



# *the* OXFORD UNION

## Statement from the Oxford Union 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Last night, Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon visited the Oxford Union to give an address and answer questions on the topic of "Hopes and Challenges for the Middle East." Whilst the vast majority of the audience behaved in an orderly and responsible fashion, some members continually interrupted the speech, and one individual in particular appears to have made a directly anti-Semitic remark. These individuals exceeded the principles of free speech that the Society upholds. They and their remarks are not representative of this Society, nor the vast majority of the audience. The Oxford Union will not tolerate this kind of behaviour by its Members.

This morning, the Union's President launched an investigation aimed at identifying the Members who disrupted the event. The Union will be taking disciplinary action against these Members, in accordance with the Society's rules.

The President praised the work of the security and local police on the night and expressed his gratitude for their help, as well as that of the Israeli embassy, in coordinating the event. The event was attended only by those members of the University who hold Oxford Union membership. Local protesters were not admitted onto the Union's premises.

The Oxford Union believes in the rights of free speech and protecting our invited speakers' ability to express themselves in an orderly and disciplined environment. We further believe that our Members have the right to challenge and question the speakers in keeping with the Society's expectations of good conduct. Last night was unprecedented. A disorderly minority disrupted and prevented the speaker from holding the floor where he had been invited to speak.

The Union will be taking immediate steps to ensure that all members are made aware of the high levels of decorum that the Oxford Union expects and that the moderators are trained effectively to enforce the rules of the Society.

The Oxford Union will be apologising to Mr Ayalon for the actions of its Members and thank him for the professional way in which he handled the situation.

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