

Leigh Day's Iraqi Torture Claims Verdict Expected Friday



Summary: The decision of whether or not Leigh Day and its solicitors are guilty of dishonesty and other charges related to supporting false claims of torture against British troops is expected Friday.

Leigh Day is accused of making false claims of torture and murder at the hands of the Ministry of Defence against Iraqis. A disciplinary tribunal is expected to announce their decision of whether the law firm is guilty or not.

The hearing has lasted for a long seven weeks. At the core of the charges are three solicitors who helped pioneer the class compensation actions in the United Kingdom. The controversial case pins one viewpoint of ambulance-chasing lawyers versus the other side that solicitors should be allowed to file suits against the government without fear of reprisal or recrimination.

The claims Leigh Day brought forward of Iraq detainees being murdered and tortured by British soldiers was saddening for the country. The problem is how the charges were made about the so-called Battle of Danny Boy in 2004 near Basra. The fight began when members of the Mahdi Army Shia militia ambushed a UK military patrol. Leigh Day supported the claims that a few of the militia were captured and brought back to the British base to be tortured and murdered.

An al-Sweady inquiry in 2014 found the claims to be made up. The supposed militia members making the claims were not innocent civilians like the claimed but actual Mahdi Army members. A confirmation of this fact was made with the personnel list issued by the Office of the Martyr al-Sadr (OMS). This revealed that Leigh Day's clients were not civilians but Mahdi Army fighters.

Now that could have been a simple mistake except that Leigh Day has been in possession of the OMS list since 2007. They chose not to disclose this to other lawyers, the high court, or the al-Sweady inquiry. So not only is Leigh Day and its solicitors in trouble for withholding evidence but they are also accused of publishing allegations against British troops without letting lawyers know whether the accusations were true or not. The defendants also allegedly entered into a fee sharing arrangement with an Iraqi middleman and of destroying evidence.

Two Leigh Day partners, Martyn Day and Sapna Malik, and another solicitor, Anna Crowther, face multiple charges, including a big, fat dishonesty charge. All three deny any wrongdoing. Patricia Robertson QC, who is defending Leigh Day, claims the three simply overlooked the OMS list but do not lack integrity.

The bribes the firm is accused of participating in was just in reference to the fact that the firm had to pay Iraqi claimants for employment leave in order to get legal statements and meant to be a joke. She told the tribunal, "You are being invited to buy into a notion that people would put a lifetime of integrity at risk in order to hang on to a few clients. It doesn't make sense. There was nothing improper about meeting a demand by an employer to secure their leave."

However, the damage Leigh Day inflicted on the British troops is irreversible. The firm delivered a press conference in 2008, after they were in possession of the OMS and should have verified the claims, which placed the troops in the spotlight as evil men. Leigh Day compared the crimes to the US army massacre in 1968 at My Lai during the Vietnam War. In that attack, hundreds of villagers were killed.

Tim Dutton QC is representing the SRA. He states that Leigh Day was reckless by making such claims before checking the facts, "Their approach was less responsible than that of journalists."

Should any of the charges against Leigh Day or its solicitors be proven, sentencing will occur at a later date.

Do you think Leigh Day should be punished? Tell us in the comments below.

To learn more about the case, read this article:

- [Leigh Day Lawyers Failed to Release Detainee List](#)

To learn more about attorneys that make false claims, read these articles:

- [Beck's Beer Loses False Advertising Suit, Beer Actually Brewed in the U.S.](#)
- [Immigration Lawyer Sentenced for Fake Asylum Claims](#)
- ["Conn-Attorney" Pleads Guilty to Fake Disability Benefits Scheme](#)

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