

WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT *Being* **Jewish** *in* **Scotland**

special issue

FOUR CORNERS ארבע פינות

SCoJeC received more than 25 reports

relating to at least 12 separate antisemitic incidents during August 2014, almost as many as in the whole of 2013, and Police Scotland advised us that they had received reports of threatening phone calls and e-mails, graffiti on synagogues, and two cases of incitement to break the criminal law.

Then, and increasingly in the following months, many people told us that they now felt uncomfortable, anxious, and in some cases even afraid going about their day-to-day activities as Jewish people in Scotland. Most tellingly, the person who in 2012 had told our *Being Jewish in Scotland* inquiry that Scotland is a 'darn good place to be a Jew' wrote to us last summer to say:

"I feel alienated, and no longer Scottish first then Jewish. I feel Jewish only."

These feelings of discomfort were also translated into actions. One Edinburgh man told us:

"For the first time in 62 years I did not attend high holiday services this year due to my security concerns."

Others have also expressed similar sentiments.

We were also disturbed to hear from a health worker with a long involvement in both Jewish communal activities and public life at a senior level:

"I'm scared to tell people at work that I'm Jewish - I talk about going to church instead."

This spike in antisemitic incidents coincided with the war in the Middle East last summer, and the resulting unprecedented expressions of fear, anxiety, insecurity, and alienation in the Jewish Community came as an unwelcome shock not only to the Community but to civil society at large. In direct response, the Scottish Government agreed to fund a short-term study of how the experience of Jewish people in Scotland has changed since our *Being Jewish in Scotland* inquiry in 2012.

Creating a Scotland free from discrimination

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs said:



"I am proud that Scotland's diversity is its strength. The Scottish Government wants to celebrate that diversity and build a nation where everyone is respected and able to celebrate their culture without fear of prejudice, bigotry or alienation.

"We must recognise the positive contributions of well-established communities, like that of the Jewish community, as well as the positive contributions of all those who have chosen to make Scotland their home more recently. All who have come to Scotland, or who were themselves born here, should be recognised as modern Scots who enrich the life of our nation and make it stronger.

"There is a clear commitment, from within all our communities, to counter prejudice and bigotry and the ignorance that fuels it. However, to eliminate such prejudice, it is therefore crucial that we gain and share widely a fuller and more rounded knowledge of each of our communities. That is why we supported this follow-up report to *Being Jewish in Scotland* which asks *What's Changed About Being Jewish in Scotland?* The report's findings shed further light on the lived experience of Scotland's Jewish community and will inform Scottish Government efforts and those of civic Scotland to counter prejudice and create a Scotland where we can all live free from discrimination.

"The research will also inform the work we are taking forward, through Interfaith Scotland, to promote dialogue and education as a way to eliminate religious discrimination. This work is also very firmly targeted at improving the lives of all faith communities in Scotland.

"The research confirms that we should all be proud of our multiple identities as modern Scots - Scottish, Jewish and many others - and share our proud traditions, while embracing those of others with generosity and goodwill. It is a huge positive that we are not all the same and we should celebrate the right to be different - to be ourselves. Let all who live in Scotland, therefore, go forward as a single nation united by the unique contributions that we can each make to the cultural wealth and collective health of our country, which embraces the future we share while also respecting the past that made us who we are."

OUR EVENTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY BROUGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER ...
PHOTOS OF 'FREILEKHS BRIDER' (RIGHT) AT LIMMUD IN GLASGOW,
AND 'CELTIC SCHMELTER' (BELOW LEFT)
IN FINDHORN AND EDINBURGH.



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**The
Scottish Council
of Jewish
Communities**
www.scojec.org

THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION
OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND

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WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT Being Jewish in Scotland

"The Scottish Government wants to build safe and strong communities for everyone to live, work and raise their family. Therefore, it is crucial that we gain a better understanding of all our communities – including of the Jewish community which continues to enrich our nation. This follow-up report sheds further light on the experience of being Jewish in Scotland and will inform our efforts to create a Scotland where we can all live free from discrimination."

