



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: October 11, 2016

Contact: Kassie Dulin, [kdulin@firstliberty.org](mailto:kdulin@firstliberty.org)

Cell: 214-542-4334, Direct: 972-941-4575

### **ORTHODOX JEWISH SYNAGOGUE ASKS JUDGE TO LIFT TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER BEFORE START OF YOM KIPPUR**

*After animal rights activists file lawsuit against synagogue, Jewish leaders ask court to restore their right to practice a historic religious ritual before sundown today*

---

**Irvine, Calif.** – On Tuesday morning, just hours before sundown signals the start of Yom Kippur, a small Jewish synagogue in Irvine and its rabbi filed a brief with a California federal district court. They asked Judge André Birotte, Jr. to lift a temporary restraining order that is preventing them from practicing a historic Orthodox Jewish ceremony during Yom Kippur.

[Read the synagogue's brief](#)

“Special interest activists are trying to ban a religious ceremony that Orthodox Jews have practiced for at least 1200 years,” said Hiram Sasser, Deputy Chief Counsel for First Liberty Institute, a national religious freedom law firm. Sasser is co-counsel for the Jewish synagogue, alongside lead counsel Matthew Martens from the international law firm WilmerHale, and the Orange County law firm of M. Jones & Associates.

In late September, an animal rights organization called United Poultry Concern (UPC) filed a federal lawsuit against the Chabad of Irvine, a small Orthodox Jewish synagogue. UPC sought to prevent members of the Jewish community from engaging in a historic Yom Kippur ritual called a kaporos ceremony, where the atonement of sins is facilitated through prayer and the kosher killing of a chicken. Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

“The kaporos ceremony is a cherished tradition of our faith,” Rabbi Alter Tenenbaum, the rabbi of the Chabad of Irvine, says. “For a court to order us to stop our religious practice because some refuse to tolerate our beliefs is deeply distressing.”

A California federal district court issued an *ex parte* Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against the synagogue on October 7, preventing the synagogue from engaging in the full practice of the kaporos ceremony during Yom Kippur. In granting the TRO, the court ruled against the synagogue without affording the synagogue an opportunity to defend itself in court.

On Tuesday, the Chabad of Irvine filed a brief, asking Judge Birotte to lift the TRO and restore the Jewish community's rights to practice the kaporos ceremony in time for Yom Kippur.

“We look forward to the opportunity to protect the Jewish congregation's First Amendment rights and protect the Rabbi's freedom to lead his congregation in this time-honored tradition,” Matthew Martens, lead counsel for Chabad of Irvine and partner with the international law firm WilmerHale.

“This drastic judicial measure has prevented hundreds of people in the Jewish community from fully exercising their faith on Yom Kippur,” Sasser declared. “We cannot allow a special interest group to trample on the religious rights of the Orthodox Jewish community.”

**About First Liberty Institute**

[First Liberty Institute](#) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

*To arrange an interview, contact Kassie Dulin, Director of Legal Communications for First Liberty Institute. Email: [kdulin@firstliberty.org](mailto:kdulin@firstliberty.org), Direct: 972-941-9575, Cell: 214-542-4334.*

###