PRESS RELEASES

Benesch and ADL Sue Cafe for Discriminating Against Jewish Customer

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The cafe owner and employees berated the man for being Jewish and refused him service

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 27, 2025 - Benesch and the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) today filed a federal lawsuit against the operators of Jerusalem Coffee House of Oakland, Calif., on behalf of a Jewish customer, Michael Radice, alleging the cafe violated his civil rights and denied him full and equal accommodations by refusing him service simply for being Jewish. This marks the first case ADL has filed to halt discriminatory business practices by establishments refusing to serve Jewish customers.

The Complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, alleges Jerusalem Coffee House violated Mr. Radice's civil rights under both federal and California law.

"We are proud to work with the ADL to rid the community of discrimination," said Benesch Partner Michael Meuti. "We took on this case pro bono because not only is it illegal to refuse service to anybody because of their religion or ethnicity, it's simply not okay."

Cleveland-area native Mr. Radice, who runs a local nonprofit, visited Jerusalem Coffee House twice and was subjected to antisemitic harassment both times. The first time, in July 2024, he wore a baseball cap with a Star of David icon and the phrase "Am Yisrael Chai" - or "the people of Israel live" - emblazoned on the cap in Hebrew. He encountered a man sitting outside who demanded, "Are you a Jew?" After Mr. Radice answered affirmatively, the man then spewed a series of claims about the Israel-Hamas war and loudly accused Mr. Radice of being "responsible" for "killing children." As Mr. Radice, concerned for his safety, turned to walk away, he noticed the coffee shop owner talking with the man.

Believing that the coffee shop owner had intervened on his behalf, Mr. Radice returned the following month to make a purchase at the café. When he entered the coffee shop, however, he discovered the man who harassed him in July was working there, along with the owner and a third employee. Instead of being able to make a purchase, Mr. Radice found himself being ejected by all three employees as they yelled, "You're the guy with the hat. You're the Jew. You're the Zionist. We don't want you in our coffee shop. Get out." As Mr. Radice walked away, three men followed him, and he heard them calling him "Jew" and "Zionist."

"I'm proud to be Jewish, and I was stunned to experience such overt discrimination," said Mr. Radice. "I don't want any other Jews to have to experience such bigotry at Jerusalem Coffee House or at any establishment. This lawsuit is about accountability and sending a clear message that antisemitism is unacceptable."

“Nobody deserves to be discriminated against simply for being who they are, and Benesch will stand up for anyone who is,” said Benesch Senior Managing Associate Dave Hopkins.

Jerusalem Coffee House’s behavior toward Mr. Radice was part of a pattern of antisemitic discrimination. Around the first anniversary of the October 7 Hamas terrorist attacks, the cafe introduced new menu items seemingly celebrating the murder of Jewish people, including drinks called “Iced In Tea Fada” and “Sweet Sinwar,” with Hamas symbols decorating the menu. The owner was also videotaped ejecting a Jewish man and his child while proudly declaring that he could refuse to serve customers simply because they are Jewish.

“No one should have to hide who they are to order a cup of coffee, but at the Jerusalem Coffee House, antisemitism was literally on the menu,” said Marc Levine, Regional Director for ADL Central Pacific. “Bigotry against Jews is on the rise, but we will not be turned away - this behavior cannot be tolerated anywhere.”

The Complaint urges the court to declare that the defendants violated Mr. Radice’s civil rights and award him damages.

This action is the latest in ADL’s expanded effort to fight antisemitism through the legal system. The organization filed more lawsuits in a 12-month period than in its first 111 years of existence, including litigation against corporations, extremist groups, universities, school districts and state sponsors of terror.

Benesch *is an Am Law 200 firm with approximately 450 attorneys and offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, New York, San Francisco and Wilmington. Benesch’s award-winning Litigation Practice Group has achieved precedent-setting victories for clients in high-stakes cases worth billions of dollars and in cases that put priceless principles at issue. The firm also maintains an active pro bono practice and commitment to community. As one of the fastest-growing law firms in the country, Benesch continues to earn national recognition for its legal prowess and dedication to client service. Learn more at beneschlaw.com.*

ADL *is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all. More at www.adl.org.*

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