

## PE1737/D

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities submission of 17 October 2019

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. SCoJeC advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, by providing information and assistance to educational, health, and welfare organisations, representing the Jewish community in Scotland to Government and other statutory and official bodies, and liaising with Ministers, MSPs, Churches, Trades Unions, and others on matters affecting the Jewish community. SCoJeC also provides a support network for the smaller communities and for individuals and families who live outwith any Jewish community or are not connected with any Jewish communities, and assists organisations within the Scottish Jewish community to comply with various regulatory requirements. SCoJeC also promotes dialogue and understanding between the Jewish community and other communities in Scotland, and works in partnership with other organisations and stakeholders to promote equality, good relations, and understanding among community groups.

In preparing this response we have consulted widely among members of the Scottish Jewish community, and with the Community Security Trust (CST)<sup>1</sup>, a UK-wide charity that works closely with the police to monitor antisemitism, and to protect Jewish people from antisemitism and related threats.

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities welcomes this opportunity to give evidence on PE1737: “Review of hate crime legislation and security funding in Scotland”, and would draw the Committee’s attention to our responses<sup>2</sup> to the Scottish Government’s recent consultation “One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here”, and to Lord Bracadale’s 2017 “Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland”.

### **Legislation**

Hate crime legislation is important not only in terms of prosecution and punishment, but also for society to signal its abhorrence of prejudice and hatred against identifiable groups. We support Scottish Government proposals to consolidate hate crime legislation in order to make it more comprehensible, and, in order to provide everyone with equal protection before the law, and strongly recommend that it should be applicable to any conduct that attacks or vilifies any individual because of his or her perceived membership of a group, no matter the nature of that group. This would be wider than the “protected characteristics” defined in the Equality Act<sup>3</sup>, and would unambiguously include not only conduct motivated by hatred of a particular religion, but also of any branch of a religion even if not against the religion itself.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cst.org.uk/about-cst>

<sup>2</sup> One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here Response from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities [https://www.scojec.org/consultations/2019/19ii\\_hate\\_crime.pdf](https://www.scojec.org/consultations/2019/19ii_hate_crime.pdf) and Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland: Response from Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) jointly with Glasgow Jewish Representative Council [https://www.scojec.org/consultations/2017/17xi\\_bracadale\\_review.pdf](https://www.scojec.org/consultations/2017/17xi_bracadale_review.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/4>

We completely agree with the petitioner “that all communities should be able to worship at their place of worship free from intimidation, violence or any abusive behaviour.”<sup>4</sup> However, the recent attacks on synagogues in Pittsburgh and San Diego, mosques in Christchurch and Baerum, and churches in Sri Lanka and Cairo, amongst others, have, unsurprisingly, caused worshippers in Scotland to feel significantly more vulnerable attending their places of worship and associated communal buildings, and this anxiety has been further increased by more minor attacks in Scotland. The fact that physical violence against individual worshippers was not involved in, for example, the painting of racist graffiti on Elgin mosque<sup>5</sup>, a video widely circulated on twitter of a teenager wearing a ‘Hitler moustache’ giving a Nazi salute on the front steps of Scotland’s largest synagogue<sup>6</sup>, and a firebomb attack on a Sikh temple in Edinburgh<sup>7</sup>, does not provide any reassurance. Quite the reverse, since people fear that the next incident – and, sadly, it is inevitable that there will be a “next incident” – could as easily result in fatalities in Scotland as elsewhere.

## **Funding**

The UK Government “Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme”<sup>8</sup> covers England and Wales but does not include the Jewish community. This is because there was already funding in place, the “Protective Security Grant for the Jewish Community”, originally only covering Jewish schools<sup>9</sup> but later extended to include synagogues and other communal buildings. This grant, which is administered by the CST, and which applies throughout the UK, including in Scotland, was introduced in 2010 when the number of antisemitic incidents recorded the year before rose by 55% compared to the previous worst year on record<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the CST itself has funded a UK-wide Security Enhancement Project<sup>11</sup> which contributes to the cost of measures such as the installation of CCTV and security lighting.

More recently, in the wake of the recent Christchurch attack CST had almost fifty requests from mosques to provide security advice, as well as numerous requests from Hindu, Sikh and various Christian communities. The UK Government has offered to fund their purchase of security hardware, but the take-up is low due primarily to the complicated application process and the requirement for applicants to be registered as charities or limited companies. To meet this need, the CST has embarked on a new initiative to offer assistance to other faith communities by sharing its knowledge and expertise, developing security awareness, and building strong relationships with key leaders and influencers in those communities. This is coordinated with the UK Government and police but is funded by the CST itself, and the European Jewish

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<sup>4</sup> Puneet Dwivedi, Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee meeting 19/09/2019  
<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12272&i=110909&c=2201236#ScotParlOR>

<sup>5</sup> Outrage as vandals daub swastika graffiti on Elgin mosque during Ramadan (Herald, 21/05/2019)  
<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17654825.outrage-as-vandals-daub-swastika-graffiti-on-elgin-mosque-during-ramadan/>

<sup>6</sup> Schoolboy filmed giving Nazi salute outside synagogue (STV, 16/09/2019)  
<https://stv.tv/news/west-central/1440803-schoolboy-filmed-giving-nazi-salute-outside-synagogue/>

<sup>7</sup> Police investigate petrol bomb attack on Sikh temple in Edinburgh  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-45330820>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-for-tighter-security-to-protect-jewish-schools-from-anti-semitism>

<sup>10</sup> Antisemitic Incidents 2009 (Community Security Trust, February 2010)  
<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2010/02/05/antisemitic-incidents-2009>

<sup>11</sup> <https://cst.org.uk/security/security-enhancement-project>

Congress Security and Crisis Centre has launched a similar initiative for other EU Member states. A very senior and experienced CST Director recently visited Scotland to brief other faith groups here on these initiatives.

