

Israeli ambassador to UK in discreet visit to campus

By [Jacob Phillips](#), Editor (2017/18)

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Image: Louis Lu

On 18 October, the University witnessed a discreet visit from Israeli Ambassador to the UK Mark Regev, as part of his tour of the north east of England. As a result of the event being promoted, rather than reveal that Regev would be visiting, the University of York's Open Lecture team decided to instead promote the event as "In conversation with a high-profile Middle Eastern speaker."

In addition to security measures provided by the University, there was also a large private security presence. Regev was accompanied by both suited police and his own personal body guards, with a member of security was placed at every available exit for the entirety of the event.

Furthermore, the identity of Regev was kept quiet until as late as possible. It was not until 6am on the day of the lecture that all information about the event was disclosed to the general public. Consequently, there was no backlash or protest from students prior to or during the event, and the ambassador was able to swiftly leave the scene undisturbed.

In addition, students were only able to attend the event if they booked a ticket in advance using their University email account, requiring both a student ID card and another form of ID to cross reference with. Due to only a small number of students being able to attend, tickets were quick to run out and all were booked five days before the event. All tickets were provided to students for free.

Spectators at the event stated that it ran smoothly and slightly more quietly than they were expecting,

possibly as a result of the additional security provided by police and the ambassador's private team.

The talk itself did not cover any controversial material, but rather reiterated Israel's current stance on their position in the Middle East. Regev's main point focused on how democracy in the region is being placed under threat and, as since Israel is 'the only democracy in the Middle East', it should receive more support from the international community. Regev highlighted how Israel has an open media and strong no culture with plenty of public debate, all factors which contribute towards a democratic state.

When it was highlighted to Regev that Tunisia is a democratic republic he responded stating that Tunisia is a new hope for democracy in the region however it is an exception to the rule.

Regev proceeded to speak about transparency in democracy, speaking about how the Israeli Supreme Court has become increasingly dominant. However, Regev also stated that there was a positive trajectory for relationships between Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews.

One of the more interesting questions posed to Regev was whether the idea of a Jewish democratic state was in some senses a contradiction. To which Regev responded that Ireland, Poland and China all have similar laws to Israel. He continued stating that Israel was established by the Jewish people and therefore they should have sovereignty and independence.

Regev then stated that Israel will not negotiate with Hamas highlighting how there has been recent movements between Fatah and Hamas. He commented that Hamas wants the destruction of Israel despite removing anti semitic language from their charter.

Finally, Regev went on to support Donald Trump move to halt the Iranian nuclear deal. stating that Iranian behaviour has in fact deteriorated due to their support for Hamas and Hesbolla. Regev finally stated if Iran was to be allowed to continue then it will be a repeat of North Korea perhaps even becoming an even larger threat.

Regev's visit to the north east of the UK has taken him to other sites in York such as Clifford's Tower to commemorate the 150 Jewish people who were massacred there in 1190, as well as a visit to the University of Leeds. Regev's tour comes 100 years after the Balfour declaration.



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