

The Fairness Center

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CUNY Professors File Federal Lawsuit Following Union's Anti-Israel Political Advocacy

Avraham Goldstein fled religious persecution in Soviet Russia; now he is forced to associate with a union that opposes his religious beliefs

January 13, 2022, New York, NY — Imagine fleeing religious persecution in Soviet Russia only to be forced in the United States to associate with a union that opposes your religious beliefs. That's what happened to Professor Avraham Goldstein, an observant Orthodox Jew and professor at the City University of New York ("CUNY").

Professor Goldstein is one of hundreds of members who have resigned from the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY ("PSC") since June 2021, when PSC issued a Resolution that Professor Goldstein and his co-plaintiffs, many of whom are Jewish, view as anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish. The Resolution, among other things, required discussion of possible support by PSC for the anti-Israel "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" movement. Professor Goldstein, and his colleagues who have joined in a federal lawsuit, oppose the union's political advocacy.

Professor Goldstein used to live in Israel. He has friends and family who reside in Israel, and he supports the country based on his religious and moral beliefs. Before moving to Israel, he and his family suffered extreme anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish abuse in the Soviet Union, and their requests to leave were denied for fifteen years.

Despite the Professors' opposition to the PSC's political advocacy, New York law forces them to accept PSC as their exclusive representative for collective bargaining. Adding insult to injury, New York law explicitly limits the duties that public-sector unions owe to nonmembers they choose to represent, allowing PSC to treat Professor Goldstein and other nonmembers as second-class employees.

As a result, Professor Goldstein and five of his colleagues filed a federal lawsuit to vindicate their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and association. They are jointly represented by attorneys at the [Fairness Center](#) and attorneys from the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation.

"My family and I suffered severe anti-Semitic harassment and persecution at the hands of the Soviet Union for over fifteen years," said Professor Goldstein. "I hoped it was all in my past. But now I am forced to associate with a union that makes anti-Semitic political statements in my name without my permission or consent."

Fairness Center President Nathan McGrath released the following statement:

No one should be forced to associate with a union against their will, especially when it violates their religious beliefs. But our clients are forced to associate with a union whose behavior they view as anti-Semitic. Professor Goldstein and his colleagues should be free to separate themselves from union officials who are hostile to their religious beliefs. The First Amendment should protect their freedom to choose who speaks and bargains on their behalf.

This case was filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Documents

- [Goldstein Case Page](#)
- [Goldstein Complaint](#)

Fairness Center attorneys are available for comment. Contact John Sweeney at 609.477.0930 or jrsweeney@fairnesscenter.org to schedule an interview.

The Fairness Center is a nonprofit, public interest law firm offering free legal services to those hurt by public-sector union officials. For more information visit www.FairnessCenter.org