Scotland Together: Education and Partnership Against Prejudice

Antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiments

First report

February 2026

Local recovery

Supporting Scotland's Communities

About Local Recovery

Local Recovery was established in 2022 as a non-profit grassroots campaign, dedicated to revitalising communities across Scotland and advocating for local involvement in the decisions that affect people across Scotland's villages, towns and cities.

One of Local Recovery's core missions has been supporting the creation of strong, cohesive communities that are able to advocate for their own priorities. We believe that, in harnessing the power of local, Scotland's communities can drive real and enduring change for the better.

As a politically non-partisan organisation, Local Recovery works with stakeholders across political and societal lines to achieve that meaningful, community-led change. We engage with government at all levels and have previously outlined policy proposals focusing on issues of relevance to communities and local democracy. We are positive about government acting to support and enable communities to address their own challenges.

Local Recovery is led by an advisory board of ambassadors selected from a range of backgrounds including business, academia and community campaigning. The campaign also includes an active and engaged supporter network, with thousands of signed-up supporters operating in each of Scotland's 32 local authority areas.

To find out more about how Local Recovery operates, please visit our website at www.local-recovery.com or get in touch directly by emailing info@local-recovery.com.

1: Introduction

This is the first report in an envisioned series of papers examining prejudice in modern Scotland and how we can create a more cohesive society. Local Recovery is committed to creating a better, more understanding and more tolerant Scotland, and hopes its research will help to make a meaningful difference in the debate about how we can better understand and live amongst each other.

In this, Local Recovery aligns itself with long-standing, widely accepted attitudes. Scotland has long prided itself on tolerance, diversity, and civic equality. Yet beneath this national self-image, the last few years have seen a troubling current of sectarianism begin to reassert itself in new and more insidious ways. The decline of older sectarian divides, once rooted in denominational and class identities, has not brought an end to the mindset that fuels them. Instead, old patterns of prejudice appear to be being re-coded into contemporary political and cultural conflicts - and one particularly obvious area is the deeply unfortunate rise in modern antisemitism.

If we are going to create a more cohesive, tolerant Scotland, it is vital that these sentiments are exposed and dismantled through dialogue, understanding and unflinching commitment to the values of tolerance. Antisemitism, along with all forms of religious hatred, has no place in Scotland in 2025.

This report will primarily examine the recent hostility directed at people with Jewish identity, and the Jewish presence in Scottish public life.

It is clear that there has been a rise in antisemitic attitudes in Scotland over recent years. It is also clear that this is not down to simple disagreements over foreign policy. Legitimate criticism of any government, including Israel, is both a right and a responsibility in a free society. What has emerged in Scotland, however, goes far beyond such debate. Increasingly, Jewish citizens find themselves targeted not for the actions of a state, but for their heritage, religion, or association with Jewish life in general. This discrimination is often presented in the form of moral displacement, where antisemitism is expressed, excused, or tolerated under the language of “activism,” “solidarity,” or “human rights.”

What marks this trend as distinctively Scottish is its fusion of global grievance politics with local traditions of sectarian hostility. In the past, sectarianism expressed itself through rival religious institutions and community boundaries. Today, it manifests digitally and performatively: at demonstrations, on social media, and through boycotts of Jewish-linked businesses and cultural events. In each case, the animating impulse is the same - an urge to define moral purity by stigmatising the “Other”.

This paper shows how, across multiple towns and cities, there is a small but intensely active network of activists that has used political causes as a vehicle for spreading conspiracy theories about Jewish power, denying or distorting the Holocaust, and promoting hostility toward Jewish participation in civic life. The movement is numerically small, but its impact is magnified through repetition, visibility, and the passivity of institutions that fail to challenge it - including, in recent years, a willingness by Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) to echo some of these sentiments.

The persistence of antisemitic thought in Scotland should be understood as part of a broader cultural drift rather than an isolated aberration. In recent years, the social legitimacy once denied to overt prejudice has been re-established through the language of moral protest. Social media has accelerated this process: falsehoods about "Zionist control," recycled conspiracies about the Rothschilds or global finance, and insinuations about Jewish collective guilt are circulated to thousands, often wrapped in the rhetoric of compassion for the oppressed.

This blending of moral virtue with conspiratorial hatred is not unique to Scotland, but its effects here are especially corrosive. Scotland's political culture emphasises moral rectitude and collective justice. When those values are manipulated to justify discrimination against a small and visibly vulnerable community, the result is a profound distortion of civic ethics. We find ourselves in the terrible situation where hatred of Jews has become one of the few prejudices still capable of finding acceptance in polite company (provided it is expressed in the "right" vocabulary, or through the medium of commentary on the make-up of a Palestinian state).

The danger is cumulative. When antisemitic myths circulate unchallenged, they reconfigure public space itself. They make Jewish identity something that must be explained, defended, or hidden. They turn cultural festivals into sites of confrontation, civic institutions into arenas of selective outrage, and politics into a hierarchy of acceptable and unacceptable hatreds.

The aim of this report is not to condemn political opinions or restrict free expression. Its purpose is to illuminate a moral and social pattern: the re-emergence of sectarian prejudice under a new flag. By tracking the spread of antisemitic narratives within Scotland's civic spaces, this study seeks to understand how a rhetoric of liberation can be turned into an instrument of hate - and how well-meaning institutions can fail to recognise the difference.

