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Ryerson EyeOpener
Hate e-mails received by PSA
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The Pakistani Student Association (PSA) has received two anonymous, threatening e-mails in the past two weeks due to their absence during Genocide Week presentations in which two Indian student groups participated.

The presentation, hosted by the Indian Student Association (ISA) and Hindu Student Association (HSA), was shown on Nov. 7 and included a documentary on Kashmir — the disputed region on the border between India and Pakistan — and a PowerPoint presentation by Ron Banerjee, director of the Hindu Conference of Canada. The content sparked anger among some PSA members because they felt it was one-sided.

This issue was further compounded by a subsequent co-operative movie night held by both the PSA and ISA.

The first e-mail was sent to both the York and Ryerson PSAs on Nov. 10, attacking the PSA for not denouncing the ISA and HSA presentation. The e-mail was sent from a Gmail account, registered under the alias of Shafey Ali.

“Whoever is leading the pakistani association is the biggest crack head...u guys better open up ur eyes and change ur attitude.... u freaks... its a warning for you guys that your whole monopoly among the managment is in danger..u better chnage your attitude or there is some rebellion rising against you guys!!!, (sic)” the e-mail read.

A second e-mail, sent Nov. 14, had the same content, only Ali claimed the Kashmir genocide against Pakistan was “celebrated” at the event. The e-mail was sent to a larger audience including the York PSA, Sheridan College, George Brown, RSU executives and all Ryerson PSA members.

It is believed Ali obtained the personal addresses when an e-mail was sent to all members at the beginning of the year, with e-mail addresses listed under the carbon copy field.

“We didn’t foresee (the Genocide Awarness presentation) turning out as something so drastic,” ISA president Amish Jhangiani said. “We had no intention of aiming our presentation at a specific group.”

If people felt the content was one-sided or wrong, the group wouldn’t have presented the material, Jhangiani added.

“It’s unfortunate that one person feels that way,” Rajiv Oberoi said, President of HSA. “We are not biased in any way.”

“History has no bias,” added Sahar Zainab, vice president of ISA.

The PSA has still not viewed the content shown during the presentations made by ISA and HSA.

Immediately after the second e-mail was received, PSA sent their members an e-mail telling them to disregard any messages sent by Ali.

The same day, PSA contacted Ryerson security, which Sikander described as a “moral dilemma.”

“(Ali) is Pakistani. He made a mistake and we didn’t want that to cost him his entire university career.”

When dealing with threatening or harassing e-mails, Ryerson security first aims to identify any crimes in the e-mails, which death threats or genocide claims may include, said manager Lawrence Robinson.

“Not all e-mails of that sort necessarily constitute crimes,” he said.

Sikander felt the threat was being posed to him and his executives.

“I e-mailed execs telling them to be more aware of their surroundings and to keep their eyes and ears open.”

PSA co-president Sarah Siddiqui’s family was very concerned with the threats. “My mom was scared. She didn’t want me to go out alone.”

PSA members were scared, shocked and appalled by the emails.

“Many members felt threatened to be a part of PSA if members are like this,” Sikander said.

On Nov. 16, a follow up e-mail was sent by another PSA member agreeing with Ali.

Based on the e-mails, Sikander felt members believed that “PSA did not defend Pakistan,” after the presentation by the ISA and HSA.

“They feel the actions of PSA should be in an eye for an eye manner, which is not the way to go.”

“The reason we did not respond in the same manner, we knew the kind of reaction it would create,” Sikander said.

Despite the hate mail and the growing controversy of the two groups working together, both PSA and ISA were determined to keep the movie night on.

“We do events with everyone. Why not ISA?” Siddiqui said. “They (ISA) are happy and we are happy.”

“This e-mail is causing animosity between India and Pakistan. We have no hatred against them,” Jhangiani said.

“We’re way past this war. The world has moved on and so have we,” Zainab said. “We love working with PSA.”

The movie night took place Thursday night with about 50 participants.

“It just goes to show you how both communities are trying to evolve past history,” Sikander said.