

# Campus Antisemitism

in Britain 2020-2022





# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>WHEN AND WHERE DID UNIVERSITY INCIDENTS HAPPEN?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>6</b>	On-campus, online and off-campus incidents	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>	Offline incidents	
Jewish Student Life		Case study: University of Nottingham	
What is CST?		Case study: University of Royal Holloway	
Hostile environment for Jewish students		Online incidents	
		Case study: Bristol University	
<b>UNIVERSITY-RELATED ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS</b>	<b>11</b>	Off-campus	
What is an antisemitic incident?		Off-campus incident: antisemitic window display	
National antisemitic trends over this period		Incidents reported by students	
Antisemitism in UK universities		The month of hate	
<b>ANTISEMITIC INCIDENT CATEGORIES</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>INCIDENT OFFENDERS</b>	<b>22</b>
Incident categories		Incidents by university staff	
Extreme Violence		Case study: incident by university staff at Sheffield Hallam University	
Assault		Case study: incident by university staff at Glasgow University	
Case study: student assaulted with a rubber bat		Incidents by students' union officers or student societies	
Damage and Desecration		<b>UNIVERSITY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES</b>	<b>26</b>
Threats		University of Nottingham & Nottingham Trent University	
Case study: student edited onto image of a guillotine		University of Leeds	
Case study: a series of hostile phone calls during the May conflict		Bristol University	
Abusive Behaviour		<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>30</b>
Case study: antisemitic graffiti at University of East Anglia			
Literature			
Incident categories comparison			

## FOREWORD

**“The antisemite is the man of the crowd. However small his stature, he takes every precaution to make it smaller, lest he stand out from the herd and find himself face to face with himself. He has made himself an antisemite because that is something one cannot be alone. The phrase, “I hate the Jews,” is one that is uttered in chorus; in pronouncing it, one attaches himself to a tradition and to a community — the tradition and community of the mediocre.”** – Jean-Paul Sartre, 1944

In many campuses across the country, in internet chatrooms and social media channels, a ‘community of the mediocre’ is inciting hatred against our community of students. The world’s oldest conspiracy theory endures. Today’s anti-Jewish bigots, like many of their predecessors, derive self-worth from their mendacious theories. There’s a smugness to many of the antisemites we encounter on campus - they have figured it out, joined all of the dots and so they look down on you or me.

To the cranky conspiracist, Jewish students are homogeneous and threatening. Their rich cultural, political, and religious diversity is but a shrewd diversion. They sing in unison; innocuous and coincidental links are evidence of a masterplan. It’s all connected in the minds of antisemites who draw diagrams to advance the absurd argument that Jewish students are somehow culpable for a conflict two and a half thousand miles away. In this perverse alternative reality Jewish students are cast as the agents of a foreign power. Their individuality is erased and they are reduced to a part of a powerful collective. Age-old tropes about money, power and control are repackaged into pithy tweets. Against this backdrop, Jewish students’ complaints of antisemitism are viewed with suspicion and the cynical manoeuvring of an astute political operator.

Magda Teter in her magisterial history of the blood libel writes: “It turned out it mattered what people read ... It was the printed books, not personal contacts that became accepted knowledge.” The development of print media helped spread anti-Jewish conspiracy theories: “Rumours and lore became ‘facts’ once they entered reputable printed books.” Teter observes the “disheartening fact that the long early modern paper trail continues to be relevant in the modern era”. Indeed, in 2023 antisemitic infographics abound on Instagram and Jewish students can be readily trolled on TikTok. The medium may have changed, but the mutating virus of antisemitism remains.

**That’s why the partnership between the Community Security Trust and the Union of Jewish Students is so vital.** The 22% increase in antisemitic incidents on campus from the 2018-20 report to this one is sobering. We know that antisemitism, like other forms of hate crime, is significantly underreported. Behind each incident detailed in this report are young students, many of whom are living away from home for the first time. The 9,000 students I’m privileged to represent make up a fraction of one percent of the student population of the United Kingdom. In many campuses Jewish students can feel alienated and left behind. Together, UJS and CST are there for them, visiting campuses across the country and supporting them in the good times as well as the bad. I have seen first hand the care and dedication of CST and its many volunteers, working in partnership with our JSocs on the ground. This report is the latest example of the professionalism and thoroughness that characterises the organisation.

Jewish students are keen not to be defined by antisemitism. The students I meet as I travel round the country are refreshingly diverse. We don't agree on everything, but we are united by our commitment to Jewish life on campus. Together, we've established new Jewish societies and are reinvigorating established ones. I've often thought that what we have as a community is so beautiful, it is surely unknowable to those who would tear it down. I remember in my final year of university joining a motley group of students in Trinity College's Wren Library on Shavuot as we read from a 14th century Yemenite Torah scroll. There was an indescribable buzz in the air, and I feel something similar each time I sit down for a potluck Friday night dinner or visit a JSoc social or one of the hundreds of lunch and learns. Jewish life on campus is thriving, irrespective of the 'community of the mediocre'. That's thanks to the work of UJS and CST but it is also because of an inspirational community of students who celebrate their Judaism in whatever way is meaningful to them.

**Together, let's be there for these outstanding Jewish students.**



*Joel Rosen*  
UJS President  
2021-2022

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There are nearly 9,000 Jewish students at universities across the United Kingdom, the vast majority of whom have an excellent experience during their studies. However, **antisemitism can present a significant challenge for Jewish students on campus**. It is therefore imperative that university processes are equipped for understanding, and acting upon, the concerns of students in an impartial and timely manner.
- **CST recorded a total of 150 university-related antisemitic incidents in the last two academic years:** 95 incidents in 2020/2021 and 55 incidents in 2021/2022. The total number of incidents marks a 22 percent increase from the total of 123 university incidents recorded in 2018-2020; the two academic years covered in our previous report.
- In 2020/2021, the 95 university-related antisemitic incidents recorded by CST marked the highest total recorded for a single academic year. This can largely be attributed to the period from early May to early June 2021, during which the conflict between Israel and Gaza caused a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents nationwide. **CST recorded 55 university incidents in May 2021, which accounted for almost a years' worth of incidents in a single month** and included five threats, three of which were death threats sent to Jewish students. Until the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East and the related spike in antisemitic incidents, the number of university-related antisemitic incidents reported to CST in 2020/21 had been decreasing compared to the previous year.
- CST found that the conflict had a disproportionate impact on Jewish staff and students and that online spaces were especially hostile during this time. **Three quarters of the incidents reported in May 2021 occurred on social media platforms or messaging apps.** In one incident, a Jewish student was called a "neo-Nazi white supremacist". In times of heightened tensions such as this, universities are urged to consider the impact on Jewish staff and students and show an increased level of support.
- Overall, in the last two academic years, **93% of university-related incidents were categorised as Abusive Behaviour**, totalling 140 incidents. This category includes all forms of verbal and written antisemitism both online and offline, other than those that include direct threats.
- **Seven threats were made to Jewish students in the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years.** Four of them were online and the other three were offline, all of which took place off campus.
- **There were three instances of assault**, one each in Lancaster, Birmingham and Bristol. In one case, a Jewish student was hit with a rubber bat as they were returning to their student accommodation.
- None of the university-related antisemitic incidents recorded by CST during the two years covered by this report were in the categories of **Extreme Violence, Damage and Desecration of Jewish Property or mass-mailed antisemitic Literature**.
- **82 of the university incidents took place online, 41 of which were recorded during the period of conflict in Israel and Gaza in May 2021.** Online incidents reported to CST from 2020-2022 included antisemitic messages sent via email, text or social media to Jewish students or Jewish societies, antisemitic messages in group chats, and antisemitic online posts by students, staff, or students' union officers.

