

Brandeis Center Files Federal Complaint Against Fulton County School District over Anti-Semitism in K-12 Schools

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Washington, D.C. – The Louis D. Brandeis Center For Human Rights Under Law, Jewish Americans for Fairness in Education (JAFE) and the National Jewish Advocacy Center (NJAC), filed a Title VI complaint with the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) against the Fulton County School District (FCSD) over routine anti-Semitic bullying and harassment against Jewish and Israeli students since October 7th, in the hallways, classrooms, buses and schoolyards of elementary, middle and high schools located across the District.

The complaint documents numerous incidents showing how FCSD has fostered a hostile climate that has allowed anti-Semitism to thrive in its schools. FCSD has ignored pleas from Jewish and Israeli parents whose children have faced increasing physical and verbal harassment that has led many of them to feel unsafe and unwelcome at school.

Said Denise Katz-Prober, Director of Legal Initiatives for the Brandeis Center, “The numerous incidents of anti-Semitic bullying and harassment against Jewish and Israeli students by their peers and teachers in the Fulton County School District - some even targeting the most vulnerable students in elementary and middle schools - are a disturbing reminder that anti-Semitism is a problem that impacts students long before they step foot on a college campus. The families of these Jewish and Israeli students have been left to fend for themselves, by administrators who dismiss their complaints and refuse to act. It is long past due for FCSD to take swift corrective action against the anti-Semitism that pervades their schools.”

Fulton County School District Fosters a Hostile Environment and Culture of Anti-Semitism

- Just one day after Hamas’ terrorist attacks on October 7, 2023, Jewish and Israeli students in FCSD were subject to other students yelling anti-Israel slogans and cursing at them. One Israeli middle school student was told by a classmate that “somebody needs to bomb your country, and hey, somebody already did.” A high school student approached a group of Jewish and Israeli girls

and mimicked shooting them with a gun while making gunshot noises. Students have also burned “I stand with Israel” posters.

- Students have referred to Jews as “stinky.”
- In one particularly egregious instance, a student asked an Israeli 5th grade student if she was Israeli and then told her that she hates Jews and Israelis and they should all be killed. The same student kept approaching the Israeli student and happily describing all the atrocities that Hamas had committed in Israel, including beheading babies and butchering children. Further, some Jewish students, as young as six years old, have been told, during class and with teachers present, that Israel is entirely at fault for this war.
- The harassment is not limited to students, but tolerated and even conducted by teachers and other school officials. Just nine days after October 7th, a 2nd grade teacher told her class - which included two Israeli students - that the war was Israel’s fault. Further, educational materials used by FCSD teachers to indoctrinate students with one-sided history include maps that completely omit the State of Israel and erase the heritage of Jewish and Israeli students.
- In April, during cultural night at a District elementary school, five Israeli mothers of FCSD students were talking with their children when they were verbally accosted and abused by a group of Palestinian parents. The Israeli mothers were yelled at and called “Nazis.” As the mothers began to shake and cry in fear for their children’s and their own safety, the leader of the Palestinian group – a father of another student – spat at them. After the victims complained to a school safety officer, the guard ultimately told the women that the man seemed nice, so he was not going to do anything.

The harassment and bullying have been perpetrated and condoned not only by fellow students but also by teachers and administrators, who have fostered an intense climate of hostility and fear by teaching propaganda and by allowing students to harass their Jewish and Israeli peers before, during, and after class, mocking their pain and threatening their families. Parents reported the anti-Semitism to school administrators on numerous occasions. But instead of taking responsive action to address the anti-Jewish hostility, FCSD denied the anti-Semitic nature of the incidents or offered inadequate solutions.

The cumulative effect of the anti-Semitic harassment and bullying by teachers and peers, anti-Semitic propaganda on schoolhouse walls, retaliation against those reporting anti-Semitism and a complete failure of FCSD to address the anti-Semitic climate, is the increased bullying, shunning and marginalization of Jewish and Israeli students. The hostile environment for Jewish students has become intolerable, and is ultimately denying Jewish students the full benefits of their federally-funded education and interfering with Jewish students’ ability to access their education.

Said Kenneth L. Marcus, founder and chairman of the Brandeis Center and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, “Since October 7, much of the discussion around anti-Semitism in educational institutions has focused, rightfully so given the scale of the problem, around colleges and universities. However, as FCSD has shown, anti-Semitism also is being taught in K-12 schools and at times

perpetuated by teachers and staff. As students enter the new school year, FCSD must fulfill its moral and legal obligations to create a school climate free from anti-Semitic harassment and discrimination.”

The complaint against FCSD follows a series of legal actions taken by the Brandeis Center to address the eruption of anti-Semitism in K-12 schools after the October 7 terrorist attacks in Israel. The Brandeis Center has also filed a federal complaint against **Berkeley Unified School District** and is suing the **New York Department of Education** and the **Santa Ana Unified School District** for unaddressed anti-Semitism. The Brandeis Center also secured a recent win with respect to its complaint against the **Community School of Davidson** public charter school in North Carolina.



About the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law

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. The Brandeis Center is not affiliated with the Massachusetts university, the Kentucky law school, or any of the other institutions that share the name and honor the memory of the late U.S. Supreme Court justice. More at www.brandeiscenter.com.

