



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 30, 2019

London Police Pay Damages to Street Preacher Arrested for “Islamophobia”

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A London street preacher who was arrested for “Islamophobia” has been awarded over \$3,000 in damages from the British capital’s police.



Oluwole Ilesanmi, a former dentist who immigrated to the U.K. from Nigeria as a Protestant missionary in 2010, was preaching near the Southgate Underground station in North London on February 23 when police arrived in response to an emergency call saying Ilesanmi was making “Islamophobic” remarks.

Fortunately for Ilesanmi, an observer, Ambrosine Shitrit, was already making a video recording of the scene — not because the preacher was being Islamophobic but because the Muslim man with whom he was conversing was “becoming aggressive,” according to the [Daily Mail](#).

“The preacher was fearless, but if I hadn’t started filming he would have been attacked,” Shitrit told the paper. “He was not breaching the peace and in no way had he been Islamophobic. I would’ve been the first person to have said something if he had been.”

Shitrit’s [video](#), which garnered 10 million views on the Internet, shows police threatening Ilesanmi with arrest for “breaching the peace.” Ilesanmi tries to preach to the officers, one of whom says, “Nobody wants to listen to that. They want you to go away.”

The cops take Ilesanmi’s Bible and handcuff him. “Don’t take my Bible away,” the preacher says. “You should have thought about that before being racist,” the officer retorts.

Police drove Ilesanmi more than five miles away, then “de-arrested” him and left him to find his way home despite having no money. Eventually, a stranger paid his bus fare, at which point he returned to the Southgate station and resumed preaching.

Ilesanmi’s case was taken up by the London-based Christian Legal Center. In a [website post](#), the group detailed the multiple falsehoods the police told when questioned by journalists about Ilesanmi’s arrest. At first, the police denied ever driving Ilesanmi away from the scene of the arrest. Later they claimed he was driven to the Hadley Wood bus stop, about 3.5 miles from the Southgate station, and that the cops who released him verified that he had a bank card to pay his way home. (Ilesanmi said he had no bank card on his person at the time he was released; besides, the bus line does not accept bank cards, and there was no automated teller machine in the vicinity of the bus stop.) Even after the Christian Legal



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Center found Ilesanmi's bus ticket that proved he'd been taken 5.2 miles from Southgate, the bobbies only copped to having driven him "more than four miles away," and they "insist he was offered a lift back but refused," wrote the *Mail*.

After the Christian Legal Center sent the police a letter threatening legal action, the cops agreed to pay Ilesanmi about \$3,100 in damages. This payment "includes compensation for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment, aggravated damages for exceptional harm and humiliating and distressing treatment, and recognition for the potential psychological trauma experienced during the arrest," reported the *Mail*.

"I am glad that the police have recognized that it was not right to arrest me for preaching from the Bible. It was traumatic being arrested and left many miles from my home. But God was always with me and even though I was left in a place I did not know, I was determined to get back to Southgate and start preaching the gospel again," Ilesanmi said in a [statement](#).

"When I came to the U.K. it was a free Christian country, but now preachers like me are being arrested for speaking the truth," he added. "Christians and freedom of speech must be protected, especially by the government and police."

Despite Ilesanmi's vindication, U.K. street preachers continue to face arrest simply for exercising their freedom of speech.

"While the extent of the public outrage at Pastor Oluwole's arrest was unique, what he faced from the police and members of the public was not," Christian Legal Center chief executive Andrea Williams said in a [statement](#). She demanded "tangible action from the government" to prevent future injustices to preachers.

Ilesanmi is doing his part to make Williams' request a reality. On Tuesday, he [delivered a petition](#) to that effect — signed by almost 45,000 people — to the home secretary and London City Hall.

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