- **47 university incidents occurred on campus and 21 took place off campus.** CST defines on-campus incidents as any antisemitic incident that occurs within university premises, including at events hosted on campus, in lectures and seminars, and in university owned halls of residence. Off-campus incidents include any offline incident that takes place outside the university premises, but where the incident relates to the victim's student, staff, or academic status.
- **CST recorded five university incidents perpetrated by staff**, some of whom had a prior record of expressing allegedly antisemitic views in other settings. Such incidents can potentially affect Jewish students' confidence that their lecturers or tutors will treat them fairly. On three occasions, the comments made by academics directly targeted or mentioned students or student organisations. In one case, an academic at the University of Glasgow tweeted that he had received an "email from the lobby" after a student journalist requested a statement for an article they were writing. As one of the most complicated and sensitive aspects of university-related antisemitism, **it is essential for institutions to develop appropriate and proportionate rules and policies** for when students make a complaint about alleged antisemitism from their own lecturers or tutors.
- **Universities have a duty of care to protect all students at university.** However, it is not always the case that they succeed in providing robust support to Jewish students. This is sometimes seen in how some academic institutions handle complaints of antisemitism made by Jewish students. **This report details cases where, on occasion, investigations have been marred by slow responses, a breakdown in communication, a lack of impartiality or objectivity from investigating officers, and a failure to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism in an appropriate way.**
- **Recommendations for change suggested by CST include:** ensure that an impartial and fully independent party investigates complaints; issue responses within mandated time frames; maintain frequent communication with the complainant to provide updates as to any delays or actions taken; and, most importantly, allow for anonymity and the involvement of third party representation at the students' request.

# INTRODUCTION

## Jewish student life

Universities across the United Kingdom are home to nearly 9,000 Jewish students. As of this year, a total of 73 established Jewish societies offer a wealth of opportunities for an overwhelmingly positive experience on campus and engagement with Jewish life. Supported by the Union of Jewish Students and other organisations like Chabad and the University Jewish Chaplaincy, students can get involved with a wide range of events, including Friday night dinners, lunch and learns, socials, guest speaker events, debates and much more. Jewish festivals are celebrated in style with Chanukah lightings on campus, seder nights at Pesach and parties during Purim. For newer students, involvement with the Jewish community on campus can be a chance to meet new people; stay connected with Jewish life; and to continue, or embrace, Jewish customs and traditions during their studies.

Most Jewish students will not encounter any antisemitism during their time at university. However, antisemitism can sometimes present a significant challenge for Jewish students on campus. Where there is antisemitism Jewish societies have been active in speaking out against it, raising complaints with their university and students' union and reporting to CST and UJS – for which students receive the full support of both our organisations.

The vast majority of Jewish students will have an excellent experience during their time at university, so the decision of where to attend must be left to criteria such as selecting an interesting course, or exciting city that they would enjoy living in. Some of the more popular universities for Jewish students are Birmingham, Leeds, Bristol and London. This is partly because of the number of facilities available for Jewish students (such as kosher accommodation on campus), vibrant and active Jewish societies, and easy travel back home to family.

## What is CST?

Community Security Trust (CST) is a UK charity that advises and represents the Jewish community on matters of antisemitism, terrorism, policing and security. CST received charitable status in 1994 and is recognised by government and the police as a best practice model of a minority-community security organisation. CST provides security advice and training for Jewish schools, synagogues and Jewish communal organisations and gives assistance to those bodies that are affected by antisemitism. CST also assists and supports individual members of the Jewish community who have been affected by antisemitism and antisemitic incidents. All this work is provided at no charge. An essential part of CST's work involves representing the Jewish community to police, legislative and policy-making bodies and providing people inside and outside the Jewish community with information to combat antisemitism. CST has recorded antisemitic incidents in the United Kingdom since 1984.

CST works alongside the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and other campus-based organisations to support students, academics and others who experience antisemitism in a higher education setting. CST's campus team gives advice to Jewish students and Jewish societies on campus regarding how to organise events safely. CST also works with different organisations to teach students about topics relating to antisemitism and extremism on campus.

## Hostile environment for Jewish students

The antisemitism that is described in this report takes place in a broader environment that provides the context in which Jewish students experience, and are affected by, antisemitism. Too often this broader environment makes the impact of antisemitism worse, rather than providing support and sympathy to Jewish students and academics.



One example of this is the support provided to Professor David Miller when complaints were raised about his antisemitic statements. Speaking at an off-campus online event in February 2021, Miller made the following comments about Bristol University Jewish Society and the Union of Jewish Students:

“I’ve been attacked and complained about by the head of the Bristol JSOC, the Jewish Society, along with the President of the Union of Jewish Students who are... both organisations of which are of course formally members of the Zionist movement, JSOCs are all part of UJS, UJS is part of the World Union of Jewish Students which is a direct member of the World Zionist Organisation. UJS in its constitution of course mentions being pro-Israel”. When Miller was challenged on these comments by *The Jewish Chronicle*, he claimed further that “Jewish students on British campuses [are] being used as political pawns by a violent, racist foreign regime engaged in ethnic cleansing.”<sup>1</sup>

Over 450 academics and educators, mostly but not exclusively from British universities, signed an open letter in support of Miller after he made these comments. Although a larger number of academics signed a rival letter condemning Miller, the widespread support he attracted suggests that there are hundreds of academics at institutions across the United Kingdom who believe that Miller’s conspiracist attacks on Jewish students are acceptable discourse for somebody in a position of authority over Jewish (and non-Jewish) students.

Miller was also supported by the Universities and Colleges Union Scotland, who formally passed a motion in March 2021 that “Condemns the attack on Professor David Miller by Zionist lobby groups”.<sup>2</sup>

1 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/now-end-of-zionism-academic-says-bristol-jsoc-is-israel-s-pawn-1.511915>

2 <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/11508/UCU-Scotland-Congress-2021>

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES), which has 500 members involved in the field of Middle East research, published a statement “to express our dismay that the university took the decision to fire Professor David Miller following an investigation into comments that he made that were critical of Israeli government policy, Zionism and pro-Israel groups.”<sup>3</sup> They then went a step further and wrote directly to the Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University to state that:

“We are deeply worried about the pernicious effects that your university’s action against Professor Miller will have/is already having on academic freedom in the Middle East studies academic community in the UK, particularly the confidence of individual scholars and students to engage in public debate and research critical of Israeli policies and Zionism without the threat of being subject to career-destroying measures.”<sup>4</sup>

Events at the National Union of Students (NUS) also contributed to a broader environment in which antisemitism occurred and was not tackled firmly and robustly. In March 2022 a controversial rapper, Kareem Dennis, known as Lowkey, was booked to perform at the NUS national conference. Lowkey has stated that the Jewish heritage of Ukrainian President Zelensky was being “weaponised” by the mainstream media and that Zelensky “has overseen the integration of the Ukrainian state into several explicitly neo-Nazi movements.” He is an outspoken supporter of David Miller and has even rapped conspiracy theories about the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Following an outcry the President of NUS, Larissa Kennedy, met with members of the Union of Jewish students to discuss their concerns.

3 <https://www.brismes.ac.uk/news/letter-to-bristol-university-regarding-academic-freedom-in-relation-to-the-dismissal-of-prof-david-miller>

4 [https://www.brismes.ac.uk/files/documents/CAF\\_Bristol\\_Miller\\_12102021\\_signed.pdf](https://www.brismes.ac.uk/files/documents/CAF_Bristol_Miller_12102021_signed.pdf)

UJS was the only group to complain to NUS about inviting Lowkey to perform at the centenary celebration of the union, which itself shows that Jewish students are isolated when it comes to tackling antisemitism. At the meeting, it was suggested that rather than changing the performer Jewish students should “self-segregate” by going to a different room where they would not be able to hear his performance.<sup>5</sup> This was rejected by UJS, who understandably felt that it was the performer with a record of allegedly antisemitic statements who should be excluded by NUS, rather than its own Jewish members. Eventually Lowkey did not perform at the event and NUS released a statement that criticised what it called “harassment and misinformation against Lowkey”.<sup>6</sup>

Other ways in which a hostile environment can be created for Jewish students is through protests and harassment at Jewish student events.

In November 2021 the University of Warwick Jewish Society was faced with the prospect of a demonstration by Warwick Action for Palestine outside their Friday night dinner when they attempted to include an Israeli speaker from the Israel advocacy group Stand With Us. The *Jewish News* reported that the event was cancelled over fears for her safety.<sup>7</sup>

Also at Warwick University, during the conflict between Israel and Gaza during May/June 2021 a placard showing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a demonic figure drinking a glass of blood was held aloft at an anti-Israel protest on campus. This image evoked the medieval antisemitic blood libel, in which Jews were accused

of drinking the blood of Christian children. A speaker at the same protest shouted “we’re coming for their f\*cking necks” through the PA system, to cheers from the assembled crowd.