NEIL HASTIE, HEAD OF SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

How we carried out the inquiry

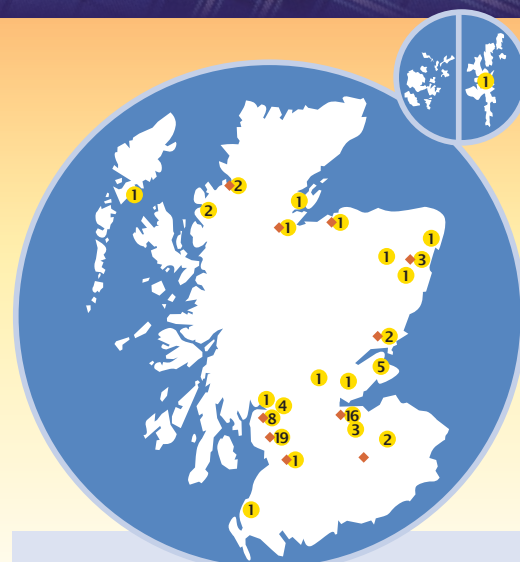
In addition to online and paper surveys, we held individual interviews, ran a discussion session at Scotland Limmud, and toured the country running focus groups alongside Jewish cultural activities. In February these featured Glasgow Jewish writer J David Simons in 'meet the author' sessions in Aberdeen, Inverness and Ullapool, and in March, we held klezmer ceilidhs and workshops in Edinburgh, Giffnock, Dundee, Findhorn, and Peebles with French-Israeli Klezmer band *Freilekhs Brider*. In total that brought us into contact with more than 300 Jewish people from throughout Scotland.

As well as contributing to our data, merely holding these events has other positive effects for the Community:

- ▼ they brought Jewish people together in a safe environment, enabling them to celebrate their Judaism in a variety of ways;
- ▼ they brought Jewish cultural activities to the attention of non-Jewish people around the country – around 200 non-Jewish people participated in the associated activities, thereby contributing to the sense of integration of the Jewish participants;
- ▼ they enabled Jewish people to feel less isolated, and, therefore, more secure.

To ensure wide participation from Jewish people all around Scotland, we sent a link to an electronic survey to all our e-mail contacts, and to all the Scottish Jewish social media groups, and encouraged people to take part by offering a prize draw with four Jewish-themed prizes for the winners.

In total we received almost as many survey responses as in our 2012 survey, despite the much shorter time, itself an indication of the level of concern in the Community.



What's Changed About Being Jewish in Scotland survey responses and events:

◆ LOCATION OF FOCUS GROUPS & EVENTS (TOTAL 10)

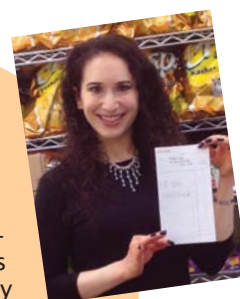
79 LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONSES AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS. (TOTAL 79)

THERE WERE ALSO 39 RESPONDENTS WHO DID NOT DISCLOSE A LOCATION. IN TOTAL, MORE THAN 300 PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN THE INQUIRY.

Barbara Spevack

won a £15 voucher from Marks Deli.

"I've never experienced any antisemitism; non-Jewish people have always been very respectful of my restrictions such as being Shabbat observant and keeping kosher; however, when I'm with a non-observant Jewish person, I find that THEY can be quite scathing and derogatory of my observance!"



Lisa Barcan

won a copy of the book *Mackerel at Midnight*:

Growing up Jewish on the Shetland Isles by Ethel Hofman.

"I'm very happy to be involved in the survey to illustrate the variety of ways of being Jewish in Scotland". My prize shows just how far we have travelled!"



Martin Watssman described himself as "absolutely thrilled" to have won a CD donated by Scottish Klezmer band *Celter Schmelter*.

"As a lapsed and somewhat disillusioned Jew, living in one of the remoter parts of Scotland without a Jewish community to rely on for ethical support, my contact with SCOJeC over the past few years has been a refreshing wake up call. The events they have organised here in the Highlands and the useful information provided by *Four Corners* and the online forums have allowed me to revisit my roots and bring my grandchildren a taste of their cultural inheritance."



