

March 7, 2010.

Dear TDSB Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the TDSB's condemnation and prohibition of Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) activities.

IAW, now in its fifth year and held in dozens of cities worldwide, encourages legitimate debate about the applicability of the term "apartheid" -- as defined by the International Criminal Court (ICC) -- to the state of Israel . To be able to engage in such debate, and to express such an opinion, is a right guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms -- i.e., the freedom of expression.

Michael Ignatieff, Ehud Barak, Desmond Tutu, Jimmy Carter, Naomi Klein: All of these individuals, despite there being significant political differences among them, have expressly considered the applicability of the term "apartheid" to Israel . The notion is neither new nor inappropriate.

Education should entail evaluation of all viewpoints and evidence. Advancing human rights and working for social justice frequently invite controversy and strong emotions -- especially in our complex and tumultuous world. You should not fear such controversy; it is an important starting point for learning and the development of critical thinking. Above all, you should not prohibit legitimate debate and freedom of expression; that is the opposite of education, and our democracy demands better.

Israeli policies against the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as against its own Muslim and Christian citizens, show all the criteria of racism an apartheid practices as defined by international law and reputed international bodies.

Israeli policies, like those of any other state, must be open to legitimate criticism, when based on fact. Israel must not be allowed this immunity from criticism that is not available to any other state. Israel must not be allowed to remain above international law.

Yours Sincerely,

Ismail Zayid, MD, FRCPC.

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