

## Universities rebranding Israel's image: Hasbara posts in Israel Studies threaten academic integrity

### Contents

Introduction .....	1
1 Hasbara entering academia .....	1
2 University posts rebranding Israel? .....	2
3 Threats to academic integrity and freedom.....	3
4 Questioning new posts .....	3
Annex on Hasbara funding: who's who .....	5
Lord Weidenfeld .....	5
Atkin Foundation .....	6
Blavatnik Family Foundation.....	6
Gerald Ronson Foundation .....	7
Pears Foundation.....	8
R & S Cohen Foundation .....	10
Stanley and Zea Lewis Foundation .....	11
Yossi Harel.....	11

### Introduction

Since 2009 several UK universities have created posts in Israel Studies, all funded by external donors. Some explicitly promote political aims, especially by diverting attention from Israel's occupation of Palestine. Such efforts threaten academic integrity and freedom.

This briefing document provides guidance about the threat and about opposition strategies for local campaigns. Special thanks are due to Adriano Mérola for useful material, especially in the Annex.

We welcome extra information and comments for future development of the briefing document. Likewise any requests to support local campaigns via endorsement or practical assistance. See email contact address above.

## 1 Hasbara entering academia

For many years, supporters of Israel have sought to re-brand its global image. They have promoted an intense campaign of *hasbara*, the Hebrew word for 'explanation', though also often translated as 'public relations'. This is a euphemism for propaganda: *hasbara* portrays Israel as a centre of academic and cultural excellence, as well as a civilized democracy. This diverts attention from its colonisation of Palestine, where Israel has systematically violated international law and carried out war crimes in Gaza. *Hasbara* attempts to soften or pre-empt negative public attitudes towards Israel, while also deflecting the international campaign of Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment (BDS).<sup>1</sup>

*Hasbara* initiatives have been well funded by the Israeli government and Zionist foundations, with strategic advice from organizations such as the Reut Institute, an influential Zionist think-tank. According to its 2010 report on threats to Israel, *hasbara* means 'public relations', which have 'great significance in articulating Israel's positions'. After the UN's Goldstone Report accused Israel of war

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<sup>1</sup> <http://electronicintifada.net/content/behind-brand-israel-israels-recent-propaganda-efforts/8694>,  
<http://mondoweiss.net/2011/04/reut-israel-studies-aims-to-show-that-israel-is-a-normal-country-struggling-to-survive-in-impossible-reality.html>,  
<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/israel-wouldn-t-need-propaganda-if-it-changed-its-policies-1.355052>

crimes during the 2009-10 'Operation Cast Lead' against Gaza, for example, 'a number of Israeli ministers were sent on rapid-response missions to provide hasbara for Israel's stance and policy'.<sup>2</sup>

More recently the strategy has been extended to academia, especially for countering calls to boycott Israeli universities.<sup>3</sup> Money can buy hasbara in universities, which thereby become complicit in rebranding Israel.

In the UK a key hasbara initiative is the Britain-Israel Research and Academic Exchange (BIRAX). It was jointly established by the UK and Israeli governments, with support from the Pears Foundation and United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA).<sup>4</sup> BIRAX has been facilitated by Lord Weidenfeld, a former Chef de Cabinet of Israel. BIRAX aims to strengthen research cooperation between Israeli and British academics, especially as a way to counter boycott calls against Israeli universities. The UK ambassador to Israel, Matthew Gould, commented on the BIRAX initiative as follows:

I also think the clearest possible answer to people who are calling for a boycott of Israel is to promote cooperation. So when people call for an academic boycott, we push for scientific cooperation. Just when people call for an economic boycott, we push commercial collaboration and when people call for a cultural boycott, we push cultural collaboration.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 University posts rebranding Israel?

