

Statement from Director Igor Sadikov

I sincerely apologize for recently publishing a tweet expressing a personal political viewpoint in an insensitive and inappropriate manner by referencing a popular meme. Even though the tweet was published on a personal account, the format I used was unbecoming of my leadership position and the expectations that are associated with it. I deeply regret the harm that was caused as a result.

I regret that members of the McGill community have felt unsafe as a result of the tweet, which, without context, appears to be a genuine call to violence. Many of my constituents and fellow students, and some of my friends, identify as Zionists. I am Jewish myself, and I understand the importance of the state of Israel to many Jews. My parents and a number of our family friends are Zionists as well. I do not wish to enact, and would not condone, violence of any kind toward anyone in my community. I hope that, despite the high level of attention it garnered, my tweet can be understood for what it was: a misguided joke with a political meaning, rather than a credible call for violence.

Over the past few days, I have had opportunities to engage in conversations about Zionism with fellow students who have reached out to me with questions or criticism. I am committed to expanding my knowledge on Zionism by continuing and facilitating such conversations, both within Jewish communities and in dialogue with Palestinian voices, based on a shared commitment to social justice and human rights.

Specifically, I will personally reach out to those who have felt harmed as a result of my tweet, including members of Zionist groups, in order to apologize, and, if desired, engage in dialogue in their preferred format. I am willing to respond to or meet in person with any individuals or groups. I will participate in training and educational activities in order to better engage with a diversity of perspectives on Zionism. I will also seek out collaboration with campus groups and the administration in order to create a space for productive discussion on this topic.

I also want to take this opportunity to address a comment I made at the last meeting of the SSMU Legislative Council. I said: "As to your claim that Jewish people are an ethno-religious group indigenous to the Levant, again as someone with a Jewish heritage and Jewish ancestry I want to note that that is a deeply contested claim." I apologize for the lack of clarity in the phrasing of this statement. To clarify, I believe that Jewish peoples around the world constitute many ethno-religious communities with different geographies and histories, including Jews of the Levant, European Jews, North African Jews, Sub-Saharan African Jews, Latin American Jews, South Asian Jews, and East Asian Jews, as well as multiracial Jews of colour and converts to Judaism. I look forward to engaging in further discussion on this topic.

I welcome any further questions, concerns, or other feedback, and reaffirm my commitment to the safety and well-being of all students.

– Igor Sadikov