**SCIENTOLOGY MET BY LARGEST PROTEST IN 15 YEARS AS TOM CRUISE FLIES IN FOR ITS ‘GREATEST GATHERING’**

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Scientology were met by dozens of protesters today, Friday 3rd November, as they gathered at their UK headquarters near East Grinstead. The demonstration, which was the largest of its kind in 15 years, was organised by Alexander Barnes-Ross, known in the anti-Scientology community as “Apostate Alex”. Scientology leader David Miscavige, who was recently served in a human trafficking lawsuit, was expected to host the

The former Scientology London staff member, who now speaks about his experiences on Youtube, says, “Scientology have advertised this event as their ‘greatest gathering’ and we wanted to send a clear message: the abuse in their organisation must stop.

“In all, 46 protestors attended today’s demonstration and I was overwhelmed by the support we had from local people, ex-Scientologists and “never-ins”, some of who travelled from as far as Plymouth and Nottingham to take part.”

Tom Cruise arrived at the Scientology base, which used to be the home of founder L. Ron Hubbard, by helicopter, just as the protest arrived. The demonstrators welcomed them to the event and carried a message of compassion, the organiser explaining ”We wanted to let Scientologists know there is a community of people willing and ready to support them if they choose to leave.”

“We are extremely thankful to Sussex Police for their help escorting us and ensuring the safety of the protestors.”

“When I was a teenager, I was locked in a room at their London Org at 146 Queen Victoria Street and told I couldn’t leave until I’d written down everything unethical I’d ever done – when all I was asking for was help” he says. “After leaving, I have heard countless stories of similar things happening to Scientologists around the world – people being harassed, forced to have abortions, held against their will and, for example, thrown in the lake during winter at Saint Hill as punishment. I have had enough, and I want people to realise what really happens inside Scientology.”

The ex-Scientologist now runs a Youtube Channel called ‘Apostate Alex’, where he interviews other former members and an online magazine called *Scientology Business* ([www.scientologybusiness.com](http://www.scientologybusiness.com)) which sheds light on Scientology’s UK and European activities. “People often think of Scientology as a crazy American cult. What they don’t realise is they have a huge, multi-million pound operation here in the UK – despite the government warning in 1975 that it is a ‘harmful movement with an evil reputation’”

Scientology claims to have over a hundred thousand adherents in the United Kingdom, however the 2021 census recorded only 1,844 people identifying as Scientologists. The group was rejected charity status in 1999, with the Charity Commission last month reaffirming Scientology “does not exist for the public benefit.” They currently do business through an Australian-registered non-profit called COSRECI that operates solely in the UK for tax reasons and reported a turnover of £22 million last year in the UK alone.

Saint Hill Manor, near East Grinstead, is the UK headquarters of the Church of Scientology and the former home of founder L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer who died in 1986. Scientology is now led by David Miscavige, who has rarely been seen in public after allegations of abuse, human trafficking and intimidation were made against him in 2019. Process servers have attempted to serve him legal papers in excess of 27 times but have been unable to locate Mr. Miscavige and his whereabouts is currently unknown. His role at the forthcoming IAS event in the UK will be his first public appearance since January.

**LINKS / SOURCES**

David Miscavige served in human trafficking case:

<https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/scientology-leader-david-miscavige-served-with-human-trafficking-lawsuit_n_63ee6cb9e4b02c25737b92ca>

Charity Commission statement on Scientology, September 2023: <https://www.scientologybusiness.com/tax-exemption/charity-commission-scientology-cannot-appeal-rejection-for-tax-exempt-status/>

1975 UK Government warning on Scientology:

<https://www.scientologybusiness.com/people/scientology-requested-a-formal-apology-from-the-uk-government/>

Apostate Alex on Youtube:

[https://www.youtube.com/@apostatealex](https://www.youtube.com/%40apostatealex)

United Against Scientology – protest website:

<https://www.iasprotest.com>

**IMAGES**

Getty Images / AFP: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/protesters-holding-banners-and-placards-chant-slogans-on-news-photo/1761314072?adppopup=true>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fzXuAPP7qjGv1ivuxAezwvU97ga_UYoV?usp=sharing>

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