The findings set out in the sections that follow are not about disagreement over policy in the Middle East; they are about the corrosion of trust, empathy, and shared truth within Scotland itself. When citizens are told that Jewish people are responsible for wars, pandemics, or financial crises; when Holocaust denial is treated as a form of "alternative history"; when Jewish cultural events are shouted down while their attackers pose as moral crusaders, something fundamental in Scottish public life is being lost.

If Scotland is to live up to its values of justice and equality, it must confront this new sectarianism with the same clarity it once brought to older divisions. The test is not only whether Jews feel safe, but whether Scottish society can still recognise hatred when it hides behind the language of virtue.

2: History and context

Scotland's Jewish community is small (fewer than 6,000 people), but its history stretches back centuries, contributing to the nation's cultural, economic, and intellectual life. For most of that time, Jews in Scotland enjoyed a sense of safety that was, all too often, rare in Europe.

Jewish life in Scotland dates back at least to the seventeenth century, though it was not until the nineteenth century that a recognisable community began to form. Early records mention small numbers of Jewish merchants and physicians in Edinburgh and Glasgow, often itinerant and without formal congregations. These early arrivals integrated quickly, helped by Scotland's comparatively tolerant environment. Unlike many parts of continental Europe, Scotland never experienced formal expulsions or legal segregation of Jews, nor the ghettoisation that defined Jewish life elsewhere.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe began to accelerate. Pogroms, poverty, and discriminatory laws in the Russian Empire drove thousands to seek refuge across the British Isles. A fraction of these migrants settled in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow's Gorbals district, where cheap housing and proximity to industrial employment offered opportunity. The Gorbals became the beating heart of Scottish Jewish life: a dense urban enclave of Yiddish-speaking families, kosher butchers, tailors, and small workshops.

From this base, a distinctive Scottish Jewish identity took shape - rooted in the traditions of Eastern Europe yet shaped by Scottish civic life. Hebrew schools, youth clubs, benevolent societies, and synagogues multiplied. By 1900, Glasgow's Jewish population was estimated at nearly 10,000, with smaller clusters in Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, and Greenock.

The first half of the twentieth century saw rapid upward mobility. Second-generation Jews entered professions, established businesses, and moved from inner-city tenements to the expanding suburbs of the West End, Giffnock, and Newton Mearns. The ethos of education and self-improvement found ready acceptance in Scotland's meritocratic culture. Jewish students enrolled at the University of Glasgow and other institutions in growing numbers; Jewish doctors, lawyers, and academics became visible in national life.

While casual prejudice existed, antisemitism in Scotland never reached the violent intensity seen in much of Europe. The absence of an indigenous fascist movement of significant scale and the strong civic institutions of Scottish Presbyterianism and local government offered a degree of protection. During the inter-war period, when antisemitism was spreading across the continent, Scotland's Jewish citizens were broadly secure.

Nevertheless, the community remained conscious of its vulnerability. The 1930s saw small pro-Nazi organisations distribute propaganda in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and rumours circulated that Jewish immigration might be curtailed. The trauma of events in mainland Europe reinforced a cautious reserve among Scottish Jews: a preference for quiet contribution over political visibility.

The Second World War brought both tragedy and transformation. Scotland received Jewish refugees through the Kindertransport scheme, many of whom later made their homes there permanently. Jewish soldiers from across the Commonwealth passed through Scottish bases, strengthening international connections. After 1945, the community expanded modestly as survivors and displaced persons arrived from the camps.

The post-war years were marked by consolidation. Synagogues were rebuilt or relocated, welfare organisations expanded, and Jewish cultural life entered a period of confidence. Jewish businesses thrived in retail, textiles, and property. The Giffnock and Garnethill congregations became pillars of communal identity, while national representation was channelled through the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) and local Boards of Deputies.

During this period, Scotland's Jews maintained a strong patriotic identification with the United Kingdom. Many had fought in British uniform; others contributed to post-war reconstruction. Antisemitic incidents were rare and, when they occurred, tended to be isolated acts of vandalism rather than sustained campaigns.

By the 1960s and 1970s, social mobility had carried much of the community into middle-class professions and suburban life. The tight-knit tenement communities of the Gorbals had dispersed. Intermarriage rates began to rise, and the Yiddish language faded from daily use.

This dispersal brought both benefits and challenges. Integration into mainstream Scottish life deepened; Jews held elected office, entered the judiciary, and became visible in academia and medicine. Yet the weakening of communal density made Jewish life less cohesive. Smaller provincial congregations struggled to maintain membership. Demographic decline began: younger generations, seeking careers elsewhere, moved to London or abroad.

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 added a new dimension, as the Middle East conflicts of 1967 and 1973 introduced a new source of tension. While most Scots viewed these wars distantly, antisemitic tropes sometimes surfaced when hostility to Israeli policy spilt into domestic discourse. Still, public institutions and political leaders generally maintained clear distinctions between political debate and prejudice, and overt antisemitism remained socially unacceptable.

The final decades of the twentieth century were, in many respects, a golden age of acceptance. Jewish schools such as Calderwood Lodge flourished; communal welfare services modernised; and cultural initiatives, such as the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, preserved historical memory. Relations with civic authorities were cordial.

During the 1980s and 1990s, however, new cultural currents began to reshape the environment. Globalisation and migration diversified Scotland's population, enriching its culture but also introducing new identities and political solidarities. At the same time, sectarian tensions between Catholic and Protestant communities - once the main axis of religious hostility - slowly abated through education and legislation, together with the general

decline in Christian subscription across the United Kingdom. The moral vocabulary of "anti-sectarianism" became a touchstone of national virtue.

