**Make your school an Apartheid Free Zone**

**Draft letter to use to write to your Board of Governors**

Dear Chairperson,

We are writing to you as Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) members who work in this school and who are horrified at the ongoing crisis in Palestine.

While the latest onslaught on Gaza has drawn attention to the situation once again, the Palestinian people have been suﬀering oppression at the hands of Israel for over 70 years.

At the time of writing, during this latest attack, over 50,000 Palestinian people - including approximately 17,000 children – have been killed.

Our union, the INTO, at its Annual Congress in 2022, passed a motion supporting the policy of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) in support of Palestine, and agreed to become an Apartheid Free Zone. BDS is a non-violent grassroots policy of economic support for Palestine, designed by Palestinians, under which individuals, companies, communities and nations pledge to boycott or divest from corporations which support Israel in sustaining its apartheid regime in Gaza, the West Bank and indeed against Palestinians in Israel itself. In March 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Michael Lynk declared Israel to be an apartheid state saying that the state of Israel *“…intentionally and clearly prioritizes fundamental political, legal and social rights to one group over another, within the same geographic unit on the basis of one’s racial-national-ethnic identity”.* Internationally respected human rights groups Amnesty International, Israeli NGO B’Tselem and international NGO Human Rights Watch have all commissioned and issued detailed reports which have concluded that Israel is an apartheid state.

Forms of BDS have been used throughout history to end oppression. It is an effective, peaceful campaign. Ireland has a strong record in the successful implementation of BDS which eventually brought about an end to apartheid in South Africa.

As well as the INTO, the Teachers Union of Ireland, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, at least seven local authorities including Dublin City Council and over 100 businesses and other groups have declared themselves Apartheid Free Zones and pledged to support the people of Palestine through BDS.

In our teaching, we strive to instill principles of justice, fairness and equality in our pupils. To that end we are requesting that our Board of Management consider declaring our school to be an Apartheid Free Zone. What that would mean in practice is that we would do our best as a school to not knowingly purchase products or services from companies that are complicit in supporting the imposition of apartheid. Examples would include not purchasing

· HP computers and paper

· Siemens-brand electrical products

· Puma sportswear and equipment

· AXA Insurance policies

· Any food items labeled 'Product of Israel’ & informing school catering/lunch services of same.

There is more information on BDS and Apartheid Free Zones available at <https://apartheidfree.ie/>

In response to the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine, there was a tremendous outpouring of support for the Ukrainian people in Ireland. Public sentiment over the past 18 months clearly demonstrates that the Irish people feel the same affinity with the Palestinian people in their suffering. Declaring ourselves an Apartheid Free Zone, pledging our support for BDS, and stating that we will not support companies which perpetuate the oppression of the Palestinian people is, we believe, the correct thing to do.

We hope that the members of our Board of Governors will agree with us and look forward to hearing from you when this is discussed at the next BOG meeting.

Yours sincerely