

Press Release

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Katie Hopkins and the Mail apologise and Mail pays £150,000 in libel damages to Mahmood family over “Disneyland” libels

MailOnline (the website of the Daily Mail) and its columnist Katie Hopkins have today [published a full apology](#) to the Mahmood family over two articles published in December 2015. The Mail has also agreed to pay the family £150,000 in libel damages, as well as their legal costs.

The background to the articles was the refusal by the US authorities, shortly before Christmas 2015, to allow a number of members of the Mahmood family, who are Muslims, to board a flight for the USA. The family were going on holiday and had planned a trip to Disneyland.

At the time, the story received widespread coverage across all of the UK media, not least as no proper or formal explanation was given by the airline or US authorities (which remains the case).

Most of the coverage in other media was fair and balanced. However, on 23 December, the Mail published an article by Katie Hopkins entitled *“Just because Britain’s border security is a Mickey Mouse operation you can’t blame America for not letting this lot travel to Disneyland – I wouldn’t either”*.

In typically sensationalist terms, the article then went on to convey the clear impression that Tariq and Zahid Mahmood (the two fathers who were taking a number their sons and daughters on the trip) were in fact extremists linked to Al Qaeda; that their purported reason for going to the USA – including a trip to Disneyland – was a lie; and that the US authorities were quite right to exclude them. The article included a photograph of Tariq Mahmood and a photograph of his family home in Walthamstow, which Ms Hopkins described as a “known hotbed of extremism”.

As the Mail and Ms Hopkins have now accepted, these allegations were utterly untrue. There was absolutely no basis for suggesting that any of the Mahmoods were or are extremist, and the family were simply going on holiday.

As if that were not enough, a few days later, Ms Hopkins and the Mail published another, similar article. Repeating the false allegations, this time the Mail also branded Tariq’s son, Hamza, an extremist, suggesting he was responsible for a Facebook page containing extremist material. Once again, this allegation was utterly untrue.

Faced with these false and deeply distressing allegations, the Mahmood family were forced to bring a libel complaint against the Mail and Ms

Hopkins. Neither was able to put forward any defence or other justification for these appalling libels.

Accordingly, the Mail has now published a full apology. Ms Hopkins, who tweeted the original articles as well as various defamatory comments concerning the Mahmoods, has also apologised via Twitter to her 650,000 followers.

Speaking today on behalf of the family, Tariq and Zahid Mahmood said:

“We are very pleased that, after a great deal of dragging of their heels, the Mail and Ms Hopkins have now accepted that what they published was completely false. Even to this day the US authorities have not explained the reason why we were not permitted to travel; we assume it was an error or even a case of mistaken identity. However, matters are not helped when such sensationalist and, frankly, Islamophobic articles such as this are published, and which caused us all a great deal of distress and anxiety. We are very pleased that the record has been set straight.”

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