

BETWEEN:

ALAEDEEN SICRI

Claimant

-and-

NEWSQUEST MEDIA GROUP LIMITED

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Sara Mansoori for the Claimant:

1. My Lord, I appear on behalf of the Claimant and Daniel Bishop, appears on behalf of the Defendant, Newsquest Media Group Limited.
2. The Claimant, Alaedeen Sicri, is a young man. In May 2017 he was living in West Sussex. He was born in Libya and came to the United Kingdom when he was 17 years old. His mother and father remained in Libya. His uncle is a commercial pilot and, inspired by his uncle, Mr Sicri wanted to become a pilot. He spent two and a half years studying at Shoreham Airport. Mr Sicri is now a qualified pilot and his intention and ambition is to have a career in commercial aviation.
3. While studying to become a pilot, Mr Sicri worked part-time for a number of local companies and ran an online business to assist individuals in Libya to make online purchase from companies such as Ebay or Amazon. His details were also on a Facebook page used by many Libyans for currency exchange.
4. On 23 May 2017 there was a terrorist attack in the Manchester Arena in which twenty-three people were killed, including the attacker, Salman Abdei. Shortly after the attack the terrorist group, ISIS, claimed responsibility for it. A total of 22 people were arrested in connection with the attack within three weeks, including Mr Sicri.
5. In fact, Mr Sicri had nothing whatever to do with the attack and had no connection or affiliation with the bomber or other terrorists. He cooperated fully with the police and was released without charge. Mr Sicri's arrest was reported in a number of media outlets. The police did not make any public statement referring to the fact that Mr Sicri had been arrested, and did not issue any details about his arrest.
6. Mr Sicri was told that the reason for his arrest was that his number was telephoned by Salman Abedi a day or so before the attack in Manchester. Mr Sicri did not know Salman Abedi, who said Mr Abedi had rung his number because he wanted to transfer some money to Libya and that he had obtained Mr Sicri's number from a publicly available source. Mr

Sicri told Salman Abedi that he was not able to assist and put the phone down when he became suspicious of a scam.

On 31 May 2017 there was an article about Mr Sicri in The Argus newspaper in Brighton, which is published by the Defendant. The article was published in hardcopy but was not available online. The article referred to the fact that Mr Sicri had been arrested. It also made serious allegations about Mr Sicri, suggesting that he was an ISIS supporter who had publicly mourned the death of an ISIS leader in Libya by posting a picture of the Libyan flag when news broke of that ISIS leader's death in a US air attack, together with a message of respect for the dead leader on his Facebook page.

7. These allegations are false. Mr Sicri is not, and has never been, a supporter of ISIS. Mr Sicri had nothing to do with the attack in Manchester. He is opposed in the strongest possible terms to all violence done by ISIS, including the Paris and Manchester attacks. He has never supported the ISIS leader referred to in the article published in The Argus, (or any other ISIS leader). He did not mourn the leader's death as suggested in the article – indeed, he had no idea who that person was until he read about the article. Mr Sicri changed his Facebook profile to a Libyan flag to show solidarity with both the French and Libyan people, together with an ordinary form of greeting in Libyan which was not an expression of support for any terrorist leader.
8. The publication of these false and defamatory allegations by the Defendant has caused Mr Sicri very great distress, anxiety and damage to his reputation. Mr Sicri lived in the area where The Argus is published and the highly damaging allegations were published to those in his local community.

Daniel Bishop for the Defendant

9. My Lord, on behalf of the Defendant I confirm all that has been said by Counsel for the Claimant. The publisher accepts completely that the allegations that Mr Sicri was an ISIS sympathiser and that Mr Sicri had publicly mourned the death of an ISIS leader by posting a picture of the Libyan flag together with a message of respect for the dead leader on his Facebook page are wholly false. The publisher has agreed to join in this Statement in Open Court to publicly apologise to Mr Sicri; to pay him a substantial sum in compensation and his legal costs; The Argus has published a suitable correction and apology and has undertaken not to publish these allegations or any similar allegations again.

Complainant

10. My Lord, given the public apology and other steps undertaken by the Publisher the Claimant is content to let this matter rest.

Bindmans LLP
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Bindmans LLP
Solicitor for Mr Sicri
Dated: 23 October 2018

S. A. Heston (COMPANY SECRETARY)
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Newsquest Media Group Limited
Dated: 23.10.2018