Ironically, this success masked the emergence of a subtler form of prejudice. As traditional sectarianism waned, other hatreds sought expression through global causes. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict became a symbolic battlefield for moral identity, particularly within student politics and activist circles. By the early 2000s, anti-globalisation and anti-imperialist movements were drawing upon increasingly conspiratorial narratives in which Jewish figures or institutions were cast as embodiments of power.

The first decade of the twenty-first century marked a dark turning point. Scotland's Jewish population, now below 7,000, faced a paradox: unprecedented social integration alongside growing unease. Public life remained formally inclusive, but the tone of discussion around Israel - and, by extension, Jews - grew sharper.

The Second Intifada (2000–2005) and the wars in Lebanon (2006) and Gaza (2008–09) galvanised new protest movements in Scotland's cities. Some demonstrations remained peaceful and issue-focused, but others crossed a boundary. Placards comparing Israelis to Nazis, online posts alleging Jewish control of Western governments, and boycott calls targeting Jewish-owned businesses began to appear with unsettling regularity. Jewish students reported feeling isolated on campuses; small community centres installed additional security measures.

At the same time, digital communication changed the nature of prejudice. Antisemitic conspiracy theories, once confined to fringe pamphlets, circulated widely on social media platforms. Holocaust denial websites were accessible to anyone; the language of "Rothschild control" and "Zionist plots" entered mainstream comment threads, reaching new and younger audiences.

Within Scotland, these developments unfolded against a backdrop of national self-confidence following devolution in 1999. A new Scottish Parliament projected moral leadership on global issues - climate, equality, and human rights - but often underestimated the persistence of antisemitism beneath progressive rhetoric. Few recognised that sectarian patterns could reappear under modern banners.

By 2010, community surveys were already recording a quiet anxiety. Most Scottish Jews still described their relations with neighbours and colleagues as positive, yet many avoided displaying religious symbols or discussing Israel in public. A generation that had grown up believing antisemitism was a relic of the past began to sense its re-emergence in coded and politicised form.

3: The recent shift in attitudes

The last decade has seen a pattern of persistent normalisation in anti-Jewish attitudes. As a result of these recent shifts, Holocaust denial materials today circulate openly online; public events featuring speakers who trivialise Jewish suffering are promoted under banners of "peace" and "justice"; and protests targeting Jewish-linked businesses are endorsed by individuals who also share extremist propaganda. These are not random incidents - they form part of a recent trend of moral decline, in which antisemitism is rationalised as activism and civic institutions look away with increasing frequency.

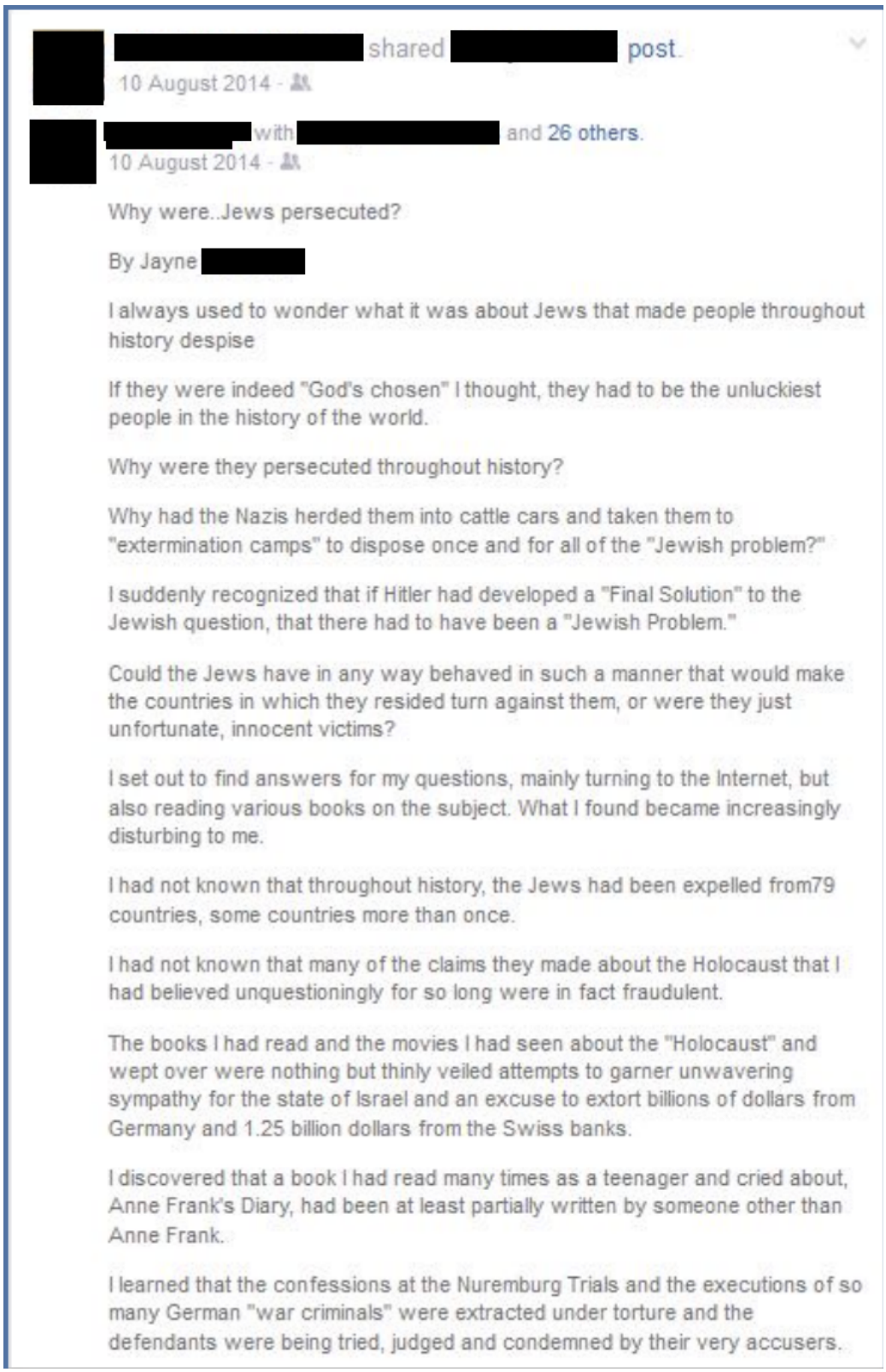
This phenomenon fits within a wider Scottish challenge: the country's unresolved relationship with its own sectarian past. Decades of initiatives against anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant prejudice have achieved measurable progress, but the underlying social mechanism - the creation of collective virtue through the denigration of another group - remains intact. Today, that same instinct is being reactivated in a new guise, directed at a community whose small numbers make it easy to marginalise and whose identity is easily conflated with global politics.