In November 2021 the Israeli ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely, spoke at the London School of Economics and a demonstration was organised outside the building. One of the speakers, a student at LSE, was applauded by a large crowd when he said “Zionism will never be a legitimate ideal in our spaces.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time banners for the Iran-linked Shia militia Khataib Hizballah were waved and a speaker told the crowd that “this is almost, almost the same concept as Holocaust denial, denying the atrocities that are taking place right now.”<sup>9</sup> This was not a Jewish student event, but it was one that was likely to attract a disproportionately Jewish audience and, as these examples of hostile language show, the discourse of the protestors included Jewish-related topics.

Within this climate Jewish students have told CST they are unwilling to make complaints to their university about antisemitism they have experienced due to an uncertainty as to the treatment they will receive as a result. This is how a hostile environment inhibits Jewish students from asserting their rights when they do experience university-related antisemitism.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thejc.com/news/news/call-for-antisemitism-probe-into-nus-over-'self-segregate'-plan-for-jews-at-rapper-lowkey-gig-3tCYkoHVvKujikCyg7vFaP>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nus.org.uk/articles/nus-update-on-conference-speakers>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/israeli-speaker-pulls-out-of-warwick-uni-event-over-safety-fears/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://twitter.com/hurryupharry/status/1460564125155827712>

<sup>9</sup> <https://twitter.com/hurryupharry/status/1458205462302760964>

# UNIVERSITY-RELATED ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS

## What is an antisemitic incident?

CST defines an antisemitic incident as any malicious act aimed at Jewish people, organisations or property, where there is evidence that the act has antisemitic motivation or content, or that the victim was targeted because they are (or are believed to be) Jewish. This is a narrower definition than that used by the criminal justice system, which defines an antisemitic hate incident as “any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s race/religion or perceived race/religion.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism is a useful tool for identifying the different types of antisemitic language that may be used in an incident. It gives a list of behaviours that ‘could, taking into account the overall context’ indicate antisemitism. It states, for example, that ‘criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic’, while noting that antisemitic language is sometimes directed at Israel – such as the comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany.

Antisemitic incidents can take several forms, including physical attacks on people or property, verbal or written abuse, hate mail (including antisemitic emails), antisemitic leaflets and posters or abuse on social media.

An antisemitic incident is labelled by CST as a university incident if it relates to any student, staff or academic at a UK university. This includes online incidents, on-campus incidents and off-campus incidents where the incident relates to the victim’s student, academic or staff status, such as damage to private Jewish student accommodation, or antisemitism directed at campus-focused organisations, such as UJS or University Jewish Chaplaincy.

University-related antisemitic incidents that take place online include tweets, Facebook comments, or messages sent in WhatsApp groups such as those made for student accommodation blocks or university courses. CST does not proactively search social media platforms to look for incidents of online antisemitism to include in statistics. CST will, however, record antisemitic comments or posts from internet forums or transmitted via social media if they have been reported to CST by a member of the public, and if the comment shows evidence of antisemitic content, motivation or targeting of a UK-based student, staff member or campus-affiliated organisation.

University incidents recorded by CST are analysed by location as well as by institution, as many incidents take place in the town centres of places with multiple universities. Nottingham, for example, has students from both the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University who frequent similar spaces. In places such as Leeds, there is a joint Jewish Society for more than one institution. This methodology does not include London, where a lot of universities are spread over a large geographical area, and therefore a single total for the number of incidents in London would be less meaningful.

## National antisemitic trends over this period

The university-related antisemitic incidents that have been documented and examined in this report should be viewed within the context of the rising levels of hate crime offences nationwide recorded by the police.

This rising trend was also reflected in the number of antisemitic incidents reported to CST during the same period. CST recorded 2,255 antisemitic incidents across the UK in 2021, the highest figure that CST has ever recorded in a single calendar year. Previous totals include 1,690 incidents in 2018,

1,813 in 2019, and 1,668 in 2020. The record total in 2021 must be attributed to the impact of the conflict that took place between Israel and Gaza in May 2021, following a pattern whereby the level of anger and hate directed at British Jews tends to increase in relation to conflicts involving Israel.

Universities are often viewed as a microcosm of wider society and likewise suffered from an unprecedented wave of anti-Jewish hate during the academic year 2020/2021. CST logged record numbers of university-related antisemitic incidents during the period of the conflict in Israel and Gaza in May 2021. Therefore, the reports of university-related incidents included in the yearly totals and explored in detail in this report, must be seen in the context of this broader phenomenon.

**Antisemitism in UK universities**

This is the second report produced by CST that is solely dedicated to providing an analysis of the antisemitism faced by Jewish academic staff and students. The first report covered the two academic years from 2018-2020. Prior to these two publications, CST recorded university incidents by calendar year (CST still publishes statistics for university-related incidents by calendar year in its annual *Antisemitic Incidents Report*).

CST recorded a total of 150 university-related incidents over the two academic years covered by this report: 95 incidents in the 2020/2021 academic year and 55 in the 2021/2022 academic year. This is a 22% increase from the total of 123 campus incidents recorded from 2018-2020; the two academic years covered in our previous report into campus antisemitism.

The increase in the number of university-related antisemitic incidents recorded by CST should be viewed within the context of rising levels of antisemitic incidents reported to CST in recent

years across the country as a whole, and in particular the record total for antisemitic incidents of all kinds in 2021. It is also likely that increased awareness among university students of the need and importance of reporting incidents to CST has contributed to the increase in reports of incidents during the two years covered by this report. It is likely that a number of antisemitic incidents will remain unreported, but this additional total is impossible to estimate and has not been factored into the incident totals included in this report.

The 150 incidents recorded by CST throughout the last two academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 took place across 30 cities. The six cities with five or more recorded incidents during this time were London (30), Bristol (14), Birmingham (12), Oxford (10), Coventry (University of Warwick) (8) and Nottingham (6).

2018 - 2020		2020 - 2022	
Coventry	14	London	30
Birmingham	13	Bristol	14
London	12	Birmingham	12
Leeds	11	Oxford	10
Nottingham	9	Coventry	8
Bristol	7	Nottingham	6

These numbers need to be seen in the context of the number of Jewish students in each institution. With the exception of Coventry, these cities represent the locations with the largest Jewish student populations, and therefore follow the national trend towards more incidents reported in areas with larger Jewish populations.

The higher number of incidents occurring in London, compared to the other five cities, must take into account that London has a greater number of academic institutions. The 30 incidents that took place in London were spread out across 10

university campuses, compared to the other cities with the highest totals where incidents occurred at one or two campuses.

These London campuses were as follows: University College London (12), Queen Mary University of London (4), Brunel University London (4), London Southbank University (4), Royal Holloway (2).

A single incident also took place at each of the following: City University, Imperial College London, University of London, St George's University of London and University of Arts London.

# ANTISEMITIC INCIDENT CATEGORIES

CST classifies antisemitic incidents by six distinct categories: Extreme Violence, Assault, Damage and Desecration to Jewish property, Threats, Abusive Behaviour, and mass-produced antisemitic Literature. The definitions of each one, with totals and examples of university antisemitic incidents recorded during the period covered by this report, are given below.<sup>10</sup>

## Incident categories

### Extreme Violence

Incidents of Extreme Violence include any attack potentially causing loss of life or grievous bodily harm (GBH). CST did not record any incidents of extreme violence in the 2020/2021 or 2021/2022 academic years. Nor did CST record any event of Extreme Violence in the 2018/2019 or 2019/2020 academic years.

### Assault

Incidents of Assault include any physical attack against a person or people, which does not pose a threat to their life or cause GBH, but instead may be considered actual bodily harm (ABH) or common assault. This includes attempted assault, even if it fails; and throwing objects at Jews, including where the object misses the target

CST recorded three instances of assault, one each in Lancaster, Birmingham and Bristol. One of these took place in the 2020/2021 academic year, and the other two took place in the 2021/2022 academic year.

A total of four instances of assault was recorded in the academic years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

### Case study: student assaulted with a rubber bat

In February 2022, CST received a report that students were returning home to their student accommodation when a group of youths of the other side of the road started shouting abuse and antisemitic slurs at the group, calling them “f\*\*king Jews”. One of the students was hit with a rubber bat. Police arrived quickly but the group of youths had already dispersed. This incident was raised with the university in a letter to the local council signed by the Jewish society, as well as by over fifty students and other organisations.

