Giffnock Newton Mearns Shul; Chanukah havdalah in Giffnock with a table of Chanukiot in support of the hostages in Gaza.

2ND ROW: SCJeC presenting the First Minister with *sufganiyot*; Chanukah lunch at Mearns Castle High School; Clarkston Chanukah Celebration Association party.

RIGHT: *Chanukiah* lighting at the Scottish Parliament hosted by the Deputy Presiding Officer (CENTRE).

Happy Birthday Trees

The Matana Club held a Tu B'Shvat Party for Nursery to P3 in Rouken Glen Park, led by UJIA Scotland Senior Educator Sydney Switzer. They set up a shelter, made nature art and held a birthday party for the trees. It rained a lot!



The Edinburgh Jewish Community came together to celebrate Burns Night in style this year, with contributions from Edinburgh J-Soc students, and representatives from Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre, and the Literary Society. We even overcame an auld rivalry and welcomed performers from Glasgow!

This was Burns with more than a touch of chutzpah – *Love is Like a Red, Red Rose* sung in Yiddish by Rabbi Mark Solomon, Avram Greenbaum's *Address to the Fress* performed by Fiona Brodie, David Bleiman's *Scots/Yiddish Burns' Lost Manuscript*, and the *Immortal Memory for the era of #MeToo*, written by Ellen Galford and performed by Elaine Samuel, students Josh Heimann and Elie Glaser gave the toast to the lassies and response, and the evening was compered by Adrian Harris. There were Klezmer-flavoured musical interludes by Phil Alexander and Gica Loening, the piper was Andrew Warburton, and after singing *Auld Lang Syne* as enthusiastically as bensching, everyone went home happy!

This year's **Giffnock Newton Mearns Shul** Burns Supper was what it's all about! Our Community came together to celebrate Robert Burns in our most Jewish way with laughter, song, and story telling – and food and drink! As it was Holocaust Memorial Day, we paused to reflect and gave thanks for our freedom. Then our own kilted, American, Chassidic Rabbi recited the *Selkirk Grace*; his Welsh wife chaired the evening in fabulous style; there was a fine Scottish Jewish Piper, and delightful speakers from across the wider community. Our Shul, recently formed by the amalgamation of two historic southside shuls, shone with joy and harmony, and we look forward to others from all over Scotland joining us for future events.

Rabbi Burns Suppers

BY JANET MUNDY, EDINBURGH AND MICHELLE WILSON, GLASGOW



TOP: EDINBURGH KILTS AND MUSICIANS

BELOW: GIFFNOCK'S CANDLE FOR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY; JEREMY FREEDMAN'S ADDRESS TO THE HAGGIS WATCHED BY PIPER, LLOYD FABER, AND CHEF, PAUL DONNELLY. *AULD LANG SYNE* LED BY GUITARIST, BOB PENMAN.

Spring Delayed

EPHRAIM BOROWSKI

Spring is always a busy time for the Jewish Community. The civil year starts with Holocaust Memorial Day (not a date in the Jewish calendar – we have Yom HaShoah after Pesach, but it's right the world should remember, and we welcome being able to stand in solidarity with those who stand in solidarity with us), and Tu b'Shvat, which marks the start of the agricultural year in ancient Israel and so is literally the beginning of spring.

But the real Spring Festival, so named in the Torah, is Pesach, which is why we have to adjust our lunar months to fit the solar year. So here's a pub quiz question to impress your friends: What's the average length of a Jewish year? The knowledgeable ones will say 354 days (12 x 29½), but the point of the extra "leap months" is make the average year the same as the solar year, so the correct answer is 365¼ days, to make sure that the Spring Festival stays in the spring!

So this year we have two Purims – the "little Purim" (Purim Katan) last month, and Purim proper with Megillah, and giving charity and presents, and hamantaschen and booze. And once Purim comes, can Pesach be far behind?! So spring is characterised by the two festivals that best fit the archetype of "They tried to kill us; we survived; let's eat"!

