

The following letter was published in Vancouver's Westender, in the April 24-30 issue, written by Rafeh Hulays, Ph.D.

*Reply to "Taking issue with ISM activists", letters published in the Westender (April 17-23 issue)*

Alan Switzer's venomous criticism of International Solidarity Movement (ISM) activists is a classic example of attacking the messenger. He would actually have us believe that those who put their lives at risk to protect Palestinian civilians victimized daily under Israel's illegal military occupation are somehow anti-Semitic (an irony considering that Arabs are Semites) and advocates of the "final solution." Switzer then attacks ISM members for bearing witness to Israel's atrocities, but not those committed by China or despotic Arab regimes.

There is an essential difference between the two cases: among other countries with dismal human rights records, China and certain Arab states are regularly censured by North American media and lobby groups, whereas Israel, with its enormous influence, escapes virtually unscathed. Indeed, every year it receives billions of dollars in aid from the United States along with billions more in tax-deductible contributions.

Since 1948, Israel has expelled 1,250,000 Palestinians whose numbers have grown to nearly 8 million. After demolishing over 400 of their towns and villages, Israel has confiscated their lands for the exclusive use of Jews. What remains of Palestine is under cruel military occupation, making its towns and villages into prisons surrounded by Israeli forces, illegal settlements and bypass roads. Those who doubt the severity of the crimes committed against Palestinians need only refer to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Red Cross, the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and B'Tselem, the Israeli Human Rights organization.

ISM activists have been so effective in drawing attention to crimes against Palestinians that they are now targeted by the Israeli military. Several have been killed or wounded in the past few weeks. There can be no question as to the motives of Switzer and others who support ethnic cleansing of Palestinians along with occupation of their lands and gross violations of their human rights in attempting to defame the ISM.

We should all heed the words of Albert Einstein (displayed on every page of the [ISM's website](#):

"The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."

ISM's activists have taken these words to task by "struggling for freedom and resisting the (Israeli) occupation through non-violent direct action." In the interest of all oppressed people, let us help them achieve their goal.

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