### Damage and Desecration

This category includes any physical attack directed against Jewish-owned property, or property that is perceived to be connected to Jews, which is not life-threatening. This includes the daubing of antisemitic slogans or symbols (such as swastikas) – including fixing stickers and posters – on Jewish property; and damage caused to property where it appears that the property has been specifically targeted because of its perceived Jewish connection. As this type of incident is usually only seen after the act has been completed, it is often very difficult to get any information about the perpetrators.

There were no recorded university-related incidents of Damage & Desecration in the 2020/2021 or 2021/2022 academic years. This differs from 2018/2020, when Damage & Desecration was the second most prominent category with a total of seven recorded incidents.

### Threats

This category includes only direct antisemitic threats, whether verbal or written. This would include potential improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that are designed to be hoaxes, if they do not contain any explosive material.

<sup>10</sup> A more detailed explanation of the six antisemitic incident categories can be found in the CST leaflet *Definitions of Antisemitic Incidents*, available on the CST website: [www.cst.org.uk](http://www.cst.org.uk)

CST recorded seven incidents under this category in the last two academic years. Four of them were online and the other three were offline, all of which took place off campus. Each threat was made by an individual in the UK.

A total of four incidents in this category were recorded in the academic years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

### **Case study: student edited onto image of a guillotine**

In May 2021, a Jewish student saw that they had been edited onto an image of a guillotine in a way that indicates the student is about to be beheaded. The incident was reported to CST who engaged with the student's Jewish Society and the head of campus security at their university.



### **Case study: a series of hostile phone calls during the May conflict**

In May 2021, a first year student from the University of Leeds woke one morning to see they had received three missed calls overnight from a blocked number. When they picked up the fourth call, they heard a pre-recorded message

threatening them and their family. The threat stated: "I want to shoot all your family, I know your father, I want to put a bullet in your head. I hate you, I hate the Jews".

### **Abusive Behaviour**

This category includes verbal and written antisemitic abuse. The verbal abuse can be face to face or via telephone calls and voicemail messages. The category also includes antisemitic emails, text messages, tweets and social media comments, as well as targeted antisemitic letters (that is, one-off letters aimed at and sent to a specific individual), irrespective of whether the recipient is Jewish. This is different from a mass mailing of antisemitic leaflets, pamphlets or group emails, which is dealt with by the separate Literature category. Antisemitic graffiti on non-Jewish property is also included in the Abusive Behaviour category.

CST recorded 140 incidents of Abusive Behavior in the last two academic years, which accounts for 93% of the total number of incidents. Eighty-nine of these 140 incidents of Abusive Behaviour were in the academic year 2020/2021, and 51 were in 2021/22. CST recorded 55 incidents of Abusive Behavior in May 2021 compared with one in May 2020 and two in May 2022.

This is a rise from a total of 107 incidents recorded in this category for the academic years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

### **Case study: antisemitic graffiti at University of East Anglia**

In November 2021, CST received a report of antisemitic and conspiracist graffiti written onto a sign at the University of East Anglia. The graffiti reads "F\*\*k the Jew World Order" alongside conspiratorial statements about Covid-19 and Covid-19 vaccines: "Boycott Vaccine Passports or lose everything" and "Say no to the #clotshot".



**Literature**

This category covers mass-produced antisemitic literature that is distributed in multiple quantities. This can involve a single mass mailing or repeated individual mailings, but it must involve the multiple use of the same piece of literature to fall into this category. This is different from one-off cases of hate mail targeted at individual people or organisations, which would come under the category of either Abusive Behaviour or Threats (depending on the content). This category includes literature that is antisemitic in itself, irrespective of whether or not the recipient is Jewish, and cases where Jews are specifically targeted for malicious distribution, even if the material itself is not antisemitic. This would include, for instance, the mass mailing of neo-Nazi literature targeted at Jewish organisations or homes, even if the literature did not mention Jews.

This category also includes antisemitic emails that are sent to groups of recipients. The statistics for this category give no indication of the extent of distribution: a single mass mailing of antisemitic literature is only counted as one incident, although it could involve material being sent to dozens of recipients. Thus, the number of incidents reflects the number of offenders and their actions, rather than the number of victims.

CST did not record any university incidents in the Literature category in the 2020/2021 or the 2021/2022 academic years. There were also no recorded university incidents of antisemitic literature in the academic years of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

**Incident categories comparison**

2018-2020		2020-2022	
Abusive Behaviour	107	Abusive Behaviour	140
Damage and Desecration	7	Threats	7
Threats	5	Assault	3
Assault	4	Damage and Desecration	0



# WHEN AND WHERE DID UNIVERSITY INCIDENTS HAPPEN?

## On-campus, online and off-campus incidents

University incidents can take place in one of three different physical settings: on-campus, off-campus, or online. It is important to distinguish between these different settings for university incidents, as the effect on the victim can vary considerably. It can be more disturbing to experience antisemitism within a student's own university campus as opposed to when it occurs elsewhere, and an offline incident may be more directly intimidating than an online incident (although that is not always the case).

## Offline incidents

In the last two academic years, a total of 65 offline incidents were recorded by CST. This comprised of 27 offline incidents in 2020/2021 and 38 in 2021/2022. Of the total 65 offline incidents, 47 took place on campus.

CST defines on-campus incidents as any antisemitic incident that occurs within university premises, including at events hosted on campus, in lectures and seminars, and in university-owned halls of residence.

## Case study: University of Nottingham

In April 2022, it was reported to CST that a series of antisemitic and other racist comments were made by a group of students in an architecture workshop lesson at the University of Nottingham. One of the offenders picked up on the "crooked nose" of another student in the room, put on a German accent and started calling him a "Juden". The reporter then stepped in to explain that they were Jewish, hoping this would put an end to his offensive behaviour. However, the offender replied with "Oh so you're a Jew" and motioned to his nose, saying "Do you know where I'm from? We're taught to spot the Jews". CST provided welfare support and advice on how to proceed, although the student decided not to make a formal complaint.

## Case study: University of Royal Holloway

A poster of an Israeli flag with a swastika replacing the Star of David was placed on the entrance of a library at Royal Holloway, University of London. This incident took place last year, in May 2021, during the conflict between Israel and Gaza. CST provided support for members of staff who were affected by the incident, and were in contact with the Surrey police. Two arrests were made in connection with this incident and both were released on bail.



## Online

CST recorded 82 online incidents over the last two academic years covered by this report: 68 online incidents in 2020/2021 and 14 online incidents in 2021/2022. This is a higher total than the 51 online incidents recorded by CST in the 2018-2020 academic years.

Forty-one online incidents took place during May 2021 when there was a national surge in anti-Jewish hate crime and hate incidents in response to a period of conflict in Israel and Gaza. Of these 41 incidents, nine targeted the Jewish societies of campuses around the country.

Online incidents included antisemitic messages sent via email, text or social media to Jewish students or Jewish societies, antisemitic messages in group chats, and antisemitic online posts by students, staff, or students' union officers that have been reported to CST.

One of the incidents reported to CST is not included in the online or offline breakdown as the incident occurred both in online and offline spaces. A further two incidents were reported to CST by the police as part of our data sharing agreement. While details of the incident and university where the incident took place were shared with CST, it is not clear if the incident occurred online or offline. In total, these three incidents are not included in the online or offline breakdowns.

### Case study: Bristol University

Thirteen of the total number of online incidents during this two-year period were related to the case of David Miller at Bristol University, eight of which directly targeted Jewish students. On 16th December, an anti-Israel website called *Electronic Intifada* published a partisan piece titled 'Meet Edward Isaacs, the student waging a campus war for Israel'. This article delved into the life of a Jewish student and his involvement in various pro-Israel campaigning organisations to argue that as a "highly effective foot soldier of the apartheid state", he was responsible for the termination in employment of David Miller at Bristol University two months earlier. The article made antisemitic claims itself, such as the allegation that Isaacs had fabricated Jewish students' fears of Miller's antisemitism, while also attracting antisemitic responses after being posted on Twitter. A link to the article was tweeted a total of ten times by *Electronic Intifada* and it was reported to CST that some of the posts led to antisemitic replies. In one example, a Twitter user re-tweeted the article with the message "Don't be fooled! These are #ZioNazi #BrownShirt recruits for the #fascist #ApartheidRegime occupying #Palestine". In another post, one twitter user replied "the last thing we need is more Jewish lobbying for the racist apartheid state of Israel".