The remaining prize, *Scots Jews: Identity, Belonging and the Future*, a book of photographs of Scottish Jewish Life in the 21st Century by Judah Passow, donated by the publisher, Bloomsbury, was won by **Michael Greenhill**.



You can still let us know what you think at www.scojec.org/bjis2/survey.html

WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT Being Jewish in Scotland



“Any incident in Israel raises the risk”

Even more than during our 2012 Inquiry, people told us that there is often conflation between Judaism and Israel, and that anti-Zionism is sometimes viewed as an acceptable pretext for antisemitic attitudes.

- *As an Israeli who is very familiar with the history and the reality of the Middle East, I see how people confuse Israel, Judaism, and Zionism. This is why any incident in Israel raises the risk for the Jewish community. (M, 30s, Edinburgh)*
- *Negativity towards Israel in Scotland has had a significant impact on me and has caused me sleepless nights. I can honestly say that for the first time in my life I am considering moving from Scotland. (F, 30s, Glasgow)*

“antisemitic feeling, thinly veiled as political debate”

- *Some people tend to conflate Israel with Judaism, which I find disturbing as discussions around this topic often reveal an apparently acceptable and deep-rooted vein of antisemitic feeling, thinly veiled as 'political debate'. It saddens me that this embedded undercurrent is most noticeable in the literary and arts communities that I work and often socialise in, as I have rarely experienced it elsewhere in Scottish society. (F, 60s, Edinburgh)*
- *My colleagues and friends started to exclude me from conversations about Israel – I once walked into the staff room and it immediately fell silent. That was the first time in my entire life that I ever felt singled out in Scotland for being Jewish. I cried that night! I would never before have considered it risky to show my Jewish identity in public; however that is changing. I do not fear the threat of violence – it is something much more subtle but equally frightening. (F, 30s, Glasgow)*

“I know now I am not welcome and feel totally alienated”

- *The whole tenor of the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe, which I normally love, was destroyed for me this summer by the boycott of the Israeli show – and the flying of the Palestinian flag from the city chambers was the final straw. I grew up in Scotland, I have spent most of my life here, but I know now I am not welcome and feel totally alienated. We seriously talked about an exit strategy for leaving Scotland, and so did some other of our friends and family. I feel sure that day will come and probably very soon. (F, 60s, Edinburgh)*
- *In light of the recent terror attacks across Europe and also the shutting down of an Israeli show in the last Fringe festival, I have come to realise that identifying myself as a Jewish Israeli, or just identifying my wife as Jewish, or our house as one where Jewish people live in, might pose a risk to our lives and our property. (M, 30s, Edinburgh)*

“nothing but pure violence and intimidation”

Demonstrations against Israeli performers at the Edinburgh Fringe caused considerable distress, especially to those simply wishing to attend a show at Edinburgh's annual cultural extravaganza, some of whom told us that they did not feel supported by the police.

- *One of the most horrific experiences of my life was getting to the show during the Edinburgh Festival through the crowd of screaming protesters and their repeated attempts to disrupt the show... The fact that the anti-Israel campaign is led by prominent Scottish intellectuals is very disturbing. (F, 60s, Glasgow)*
- *The antisemites have jumped onto the Palestinian bandwagon and have been allowed to slander Jews as well as Israelis. (Anon, 50s)*
- *In the past 3 years I have witnessed a worrying trend in the Scottish authorities complacency towards the vilification of the state of Israel and outright antisemitic slogans shouted during protests. (M, Edinburgh, 30s)*
- *I twice experienced the terrifying and intimidating ordeal of running the gauntlet of screaming demonstrators when attending two Batsheva dance productions, while the police stood by and allowed them to demonstrate right at the entrance of the theatres. (F, 60s, Edinburgh)*
- *Last summer, an Israeli show ... was shut down due to nothing but pure violence, threat of violence, and intimidation. I personally witnessed the police stand aside and just refrain from confronting any of the protesters. Slogans such as "your money is covered with Palestinian blood", or someone shouting at my wife "how many babies did you slaughter today?" (right next to a police officer). (M, 30s, Edinburgh)*

“I feel more inclined to separate my identity”

Whatever their views of the situation in the Middle East, the vast majority of people who participated in focus groups or completed the survey reported discomfort with the undisputed increase in the volume and virulence of anti-Zionist activity in Scotland. A small minority expressed concern that their views might be misunderstood, and that, as Jews, some people might make unfounded presumptions about their attitude to Israel.

