



## **Motion Calling on SSMU to Stand in Solidarity with the People of the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

Whereas, the SSMU Constitution states that “the SSMU commits to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights [and] social justice,”<sup>1</sup> and the SSMU Equity policy states that “the SSMU – an organization working with individuals, in groups, within organizations, and across a wide social and political context – shall promote a functional anti-oppressive environment”<sup>2</sup>;

Whereas, SSMU takes a firm stance against violations of human rights and the marginalization of oppressed peoples, which is experienced by groups including but not limited to Ethiopian and other African migrant Jews in Israel<sup>3</sup>, and Arabs throughout Gaza and the West Bank;

Whereas, SSMU has held firm political positions in the past, including a political mandate to lobby for McGill’s divestment from South African companies in protest of apartheid, from tar sands, and from Canadian military involvement in Iran, and passed motions to support free education, to oppose the armed conflict in Iraq, and to support Indigenous peoples and allies;

Whereas, Israel as an occupying power under international law is required to uphold civil “treatment of civilians...in occupied territories;”<sup>4</sup>

Whereas, there are clear disparities in educational facilities, health care, economic/social infrastructures, and military resources and power between the two parties involved (see appendix II);

Whereas, while Israel has claimed to use restrained force, it has still brought about the destruction of schools, homes, and hospitals in Gaza (see appendix III);

Whereas, Israel has imposed a siege and full naval blockade which severely restricts access to basic healthcare, education, food, water, and sanitation services for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (see appendix IV);

<sup>1</sup> <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SSMU-Constitution-English-2013-11-15.pdf>, pg 1

<sup>2</sup> <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Equity-Policy-Book-2014-01-13.pdf>, pg. 65

<sup>3</sup> IRIN, NY Times, Al Jazeera, live footage

<sup>4</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention: <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/380>



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Whereas, the illegal expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank continues despite Israel's obligation to cease this expansion according to international law;<sup>5</sup>

Whereas, members of the Canadian law community including lawyers, students and professors from across Canada including McGill University have expressed "grave concern"<sup>6</sup> regarding the continuing violence being committed in a signed letter to the McGill Daily on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 (see appendix VI);

Whereas, student unions of universities across Canada have already taken stances in opposition to the Israeli occupation, including but not limited to the York University Student Union<sup>7</sup>, the Ryerson Students' Union<sup>8</sup>, the McMaster Student Union<sup>9</sup>, and the Concordia University Graduate Students Association<sup>10</sup>, in addition to multiple university student unions in the U.S., U.K., and around the world;

Whereas, there has been condemnation of settlement expansion and military violence by large Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations (see appendix VII);

Whereas, condemning Israel's aforementioned violations does not negate Israel's right to exist as a state.

Be it resolved, that SSMU publicly condemns a) the recent destruction of schools, universities, and hospitals, and all violence against civilians in Gaza and other Palestinian occupied territories; b) the siege on Gaza; and c) the continued illegal expansion of settlements by issuing a public statement on the SSMU website and listserv;

Be it resolved, that the SSMU executives endorse and sponsor events and efforts conducted by student groups working to combat oppression and misrepresentation of

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<sup>5</sup> According to [Geneva Convention](#), and UNSC Resolutions [465](#), [471](#), and [446](#) (see appendix V)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2014/09/a-statement-of-solidarity/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/04/03/york-university-student-union-endorses-boycott-of-israeli-academics/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/04/04/ryerson-student-union-becomes-only-the-latest-to-support-israel-boycott-campaign/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/4436180-msu-assembly-backs-boycotting-israel/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://gsaconcordia.ca/press-relase-regarding-general-assembly-decision-to-endorse-bds-campaign/>



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marginalized groups including but not limited to Palestinians, and to provide a safe platform for students to voice their views and experiences accessibly.