One of the Twitter posts made by *Electronic Intifada* and the responses:



### Off-campus

Out of a total of 68 offline incidents, 21 occurred offline and off campus. An off-campus incident refers to an offline incident that took place outside the university premises, but where the incident relates to the victim's student, staff, or academic status. This includes incidents at clubs hosting student nights or frequented by students, as well as incidents in private student accommodation and in student residential areas.

#### Off-campus incident: antisemitic window display

Students from the Jewish Society at the University of Bristol reported to CST in December 2021 that an antisemitic window display had been seen in Redland, a popular residential student area. A photo was shown to CST of a window display with a doll making a Nazi salute and posters including one reading, "bloody Israelis hands off Palestine" and "National Zionism=Nazism" – featured on the street facing window of the address. This incident was reported to the police.



In February 2022, CST received a second report from another Jewish student at Bristol. Frustrated with seeing the display on his route to and from university, the student decided to confront the

homeowner who, according to the student, would sit outside of the property every day. In attempting to engage the man in a discussion about why the posters were offensive, the student claims to have made it very clear he was Jewish. The man then proceeded to call him a "Nazi boy" and shout abusive comments at him every time he passed the property thereafter.

Since this was his usual route to university, the distressing nature of the incident made the student nervous to go to campus. He showed video footage of the abuse to the police who then sent officers to the property to caution the man. The CST campus team stayed in contact with this student, and with students from the Bristol Jewish Society who later informed us the display had changed with the antisemitic components removed.

#### Incidents reported by students

There were 12 offline antisemitic incidents reported to CST by students that are not included in the total of 150 campus incidents as they do not fit the criteria of occurring on campus, at university-related events or places like accommodation, and they do not relate to the victim's student, staff or academic status. These incidents are not included in CST's statistics for university-related antisemitic incidents as they do not meet the university-related criteria, but nevertheless CST still provides the same victim support and advocacy to the people and organisations reporting them. This includes an incident where graffiti was found on a public building in the city centre, and an incident where the victim was subjected to antisemitic comments from their colleagues at their place of work, while studying at university. Although we do not classify these 12 incidents as university-related, they still play a role in the university experience of some Jewish students and therefore warrant a mention in this report.

**The month of hate**

The period from early May to early June 2021 saw a large spike in antisemitic hate crimes and hate incidents across the UK, that was largely responsible for the record annual total of antisemitic incidents recorded by CST in 2021 (CST has written about this previously in the report *The Month of Hate: Antisemitism & extremism during the Israel-Gaza conflict*, available on the CST website).<sup>11</sup> From the 8th of May to the 7th of June 2021 CST recorded antisemitic hate incidents that include anti-Jewish chants and placards on public demonstrations, incitement from UK based Islamist extremists, and incitement to murder Jews from international Jihadi terrorist groups, all of which fanned the flames of antisemitism in the UK. Jewish students also experienced a disproportionate number of university-related antisemitic incidents during that same period.

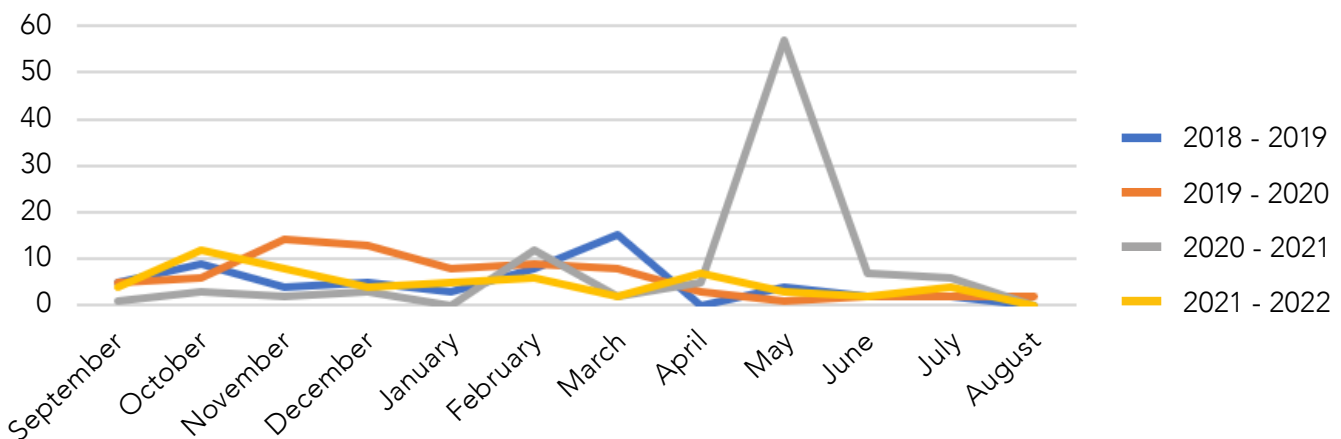
In May 2021, CST recorded 55 university-related antisemitic incidents; the single highest monthly total in the two years covered in this report. By comparison, four university incidents were recorded in May 2020. The sheer volume of incidents constituted almost a year’s worth of university-related antisemitic incidents in a single month. In

the academic year 2018/2019 a total of 58 incidents were recorded for the entire year, while in 2019/2020 CST recorded a total of 65 incidents. The total of 55 university-related incidents during the ‘month of hate’ period included five threats, three of which were death threats sent to Jewish students.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East in May 2021, 28 university-related antisemitic incidents had been recorded by CST during the academic year 2020/21, compared to 48 by the same point in the previous academic year. This difference shows the impact that antisemitic reactions to the conflict in Israel and Gaza had on British universities and Jewish student life in this country. Until the outbreak of hostilities and the related spike in incidents, the number of university-related antisemitic incidents reported to CST in the academic year 2020/21 was decreasing compared to the previous year.

Antisemitic incidents reported to CST during the ‘month of hate’ had a disproportionate impact on Jewish staff and students at universities. In the 2019 calendar year, the antisemitic incidents reported to CST that were related to universities only amounted to two per cent of the overall total, whereas the 55

**Antisemitic incidents by month for the last four academic years 2018 - 2022**



<sup>11</sup> [https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/a/The\\_Month\\_of\\_Hate.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/a/The_Month_of_Hate.pdf)

university-related incidents recorded during May 2021 made up nine per cent of all antisemitic incidents recorded by CST during that period.

Thirteen out of the 55 university-related antisemitic incidents recorded during the 'month of hate' were committed offline, five of which occurred during pro-Palestinian demonstrations that took place on university grounds in May 2021.

One of the demonstrations in question took place on campus at Warwick University and was organised and streamed live on Facebook by the student society 'Warwick for Palestine'. A student attending the demonstration was photographed carrying an antisemitic placard on which a cartoon of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was drawn drinking blood and captioned "Satanyahu". This was recorded as an antisemitic incident as the image was reminiscent of the medieval 'blood libel' charge that falsely accused Jews of murdering children and consuming their blood.

In recording antisemitic incidents, CST distinguishes between legitimate pro-Palestinian campaigning and antisemitic or extremist activity. This report does not focus on general pro-Palestinian campaigning on campus, but is limited only to those aspects that involved anti-Jewish language, motivation or the targeting of Jewish students, staff or campus-related Jewish organisations.

Three quarters of all university-related antisemitic incidents reported to CST during the month of conflict in the Middle East occurred on various social media platforms or messaging apps, with 41 incidents of that nature being logged. The high proportion of online incidents can be attributed to a combination of factors: the propensity for younger generations to utilise social media platforms; the high regard with which pro-Palestinian campaigning is held on campus, and the

way in which antisemitism sometimes spills over from that activity during times of conflict; and the lockdown status of the UK in May 2021, which meant that campus activity around the country was minimal with cancelled lectures and closed university lecture halls and libraries.

# INCIDENT OFFENDERS

## Incidents by university staff

Incidents by university staff are those where the offender is part of the academic body or professional staff at the university. This can include professors, assistant professors, lecturers and non-academic staff such as caretakers and building managers.

