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University of California Settles With Jewish Students Over U.C.L.A. Protests

Jewish students and a professor said the university had allowed a hostile protest. After the settlement was announced, the Department of Justice separately said it had found the university violated civil rights laws.



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Pro-Palestinian students at U.C.L.A. also sued the university after a violent encounter at the protest encampment. Mark Abramson for The New York Times



By **Anemona Hartocollis**

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The University of California has agreed to settle a lawsuit contending that the university allowed pro-Palestinian protesters to block Jewish students from a section of the University of California, Los Angeles, campus during demonstrations last year.

In the lawsuit, three Jewish students and a Jewish professor said that the university had countenanced antisemitic behavior at [a tent encampment set up in 2024 by protesters demonstrating against the war in Gaza](#).

The plaintiffs said the university had not intervened when protesters prevented students who were wearing Jewish symbols like a star of David or the Israeli flag or a skullcap from crossing campus. The university even provided the barricades used to keep people out and stationed security guards on campus who sent Jewish students away instead of helping them get through, the court papers said.

Passers-by were given wristbands that allowed them to pass through if they renounced support for the existence of the state of Israel, the lawsuit said. The U.C.L.A. administration allowed the exclusion zone to continue operating for a week, the lawsuit said.

The settlement, announced Tuesday, will require the university to give \$6.45 million, including legal fees, to the plaintiffs and to charitable entities. The money will also support the university's own efforts to combat antisemitism and support the Jewish community on campus.

Mark Rienzi, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said the settlement appeared to be the largest among a set of private lawsuits accusing universities of tolerating antisemitism since the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023.

"What's important is getting the final order saying that schools can't just yield to antisemitism and go along with the exclusion of Jews from central places on their campus," said Mr. Rienzi, who is with the nonprofit Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. "When they do that they violate the law."

The university, in an announcement of the settlement on Tuesday, said it "abhors antisemitism," adding that it "is diligently working to address and counter it in all its forms across the U.C. system."

Just hours after the settlement was announced, the Department of Justice said it had found U.C.L.A. in violation of civil rights law and the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment for failing to adequately respond to complaints of "severe, pervasive and

objectively offensive harassment and abuse” of Jewish and Israeli students during the protest encampment in the spring of 2024.

The department sent a 10-page letter to Dr. Michael V. Drake, president of the University of California, laying out the evidence it had reviewed, including the lawsuit. It said that the department was now looking to enter into a voluntary resolution agreement with U.C.L.A. or go to court.

The Trump administration has targeted dozens of universities over accusations that they have not done enough to combat antisemitism. In several cases, it has sought to end millions in federal research funding to the universities as a way to force compliance with the government’s demands.

The letter said that the department had interviewed a Jewish man who was told by members of the encampment that “Hitler missed one.” The man also reported to the police that he had been physically assaulted by members of the encampment, the letter said.

A Jewish student was hospitalized, unconscious with an open wound to her head, after being knocked to the ground and kicked by encampment participants, the letter said. Other students were prevented from getting to class on time or from using campus resources, it said.

These events had put Jewish students “in a state of anxiety and fear,” the letter said, yet U.C.L.A. did not ask for law enforcement support to disband the encampment.

“Late that night, counter-demonstrators violently attacked the encampment, resulting in dozens of injuries and requiring law enforcement in riot gear to restore order,” the letter said, resulting in more than 200 arrests.

“This disgusting breach of civil rights against students will not stand: D.O.J. will force U.C.L.A. to pay a heavy price for putting Jewish Americans at risk and continue our ongoing investigations into other campuses in the U.C. system,” Pamela Bondi, the attorney general, said in a statement.

U.C.L.A. did not immediately comment on the Justice Department investigation.

UCLA Faculty for Justice in Palestine, an advocacy group, criticized both the university and the Trump administration in a statement. “Today, while Palestinians in Gaza starve under an Israeli blockade, both UCLA and the Trump Administration came to the same conclusion: criticism of Israel is forbidden, because it is antisemitic,” the statement said.

“We reject the conflation,” the group said, adding, “We will continue to raise our voices along with students to demand an end to our university’s and our country’s complicity in the genocide in Gaza.”

A federal judge, Mark C. Scarsi, had [issued a preliminary ruling](#) in favor of the plaintiffs last August. The judge said that Jewish students had been excluded from parts of the campus because of their faith, and he called this an “unimaginable” and “abhorrent” violation of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom.

The settlement, which still has to receive final approval from a judge, would give \$50,000 to each of the named plaintiffs, including two law students, one undergraduate and one medical school professor. It would distribute \$2.33 million among eight nonprofits, including Hillel at UCLA, the Anti-Defamation League and Chabad House at UCLA; \$320,000 to a U.C.L.A. account dedicated to combating antisemitism; and the rest to costs and legal fees.

Daniel Gold, executive director of Hillel at UCLA, called the agreement “a meaningful step in addressing the very serious challenges that Jewish students have faced at U.C.L.A.”

In a related lawsuit, [pro-Palestinian activists have also sued U.C.L.A.](#), accusing the university of allowing pro-Israel counterprotesters to terrorize people at the encampment in 2024. That case is making its way through the courts, said the lawyer for the plaintiffs, Thomas Harvey.

A correction was made on July 30, 2025: Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misstated the number of plaintiffs. There are four, not five.