



On Tuesday evening, students at the London School of Economics gathered to protest the platforming of Tzipi Hotovely, Israel's ambassador to the UK. Hotovely was invited as a speaker by LSE's Debating Society to speak alongside Husam Zumlot, Palestine's ambassador to the UK. The public debate event was named "Perspectives on Israel-Palestine".

In the lead up to this controversial debate, LSESU's Palestine Society released a strongly worded statement condemning the decision to platform Hotovely. The statement cited the Israeli ambassador's "track record of anti-Palestinian racism and war crimes". The letter outlined examples of Hotovely's racist rhetoric, such as dismissing the Nakba, a term used to refer to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, as "an Arab lie" and advocating for the building of settlements. It argued that the platforming of Hotovely would not only violate "LSE's duty of care towards its Palestinian and Muslim students", it would also contradict LSE's External Speaker's Policy and Code of Practice on Free Speech.

The Association of Students for Palestine, a student-led organisation that seeks to represent Palestinian students and societies across UK universities, released a joint statement with LSE's Palestine Society. The open letter expressed similar concerns such as the well being of LSE's Palestinian students and argued that "anything less than a 'zero tolerance' approach to anti Palestinian racism send the message that bigotry towards Palestinians [...] gets a free pass". This statement was signed by 11 Palestinian societies from UK universities.

The protest itself occurred at 5pm on a Tuesday, it's attendees marched from the library towards where the event was hosted. LSE for Palestine's official statement concerning the event described how "the chants of 'Free Free Palestine' and 'From the river to the sea Palestine will be Free' rang ever loudly through the air". The students were described as "collectively disrupting the event with their voices". The statement emphasised that Hotovely did not "flee" the event, neither was she denied a platform, contrary to what earlier, unsubstantiated reports on twitter had stated. Instead, the statement reveals that Hotovely was "welcomed with open arms", it points out that she left the event holding flowers.

The protests themselves have become a source of controversy, with many users and news outlets accusing the protestors of antisemitism. The Jewish Chronicle published a headline dubbing the protestors as "a Jew hunting mob". However, LSE for Palestine's statement makes it clear that the protestors used their voices as their means of protest and the videos of the event do not show evidence of violence. Moreover, a few hours before the event, LSE for Palestine published a post on their Instagram page establishing which chants would be acceptable, illustrating that the intention behind this protest was to show their dismay at the platforming of the Israeli ambassador.

This is not the first time Hotovely has received condemnation, following her appointment as an ambassador to the UK, over 2000 Jews signed a petition by Naamod condemning this decision. In the past, Hotovely has flat out rejected ambitions for Palestinian statehood. She has also criticised the Board of Deputies for British Jews for supporting a two-state solution.

The joint Statement can be found on www.asapalestine.co.uk