Incidents perpetrated by members of staff involve a strong power imbalance between victim and perpetrator, whereby Jewish students are expected to make a formal complaint about a person who may have direct authority over them; and to do so by complaining to the same institution they are complaining about. Fears of having their grades affected as a result, mean students are often hesitant to report an incident if they are taught by the subject of their complaint. This is why some students choose not to report incidents that occur in class, or to only do so anonymously or via third parties such as CST or UJS. However, it is vital for students to report antisemitic incidents perpetrated by university staff. Unlike students who graduate after a few years, staff are often present in the same university over extended periods of time and therefore, should they possess antisemitic views, they risk affecting successive cohorts of students who may be taught by them in the future.

CST recorded five antisemitic incidents involving lecturers in the two academic years covered by this report. Four incidents were recorded during the academic year 2020/2021, all of which took place online; and there was one incident recorded during 2021/22, which occurred on campus.

## Case study: incident by university staff at Sheffield Hallam University

In December 2021, CST was informed by students of a complaint about a Twitter thread by Shahd Abusalama, then a PhD student at Sheffield Hallam University. The thread discussed an incident involving a student's "Stop the Palestinian

Holocaust" poster. In this thread, Abusalama explained why the student might have made the comparison, but stated "I wouldn't use such a politicised word"<sup>12</sup> indicating that she did not support comparing the Israel/Palestine conflict with the Holocaust.

Dr Abusalama was suspended as part of the investigation into this thread one day prior to taking on a newly appointed position as an associate lecturer, but then reinstated one week later to teach her module on post-colonial media literature.

Meanwhile, the arguments constructed in her defence, made by Dr Abusalama and those around her, began to pick up momentum. She tweeted that she was the "target of a Zionist witch hunt" and repeated this idea on numerous occasions in articles, interviews and on various social media platforms. This was despite the fact that university officials had not specified the group or individual who filed the complaint that led to her suspension, citing confidentiality.

Nevertheless, Dr Abusalama continued to make her claims in conspiratorial language. On the same day as her reinstatement, speaking in an interview with Roshan Salih of the 5 Pillars website, she said: "I am accused of antisemitism because I dare to speak up against power and I dare to demand freedom just as an equality for my people".<sup>13</sup>

Roshan Salih then asked her "Do you feel there is a co-ordinated attempt by Zionist organisations in this country to basically take down pro-Palestinian academics?" To which she replied "Of course, and there is a historical pattern... I am not the first person to be targeted and I may not be the last".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/ShahdAbusalama/status/1467103194820100100>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmx5jPPFDE>

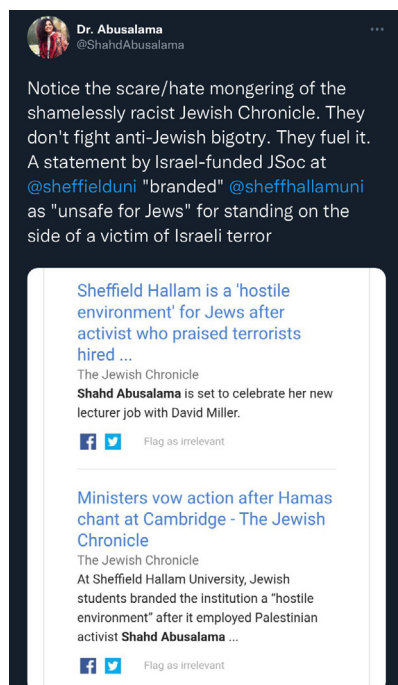
<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmx5jPPFDE>

Dr Abusalama repeated her claims of Zionists acting in bad faith against her in an interview with the website 'The Left Berlin' during which she said:

"The university has made itself an accomplice in the Zionist attempts to silence Palestine, to silence Palestinian voices, and to distract from Israeli crimes against the Palestinians".<sup>15</sup>

Dr Abusalama also stated "It's clear that Israel's lobby is constructing a new term called "anti-Zionist antisemitism", which they identify as the worst form of anti-Semitism that is threatening Jews. It is a deliberate conflation of a crime and a just cause. Anti-Zionism is a duty that people must embrace if they are actually and truly anti-racist".<sup>16</sup>

In response to an article in *The Jewish Chronicle* reporting about her case, Dr Abusalama claimed in a tweet that the Jewish Society is "Israel funded":<sup>17</sup>



<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theleftberlin.com/we-need-every-voice-to-speak-up-against-this-silencing-of-the-palestinians-interview-with-shahd-abusalama/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.theleftberlin.com/we-need-every-voice-to-speak-up-against-this-silencing-of-the-palestinians-interview-with-shahd-abusalama/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/ShahdAbusalama/status/1492201030632841222>

There are two aspects of Dr Abusalama's conduct that met CST's criteria for antisemitic incidents. First, her allegation that the complaints about her were the product of a powerful and secretive Zionist conspiracy comprising several organisations and individuals. In fact Dr Abusalama did not know who had made the original complaint against her and had no evidence on which to base her claims. Instead, it echoed a familiar trope that assumes Jewish people who complain about antisemitism are doing so dishonestly and in bad faith in pursuit of some political or other advantage.

The second aspect that CST categorised as antisemitic was her allegation that the Jewish Society at her university is "Israel funded". Again, this allegation was made without evidence and invoked the 'dual loyalty' trope that alleges British Jews have suspect loyalties to Israel that mean they are following an ulterior motive and cannot be trusted.

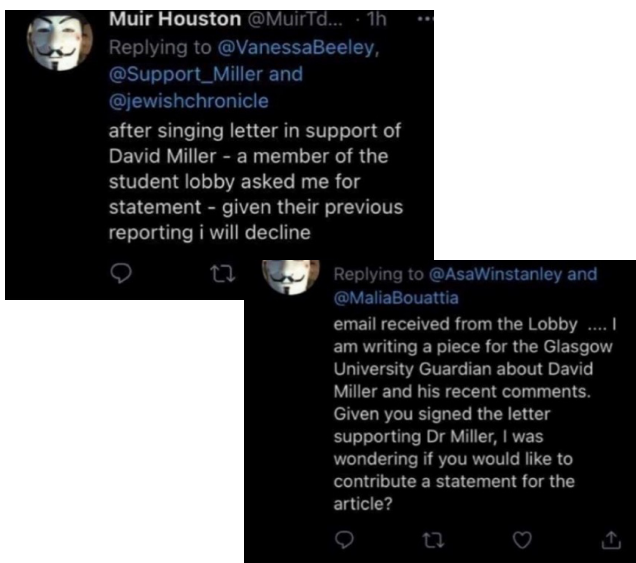
While she claimed in a tweet that she was offered a "more secure contract" as a result of the initial complaint, CST understands that Dr Abusalama is no longer employed by the university.

### Case Study: Incident by university staff at Glasgow University

In the autumn term of 2021, CST received a report from a student journalist regarding Dr Muir Houston, a senior lecturer from the College of Social Sciences at Glasgow University. The student had contacted Dr Houston via email for a comment after he had signed a letter in support of the disgraced academic David Miller, who was suspended by the University of Bristol after calling the Jewish society "pawns" of a "foreign regime".<sup>18</sup> All academics at Glasgow University who signed the letter supporting Miller were contacted by the student for an article they were writing for the student newspaper *The Glasgow Guardian*.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.thejc.com/news/news/revealed-university-lecturer-smears-jewish-student-as-the-lobby-35zbEh7l6rv8UZR9l6Kjyb>

Upon receipt of the email, Dr Houston tweeted from the account 'Muir TDM' saying, "email received from the lobby" and exposed online the details of the student's request for comment. He later tweeted, "After signing letter in support of David Miller – a member of the student lobby asked me for statement".



The suggestion that this student journalist was acting on behalf of "the Lobby" was antisemitic, as it denied her ability to perform a normal function as a student journalist and implied that her true loyalty was to a mysterious power acting for some hidden purpose.

A formal complaint was made to the university regarding the incident, and the student met with the Chief Operating Officer, supported by the Union of Jewish Students (UJS). Following a prolonged investigation, carried out over several months, it was concluded in November 2021 that the matter would be dealt with informally and Dr Houston would not be the subject of formal disciplinary action.

When later approached by *The Jewish Chronicle* Dr Houston said:

"The Israel lobby is an actually existing phenomenon composed of witting and unwitting

assets of a hostile and illegitimate foreign state."

