

From: First Minister
Sent: 22 March 2018 08:28:40
To: Public Engagement Unit
Subject: FW: Attacked by racists at anti-racist march

MACCS case please for OR

[REDACTED]

Office of the First Minister

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 March 2018 06:52
To: First Minister
Subject: Attacked by racists at anti-racist march

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am writing to you in your capacity as First Minister of Scotland.

I was part of the group from COFIS (Confederation of Friends of Israel Scotland) who attended the "Stand Up to Racism" march in Glasgow last Saturday. COFIS was set

up in response to the aggressive and racist behaviour of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign which in the last year has seen several of its members convicted and others outed as Holocaust deniers or otherwise antisemitic.

Two stewards from the organising group met with us and told us in an aggressive tone that we would be at the back of the march. They were asked to stay with us and escort us to our place because we were already surrounded by a baying mob, but they refused to do so. Three Arab Israelis who were part of our group (one a Christian Lebanese refugee; one a Muslim Bedouin and the third a female Druze student) were verbally abused in the most vile terms.

As the 35 members of our group attempted to join the march, a large number of individuals from various Class War, Revolutionary Communist Party, and anarchist groups jostled, pushed, threatened, swore and attempted to prevent us walking along Glasgow streets, screaming "These are our streets!" At the heart of the attacks was a group of balaclava-clad thugs from a group called "Red Front Republic". The police were overwhelmed, but eventually restored sufficient order to allow us to continue, albeit at a pace dictated by the thugs ahead of us who continued to obstruct us at every opportunity. The police appeared helpless to do anything about this.

Apart from the violence, what was also of concern was the repeated racist chants of "From the River (Jordan) to the (Mediterranean) Sea, Palestine will be free!" (a euphemism for the destruction of Israel) and, even more sinister, "From Glasgow to Gaza, victory to the intifada" (an apparent threat to the Jewish, and wider, community by bringing terrorism to Glasgow).

What was meant to be an anti-racism event looked and felt like a rally from 1930s Germany. Several of the chants fell within the international definition of antisemitism which has been adopted by both the Scottish and UK governments. This all took place in full view of the police.

COFIS as an organisation will be challenging all relevant parties to explain their actions. However, as an individual I would appreciate your comments on the above and your thoughts on what the Scottish Parliament can do to ensure that people can feel safe on the streets of Scotland.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

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Our ref: [REDACTED]
13 April 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 March, to the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, MSP, regarding being attacked at an anti-racist march. I work in the Scottish Government's Cohesive Communities team and have been asked to respond.

I would like to reassure you that this government takes hate crime very seriously. We are clear that any form of hate crime is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Unfortunately, Scottish Ministers are not able to comment on or intervene in individual cases.

Scotland is a multi-faith and multicultural society where everyone has the right to public assembly. These are important rights that the Scottish Government is committed to upholding. However, they must be balanced with the rights of communities affected by such events to go about their business as undisturbed as possible and without fear for their safety.

Police Scotland has powers available to it under the Public Order Act 1986 to deal with any disorder arising and to ensure that public safety and order is maintained. The Scottish Government fully supports Police Scotland to take appropriate and proportionate action to safeguard public safety.

If you believe you have been a victim of a crime you need to report it to Police Scotland by dialling 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-emergencies. Alternatively, you can also complete the online hate crime reporting form on Police Scotland's website at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/secureforms/hate-crime/>

If you don't feel comfortable reporting a hate crime directly to Police Scotland, third party reporting allows you to tell them about an incident without contacting them directly. There are third party reporting centres across Scotland, ranging from housing associations to victim support offices and voluntary groups, where their specially trained staff will provide support and assistance in submitting a report to Police Scotland on your behalf.

You can find your nearest third party reporting centre at:

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/hate-crime-and-third-party-reporting/third-party-reporting-centres>

I hope you find the above information helpful.

Yours sincerely

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