In Britain, Protesters Shut the Falk Up

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A British campus speaking tour came to an abrupt end on Tuesday for [Professor Richard Falk](http://www.timesofisrael.com/uns-falk-accuses-israel-of-ethnic-cleansing/), when Middlesex University canceled his appearance scheduled for Wednesday.

The tour was intended to promote his book, “[Palestine’s Horizon: Towards a Just Peace](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Palestines-Horizon-Toward-Just-Peace/dp/0745399746).” Falk is a former UN special investigator on human rights in the Palestinian territories who is highly critical of both Israel and the United States. Born in New York to a Jewish family, Falk is a professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University.

Falk arrived in Britain fresh from a major row about a report he co-authored on behalf of the UN’s [Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia](http://www.timesofisrael.com/topic/escwa-economic-and-social-commission-for-western-asia/) (ESCWA), which concluded that Israel was imposing an “apartheid regime” on the Palestinians. After protests from Israel and Washington’s UN ambassador Nikki Haley, the report was disowned by the UN secretary-general and withdrawn from the ESCWA website. ESCWA head Rima Khalaf resigned in protest. Haley described Falk as “a man who has repeatedly made biased and deeply offensive comments about Israel and espoused ridiculous conspiracy theories.”

Middlesex, whose campus is in the heart of the Jewish community in northwest London, cited safety reasons for canceling the event, where Falk, who has been denounced three times for anti-Semitism by the British government, was due to be hosted by the law faculty.

In 2012, the British Foreign Office condemned Falk for providing the cover endorsement of a virulently anti-Semitic book that describes Jews as Nazis and asks whether “Hitler might have been right after all.”

In 2011, then-prime minister David Cameron “strongly condemned” Falk’s publication of an anti-Semitic cartoon. The image posted by Falk on his blog showed a dog wearing a Jewish skullcap, urinating on a depiction of justice, and devouring a bloody skeleton.

Falk was publicly rebuked by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2011 for [suggesting the 9/11 terrorist attacks](http://www.theblaze.com/news/2011/07/07/un-palestinian-expert-cartoon-insults-israel/) were orchestrated by the US government. He also blamed the Boston Marathon bombings on “American global domination” and “Tel Aviv.”

Falk’s glorification of Hamas even saw the Palestinian Authority seek to expel him from the UN.

On Tuesday, Falk was due to speak at the University of East London (UEL), but it, too, canceled the meeting.

A spokesperson for the university said that it “has taken the difficult decision to cancel a book launch by Professor Richard Falk which was scheduled to take place at our Stratford campus on Tuesday, March 21, 2017. It became clear, the day before the event, that the University’s external speakers policy had not been adequately followed.”

The university said it is “a diverse and inclusive environment,” which hosts many varied events and speakers. It “strongly believes that universities should be a place of debate and free speech. We would consider welcoming Professor Falk to our campus on another occasion if the appropriate policies and procedures were followed,” the spokesperson added.

But asked why UEL would “welcome” Falk if all procedures were properly followed, the university refused to comment further.

Behind the cancellations lay furious activity by the Jewish community after a tumultuous event for Falk at the London School of Economics (LSE) Monday night, at which Jewish students were verbally abused and one of Falk’s supporters allegedly told students to read the works of notorious Holocaust denier David Irving.

Amid chaotic scenes, two pro-Israel activists were thrown out.

The LSE event was hosted by the university with the support of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (Caabu), considered to be a more moderate pro-Palestinian lobby group. Caabu director Chris Doyle interviewed Falk about his book, in which he claims that Jerusalem has been “ethnically cleansed.”

Mary Kaldor, a professor of global governance at LSE, described Falk as a “very old friend.” Her introductory remarks, that set the tone for the entire event, were to suggest the recent UN rejection of Falk’s latest report was the “latest variant” of the argument over free speech and Israel, said blogger David Collier, who was present at the LSE meeting.

Kaldor told those at the meeting she was “deeply ashamed, on behalf of the London School of Economics, that there should be people who come to a meeting of this kind and behave in this way… It totally illustrates to me how unacceptable the way free speech is being closed down in this country.”

She said the fracas proved Falk’s point — that Israel supporters now “attacked the messenger.”

Collier protested that Kaldor “felt compelled to announce her ‘shame’ at the way the Jewish people present handled the incitement. This professor has sold her intelligence and integrity up the river and can now be counted as one of life’s galactically stupid human beings.”

On Monday night, LSE’s Israel Society published a statement on social media saying that it was “appalled by the treatment of Jewish students.”

“It is completely unacceptable that Jewish students were subjected to the comments made during today’s talk,” the statement continued. “We expect the university to take strong action to ensure the welfare and safety of Jewish students at LSE.”

A spokesman for LSE said the school is “committed to encouraging the free exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect, even on issues over which views may differ sharply, such as the political situation in the Middle East.

“As with all public events, LSE has taken steps to protect free speech within the law and foster an open dialogue,” said the spokesman.

Earlier Tuesday, Middlesex had told The Times of Israel that the meeting would indeed go ahead, maintaining it was satisfied that “protocols” had been followed and that the university was “very committed to free speech and offering students a safe space to explore these issues.”

But hours later, the university said there were “safety concerns” and that the Falk event at the Faculty of Law had been canceled.

“Free speech and academic freedom are fundamental to our higher education system and ultimately it is for an institution to assess the risks associated with an event and decide whether it should go ahead,” a Department of Education spokesperson told The Times of Israel.

“We expect higher education institutions to have clear policies in place for events which allow for challenge and debate, but we are clear that there is no place in our society for hatred, racism or discrimination such as anti-Semitism.”

The spokesperson said that Universities Minister Jo Johnson, brother of Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, had “reiterated this in a letter to Universities UK and the Guild of Higher Education earlier this year.”

But the UK’s Board of Deputies President Jonathan Arkush said he had “no confidence” that Jewish students would be safe in places where Falk was being hosted. The Board of Deputies sent both LSE and Middlesex a dossier of anti-Semitic remarks made by Falk.

“Richard Falk is notorious for his anti-Semitic comments… He has accused all Jews of being collectively responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people,” said Arkush.

“It is totally unacceptable that he was invited by LSE and Middlesex to spread his lies and smears. Appeals to freedom of speech do not stand up when the person being heard is likely to repeat his despicable anti-Semitic smears,” said Arkush.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism lodged formal complaints about Falk with LSE and the Council for Higher Education. It said Falk should never have been considered as a speaker.