Research shows examples of holocaust denial, global-Jewish-control conspiracies, and overt hatred of Jews being circulated by activists across multiple Scottish cities. It is clear that a significant share of visible anti-Israel activism in Scotland is driven by anti-Jewish ideology rather than by concern for Palestine.

A simple review of recent demonstrations, online pages, and individual accounts shows this recent trend - it is disconcertingly simple to find activists repeatedly sharing antisemitic content, including holocaust denial, Rothschild banking conspiracies, or assertions of Jewish world domination. Such research also shows that the same individuals appear again and again at online and real-world multiple events, suggesting that Scotland's anti-Israel movement is small but intensely radicalised, sustained by a few dozen repeat activists.

a. Holocaust Denial and Revisionism

Numerous activists have, in recent times, circulated materials claiming that the Holocaust was exaggerated or fabricated, that gas chambers did not exist, or that "Zionists collaborated with Hitler." Videos and articles from neo-Nazi websites have been shared openly in forums thought too mainstream for such extreme views, such as Facebook:



[redacted] shared [redacted] post.
10 August 2014 -

[redacted] with [redacted] and 26 others.
10 August 2014 -

Why were..Jews persecuted?

By Jayne [redacted]

I always used to wonder what it was about Jews that made people throughout history despise

If they were indeed "God's chosen" I thought, they had to be the unluckiest people in the history of the world.

Why were they persecuted throughout history?

Why had the Nazis herded them into cattle cars and taken them to "extermination camps" to dispose once and for all of the "Jewish problem?"

I suddenly recognized that if Hitler had developed a "Final Solution" to the Jewish question, that there had to have been a "Jewish Problem."

Could the Jews have in any way behaved in such a manner that would make the countries in which they resided turn against them, or were they just unfortunate, innocent victims?

I set out to find answers for my questions, mainly turning to the Internet, but also reading various books on the subject. What I found became increasingly disturbing to me.

I had not known that throughout history, the Jews had been expelled from79 countries, some countries more than once.

I had not known that many of the claims they made about the Holocaust that I had believed unquestioningly for so long were in fact fraudulent.

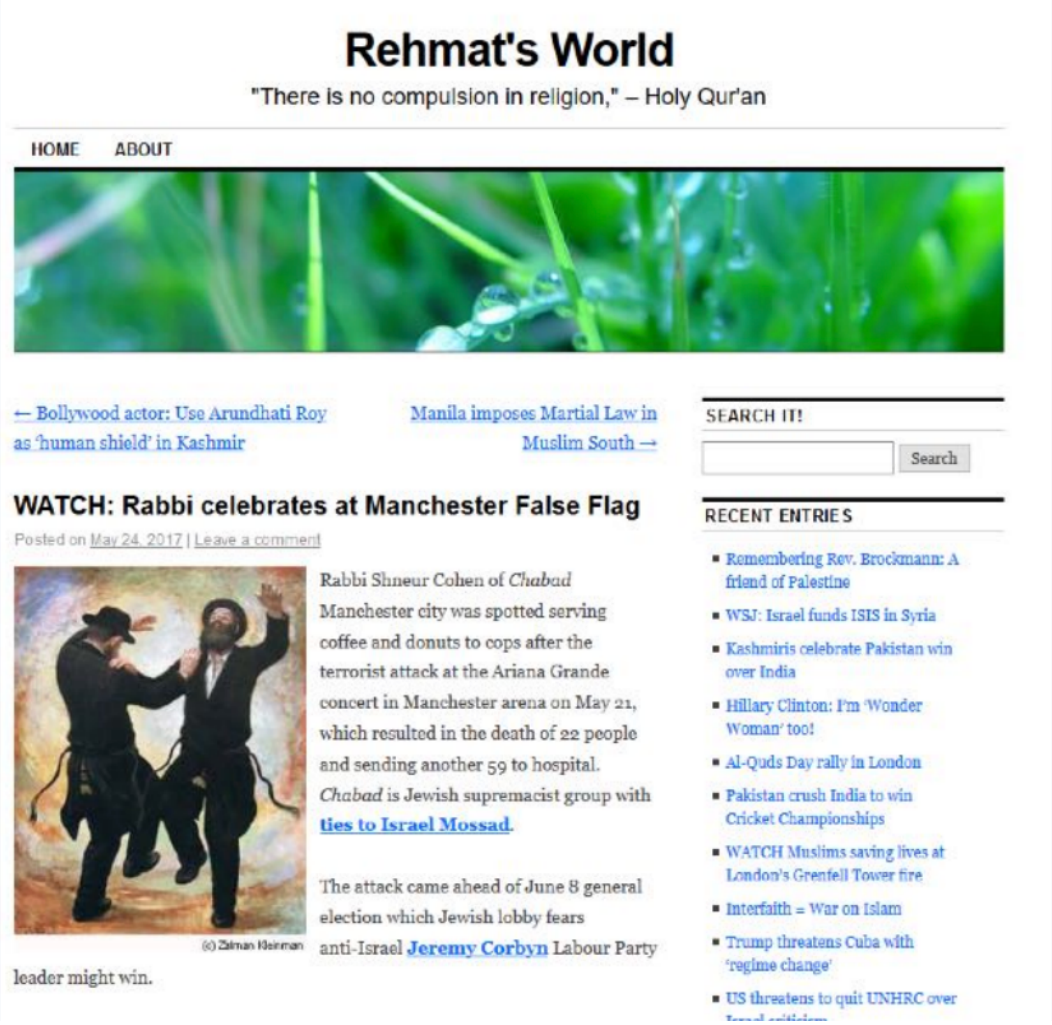
The books I had read and the movies I had seen about the "Holocaust" and wept over were nothing but thinly veiled attempts to garner unwavering sympathy for the state of Israel and an excuse to extort billions of dollars from Germany and 1.25 billion dollars from the Swiss banks.

