

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

B E T W E E N :

(1) IBRAHIM HEWITT
(2) ESSAM MUSTAFA
(3) SHAHAN HUSAIN
(4) GHASSAN FAOUR
(5) ISMAIL GINWALLA
(6) MOHAMMED RAFIQ VINDHANI

Claimants

and

EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

The Claimants' Solicitor

My Lord, I appear for the Claimants in this libel action, Ibrahim Hewitt, Essam Mustafa, Shahan Husain, Ghassan Faour, Ismail Ginwalla and Mohammed Rafiq Vindhani.

The Claimants are the trustees of the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund, commonly and publicly known as Interpal.

Interpal is a long established charity, registered in the United Kingdom with the Charity Commission. It is a non-profit organisation that works with international funding partners and partners on the ground to provide relief and development aid to Palestinians in need; it assists in the provision of essential humanitarian relief, education, health and medical services and community development.

The Defendant is the publisher of the Sunday Express and the website www.express.co.uk.

The Defendant published an article on its website from 27 December 2009 until 15 January 2010 entitled "Jet Bomb Ordered by 9/11 Spiritual Leader". The article concerned the terrorist attempt to blow up an aeroplane over the United States on Christmas Day 2009 and the purported links to the Yemen-based cleric and alleged Al Qaeda commander Anwar al Awlaki. In this context, the article stated that Interpal was " Hamas-supporting". As such, the article would have been wrongly understood to mean that the Claimants provided support for Hamas, notwithstanding Hamas is deemed a terrorist organisation, and thereby were aiding terrorism.

In fact, neither the Claimants nor Interpal support Hamas. It would not enjoy its charitable status in this country if it supported Hamas. Under UK terrorism legislation Interpal would be banned were it found to have any such links.

By reason of the publication of the words complained of, the Claimants have suffered damage to their reputations and distress and embarrassment.

My Lord, the Defendant now accepts that the defamatory words are incorrect and should not have been published. It has agreed to join in the reading of this statement, withdrawing publicly the allegations and apologising to the Claimants for the hurt and distress caused to them by the publication.

As a mark of regret, the Defendant has agreed to pay a substantial sum in damages to the Claimants, which the Claimants propose to apply to Interpal's funds and charitable purposes.

The Defendant's Counsel

My Lord, on behalf of the Defendant, I confirm what has been said by my friend. The Defendant offers its sincere apologies to the Claimants and is pleased to set the record straight.

The Claimants' Solicitor

My Lord, the Claimants are satisfied that they have been vindicated and accordingly are content to let the matter rest.

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