

# Pro-Israel Group in ‘Complete Shock’ Over Hotel’s Alleged Response to ‘Pro-Palestinian and Pro-Hamas’ Threats

fw [faithwire.com/2024/05/15/pro-israel-group-in-complete-shock-over-hotels-alleged-response-to-pro-palestinian-and-pro-hamas-threats](https://faithwire.com/2024/05/15/pro-israel-group-in-complete-shock-over-hotels-alleged-response-to-pro-palestinian-and-pro-hamas-threats)

By Billy Hallowell

7 hours ago



Demonstrators retreat along University Boulevard in a cloud of teargas as law enforcement officers use chemical ammunition to clear an encampment off the University of Arizona campus, Friday, May 10, 2024, Tucson, Az. (Kelly Presnell/Arizona Daily Star via AP)

A conservative legal firm is accusing a Tennessee hotel of canceling a pro-Israel meeting and demanding the establishment honor its commitment to the organizing party.

***Listen to the latest episode of CBN News’ “Quick Start” podcast*** 📌

First Liberty, a religious freedom firm, sent a letter Monday to Sonesta Nashville Airport Hotel, imploring the venue to “fulfill its contractual obligation to HaYovel, a Christian ministry that was scheduled to hold a summit supporting Israel at the hotel next week,” according to a press release.

The firm’s attorneys, who accused the hotel of breaching “its contractual obligation,” decried the alleged actions and lambasted the hotel for purportedly canceling The Israel Summit, a conference for pro-Israel supporters who believe the nation has a right to the Holy Land where it currently resides.

Luke Hilton, director of marketing for HaYovel — a group bringing volunteers to Israel to help support the Jewish state — told CBN News he received a call just 10 days before the event, which is set to unfold May 20-22, 2024, telling him the hotel was no longer willing to host.

“They decided to cancel our contract due to pressure that they’d received from pro-Palestinian and pro-Hamas groups, making phone calls,” he said, noting the hotel cited safety concerns in making the decision. “It’s complete shock to us and, obviously, very last minute.”



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/uaXnxknB-68>

Hilton said HaYovel pledged to help provide increased security for the event and to do “whatever was needed to make sure everyone was safe.” But the hotel reportedly wasn’t persuaded by these offers.

First Liberty has pleaded with Sonesta to reverse its decision. Hiram Sasser, the law firm’s executive general counsel, told CBN News he is concerned about several matters surrounding the cancellation.

“There’s obviously a contract dispute issue,” he said. “But, more importantly, there’s a federal law, The Civil Rights Act Title II. The Civil Rights Act prohibits places of public accommodation from discriminating based upon religion and other things as well.”

Sasser continued, “In this case, what you have is, you have these agitators and protesters who are anti-Semitic and they do not want this group to be able to support the Jewish people or to support Israel, because of the religion of the people that they are trying to support. That’s their motivation.”

He believes the hotel potentially giving into that pressure could cross some lines when it comes to Title II, but the issues, he said, stretch beyond federal consideration.

“There’s also a Tennessee state law that’s sort of the equivalent of that they’re also in violation of,” Sasser said.

In the end, the attorney said people and institutions shouldn’t be in the habit of shutting down simply because “there’s some heckler who comes along and wants to do a heckler’s veto, which is basically, they’ll complain enough in order to try to create trouble to shut down” an event.

“That’s not how our country’s supposed to operate,” Sasser said.

First Liberty detailed these concerns and others in a letter addressed to the hotel on behalf of HaYovel, The firm wrote the hotel’s cancellation was not only a breach of contract, but also “unlawful religious discrimination in a place of public accommodation in violation of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000a, and the Tennessee Human Rights Act, Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-21-501 (the ‘THRA’).”

At the core of the issue, Sonesta Nashville Airport Hotel told HaYovel it was receiving threats regarding the event and attempted to invoke the “force majeure” in the contract, a clause for cancelation. However, the law firm said the circumstances are not covered by “force majeure” and that the hotel is liable.

“It is un-American — and illegal — to cancel a gathering due to religious beliefs and, quite frankly, it is morally wrong,” Sasser said in a statement. “The Sonesta and others cannot surrender to terror in violation of federal and Tennessee law.”

Another issue at the heart of the matter is the alleged claim the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department encouraged the cancellation over security concerns — something authorities have reportedly denied. A Tuesday press release from First Liberty reads, in part:

“In phone calls with HaYovel officials, hotel representatives ... claimed that police told them they should cancel the event due to security threats.

According to an email from Chief John Drake of the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, dated May 13, 2024, however, the Department ‘did not advocate, in any shape or form, for the cancellation of the conference at the Sonesta Hotel. Any inference to the contrary is false. Equally false is the assertion in an online article that this police department voiced concerns about persons being in physical danger. In fact, members of the police department did, indeed, meet with hotel management at its request to talk about the conference. We let it be known that we were absolutely prepared to help the hotel create a safety and security plan, as we would with any of our city’s hotels, and offer additional support if needed.’”

Regardless of the police debate, The Israel Summit organizers have no plans to halt the event. In fact, Hilton said, HaYovel is “100% determined” to continue with the conference.

“We’re not canceling,” he said, noting either Sonesta will honor the contract or a new venue will be found. “We have ... Jewish-Israeli speakers coming. They already have their plane tickets. We have nearly 500 people driving and flying from across America to come. The Israel Summit is happening.”

If Sonesta doesn’t reverse course, Sasser said First Liberty could file a complaint with the Civil Rights Commission and pursue associated remedies at the state or federal levels.

“You start off by filing ... to let them know that we have this problem and for the government to come in and do an investigation of this kind of discrimination,” he said. “That’s why the laws are in place, and they’re designed to protect people of faith.”

The cancelation is the latest move to come amid anti-Israel sentiment sparked following Hamas’ deadly terror attack on the Jewish state.

A request for comment from CBN News to Sonesta has, thus far, gone unanswered.

***\*\*\*As the number of voices facing big-tech censorship continues to grow, please sign up for Faithwire’s daily newsletter and download the CBN News app, developed by our parent company, to stay up-to-date with the latest news from a distinctly Christian perspective.\*\*\****