

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

In the Matter of,

AHMAD AWAD, SOFIA DADAP, SAPPHIRA
LURIE, and JULIE NORRIS,

Petitioners,

-against-

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY,

Respondent,

For a Judgment Pursuant to Article 78
of the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

Index No. _____

AFFIDAVIT OF AHMAD AWAD

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) ss:
COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

Ahmad Awad, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. I am a senior at Fordham University, and upon information and belief, will receive my diploma in May 2017. I submit this Affidavit in support of Petitioners' request for an Order of Judgment compelling Fordham to recognize Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this Affidavit.

2. On approximately November 19, 2015, I, along with three other Fordham students, applied to start a student group, SJP, at Fordham's Lincoln Center campus. I expected Fordham would approve our group within a few weeks so that we could start our educational programming.

3. SJP's proposed mission was "to build support in the Fordham community among people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds for the promotion of justice, human rights, liberation, and self-determination for the indigenous Palestinian people." We intended our club to foster a greater understanding of Israel-Palestine on campus.

4. Advocating for the basic rights of Palestinians is more than just a conviction for me, it is an integral part of my identity. My mother's father was a Polish survivor of Nazi labor camps, and my father's parents were born in Palestine prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948. These two histories of oppression taught me to value human dignity and to fight injustice wherever I see it.

5. My relatives in the West Bank have been forced to live under Israeli military rule for decades now, with no ability to control even the most basic aspects of their lives. The Israeli government controls the borders, which means that even though my grandparents — one of whom is a U.S. veteran — were born there, they are now prohibited from living in their birthplace. They can only obtain a visitor's visa for three months a year, if they're lucky. When I travel to Palestine to visit my relatives, I am routinely discriminated against and threatened by Israeli soldiers at checkpoints simply because I am Palestinian.

6. In February 2016, Dr. Dorothy Wenzel, Director of the Office of Student Leadership, met with one of the students who was involved with forming SJP. On April 6, 2016, I wrote Dr. Wenzel inquiring about SJP's status and letting her know that the student she met with in February would not be vice-president of SJP. In addition, I wrote expressing my frustration at the delay in approving SJP:

We've effectively missed a whole semester of being involved on campus, and would appreciate approval soon so we can begin

hosting meetings for fellow Fordham students who are interested to learn about what SJP is.

We are very motivated to make this club happen. It is an issue very dear to our hearts, especially as I, Ahmad, am Palestinian myself.

7. In September 2016, I came back to school, eager to get the club started, since I was now a senior. I planned to organize events that would educate Fordham students about Palestinian culture and identity, Israel's decades-long occupation, military attacks in Gaza, its two-tiered system of citizenship, and the impacts on Palestinians' historical and contemporary experience.

8. After months of delays, on November 17, 2016, the United Student Government (USG) Executive Board and Senate voted to approve SJP as a club.

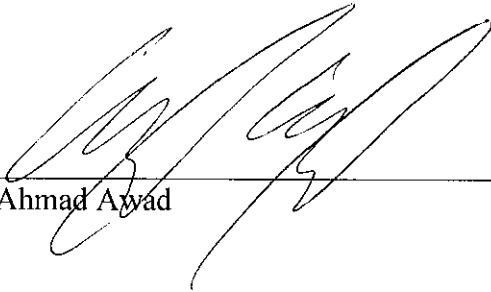
9. Shortly after USG's decision, Dean Eldredge wrote me, Sofia Dadap, Sapphira Lurie, and other students hoping to be part of SJP, stating that he was informed of the decision to approve the SJP club and that he "now need[s] to review the request before it is finalized."

10. On December 22, 2016, the last day of the fall semester, Dean Eldredge again wrote me, Sofia Dadap, Sapphira Lurie, and other students hoping to be part of SJP, stating that he had decided to deny our request to form SJP at Fordham University.

11. I was devastated to discover that Fordham would prohibit SJP. I had thought that because we had followed all the rules and the USG had approved us, we would be granted club status. I had been sitting in the student lounge with another student interested in starting SJP during the USG deliberation, awaiting the decision. When I read the email approving SJP, I was ecstatic. I called my dad and told him USG approved our club. There wasn't a thought in the back of my mind that Dean Eldredge or any Fordham administrator would veto the decision. I thought we could now start our programming. I felt disgusted by the decision by Dean Eldredge.

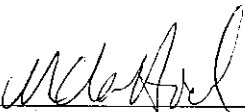
For nearly four years I had heard Fordham administrators speak about Jesuit values, about creating moral people, being kind, and taking care of those less fortunate. When I received this decision, I understood this message did not apply to Palestinians. I felt defeated.

12. On January 6, 2017, Dean Eldredge informed me, Sofia Dadap, Sapphira Lurie, and other students interested in starting SJP that “there is no appeal of my decision.”



Ahmad Aywad

Sworn to me this 19th day of
April, 2017.



Notary Public

MARIA C. LaHOOD, ESQ.
Notary Public, State of New York
No. 02LA6161980
Qualified in Kings County
Commission Expires February 26, 2019