

Menzies Campbell lectures on Arab Spring

October 27, 2011 9:20 am [0 comments](#) [Sunniva Davies-Rommetveit](#)

On Friday, October 14, Sir Menzies Campbell, former leader of the Liberal Democrats, gave a speech in an International Politics Association (IPA) event about the recent and ongoing government protests and government collapses in the Middle East.

This was the first IPA event of the year where Sir Menzies, who is also MP for Northeast Fife and Chancellor of the University of St Andrews, raised ten pressing questions reflecting on the recent Arab Spring and what it now means for the Middle Eastern states in question, as well as for Western nations.

The IPA said of the event: “Under the topic ‘Reflections on the Arab Spring’, Sir Menzies raised ten points concerning the Middle East situation before declaring himself partial to the ‘Socratic method’ and turning on the audience to kick-start what proved to be a lively debate.”

The above-mentioned debate stemmed from Sir Menzies’ initial pressing questions, namely: how did the United Kingdom and the West miss the Arab Spring, what should be done afterwards, how could the international community know when to intervene, and should intervention only take place when the intervening state’s morals are laudable?

Rarely giving away his stance on the topic to begin with, Sir Menzies instigated an interesting audience response, making sure to encourage debate where necessary.

Sir Menzies advocated humanitarian intervention and the ‘duty to protect’ cosmopolitan view; that is accepting that there is a moral duty to protect people in other states that are both mentally and physically mistreated by their government and who are not given their basic human rights such as freedom of speech, the right to an education and to the vote.

Students were largely impressed with the event. Erin MacGalloway said, “I was really impressed with the first IPA event, although felt a smaller group would have meant more people could contribute [to the following debate].”