

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

CLAIM NO: QB-2021-003830

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST

B E T W E E N :

ILIAN STOIMENOV

Claimant

- and -

MGN LIMITED

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Solicitor for the Claimant:

1. My Lord/Lady, in this action I appear for the Claimant, Ilian Stoimenov, who is a customer service assistant with Transport for London.
2. The Defendant is MGN Limited, the publisher of the Daily Mirror, the Sunday Mirror and their online version which is available at www.mirror.co.uk.
3. On 14 May 2020, the Defendant published an article by its journalist Andrew Penman, under the headline: "*Sham savings sites chasing your cash*" ("the Article"). The Article appeared in near identical form on www.mirror.co.uk.
4. The Article was presented as an investigation into fraudulent savings comparison websites. It alleged that Mr Stoimenov was a scammer who was guilty of serious fraud in that he set up and ran a large number of sham investment websites and promoted them through GoogleAds to target and deceive consumers looking to invest their savings. The Article was illustrated by a large photograph of Mr Stoimenov.
5. The Defendant published a series of follow up articles, in hard copy and online, on 21 May, 28 May, 27 August, 17 September and 17 December 2020. There were 11 publications in total. The follow up articles made similar allegations against Mr Stoimenov, and some of them further alleged that Mr Stoimenov had continued his actions even when he was exposed as a fraudster and when one of his companies was struck off the Companies House register.

6. As the Defendant now accepts, these allegations were and are entirely untrue. Mr Stoimenov was completely unaware of the fact that the name of the company which he had set up for a business project which did not succeed (and which was in the process of being dissolved by Companies House) was being used by fraudulent third party websites. In fact, Mr Stoimenov has never had any involvement whatsoever with the scam comparison websites named in the articles. The domain names of the email addresses used on the scam comparison websites and referenced in the Financial Conduct Authority's warning notices used the name of Mr Stoimenov's company, but were not the domain names that Mr Stoimenov had purchased.
7. Mr Stoimenov contacted the Defendant following his discovery of the articles, explaining the falsity of the allegations and demanding that all of his personal data be removed from the articles. Following further correspondence from Mr Stoimenov's solicitors, the Defendant removed his name, and the allegations made against him, from the online versions of the articles.
8. The publication of these serious, false and defamatory allegations has had an enormous impact on Mr Stoimenov, and effectively altered the course of his life as he had previously known it. Mr Stoimenov experienced acute distress and anxiety, and feared for his safety and that of his family. Not wanting to approach acquaintances who may have read the false allegations and ask whether they were aware of the existence of the publications, he found himself completely isolated. The large number of republications means that Mr Stoimenov has felt unable to pursue any new business projects.
9. In recognition of the falsity of the allegations made against him, on 3 June 2021 the Defendant made an offer of amends which Mr Stoimenov has accepted. The Defendant has published a full and prominent apology in the hard copy edition of the newspaper and on www.mirror.co.uk. Further, the Defendant has agreed to pay Mr Stoimenov substantial libel damages, as well as his legal costs.

Conclusion

10. My Lord/Lady, on that basis, I ask for leave to withdraw the record.