

■ UJIA CHIEF'S MESSAGE AT DINNER

# We must inspire next generation

BY JOHN FISHER

UJIA north-east 's annual dinner on Sunday, raised £249,000.

UJIA chief executive Michael Wegier introduced an appeal video, which featured Leo Brosh, of Leeds, who went on a UJIA-supported gap year to Israel with FZY in 2014 and has since been volunteering with three communal organisations.

Leeds UJIA chairman Martin Harris appealed for support to further UJIA's work to secure its future.

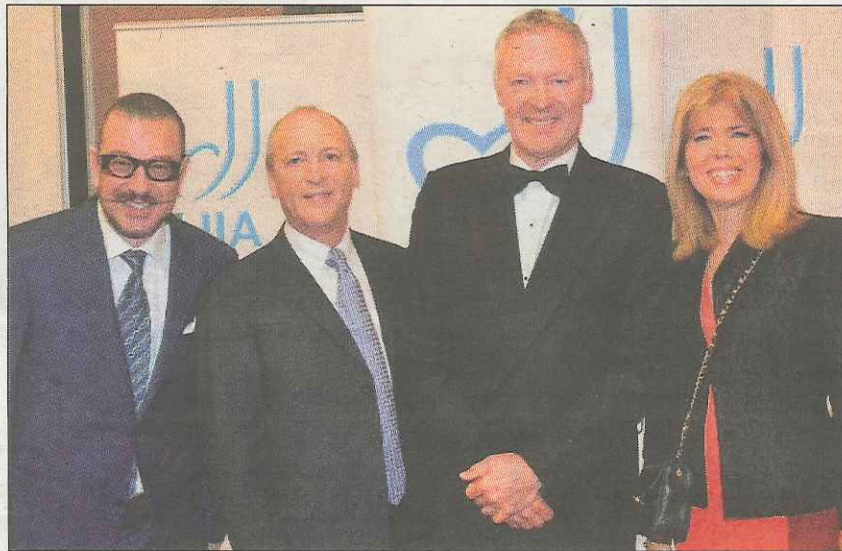
In a speech centring on the ongoing strategic challenges to a secure future for UK Jewry and Israel, Mr Wegier described anti-semitism as "a real threat".

Referring to the current attacks terrorising Israel, Mr Wegier, who is an Israeli citizen, said:

"My heart bleeds for all innocent people who are caught up in this conflict on all sides of the border, but where do we try and find hope in this scenario?"

"We know that younger people take a slightly more questioning approach to Israel than that of their antecedents. That is something UJIA thinks about very deeply."

He referred to the Diaspora's connection to Israel as "rock solid," but warned that going into the seventh decade of Israel's exist-



MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION: Rory Bremner is welcomed to the dinner by Jonathan Straight, Martin Harris and Sheryl Harris

tence, "our younger community are starting to question that more and more".

He asked how the Jewish community can "do its bit" and ensure that there will be the next generation of British Jews capable of helping Israel.

In his Israel travels, Mr Wegier said he meets "fantastic young people, both Israeli and Arabs, in schools and universities, who are passionate about creating a safer Israel, and are doing their bit to make Israel an absolute bastion of decency and democracy of good Jewish and Arab values".

He added: "It is critical that UJIA and the British Jewish community do everything we can to ensure that those people succeed —

we cannot let them down."

North-east regional director Howard Foreman told the *Jewish Telegraph*: "I'm really proud of what we

achieved at the event and I know it's going to make a real difference both in Israel and the UK."

Impressionist Rory Bremner performed at the event held at the Queens Hotel.



APPEAL: Michael Wegier

IT was an evening of prayers, debate, information and community solidarity as almost 300 people joined together on Monday to discuss the situation in Israel.

The event was organised by Makor, shaliach Or Nehushtan and Leeds Jewish Representative Council to ascertain what the community felt was the best way forward in a very worrying situation.

Extracts were read out from a statement made by Board of Deputies president Jonathan Arkush about the biased media reporting and "the near deafening silence of the UN and world powers".

The message that the Rep Council picked up when meeting 21 of the prospective parliamentary candidates, was that during the last cycle of violence, what swayed most politicians was the letters they received, allowing them to understand the rationality of a well-argued point.

Members of the community were urged to write, email and text their thoughts, because "politicians at all times want to hear from constituents".

There was an updated CST security bulletin. Film footage and photographs of terrorist attacks on Israelis were shown, as well as examples of biased media reporting.

A speaker from the floor suggested "sharing our fears with the British public regarding secular Muslims in this country who are entering universities and

## 'Rectify mistakes on PSC website'

coming out radicalised. "We need to shift the narrative and say 'these minds are being politically radicalised here, just like they are in Israel'."

Another voice said: "This is not about Israel anymore. This is about Jews."

He believed that the murder in Woolwich of Fusilier Lee Rigby was the model for what is happening in Israel now.

He felt the key was social media.

He urged people to go on the Palestine Solidarity Campaign website and rectify incorrect statements to "eliminate their self-confidence".

The consensus of the meeting was that this was not the right time to step outside the community's borders to protest, but people were urged to become more informed, vigilant and make their voices heard.

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LAST LAUGH: Rory Bremner with Debra Mourmouris, Martin Harris and Lorraine Sugare