
Islamic Society of Boston Dismisses Defamation and Civil Lawsuit

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The Islamic Society of Boston (ISB) dismissed its defamation and civil lawsuit against Cahill's client Steven Emerson, a recognized expert on terrorism, and his organization, The Investigative Project on Terrorism, as well as various Boston residents, a Boston newspaper and television station. In all, 17 defendants were named.

The lawsuit was initiated by the ISB in October 2005 in response to media reports criticizing a real estate transaction entered into between the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Islamic Society, at a price well below market value, for the construction of a mosque and other facilities. The critics urged the Boston authorities to reconsider their decision to provide the land on such favorable terms to an organization whose present or former leaders had close connections with or who had otherwise supported terrorist organizations.

The Islamic Society sued, claiming both libel and civil-rights violations. Motions to dismiss were denied, and the litigants began to compel third parties to turn over relevant documents. Shortly thereafter, many allegations in the complaint were disproved, and others, substantially undermined. For example, documents obtained from the Boston Redevelopment Authority itself revealed a serious conflict of interest in the real estate deal; the city agency employee in charge of negotiating the deal with the Islamic Society was at the same time a member of that group and advising it about how to obtain land at the cheapest price.

The case was abandoned by the Islamic Society, and the defendants prevailed. No money was paid by the defendants, no apologies offered, and no limits on their future speech imposed.

Attorney

- Floyd Abrams