I discovered that a book I had read many times as a teenager and cried about, Anne Frank's Diary, had been at least partially written by someone other than Anne Frank.

I learned that the confessions at the Nuremburg Trials and the executions of so many German "war criminals" were extracted under torture and the defendants were being tried, judged and condemned by their very accusers.

b. Conspiracy Theories about Jewish Power

Posts routinely alleged that "the Rothschilds control all central banks," that Israel or Jews orchestrated the 9/11 attacks, or that Mossad staged terror incidents in Europe. Such claims revive centuries-old stereotypes of secret Jewish manipulation.



Rehmat's World

"There is no compulsion in religion," – Holy Qur'an

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WATCH: Rabbi celebrates at Manchester False Flag

Posted on May 24, 2017 | Leave a comment

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Rabbi Shneur Cohen of *Chabad* Manchester city was spotted serving coffee and donuts to cops after the terrorist attack at the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester arena on May 21, which resulted in the death of 22 people and sending another 59 to hospital. *Chabad* is Jewish supremacist group with ties to Israel Mossad.

The attack came ahead of June 8 general election which Jewish lobby fears anti-Israel Jeremy Corbyn Labour Party leader might win.

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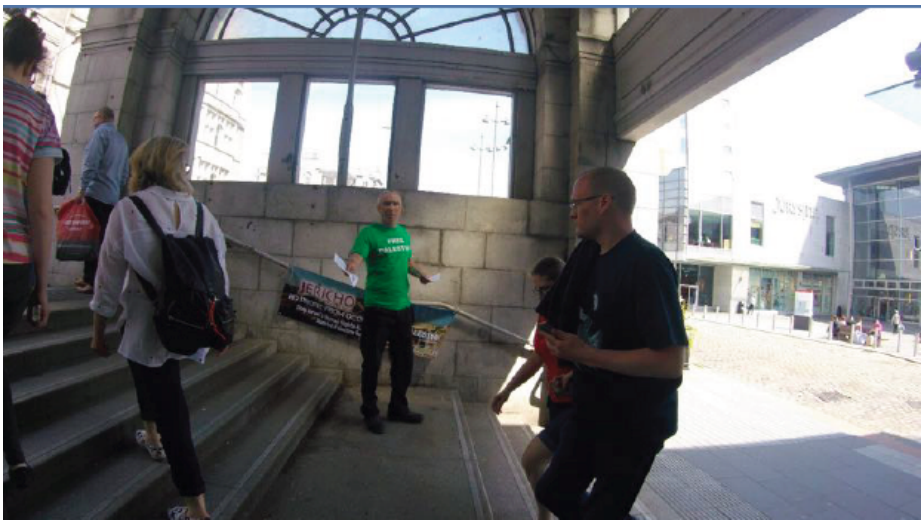
c. Direct Hostility to Scottish Jews

Jewish-owned or Israeli-linked businesses such as *Jericho Cosmetics* in Aberdeen were boycotted and harassed, with protesters including individuals who had publicly denied the Holocaust. Local councils and unions occasionally gave tacit backing to these campaigns, ignoring the antisemitic context.

In 2024, during a Holyrood debate on Gaza, the SNP MSP John Mason said that while many Jews have ties to Israel, "it does not mean that we cannot criticise the Jews or Israel," remarks opponents called "an appalling antisemitic comment" (link).



d. Scale of the Problem

The case of Mason shows how the scale of antisemitism isn't just a question of volume, but a question of penetration. Now, even Scotland's leading institutions, including the Scottish Parliament and other leading institutions, are all too often used as pulpits for the propagation of unacceptable views. A few examples will suffice:

In 2024, Stella Maris (Rector, University of St Andrews) sent an "All Students" message using language such as "genocidal attacks" and "apartheid" and linking to forcefully anti-Israel material. An independent KC's report for the University Court concluded the message was "unwise and ill-judged," caused distress (particularly to Jewish students), and that "there is certainly room for an argument that the Statement might encourage the expression of antisemitism by others" (link).

