FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

McMaster students deeply concerned over ‘hate crime’ insinuation

HAMILTON - The McMaster Students Union (MSU) represents the nearly 23,000 full-time undergraduate students of McMaster University. As such, the MSU is attuned to the vibrant diversity of cultures, ethnicities, religions and opinions that comprise the student body. As a student-led and student-driven organization, the MSU is constitutionally mandated to host an annual General Assembly, at which any student can bring forward a motion that could be binding on the organization, provided quorum is met. At the General Assembly of this year, quorum was reached as hundreds voted in favour of a student’s motion, binding the MSU to endorse the international Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) movement.

“To suggest that McMaster students participated in some form of hate speech, by exercising their right to peacefully congregate and utilize the democratic mechanisms of their student government, to declare an opinion on an international event is simply egregious,” said Ehima Osazuwa, MSU President. “That said, BDS is a divisive topic for students at McMaster. For my part, I plan to continue the dialogue series that my predecessor helped form in 2014, in hopes of continuing to build a culture of peace and discourse amongst the student body of McMaster University.”

To be clear, the motion, as it read at General Assembly on March 23, was not an MSU endorsement of a boycott of the state of Israel. Furthermore, and more importantly, in no way does the MSU condone or endorse violence or hate of any kind towards the state of Israel, towards citizens of Israel or towards people of the Jewish faith. Specifically, the motion that passed, which is currently in effect, compels the MSU to:

- Commit to identifying and divesting from companies that support or profit from Israeli war crimes, occupation and oppression of Palestinians
- Affirm that students have a vital role in supporting struggles for social justice and human rights, stand in solidarity with Palestinians’ struggle for self-determination and freedom
- Commit to ethical purchasing policies and fair trade practices around the globe

The BDS motion first came forward at the 2014 MSU General Assembly. Though it passed at the time, quorum was not met and the motion was not binding on the MSU. As a result, during the 2014-2015 academic year, the MSU pursued a series of educational dialogues and initiatives on the matter, as witnessed through the multi-month Perspectives on Peace campaign, in partnership with McMaster University.

For more information, please contact

Ehima Osazuwa
MSU President
president@msu.mcmaster.ca
905-525-9140 ext. 23885