



News Release
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Ninth Circuit Court Protects Religious Liberty of California Orthodox Jewish Congregation

Animal rights activists had sought to prevent longstanding religious practice

Pasadena, CA—The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit today rejected demands by animal rights groups seeking to prevent Orthodox Jewish communities in California from participating in a millennia-old religious ritual known as kaporos. First Liberty Institute and its network attorneys with the law firm WilmerHale recently argued on behalf of the Chabad of Irvine (CA).

“We’re grateful that the Ninth Circuit rejected this effort to ban a thousand-year-old religious tradition,” said Hiram Sasser, General Counsel to First Liberty. “The First Amendment protects the peaceful religious practices of all faiths. The court rightly determined that organizations cannot force the government to interfere with a centuries old religious practice they find objectionable.”

“Today’s decision is a tremendous victory for our clients and the Orthodox Jewish community in California,” said Matthew Martens, the WilmerHale partner who argued on behalf of Chabad of Irvine.

Kaporos is a sacred religious ceremony performed by Orthodox Jewish congregations, where the atonement of sins is contemplated through prayer and the kosher and humane killing of a chicken. The ceremony takes place during the holiest days of the Jewish calendar.

Animal rights activists in California have sought to force government officials to prohibit the ceremony. First Liberty network attorneys argued that it is not the role of the government to tell religious communities how to exercise their religious beliefs.

Last year, First Liberty and network attorneys successfully defended Chabad of Irvine against two lawsuits brought by activists opposed to kaporos.

Learn more at FirstLiberty.org/Chabad.

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About First Liberty Institute

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

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNiel at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.