

## **Beverly Hills Officials Harass Small Jewish Prayer Meetings** *Law firm sends letter urging city to withdrawal threats of criminal punishment.*

---

**Beverly Hills, CA**—First Liberty Institute and the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP today sent a letter to Beverly Hills, CA city officials urging them to withdraw their “Notice of Violation” against Rabbi Levi Illulian, which threatens the Rabbi with civil and criminal proceedings for hosting religious gatherings in his home to meet the religious needs of his family, neighbors, and friends.

To read the letter, click [here](#).

“Rabbi Illulian has a constitutional right to engage in religious exercise at his home with family or friends, free from government burden and interference,” said Ryan Gardner, Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Beverly Hills is a diverse city that should welcome this Rabbi and protect his freedom to live out his faith. The city should stop its harassment of Rabbi Illulian immediately.”

Elizabeth Kiernan of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher added, “It is chilling that Beverly Hills officials have resorted to surveilling a small group of Jewish residents who meet together for worship. The law and constitution protect his right to host gatherings of family and friends to meet their spiritual needs.”

Rabbi Illulian’s gatherings, which began as a means of supporting an aging, home-ridden Holocaust survivor, include Shabbat prayers and dinner, and religious holiday celebrations and are open only to those who are invited and not the general public. During Shabbat, adherents traditionally join their family and friends to recite Jewish prayers and for meals prepared in accordance with the Jewish beliefs and must “make the Shabbat a delight,” and thus cannot work or drive. Many of the individuals present at his Shabbat gatherings and holiday celebrations are blood relations, as his father and several of his uncles, siblings, nieces, and nephews live within walking distance. City officials have been investigating Rabbi Illulian’s religious exercise since March using increasingly invasive means, including surveilling individuals and cars coming and going from the home and flying a drone over the home. They issued a “Notice of Violation” prohibiting all religious activity at the home with non-residents in June.

According to the letter, “The City’s Notice of Violation threatens Rabbi Illulian with civil and criminal proceedings for his ‘religious activity’ at his home with ‘non-residents,’” despite allowing social gatherings of similar size and character to occur in the same neighborhood unmolested. When Rabbi Illulian’s neighbors can invite friends and family into their homes for a card game or dinner party but the City notices Rabbi Illulian for

inviting his friends and family to pray or celebrate Shabbat, neither the First Amendment nor RLUIPA tolerates this kind of unequal treatment.”

# # #

**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 John Manning at [media@firstliberty.org](mailto:media@firstliberty.org) or by calling Direct: 972-941-4453.