

# University Activity Report

A CSG Victoria analysis of incidents on campus



**COMMUNITY  
SECURITY GROUP**  
VICTORIA

## Jewish Community Incident Reporting on Victorian University Campuses

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## Introduction

This report is prepared to provide insight into the diverse types of incidents involving the Jewish community on university campuses from the beginning of 2024. Accompanying this analysis is a selection of extracts of victim impact statements made by individuals who have reported incidents to the Community Security Group (CSG) Victoria. All statistics are provisionally accurate as of May 31, 2024.

## Background Information

Since Hamas' attack in Israel on October 7, 2023, universities have been a focal point for pro-Palestinian activism by both far left and Islamic groups. More recently, the establishment of the first Pro-Palestinian university encampment in Victoria – at the University of Melbourne on April 25 – catalysed a spike in on-campus incidents.

Incident reporting from individuals on university campuses increased significantly in the month following the encampments' commencement – from students, parents of students and university employees. Since the encampments began, the CSG has averaged more than 50 reports per week, a vast majority of which are connected to university campuses. It is important to note that not all these reports were considered 'incidents' – many were reporting the existence of the encampments or online calls for activism.

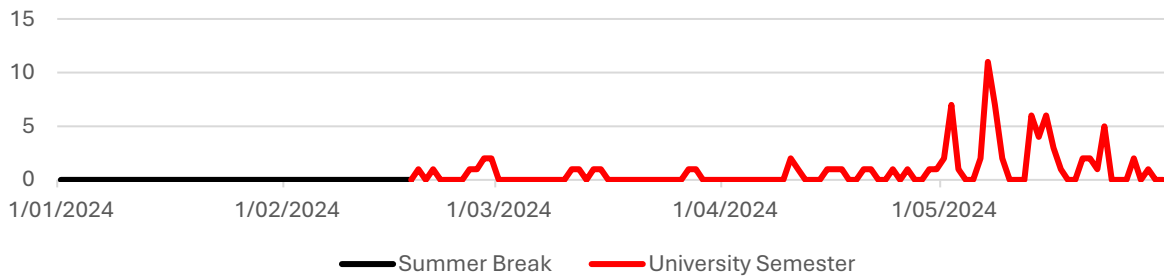
For added context, the CSG recorded only 11 incidents on university campuses in 2023, (9 of which were after October 7), and only 1 incident in 2022.

# Incident Analysis

Analysing data from on-campus incidents details an overview of the type of experiences Jewish students are reporting, providing quantitative data to support the impact statements provided later in this document.

## Overall Review of Incidents on Campus

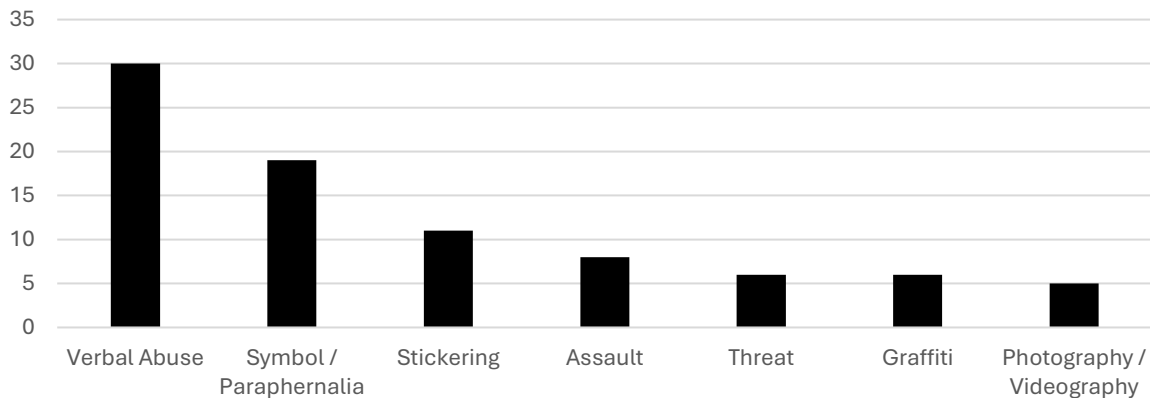
Count of Daily Incidents on University Campuses in 2024



The CSG recorded 91 incidents on university campuses in 2024 until May 31. 84 of these were classified as containing hostile or hateful rhetoric, while the remainder were classified as suspicious activity (predominantly individuals taking photos of Jewish events). Of all incidents recorded, about three-quarters (68) occurred after the first encampment on April 25.

Incidents are further categorised by the CSG into subcategories. Subcategories where at least five incidents were recorded on campus were Verbal Abuse, Symbol / Paraphernalia, Stickers, Assault, Threat, Graffiti and Photography / Videography. A distribution of these is shown below.

