

Statement to AUS Council regarding my recent tweet

My recent tweet was a form of political expression that highlighted the violence of the colonization of Palestine, by mirroring a recently popularized meme format used to oppose the violence of white supremacy (the “punch a Nazi” meme). While I absolutely did not intend to otherwise equate Zionism and fascism, both are political ideologies (far from the only ones) that, as currently practiced, rely on the use of violence toward a marginalized population. The comparison does not extend beyond this point, and I see now that it was insensitive and inappropriate to use this format. While the tweet was published on a personal account, this was unbecoming of my position. I unequivocally apologize for publishing the tweet, and I deeply regret the harm that it caused.

Many of my constituents and fellow students, and some of my friends, adhere to Zionist ideology and identify with the label “Zionist”. I am Jewish myself, and I understand the importance of the state of Israel to many in my community. My parents and many of our family friends are, ideologically, Zionists. I do not wish to punch any of these people, I do not wish to encourage anyone to punch them, and I do not wish to otherwise enact violence on them. I hope that, despite the overblown public attention, you will see my tweet for what it is: a misguided joke with a political meaning, rather than a credible call for violence.

Due to the onslaught of violent threats, harassment and intimidation that I am currently experiencing, the past few days have been very difficult for me. But they have also been an occasion to engage in conversations about Zionism with fellow students who have reached out to me, including those who have reached out with questions or criticism. It is extremely important to continue to have such conversations, both within Jewish communities and in dialogue with Palestinian voices, based on a shared commitment to social justice, human rights, and opposition to oppression in all its forms. I regret the circumstances in which these conversations are currently occurring, but I look forward to continuing them. I would welcome an instruction from Council to do so more formally, in the format it deems appropriate.

Political disagreements regarding Zionism do not define my relationship with my cultural communities, my friends and family, my colleagues, or my constituents, and I value these relationships despite such disagreements. I believe that, as an Arts Rep to SSMU, I have done my best to represent all my constituents and to fight for their interests as students, including those who adhere to a Zionist ideology or are affiliated with Zionist groups. When students have reached out to me with questions or feedback, including in recent weeks, I have worked to address their concerns and incorporate their feedback in good faith, to the best of my ability, and have adjusted my positions in advocacy and representation accordingly. Should I remain a councillor, I will redouble my efforts to do so.

I have attempted to handle this overblown and frightening situation in a principled, honest, and accountable way. This has been very challenging under the circumstances, and I know that my response has not been perfect. I welcome any further questions or concerns, which I will address prior to or at Council. It has been a pleasure to work with all of you so far, and I hope to have the privilege to continue to do so.