

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

Claim No: HQ15D01851

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

Before:

BETWEEN

AYMAN ASFARI

Claimant

-and-

MGN LIMITED

Defendant

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STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

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Solicitor for the Claimant (Jonathan Coad)

1. My Lord, in this action I appear for the Claimant, Ayman Asfari.
2. The Defendant is the publisher of *The Daily Mirror* which is represented by Gervase de Wilde.
3. Mr Asfari is the Group Chief Executive of Petrofac; a provider of services to the oil and gas industry. Mr Asfari also established the Asfari Foundation which in addition to funding the education of young people, also supports initiatives that promote civil society and provides humanitarian relief aid and has recently tried to alleviate the suffering of refugees in Syria, by donating some £3 million in humanitarian aid. Mr Asfari is also a supporter of the moderate opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad.
4. On 9 February 2015 *The Daily Mirror* published via its hard copy and its website two Articles referring to Mr Asfari. The primary content of the Articles was to speculate on the financial benefits to a number of wealthy individuals including Mr Asfari who the Articles claimed were beneficiaries of tax changes made by the Conservative government. Mr Asfari made no complaint about that part of the Articles.
5. The last paragraph of the Articles however stated that Mr Asfari had "*courted controversy by dealing with [the] Assad regime in Syria....*". The print version of the Article also referred to a photograph which featured both Bashar al-Assad and Mr Asfari.
6. Mr Asfari has never had any dealings with the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The photograph which featured both Mr Asfari and Mr Assad was taken at the conclusion of a contract which Petrofac had with a Canadian company for the building of a gas plant which was completed before the uprising in Syria. Bashar al-Assad and Mr Asfari were

separately invited to the event by Petro-Canada, and Mr Asfari was photographed (along with others) with President Assad during a tour of the completed site.

7. Mr Asfari abhors the violence being meted out to his fellow Syrians by the Bashar al-Assad regime and has committed much of his time and resources to alleviate that suffering. He has also tried to assist the process of transferring power from the Assad regime to one which treats Syrians with respect and humanity. He was therefore profoundly distressed and angered at the suggestion made by *The Daily Mirror* that he in any way had supported or assisted the regime of Bashar al-Assad.
8. Mr Asfari is however grateful that the *Daily Mirror* has now agreed to the reading of this statement on his behalf retracting that allegation and that it has also agreed to make a contribution to the humanitarian work in Syria.

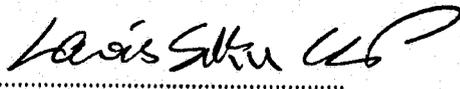
**Counsel/Solicitor for *The Daily Mirror***

9. I accept on behalf of *The Daily Mirror* that neither Mr Asfari nor Petrofac has ever had dealings with the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and that Petrofac has had no dealings with any Syrian state enterprise since the uprising in 2011.
10. *The Daily Mirror* has apologised to Mr Asfari, withdrawn the allegation complained of, agreed not to republish it and made a contribution to his costs. *The Daily Mirror* has also made a donation to the work of *Save the Children* amongst Syrian refugees in lieu of damages.

**Solicitor for Asfari**

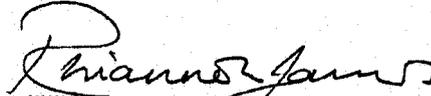
11. Accordingly My Lord, I seek leave to withdraw the record.

For the Claimant



Lewis Silkin LLP

For the Defendant



MGN Legal Department