In 2025, Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah (Rector, University of Glasgow) posted a message comparing events in Gaza to the Nazis' "Final Solution," wording widely condemned by Jewish groups as Holocaust inversion under the IHRA definition. Press coverage also highlighted prior campus concerns about his pledge to replace IHRA with the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (link)

4: Regional Patterns

Although the outward appearance of anti-Jewish activity in Scotland is sporadic and localised, closer study reveals a consistent pattern across multiple regions. The same faces, slogans, and online networks recur from one city to another, giving the impression of a much larger movement than actually exists. Beneath the surface, however, the structure is remarkably thin: a few dozen highly active individuals form the nucleus of an inter-linked campaign that has taken root in several Scottish towns and cities.

Glasgow

Glasgow has long been the principal hub of pro-Palestinian street activity in Scotland. Its central location and concentration of universities have made it a natural gathering point for demonstrations, leafleting campaigns, and boycotts. Yet the same evidence that shows the city's vibrancy also exposes the darker undercurrents that accompany it.

According to field evidence gathered over two years, Glasgow demonstrations regularly feature individuals who promote overt antisemitic conspiracy theories online. Activists distributing boycott leaflets or urging passers-by to "avoid Israeli goods" were found to be simultaneously sharing material denying the Holocaust or recycling myths of Jewish world domination. Examples include posts praising Hitler, claiming that Jews "control world banking," or alleging that the Holocaust was exaggerated to generate sympathy for Israel.

Aberdeen

In Aberdeen, antisemitic activism has taken a more targeted and personal form. The boycott campaign against Jericho Cosmetics, a small business run by an Israeli expatriate, illustrates how anti-Israel rhetoric has slid into outright harassment. Demonstrators outside the city's Union Square shopping centre repeatedly called for the shop's closure.

Jewish Human Rights Watch observers recorded protesters joking during the demonstration while standing in front of banners accusing the business of "profiting from occupation." Aberdeen's local council and trade-union bodies were drawn into the controversy, with some officials defending the protests on free-speech grounds. Yet their reluctance to recognise the antisemitic context reveals a broader problem: institutional actors struggle to distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israeli policy and discriminatory targeting of Jewish individuals.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh's anti-Israel activism has been characterised by its cultural visibility. Demonstrations outside events such as the Shalom Festival at the Edinburgh Fringe and during the visit of the Israeli ambassador Mark Regev became focal points for a coalition of activists drawn from across Scotland.

Here, protests have revealed a pattern of cultural suppression. Organisers of the Shalom Festival, intended to celebrate Israeli and Jewish art, reported intimidation of performers and volunteers. Posters were defaced, and online harassment followed.

Local politicians have, in recent years, also propagated deeply concerning views. In 2024, Cllr Susan Rae (Scottish Greens, Edinburgh) posted - and later deleted - a graphic advertising a Leith meeting that included the phrase "Declare Leith a Zionist free zone" (link). The tweet drew immediate complaints that the message was antisemitic and intimidating to Jews.

Taken together, these regional profiles show that antisemitism within Scotland's anti-Israel activism is not geographically isolated but structurally embedded. Glasgow provides scale and visibility; Aberdeen demonstrates how rhetoric translates into direct intimidation; Edinburgh exposes the contamination of cultural spaces.

Through constant activity - street stalls, online propaganda, and alliances with sympathetic officials - a deeply disturbing discourse that frames Jewish identity as suspect and Jewish participation in civic life as conditional has been propagated far and wide.

What emerges from this regional analysis is not merely a tale of prejudice but a warning about institutional inertia. Across Scotland, antisemitic ideology has been allowed to masquerade as humanitarian concern, drawing legitimacy from civic symbols and moral language. Unless this conflation is directly confronted, the same pattern will persist: a small cadre of extremists shaping national conversation through the passivity of others.

5: The Consequences for Scotland's Jewish Community

The resurgence of antisemitic discourse and activity in Scotland carries consequences far beyond individual incidents. It reshapes how Jewish citizens experience belonging, safety, and identity within their own country. It also corrodes public trust, weakens Scotland's civic values, and damages its reputation as an open and plural democracy. The following analysis sets out the human, social, and political costs of this trend.

For much of the post-war period, Scotland's Jews lived with an unspoken confidence that antisemitism was a relic of history - a prejudice vanquished by education, prosperity, and civic decency. Over the past decade, that confidence has eroded. Jewish shopkeepers, students, and cultural organisers now report intimidation, social exclusion, and anxiety about being publicly identified as Jewish.

The shift is subtle but pervasive. Where earlier generations felt able to display a Star of David pendant, hang a mezuzah on a doorway, or speak openly about family in Israel, many younger Jews now avoid such visible markers. University students describe hesitating before joining Jewish societies for fear of being labelled "Zionist." Shop owners speak quietly of graffiti, boycotts, or online harassment. Parents worry about sending their children to Hebrew classes in visibly marked buildings.

These are not isolated anecdotes - they reflect a pattern of communal self-censorship. The line between legitimate political criticism of Israel and hostility to Jewish identity has been blurred, often deliberately. Campaigns that claim to target state policy frequently spill over into condemnation of Jews as a people, suggesting collective guilt or dual loyalty. In such an atmosphere, the psychological toll is profound. Fear and fatigue replace the easy confidence of belonging; everyday civic participation becomes a calculation of risk.

