



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.

Contact: Nicole Rosen 202-309-5724

ANTI-SEMITISM HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO “RUN RAMPANT” AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, ALLEGES NEW FEDERAL COMPLAINT

Washington, D.C., Oct. 1, 2024: A new federal [complaint](#) filed by [The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law](#) alleges that anti-Semitism was allowed to run rampant at the University of Washington (UW) because the administration has repeatedly failed to adequately respond despite having been put on notice.

According to the complaint, Jewish students have been threatened with physical harm, excluded and forced out of areas on campus they are entitled to access, and unable to attend class. Vandals have repeatedly covered the campus with anti-Semitic graffiti calling for physical violence against Jews. Aggressive anti-Israel protestors shut down a Board of Regents meeting at the university where Jewish university and community members were testifying about anti-Semitism on campus. Police had to escort Jewish community members, including the CEO of the Seattle Jewish Federation, from the location for their safety.

University leaders continue to put out statements void of any action to address the hostile climate. Even as recent as last week in a [letter](#) from UW President Ana Mari Cauce to the Seattle Jewish Federation conceding the severity of a recent anti-Semitic incident, she merely cited old policies that had already proven ineffective in addressing the anti-Semitism thus far and ignored the larger hostile environment on campus.

The complaint was filed with the U.S. Department of Education on behalf of UW Jewish students. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin, including discrimination against Jews on the basis of their actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, in educational institutions that receive federal funding. Under the law, harassing, marginalizing, demonizing, and excluding Jewish students based on the Zionist component of their Jewish identity is unlawful.

“It didn’t require any special reading of the tea leaves to see that Jew-hatred was rapidly escalating at the University of Washington and action was required,” stated Kenneth L. Marcus, founder and chairman of the Brandeis Center and former assistant secretary of education at the U.S. Department of Education. “This could have been prevented but left unaddressed, graffiti and threatening messages directed at Jews quickly moved to dangerous bullying, intimidation, physical threats and discrimination. The Administration cannot continue to sit idly by. Jew-hatred will likely continue to spread like wildfire until the university takes concrete steps to address it, as they are required by law.”

To document how the situation has escalated in the face of inadequate action from UW’s administration, the federal complaint describes the following timeline:

- Anti-Jewish hostility began right after October 7 with a rally organized by a pro-Palestinian student organization to “honor the martyrs of Palestine.” Participants called for the ethnic cleansing of Jews in Israel and venerated the Hamas terrorists who committed the deadliest act of violence against Jews since the Holocaust.
- In the ensuing months, anti-Semitic graffiti such as “Zionist (piss on ‘em)” “mug Zionists only,” “F**k off Zionists,” “Zionists f**k off,” “Zionists home” written on trash dumpsters, and “Save a life...kill your local colonizer” along with the Hamas symbol of an inverted triangle, appeared all over UW’s campus. And while UW President Cauce admitted the graffiti was “vile,” “anti-Semitic,” “violent,” and created an “unwelcome and fearful environment for many students, faculty and staff, especially those who are Jewish,” she failed to take concrete steps to address the hostile environment which continued to escalate.
- Pro-Palestinian protestors shut down a bowling event hosted by the Jewish fraternity AEPi. They took over the building, yelling, “Get out of here” and “Zionists go home.”
- During UW’s encampment this past spring when a Jewish student approached the encampment, students in the encampment confronted him stating, “We’re going to kill [you]” and “We’re going to end your life.” The next day encampment students tried to grab an Israeli flag he was holding, circled him, obstructed his movements, and prevented him

from walking through the quad. When he began to escape, someone yelled, “Let’s go get the knife.” Later that evening when the Jewish student had to walk through the encampment to get home from a party, encampment members ran up to him with hammers, threatening “Yo, bro, shut the f**k up, I’ll f**king end you” and “I’ll kill you.” The student reported the incidents to a school administrator and campus police but neither offered assistance or protective measures.

- Another example of physical bullying by encampment protestors included the harassment of a Jewish student wearing a yarmulke. When the student had to walk through the quad to get to class, protestors yelled, “Go home,” “You’re not welcome,” and “We know who you are...go away.” Many of the individuals who participated in the encampment were dressed in black and carrying sticks and shields. The Jewish student hid his yarmulke to avoid being harassed, missed classes because he was afraid to walk through the quad, and at the end of the semester left UW.

“Wearing my yarmulka, speaking my language, simply being who I am - all of it made me a target of harassment and intimidation. I felt pressure to hide a core part of myself just to walk through campus without fear,” shared the former UW Jewish student who asked to keep his identity confidential for fear of retribution. “When I sought help from University officials they offered little help and chose inaction even as student organizations called for violence and removal of ‘Zionists’ and ‘Jews’ from campus. The school that promised opportunity became an unwelcoming place I had to leave because it no longer felt safe or like a place that would protect my identity as a Jewish student. As an institution, the University of Washington claims to stand for equality and inclusion, yet allows anti-Semitism to thrive unchecked.”

“This past school year was deeply troubling for many in the Jewish community at the University of Washington. Jewish students, faculty, and staff experienced unchecked anti-Semitism. At times, they faced harassment, intimidation, and a hostile environment. The recent disruption of the September 12 [Board of Regents](#) meeting further highlighted the ongoing failure to protect our community,” stated President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle Solly Kane in a recent statement. “The University has issued a letter to the Jewish community indicating the University’s intent to depart from last year’s inaction...This marks a shift in tone from where we stood just a few months ago. However, this is not the time for complacency by the university. Last year, similar rules were already in place, yet they failed to protect our community. We expect transparency, accountability, and action—and we will stay vigilant until these expectations are met.”

The Brandeis Center requests the Department of Education require UW to enforce its policies against vandalism and remove all anti-Semitic graffiti, posters, banners, flags, images and writings on school property; ensure all students have access to university facilities and services on a non-discriminatory basis and are provided a safe environment free from harassment, discrimination and harm; work with local law enforcement and campus police to enhance security measures for Jewish and Israeli students; institute anti-Semitism education for administrators, faculty, students and staff that utilizes the IHRA definition of classic and contemporary forms of anti-Semitism; issue a statement denouncing anti-Semitism in all its forms, including recognizing that anti-Zionism is a form of anti-Semitism; appoint an independent investigator to examine the campus climate on a regular basis to address the climate for the Jewish community; and create a task force comprised of Jewish students and faculty to provide input to the UW administration about how best to address and improve Jewish life at UW.

The Brandeis Center and other Jewish organizations recently reached a historic [agreement](#) with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to protect Jewish students, and the Department of Education also recently resolved the Brandeis Center’s complaint against [Brooklyn College](#) as part of a comprehensive resolution agreement the Department with the City University of New York. North Carolina State University also recently entered an [agreement](#) with the Brandeis Center to combat campus anti-Semitism, and, as a result of a Brandeis Center complaint, the Community School of Davidson [agreed](#) to address K-12 anti-Semitism. The Department of Education is investigating Brandeis Center complaints for unaddressed anti-Semitism at numerous campuses, including [Chapman](#), [Wellesley](#), [SUNY New Paltz](#), and the [University of Southern California](#).

The organization has also filed state or federal lawsuits and administrative agency complaints against numerous schools, including [Harvard University](#), the [University of California at Berkeley](#), the [New York Department of Education](#), the [Santa Ana Unified School District](#), [American University](#), [UC Santa Barbara](#), [Occidental College](#), [Pomona College](#), [UMass-Amherst](#), and [Ohio State University](#) for unaddressed anti-Semitism.

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