We are unclear on what basis other Scottish faith communities are excluded from the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme while Scottish Jewish communities are, through the CST, eligible for the Protective Security Grant for the Jewish Community. The issue seems to be on the borderline between devolved and reserved responsibilities: hate crime is devolved, but terrorism and security are reserved matters. We regret that this anomaly may prevent other communities from receiving assistance. This should be addressed by ensuring that funding to enhance the security of communal buildings belonging to all faith communities, including the Jewish Community, should be provided from the same source, whether the Scottish or the UK Government, and administered by an appropriate agency, such as the CST and Tell MAMA, that has the confidence of both the authorities and the relevant community.

## **Education**

Although important, legislation and improved security can only provide a partial solution, and we also agree with the petitioner<sup>12</sup> about the importance of educational initiatives, including interfaith and inter-communal activities, to demystify ‘the other’, and promote the development of good relations between communities, thus enabling people to appreciate the lives and fears of Scotland’s diverse communities. However, in order to be effective, it is essential that all information is accurate and appropriate, and we would therefore emphasise that all teaching materials must be referred to authoritative bodies in the relevant community for checking. This is simply a matter of respect, but also when it is not done, as we know from experience, errors can often be incorporated which may result in an inaccurate, and possibly even a negative impression of the community concerned.

We are also concerned that it is too easy for schools and teachers to focus on some peripheral aspect of a particular community, and then cite this as evidence that they have been teaching “about” it. In our own case, many schools have extremely good Holocaust education programmes, but that, of course, does not teach pupils about the Jewish religion or the contemporary Jewish community, and indeed can sometimes result in flagrantly false beliefs and negative stereotypes being reinforced<sup>13</sup>.

In order to counter this and to improve the quality of education about Judaism and Jewish people, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities runs two initiatives, “Volunteer Ambassadors”, and “JOES Boxes”.

JOES Boxes (Jewish Objects for Education in Scotland)<sup>14</sup>, is an educational resource supported (not financially) by Education Scotland, that provides positive, educational, and memorable information about Judaism and Jewish people in Scotland. We have provided resource boxes and an accompanying online guide to every Education Authority in Scotland. The boxes include a range of objects that can all be used to

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<sup>12</sup> Puneet Dwivedi, Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee meeting 19/09/2019  
<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12272&i=110909&c=2201266#ScotParlOR>

<sup>13</sup> Nearly all of teachers I worked with habitually excuse Hitler (Jewish Chronicle, October 2018)  
<https://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/nearly-all-teachers-i-worked-with-habitually-excuse-hitler-1.471184>

<sup>14</sup> JOES Boxes (Jewish Objects for Education in Scotland)  
[https://www.scojec.org/resources/joes\\_boxes/joes\\_boxes.html](https://www.scojec.org/resources/joes_boxes/joes_boxes.html)

stimulate interest about Judaism and understanding of the Jewish way of life, and can be borrowed by schools to support their Religious Education curriculum.

We also run an accredited training programme for volunteer ambassadors<sup>15</sup> who lead activities in schools and community groups to increase understanding and communication around Jewish life and belief. We strongly believe that this can promote a greater sense of safety and inclusivity across Scotland for Jewish and non-Jewish people alike, and would welcome similar initiatives from other faith communities. These are particularly important in remote and rural areas where there are few or no members of minority faith communities so that pupils may not, for example, have an opportunity to visit places of worship and thus understand that these faiths are not museum-pieces but living and vibrant communities in Scotland. The onus should not, however, be on small and often scattered faith communities to fund essential educational initiatives, and we urge the Scottish Government to provide sufficient funding to ensure that pupils throughout Scotland have access to effective learning about the many faith communities that contribute to the colourful tartan of Scottish society.

### **In Summary**

Even though the absolute numbers are relatively low, we are concerned that Scottish Government figures for charges for religious hate crime consistently show that, when the size of each community is taken into account, antisemitism is substantially higher per head of population than other religious hatreds. Indeed, the most recent published data reveals that, although Jewish people constitute barely one tenth of one per cent of the population of Scotland, 3% of religiously motivated hate crime is antisemitic in nature, so that Jewish people in Scotland remain 30 times more likely than others to be targeted for their religion.<sup>16</sup>

The members of all faith communities should have confidence that they can go about their daily activities, including attending at their place of worship and other communal buildings, without fear of attack or abuse, and we therefore strongly support legislative, financial, educational, and other initiatives to ensure that all groups not only are, but also feel, equally safe.

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<sup>15</sup> Information Sessions about Judaism for Schools and Community Groups  
[https://www.scojec.org/resources/education/info\\_sessions/info.html](https://www.scojec.org/resources/education/info_sessions/info.html)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.scojec.org/news/2018/18vi\\_hate\\_crime.html](https://www.scojec.org/news/2018/18vi_hate_crime.html)  
and  
[https://www.scojec.org/news/2017/17vi\\_hate\\_crime.html](https://www.scojec.org/news/2017/17vi_hate_crime.html)