

THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS MIDDLE  
EAST CENTRE

JANUARY 2011

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## Introduction

The involvement of Prof. Martha Mundy and Dr. John Chalcraft in the London School of Economics Middle East Centre has been brought to the attention of Student Rights over the past few weeks. We have compiled this briefing document to investigate their affiliation to the institution, whether or not they contribute to the goals of the organisation or indeed, hinder its operation.

This document aims to ask the questions and provide recommendations regarding the appointment of these academics and raising the issue of due diligence when universities appoint academics onto management boards such as this, due to the political sensitivities that surround them.

## About the Middle East Centre

The Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics was founded in 2010 and describes itself as a 'multidisciplinary research centre focusing on modern Middle Eastern cultures, societies, economies and international relations.'<sup>1</sup>

The centre was initially endowed by the UAE's Emirates Foundation for Philanthropy and the Aman Trust for the amount of £9.2m. Sources report that the Emirates Foundation portion is regarded as a contribution from the government of the UAE Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The Aman Trust was endowed by Arif Naqvi, an LSE alumnus originally from Pakistan who currently serves as the CEO of Abraaj Capital in Dubai and has worked for organisations in London, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.<sup>2 3</sup>

LSE's Director, Howard Davies has said of the Middle East Centre, "With founding support in place from the Emirates Foundation and The Aman Trust, we will be inviting other stakeholders who share our values of impartiality and academic freedom to examine the LSE's strength in Middle East studies, and to contribute materially to the Centre's development."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/news/archives/2010/05/MiddleEasternCentre.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.amanfoundation.org/about/about-the-aman-foundation/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.amanfoundation.org/about/board-of-trustees-management-team/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.emiratesfoundation.ae/%28S%282eqa4wnlfcmtjayqz013o55%29%29/English/pressdetails.aspx?releaseid=1>

## The goals of the Middle East Centre are as follows:

“The Middle East Centre works to develop research and teaching on the societies, economies, politics, and international relations of the **region, which includes Arab states, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan.**

The Middle East Centre builds on that expertise to **promote innovative interdisciplinary research and training on the region**, with foci on history and political economy, society and environment, and law and international relations. The Middle East Centre places special emphasis on active and systemic collaboration with Arab universities, scholars, policy makers, and civil society, and on speaking to a global audience about the region's strengths and challenges.”

### Middle East Centre Aims:

- Increase LSE capability to **engage** with countries in the Middle East
- Create a platform for the receipt of endowments and financial support for research, teaching, exchange, publications, conferences and lectures
- Establish LSE as a European centre for Middle East scholarship
- **Strengthen relations between LSE and Middle East universities**<sup>5</sup>

## Staff

The staff of the LSE Middle East Centre follows below. It is worth emphasizing that the stated aims of the organisation are to ‘strength relations’ in the region between the LSE and Middle East universities and that Director Howard Davies made a point of ‘impartiality’ and ‘academic freedom’ when discussing the launch of the Middle East Centre.

**Director** - Professor Fawaz Gerges

**Centre Manager** - Robert Lowe

### Management Group

- Professor Nigel Ashton, Department of International History
- **Dr. John Chalcraft, Department of Government**
- **Professor Martha Mundy, Department of Anthropology**
- Professor John Sidel, Departments of Government and International History

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/about/home.aspx> [emphases added by Student Rights]

**Dr. John Chalcraft**

Dr. Chalcraft recently spoke at a debate at the London School of Economics which was co-hosted by the Palestine Society and the Israel Society. The topic of the discussion was the academic boycott of Israel. Dr. Chalcraft spoke in favour of a boycott. Chalcraft has described Israel as a “heavily militarized, nuclear-armed, expansionist apartheid state with extensive illegal settlement, land seizure and wall-building activity.”<sup>6</sup>



At the event, Prof. Daniel Hochauser, speaking against the motion, questioned the fact that Chalcraft sits on the management group/board of the Middle East Centre, given its aims towards academic freedom, strengthening ties in the region and impartiality. These do indeed seem directly contradicted by Chalcraft’s views on an academic boycott of Israel and various other organisations/campaigns he is involved with.

Dr Chalcraft’s association with the following groups/documents is damaging to the integrity of the Middle East Centre, as his views increase divisions and stifle constructive debate and research, than they do to foster an appropriate academic environment of research. This is confirmed by a recent joint press release by the Al-Quds (Palestinian) and Hebrew (Israeli) Universities (signed in London) which states<sup>7</sup>;

*“Cognizant of the moral leadership universities should provide, especially in already turbulent political contexts, we, the President of Al-Quds University and the President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, have agreed to insist on continuing to work together in the pursuit of knowledge, for the benefit of our peoples and the promotion of peace and justice in the Middle East.*

*Our position is based upon the belief that it is through cooperation based on mutual respect, rather than through boycotts or discrimination, that our common goals can be achieved. Bridging political gulfs – rather than widening them further apart – between nations and individuals thus becomes an educational duty as well as a functional necessity, requiring exchange and dialogue rather than confrontation and antagonism. Our disaffection with, and condemnation of acts of academic boycotts and discrimination against scholars and institutions, is predicated on the principles of academic freedom, human rights, and equality between nations and among individuals.*