Going beyond academic cooperation, in 2006 the Australian millionairess Lee Lieberman funded a new chair in Israel Studies at Monash University. She was worried that Israel is studied in universities 'through the narrow perspective of the Palestinian conflict'. As a way forward, she encouraged the creation of Israel Studies courses all over the world.<sup>6</sup>

This strategy has been promoted by the Reut Institute, whose website reported in 2009: 'Ben Gurion University Professor David Newman describes how the growth of Israel studies programs may serve as a constructive response to delegitimacy and attempted boycotts of Israel on campus.' Moreover, in the context of Reut's current work on how to fight the delegitimacy of Israel, the suggestion to create chairs of Israel Studies in leading UK universities could act as an important component of Israel's strategy.<sup>7</sup>

A hasbara strategy in academia was likewise developed at a 2009 conference convened by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Likud Minister of Knesset Yuli Edelstein, especially in a working group on 'Delegitimization of Israel: Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions'. Amongst its UK participants were representatives from the Union of Jewish Students and Wes Streeting, President of the National Union of Students. It produced a document targeting university campuses, especially through the development of 'Israel Studies as an academic discipline'. This contributed to the group's 'Going on Offense' plan to counter the 'critics of Israel', which included a point titled 'Circulate information on Muslims acting contrary to Islam'.

Since 2009 several UK universities have created posts in Israel Studies. The list includes: the School of African & Oriental Studies (SOAS), Manchester University, Leeds University (all funded by the Pears Foundation) and at Oxford University (Stanley and Zea Lewis Family Foundation).<sup>8</sup> At SOAS the posts are named Israel Studies. At the other universities the names link Israel with Middle Eastern or Mediterranean Studies. There are efforts to create more posts.

At Sussex University in particular, the Yossi Harel Chair in Modern Israel Studies is named after a Mossad spy-provocateur who sought to escalate conflict with Egypt during the 1954 Suez crisis; he also fought in the Haganah (see Annex on Yossi Harel). The Chair's name indicates the pro-Zionist political objectives of the sponsors: the R and S Cohen Foundation, the Blavatnik Family Foundation,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://reut-institute.org/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=3769>,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/02/israel-palestine-pr-spin>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pacbi.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.biraxrmi.org>, <http://www.britishcouncil.org/israel-education-birax.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://ukinisrael.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=PressR&id=22939319>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/news/a-different-way-to-fight-academic-boycotts-1.188510>

<sup>7</sup> <http://reut-blog.org/2009/11/22/fighting-delegitimacy-reut-israel-studies-david-newma/>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news\\_releases\\_for\\_journalists/110526\\_1.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_releases_for_journalists/110526_1.html)

the Atkin Foundation, the Gerald Ronson Foundation (see Annexes). Lord Weidenfeld welcomed the Yossi Harel Chair as ‘vital in the fight against anti-Zionism’. Indeed, Israel Studies ‘is very important to have in some key universities, particularly those with an anti-Israel presence’, he told the *Jewish Chronicle* (01.03.12).<sup>9</sup>

### 3 Threats to academic integrity and freedom

In financing these posts, donors aim to promote the Zionist narrative, e.g. by either obscuring or justifying Israel’s ongoing and illegal dispossession of the Palestinian people. This hasbara agenda profoundly contradicts the mission and basic values of universities. They are committed to excellence, integrity and rigour in both research and teaching. This aim distinguishes universities from PR companies, advertising agencies, policy-based think-thanks, in-house research units, commercial R&D units and the like. It forms the core value of universities to the wider society. Research and teaching therefore must be carried out in ways that are not, nor seen to be, captured by special interests of any kind. Universities have a fundamental responsibility to students, tax-payers, donors, and the wider public in this regard. Their intrinsic value and wider reputation would suffer to the extent that they disregard this responsibility.

Universities must also operate in ways that conform to their core ethical values. Under new financial pressures, universities increasingly pay attention to who their partners and stakeholders are, especially regarding what ethical standards should apply to new fund-raising for academic activities. Such issues have been highlighted by the Woolf Report criticising the LSE’s relations with the former Libyan regime.<sup>10</sup> Since then, codes of corporate and social responsibility have been examined in order to devise an Ethics Code governing relations between the LSE and donors.

Israeli PR has goals fundamentally at odds with the university’s mission. Such funding also generates a conflict with the ethical codes and standards that some universities are attempting to formalize. Academic integrity and freedom are under threat at every stage: in accepting such funds, selecting staff, setting the curriculum, research topics, framing issues, etc. Staff may well feel under pressure to keep quiet about such concerns. Such funds concern all those who wish to uphold basic academic standards in an era of greater austerity and private fund-raising.

