



PRESS RELEASE

Arizona • California • Michigan • New York • Washington, D.C. • (855) 835-AFLC (2352) • Fax: (801) 760-3901

Contact: Robert J. Muise
(855) 835-AFLC (2352)
Choose Option “3”

For Immediate Release: February 20, 2013

AFLC Asks Federal Court to Enjoin Wayne County Sheriff from Restricting Christians’ Right to Freedom of Speech at 2013 Arab Festival in Dearborn, Michigan

Detroit, Michigan (February 20, 2013) — Yesterday, the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a national Judeo-Christian public interest law firm, filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, requesting that the court issue an order preventing the Wayne County Sheriff and his deputies from restricting a group of Christian evangelists from displaying banners and signs with Christian messages on the public sidewalks during the 2013 Arab Festival to be held in Dearborn, Michigan.

The motion is part of a federal civil rights lawsuit that AFLC filed against Wayne County, the Wayne County Sheriff, and two Wayne County Deputy Chiefs on behalf of Bible Believers, a Christian organization; Ruben Israel, the leader of Bible Believers; and two other members of the organization. Bible Believers and its members engage in street preaching and other First Amendment activities, including displaying signs and banners with Christian messages, throughout the United States.

In 2012, the Christians attended the Arab Festival in Dearborn, Michigan. While they were walking along the public sidewalks expressing their message, they were viciously attacked by a group of Muslims, who were throwing bottles, rocks, and other debris at the Christians. The Muslims were also shouting and blowing horns to harass the Christians. Some of the Muslims spat at the Christians. Several Christians, including Ruben Israel, were bruised and bloodied by the assault. The Muslims also shouted profanities at the Christians and mocked the Christians’ faith. The attack was caught on video, which has since gone viral on YouTube.

Rather than arrest the Muslims for engaging in criminal behavior, Wayne County deputies ordered the Christians to halt their free speech activity and forced them to leave the Arab Festival under threat of arrest for disorderly conduct.

As AFLC argued in its motion, Wayne County deputies cannot criminally punish the Christians' speech as a matter of law. Moreover, the deputies have a duty not to effectuate what is known in First Amendment jurisprudence as a "heckler's veto" by censoring the Christians' speech based on a hostile crowd's adverse reaction to the content of the Christian's message. Furthermore, the deputies have an affirmative duty to insure the Christians' safety and security in the free exercise of their constitutional rights.

The Christians are seeking a preliminary injunction because they want to return to Dearborn during the annual Arab Festival in June 2013 to engage in their free speech activity. However, they fear that if they do return without a court order protecting them, they will again be attacked by Muslims and forced to halt their speech activity under the threat of arrest for disorderly conduct.

Robert Muise, Co-Founder and Senior Counsel of AFLC, commented: "An injunction is certainly warranted and needed in this case based on the actions of the Wayne County deputies in 2012, which clearly demonstrate that they are intent on suppressing the Christians' message by joining the violent Muslim mob rather than fulfilling their duty to protect the Christians' safety and security in the exercise of their constitutional rights. In short, the Wayne County deputies have chosen to side with Muslim violence rather than protect the constitutional freedoms of Christians."

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.

###