

Suit to Block Suburban Mosque Is Thrown Out

Ruling applauded by Muslims, but the plaintiff's lawyer says it isn't over.

By *MATT SEDENSKY*

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MIAMI | A lawsuit fighting construction of a mosque in a suburban neighborhood has been dismissed, though its backers vow to return to court.

The lawsuit was filed last year by lawyers for Rodney Wright, who claimed the relocation of the Islamic Center of South Florida to a new, larger building in his Pompano Beach neighborhood threatened the well-being and safety of the community.

The complaint was dismissed Monday, a move applauded by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which fought the litigation.

"These people were not really interested in doing something for the community. They were trying to further a political agenda of trying to restrict Muslims from worship in America," said Ahmed Bedier of CAIR. "And that's un-American."

Wright's lawyer, Peter Feaman, said he planned to investigate the case further before returning to court. The case has been backed by others who have been highly critical of major Muslim groups.

"If they're foolish enough to try this again and be embarrassed, then we'll see them in court," Bedier responded.

Wright, who identifies himself as a Christian, made bold claims in the lawsuit, saying the leader of the mosque, Imam Hassan Sabri, has repeatedly been associated with others who are tied to terrorist groups including Hamas, al-Qaida and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

There was no accusation of direct wrongdoing and the connections to such groups outlined in the filing appeared loose. Sabri has not been charged with any criminal wrongdoing and neither he nor his mosque has been the target of any publicized investigation.

The lawsuit also makes more routine complaints, including that prayer meetings could cause substantial traffic and taxpayers would be forced to foot the bill for increased infrastructure and police protection.

The Islamic Center of South Florida has been in Pompano Beach, about 30 miles north of Miami, for more than 20 years. A phone call to Sabri by The Associated Press was not immediately returned Wednesday.

This story appeared in print on page B3

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