- *I was strongly against the incursion into Gaza and don't identify as a Zionist, nor do I assume people are antisemites if they criticise Israel. I am aware though that there was an increase in reported anti-Jewish activity in Scotland and that some people might turn to racist abuse and stereotyping. (F, 50s, Edinburgh)*
- *I feel increasingly uncomfortable with Israel and more inclined to separate my identity as Jewish from any automatic connection to Israel. (F, 50s, North-East)*
- *I was depressed about the conflicts [my views] produced. I do feel a particular attachment to Israel and believe that as Jews we should understand repression and discrimination and unfair treatment. In the end I wanted to retreat from the black and white understanding of it by many people and people assuming you would agree with their viewpoint. (F, Edinburgh, 50s)*

WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT Being Jewish in Scotland

Politics and People...

antisemitism worse target hatred identity confrontation unsafe Jewish
obsession distortion language hurtful bullied Israeli risky hiding unsympathetic

"The Scottish Government needs to address its obsession with Israel"

Many people expressed concern about the disproportionately high number of motions concerning Israel in the Scottish Parliament. Consistently around 20% of the Motions about foreign countries proposed by MSPs related to Israel – currently 55 out of 300 since the last Scottish Parliament elections; second highest was Malawi, with only 15 Motions, and only 4 of the other 69 countries mentioned even reached double figures. These comments were typical:

● *The Scottish Government needs to address its obsession with Israel – it is an obsession! The Scottish Parliament passes more motions on Israel, doesn't condemn by comparison what's happening in Syria, Libya, Nigeria. I could go on, going round the world, all the things it's not exercised about. That is a serious distortion of perspective, it has no effect on Israel but it certainly has an effect on Jewish people here.* (M, 60s, East Coast).

● *Those in government (and local government) fail to fully appreciate the impact and meaning and impact of their actions, e.g. anti-Israel motions in the Scottish Parliament. They need to recognise the need for treating all countries equally (or not at all, as they have no official locus in international affairs).* (M, 60s, Glasgow)

"abandonment of a community they represent"

Many people were upset that a number of local authorities flew the Palestinian flag over Council buildings during the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014.

● *What concerns me is the flying of the Palestinian flags – I'm not unsympathetic to the Palestinian cause but the fact that they were flying a flag that represented a government that is dedicated to getting rid of Jews not only from Israel but elsewhere, I found offensive and an abandonment of a community that they represent.* (Anon, North East)

● *"For the first time I am considering moving from Scotland. I am most disappointed with the politicians who I feel have failed me as a Scottish Jew by raising the Palestinian flag. It was an incredibly thoughtless and hurtful action! In addition, the boycotts on Israeli products in Scottish shopping centres etc – a small group of people caused honest hard working people to lose jobs.* (F, 30s, Glasgow)

What's changed about being Israeli in Scotland?

The 2011 census reveals that 400 people in Scotland identified themselves as both Jewish and Israeli by birth, and 186 people said that their national identity is wholly or partly Israeli. Including people who may not have been born in Israel but were brought up there or lived there for a significant time, and their families and children who may have been born in Scotland, the total number of people with an Israeli background may be as many as 1000.

To gather their views of the experience of "being Israeli in Scotland", and of what, if anything, has changed in the last few years, we conducted two Hebrew language focus groups, one in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh. We also received a number of responses to the online survey from people with an Israeli background.

