

2024 GSA General Election

CRO Decision in the Matter of Khaleeq Ahmed and Ajibola Adigun

Thursday, March 7th, 2024

A formal complaint was filed by Khaleeq Ahmed, a candidate for the position of Vice President Student Life in the GSA Re-Election of the Vice President Student Life (hereafter “the Complainant”), against Ajibola Adigun (Jibs), a candidate for the position of Vice President Student Life in the GSA Re-Election of the Vice President Student Life (hereafter “the Respondent”), on Tuesday, March 5th, 2024.

Complaint: The Complainant alleges that the Respondent “began campaign activities ahead of the officially designated period” and is “sharing confidential information on social media platforms”. As evidence, they submitted two screenshots from the Respondent’s Instagram: one with a quote from another account speaking to their character, with “Ajibola Adigun VP Student Life for GSA” in the post, and another of the candidate sharing a screenshot of the email sent to all graduate students with the official results and also alerting them of a re-election. They also claim that the Respondent shared discriminating content, with a screenshot of a WhatsApp group where the Respondent states “We have a rerun Ladies and Gentlemen. If they didn’t hear us clearly at Triffo hall where they said I came in second by a vote. There is another chance to make it clear and conclusive. If anyone takes a look at most of the candidates that got elected in the just concluded elections, it is seems to be an interesting coincidence that they all come from one country only. This time, we make sure.”

Response: The Respondent notes that “reposting someone’s comment on my page does not warrant a campaign” and that the screenshot of the email is an announcement of a rerun. The Respondent acknowledged that pointing out the nationalities of the winners in the previous election may be misinterpreted, and deleted the message immediately, providing evidence of this through a screenshot, showing the WhatsApp message had been deleted. The Respondent also notes that the “notice for rerun isn’t confidential information” and “mentioning the coincidence of nationality does not constitute a slander.”

Relevant Bylaw and Policy:

I.POL. 10.1 “The campaign period will last at least seven (7) calendar days and will begin no earlier than the day following the All-Candidates Meeting” (GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section I.POL.8.6).

I.POL. 10.2 No form of campaigning (verbal, electronic, and visual) will contain slander, discriminatory content, or ad hominem attacks on individuals.

Consultation with the Elections and Referenda Committee (ERC): The ERC had decided prior to this year’s election that any form of discrimination would result in disqualification. Regarding this case, ERC recommended a warning for the comments regarding nationality. They recommended consequences from a warning to a 5% vote deduction for early campaigning.

Decision: Firstly, the CRO/DRO and ERC want to acknowledge that the Respondent's comment regarding the nationality of the newly elected DEOs is uncomfortable for some who read it and are affected by it, and that the GSA does not tolerate any form of discrimination. It is a potentially harmful statement, especially to those in the communities affected by it. Comments regarding others' nationality or any other personal factors are unacceptable in a just and fair electoral process. We also want to acknowledge that the Respondent immediately realized the potential impact of their actions and rectified them in a timely manner. Although ERC decided previously that discrimination would result in disqualification, they did not consider this case to be explicitly discriminatory. The CRO and DRO are issuing a 10% vote deduction regarding this statement that is personal to the other candidates involved, violating I.POL.10.2. This decision also serves as a written warning, in addition to the vote deduction. Regarding the early campaigning, the announcement of candidacy is not perceived as an issue. However, the screenshot of the quote with the candidate's name and position they are running for would have been considered campaign material during the campaign period, therefore it can be considered as such now. For this, the Respondent is being issued a \$10 spending limit deduction (i.e., they can only spend \$140 maximum out of the \$150 allowed).

Appeals: As per GSA Bylaw and Policy, "decisions of the CRO are subject to appeal to the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (GSA ACB)" (I.POL.11.6) and "[parties] have twenty-four (24) hours from the time the CRO's email is deemed delivered for an emailed appeal to be received by the Chair of the GSA ACB" (I.POL.11.6.a). Please note that all parties may file an appeal to ACB, and ACB decisions are final and binding (H.POL.15.7.b).