

# Curb your compassion

## Viewpoint

ROBERT MAGID

As Jews, we sympathise with the plight of refugees. But not every asylum seeker is in the same boat.

**T**HERE is a tendency among Jews to wish to appear more compassionate than the rest of society since we have been the victims of discrimination, hatred and violence over the centuries. This often leads us to take positions of compassion over reason.

A case in point is the issue of illegal immigration into Australia. The collective memory of Jews' attempts to escape the Holocaust and not finding a haven leads to sympathy for any immigrant whatever the situation.

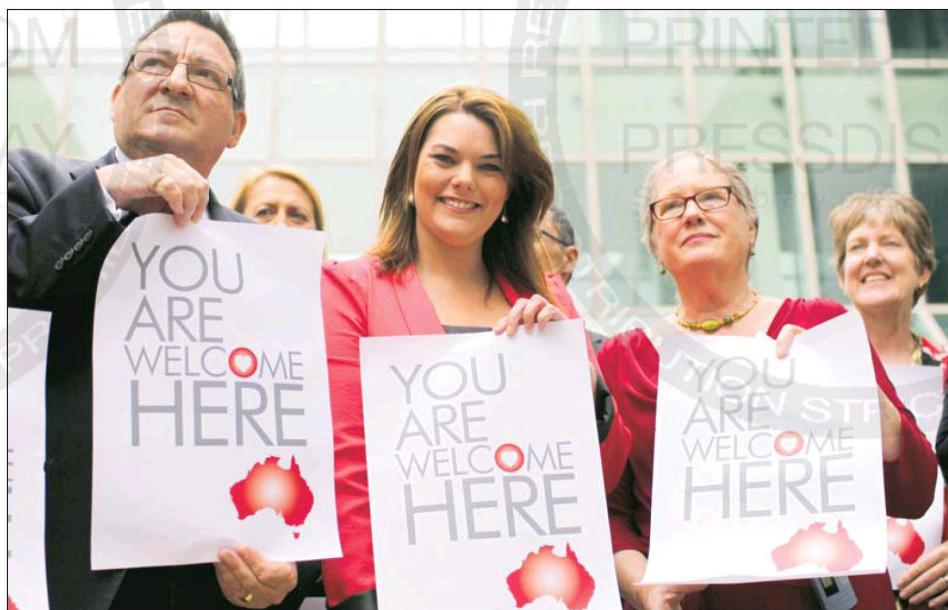
But what has that to do with the real world? Nothing whatsoever. First of all, supporting a policy of unrestricted illegal immigration is not a moral position; it is a political one, and I would argue it is one lacking in compassion.

In conformity with its international obligations, Australia has committed itself to an annual intake of refugees. We can debate whether that number should be increased or not, but there is clearly a limit.

So the situation is as follows: on one hand, we have people who fly into Indonesia with documents, destroy them once they are on the high seas to deceive Australian authorities, are wealthy enough to have the funds to pay criminals and then head for Australia against the wishes of the Australian public.

On the other hand, we have long suffering refugees, confirmed and approved by Australian authorities, many living in atrocious conditions, some in life-threatening war zones, some with relatives anxiously waiting for them in Australia. These have been pushed down the queue and told they must wait years beyond their due date because the unscrupulous illegal immigrants have taken their place in the queue.

It is a zero sum game: it's either genuine approved refugees or illegal queue jumpers who can afford to pay criminals to deceive Australian authorities. Which do you choose? Now clearly the illegal boat people have the advantage: they are photogenic. Who can resist a photograph of a woman and child being taken off a sinking boat? How can you compare the emotional impact of that with an unphotographed, unreported, unseen mother and starving child in a refugee camp?



MP Steve Georganas (left), Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and MP Judy Moyle at the launch of the Welcome to Australia group in Canberra last November. The group seeks to change community attitudes to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Photo: AAP Image/Lukas Coc

Clearly the media is the message. Is the preference for the photographed sufferer over the un-photographed sufferer a sign of compassion? Hardly.

Illegal immigration is a criminal enterprise that deprives genuine refugees of an opportunity to come legally to Australia.

As an aside, it is unconscionable to bring the Holocaust into the discussion. The Jews who fled the Holocaust fled certain death. I doubt whether there is a single boat person in that position. Some may have fled a war zone or limited economic opportunities, while others are seeking an easy life. None were facing certain death.

Second, the Jews who were escaping the Shoah would have been grateful to accept any refuge, be it in Africa, the Dominican Republic, China, Cuba, Iran or India, anywhere to escape the gas chambers. That is not so in the case of the illegal immigrants who are destination shopping. They are out of danger as soon as they are out of their own country. From there they proceed through a series of countries in which they are no longer in danger.

Sri Lankan Tamils can cross into Tamil Nadu in India and be with their ethnic community.

Afghans are safe outside of their local territory and can be accommodated in some of the Muslim countries they cross on their way to the boat to Australia. However, that is not what they want and they are willing and able to pay criminals to take them to the destination of their desire.

As noted above, illegal immigration is a criminal enterprise that deprives genuine refugees of an opportunity to come legally to Australia. The boat people are urged by the people smugglers to call their contacts in Australia for help as soon as they leave the Indonesian coastline. Australian coastal vessels, at great cost to the Australian tax payer, are sent – at times into Indonesian waters, at others the open sea – to rescue boats that are deliberately overloaded and sabotaged to play on the conscience of the Australian public.

This cynical enterprise is expanding rapidly to a point where it will simply become economically unsustainable. But there is another side to this. We have witnessed the increasing disruption of society in England and Europe by some immigrant communities. We have seen ghettos formed in cities which become no-go zones for authorities, where honour killings are carried out with impunity, where demands are being made for sharia law to replace the law of the land, where the immigrants despise the values, culture and activities of their adopted country.

Our police force has squads devoted to

fighting potential terrorists; there are imams who preach hatred of our society. We, in the Jewish community, have to expend considerable funds to protect our institutions against attack, which it would be naive not to acknowledge comes in many cases from the extremists in the Muslim community.

Just last week, a Muslim husband and wife were convicted of planning a terror attack against Jews in Manchester. They had spent months scouting out potential Jewish targets, including two synagogues and the Jewish Agency building.

Obviously, if Al-Qaeda or another jihadi organisation wished to create a network of terrorists in Australia, undocumented illegal immigration would ensure the Australian authorities had no way of verifying their bone fides. Clearly we should be interested in maintaining an orderly vetting of potential immigrants or refugees.

Ultimately it is the responsibility of the Australian government to act in the interest of its own citizens. The government should be the sole arbiter of who is and who is not eligible to enter the country, how to expend taxpayers' funds and what is in the best interest of society.

A government that leaves that decision to a criminal enterprise has abrogated its responsibility.

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