"I do not feel as safe as I used to feel here"

Some participants told us that attitudes to Israeli people have changed during the last few years:

● *When I arrived here 30-something years ago I was not aware of antisemitism, and Israelis where held in high esteem. Years later, when my son attended secondary school, he was bullied by some boys for being Jewish. However I feel that now being Israeli and Jewish is less favourable than ever before. I do not feel as safe as I used to feel here. Consequently I moved to live in among the Jewish community – the illusion of safety in numbers, maybe.* (Israeli, F, 60s)

● *For 33 years I did not come across antisemitic attitudes. On the contrary at the beginning there was a very positive attitude towards Israel. People thought that it is great that I came from Israel, and were in awe of the fact that I served in the army. This changed when I moved to live in Glasgow in 2011, when I was told by a so called "friend" that Israel should have ceased to exist because of its treatment of the Palestinians. Today I only say that I am from Israel when I am asked and when I feel that it is safe to do so.* (F, 60s, Glasgow)

● *I became a Facebook friend with many members of [a Pakistani neighbour's] family after I attended a wedding in her family. When the Gaza war started, I started getting hate posts from them because I responded to some of the things they posted and tried to present a more balanced picture. One of them wrote to me that it is only a question of time before they finish us. These are people that were born here in Scotland.* (M, 40s, Edinburgh)

"I now keep my identity in a sealed box"

Many respondents told us they were increasingly unlikely to speak about being Jewish:

● *I would never before have considered it risky to show my Jewish identity in public. However that is changing.* (F, 20s, Glasgow)

● *As far as the children are concerned we are telling them to be less open about being Israelis. Two years ago it wasn't like this. It is a question of safety now. I feel that today there is an element of risk in saying it. My daughter was a target of antisemitism. A boy from her year sprayed deodorant behind her and said "Gas the Jews".* (M, 40s, Edinburgh)

(The family was very clear that the head teacher handled this very well: the boy's parents were called in and he was suspended from school and told to write an apology. As a result, although they reported it to the police as an antisemitic incident, they did not make a complaint against the boy).

● *I have dual nationality and have served in the Israeli Defence Forces as a reservist. I was originally unafraid to mention this fact and ex British military friends would actually respect my short military involvement, [but recently] I have been less welcome in many conversations and have even been looked on as being personally responsible for the deaths of civilians to the point that I now keep my mouth shut and keep my Jewish and Israeli identity in a sealed box and hidden from view.* (M, 50s, Highlands)

Some told us they see a marked difference between how they are treated as a Jew and as an Israeli, but others felt that there was little difference in the way people saw the different facets of their identity.

● *Now I don't feel safe to say that I am Israeli. I don't want confrontations and to become a victim. And I feel that that is what they would do to me if they knew that I am Israeli. To be Jewish is not a bigger problem than before the summer of 2014.* (M, 40s, Edinburgh)

● *With regard to being Jewish I did not recognise any change in being Jewish in Glasgow. I've never experienced any antisemitism towards me as a Jew. I have never hesitated to say that I am from Israel, and I have definitely come across anti-Israel sentiments. I read expressions of hatred in Facebook, I see stickers on the lampposts that I have not seen for a long time.* (M, 40s, Glasgow)

WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT Being Jewish in Scotland

“There’s no way to be casually Jewish in Scotland”

One student from North America talked about the slightly lonely experience of coming to a country where being Jewish is not the norm:

● *There's no way to be casually Jewish in Scotland; it's not like my home where you can assume everyone knows what Passover is, what kosher food is, even if they're not Jewishly observant themselves. If you want to be engaged with Judaism here, you need to actively seek it out. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing for Judaism, for people to feel forced to engage with Judaism – but it's lonely. It's more isolating here. (F, under 21, Edinburgh)*

● *Another North American student told us that her university did not respect Jewish religious observance: As a student having a university that refuses to reschedule my exams around Jewish holidays and Shabbat, I was told by my university that either I sit exams on Shabbat or I fail, period. (F, under 21, Edinburgh)*

● *One father told us: “There was a ‘Jewish topic’ at school assembly. [My son] was dying to speak, the head was talking about Judaism and other religions, and he wanted to say ‘my dad’s Jewish’. He had no concerns about saying it – he had no reaction in primary school. But my partner was a bit worried – she asked ‘do you think that’s ok?’ She was slightly concerned that just putting his hand up would identify him as Jewish, with negative repercussions. (M, 40s, Highlands)*

Other participants told us how changing attitudes to Jewish people have affected their relationships with friends and colleagues:

● *I have been uncomfortable about talking to work colleagues about being Jewish, let alone about my trips to Israel. My neighbour, a member of Amnesty Scotland, was rendered practically speechless when she heard we were going on holiday to Israel. (F, 60s, Edinburgh)*

“living in Scotland is special and being Jewish is something to be proud of”

Although most people responded to our question asking “what’s good about being Jewish in Scotland?” by reporting some good experiences, responses were overall very negative, and a few people explicitly responded “nothing” or “not any more”.

