

Scottish government ministers are both Zionists and antisemitic

By Sammy Stein

A few months ago, a member of Glasgow's Jewish community [accused the SNP and the Scottish Government of antisemitism](#) after Angus Robertson, the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, made a dramatic volte-face following his meeting with an Israeli diplomat. But how can this be the case?

For decades Jews have been welcome in [Scotland](#) and have always felt safe and until a few years ago, incidents of antisemitism were rare or even unheard of. But there has been a marked change and many would point to the ascendancy of the SNP as a trigger for increased levels of antisemitism in Scotland.



In 2015, Sandra White, an [SNP](#) MSP re-tweeted a repellent and offensive

antisemitic cartoon that showed six piglets suckling at a sow with the word "Rothschild" and the Star of David on it. The piglets are shown as representing the UK, the US, Israel and terror groups Islamic State, Al Qaeda and Boko Haram.

I understand following complaints, [Police Scotland](#) paid a

visit to Ms White who claimed that she had not intended to retweet the picture, and they accepted her explanation that she had done so by error.

That could have been the start of the growth of antisemitism in Scotland. Throughout her years as First Minister, [Nicola Sturgeon](#) made numerous commitments that racism, especially antisemitism and Islamophobia, would not be allowed to happen in her Scotland.

But both forms of racism continued to flourish and antisemitic members of the SNP gained confidence in their ability to openly display antisemitic tendencies. This was often driven by anti-[Israel](#) rhetoric by people who knew little or nothing about the Middle East conflict but they knew they hated Jews.

I experienced numerous incidents of antisemitism when attending SNP Party Conferences in [Glasgow](#), Edinburgh and Aberdeen with the group 'SNP Friends for Peace in the Middle East'. At some of these conferences, I noticed the presence of another group called 'SNP Friends for Palestine' and Nadia El-Nakla on occasion manned its stall. I once suggested that our two groups hold a joint fringe meeting and together advocate for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians but it never happened.

Nicola Sturgeon resigned after a series of scandals within the SNP and anointed her protégé [Humza Yousaf](#) to become First Minister. After his election, the level of antisemitism increased with much of it related to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In his address to the Jewish Community at the memorial service to Bernard Cowan, originally from Newton Mearns in Glasgow, who was killed mercilessly in his home by Hamas terrorists on 7 October, Yousaf said: "My commitment to the Jewish community then, and now, is to be an ally in the face of antisemitism, and I am proud of my lifelong campaigning against hatred in

all of its forms and believe that Islamophobia and antisemitism are two sides of the same coin.”

But I am not persuaded that Humza Yousaf really believes that statement. For a man whose family emigrated to Scotland from Pakistan and who was raised in a Muslim home with a strong faith, surely his ability to feel the same about Jews as he does about Muslims would be difficult to reconcile.

Yousaf, whose wife has Palestinian heritage and whose family lives in Gaza, was personally seriously impacted at the start of the October war when his parents-in-law were trapped there. He donated £750,000 of Scottish taxpayers money, [allegedly on his own initiative](#), to UNRWA, after which his parents-in-law were released. But UNRWA is an organisation that has been accused of having links with Hamas.

Yousaf resigned as FM after only a year because he ended the coalition the Scottish Government had established with the antisemitic Scottish Greens. The SNP then turned to veteran politician [John Swinney](#) to succeed Yousaf as First Minister.

Last week the SNP was verbally attacked by its members and supporters after [Angus Robertson](#) met with the Israeli Deputy Ambassador. Swinney confirmed that he was aware of the meeting which was held to raise with Israel the possibility of a ceasefire and the release of hostages held since October 7.

The objection of the SNP rabble to the meeting and it seems pressure from Nadia El-Nakla, Yousaf's wife, probably compelled Swinney to instruct Robertson, who is the external affairs secretary and whose job it is to foster diplomatic relations with other countries, to apologise for meeting the Israeli diplomat. Apparently, he was guilty of discussing cultural and trade links instead of limiting his remarks to urging an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Clearly, on one view, attempting to use the Scottish Government's influence to arrive at a ceasefire was no longer

important.

And so confusion reigns within the ranks of the SNP. The Scottish Government's formal position of supporting a two-state solution actually means that all Scottish ministers are in fact Zionists, as a Zionist is a person who supports the right of Israel to exist. But the Scottish Government has also breached the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which it has signed up to and which states that applying double standards by requiring from Israel behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation is antisemitic.

So Scotland's First Minister John Swinney has breached the IHRA definition of antisemitism by curtailing all further contact with the Jewish state but at the same time not doing so with countries such as China, Russia, Sudan and Saudi Arabia whose human rights violations are significantly worse than anything Israel may be doing in attempting to defend itself. It is clear therefore that SNP Government ministers are at the same time both Zionists and antisemitic.

This is possibly not the only country where the government ministers are so conflicted.

Sammy Stein is the Chair of Glasgow Friends of Israel