

NEWS FROM:



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REACTION TO VERDICT **IN MUHAMMAD SALAH TRIAL**

In a statement issued by Alan Solow, Chair, and Jay Tcath, Executive Director, the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago responded to today's verdict in the trial of Muhammad Salah and Abdelhaleem Hasan Ashqar in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. The statement is as follows:

“We take particular note of the fact that the jury found Muhammed Salah guilty of lying about his involvement with and support for the terrorist organization Hamas. Hamas has been designated a terrorist organization by the United States for over a decade, and has the blood of many Americans and Israelis on its hands. The jury found Salah guilty of lying about his support for Hamas while answering questions in a civil trial in which he and others were found liable for \$156 million in damages for the murder of American teenager David Boim.

At the same time, we are disappointed that the two defendants were found not guilty of the racketeering (RICO) charges, for which they were prosecuted. Under that indictment, the Federal government alleged that they had violated American laws in acting to advance the violent behavior of Hamas, an organization that has taken its notorious place in the pantheon of global terrorist entities. Over the course of more than two months, the prosecution presented extensive evidence supporting the allegations that Salah and Ashqar were involved in criminal activities including conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to kidnap, money laundering and more. In our view, the defense offered little challenge to the veracity of the government's evidence and failed to present evidence of their own to refute the compelling case presented by the government.

(more)

Add One Salah Trial

Notably, the defense did not put the defendants on the stand to deny the allegations. Instead, they made political arguments, inviting the jury to ignore the evidence.

We note that some of the evidence entered in this case was used and allowed by the judge in an extradition hearing for the third named defendant, Mousa Abu Marzook. We recall that at the time of Marzook's extradition hearings, supporters adamantly disputed claims of Hamas ties. Marzook now lives in Syria, where he openly functions as one of Hamas' primary leaders.

We applaud the U.S. Attorney's office for bringing charges and prosecuting a case aimed at strengthening the important principle that America will not allow itself to be used as a safe haven for funding, coordinating, directing or otherwise supporting international terrorist activities. Hampering the flow of funds to international terrorists groups is an essential component of America's campaign to defeat international terrorism, and though the prosecution in this case was not fully successful, we hope that the scrutiny it has directed towards such activities will help advance that effort.

Finally, it is particularly disturbing to observe that many of the alleged criminal acts for which Salah and Ashqar were charged were said to have played out right here in Chicago. For over a dozen years, the JCRC has followed Chicago area connections with international terrorism through its Terrorism Awareness Project. We look to law enforcement to continue to apply vigorous efforts to combat the scourge of global terrorism, which threatens all Americans.”

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