● *I think living in Scotland is special and being Jewish is something to be proud of. I think the Scottish people on the whole respect and value the Jewish community. I love the sense of the community within the Shul and the support of the family. (F, 60s, Glasgow)*

● *At the height of the Israel and Gaza hostilities I was invited to a neighbour’s garden party, a Pakistani family included. Being the only Jew, I was a bit apprehensive, but I need not have worried. Tea was served and someone had ordered a platter of cakes and sandwiches from our local kosher deli for me. How thoughtful was that! (F, 80s, Glasgow)*

● *There will always be antisemitism but there are still those who do not use religion as a barrier, with boycotts, and hate, and accept us for what we are. (F, 80s, Glasgow)*

One participant, who told us she hadn’t experienced any direct antisemitism since school, began by saying how much she loved being in Scotland but then, like many other respondents, went on to express some disquiet, particularly about online antisemitism:

● *I was born and raised in Glasgow, I love Glasgow, it’s a wonderful place. I love Scotland, the people here are amazing, warm and friendly. If the Jewish community had been much bigger it would have been perfect. My children left, they didn’t feel there were enough young people around; they went to London. (F, 60s, Glasgow)*



● *I feel antisemitism in the air through the internet – that’s the only thing I’ve experienced; apart from that it’s second hand. I know there’s an undercurrent of anti-zionism and little bits of antisemitism peeking through but apart from that, it’s an easy place to live compared with other parts of Great Britain. (F, 60s)*

“I like to connect with the tribe every now and then!”

Throughout Scotland, there were concerns about the effect of the decreasing size of the Jewish community. In the smallest communities, the role of looking after the vulnerable members of the community falls to a shrinking few, as one respondent told us:

● *We live in a dying Jewish community, we have responsibility for the older members of the community ... that’s the main focus of the activity, ... the pastoral responsibility of the small Jewish community is just hard work. (M, North East, 50s)*

But even in Glasgow, Scotland’s largest Jewish community, several respondents were concerned about falling numbers:

● *It’s a small community so there’s a lack of activity for young people. Most teenagers eventually move away to areas with larger more vibrant communities. We need to work harder to attract more young Jewish people to Scotland. The size of the community also has an impact on the choice of kosher food etc. (F, 30s, Glasgow)*

● *It’s a very small dwindling ageing community with fewer social activities or amenities. There is little opportunity for young people and many move away to meet partners. (F, 40s, Glasgow)*

And one focus group respondent linked the size of the community to a change in his sense of security:

● *I feel more vulnerable and sensitive in the last couple of years, I’m less likely to publicise who I am and what I’m doing than before. The fact that the community is shrinking does make things more difficult – there’s safety in numbers. (M, 60s)*

Around the country, people old and young talked about their feelings of isolation. These included an 84-year-old lady, recently widowed, who told us:

● *It’s been awful since my husband died, I have no children, no family, I had two special friends, they both died; I’ve been very isolated and lonely. I went to Jewish Care, just after my husband died, but I felt lonelier there, they’d all known each other at school, their children went to school together, I felt absolutely on the fringe. (F, 80s, Glasgow)*

● *You need human contact, physical presence, of someone. Ages ago they offered me someone to phone me – I don’t want someone to phone me, I want a physical conversation. But unless you live in Giffnock, you can’t have that. (F, 80s, Glasgow)*

A young woman in the north east of Scotland whose daughter was the only Jewish child in the local nursery told us:

● *My family, my sisters are very Jewish and kosher and everything, I’m a bit of a black sheep, I like to connect with the tribe every now and then! It’s interesting raising my daughter – how much Judaism do I give her, how do I give it to her, it’s a little bit lonely, there are no other Jewish children around – well, there is one other, but no-one really practising. (F, 20s, North East)*

WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT Being Jewish in Scotland

Key themes that have arisen from the surveys and focus groups include identity, Israel, antisemitism, feelings of safety and security, changes in the Scottish Jewish community, ways of being Jewish, raising Jewish children, the experience of being Israeli in Scotland, Scottish identity among Jewish people in Scotland, and the importance of interfaith work, including awareness-raising about Judaism with non-Jews.

