

FORMER AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE TO DINNER WHICH RAISES £753K

Two states only solution to 'depressing' situation

BY ADAM CAILLER

A TWO-STATE solution is the only answer to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the UK's former ambassador to Israel declared this week.

Matthew Gould told guests at Monday's UJIA north-west annual dinner on Monday — which raised £753,000 — that the current situation in Israel is "incredibly depressing".

He said: "There is a cycle of violence that does nothing to advance peace.

"It makes people much less willing to take on the difficult steps needed.

"If you look at both sides, peace is just getting more and more distant and, the truth is, I can not see any alternative to a two-state solution.

"I can not think of anything else that might work. It is a depressing situation."

Interviewed by Sky News presenter Samantha Simmonds, who was comper for the evening, Mr Gould felt that the way news travels around social networking is one of Israel's biggest problems — as is public opinion and Israel's perception in the media.

He explained: "Whether you like it or not, whether you think it is fair or unfair, the vast majority of the British public see Israel through the prism of the conflict with the Palestinians.

"There are issues about how Israel gets its message across because the conflict is an inescapable issue and only when we move towards peace will be able to change that.

"There are media outlets which



PICTURES: GABI AND OLIVIA JOHNSON

MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION: Rory Bremner, centre, with Samantha Simmonds, Joel Rosenblatt, Sandra Matlow and Nici Wertheim

are more sympathetic to Israel, there are some that are less sympathetic to Israel and understand the concern of the British people.

"We, as a community, need to be careful not to draw the line in a place which makes too many people, defined by us, enemies of Israel and need to be careful before we throw around accusations of antisemitism or bias. It can have a counter-productive effect."

Speaking about his former role as ambassador, which he left earlier this year after five years, he knew he would not have an easy ride from his first day.

Mr Gould recalled: "I knew it was not going to be straightforward, but I was proud to be the first Jewish person to represent the Israel in the UK, the country which gave my grandparents refuge.

"The accusations that surrounded my appointment to office of disloyalty, people condemning it because I was Jewish, really did hurt.

"What it did do was strengthen my determination because I realised that nobody has the right to define my identity as a British Jew.

"You can not tell me that I can

not be a British person and love Israel as well.

"We are entitled to be proudly British, proudly Jewish and love Israel at the same time".

Mr Gould also spoke about his role as director of cyber security and information assurance at the British government's Cabinet Office, despite criticism from his friend's children.

He said: "My new role is to protect the UK from cyber attacks and follows on from the work I did with Israel on technology."

"My friend's son, who works in Jerusalem for the IDF's technology department, found it hilarious

that I have a role tackling cyber security as he said I know nothing about security compared to him."

Political comedian Rory Bremner also spoke at the event — despite admitting he had no Jewish background or knowledge on Israel.

He performed a 25-minute set based around Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, former Home Secretary David Blunkett, former American president George Bush and several other former politicians.

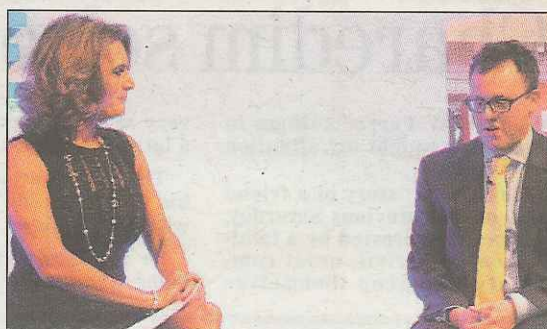
The event was attended by 450 guests, a record for the charity's annual dinner.

UJIA Manchester dinner chairman Joel Rosenblatt told guests that the charity spent more than

I know nothing about security compared to him

£3.8 million on UK-related initiatives last year, including supporting sending more than 2,500 young people to Israel on Israel tour, Birthright or gap year; providing core funding to a dozen Zionist youth movements and providing activities for Jewish children in mainstream schools.

He also sounded a note of warning. Mr Rosenblatt said: "The mainstream of our community is shrinking. UJIA's sacred purpose is to underpin an entire eco-system, which inspires our young people and keeps them involved in Jewish life, the Jewish community and Israel."



IN CONVERSATION: Sky News' Samantha Simmonds interviews Matthew Gould. Left, dinner guests Murray and Margaret Fink with daughter Suzanne Showman

DIGEST

Busy week at Nicky

THERE are discussion groups with Tony Sheldon (Monday), Leita Donn (Wednesday) and Ann Cohen (Thursday) at the Nicky Alliance Day Centre.

Colin Doherty will talk on 'Life Behind a Civic Wheel' on Monday, while The Augmenti Quartet entertain on Wednesday, as does Glynn Morris on

Thursday, accompanied by Rachel Steadman on piano.

October winners

PRESTWICH Hebrew Congregation 250 Club's October draw: Hilary and Jeffrey Wilton, £50; Tracey and Bernard Yardley, £25; Lynne and Elliot Simon, £20; and Francine and Stephen Epstein, £20.

Outreach 250 Club's October draw: Jonathan Colman, £25; Graham Davies, £10.

Cards lunch

WHITEFIELD Golf Club holds a cards lunch on November 4 (10.15am). Tickets, priced £15, from Helen Levy on 0161-280 8893 or 07768-726119.

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