

Harvard Faces Federal Criticism Over Handling of Antisemitism Investigation

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The U.S. Department of Education stated that Harvard University has not cooperated fully with a civil rights investigation into allegations of antisemitism on its campus. The investigation, led by the department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), was initiated following reports of discrimination against Jewish students, particularly amid tensions after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel.

The investigation began in January 2024 under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal funding. The department alleges that Harvard has not fully provided access to requested documents and records necessary to complete the inquiry. According to the Education Department, such non-compliance hinders the federal government's ability to determine whether the university has properly addressed complaints of antisemitic incidents.

In a letter dated July 29, the department warned Harvard that continued non-compliance could result in the suspension of federal funds. The department emphasized that institutions receiving federal support must uphold civil rights protections and respond promptly to discrimination complaints.

A Harvard spokesperson said the university has "cooperated extensively" with the investigation and is "committed to addressing antisemitism and all forms of hate." The university added that it has provided thousands of pages of documents and arranged interviews with staff as requested.

The rise in reported antisemitic incidents on U.S. college campuses has prompted greater federal scrutiny in recent months. Harvard, an Ivy League institution based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has drawn particular attention due to high-profile protests and the university leadership's controversial responses. The university's president at the time, Claudine Gay, resigned in early 2024 following criticism over her testimony to Congress regarding antisemitism and allegations of plagiarism.

The Education Department's civil rights office has opened dozens of similar investigations across the country, as both Jewish and Muslim students have reported incidents of discrimination following the Israel-Hamas conflict. However, this latest development marks a significant escalation in federal efforts to hold universities accountable for ensuring campus safety and adherence to federal anti-discrimination laws.

The Department of Education has not set a public timeline for concluding the Harvard inquiry, but stated that it will continue pressing for full cooperation.