### 4 Questioning new posts

To defend the basic mission of the university, we have a responsibility to question the aims and conditions of a new post in Israel Studies, regardless of whether it has already been established. Questions can be flexibly deployed for different purposes or at different stages, for example:

1. pressurising universities to demonstrate that the post is *not* Hasbara Studies, or
2. opening up debate about the academic integrity of such a post, or
3. trying to set conditions for improving its integrity, or
4. opposing the post.

A campaign can maximise initial unity by posing questions to donors and universities, who may be sensitive about their reputation. Questions could be put more forcefully if sponsored by unions of university staff and students. The list of questions should be widely publicised; see examples below.

University staff have already posed such questions about posts in Israel Studies. In some cases, donors’ terms have been clarified or improved, or else their offers have been withdrawn.

Depending on responses from the university and donors, a campaign can then decide on further demands or action. This activity could be called, for example, the ‘Campaign Against Hasbara Studies’ or the ‘Campaign Against Apartheid Apologetics’, or the “Campaign for Academic Integrity”. Groups to be engaged in a campaign include: academic and other staff; students, student societies and the Students Union; UCU at branch and national level; and the local community. Appropriate methods include public meetings, press announcements, cross-university collaboration, etc.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/64392/vital-new-chair-students>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.woolfse.com/dl/woolf-lse-report.pdf>

As a general question: How do the criteria and procedures for this post compare with other new posts in the department? More specific questions:

#### Rationale for the post

What academic need informed the decision to create the post? Or did the initiative come from the donors?

What are the aims for establishing the post? What is the justification within the academic framework and the department's programme?

How does this post relate to the department's other strengths in Middle East studies? Why isn't the post called Middle Eastern or Mediterranean Studies? (as already done at some universities)

#### Criteria for candidates

What are the criteria and specifications for selecting a candidate?

Is the position open to all applicants, regardless of ethnic or religious origin?

Will the donors accept a decision to select a Muslim, Arab or Palestinian?

#### Role of donors

Will the appointment be set up on a basis independent of the donors? Have they expected or requested a role in the selection process? Do they have the opportunity to set criteria? If so, what are they?

Have any donors suggested names of candidates? Have such suggestions resulted in applications?

Will the financial contribution be an annual renewal and therefore vulnerable to donor interference? or by a long-term guaranteed endowment?

#### Application and selection process

Where is the post to be advertised?

Who are the members of the appointment committee? Will it include a staff-appointed representative?

Has a shortlist been established? What are the shortlisting procedures?

After shortlisting, will candidates give presentations accessible to staff members?

## **Annex on Hasbara funding: who's who**

The information below on key hasbara names further demonstrates the political agendas driving new finance in academia. The above criticisms and questions apply equally to new posts or relevant units which may have names other than Israel Studies. Most text below comes from investigation by Adriano Mérola.

### **Lord Weidenfeld**

Lord Weidenfeld is a cross-bench member of the House of Lords since 1976. It was his initiative to create the Chair in Modern Israel Studies at Sussex. He has been a life-long supporter of Israel, from its inception until the present day. In 1949, he was Political Advisor and Chef de Cabinet in Israel to Chaim Weizmann, working for an entire year in this capacity. He has been the Vice-Chairman of the EU-Israel Forum, as well as the Governor of Tel-Aviv University, Chairman of Ben Gurion University of the Negev amongst many.

He has been quoted as not supporting the Palestinian Statehood bid because of its unilateral nature; a common argument amongst right-wing Zionists. Instead, the 'peace talks' are upheld as the model for co-operation, despite their appalling track-record.

He is quoted as saying that Islam is a 'merciless' religion. Furthermore, he has compared Hamas to the SS special death squads or the Ascension Commandos of the Gestapo. He is an outspoken defender of the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza in May 2010, as well a supporter of Israel's supposed right to own nuclear weapons. He openly encourages military intervention as a means to stop Iran from attaining any nuclear arsenal. The *Jewish Chronicle* said of Lord Weidenfeld: 'He has worked with presidents, prime ministers, a pope and just about every significant Israeli politician since the birth of the state.'

