

U.S. Department of Education Opens Civil Rights Investigation into Chapman University Following Brandeis Center Complaint Showing Unchecked Anti-Semitism on Campus

Washington, DC, June 17, 2024 - The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has opened an investigation into a federal complaint [filed](#) by the The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law alleging Chapman University failed to take action after anti-Semitic harassment and exclusion of Jewish students in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The case involves anti-Semitic incidents perpetrated by Chapman Students for Justice in Palestine (CSJP) and its members. CSJP is a local chapter of a national anti-Jewish hate group, with the stated goal of "dismantling Zionism on college campuses." After the October 7th Hamas massacre, actions by CSJP and its members included removing a Jewish student from the group because of his shared Jewish ancestry and making heinous death threats against a different Jewish student.

The complaint specifically details several instances when the University failed to address anti-Semitic conduct by CSJP targeting Jewish students.

First, was the exclusion of a Jewish Chapman student with a Jewish sounding surname when he attempted to join the group in September 2022 to learn about CSJP's perspective. In October of 2022, he was removed from the listserv and effectively denied admission to the group. He was similarly rebuffed by CSJP when he renewed his attempts to join the group in October 2023 after Hamas' terrorist attacks in Israel. CSJP failed to confirm his RSVP to a teach-in event and later denied him entry to the in-person event held on campus. This also happened with several other students who are Jewish or have Jewish-sounding names, who sought to attend the teach-in event, but did not receive the confirmation needed for admission by CSJP and therefore were barred from attending.

The complaint explains that CSJP utilizes a litmus test whereby those believed to be Jewish, often on the basis of nothing other than a Jewish-sounding surname, are denied access to CSJP unless and until CSJP confirms that they do not support Israel. Non-Jewish students, however, are not subjected to this test.

The second incident detailed in the complaint started on November 12, 2023 when a CSJP member sent a death threat to one of the Jewish students who was excluded from CSJP, after she responded to a social media post in which he called for "death to all Israelis who follow Zionism." The student then asked the CSJP member if he wanted her dead. He responded "f*** yeah I want you and all Zionist trash bags dead the f*** kinda question is that?" The CSJP member then sent her a barrage of harassing messages accusing her of not being a real Jew and alleging that "Zionism is terrorism."

The complaint details Chapman's failure to keep the Jewish student safe after she promptly reported the threat incident to Chapman's Department of Public Safety. After the Department of Public Safety conducted a threat assessment and determined that the CSJP member was not a threat, however, the school permitted him to move back into on-campus housing pending an investigation by Chapman's Office of Student Conduct. At no point since issuing the death threat has the student been prohibited from campus. The Jewish student had to live and study in fear for her physical safety at Chapman due to the death threat issued on the basis of her Jewish identity by an individual who was routinely on the Chapman campus.

What is more, the same CSJP member continued to post anti-Jewish content on social media. After Hamas' October 7 massacre in Israel, he filmed himself on TikTok vandalizing an on-campus memorial to the Israeli victims of the massacre. He also falsely accused another Jewish student of stealing his Palestinian flag and threatened him, going so far as to demand the Jewish student's address.

Said Kenneth L. Marcus, chair of the Brandeis Center and the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, "Anti-Semitism continues to run rampant on college campuses. Too many universities are refusing to do what's needed to address these civil rights violations. It is imperative that federal officials enforce the law. It is about time that the federal government is finally investigating Students for Justice in Palestine's discriminatory activities. We welcome this outcome and look forward to pursuing the case to implement needed remedies to address past violations and stop future wrongs."

Other SJP chapters at Fordham, Rutgers, Brandeis and George Washington University have been banned or suspended.

Ultimately, The Brandeis Center is seeking several remedies to ensure anti-Semitism is addressed including ensuring a comprehensive investigation into the death threat, ensuring student clubs are equally accessible to all Jewish students, disciplining student groups that engage in discrimination, revising anti-discrimination policies to better address the rights of Jewish students, and issuing a statement denouncing anti-Semitism in all forms and recognizing Zionism is a key component of Jewish identity for many of Chapman's students.

The Brandeis Center is also pursuing federal lawsuits against Harvard University and the University of California at Berkeley. The U.S. Department of Education is currently investigating Brandeis Center complaints of unaddressed anti-Semitism on numerous college campuses, including **Wellesley**, **SUNY New Paltz**, the **University of Southern California**, **Brooklyn College**, and the **University of Illinois**. The organization also recently filed complaints against **American University**, **UC Santa Barbara**, **Occidental College**, **Pomona College**, **UMass-Amherst**, and **Ohio State University**, working in some cases with partner institutions, such as the Anti-Defamation League and StandWithUs. At the K-12 level, 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, after securing a recent win with respect to its complaint against the **Community School of Davidson** in North Carolina.

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.