"That state, Israel, can only continue to exist because of a slow genocide being committed against the Palestinian people. Britons should be deeply concerned that *The Jewish Chronicle*, whose funders remain secret, is seeking to lead the largest political witch-hunt in British history. We should all ask on whose behalf this onslaught of censorship and intimidation is being conducted".<sup>19</sup>

Considering no formal action was taken, the university ruled that the case could be reconsidered if "significant" new evidence came to light. The student then submitted a dossier of evidence of offensive and, in their opinion, antisemitic content taken from the same account 'Muir TDM'. In one of the posts raised with the university, the Glasgow professor had tweeted that former MP Louise Ellman was 'at the behest of a foreign power', and in another, "she got her 30 pieces of silver then?" in response to news that a former Labour MP had received an MBE despite her attack on Jeremy Corbyn. The trope of "30 pieces of silver" relates to the payment that Judas was allegedly given for betraying Jesus Christ to the Roman authorities. It is an antisemitic trope that has long been used to accuse Jews (i.e. Judas) of disloyalty and of selling their principles and values for money.

During the renewed investigation, Dr Houston made a guest appearance on a Facebook livestream event titled 'Academic Witch hunt spreads', which was organised by the Scottish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign. Speaking about the case alongside David Miller, Dr Houston said:

"This then got me in further trouble because apparently the terms the lobby and the terms the student lobby when applied to relating to

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.thejc.com/news/news/revealed-university-lecturer-smears-jewish-student-as-the-lobby-35zbEh7l6rv8UZR9l6Kjvb>



anything to do with Israel is deemed antisemitic by some people”.

“It all came to a head recently with a publication in January in *The Jewish Chronicle* which then appeared in other Zionist funded supporting magazines”.



“Any search for my name as I invite you to do just now and you will see some of the smear attacks that have been made against me”.

He later added, “I am waiting for the outcome of a disciplinary hearing into my conduct which was found by an investigating committee of anonymous experts to be antisemitic”.

In a final email to the student, the university explained that a formal process – initiated by the Head of School – was completed and appropriate action was taken.

Although an academic’s personal social media use does not directly affect what they teach to students, if those academics have a record of expressing allegedly antisemitic views in other settings it can potentially affect Jewish students’ confidence that

their lecturers or tutors will treat them fairly. This is particularly the case when comments by academics have directly targeted students or student organisations. This is perhaps the most complicated aspect of university-related antisemitism for which institutions need to develop appropriate and proportionate rules and policies.

### Incidents by students’ union officers or student societies

CST recorded four antisemitic incidents across the two academic years 2020-2022 in which the alleged perpetrator was an elected officer or staff member in a students’ union. This includes antisemitic incidents that directly involve students’ union-affiliated clubs or societies (such as an incident perpetrated by members of a society or club at an official event, or by a society or club’s executive committee member in their capacity as an executive committee member).

In October 2021, CST received a report of an incident involving a student unions’ Hockey Club and one of their events: a white T-shirt social. This is an event where students decorate one another’s plain clothing by writing and drawing various, often offensive, messages as part of a university social event. At a ‘Cards Against Humanity’ themed white T-shirt social, one Hockey Club member wrote on the back of their T-shirt “What do me and Hitler have in common?”, with the answer – “How much we hate the Jews” – written on the front.

A photograph of the offensive T-shirt was seen on social media and reported to the university. The student was suspended pending an investigation, and the students’ union notified CST and the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) of their intention to sanction the Hockey Club Committee and commit the entire team to antisemitism awareness training.

## UNIVERSITY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

CST and UJS work in tandem alongside other campus organisations to support students through the process of reporting antisemitic incidents to their universities and affiliated students' unions. Since the publication of CST's report *Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2018-2020*, this work has continued to unveil the difficulties faced by students who find that universities' complaints procedures can still be flawed and inconsistent. Whereas some institutions have provided strong support to Jewish students, others appear not to have investigated and adjudicated complaints about antisemitism fairly, objectively or quickly.

The following case studies illustrate the contrasting realities faced by students when it comes to reporting what they feel is discrimination against them. As these case studies show, when universities meet their duty of care to Jewish students who have specific concerns relating to antisemitism, they can play a key role in making those students feel safe and welcome in their institutions. When this does not happen, universities can compound the harm done by the antisemitism that the Jewish students feel.

### University of Nottingham & Nottingham Trent University

In June 2021, it was reported to CST that a University of Nottingham student was prosecuted by police in relation to antisemitic and racist graffiti, including a swastika which had been sprayed onto the wall of a Nottingham Trent University (NTU) accommodation block. At the time of the incident, both universities issued a robust, initial response.

A spokesperson for NTU said: "We have received a report in relation to an incident at a UPP hall of residence which involved offensive graffiti. We are investigating the matter and liaising with the police, the accommodation provider UPP and

colleagues at University of Nottingham. The graffiti has been removed".<sup>20</sup>

A spokesperson for the University of Nottingham said: "We condemn all forms of racism. It does not reflect the values of the University nor the behaviour we expect from students".<sup>21</sup>

"Should this be linked to a member of our community they will face robust disciplinary action."

According to the student who reported the incident to CST, the University of Nottingham followed through with disciplinary procedures during which the offender was suspended and excluded from the university. The police used a restorative justice process to resolve the criminal complaint regarding the graffiti. This required the offender to write a letter of apology to the university and to attend a course at the Holocaust Centre in Newark.

### University of Leeds

In January 2021, the Jewish Society at the University of Leeds informed CST they had filed a complaint over the online conduct of Professor Raymond Bush, in part for his tweets comparing Zionists to Nazis. Until his retirement in 2021, Raymond Bush was a professor of African Studies in Development Politics, in the School of Politics and International Studies at Leeds.

In 2017, Bush retweeted a post from blogger Asa Winstanley referring to the so-called "Nazi-Zionist alliance" saying "#Nazi-Zionist alliance #zionism #settler colonialism hold onto power whoever you align with".<sup>22</sup> Similarly, he also retweeted a *Haaretz*

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/nottingham-news/students-left-angry-offensive-graffiti-5508745>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/nottingham-news/students-left-angry-offensive-graffiti-5508745>

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/raymondobush/status/898116039824822272>

story about the Philippine Leader Rodrigo Duterte visiting Israel, writing “Does it take a Nazi to recognise a #Nazi #Israel #racism?”.<sup>23</sup>

Comparing or equating Israel with Nazi Germany or Zionism with Nazism is a gross libel with no basis in historical fact. It uses the pain and trauma of the Holocaust as a propaganda tool against Israel, by playing on the fact that Israel is a Jewish state. As such it is often deliberately used to provoke the most painful Jewish sensitivities and is one of the most common expressions of antisemitism found in anti-Israel discourse.



In another post, the Leeds professor is found to have quote-tweeted an opinion piece that argued former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was not antisemitic, adding “The reason they hate Corbyn of course is because he is anti-#Zionist and the antisemitic campaign is ran [sic] by the #Israeli embassy among others”.<sup>24</sup> Bush’s opinion that Jeremy Corbyn is not antisemitic is fair comment,

<sup>23</sup> <https://twitter.com/raymondobush/status/1021688682472984582>

<sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/raymondobush/status/1200s065022191382533>

whether it is accurate or not, and would not be categorised by CST as antisemitic. However, his allegation that complaints about antisemitism in the Labour Party under Corbyn’s leadership were part of a campaign run by the Israeli Embassy is a conspiracy theory that denies the legitimacy and authenticity of Jewish complaints about antisemitism and suggests that British Jews complaining about antisemitism were acting on behalf of a foreign government.



Despite successive queries by the Leeds Jewish Society, the outcome of the complaint was not made clear by the university.

On 6th May 2022, a student from the JSOC committee informed CST they had contacted Leeds University again to follow up on the initial complaint made two years previously. He received a reply from the university on 7th July with an apology for the “breakdown in communication”.

This email explained that the university secretary (at the time) investigated the complaint, taking into account the compliance of the posts with the university’s protocol on freedom of expression, which cites the IHRA definition of antisemitism. It also stated that they consulted counsel’s opinion, which included a review of the university’s obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 and other relevant legislation. This led the secretary to the conclusion that the posts in question were “neither unlawful nor anti-Semitic”, ruling that “there was nothing in

the posts themselves which could reasonably be taken to exhibit hostility towards Jewish people as Jewish people”.

