



**Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities**

STUC St Andrew's Day Anti-Racism Brochure 2010

The Politics of Hate

Although Scotland is a relatively safe place for Jews, antisemitism is a growing concern. The number of hate crimes against Jews, recorded by the Community Security Trust, reached record levels in 2009. In a recent survey of over 4000 British Jews, conducted by Ipsos MORI, almost a quarter said that they had witnessed an antisemitic incident in the course of the previous year. More than half of them attributed that incident directly to the assailant's views on Israel.

It is true that Jewish people tend to support Israel, often as critical friends. Israel was founded as a refuge against persecution, the vast majority of British Jews are the offspring of relatively recent refugees from racist oppression in Europe, and most (69% in the survey) have friends or relatives in Israel. That does not mean that Jews take any part in Israel's decisions, and it does not explain why people are attacked, and synagogues and cemeteries defaced. That is down to racism.

The STUC has complained that Jewish representative organisations are conflating anti-Semitism with legitimate criticism; but criticism of Israel is often expressed in racist terms. When you read, for example, that Israel's behaviour is determined by the character of the Jewish people, that a powerful Zionist lobby exerts a sinister influence on Western governments, or that Israel is setting out to kill non-Jewish children, you are reading the politics of hate.

It is questionable whether protests and demonstrations about Israel in Scotland have much effect on politics in the Middle East, one way or another. However, the protests do have an effect in Scotland, where their strident tone is contributing to a climate of unease. It's all very well condemning racism; you have to be very sure that you are not feeding it.

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