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## Sydney Restaurant Faces Human Rights Complaint Over Keffiyeh Ban

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— *Categories: Human Rights*

The Racial Justice Centre is preparing to file a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission after a Sydney restaurant reportedly restricted dine-in access to some customers wearing Palestinian keffiyehs.

The complaint, to be lodged on behalf of six Palestinian Australians, concerns an incident at Jimmy's Falafel, a Merivale-owned restaurant in Sydney's CBD, on 3 August, following a pro-Palestine march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

According to the Racial Justice Centre, several patrons were asked to remove their keffiyehs before entering the restaurant. Four additional individuals, not part of the complaint, told Guardian Australia that staff indicated they could not dine inside unless the scarves were removed.

One attendee, who requested to be identified as Amir, said he and a friend from Queensland were told by a security guard that their keffiyehs could not be worn inside the venue. The pair left the restaurant calmly. Other diners wearing the scarves either removed them or ordered takeaway.

Merivale issued a statement explaining that a management decision at 3:55 p.m. on the day of the protest restricted the display of large flags and placards within the restaurant, citing safety concerns after some members of the public directed hostile comments toward the venue.

“The decision was understood by staff to include political clothing or accessories, which patrons were politely asked to place in their bags before entering,” the statement said. CCTV footage reviewed by Guardian Australia reportedly shows that some patrons complied, while others were turned away during a 20-minute window.

Merivale added that at no time was entry denied based on political or religious affiliation, and the company maintains a neutral position regarding patrons’ beliefs. “No Merivale venues, including Jimmy’s Falafel, have policies regarding customers wearing keffiyehs or other scarves,” the spokesperson said.

Sharfah Mohamed, a lawyer at the Racial Justice Centre, said the centre believes the conduct violates the federal Racial Discrimination Act. Mohamed emphasized that security personnel must respond to safety threats on a case-by-case basis, but banning a cultural garment linked to a specific ethnic group raises legal concerns.

Another patron, Hasan, described the keffiyeh as a symbol of hope and solidarity for Palestinians. Several individuals who were asked to remove their scarves reported feeling humiliated.

The Racial Justice Centre’s complaint will now be reviewed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which handles federal anti-discrimination cases. The incident has prompted discussions about cultural expression and access to public venues in Sydney.