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Brandeis Center Contact: Nicole Rosen, nicole.rosen@berlinrosen.com, 202-309-5724

Brandeis Center Files Discrimination Charges Against UAW's 'Legal Aid' Union for Anti-Semitic Discrimination Against Its Jewish Members at NYLAG

Brandeis Center Alleges Union Betrayed Jewish Members, Enabled Hostile Workplace at NYLAG

May 7, 2025 (Washington, D.C.) – On behalf of numerous Jewish employees of the [New York Legal Assistance Group](#) (NYLAG), [The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law](#) filed complaints today with the [National Labor Relations Board \(NLRB\)](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#). The complaints allege the employees' own union, [A Better NYLAG](#) (the ABN,) not only failed to represent their interests but also actively obstructed efforts by NYLAG to address and remedy an anti-Semitic workplace environment allegedly fostered by the union itself.

The ABN is a chapter of the United Autoworkers of America, Local 2325, a.k.a., the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys.

According to the complaints, the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack in southern Israel precipitated an onslaught of anti-Israel advocacy in NYLAG's offices that came to permeate the workplace. Many Jewish NYLAG employees complained that this advocacy had subjected them to an anti-Semitic, discriminatory environment. This included, among other things, posters rationalizing and supporting the violence of the October 7th attack, and encouraging further such actions. As one Jewish NYLAG employee wrote, begging NYLAG to act, "These signs are having the discriminatory effect of pushing Jewish people and/or Zionists out of these spaces. As a Jewish person, I should not have to work in such close proximity to signs that direct hatred towards me."

In order to ensure a non-discriminatory work environment, NYLAG management promulgated a viewpoint-neutral policy prohibiting the display of "any posters or other postings regarding the Israel/Gaza conflict" in the office. Private sector employers have a well-recognized legal right to limit political advocacy in their workplaces, and that is particularly so in situations where such political advocacy contributes to a toxic work environment for employees based on their identity, and where such advocacy isn't aimed at the terms and conditions of employment at their workplace.

Rather than defend the right of these Jewish NYLAG employees in the ABN's bargaining unit to be free from a toxic work environment – created in large part by the ABN's own activities – the ABN went so far as to advocate against the very Jewish employees whom they are responsible for representing. In this case and in others, the ABN repeatedly took actions to undermine NYLAG's efforts to protect Jewish employees. They filed an unfair labor practice charge against NYLAG with the NLRB.

There are other examples of the ABN prioritizing its anti-Israel advocacy over the safety of its Jewish members. For example, when the NYPD warned of potential serious danger around an upcoming anti-Israel protest and NYLAG offered its Jewish employees to work from home that day, ABN attacked NYLAG management for trying to keep its Jewish employees safe. As one NYLAG employee pleaded with ABN for its help, "...were you aware that my not-even two-year-old daughter couldn't go to her classes on Friday, despite the increase of police presence, for fear of her physical safety? That my husband couldn't wear a kippah to work on Friday, for fear of being attacked?" The ABN has repeatedly rejected and fought against any attempts by NYLAG to address the increasing anti-Semitic discrimination and harassment its Jewish employees were experiencing.

"Jewish American union members, like all other working people, are entitled to union representation that supports them fairly and equally against toxic environments. In this case, the union actually made things worse, actively attempting to block management efforts to address a workplace that had been made inhospitable for Jewish workers. This is exactly the opposite of what unions should be doing," said **Hon. Kenneth L. Marcus, chairman of the Brandeis Center and a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights for two administrations.** "We must hold labor unions accountable when they exacerbate anti-Semitic environments, just as we do with universities, public schools, and other institutions."

The ABN is the exclusive bargaining representative for NYLAG staff, and thus owes a legal duty to fairly represent all its employees. According to the NLRB complaint, "the union cannot throw its members of one protected identity under the bus in favor of supporting other members' 'right' to discriminate against or torment them. Yet that is exactly what the ABN is doing: choosing to discriminate against its many Jewish members and non-members in its bargaining unit who are experiencing a discriminatory toxic environment in fighting to allow that discriminatory toxic environment to continue unremedied." And a union which violates its duty of fair representation when motivated by such discriminatory animus also violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, enforced by the EEOC as well as New York State and New York City civil rights laws.

"These Jewish legal services attorneys have dedicated their professional lives to representing poor and marginalized New Yorkers facing eviction, deportation, and loss of access to health care and other critical government services, so imagine their shock and disappointment when their own union sided with those marginalizing *them* and fomenting an anti-Semitic toxic work environment," said **Hon. Rory Lancman, Senior Counsel at the Brandeis Center and a former NYC Council Member who chaired the Committee overseeing City-funded legal services providers.**

The Brandeis Center has represented dozens of Jewish students, faculty, employees, professionals, and union members experiencing anti-Semitic discrimination at numerous institutions across the country, including at [Harvard University](#), [Yale University](#), [Stanford University](#), [University of Southern California](#), [UMass Amherst](#), [Cal Poly](#), [UC Santa Barbara](#), [UC Berkeley](#), and [more](#). In fact, in response to the Brandeis Center's lawsuit against [Harvard](#), the nation's oldest university recently agreed to take significant measures to address anti-Semitism on its campus, and in response to a Brandeis Center [complaint](#) the United Autoworkers of America oversight board nullified expulsion proceedings against four Jewish and allied union members for having opposed a UAW local union's anti-Israel resolution.

The Brandeis Center's newly-formed public interest litigation group, [The Center for Legal Innovation \(CLI\)](#), litigates against anti-Semitism that occurs in all sectors, including the workplace, housing, healthcare, public accommodations, government services, sports, unions, academia, and corporations.