

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

Claim no: HQ10D00710

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

B E T W E E N : -

**(1) IDRIS ATCHA
(2) MOHAMMED IDRIS
(3) ZAKER PATEL
(4) MUHAMMAD AHMAD SEEDAT**

Claimants

and

EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

The Claimants' Solicitor

My Lord, I appear for the Claimants in this libel action, Idris Atcha, Mohammed Idris, Zaker Patel and Muhammad Ahmad Seedat.

The Claimants are the four trustees of the Amanat Charity Trust, a charitable organisation which has the working name of, and is commonly known as, the Ummah Welfare Trust.

The Charity, which has its head office in Bolton but operates throughout the world, has an annual charitable expenditure of around £4.5m, employing around 20 people and with a further 70 volunteers. Its major area of charitable work and expenditure is on emergency relief in developing countries. The Claimants have each worked extremely hard for many years and without any financial or other material reward to build Ummah Welfare Trust into a highly respected and significant charity, providing relief to many people across the world who are in the greatest need.

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 19 January 2010 entitled "Jet Bomb Ordered by 9/11 Spiritual Leader". The article carried a series of false and defamatory allegations about the Charity.

It alleged a link between the Charity and Anwar al Awlaki, the Al Qaeda commander who is said to have been the spiritual leader of those responsible for the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and who apparently ordered the attempt to blow up an aeroplane over the United States on Christmas Day 2009. The article claimed that al Awlaki is one of the Charity's "favourite speakers".

In fact, the Charity does not have any connections with Anwar al Awlaki and the Claimants have never met him and do not support or condone his extremist views or objectives. The Charity has never hosted a speech or sermon by al Awlaki nor has it invited him to speak at any of the Charity's events.

Secondly, the article alleged that the Charity accepted donations from the Islamic society of University College London in order to advance an extremist and terrorist agenda of the kind supported by Anwar al Awlaki.

In fact, while the Charity has accepted donations from the UCL Islamic Society, as with every donation received by the Charity, these donations were applied by the Claimants to relief work of an entirely charitable nature and were not accepted in furtherance of any extremist or terrorist agenda.

Finally, the article alleged that the Charity has aided the cause of terrorism through connections with groups alleged to be linked to the terrorist organisation, Hamas.

In fact, the Charity has never funded nor had any links with Hamas or any other terrorist organisation. The same applies to the Claimants. The aid distributed by the Charity and the Claimants has always been applied to wholly charitable purposes.

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

My Lord, the Defendant now accepts that the defamatory words are false and should not have been published. It has agreed to join in the reading of this statement, withdrawing

publicly the false allegations and apologising to the Claimants for the severe hurt and distress caused to them by the publication.

As a mark of regret, the Defendant has agreed to pay the Claimants a substantial sum in damages, which the Claimants propose to apply to the Charity's funds. In these circumstances, the Claimants are satisfied that they have been vindicated and accordingly are content to let the matter rest.

The Defendant's Solicitor

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 Claimant's Solicitor

My Lord, I ask for leave to withdraw the record.