

MAN KICKED OUT OF OAKLAND CAFÉ FOR BEING JEWISH SUES OWNER

Washington, D.C., March 3, 2025: [The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law](#), representing a man who was ejected, along with his five-year-old son, from an Oakland coffeehouse because he is Jewish, filed a [lawsuit](#) today in the Superior Court of the State of California, Alameda County. According to the lawsuit, the defendants' denial of services violates California's Unruh Civil Rights Act, among other laws.

This marks the first lawsuit brought by the Brandeis Center's recently launched public interest litigation group, the [Center for Legal Innovation \(CLI\)](#). With incidents of anti-Semitism skyrocketing in the U.S., CLI was formed to serve as the first law firm to litigate exclusively against anti-Semitism in all sectors. Advisory board members include U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr, Solicitor General Paul Clement, and chairmen and renowned litigators representing some of the nation's most prestigious law firms, including Paul, Weiss; Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP; Holtzman Vogel; Schaerr | Jaffe LLP; Consovoy McCarthy; and Cooley and Susman Godfrey LLP.

The incident in question occurred on October 26, 2024, when Jonathan Hirsch and his five-year-old son entered the Jerusalem Coffee House, owned by Abdulrahim Harara. After lunch at a local restaurant, Casper's, Hirsch's son needed to use the restroom, but Casper's did not provide restrooms for their customers, and the staff directed Hirsch to the coffee shop across the street. Hirsch was wearing a blue baseball cap that depicted a white Jewish Star on the front. The baseball cap was a recreation of a 1938 baseball cap associated with the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, a large Jewish charitable institution based in New York that hosted many Negro league baseball games. Hirsch ordered a latte, his son used the restroom, and they started playing chess while waiting for their drink.

Within minutes, Harara approached Mr. Hirsch and demanded to know if he was a "Zionist." When Mr. Hirsch refused to answer the question, Harara demanded that Mr. Hirsch leave the premises, threatened to call the police, subjected him to physical contact and verbal slurs. Harara raised his voice at Hirsch and he and another employee attempted to physically push Hirsch toward the exit. Harara stated, "this is a violent hat and you need to leave."

An employee of the East Bay Community Space, which rents the space to Harara, arrived on the scene. Echoing Harara's right to evict Hirsch, she claimed, "the only reason they know you're a protected class is that you're putting on your hat. You're choosing to be here in this situation." The police arrived, Hirsch and his son stepped outside, his son frightened and in tears, while Harara continued yelling at Hirsch. Harara shouted "Fuck Israel. Fuck Zionists," called Hirsch a "bitch" and told Hirsch's son "Hey, your dad's a bitch. Your dad's a bitch."

A video of Harara verbally attacking Hirsch and demanding he leave the establishment can be viewed [here](#). Hirsch had never discussed Israel, Zionism, Judaism, or any related topics with Harara or anyone else inside the business. Other than the Jewish Star, his hat had no other writing or symbols.

Hirsch is an American Jew and United States citizen who resides in Oakland, California, with his wife and three children. The Jewish Star on Hirsch's hat, also known as a Star of David, is a symbol that represents Judaism and Jewish identity. It appears in Jewish synagogues, on Jewish tombstones, on the Israeli flag, and was used by the Nazis to identify Jews; it is inextricably linked with the Jewish people and the Jewish religion.

"The anti-Semitism that Mr. Hirsch and his son experienced is utterly shocking, as was the Defendants' ignorance of basic morality and the law," said Brandeis Center Senior Counsel Omer Wiczky, who is representing Hirsch. "We look forward to educating the Defendants – and anyone that shares their distorted views – in a court of law. In the United States of America, a business cannot refuse to serve someone because they are Jewish, or any other race, religion, or ethnicity. The fact that this needs to be said in 2025 is a frightening reminder of the growing anti-Semitism that far too many have experienced in recent years."

California's Unruh Civil Rights Act, Civil Code § 51 et seq. broadly prohibits business establishments from discriminating in the provision of goods and services. Harara's and East Bay Community Space's refusal to permit Hirsch and his son to enjoy the services, privileges, accommodations, and facilities of a business establishment, solely because he was wearing a baseball cap with a Jewish star, constitutes discrimination. Hirsch is suing both Harara and the East Bay Community Space and seeks compensatory and punitive damages as well as injunctive relief and declaratory relief.

Victims of anti-Semitism seeking pro-bono counsel and support from CLI can reach out to David Dince, Brandeis Center Director of Litigation, at ddince@brandeiscenter.com or 917-509-1203 (mobile), 202-559-9296 (office).