

**Deloitte.**The Cambridge Union Society  
9A Bridge Street  
Cambridge, CB2 1UBEmail : [pressofficer@cus.org](mailto:pressofficer@cus.org)**PRESS RELEASE - 05.03.15****This House Believes Israel is a Rogue State**

On Thursday 5 March, the Union hosted a debate on the controversial motion “This House Believes Israel is a Rogue State.”

**Ben White** opened the debate for the proposition. He defined a “rogue state” as a “state that is a serial violator of international law and human rights,” and a state that routinely takes the law into its own hands. According to Mr White, the debate ought therefore to be over Israel’s human rights violations, not other states in the Middle East such as Iran and Syria. He noted that Israel likely possesses nuclear weapons, but chose to focus on settlements in occupied Palestine instead. Mr White quoted a former Israeli foreign minister calling the settlement projects illegal and inhumane, and a 1979 response from an American diplomat echoing the same sentiments. He later argued that “the settlement issue” has “calamitous” consequences for the lives of Palestinians. Next, Mr White argued that Israel “simply doesn’t care” about this problem, and cited several recent news articles reporting the contemporary continuation of Israeli settlements. He closed by calling such evidence “irrefutable, and that this is the conduct and behaviour of a rogue state.”

**Vivien Wineman**, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, opened the debate for the opposition. He started by saying that Israel may be imperfect, but should be “judged by the standards of states generally.” Mr Wineman asserted that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, and cited the invasions that have surrounded Israel since its inception. He argued that Arabs refused to negotiate with Jews, and refused to recognize the existence of the Jewish state. Mr Wineman argued that this hostility toward Israel is the root cause of the Israel/Palestine conflict. On the points of settlements, he asserted that Israel had agreed to give up their settlements in treaties with Palestine—and that such an agreement might be reached again—but that the conflict continued due to aggression from neighbouring countries. On the subject of human rights, Mr Wineman sought to condemn Israel’s neighbours, and argued that no nation has a perfect record of human rights, including Britain. He concluded by reiterating that a hatred of Israel is at the heart of the conflict, and denied that Israel ought be labelled as a rogue state.

Palestinian author and academic **Ghada Karmi** continued the debate for the opposition. She began by arguing that Israel is a democracy, but only for Jews. Ms Karmi called Israel guilty of human rights violation and a threat to other countries, citing occupations in Syria and Palestine. She said “Israel’s preferred method of dealing with conflict is through violence, oppression, and war.” She asserted that the six wars since the establishment of Israel have been “entirely due to” its existence. She argued that Israel has taken land, resources, and lives from the Palestinian people. Ms Karmi then sought to rebut the point that Israel might be an ally with whom to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon by noting that Israel is the only state in the region that has already acquired one. She referred to herself as “living proof” that Israel is a rogue state, calling Israel the reason she is unable to live in her homeland.

**Hannah Weisfeld**, director and one of the founders of Yachad, the UK’s pro-Israel pro-peace movement continued the debate for proposition. She opened her speech by refusing to defend policies of occupation, but asserting that such policies should not condemn Israel to history as a rogue state. Ms Weisfeld argued that the term “rogue state” implies a grave threat to world peace and other human rights abuses that she thought Israel does not commit. She spoke of the Israeli court system’s proclivity to charge corrupt politicians, a behaviour she viewed as contrary to the conception of a rogue state. She reiterated a more expansive definition of a rogue state, and concluded that a debate over Israel’s status as such “takes away from what we should really be talking about.”

**Dr Norman Finkelstein**, political scientist and activist, closed the debate for the proposition. He began his speech by expressing that, while he takes no pride in defending his side of the house, it is important to adhere to the facts. Dr Finkelstein called widespread anti-Israel sentiment in Britain “a rational reaction” to its policy.

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He mentioned a multitude of instances in which Israel has used violence on Palestinians. Whilst he conceded that both sides had attacked one another, he cited a ratio of 400 Palestinian deaths to every 1 Israeli. He argued that Israel had committed “eight murderous operations” on Gaza in the last decade. He asserted that Israel has committed atrocities against Lebanon since the conflict between the two had ended. Dr Finkelstein argued that every state in the world wanted peace and negotiations, except for Israel, who wanted a war with Iran. He concluded by saying that if Israel is regarded as a rogue state it is not due to a double standard, but because it “carries on like a rogue state.”

**Davis Lewin**, Deputy Director & Head of Policy and Research at the Henry Jackson Society, closed the debate for the opposition. He cited statistics mentioning atrocities that he viewed as far worse than any committed by Israel. He criticized Dr Finkelstein on several grounds and accused him of anti-Semitism. His speech was frequently interrupted by yells and noise from the audience. He argued that in Israel, citizens do not fear the state as they do in many other Middle Eastern countries. Mr Lewin further argued that there are many existential threats to Israel, and that the Israeli Defence Force is the most “moral army in the world.” He concluded by urging the house to argue about people who are “truly oppressed” rather than accusing Israel of being a rogue state.

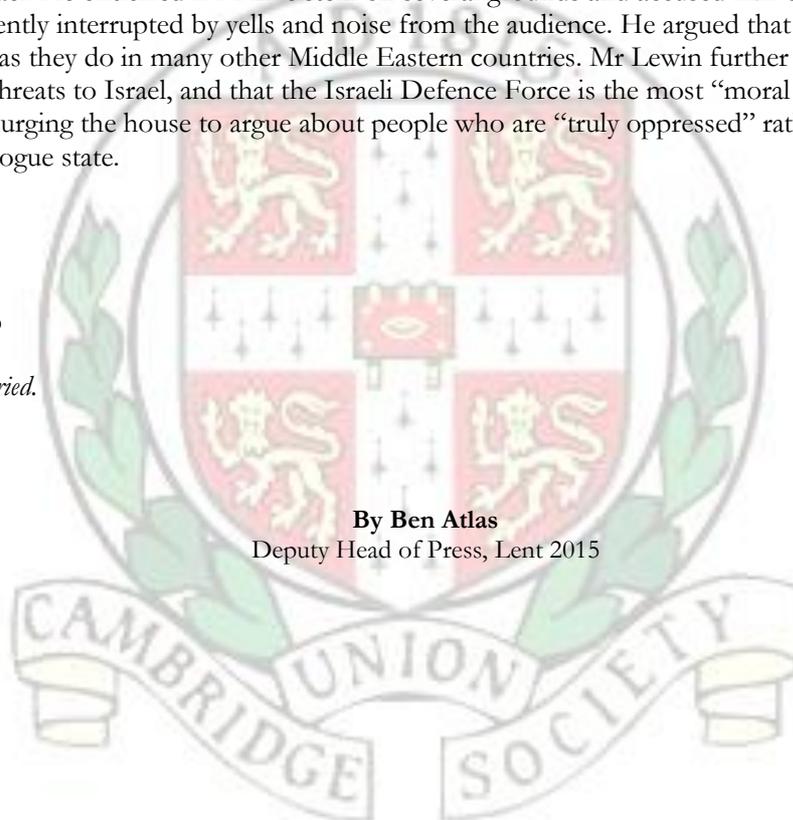
**Debate Result**

Ayes: 51%

Noes: 30%

Abstentions: 19%

*The motion duly carried.*



**By Ben Atlas**  
Deputy Head of Press, Lent 2015

**PRESS OFFICE**