

Palestinian Nerdeen Kiswani files civil rights lawsuit against Zionist Betar USA under Ku Klux Klan Act

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On Thursday, Palestinian-American activist Nerdeen Kiswani filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the Betar Zionist Organization and its leadership in the Southern District of New York. In the lawsuit, Kiswani accused the genocide-supporting group of orchestrating a coordinated campaign of racial harassment, violent threats, stalking and intimidation against her.

Defendants in the lawsuit include Betar USA and its leadership: Ronn Torossian; Ross Glick; Yoni Kletzel; Jon Mantell; and ten unidentified board members. Attorneys for the plaintiff include Eric Lee and Christopher Godshall-Bennett of Lee & Godshall-Bennett LLP and Daniel Kornstein and Jonathan Abady of Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP.

Kiswani has lived in the US since her parents immigrated to the country when she was one year old. She is the founder of the pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist group “Within Our Lifetime.” Members of the New York-based group frequently hold protests against the US-backed genocide in Gaza and organize boycott campaigns against corporations that profit from the ongoing occupation and ethnic cleansing campaign.

For her public advocacy, Kiswani has been a frequent target of Zionists and capitalist politicians who support Israel due to its role as US imperialism’s top attack dog in the region.

New York City has been the site of frequent demonstrations against the US-backed Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. Despite the overwhelmingly peaceful character of pro-Palestinian and anti-war protests in the city since October 7, 2023, thousands of people have been arrested, including hundreds of students. Meanwhile, Zionist organizations that support the slaughter have escaped any police scrutiny despite their violent character.

The lawsuit notes that the Ku Klux Klan Enforcement Act of 1871 provides “a private cause of action against non-state actors when ‘two or more persons...conspire...for the purpose of depriving, either directly or indirectly, any person or class of persons of the equal protection of the laws, or of equal privileges and immunities under the laws.’”

In simple terms, the Act allows someone to sue private individuals or groups that band together to threaten, intimidate or attack them in order to deprive them of their civil rights or equal protection under the law.

There is no question that Betar has engaged in violent behavior

in violation of the Ku Klux Klan Act. The 26-page lawsuit, and 94-page appendix, are filled with threatening public social media posts made by Betar USA targeting Kiswani, pro-Palestinian groups and those who oppose Israeli war crimes.

The lawsuit also relies on a public investigation released on January 13, 2026 by the Office of the Attorney General of the New York into Betar USA’s activities in the Southern District of New York. The OAG report confirmed that Betar engaged in “bias-motivated assaults, threats and harassment targeting Muslim, Arab, Palestinian and Jewish New Yorkers.”

In 2024, members of Betar were recorded physically threatening political scientist Norman Finkelstein in New York City. Video circulated online showed Betar affiliates confronting and attempting to intimidate Finkelstein, the son of Holocaust survivors and one of the foremost chroniclers of Israeli war crimes and the exploitation of the Holocaust for political ends.

The incident underscored that Betar’s campaign of harassment has nothing to do with “protecting Jewish people” or combating antisemitism. Finkelstein himself is Jewish and the child of Nazi camp survivors. Rather, the group’s actions demonstrate that its targets are those who oppose the policies of the Zionist state, regardless of background, and that it is prepared to use physical intimidation and extralegal methods against critics.

The OAG report described Betar’s mission as to get “Jews armed” and “attend and disrupt pro-Palestinian protests” and that the group has “demonstart[ed] animus motivating its harassment and violence.”

The report found Betar members “harassed and tried to force beepers on multiple students” at New York University in January 2025. The following month a members of the group attacked “protesters” and at least “one activist was stabbed.” The group took credit for the violence, writing on social media after that attack “Indeed [protesters] were beaten. Don’t come to Brooklyn.”

In another incident the OAG investigation found “a member of Betar’s national leadership team physically struck a woman at a protest wearing a keffiyeh. Betar celebrated this interaction by posting a video of it on social media.”

In addition to the above, on its official social media accounts, Betar frequently posts text supporting the mass murder of Palestinians coupled with direct threats against Kiswani and others. In multiple posts the organization has characterized

Kiswani as a “domestic terrorist” and threatened to work with the fascistic Trump administration to denaturalize and deport her.