Actually we did more than survive – we prospered! Pesach is also called the Festival of Freedom – freedom from slavery and freedom to travel to Sinai to receive the Torah, as we remember every year at the Seder, so Pesach is the birthday of the Jewish nation, and the prelude to the birthday of our "constitution" seven weeks later on Shavuot.

Purim, on the other hand, celebrates physical survival following the decree by Haman "to destroy, to kill, to annihilate, all Jews, young and old, children and women", a threat chillingly echoed in the Hamas Charter, literally executed on October 7th. So our Purim celebrations this year will be muted, as we also hope and pray that we will again, as Esther says, exchange feasting for fasting, and be able to celebrate with light, and gladness, and joy.

Spring Calendar

PURIM

Fast of Esther: Thu 21 Mar
 Purim: Sun 24 Mar
Megillah readings after Shabbat and Sun morning
 Shushan Purim: Mon 25 Mar

PESACH

Search for Chametz: Sun night 21 Apr
 Fast of First-born and Burning the Chametz: Mon 22 Apr
 Yom Tov: evening Mon 22nd till Wed night 24 Apr
 First Seder: Mon night 22 Apr
 Second Seder: Tue night 23 Apr
Chol HaMoed (middle days) continue until ...
 Yom Tov: evening Sun 28 Apr till Tue night 30 Apr

- **Yom HaShoah:** Mon 6 May
- **Yom haAtzma'ut:** evening Mon 13 & Tue 14 May
- **LaG b'Omer:** after Shabbat 25 & Sun 26 May

SHAVUOT

Yom Tov: Dusk Mon 10 Jun till night Wed 12 Jun

Holocaust Memorial Day

KIRSTY ROBSON

The Scottish Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony, the national focal point for HMD in Scotland, was held on 30th January in the Scottish Parliament, sponsored by Paul O'Kane MSP. Holocaust Memorial Day is the day we come together as a nation to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, together with millions from other groups also persecuted by the Nazis, and those killed in more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Civic, faith, and political leaders gathered to hear the testimony of Holocaust survivor Prof Peter Lantos BEM, a survivor of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. We were also privileged to hear poetry by Chantal Mrimi, reflecting on the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and prayers from the Bosnian and Jewish communities.

First Minister Humza Yousaf MSP shared his reflections, highlighting the importance of communities coming together to tackle prejudice across the country, and Minister for Victims and Community Safety Siobhian Brown MSP spoke of the importance of commemorating the date every year.

We are grateful to all those who attended the national ceremony, and all those who attended a local event in their own community. It was also encouraging to hear MSPs from all parties participating in a Scottish Parliament debate to mark the date.

TOP: EDUCATION SECRETARY JENNY GILRUTH AND VISION SCHOOLS AWARD WINNERS.

CENTRE, LEFT: EDINBURGH INTERFAITH ASSOCIATION'S "EXPULSED! POLENAKTION 1938" EXHIBITION. RIGHT: SCOJEC'S BAKE TO REMEMBER AT JEWISH HERITAGE CENTRE WITH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MODERATOR. FOOT: NATIONAL CEREMONY IN SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT WITH FIRST MINISTER.



Student Summit

Jewish students and university chaplains had an opportunity to tell the First Minister, Humza Yousaf, about their experiences since the 7th October Hamas pogrom, at a meeting facilitated by SCoJeC.

The students, from seven universities, told him they feel particularly exposed – they are expected to explain Middle East politics and defend Israel, and are made to feel like the token Jew. Most said they had little support from their universities, which were “listening but not acting”, if not openly hostile. Many students do not feel safe wearing Jewish symbols such as a Magen David or kippah, or even safe enough to report what happens to them.

The First Minister said he empathised, having grown up with many Jewish neighbours and school friends. He was disappointed to hear about this lack of humanity, and concerned that Jewish students feel their university is not a safe space. He added that this reminded him of how he was treated at school after 9/11 – “it’s a way of targeting people because of their faith”. He said victims of abuse should never “just come to expect it”, recognised the need for tackle this insecurity, and reaffirmed the Scottish Government’s zero tolerance for antisemitism.



Breakfast at Bute House



First Minister Humza Yousaf invited SCoJeC to a kosher breakfast at his official residence in Bute House, to discuss community tensions, and the unprecedented surge in antisemitic incidents since the Hamas pogrom in Israel on 7th October.

