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Columbia University Janitors, UCLA Jewish Community Members Sue Orgs Behind Encampments

New Lawsuits Go After Organizations Behind Encampments, Alleging Coordinated Campaign of Anti-Semitism

Washington, D.C., April 28, 2025 – Unlike previous lawsuits that aim to hold universities accountable for rampant anti-Semitism, [The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law](#)'s latest lawsuits go directly after the organizations that they allege orchestrated the assaults, battery, and civil rights violations of Jews on university campuses.

“These were not organic student-driven events, as they claimed to be. This was part of a professional, coordinated effort that we’re seeing taking place across the country. Not only do they seek to strip Jews of their safety, their security, and their ability to walk freely on campus, but many are career supporters of Hamas who aim to propagate Hamas’ anti-Semitic goals,” said **Hon. Kenneth L. Marcus, chairman of the Brandeis Center and the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights during two administrations.** “Until we acknowledge that these protests were part of a larger web of radical anti-Semitism, and until we hold the perpetrators actually carrying out this abuse accountable, these vicious attacks will continue. And Jewish students and faculty – and those who stand up for them – will continue to suffer.”

The lawsuits were filed late Friday in the United States District Court, Southern District of New York and the United States District Court, Central District of California alleging that student groups and other national organizations at Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) orchestrated a professional, coordinated campaign of egregious acts of racial exclusion, intimidation, and assault against Jewish students and others viewed as sympathetic to Jews.

In each case, these professional organizations – who have spent years spreading pro-Hamas and anti-Semitic propaganda – planned, constructed, supplied, and recruited for the encampment knowing that its purpose and effect was to further Hamas’ goals to harass, vilify, and exclude Jews.

Columbia University

Filed by Torridon Law PLLC and the Brandeis Center, the complaint alleges that pro-Hamas group The People’s Forum, Inc. and numerous individuals, including professional agitators,

were responsible for brutalizing two janitors during the takeover of Columbia University's Hamilton Hall. As a result, these two janitors have not been able to return to work and now suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The complaint also alleges that numerous non-defendant pro-Hamas organizations and groups, including Within Our Lifetime United For Palestine, Westchester People's Action Coalition, Inc., Columbia University Apartheid Divest, Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine, and Columbia-Barnard Jewish Voice for Peace, directly or indirectly supported the seizure of Hamilton Hall.

In April 2024, members of a highly coordinated mob used violent, masked tactics reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan to storm Columbia University's Hamilton Hall. Armed with rope, zip ties, and crow bars, the masked invaders smashed their way through the doors and windows of the Hall and encountered two janitors – one Latino and one African-American, neither of whom are Jewish – who were working the overnight shift cleaning the building's classrooms and bathrooms. The mob terrorized the two men, assaulted and battered them, held them against their will, mocked, and derided them as "Jew-lovers" and "Zionists."

In the weeks prior to the attack, these same groups constructed encampments on Columbia's campus, which soon became the center of virulent anti-Semitism. Jewish students were barred from joining, physically assaulted, and mocked with jeers of, "Yahoodim, yahoodi, [Jews, Jew] f*ck you," "stop killing children," "go back to Poland," "Nazi b*tches," and "go to a synagogue." When attempts to negotiate between Columbia University and protesters failed, university administration issued a statement expelling the students that participated in the encampments. Upon hearing this statement, the involved groups devised a plan to prolong and intensify their campaign of anti-Semitic violence and intimidation at the university, resulting in the occupation of Hamilton Hall and the vicious attack on the two janitors.

More information on the complaint can be found [here](#).

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Filed by Consovoy McCarthy PLLC and the Brandeis Center, the UCLA complaint alleges that several professional groups – including National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), AJP Educational Foundation, Inc., Faculty for Justice in Palestine Network, WESPAC Foundation, and People's City Council – engaged in a long-running and coordinated anti-Semitic conspiracy to deny Jews equal access to campus.

According to the complaint, anti-Semitism on campus severely worsened when protesters erected a violent, pro-Hamas encampment on Dickson Plaza and Royce Quad. Within the encampment, protesters created and enforced a "Jew exclusion zone," which was defended by threats of physical violence. Protesters designated teams of security personnel armed with wooden planks, makeshift shields, pepper spray, tasers, and even a sword to man "checkpoints" and "human phalanxes" designed to intimidate Jewish and Israeli students and faculty.

Members of the aforementioned groups and other pro-Hamas organizations coordinated via social media and Google Docs as part of an organized, professional, and concerted effort to

plan, fund, execute, and reinforce the encampment. They also took over a university building and physically barred Jews access to areas of campus, including certain libraries and halls that were named after prominent Jewish figures.

Even after UCLA belatedly cleared the encampment, these same violent protesters conspired to reestablish it and to otherwise cause Jews to continue to fear for their safety. For example, just a few days after the first encampment was dispersed by police, more than 40 protesters were taken into custody after they were discovered with metal pipes, bolt cutters, chains and padlocks, and manuals for “occupying” campus buildings.

More information on the complaint can be found [here](#).

In response to another Brandeis Center lawsuit, Harvard recently agreed to take significant measures to address anti-Semitism on its campus. As part of the precedent-setting agreement, Harvard will apply the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism with its examples to its non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, recognize the centrality of Zionism to Jewish identity, and explicitly state that targeting Jews and Zionists constitutes a violation of school rules. Other schools have also settled recent complaints with similar concrete action.

The Brandeis Center has filed dozens of complaints on behalf of Jewish students at numerous universities, including Harvard University, Yale University, Stanford University, University of Southern California, UMass Amherst, Cal Poly, UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley, and more.

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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.