*We therefore call upon academics here and worldwide to act in support of our mission, as one which might allow for ending our shared tragedy rather than prolonging it.”*

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=203765>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hunews.huji.ac.il/articles.asp?cat=24&artID=449>

## Affiliations:

British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), a campaign group supporting an academic boycott of Israel:

Dr. Chalcraft is the Treasurer ([treasurer@bricup.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@bricup.org.uk))

In support of this call for a boycott, BRICUP will <sup>8</sup>:

- *Continue to put pressure on the EU and the UK government for the **exclusion of Israel from the European Research Area.***
- *Develop a policy which encourages individual academics to **break their professional links with Israel** by such actions as:*
  - ***Refusing research collaborations with Israeli institutions** or to referee papers or grant applications issuing from such institutions*
  - ***Refusing to attend academic conferences in Israel***

*Dr. Chalcraft and Prof. Mundy are signatories of the following:*

## Statement by Workers in the Public Cultural Sphere in Lebanon, July 27, 2006

“Rather, the recent Israeli aggression is the latest in a long series extending back to the founding of the Zionist state and motivated by both historical ambitions vis-à-vis Lebanese territory and waters and by a racist supremacist ideology that denigrates the indigenous population, their culture, and their very existence.

Arab intellectuals to stand beside the Lebanese Resistance, to expose the Zionist racist, supremacist impetus, and to document Israel's crimes against Arabs since its founding.

Free-thinking intellectuals the world over, and advocates of justice and peace, to publicize the history of Israeli aggression and to pressure the American and European governments to halt their military and material maintenance of the Zionist killing machine.” <sup>9 10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bricup.org.uk/what.html> [Emphases added by Student Rights]

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=297>

<sup>10</sup> <http://umkahlil.blogspot.com/2006/08/statement-by-workers-in-public.html>

## **Israel- Blue, White - and Green!**

“No environmental scientist of integrity should collaborate in this public relations exercise for a noxious regime, or in the attempted indoctrination of a swathe of Britain’s school students.”<sup>11</sup>

## **Letter regarding Zion Evrony- Israeli Ambassador to Ireland**

“Madam, – We, the undersigned, are united in seeking the immediate expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland, Dr Zion Evrony. We believe the ambassador must leave Ireland until such time as there is a complete end to Israel’s war on Gaza and its continued slaughter of the Palestinian people.”<sup>12</sup>

## **Prof. Martha Mundy**

### **‘To boycott or not to boycott’**

After the ‘To boycott or not to boycott’ event, in which Dr. Chalcraft argued in favour of the boycott of Israeli institutions, Professor Mundy was involved in an exchange of views with another member of the audience, where it is alleged that Professor Mundy threatened to ‘slap’ a member of the audience who turned out to be a Vice President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Mundy admits the use of this language, yet denies that it was used in a threatening manner, and has written to the Jewish Chronicle, who covered the story, demanding an apology. The details of this episode, rather than indicting Professor Mundy for threatening behaviour, serve to highlight the controversial and divisive nature of Professor Mundy’s involvement within the Middle East Centre.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bricup.org.uk/documents/archive/BRICUPNewsletter25.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/90621>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/43726/jewish-leader-threatened-lse-israel-debate>

## "How much influence does the Zionist Lobby exert on US & UK Foreign Policy?" with Abdel Bari Atwan

Martha Mundy chaired a student event at the London School of Economics in which hateful, racist accusations were shouted across the room. Professor Mundy seemed unable or unwilling to control the debate, leading to some members of the audience accusing Jewish students of being Nazis. One such claim was even mounted at the Jewish anti-racism sabbatical officer at the LSE.

Whether the talk should have been allowed to proceed from the outset is debatable, given the controversial views of the speaker, and his previous comments concerning the bombing of Israel and his intention to 'go to Trafalgar Square and dance with delight' if Iranian missiles hit Israel<sup>14 15 16 17</sup>. At the very least, the intimidation of audience members should have been prevented by Professor Mundy. Instead, reports are that Prof. Mundy was complicit in the intimidation, which can be inferred from the videos available.

### BRICUP

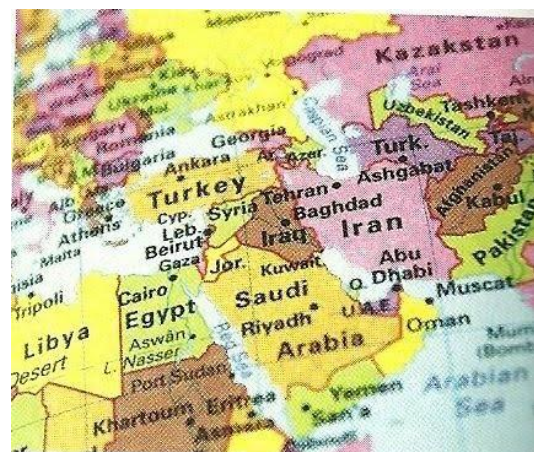
In a similar vein to Dr. Chalcraft, Professor Mundy is deeply involved with BRICUP, and has written in the Independent - 'Why we support the Israeli university boycott'.<sup>18</sup>

Both Dr. Chalcraft and Professor Mundy's participation in the boycott movement run against the principles of the LSE's Middle East Centre. The centre includes Israel in its definition of the region, yet both academics are committed to the omission of Israeli institutions within their research.