Incident Count by Subcategory (minimum 5)



Only incidents that occurred on a university campus and were reported directly to the CSG are included in this analysis. Online rhetoric is not included.

Where identified, the perpetrators of serious incidents, such as assault, threats, or verbal abuse, were **overwhelmingly individuals unaffiliated to the university** at which the incident happened, supporting the hypothesis that outside agitators are driving an unsafe environment for Jewish students on campus.

## Language on Campus

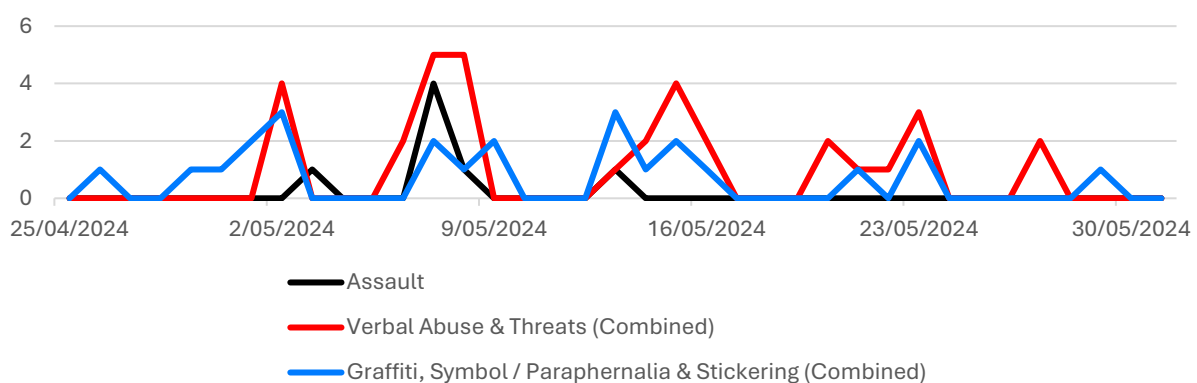
Of interest is the language used by pro-Palestinian demonstrators on campus, which repeatedly and explicitly expresses for the **discrimination against, vilification of or threats of violence against 'Zionists.'**

A comprehensive study undertaken by the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation in June 2023<sup>1</sup> found that around **80% of Jewish individuals in Australia identify as Zionists** and hold this as a core belief. While various definitions of “Zionism” exist, the most common is “the belief that Jewish people have the right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland of Israel,” in other words, the belief that the State of Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish state. At the time of writing, no research has been released regarding Jewish identification with Zionism since October 7.

Universities have broadly failed to rein in hostile rhetoric on campus toward Zionism under the guise of academic freedom or freedom of expression. Incidents that have been reported to the CSG include those including phrases such as “Clean the world of Zionism”, “Zionism is Terrorism”, “Zionism is racism”, “Kick Zionists off Campus” among a multitude of other phrases.

With the overwhelming majority of Jewish students identifying as Zionists, such rhetoric has predictably negatively impacted their wellbeing. Multiple impact statements provided later in this report support the assertion that Jewish students routinely **feel unsafe, psychologically attacked, or at best, unwelcome**, on university campuses around Victoria even when the incidents are not what one may consider to be “traditional” antisemitism.

Selected Incident Subcategories daily incident count since the beginning of encampments on April 25, 2024



As seen in the timeseries above, escalating action from pro-Palestinians has demonstrated that reports of graffiti, symbol / paraphernalia & stickers can be analysed as **a leading indicator of reports of verbal abuse & threats and eventually assault.**

Specifically, between the April 29 and May 3, incidents moved from graffiti, symbol / paraphernalia & stickers from the first three days of the university week before verbal abuse & threats numbered four on May 2 and then an assault was recorded on May 3.

<sup>1</sup> [https://jewishindependent.yourcreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Crossroads23\\_Survey\\_Report\\_June\\_2023\\_2-1.pdf](https://jewishindependent.yourcreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Crossroads23_Survey_Report_June_2023_2-1.pdf)