Moved By: Petition

POSTPONED INDEFINITELY



## **APPENDIX**

### **I) Supporting Perambulatory clauses:**

Whereas, SSMU defines oppression as “the exercise of power by a group of people over another group of people with specific consideration of cultural, historical, and living legacies”;<sup>11</sup>

Whereas, the International Court of Justice deems the Israeli construction of the separation barrier illegal since 2002 on the grounds that it “constitutes de facto annexation,” is “not justified on security grounds,” and “violates human rights laws”;<sup>12</sup>

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his statement on July 9th that “the wall severely restricts Palestinian movement and access throughout the West Bank, cuts off land and access to resources needed for Palestinian development, and continues to undermine agricultural and rural livelihoods throughout the West Bank”;<sup>13</sup>

### **II) Supporting Statistics:**

- The 2014 Operation Protective Edge resulted in a death toll of 1,999 Palestinians, 1,434 of which are confirmed civilians, 467 of which were children; In Israel 66 were killed, 64 of which were soldiers.<sup>14</sup>
- More than 400,000 Palestinians have been displaced since July 8th and are currently hosted in UNRWA shelters.<sup>15</sup>
- Almost 1,000 children in Gaza will suffer lifelong physical and psychological disabilities.<sup>16</sup>

### **III) Supporting Statistics:**

- Up to August 15th, 2014, at least 216 schools in Gaza including 141 government schools, 75 UNRWA schools, and four private/kindergarten schools, were partially damaged due to Israeli airstrikes or shelling.<sup>17</sup>
- On August 2nd, 2014 the Islamic University in Gaza was bombed<sup>18</sup>, and on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 the Al-Quds Open University was bombed, killing 22 people.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [SSMU Equity Policy](#)

<sup>12</sup> <http://visualizingpalestine.org/infographic/ICJ-Separation-Wall-Legality>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7849>

<sup>14</sup> According to UNISPAL: [http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/OchaGazaSitRpt\\_200814.pdf](http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/OchaGazaSitRpt_200814.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



- Several UNRWA shelters that “provide refuge to civilians displaced by conflict in a context where people have nowhere else to go” were hit by explosive projectiles resulting in deaths and casualties.<sup>20</sup>
- More than 25 medical facilities were targeted in the operation<sup>21</sup>, as well as ambulances and medical personnel, with an attack on Al-Aqsa hospital killing at least 5 civilians.<sup>22</sup>
  - Amnesty International has condemned these attacks declaring “mounting evidence”<sup>23</sup> that Israel deliberately targeted hospitals and medical personnel.

#### **IV) Supporting Statistics:**

- Israel continues to control virtually all entry and exit to Gaza, as well as Gaza’s airspace and coastline, and has continually restricted movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza.
- There is a longstanding electricity deficit in Gaza that results in power outages of up to 12 hours a day.<sup>24</sup>
- Only a quarter of households receive running water every day, for only several hours, and over 90% of the water extracted from the Gaza aquifer is unsafe for human consumption.<sup>25</sup>

#### **V) International law re: Israeli settlements**

- UNSC Resolution 446<sup>26</sup> “determines’ that Israeli settlements are a ‘serious obstruction’ to peace and calls on Israel to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention”;
- The Fourth Geneva Convention article 49 (1) forbids “individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country,” while sub-

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/israel-strikes-university-gaza-city-20148283821707200.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2014/08/educational-toll-gaza-war-two-universities-six-schools/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-17>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/health-facilities-hit-israels-gaza-attacks-death-toll-rises-over-640-129158985>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/21/gaza-crisis-unsc-and-obama-call-for-immediate-ceasefire-live-updates>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.amnesty.ca/news/news-releases/mounting-evidence-of-deliberate-attacks-on-gaza-health-workers-by-israeli-army-0>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-4>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jan/30/gaza-looming-water-crisis-friends-earth>

<sup>26</sup> <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/BA123CDED3EA84A5852560E50077C2DC>



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clause (6) clearly dictates that “the Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”<sup>27</sup>

**VI) Statement from Law Community Letter:**

- “We, the undersigned, condemn the senseless killing of innocent civilians, including children. We condemn the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, healthcare centers, mosques, schools, and Gaza’s only power plant“.<sup>28</sup>

**VII) Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Israel/Palestine:**

- CSOs Include but are not limited to B’Tselem, Peace Now, Rabbis for Human Rights, Israelis for Palestine, and Ir Amim.
- For more Israeli-Palestinian organizations, visit:  
<http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/israel-palestinian-territories/peacebuilding-organisations/>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/380-600056>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2014/09/a-statement-of-solidarity/>