

California County Threatens to Criminalize Small, Family Observances of Jewish High Holidays

*First Liberty Institute urges Los Angeles county officials to reverse threat to police small,
religious gatherings at family homes*

Los Angeles, CA—First Liberty Institute today sent a letter to Los Angeles (CA) County officials urging them to reverse their policy barring Jewish residents from observing the High Holidays with other families inside private homes.

You can read First Liberty's letter [here](#).

“After Los Angeles county has allowed political gatherings of up to 100,000 attendees, it is outrageous that the county would publish a policy threatening to crack down on extended family sharing a meal for Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur,” said Stephanie Taub, Senior Counsel at First Liberty Institute. “It is simply beyond the pale to threaten to police the homes of observant Jews during the High Holidays under threat of criminal penalties. The county should immediately remove all language from county policy threatening to police small, religious gatherings at family homes.”

First Liberty client Rabbi Yisrael Gelb said, “Los Angeles’ policy is profoundly disrespectful and disappointing. I plan on honoring the High Holidays as I do every year, by sharing a table with a local family in my congregation. We urge the county to reverse its policy and allow us to celebrate our most holy days in peace and safety.”

Los Angeles county has already once changed the language of its policy. The policy prohibiting gatherings originally included as an example “having dinner with extended family and friends to honor the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur).” The policy has since been changed to prohibit “having a meal with extended family and friends for a religious or cultural holiday.” Although now hiding behind obscured language, the threatened enforcement remains. Violations of local health orders are a crime, punishable by fines or imprisonment.

The High Holidays fall between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. These days represent the holiest days of the Jewish calendar and usually include a series of meals in the family home with a small gathering of friends or family.

In its letter, First Liberty states, “Los Angeles County has not vigorously policed its stated ban on small gatherings with friends or extended family. Yet, despite the county’s lack of enforcement, the county’s policy threatens enforcement against the upcoming holiday of a religious minority faith.”

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is a non-profit public interest law firm and 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.