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AFLC Files Federal Civil Rights Lawsuit in Defense of Christians Stoned by Muslims at Arab Festival in Dearborn, Michigan

Detroit, Michigan (September 25, 2012) — Today, the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a national Judeo-Christian public interest law firm, filed a federal civil rights lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan on behalf of several Christian evangelists who were violently attacked by a Muslim mob at the Arab International Festival held this past June in Dearborn, Michigan. The violent attack was captured on video, which has gone viral on YouTube.

The Christians are suing officials from the Wayne County Sheriff’s Office who sided with the Muslim mob intent on suppressing the Christians’ speech. As alleged in the lawsuit, the officials failed to protect the Christians and in fact ordered them to leave the Arab Festival under threat of arrest for “disorderly conduct.” Not one Muslim was arrested for engaging in the violent criminal attack of the Christians. One of the named defendants is Deputy Chief Mike Jaafar, a Muslim who was featured in the now-cancelled show, “All American Muslim,” which appeared on The Learning Channel (TLC).

In June 2012, several members of Bible Believers – a group of Christian evangelists whose mission is to share and express their Christian faith – were walking on the public sidewalks in Dearborn, Michigan during its annual Arab Festival, holding signs and banners and wearing t-shirts displaying Scripture quotes and Christian messages, such as “Trust Jesus” and “Obey God, Repent.” While peacefully engaging in their First Amendment activity, the Christians were viciously attacked by an angry mob of Muslims armed with stones, bottles, and debris. Many of the Christians were bloodied by the attack.

Ruben Israel, the leader of the Christian group and a plaintiff in the lawsuit, pleaded with senior officials from the Wayne County Sheriff’s Office to intervene so that the Christians could

continue their peaceful activity free from criminal interference. The officials refused to enforce the criminal laws against the Muslims and instead ordered the Christians to leave the festival under threat of arrest.

Robert Muise, AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel, commented: “In our society, which is guided by Judeo-Christian principles, free speech and religious freedom are protected against censorship or punishment. Consequently, law enforcement officials have a constitutional duty not to effectuate a heckler’s veto, nor may they join a violent mob intent on suppressing speech. Instead, officials must take reasonable action to protect persons exercising their free speech rights. Here, we have an angry and violent mob of Muslims intent on suppressing free speech and law enforcement officials aiding and abetting the violence in violation of the Constitution.”

AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel David Yerushalmi added, “What is shocking is that this sharia-mandated violence in response to speech contrary to Islam is not just occurring overseas in places like Egypt and Libya, it is happening right here in the United States. One thing is clear: no citizen should be stoned in a city street in America for exercising his constitutional rights. In the United States, the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, not sharia.”

Shortly after the attack, Ruben Israel contacted AFLC for legal assistance because AFLC attorneys have litigated – and won – several challenges in defense of Christians whose rights were violated in Dearborn, Michigan, a city with one of the largest Muslim populations in the United States. For example, in 2009, a Christian pastor was prohibited from distributing his Christian literature at the Dearborn Arab Festival. Muise represented the pastor in his constitutional challenge to the festival policy, which resulted in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruling that the speech restriction violated the pastor’s First Amendment rights.

In 2010, four Christian missionaries were handcuffed and jailed for peacefully preaching to Muslims at the Arab Festival. The City charged the Christians with “breach of the peace.” Muise defended the Christians against these charges in their week-long criminal trial. And at the close of the trial, the jury returned verdicts of “not guilty.” Following the acquittals, Muise and Yerushalmi filed a lengthy civil rights lawsuit against the City, its mayor, the chief of police, seventeen police officers, and two festival organizers for violating the Christians’ constitutional rights. The City recently sought to dismiss the lawsuit, but a Detroit federal judge denied the City’s request, and the case is proceeding.

In 2011, the Wayne County Prosecutor forced a Christian pastor and his associate into court under an archaic Michigan law that allowed for the imposition of a “peace bond” to prevent a crime because the pastor wanted to hold a peaceful demonstration protesting sharia and jihad outside of the Islamic Center of America, the largest mosque in the United States. The prosecutor argued that because Muslim counter-protestors threatened violence if the Christians were allowed to hold their protest, a “peace bond” to prevent the pastor’s peaceful demonstration was justified. A local state court judge agreed. Following a two-day trial, the court imposed a “peace bond,” issued an order preventing the Christians from going near the mosque for three years, and jailed them until they paid the bond. Neither the pastor nor his associate had legal representation during the “peace bond” proceeding. Muise represented the Christians on appeal and successfully argued to the Michigan Circuit Court that the judgment and the injunction should be reversed.

AFLC’s lawsuit alleges that Wayne County officials violated the Christians’ rights to freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion protected by the First Amendment, and that the officials deprived the Christians of the equal protection of the law guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment. The lawsuit is seeking declaratory and injunctive relief, nominal damages, and attorney’s fees and costs.

The *American Freedom Law Center* is a Judeo-Christian law firm that fights for faith and freedom. It accomplishes its mission through litigation, public policy initiatives, and related activities. It does not charge for its services. The Law Center is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. Visit us at www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org.

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