

# Bhatt Murphy Solicitors

## PRESS RELEASE

14 September 2011

### **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE PAY £20,000 DAMAGES TO RIZWAAN SABIR FOR WRONGFUL 'TERROR ARREST'**

**The Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire Police has paid £20,000 in compensation to Rizwaan Sabir for his wrongful arrest and seven days' detention under the Terrorism Act 2000 in May 2008.**

Mr Sabir - currently a PhD student at the University of Strathclyde researching domestic UK counter-terrorism policy - was arrested after downloading an edited version of the 'The Al-Qaeda Training Manual' from a US government website for his postgraduate research as a Masters student at the University of Nottingham.

The manual is well established as a document used for research in the field of counter-terrorism policy<sup>1</sup>. In fact, undergraduate students are referred to it in standard textbooks<sup>2</sup> and readers<sup>3</sup>, which could be found in the University Library; it is available in various editions from reputable publishers<sup>4</sup>, and is widely available to buy, including from WH Smith<sup>5</sup>. However, when the manual was discovered on his friend's computer, both Mr Sabir (who is of Pakistani descent) and his friend (who is Algerian) were arrested in a joint operation by Nottinghamshire Police and West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit. Notwithstanding the clear explanation of Mr Sabir's legitimate possession of the manual, which was confirmed by his lecturers, both men were detained for seven days before being released without charge.

Mr Sabir subsequently brought proceedings against Nottinghamshire Police for false imprisonment and breaches of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Human Rights Act 1998. He also claimed under the Data Protection Act 1998 regarding false information on Nottinghamshire Police records, including a clear but unfounded assertion that Mr Sabir had been convicted of a terrorist offence, which had led to Mr Sabir being subject to numerous stops and searches.

The Chief Constable has finally been compelled to concede that there was "no evidence to justify any criminal charge" against Mr Sabir, and, in satisfaction of his claim, she has:

- Paid Mr Sabir £20,000 in compensation and agreed to pay his legal expenses;
- Deleted the inaccurate information from the intelligence files; and
- Acknowledged that her officers' actions were unlawful and "apologise[d] for any embarrassment, frustration and distress caused by those events" in respect of a stop and search on 4 February 2010 based solely on the fact of the previous arrest.

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<sup>1</sup> As documented in by an academic from Nottingham University, Dr Rod Thornton, who has been suspended by the University since June 2011: see [www.academicfreedom.co.uk](http://www.academicfreedom.co.uk) for information on his on going case.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Understanding Terrorism by Gus Martin

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Voices of Terror edited by Walter Laqueur

<sup>4</sup> See Military studies in the Jihad against the tyrant: The Al-Qaeda Training Manual edited by Jerry Post, Frank Cass Publishers

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.whsmith.co.uk/CatalogAndSearch/ProductDetails.aspx?productID=9781907521249>

Rizwaan Sabir said:

*For more than 3 years, I have been fighting to clear my name and establish that the police were wrong to arrest me and put me through the tortuous experience I suffered at their hands. I have finally succeeded in doing so, and they have been forced to account for the wrong they did to me. But I am one of the lucky ones. I cannot forget all those other innocent people like me who have suffered at the hands of the police but do not have the chance or means to vindicate their names.*

Michael Oswald of Bhatt Murphy, solicitor for Rizwaan Sabir said:

*Mr Sabir's case is one example of the way in which the War on Terror has been allowed to pervert the rule of law over recent years. Clearly, the police have a difficult and important job to do in their counter terrorism role, however, they must nonetheless act within the law and must be held to account when they do not. Through his remarkable effort and fierce determination over the last three years, Mr Sabir has been able to hold the police to account for their failings. This result is nothing more than the clear vindication to which he is entitled.*

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Mr Sabir is available for interview or comment. For further information, please contact:

Rizwaan Sabir

+44(0)783 5871 096

[rizwaan.sabir@strath.ac.uk](mailto:rizwaan.sabir@strath.ac.uk)

or

Michael Oswald, Bhatt Murphy Solicitors, 27 Hoxton Square, N1 6NN

0207 729 1115

[m.oswald@bhattmurphy.co.uk](mailto:m.oswald@bhattmurphy.co.uk)

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- 1 The settlement of Mr Sabir's claim comes only days after reports emerged that police are applying pressure on universities to report Muslim students who are considered depressed in case they are vulnerable to radicalisation:  
[www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/aug/29/university-inform-vulnerable-muslim-students](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/aug/29/university-inform-vulnerable-muslim-students)
- 2 For press report of Mr Sabir's arrest, please see:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/may/24/highereducation.uk>.
- 3 Mr Sabir was represented by Bhatt Murphy Solicitors and Richard Hermer QC and Alison Pickup, both of Doughty Street Chambers.