Neil Hastie, head of the Scottish Government Community Safety Unit which commissioned this follow-up inquiry, commented on our preliminary findings: *"The emerging themes from this report are particularly valuable, as are the data on how the international context can impact very palpably on the experience of being Jewish in Scotland. There is much in this for us (and ministers) to consider."*

Carrying on the conversation:

We are very aware of how much people benefit from sharing their experiences with other Jewish people and organisations. SCoJeC is therefore always very pleased to hear people's experiences, whether positive or negative. You can tell us by email to jewishscotland@scojec.org, by letter to SCoJeC (address on right), or by completing the questionnaire at www.scojec.org/bjis2/survey.html

Alternatively you may like to get together with a small group of Jewish friends to discuss the issues raised in our inquiry, and we'd be delighted to hear what you all have to say.

You may like to use our survey questions as a basis for discussions:

- ▲ What's good, and what's not so good about being Jewish in Scotland?
- ▲ Do you talk about being Jewish, or demonstrate your Jewishness in other ways, to non-Jewish people in Scotland?
- ▲ How has your experience of being Jewish changed over the years? Why do you think this is so?
- ▲ How far do you feel that events in the Middle East during Summer 2014 have affected your experience of being Jewish in Scotland?
- ▲ What could the Scottish Government, or local or national organisations, or Jewish organisations including SCoJeC, could do differently to improve the experience of Jewish people in Scotland?
- ▲ Anything else you'd like to raise?

CLOCKWISE: SCoJEC RESEARCH ASSISTANT REBECCA HOUNSOM WITH A FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT; AUTHOR J DAVID SIMONS SPEAKING AT OUR LITERARY EVENT IN ULLAPOOL; FOCUS GROUP IN ABERDEEN; TWO PARTICIPANTS AT OUR INVERNESS DISCUSSION.

What has changed?

- ▼ In marked contrast to our last inquiry, several participants told us that, for the first time, they were thinking about leaving Scotland.
- ▼ Many more people than in 2012 told us that, as a result of negative experiences, they now hide their Jewish identity in an attempt to avoid antagonistic comments.
- ▼ 60 per cent of respondents told us that events in the Middle East during summer 2014 had negatively affected their experience of being Jewish in Scotland. A typical comment was: *"the conflation of the Israeli and Jewish identities within mainstream Scottish society has created a sense of collective accountability; that the Scottish Jewish community is somehow partly complicit and hence accountable for Israeli responses in the Middle East."* (anonymous survey form)
- ▼ Antisemitism in social media is now much more of an issue than in our 2012 inquiry, and people of all ages reported antisemitic attacks from Facebook 'friends'.
- ▼ The attacks on Jewish people in France and Copenhagen in February 2015 very much increased the discomfort and insecurity among Jewish people throughout Scotland, to the extent that many told us they were anxious about their personal safety.

SCoJeC's Projects and Outreach Manager, Fiona Frank, who led the research, said: *"We have been disturbed by the extent to which Jewish people's experience in Scotland has changed as a result of the wider community's attitudes towards events in the Middle East. Nonetheless, despite the negativity and level of discomfort expressed by many respondents, Scottish Jews in general say they feel at home here, and we welcome the willingness that the Scottish Government has demonstrated to listen to their concerns and to work with us to ensure that Jewish people in Scotland feel safe, secure, and supported."*

The full report, which will be published in early summer, will discuss these findings in greater detail, and will include recommendations for the Scottish Government, local, regional and national organisations, and for Jewish communal organisations.

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