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University statement – Antisemitic attacks on Hillel House and Rabbi Deutsch

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12 February 2024



A statement from the University of Leeds

The University of Leeds is deeply shocked and saddened by the events of Friday 9 February during which Rabbi Zecharia Deutsch received threats to his safety and that of his family and Hillel House was attacked. We understand and share the sentiment that has been expressed within and beyond our community, that antisemitism is a hatred that has no place on campus.

We totally condemn the antisemitic abuse and threats directed towards the chaplain and his family – such attacks on any individual are unacceptable and will not be tolerated from members of the public or our University community.

The University is supporting West Yorkshire Police in their investigations and will continue to work with his employer, the University Jewish Chaplaincy, to ensure Rabbi Deutsch can provide the support that is so valued by Jewish students at Leeds and the other universities he serves in the Yorkshire region.

We are appalled that our Jewish student community was also targeted by a criminal act at Hillel House and share the concerns expressed for their safety and wellbeing. The University is actively supporting West Yorkshire Police and the Union of Jewish Students as the property owners as they investigate this incident as a hate crime.

The University has detailed measures in place to safeguard our students and is further stepping up activity relating to both security and wellbeing. Our campus Security team and West Yorkshire Police are increasing foot and vehicle patrols of the area, and we continue to strengthen our partnership with police and the Community Security Trust (CST), to ensure our community feels safe.

The Interim Vice-Chancellor and President is seeking meetings with universities in the region as well as our key partners across the city and

local politicians, to identify what more we can do together to address issues being experienced by communities in the city and wider region.

The Harassment and Misconduct team are the recommended first point of contact for any student or postgraduate researcher who is impacted by violence, abuse, harassment, or discrimination. To get confidential support from a specialist advisor, they should complete our disclosure form. If students don't want to access support and would rather tell us about something anonymously, they can complete an anonymous disclosure form. The Security team can also be contacted in an emergency on 0113 343 5494. We also promote the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) welfare hotline - 020 7424 3288 - should students prefer to report an incident to external community-led organisations.

The University is committed, and indeed has a legal duty, to support free speech within the law. Whilst there have been many peaceful expressions of solidarity, we regularly remind everyone in our community of the legal limits of free speech – the University does not support any views or actions which seek to exclude or make any community feel unwelcome on campus.

More broadly, we are working extremely hard to support and maintain our collective student and staff community. This has included regular meetings with student societies, faith groups and relevant regional and national representatives, to listen, discuss and respond as we identify what more we can do to respond to student concerns.

Our University counselling and wellbeing services and Leeds University Union continue to offer students help, advice, and a safe space to talk about any concerns and issues. Any students experiencing anxiety or wellbeing issues that adversely impacts their studies are encouraged to contact their School to discuss support or mitigating circumstances to support them.

In response to these specific and abhorrent instances of antisemitism, the University of Leeds is determined to protect members of our Jewish community and all those who play such a valuable role in supporting them.

Further information about antisemitism is available on the [CST website](#).

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