MK MICHAEL OREN speaks at Bar-Ilan University. (Courtesy BIU)

DEPUTY MINISTER for Diplomacy Michael Oren MK this week welcomed hundreds of new and returning international, immigrant and overseas students at a student orientation marking the opening of the 2018-19 academic year at Bar-Ilan University.

"Israel, like the United States, is a land of opportunity. Anybody can get anywhere here, no matter where you come from," said Oren, noting that the founder of the Israeli citrus industry and the inventor of the Iron Dome missile defense system were both originally from the United States, that there are two MKs from Argentina, and that one out of every 75 Israelis speaks Russian. “This is an area of great possibilities. There is so much to contribute. Israel is not only a work of progress, but a work in progress. This country is still being formed and you can be part of that formation,” said Oren Regarding American student Lara Alqasem, who was recently detained at Ben-Gurion Airport and denied entry into Israel for her alleged support of the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement that targets the Jewish state, Oren said, “Every sovereign country in the world has the right and obligation to decide who gets into that country and who does not. Israel has precisely that right and precisely that duty.”

More than 800 international and immigrant students from countries such as the United States, UK, France, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Bulgaria, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Somalia, Turkey, China, Mongolia, Panama, South Korea, Morocco, Singapore and many more are enrolled in the university’s undergraduate and graduate programs this year, and in post-doc programs on the Ramat Gan campus, as well as at the Azrieli School of Medicine of Bar-Ilan University in Safed. They are studying in the English-language International BA programs, international MBA program, physics program and the Shaindy Rudoff graduate program in creative writing, and are also studying in Hebrew in various university departments.

It is not uncommon for Israel’s institutions of higher learning to accept students from countries with which Israel does not have diplomatic relations.