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FOR ISRAELSpring 2016
ProgrammingStatement on
GSOC BDS Vote

Statement on GSOC BDS Vote

NYU Law Students for Israel strongly condemns the NYU Graduate Student Union's recent approval of a motion to support a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions resolution against Israel. We commend NYU's President, Andrew Hamilton, and his recent statement reacting to the GSOC vote on BDS, stating that, "[a] boycott of Israeli academics and institutions is contrary to our core principles of academic freedom, antithetical to the exchange of ideas, and at odds with the University's position on this matter, as well as the position of GSOC's parent union."

As law students, we feel obligated to address this vote specifically, and the BDS movement more generally. This movement stifles free speech, limits academic freedom, and minimizes social interactions at a time when more than ever, respectful dialogue is needed on the most complex and pressing issues of our generation. Here at NYU, the GSOC referendum itself perpetuated unsubstantiated, false, and discriminatory statements about Israel in a misleading way by framing the vote in a biased, provocative and leading manner. Moreover, this proposal runs counter to the N.Y. Executive Law, Article 15 (Human Rights Laws) which unambiguously proscribes denial of an equal opportunity to employment, education and medical treatment based on national origin.

If this motion were in fact adopted, NYU would be forced to cut all financial, academic, or political ties with any institution within or doing business with Israel. In practical terms, NYU graduate students would lose their opportunity to study at NYU's acclaimed program at Tel Aviv University, one of the world's top universities. The financial loss NYU would potentially face from such divestments would be profound, as NYU would no longer be able to engage in any sort of business with companies ranging from Procter & Gamble to Intel to McDonald's. Undoubtedly, NYU professors, students and alumni would be disproportionately harmed.

Importantly, the vote should also be considered in context, in that it reflects that only a small minority of NYU graduate students is in favor of adopting a BDS resolution. Out of the approximately 25,000 NYU graduate students, the Union only represents about 1,200 students who are eligible to vote. Of those approximately 1,200 union members, only 428 students, **a mere 1.5% of NYU graduate students**, voted in favor of the BDS resolution, while 216 voted against it. Even more, GSOC's membership guidelines are confusing. Students from NYU's Stern School of Business are prohibited from joining the union, while students in the School of Law, another professional school, were considered eligible only after a lengthy discussion with union members and advisors. Such ambiguity as to who can be a union member casts further doubt that this vote truly represents the majority of NYU's graduate students.

The NYU Law Students for Israel stands in unity with the broader NYU graduate student body and students across the country in support of academic expression and against boycotts.

NYU Law Students for Israel

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