The damage extends beyond private fear to public confidence. When Holocaust deniers or conspiracy theorists can stand outside the Scottish Parliament or city-centre businesses under the banner of "human rights," it signals not only the presence of hatred but the absence of effective challenge. The failure of institutions - political parties, councils, universities, and cultural bodies - to distinguish legitimate protest from hate speech sends a message that antisemitism is tolerable if expressed in moral language.

This erosion of trust is particularly acute because Jewish citizens have historically regarded Scottish institutions as fair and impartial. The sense that civic equality is now conditional - dependent on political context or the popularity of a cause - undermines the very idea of equal citizenship. The result is a quiet withdrawal: fewer Jewish voices in public debate, reduced willingness to host cultural events, and declining participation in the broader civic conversation.

The problem is not only moral but procedural. When antisemitic speech is reframed as political activism, enforcement mechanisms falter. Police hesitate to intervene; councils allow events featuring denialists to proceed; elected officials pose for photographs with activists who spread hatred online. Each instance reinforces the perception that Jewish security is

negotiable and that antisemitism, uniquely among prejudices, enjoys a form of moral immunity.

The cultural consequences are equally severe. Jewish life in Scotland has always been enriched by its openness - festivals, music, literature, and food shared freely with the wider public. Yet in recent years, cultural expression itself has become contested terrain. Events intended to celebrate Israeli or Jewish culture - such as the Shalom Festival at the Edinburgh Fringe - have faced aggressive protests, often accompanied by chants or placards that evoke classic antisemitic imagery.

These protests do more than disrupt individual occasions; they transmit a warning to the entire community. They imply that Jewish culture is acceptable only if it is silent on its own identity, that celebration must be filtered through the politics of others. The effect is to discourage Jewish participation in civic life and to undermine Scotland's reputation as a genuinely multicultural nation.

The arts and cultural sectors, traditionally engines of tolerance, are increasingly reluctant to host events linked to Jewish themes for fear of backlash. Performers withdraw, sponsors hesitate, and organisers seek "balance" where none is required. This dynamic mirrors the broader moral confusion at play: antisemitism has been recast as a question of taste or political alignment, rather than recognised as a breach of fundamental equality.

The persistence of antisemitism within parts of Scottish public life raises urgent political questions. At its core lies a double standard of tolerance. Racism against most minorities rightly provokes outrage, official condemnation, and immediate solidarity. Yet anti-Jewish racism, when expressed through the vocabulary of anti-Zionism or "solidarity with Palestine," is too often excused, rationalised, or ignored. The same moral instinct that condemns bigotry elsewhere falls strangely silent when Jews are its target.

This inconsistency corrodes the moral authority of Scotland's institutions. A society that prides itself on equality cannot sustain selective empathy. When prejudice is graded by political convenience, the entire framework of anti-racism collapses into performative gesture. The refusal to apply consistent standards tells Jewish citizens that their pain is negotiable and that their protection depends on prevailing political sympathies.

Beyond the moral sphere lies a security concern. The ideological overlap between far-right and far-left conspiracy cultures has created a new vector of radicalisation. Both extremes share a common language of resentment: a belief in hidden elites, financial manipulation, and global plots - tropes that invariably lead back to antisemitic myths. Online spaces now blend these narratives seamlessly, allowing extremists of ostensibly opposing ideologies to converge around hatred of Jews. This cross-pollination increases the risk of violence, not only against Jewish individuals but against democratic institutions themselves.

Finally, there is the question of Scotland's global reputation. A country that tolerates visible antisemitism, even inadvertently, undermines its standing as a modern, plural democracy. International partners observe not only the content of Scotland's laws but the tone of its streets and institutions. When Jewish cultural events require police protection, or when elected officials appear alongside Holocaust deniers without rebuke, it sends a signal of moral

inconsistency to allies and adversaries alike. Diplomatically, economically, and culturally, the cost is real.

The challenge, then, is not simply to punish hate but to restore confidence. Jewish security in Scotland cannot rely on silence or exceptional measures; it must rest on the same universal standards that protect every citizen. To rebuild trust, Scotland's leaders must demonstrate - through action, not only words - that antisemitism is incompatible with the nation's moral identity.

This means confronting the uncomfortable truth that antisemitism in Scotland does not emerge from the margins alone. It is sustained by mainstream complacency: the failure to call out prejudice when it dresses itself as principle. The measure of a just society is not how it treats the popular or powerful, but how it protects the small and vulnerable.

If Scotland wishes to remain a country confident in its pluralism, it must ensure that its Jewish citizens can live, worship, and celebrate openly without fear or apology. Anything less represents not only a betrayal of the Jewish community, but a betrayal of Scotland's own civic promise.

6: What Is To Be Done?

The findings of this report point to a simple but uncomfortable truth: Scotland's institutions have not yet grasped the scale or nature of contemporary antisemitism. While expressions of solidarity are common, effective action remains rare. The task now is not only to condemn hate but to dismantle the conditions that allow it to persist. This requires clarity of responsibility across public life, consistent enforcement of the law, and visible moral leadership from those who claim to speak for Scotland's values.

Elected representatives carry the first and greatest burden. Moral authority in public life derives not from sentiment but from courage - the willingness to name prejudice even when it appears in one's own political or ideological circles. MSPs, MPs, councillors, and party leaders must make it unambiguously clear that antisemitism, whatever its disguise, has no place in progressive activism or in the rhetoric of national conscience. Silence is not neutrality; it functions as endorsement. Every elected leader should be expected to challenge antisemitic statements and associations within their parties and campaigns, and to ensure that "human rights" events or public meetings do not become platforms for hate.