Lord Weidenfeld also runs the Weidenfeld & Nicolson publishing company, which he set up in 1948. This company has published many books by outspoken Zionists:

I can say without exaggeration that I published just about every Israeli memoir that's ever been done. I published Rabin, Peres, Golda Meir, Shamir and, of course, Kollek (Lord Weidenfeld quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 21.05.09).

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## **Atkin Foundation**

The Atkin Foundation is headed by Edward Atkin, CBE, although the charity is officially under the name of someone else. The Foundation has worked to support many Jewish Charities in the UK, from mental health charities to institutions helping Jewish kids with learning disabilities.

The Atkin Foundation is an ardent financial supporter of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR). This centre attempts to combat 'radicalism' all over the world, though its main focus is the Middle East. The centre is a partnership of four institutions – King's College London, the University of Pennsylvania, the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy and the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. The last institute, located in Israel, is a private university with strong ties to the Israeli military intelligence community. This institute is also tied to the R & S Cohen Foundation, mentioned above. Some of its notable contributors are Avi Dichter (former head of Israel's internal security agency), Richard Dearlove (former head of MI6), among other well-known security personnel.

The Atkin Foundation provides the financial support for the 'Atkin Fellowship' as part of the ICSR. This fellowship is funded by the Atkin Foundation and it offers Israeli and Arab students the opportunity to come to London as Fellows of the ICSR and learn/ promote these particular ideas of security. Every year, 4 students are chosen, one from each institution. There is an abundance of Zionist publications focused on security coming out of the ICSR, including ideas of 'neutralizing Iran' and 'excluding Hamas and Hezbollah' from political participation. Much of the contributions in publications are done by Israeli political actors; the same right-wing actors which are in power today.

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## **Blavatnik Family Foundation**

The owner and founder of this foundation is famous Russian-American oligarch Leonard Blavatnik. Leonard Blavatnik is the sixth wealthiest person in the UK and 80<sup>th</sup> in the world. He has an outstanding debt to the Royal Bank of Scotland (and thus to the UK government) of £2.5 billion, which he was granted in a loan and then never repaid. He has been allowed not to do so and so is effectively subsidised by the UK government. He is a former owner of Warner Music.

He supports a Zionist charity called Colel Chabad, which has existed since 1788 to aid and improve the economic standing of Jewish people in what is today Israel. The charity works to fight poverty in Israel, on the basis that the recipients of aid are Jewish. This charity does not differentiate between 'aiding' Jewish inhabitants of Israel and Jewish settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Blavatnik Family foundation is a financial supporter of the 'UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers'. Every year, the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers (AWIS) gives 120 'outstanding' soldiers from the Israeli Defence Forces scholarships of NIS 4,000 (approx.

£670). The UK Friends of AWIS are amongst the most prolific Zionist groups in the UK; their unrelenting support for any and all of Israel's wars makes them a highly politically biased organisation for the Blavatnik Foundation to associate with.

The Blavatnik Foundation has donated millions to Tel-Aviv University for them to enhance their computer science department. This strengthens the human capital resources of Israel's IT industry, its most prominent industry.

Leonard Blavatnik controls various media firms all around the world, and has long looked to invest in Israeli media to further expand his corporation's influence. He has also close ties with the former Israeli ambassador to Britain, Zvi Hefetz.

The Blavatnik Foundation has invested in other academic institutions beyond Tel-Aviv University where Leonard Blavatnik sits on the academic board; these institutions include \$10 million to Harvard University and \$75 million to Oxford University, to create the Blavatnik School of Government. This school is designed to 'develop tomorrow's leaders, in both the private and public sectors'.

Leonard Blavatnik is the Honorary Vice-President of the UK Hillel group. Hillel is a Zionist international organisation which aims at refuting 'anti-Israeli' claims on university campuses around the world, whilst fostering ties between Jewish students and Israel. Leonard Blavatnik is also on the International Board of Governors of the One Family Fund, an Israeli organisation which helps victims of terrorism and spreads information about the dangers of terrorism in Israel, usually with a staunchly nationalistic bias.