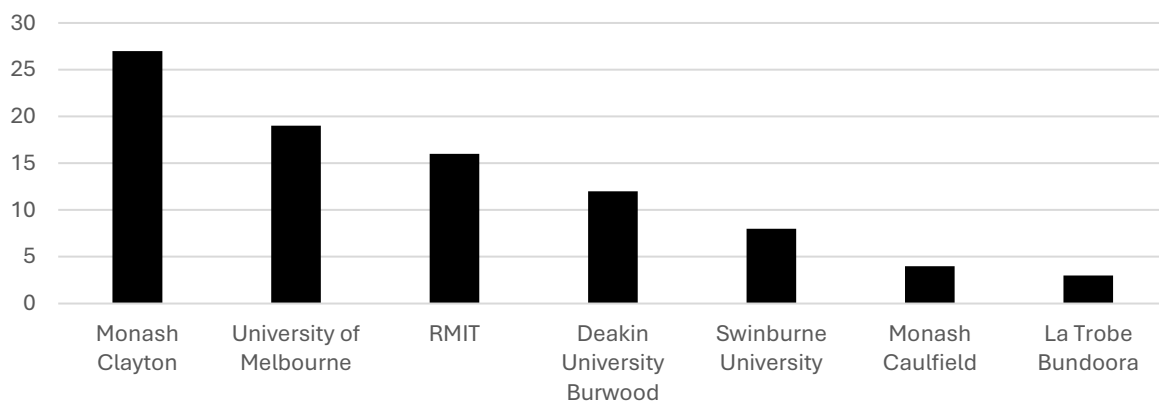
From this analysis, the CSG is confident that **the longer encampments exist on campus, the more violent they are likely to become**, especially during the first three weeks – a finding which is supported by evidence from overseas encampments.

### Campus Specific Analysis

Reporting of incidents on campus has been **largely proportional to the number of Jewish students on each campus**. As such, reported incidents at Monash University, which has the highest number of Jewish students at any Australian university, are much higher than other universities despite the size of the encampment being considerably smaller than at the University of Melbourne for instance.

The CBD location of RMIT City Campus, where all RMIT related incidents have been recorded, lends itself to increased reporting too, as reporters unaffiliated with the university have reported incidents (including an assault) on the campus grounds.

Incidents by University Campus (minimum 2)



### Additional Remarks on Incident Analysis

CSG notes that due to the timing of this report and the recency of incidents on campus, there may still be a substantial number of incidents yet to be either reported or recorded.

## Police Reporting

While the CSG encourages victims to make reports to police, very few victims do.

CSG has recorded only six incidents resulting in a formal police statement being made – four of these were statements made to police officers stationed at university campuses, while the remaining two were made at police stations following the incident. To CSG’s knowledge, only one of these incidents resulted in a case being opened by Victoria Police.

There remains a significant hesitancy to report, both to CSG and to Victoria Police, with a major barrier being reporters dismissing incidents as ‘nothing significant’ or fearing they will be exposed as an incident reporter.

## External Reporting

Individual university campuses have encouraged reporting to campus security through various channels, including emergency & advisory phone lines, reporting apps and/or web enquiries.

As evidenced by the impact statements, Jewish university students have expressed dismay at inaction by university administrations & campus security, particularly when it comes to allowing hateful rhetoric at demonstrations. For this reason, it appears that Jewish students feel disenfranchised and disempowered to report incidents to security. The CSG therefore believes that under-reporting of incidents is prevalent on all university campuses.

Separately, the CSG provides anonymised incident details to the Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS), the body representing Jewish students on university campuses throughout Australia.

As an illustration of under-reporting, CSG provided incident information to AUJS' Monash Clayton branch. Following a meeting with campus security at Monash Clayton, AUJS indicated that of the 8 incidents (at the time), 2 had not been reported to campus security. Campus security also indicated that it had received an undisclosed number of other incidents which AUJS and CSG were not aware of.

## Impact Statements

Incident reporters were approached to make impact statements for this report. These statements illustrate the impact on Jewish students' physical and psychological safety on campus in their own words.

Indeed, 16 out of the 20 students who provided impact statements requested anonymity, again underscoring the extent to which Jewish students feel unsafe. The CSG has anonymised all remaining impact statements for security purposes.



### Impact Statement 1 ~ University of Melbourne Student

*"I've almost lost all motivation to continue my studies here, as both the students and institution clearly cares more about their public reputation than protecting the lives and safety of their Jewish students. I feel abandoned and discarded by the university, left exposed to the antisemitic mob that is slowly taking over. I have never felt more alone."*

### Impact Statement 2 ~ Monash University Student

*"I have not reported any of these incidents, since for a long time, I rationalised them and convinced myself that none were enough to amount to legitimately threatening conduct. Since then, I have cried countless times. I could not report any of conduct for fear of being unjustly penalised in grading. Accepting [this] behaviour means that at any time I choose to display my ethnicity and religious beliefs, it is permissible for me to be the target of verbal and physical harassment. I refute this. But it seems that no one really cares what Jewish students think."*

### Impact Statement 3 ~ University of Melbourne Student

*"Coming to campus feels claustrophobic, as if I have to walk on eggshells to be accepted. University life is merely about surviving rather than thriving."*

### Impact Statement 4 ~ Deakin University Student

*"I am grappling with the fact that I didn't spend the last three weeks [of my diploma] celebrating or having fun with my friends, instead, I have been fighting for my right to exist safely on campus."*