Public institutions must also move from passive tolerance to active guardianship. Councils and cultural bodies should review their event-hosting and partnership policies to ensure that civic venues cannot be used for Holocaust-denial meetings, boycott actions directed at Jewish businesses, or gatherings that promote conspiracy theories about Jewish power. Training in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism should be a standard requirement across local authorities, political parties, and publicly funded organisations. The aim is not to limit debate but to uphold the boundary between legitimate expression and hate speech - a boundary that Scotland's institutions are morally and legally obliged to defend.

Law enforcement has a critical role to play. Police Scotland should treat Holocaust denial, incitement against Jewish businesses, and organised harassment campaigns as hate crimes where intent is clear. This requires robust data collection, improved guidance for officers, and consistent application of hate-crime legislation. A single antisemitic incident unchallenged sends a message to the entire community; a single successful prosecution sends one to the wider society. The police cannot fight prejudice alone, but without their visible commitment, civic reassurance collapses.

Education remains the most powerful long-term defence. Holocaust teaching in Scottish schools must move beyond historical narrative to address the modern forms of denial and distortion that circulate online. Students should learn not only what happened in Europe between 1933 and 1945, but how the same patterns of conspiracy and dehumanisation resurface today. Teacher-training courses and educational resources should be updated to reflect this contemporary relevance, equipping staff to respond when antisemitic myths appear in classrooms or on social media.

Inter-faith and community programmes should be strengthened to build bridges rather than walls. Genuine dialogue between Jewish, Muslim, and other faith or ethnic groups can

counteract the propaganda of division. These initiatives must focus not on token gestures but on shared responsibility for rejecting hate speech and misinformation. The Scottish Government and local authorities should fund sustained, outcome-based projects that encourage joint education, cultural exchange, and rapid response to incidents of religious or ethnic hostility.

Digital literacy campaigns are essential to counter the online radicalisation that fuels much of today's antisemitism. Scotland's young people are not only consumers of digital information but creators of it. They must be equipped to recognise and reject the recycled conspiracies - about banking, media, or global control - that masquerade as anti-war or anti-imperialist narratives. Public-information campaigns, partnerships with social-media platforms, and targeted community outreach can help inoculate citizens against the spread of hatred under moral slogans.

Finally, rebuilding Jewish confidence in Scotland requires more than policing or education - it demands visible solidarity and consistent institutional protection. Political leaders should attend Jewish cultural events, publicly defend festivals such as the Shalom Festival, and ensure equal police presence for them as for any other community gathering. Legislation should give statutory backing to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, affirming that the state recognises both the historic and the contemporary dimensions of anti-Jewish hatred. Funding for antisemitism prevention and community safety should be placed on a footing equal to that for other forms of hate crime, ensuring that Jewish citizens are neither exceptionalised nor neglected.

Public accountability must underpin these commitments. Any organisation receiving public grants or access to civic facilities should be required to sign a clear anti-hate undertaking that explicitly includes antisemitism. This is not bureaucracy; it is a test of moral seriousness. A nation that proclaims equality must demonstrate, through its institutions, that hatred has no public legitimacy.

The task before Scotland is therefore twofold: to confront the prejudice that has re-emerged, and to rebuild the trust that its re-emergence has broken. These are not abstract goals. They can be measured in the confidence of Jewish shopkeepers to hang a mezuzah without fear, in the ability of students to speak openly about their heritage, and in the willingness of cultural organisers to celebrate Jewish life without police barriers. When those measures are met, Scotland will have proved not only that it rejects antisemitism, but that it still believes in its own promise of fairness and decency.

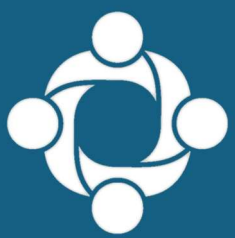
7: Conclusion

The evidence presented in this report reveals a pattern that Scotland can no longer afford to ignore. What has emerged over the past decade is not a series of isolated incidents but a cultural drift - a slow corrosion of civic norms in which antisemitic narratives have been normalised under moral or political disguise. This is not simply about prejudice against one community; it is about the integrity of Scotland's public sphere. When hatred can borrow the language of justice, and when silence is mistaken for balance, the very foundations of democratic decency are at risk.

Scotland has long imagined itself as a nation immune to the old poisons of sectarianism and bigotry. Yet the persistence of antisemitism shows that such immunity does not exist. Hatred changes shape to fit the age: yesterday's religious scapegoats become today's political ones. The challenge is therefore not to preserve an image of tolerance, but to live up to its substance - to ensure that Scotland's commitment to equality extends beyond sentiment and into enforcement, education, and cultural courage.

The task is collective. Politicians must speak with clarity, institutions must act with integrity, and citizens must recover the moral instinct to distinguish conviction from cruelty. Rebuilding trust will take time, but the first step is recognition: to name antisemitism where it appears and to deny it the protection of euphemism or excuse. Only through such honesty can Scotland renew its civic confidence and prevent the re-emergence of old hatreds in new forms.

Scotland's leaders now face a moral test. To remain silent is to concede space to prejudice; to act is to reaffirm that Jewish life, memory, and culture are integral to Scotland's democracy. Ensuring that Jewish citizens can live, worship, and celebrate openly is not merely a Jewish concern - it is a measure of Scotland's integrity as a just and plural nation.



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