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#### **Gerald Ronson Foundation**

Gerald Ronson is a multi-millionaire businessman and Chief Executive of Heron International Plc, one of the largest real-estate companies in the UK. He is the head of the Gerald Ronson Foundation. Ronson is a convicted felon, involved in the famous Guinness share-trading fraud and convicted in 1990 of two charges of false accounting, one of conspiracy and one of theft. He was given a one-year jail sentence, of which he served 6 months at the Ford Open Prison in Sussex.

Whilst in prison, during a one-day release for a medical examination, he met Yitzhak Shamir the then Israeli Prime Minister, together with Binyamin Netanyahu, the current Prime Minister of Israel. He

reportedly maintains a close relationship with Shamir and other high-ranking Israeli politicians, frequently visiting them in Israel.

He has worked with the United Jewish Israel Appeal, a Zionist organisation from the UK which offers education opportunities to inhabitants of the northern area of Galilee, including the occupied Golan Heights. Furthermore, this group operates the UJIA Israel Experience, a program designed to offer tours and year-abroad opportunities to Jewish people wishing to know Israel. This program is part of a wider Zionist idea of strengthening ties between Israel and the Jewish community outside of Israel.

Ronson set up the Jewish Community Secondary School, an exclusively-Jewish secondary school in London. The School ethos is one of staunch support for Israeli national politics, whilst committing itself to 'developing strong links with Israel'. Some of the ways they demonstrate this Zionist support includes residential visits to Israel and close links with Israeli schools.

Ronson also funds Jewish Care, a UK-registered charity which provides support to the Jewish community in the UK through day centers and other facilities designed to aid Jewish pensioners and disenfranchised people. Although not an explicitly Zionist organization, Jewish Care community centers have celebrated Israel's independence days through large, extravagant celebratory shows.

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#### Pears Foundation

The Pears Foundation is run by Trevor Pears and his family. Trevor Pears is a British billionaire and property mogul who has been in much controversy over the past decade for his seemingly ruthless treatment of small shopkeepers and individual tenants. He is one of David Cameron's largest donors, and has long supported the current Conservative Prime Minister since before he became leader of the Conservative Party.

The Pears Foundation considers itself a 'friend of Israel'. It has started a campaign to spread Israel Studies across Europe, in the hope of fostering stronger ties between Europe and Israel. Its support for 'friendship-building' includes the Britain-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX).<sup>11</sup> This £1 million joint initiative with the British Council is supported by the British and Israeli governments. It was created to counter the growing calls for academic boycott of Israel, with greater research cooperation as the proposed response.

The establishment of 'Pears Scholarships' is another example of the 'friendship-building' with Israel that the Pears Foundation proposes. In this scholarship programme, students from primarily Africa and Asia receive free-of-charge opportunities to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the field of public health and agriculture, all with funding from the Pears Foundation. Over the past five years, over 60 people have graduated from this programme.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.biraxmi.org>, <http://www.britishcouncil.org/israel-education-birax.htm>

The Pears Foundation has created numerous Israel-focused institutions at leading academic institutions across the UK in the past three years. They include the 'Pears Fellowship in Israel and Middle Eastern Studies' at Manchester University; the 'Pears Fellowship in Israel and Mediterranean Studies' at Oxford University; a 'Lecturer/ Senior Lecturer position in Israel & Middle East Studies' at Leeds University; the 'Pears Lectureship in Israel Studies' as well as the 'Pears Senior Research Fellowship in Israel Studies' at the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS); the 'European Association of Israel Studies' (EAIS), which is temporarily located at SOAS, with plans for it to be a Europe-wide organisation.

The Pears Foundation supports the New Israel Fund, which promotes Israel as a highly accomplished country, looking beyond the Israel/Palestine conflict. The New Israel Fund complements efforts by the Israeli government and other organisations to rebrand Israel as a prosperous country.

With the help of Lord Weidenfeld's own publishing company, the Pears Foundation published a book titled *Israel in the World* in 2005. This book emphasises the scientific and cultural accomplishments of Israeli society. It contributes to wider efforts to focus on the positive accomplishments of Israel in order to counter increased 'de-legitimisation' of Israel in Europe, especially on university campuses. It is written by two journalists, Douglas and Helen Davis, who happen to be prominent Zionists.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem gave Trevor Pears, the head of the Pears Foundation, an honorary doctorate 'in recognition of his outstanding commitment to social justice and in tribute to his profound friendship for Israel and the Hebrew University'. His friendship of Israel amidst growing opposition to the occupation of Palestine is undeniable.

