Benefactors boost Middle East studies at the University of Sussex with funding for research and a new Chair in Modern Israel Studies

With this first professorial appointment based in its School of History, Art History and Philosophy, the University of Sussex is developing its research base in modern Middle Eastern history.

University of Sussex Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Farthing says: “In this period of huge social and political change in the wider region, the development of our research in this area is timely. We hope to play our part in aiding understanding and scholarship. As an academic development at Sussex, it is part of our tradition of engaging with urgent and complex issues, in this case with a focus on the modern history of the region.”

Support for the new Professorship comes from leading philanthropic individuals and trusts including The R and S Cohen Foundation, the Blavatnik Family Foundation, the Atkin Foundation, the Pears Foundation, the Gerald Ronson Foundation and Lord Weidenfeld, who took the initiative in the establishment of the Chair.

Professor Matthew Cragoe, head of the School History, Art History and Philosophy says: “We are particularly pleased to welcome the support for this chair from such a distinguished group, with an outstanding commitment to scholarship and education. Their involvement and support is a clear signal of the important role which we believe Sussex can play in this field.”

The Chair will be named after Yossi Harel, a founding figure in the history of modern Israel. Harel, who died in 2008 aged 90, commanded the ship Exodus 1947, which carried more than 4,500 displaced European Jews to Palestine. The 1947 blockade of the vessel by Britain prompted the United Nations to vote in favour of the creation of the state of Israel.

The Chair will contribute to the Middle East studies programme of the University. Its remit will embrace teaching and research in all aspects of Modern Israel Studies, with particular reference to the politics, history and society of contemporary Israel and the Middle East. The Chair will also promote and develop links between Middle Eastern and British academics.

Along with the Chair appointment, two further lecturer posts are proposed, dealing with the history and culture of the Middle East more broadly.
The University of Sussex already has leading research in closely related areas within the School, such as within the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, and in related fields across other schools in the University.

**Blavatnik Family Foundation**
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