

## STUC St Andrew's Day Anti-Racism Brochure 2013 The World is Watching

Every year the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) and Jewish Student Chaplaincy Scotland receive enquiries from students, parents, universities, and families about life in Scotland from Jewish people around the world interested in coming here to study or work.

For many years these enquiries were about facilities: kosher food, the nearest synagogue, educational and social activities – but then around five years ago something strange happened. The level of enquiries remained the same, but the questions changed dramatically: people started asking whether it was safe for Jewish people to live in Scotland.

Why?

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Over the last four years there have been five serious racist attacks on Jewish students at Scottish universities – not many, but more than during the whole of the preceding 40 years. The worst was in St Andrews and resulted in the conviction of another student.

Scottish Government figures reveal that, while prosecutions for sectarian crime have been falling, the picture is very different for minority religions. When the size of the communities is taken into account, Muslims are almost 10 times, and Jews more than 20 times, as likely as Christians to be the victim of religious hatred.

ACPOS point out that since hate crime targets people because of the group they belong to, "fear of hate crime escalates dramatically in those who share with an immediate victim, the same group identity that has made a victim a target." So these incidents had a wider effect on Jewish students across Scotland, who now feel less safe and less confident about engaging in everyday social, educational, and religious life on campus. Students' comments about their experiences in blogs and social networking sites were picked up by print and online media in the UK, USA, and across Europe, and Jewish people have become more hesitant about moving to Scotland.

The world is indeed watching, and wondering how much longer Scotland will tolerate this increase in antisemitic behaviour that tarnishes its reputation as a warm and welcoming society.

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