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## **R & S Cohen Foundation**

The R & S Cohen Foundation is run by Ronald Cohen. He is married to the daughter of Yossi Harel, whose name features in the Sussex University Chair of Modern Israel Studies. Ronald Cohen is linked with a new 'non-political' movement in Israel, whose goal is to change the country's electoral system. In 2004 Ronald Cohen was the Labour Party's fourth largest financier.

He set up the Portland trust together with Sir Harry Solomon, whose aim is to relieve poverty through encouraging Palestinian entrepreneurs to set up businesses in Israel. This NGO tries to foster entrepreneurial co-operation by having Palestinians set up businesses in Israel, leading both to an outflow of Palestinian entrepreneurs from the West Bank and a normalisation of an inherently political conflict.

The R & S Cohen Foundation finances UK Friends of I.D.C., a Zionist organisation which fundraises for a private university in Israel with strong links to the military Intelligence community. This University is called the 'Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya University'. It is responsible for, amongst others, the Israeli propaganda campaign 'Stand With Us'.

In 2005-06 the R & S Cohen Foundation gave €10,000 to the Jewish National Fund, €5,000 to the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, €15,000 to the Jewish Leadership Council. The latter was a major group successfully lobbying to change UK law on Universal Jurisdiction, so that now a government Minister can block arrest warrants on suspected war criminals.

Ronald Cohen is a member of the executive committee of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), a right-wing, pro-Israel think-tank based in London. The IISS has been prominent in the fear-mongering regarding the supposed nuclear threat from Iran. Ronald Cohen is also on the board of trustees of the Institute for National Security Studies in Israel, a right-wing think-tank which advises the Israeli government on matters of national security, with close links to the military intelligence community.

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## **Stanley and Zea Lewis Foundation**

This Foundation has funded a Chair in Israel Studies at Oxford University (see first URL below).

Several other websites mention the Foundation but without information on its aims.

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## **Yossi Harel**

At age 15 in 1933 Yossi Harel joined the Haganah (see below). Known as an 'outstanding' Haganah fighter, he demonstrated great skills whilst fighting both the British colonial forces and the Arab community in what was then the British Protectorate of Palestine. Consequently he became commander of many refugee-survivor ships from Europe to Palestine, especially the Exodus carrying over 4500 Jewish refugees. This role brought him to worldwide fame.

He later became commander of Unit 131, a Mossad intelligence unit operating an Israeli spy ring that collapsed in Egypt in 1954. For its false-flag operation, Egyptian Jews were recruited to plant bombs inside Egyptian, American and British-owned targets in Egypt. Mossad planned to direct blame at the Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian Communists, 'unspecified malcontents' or 'local nationalists'. All this aimed to induce the British government to retain its occupying troops in Egypt's Suez Canal zone during the Suez crisis. This operation was later called the Lavon Affair, after the Israeli Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon, who was forced to resign afterwards. Yossi Harel also had close ties with Moshe Dayan, the IDF Chief of Staff.

The Haganah was a military organisation formed after the 1920-1921 Arab riots against Zionist settlement in Palestine. The Haganah began as a paramilitary militia to defend Jewish settlers against perceived threats from the Arab community. By the end of the 1920s the Haganah had grown markedly in size and were increasingly influenced by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which had been formed in 1929. This newly-formed agency strongly objected to attacks against the Arab community by Haganah fighters; until then, such attacks had been a common tactic among the Jewish paramilitaries, supposedly retaliating against Arab aggression.

When the Haganah split in 1931, a group broke off to form the Irgun, a more aggressive military organisation that openly advocated attacking civilian Arab populations and regularly did so. The Irgun worked side-by-side with the Haganah in their fight against the British occupation of Palestine, forming the Jewish Resistance Movement, a group which came to be the principal military agent fighting for a separate Jewish state in the British Mandate of Palestine. They were responsible for the mass murder of civilian Arab families and created the terror conditions which led to the *Nakba* (disaster), which displaced over 800,000 Arabs from their homes in what is today's Israel. Following the 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence, the Haganah evolved into today's Israeli Defence Forces.

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