The lawsuit notes that beginning in 2025 the Betar USA has posted “racist diatribes, violent threats, inciting bounty offers, and ominous promise of denaturalization targeting Ms. Kiswani on its social media on almost week basis.”

Betar has referred to Palestinians as “Mohammads,” described Gazans as “a problem for the whole world,” and demanded “more blood” in Gaza.

Making these threats a “reality,” individuals conspiring with Betar USA have stalked, assaulted and terrorized Kiswani, forcing her from public places and events.

On social media the group has frequently shared images, inspired by Quentin Tarantino’s hyperviolent *Inglorious Basterds*, of a “Bear Jew” with a baseball bat draped in an Israeli flag, threatening to break up and intimidate public events hosted by Within Our Lifetime and Kiswani.

A major section of the complaint details Betar USA’s role in supplying names of pro-Palestinian activists to the Trump administration. The lawsuit documents that Betar USA spokespersons publicly admitted providing “the names of hundreds of protesters and activists to the Trump administration/DHS urging ICE to deport them.” It notes that ICE officials testified that they relied on Betar’s “deportation list” in selecting individuals for arrest and removal. Betar threatened that Kiswani was “at the top of the list of naturalized citizens who will have their citizenship stripped from them.”

A central component of the lawsuit concerns Betar USA’s repeated attempts to hand Kiswani a pager or “beeper,” invoking Israel’s September 2024 operation in Lebanon in which pagers were turned into explosive devices, killing and maiming civilians, including children.

The complaint states that Betar “orchestrated coordinated actions...including by handing her a beeper provided by Defendants—an action that recalls Israel’s use of beepers as incendiary devices.”

This was not a single incident. According to the complaint, Betar publicly offered cash rewards to induce others to approach Kiswani: “We offer 1000 to anyone who hands @NerdeenKiswani a beeper tomorrow. We have them for distribution.”

The New York Attorney General’s investigation likewise concluded that Betar members “harassed and tried to force beepers on multiple students all wearing a hijab or keffiyeh.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly gifted commemorative beepers to politicians and celebrities who support Israel’s genocide in Gaza, including Pennsylvania Democratic Senator John Fetterman. At the same time, opponents of the war and critics of Israeli policy have been threatened with beepers in a menacing, coercive manner.

Within that context, Betar’s repeated efforts to place a beeper into Kiswani’s hands, including offering escalating cash bounties, cannot be separated from the lethal precedent those devices represent. The menacing “beeper” campaign is a deliberate method of psychological terror: an attempt to associate a Palestinian-American activist with a weaponized device linked to recent mass casualties, and to communicate that similar violence

could be directed at her.

The violent threats against Kiswani and others opposed to Zionism arise from Betar’s ideological lineage. The Revisionist Zionist group was founded by Ze’ev Jabotinsky in 1925. The lawsuit notes that Jabotinsky formed the “World Union of Zionist Revisionists” and its youth movement “Betar” before taking over leadership of the “military organization, the Irgun.”

The lawsuit notes that “Revisionist Zionism was based on the idea that the Zionist project required the physical suppression and political subjugation of the Arab residents of Palestine.” Citing, Israeli historian Avi Shlaim, the lawsuit explains that “Jabotinsky’s policy regarding the Arab questions [was]: to react an iron wall of Jewish military force.” The suit also cites historian Rashid Khalidi who described Jabotinsky as someone who “argued explicitly and publicly from the beginning that overwhelming force would be necessary to impose the Zionist program of making Palestine a Jewish state.”

The suit seeks damages and injunctive relief. In a post on social media about the suit, Kiswani wrote:

For years, Betar USA stalked & harassed me even offering \$1,800 for someone to hand me a beeper while I was pregnant. Last month, the NY AG found they engaged in bias-motivated harassment and threats. Still they faced no real consequences. So I’m filing a lawsuit.

Kiswani noted that despite the OAG report issued by Attorney General Letitia James’s office documenting that Betar’s harassment and threats, the monetary penalty imposed on the group “was suspended. No criminal charges followed. They continue to operate and harass me.”



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