As a result, no further action was taken and the matter had been closed in May 2021, leaving a year between its closure and the eventual explanation as to the outcome and basis for the ruling. In total, two years passed from when the initial complaint was made to when the final outcome was revealed. According to the university’s explanation, there were no repercussions for the professor whose “natural” retirement followed a long career at the university and was “entirely unrelated to this incident”. He remains an ‘emeritus’ professor, an honorary title awarded to academics of significant tenure that also indicates a continuing relationship with the university.

In this case study the University of Leeds responded to the students who had filed a complaint of antisemitism, to say that Nazi-Zionist comparisons do not exhibit hostility towards Jewish people as Jewish people, and therefore were not antisemitic. In only recognising hostility or antisemitism when “Jews” are explicitly mentioned, the university appeared to not understand the antisemitic language used, despite having used the IHRA definition as their frame of reference. This is especially anomalous given that the IHRA definition includes, as an example of potentially antisemitic speech, “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis”. This is a common, contemporary form of antisemitism that plays upon Jewish sensitivities and trauma from the Holocaust.

Indeed, the initial widespread adoption of the IHRA definition was greatly valued and has been demonstrative to Jewish students that universities were serious and open about their commitment to tackling antisemitism on campus. However, a lack of understanding risks undermining its value and

affecting the outcomes of complaints where antisemitic language is not recognised.

### Bristol University

In November 2021 a report commissioned by Bristol University into the comments by Professor David Miller was leaked, a month after Miller was sacked by the university. This report, authored by a KC, was intended to determine whether Miller had “exceeded the grounds of acceptable speech”. The KC was instructed to refer to the IHRA definition of antisemitism in line with Bristol University’s policy on antisemitism, but they took it upon themselves to also refer to the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA). Having assessed Miller’s comments drawn from five distinct sources, the KC came to the conclusion that his comments were not antisemitic.

The comments that the KC assessed included Miller’s claim in an article written by him<sup>25</sup> for *Electronic Intifada*, that the criticisms made against him by Jewish students at Bristol University were an example of the “weaponization of bogus anti-Semitism claims to shut down and manipulate discussion of Islamophobia.” He wrote that “Israel’s lobby in Britain has trained its guns on me”,<sup>26</sup> and linked to three newspapers of the Jewish community claiming that the “Israel lobby” had “penetrated public institutions”. In a separate statement made to journalist Ben Bloch, which the KC was also tasked with looking at, Miller claimed that Bristol’s Jewish Society was “an Israel lobby group”, that he was facing “a campaign of censorship” that was “directed by the State of Israel”, and that “the UJS and Bristol JSoc have consistently attacked me with a campaign of manufactured hysteria for two years”.

<sup>25</sup> <https://electronicintifada.net/content/we-must-resist-israels-war-british-universities/32391>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/how-end-of-zionism-academic-says-bristol-jsoc-is-israel-s-pawn-1.511915>

Despite the conspiratorial nature of Miller's allegations against Jewish students, the KC was unable to see any of his comments as antisemitic. This may be because, in addition to being guided to use the IHRA definition, the KC's report exhibited a preference for the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which defines antisemitism as "hatred, discrimination, prejudice or hostility against Jews as Jews, or Jewish institutions as Jewish institutions" (KC's emphasis). But antisemites rarely say that they hate Jews because they are Jewish; even Oswald Mosley claimed "we do not attack Jews on racial or religious grounds."

That the KC was unable to identify any of this as antisemitic is an important example of the difficulties that universities and other institutions sometimes find in identifying antisemitism when the word "Jew" is removed or replaced by "Israel" or "Zionist". This is an example of why simply adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism is insufficient if it is not applied in an effective and accurate way.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is important to ensure that whoever is assigned to investigate a complaint of antisemitism does not have a close working and/or personal relationship with the subject of the investigation. Otherwise there is a risk that the investigation will not be objective, or will not inspire confidence that it is truly impartial. Departmental colleagues may be more likely to have a personal relationship or similar political views and thus sympathise or show greater support for a fellow staff member, to the detriment of a student's complaint. A process for complaints of discrimination, bigotry or hateful language should be developed by universities in a way that is independent. This means including staff to assess complaints that do not have a known or close relationship with the member of staff or student involved, where possible engaging external advisers with specialist expertise in the type of discrimination or bigotry being alleged.
- Students often relay their frustration at the length of time it takes for universities to process their complaint and issue their final outcome, particularly when this is longer than the mandated timeframes laid out in their guidelines. While delays cannot always be avoided, as seen in the last two years with the global pandemic, universities should nevertheless take care to act within a reasonable timeframe. Where delays cannot be avoided, every effort should be made to ensure frequent communication, informing the student of the delays, any progress made and when they can expect a response.
- The process of reporting a hate crime can be an overwhelming and intimidating experience. Some students who felt comfortable reporting antisemitism to CST did not want to file a complaint to their university for fear of lack of anonymity. This is because the student may have a working or personal relationship with the subject of the complaint; whether that be a member of staff or fellow student. The knowledge that their identity will be revealed to the subject of their complaint may, in such circumstances, discourage them from reporting antisemitism to their university. Therefore, if a complainant's personal details can be kept confidential this would provide reassurance and encourage more students to report antisemitism.
- One university's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team informed CST that they have incorporated a space on their reporting form for students to say that they have specifically been the victim of an antisemitic hate crime. By signposting the exact type of discrimination the victim has endured, the university can respond with greater accuracy. This may include aforementioned recommendations in this report such as consulting external advisers with specialist expertise, and engaging Jewish organisations on campus to provide advice and victim support.
- It is welcome that many academic institutions have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, as it is essential that institutions use a generally recognised, transparent definition of antisemitism as a framework for their investigations. However, the experience of several investigations in different institutions shows that the IHRA definition is not always being applied accurately, proportionately and effectively, and as a consequence some investigators are failing to recognise antisemitic language. Institutions ought to ensure that the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism is accompanied by training for staff who will be investigating complaints so that they know how to use the definition, and have a wider

understanding of the nature, language and impact of antisemitism on British campuses.

- In times of heightened tension, universities should take care to formulate public stances and messaging that emphasise support for all students and do not ostracise any student communities. This is particularly relevant for Jewish students during periods of conflict involving Israel, when past experience shows that Jewish staff and students are often subjected to increased levels of antisemitism. It is essential to recognise these periods and act accordingly, both to pre-empt a rise in antisemitism through strong messaging and to ensure that appropriate levels of support are available at such times.

In addition to the recommendations made in this report, the following resources are available and useful to guide universities in dealing with complaints and tackling antisemitism on campus:

#### **Community Security Trust**

Educational resources on antisemitism

<https://cst.org.uk/antisemitism/educational-resources>

#### **University UK**

Tackling Antisemitism: Practical Advice for Universities

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/tackling-antisemitism-practical-guidance>

#### **Antisemitism Policy Trust**

A Guide to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/IHRA-Explainer-Web-Pages.pdf>

#### **Office for Students**

Briefing note on tackling antisemitism

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/prevent-and-address-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/tackling-antisemitism>

#### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

Good Practice Framework

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework>



## CST'S MISSION

**Promote good relations** between British Jews and the rest of British society by working towards the elimination of racism, and antisemitism in particular.

**Represent British Jews** on issues of racism, antisemitism, extremism, policing and security.

**Facilitate Jewish life** by protecting Jews from the dangers of antisemitism, and antisemitic terrorism in particular.

**Help those who are victims** of antisemitic hatred, harassment or bias.

**Promote research** into racism, antisemitism and extremism; and to use this research for the benefit of both the Jewish community and society in general.

**Speak responsibly** at all times, without exaggeration or political favour, on antisemitism and associated issues.

Published by Community Security Trust © 2023

The text and illustrations may only be reproduced with prior permission of Community Security Trust



Scan the QR code to visit CST's social media accounts

National Emergency Number (24-hour) **0800 032 3263**

London (Head Office) **020 8457 9999**

Manchester (Northern Regional Office) **0161 792 6666**

[www.cst.org.uk](http://www.cst.org.uk)

CST is a registered charity in  
England and Wales (1042391)  
and Scotland (SC043612)