### Institutional Bias?

#### LSE Statement regarding the publication of a map omitting Israel:

*"To illustrate a news story in our magazine LSE Connect about the new Middle East Centre at LSE, we used a small stock image of a map of the region without realizing that while Israel was coloured in on the map, it was not identified in text. This oversight was unfortunately not picked up during the production process. We apologize for any offense caused by its publication and we have updated the online version of LSE Connect to remove the map."<sup>19</sup>*



<sup>14</sup> <http://thebeaveronline.co.uk/2010/12/07/abdel-bari-atwan-talk-sees-students-walk-out/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=197812>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOJ8LT7DlFA>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.studentrights.org.uk/2010/12/nazis-accusations-students-egregious-man-state-affairs-london-school-economics/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/higher/preformdavid-seddon--martha-mundy-why-we-support-the-israeli-university-boycottpreform-490322.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=200968&R=R4>

While unfortunate, this occurrence is by itself not enough to conclude that there is institutional bias of the organisation itself, but serves to highlight that academics with 'anti-Zionist' aims may utilise it for political propaganda – seemingly at odds with their position regarding Israeli universities and academic freedom. While not to be construed as an accusation against those mentioned in this report, it serves to illustrate the sensitivities involved and potential issues for the LSE as a whole.

## Funding

The Middle East Centre has two declared donors on their website - **The Emirates Foundation** and the **Aman Trust**. Funding from these two organisations, according to LSE's annual report, amounts to £9.2 million.

*[The following descriptions are taken directly from press releases from the LSE]*

### The Emirates Foundation for Philanthropy

"The Emirates Foundation for philanthropy is one of the UAE's foremost philanthropic organizations. It offers financial and technical support to projects that enrich the lives of people in the Emirates, particularly in the areas of youth development, knowledge creation, and society and culture.

The Foundation facilitates links between commercial businesses and the public sector to devise new projects and strengthen existing non-profit initiatives throughout the country & its funding comes from annual donations and an endowment fund supported by the Abu Dhabi government and private companies.

Launched on April 12 2005 by H.H Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown prince of Abu Dhabi, its Board of Directors is chaired by Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs."<sup>20</sup>

### The Aman Trust

"The Aman Trust is a philanthropic organization operating in the fields of healthcare, education and food security throughout the Middle East and South Asia. Its sister organization, the Aman Foundation, is active in Pakistan.

The Aman Trust is headed by Arif Naqvi, CEO and Founder of Apaaj Capital, one of the largest private equity firms operating in emerging markets."

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.middleeasteducation.com/news/newsfull.php?newid=371722>

## Conclusions

It follows that while there is currently inconclusive evidence to prove any bias within the institutions aims, the two staff highlighted are completely at odds to the goals and stated aims of the LSE Middle East Centre.

Prof. Mundy and Dr. Chalcraft's continued involvement with the centre will persist in undermining what otherwise could be creditable work in fostering dialogue within the region. The question must be asked as to how these academics, with their political affiliations, can be expected to impartially serve on the management board of the Middle East Centre.

The position of these academics is not, however, unique. There are many academics across the United Kingdom who endorse the academic boycott of Israel and various other campaigns that seek to highlight regional issues in the Middle East, with specific reference to Gaza.

The crucial difference is that Prof. Mundy and Dr. Chalcraft have been tasked with guiding an organisation committed to (in the words of the LSE Director) 'impartiality' and 'academic freedom'. The promotion of a boycott against Israeli academic institutions runs contrary to this notion.

## Recommendations

- Student Rights call on the management board at the London School of Economics to review the management of the Middle East Centre, opting away from vested interests in the name of impartiality.
- Student Rights would also recommend, in the same interest, diversifying the funding stream of the Middle East Centre to avoid any accusations of bias based on financial sources. The incident regarding a map omitting Israel may or may not have been an accident, however with a more diverse funding base; this issue would not have raised as many eyebrows.
- It should also be noted that Prof. Mundy's conduct at public events has been repeatedly criticised, 'isolating those with certain political viewpoints'. The events surrounding her shouting at the anti-racism officer at the LSE during Abdel Bari Atwan's speech alongside her alleged 'threatening' behaviour toward a Vice President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews illustrates a deepening tension that may lead to a more severe incident – the LSE should distance itself from these incidents.

**Editor's note: At no point in this report have we sought to do anything but present the facts in the context of the allegations made that Dr. Chalcraft and Prof. Mundy's views are in distinct opposition to the stated aims of the London School of Economics Middle East Centre. The findings of this report should not be construed as allegations of racism or anti-Semitism, but rather an engrained political belief that contrasts with the roles that these individuals are tasked with at the LSE Middle East Centre.**