### Impact Statement 5 ~ La Trobe University Student

*"A series of graphic, violent, and antisemitic posters ... have made me feel unsafe and caused me to become anxious, unsafe, and intimidated while on campus. This all affected me to a point that I was unable to complete and subsequently fail a subject in semester 2 of 2023... I feel unsafe, unwelcome, and intimidated as a Jewish student at La Trobe University."*

### Impact Statement 6 ~ Monash University Student

*"I was witness to an incident that caused a non-Jewish student to be bullied to tears by pro-Palestinian encampment members. The encampment has left me feeling frustrated and upset."*

### Impact Statement 7 ~ Monash University Student

*"I moved one of my classes in the first week of the semester, as someone was wearing a keffiyeh and giving me looks because of my Magen David necklace, which made me uncomfortable and on edge. I have subsequently decided to hide my necklace on campus, so I am not confronted by pro-Palestinian supporters."*

#### Impact Statement 8 ~ Deakin University Student

*"I have experienced multiple instances on campus where I have faced antisemitism and hate. People have **excluded me from events and group work** because I don't support 'Free Palestine'."*

#### Impact Statement 9 ~ Monash University Student

*"The day after they posted on social media "no Zionists welcome on campus" I had a test in the building next to the camp and the entire time they were chanting "intifada, intifada" which **made me sick and unable to focus** on my test."*

#### Impact Statement 10 ~ Monash University Student

*"The last few months have been a distressing time for me to be Jewish on campus. **My shirt was ripped** by the mob, and I have had multiple other incidents of pro-Palestinians following and staring me down for several minutes on end."*

#### Impact Statement 11 ~ University of Melbourne Student

*"It was always taboo to talk about Israel on campus but since October it doesn't even feel safe. I wait until the end of the semester when I feel comfortable around the people to even mention my connection and even still, I am fearful and hesitant."*

#### Impact Statement 12 ~ Monash University Student

*"As a Jewish international student, attending university has been extremely nerve wrecking... these individuals chant Hamas slogans which have the explicit intention of butchering Jews. [I have] **avoided attending in-person classes at all costs.**"*

#### Impact Statement 13 ~ Monash University Student

*"The unwillingness of peak bodies to take any action against the protests or the encampment for so long made me feel like I was alone. It made me feel as though **these bodies were almost supporting this idea that Jewish students shouldn't be welcome on campus.**"*

#### Impact Statement 14 ~ Monash University Student

*"I've felt a lot of anxiety about attending my classes. I've skipped tutorials because of [the encampments], which exist **at the expense of Jewish students' right to feel unintimidated on campus.**"*

#### Impact Statement 15 ~ Monash University Student

*“My involvement in campus life has been drastically impacted. This has manifested in several ways – I am significantly more avoidant of campus and have **avoided speaking about my ethnicity and place of birth**. Revealing my cultural identity [could] place my social and even academic life at risk, contributing to the social isolation I have felt since October.”*

#### Impact Statement 16 ~ Monash University Student

*“The recent activity on campus has been quite **upsetting, distressing, and scary for me as an Israeli and Jewish student**. I have encountered students who are unwilling to work with me on assignments or in-class due, without me making any comments regarding the conflict. I have hidden my cultural background in classes, changed how I introduce myself and stayed away from discussions that could potentially hinder my ability to learn collaboratively with my peers.”*

#### Impact Statement 17 ~ RMIT University Student

*“We, Jewish and Israeli students pay our tuition fees like any other student, expecting to receive an environment free from discrimination and hate. Yet, **we find ourselves constantly on edge and afraid** of when the next incident of antisemitism will occur.”*

#### Impact Statement 18 ~ University of Melbourne Student

*“This has been entirely demoralising. **I have felt in serious physical danger** when an individual aggressively approached the weekly Jewish students' picnic with the motive of intimidation, hurling violent physical threats at the group. We have felt compelled to move its weekly picnic from its original location in order to protect the physical safety of its members.”*

#### Impact Statement 19 ~ Deakin University Student

*“**I have felt compelled to conceal the most fundamental part of my very being**. I have hidden my Magen David necklace under my jumper, fearing that other students would attack me. I have felt stifled and surrounded by hatred... I am a proud Jewish student with a passion for learning, and I do not feel safe at university.”*

#### Impact Statement 20 ~ RMIT University Student

*“The first time [pro-Palestinian protesters] came in, they made false claims of genocide which angered me and the Israeli guest lecturer in the class. Last week **when they came in, I left the classroom and missed the first 5 minutes of class**.”*

## Conclusion

The CSG is concerned about the long-term implications for Jewish student safety on campus. With rising hateful sentiment impacting Jewish students so severely that some are choosing to avoid campus altogether, CSG is concerned that, in the long-term, this may lead to a weakened Jewish presence on campus and an increasingly disenfranchised Jewish student body.