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StandWithUs, ADL & Brandeis Center File Title VI Complaint Against Ohio State, Alleging Pervasive Antisemitic Climate for Jewish Students

Complaint claims OSU repeatedly failed to address incidents, leaving students vulnerable

New York, NY, April 9, 2024 ... Three Jewish defense organizations today submitted a formal [complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) against Ohio State University, alleging that the university has failed to address the severe discrimination and harassment of Jewish and Israeli students following the Oct. 7 massacre in Israel, which fostered “a hostile antisemitic environment that is now pervasive” at Ohio State.

The complaint, filed jointly by StandWithUs, ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) and the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, alleges that since the events on Oct. 7, Jewish students at OSU have faced a litany of antisemitic incidents, verbal taunts and threats and threatening graffiti in classrooms and university facilities, as well as the removal of posters and photos of kidnapped Israelis and the outright physical assault of Jewish students. The complaint seeks remedies under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

“Since October 7, Jewish students on campuses nationwide have faced unprecedented antisemitic harassment and discrimination,” said Roz Rothstein, StandWithUs CEO. “Ohio State University is no exception. Antisemitism is expressed openly; blatant verbal and physical threats and attacks on Jewish students often go unaddressed by the administration. By filing this Title VI federal complaint, we aim to hold the administration accountable.”

“We believe all the evidence shows that despite a pattern of escalating harassment and intimidation, Ohio State University administrators, faculty and staff repeatedly failed in their duty to protect Jewish and Israeli students from such attacks,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL

CEO. “We urge the U.S. Department of Education to investigate these incidents and compel the university to take immediate action to address the pervasively hostile environment for Jewish and Israelis on OSU’s campus.”

“There is a clear, direct, and indisputable correlation between lack of accountability and rising levels of antisemitism,” stated Kenneth L. Marcus, chairman of the Brandeis Center and the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights. “Schools must act immediately to address incidents and hold violators accountable. Unfortunately schools like Ohio State that continue to sweep incidents under the rug are getting worse by the day. The problem cannot be ignored. Schools must uphold the law and address each and every incident of antisemitic discrimination and harassment or the problem will continue to snowball.”

The complaint alleges that the university failed to meaningfully address a long list of incidents affecting Jewish and Israeli students, constituting a violation of Title VI.

Some specific examples cited in the complaint include:

- In early November, a group of five Jewish students walking to an OSU Sorority House were accosted by two men who shouted, “Free Palestine.” When the two men caught up to the group of five Jewish students, one of them saw that a person in the group was wearing a Hebrew-lettering *Chai* necklace and called him a “Zionist kike.” He pointed at that Jewish student and asked, “Are you a Jew?” He then proceeded to ask all five of them if they were Jews. The student wearing the Chai necklace acknowledged that they were Jewish, and then seconds later, one of the two men punched one of the Jewish students in the face and threw him into the street. The other individual punched another of the Jewish students across the face just seconds later. The attackers fled the scene. The Jewish students suffered a broken nose and a broken jaw.
- After arriving at the OSU Medical Center, only the one student who was bleeding profusely and needed immediate medical care was seen, and he was allowed only one guest. The other Jewish students, including the other student who had been violently assaulted, were made to wait outside in the freezing cold for over five hours. The Jewish students were denied entrance into their own university’s hospital waiting room and the building, and weren’t even allowed to charge their cell phones so that they could contact friends and family. Even after subsequent complaints were made about this mistreatment, no one from the University hospital has contacted the students to let them know why they were treated in this manner or to identify any policies or procedures that would be changed to ensure that such mistreatment is not repeated.
- On December 9, 2023, a Jewish student wearing a sweatshirt bearing the words “Am Yisrael Chai” in the shape of a Jewish star was confronted on the way to his final exam by another student who told him to “take that f-ing shirt off now.”
- On January 26, 2024, a Jewish student living in off-campus housing found that their mezuzah (a symbol of their Jewish identity) had been torn from their doorpost and

thrown on the ground, and that on February 23, 2024, a Jewish student's dorm room door was vandalized with graffiti reading, "Free Palestine."

- On February 2, 2024, Jewish students eating Shabbat dinner at the campus Hillel were interrupted by students banging on the Hillel windows and shouting, "Free Palestine."
- On February 15, 2024, Jewish students at the Ohio Union trying to gather signatures on a petition against antisemitism were confronted by a man saying he would not sign because he wants to "kill Jews." The following day, someone stole an Israeli flag from the Ohio Union after a multicultural event there and proceeded to flash a "white power" sign and harass Jewish students.

The complaint urges OCR to compel the university's administration to implement a series of measures necessary to secure the safety of Jewish and Israeli students at OSU, including by issuing a public statement condemning antisemitic hostility on campus and devoting more resources and increasing security measure to deter future attacks. The complaint also urges the university to incorporate the IHRA working definition of antisemitism into its campus policies concerning discrimination to better recognize the types of antisemitic discrimination confronting Jewish students, and to provide mandatory antisemitism training to university administrators, faculty, students and staff.

StandWithUs is an international, non-partisan education organization that supports Israel and fights antisemitism. StandWithUs empowers and energizes students and communities with leadership training and educational programs on hundreds of college campuses, high schools, and middle schools. StandWithUs informs through social media, print and digital materials, films, weekly newsletters, and missions to Israel. StandWithUs takes legal action through the StandWithUs Saidoff Legal Department. Founded in 2001 and headquartered in Los Angeles, the organization has chapters and offices throughout the U.S., Israel, the UK, Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Australia. More at www.standwithus.com.

ADL is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all." Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all. More at www.adl.org.

The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law is an independent, unaffiliated, nonprofit corporation established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. LDB engages in research, education, and legal advocacy to combat the resurgence of anti-Semitism on college and university campuses, in the workplace, and elsewhere. It empowers students by training them to understand their legal rights and educates administrators and employers on best practices to combat racism and anti-Semitism. More at www.brandeiscenter.com

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