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Rashid Ghannouchi wins defamation claim against French publisher

Rashid Ghannouchi, the leader of the largest Tunisian political party Ennahda, has won his defamation claim against French publisher, Michel Lafon Publishing.

The claim related to false allegations that Mr Ghannouchi accepted a large sum of money on behalf of Ennahda from Qatar prior to the 2011 Tunisian elections, in breach of Tunisian party funding laws. The allegations were published in the book '*Qatar, Les secrets du coffre-fort*', published by Michel Lafon Publishing in March 2013.

These allegations had initially been published by The Independent newspaper in London in 2012. The Independent subsequently issued a formal and public apology, stating: "*We wish to make it clear that Mr Ghannouchi and his party have not accepted any donation from a foreign state in breach of Tunisian party funding laws.*"

In a judgment handed down by the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris on 28 May 2014, the court held that the repetition of this allegation in '*Qatar, Les secrets du coffre-fort*' represented an unlawful defamatory publication and a breach of the authors' obligation to provide complete and reliable information. It dismissed a variety of arguments that had been put forward by the Defendants.

Michel Lafon Publishing has been prohibited, with immediate effect, from republishing the offending allegations and has been ordered to pay Mr Ghannouchi his legal costs as well as damages.

Following the court's ruling, Mr Ghannouchi said:

"I am delighted that the court has held that this allegation about Ennahda and myself is untrue. I welcome the fact that the court has set the record straight and made clear that neither I nor my party have accepted a donation from a foreign state."

Mr Ghannouchi instructed Maître Vincent Toledano to appear on his behalf at the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris in conjunction with Carter-Ruck.

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