

Dear Dr

We met at the 5th World Congress on

I was appalled to read that the Teachers' Union of Ireland has adopted a boycott of Israel.

It would appear that the proposers of the motion were, deliberately or negligently, relying on misinformation, and had not taken the time to investigate matters at first hand.

The so-called siege of Gaza is an example. The proposers should be reminded that the Gaza Strip, which was cleared of its Jewish residents in order to allow Palestinian autonomy, has another border, with Egypt. The Egyptian authorities apparently share some of Israel's concerns about the activities of the Hamas government, which as you know have including the firing of thousands of missiles at Israel civilians, and that border is closed to commerce. Most of the supplies from Egypt are smuggled through tunnels under the border.

On the other hand, Israel has been most liberal in allowing people from Gaza to enter Israel to receive medical treatment, and allowing the transfer of supplies of all kinds to and from Gaza; it is unfortunate that terrorists have on several occasions attacked the border crossings, killing many.

All countries control their borders, and impose restrictions on entry of persons and goods. The borders between Israel and its neighbours are no different, and it cannot be surprising that these controls are stringent where the government of Gaza has repeatedly stated its intention to destroy Israel and remove all the Jews from the land called Palestine.

The so called illegal occupation of the West Bank is a matter which has yet to be adjudicated. But it is well to remember that until 1967 that area was under Jordanian control; that the standard of living, including health and life expectancy, of the residents of the West Bank is considerably higher than in any of Israel's neighbours; that many thousands of residents of that area work in Israel; that until construction of the security wall, hundreds of Israelis were murdered by terrorists who entered from those areas; and that despite millions of dollars in foreign aid, many Arabs from these areas come to Israeli hospitals for treatment, since the Palestinian Authority has failed its residents by not building appropriate medical facilities. Recent reports have emphasised that Palestinian schoolchildren are being taught to hate Israel and Israelis, and many of them are involved in stone-throwing (often from moving cars, and with heavy rocks and blocks) at Israelis, causing fatalities and serious injuries.

But the most mendacious allegation is that of apartheid. I visited South Africa in 1988, and saw with my own eyes the separation of park benches and drinking fountains with the wording "Nie Blankes", the black workers being herded on to mini-buses after the day's work to their townships, and the squalor of Soweto. By

the way, I was in South Africa again two years ago, and some of the shanty towns look no better.

In Israel:

- Miss Israel, Yityish Aynaw, is a black immigrant from Ethiopia
- The Judge who tried the former President Katzav, Judge George Kara, is a Christian Arab, as is one of the Judges, Justice Joubran, who heard his appeal in the Supreme Court.
- Lina Makhoul, the winner of “The Voice”, the contest for promising singers, is a Christian Arab.
- Dr Aziz Darawshe, the director of the emergency room at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem (one of the largest tertiary care hospitals in the Middle East) is a Moslem Arab.
- Dr Eliyan Elkarawi is a Beduin who is the President of the Achva Academic College, and who lit one of the torches at the national event celebrating Israel's Independence Day.
- The Druse population has provided many senior officers in the army.

It is unimaginable that under the apartheid regime there would be black or coloured Supreme Court Judges, or that non-whites would take part in contests such as those stated above; and any visitor to the hospitals in Jerusalem is struck by the fact that about half of the patients, a third of the nurses, and a quarter of the doctors, are non-Jews, mainly Arabs. 40% of graduates from the schools of pharmacy in Israel are Arabs.

It is unfortunately also unimaginable that a Jew would be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court in the West Bank or Gaza, or in any of the countries surrounding Israel, or would take part in any contest or serve as a senior office in the army. Why is this not called apartheid?

We in Israel are astounded that the TUI has devoted its time and energies to what is going on here, where in Syria thousands of men, women and children have been butchered in the civil war; and in practically all the surrounding countries, Palestinians are discriminated against, in regimes where human and civil rights are systematically ignored.

Teachers and academics should be the champions of hearing all sides of any question, and should be encouraging their students to keep an open mind and open channels of communication with those with whom they do not agree.

I attach an article about changing attitudes among MEPs. I warmly invite you and your colleagues to visit and see for your own eyes what is really happening over here.

With every good wish"

Philip Marcus LLM