SCoJeC’s representatives told the First Minister that the vast majority of members of the Jewish Community are worried

about family and close friends in Israel, and we shared concerns about children being incited “to hate Jews”, people hiding their Jewish identity, Jewish Ex-Servicemen being too apprehensive to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph, students leaving Scotland because of the hostility on campus, demonstrations calling for an “intifada”, and one-sided statements by SNP politicians. The meeting concluded with the First Minister undertaking to consider increased funding for the Jewish Community and to engage directly with the Community at a public meeting.

Antisemitism in Scotland

In 2023, the Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 4,103 antisemitic incidents across the United Kingdom. This is a record annual total, 147% higher than the 1,662 antisemitic incidents reported in 2022, and an increase of 81% from the previous record figure of 2,261 antisemitic incidents in 2021. This significant rise in anti-Jewish hate was triggered by the Hamas pogrom in southern Israel. Of the 4,103 reports of antisemitism, 2,699 (66%) occurred in the aftermath of 7th October, surpassing any yearly total previously recorded by CST.

The impact was instant. Between 1st January and 6th October, CST recorded an average of five anti-Jewish incidents per day. There were 31 antisemitic incidents reported on 7th October, and 416 antisemitic incidents in the week immediately following the Hamas attack – before Israel responded, and significantly higher than any ensuing week. This suggests that most of the antisemitism was in reaction to the Hamas terror attack rather than the ensuing war.

Sixty-eight of the 4,103 cases of anti-Jewish hate took place in Scotland, double the 34 recorded in 2022, and the highest ever figure reported in Scotland. Of these, 29 were in Greater Glasgow, 15 in Edinburgh and four in Aberdeen. Four of the antisemitic incidents in Scotland fell into the category of violent physical ‘assault’, there was one instance of ‘damage and desecration’ to Jewish property, one direct ‘threat’, two cases of mass-produced anti-Jewish ‘literature’, and 60 that were classed as ‘abusive behaviour’.



Report antisemitism to CST and police
Visit www.cst.org.uk
In an emergency, call the police and then CST’s 24-hour emergency number:
0800 032 3263

LEFT: RECENT GRAFFITI IN NORTHERN SCOTLAND

SCoJeC



JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE,
222 FENWICK ROAD, GLASGOW G46 6UE

scojec@scojec.org 0141-638 6411

POLICY & RESEARCH LEAH
leah@scojec.org 0141-638 6411

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT
scojec@scojec.org 0141-638 6411

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS DEMI
demi@scojec.org 0141-638 6411

Contacts in the Corners

GLASGOW EVY
office@glasgowjewishrepcouncil.org 0141-577 8200

EDINBURGH
edinburgh@scojec.org 0141-638 6411

TAYSIDE & FIFE PAUL
taysideandfife@scojec.org 07906-219 262

ABERDEEN
aberdeensynagogue@gmail.com 07955-706 333

HIGHLANDS, ISLANDS, BORDERS AND ELSEWHERE
communities@scojec.org 0141-638 6411

STUDENTS ELIRAN
eliran@mychaplancy.co.uk 07570-372 557
AYALAH
ayalah@mychaplancy.co.uk 07570-372 586

◆ Events – Coming soon:

- ◆ Cookery workshop for Refugee Week
- ◆ Glass-painter John K Clark speaking about his acclaimed Queens Park shul windows

FOR DETAILS AND OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS, SEE:

www.scojec.org/whats-on.html

◆ SCoJeC is grateful to:

- ◆ Glasgow Jewish Community Trust
- ◆ Netherlee and Clarkston Charitable Trust
- ◆ Eloise Bishop, for photography
- ◆ Community Security Trust

◆ Help SCoJeC help your community:

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CST (COMMUNITY SECURITY TRUST)

It is CST’s mission to protect our Jewish community. We work 24 hours-a-day to ensure that our synagogues, schools and communal buildings are shielded from those who wish to do us harm, and support everyone who reports antisemitism.

No victim should suffer in silence, and no incident should go unheard.