

MARCH 22, 2024 | NEWS

Shumaker Attorney Ali Latif Assists Family and Community of Slain Religious Leader in their Pursuit of Justice

SERVICE LINE

Litigation & Disputes

MEDIA CONTACT

Wendy M. Byrne

wbyrne@shumaker.com

Columbus, OH — After more than two years, the late Imam Mohamed Hassan Adam's family and community have seen justice served in connection with the December 2021 murder of their beloved father and religious and community leader.

Latif represented the Imam's family members – Shukri Hassan, Abdulkhabir Hassan, and Nasim Mohamed – with assistance from Shumaker Partner David Axelrod.

For the past two decades, in the heart of Columbus, Ohio and beyond, Imam Mohamed was a pillar of the Muslim and Somali communities. He was service-driven, giving back to those who needed it most, including feeding hundreds through his local food pantry, affording employment and shelter to those in need, providing mental health and drug abuse counseling, and offering spiritual guidance to countless individuals.

After Imam Mohamed's disappearance on Dec. 22, 2021, the discovery of his body two days later sparked a quest for justice. Police arrested John Wooden, Jr. and Isaiah Brown-Miller in connection with the crime. On October 25, 2023, a jury convicted Wooden of aggravated murder, kidnapping, and aggravated robbery, along with firearm specifications. On January 19, 2024, a jury convicted Brown-Miller of kidnapping and aggravated robbery, both with firearm specifications.

Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge Karen Held Phipps sentenced both defendants in early March 2024. Brown-Miller was sentenced to 26 to 31 years in prison with mandatory post-release control of two to five years, and Wooden received an aggregate sentence of 73-78.5 years to life in prison.

Since December 2021, Latif worked tirelessly to guide the family through the complexities of the homicide investigation and the criminal justice system. He coordinated with the Imam's family and Somali community leaders to help them engage with Columbus City officials, the Columbus Police Department, and the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office.

Throughout the legal proceedings, Ali advocated for the Imam's family to ensure their constitutional rights

were upheld as victims of violent crime. During bond hearings, Ali opposed the defendants' release before trial to maintain the community's sense of security. In advance of sentencing, Ali drafted compelling victim impact statements. At sentencing, he advocated for the maximum allowable sentences for both defendants, emphasizing the immense harm their crimes inflicted upon the family and community at large.

"It has been an honor to stand with Imam Mohamed's wonderful family and community in their quest for justice," Ali said. "I've been inspired by their strength and faith throughout this process, and I'm grateful to them for placing their trust in me. We all extend our immense gratitude to Detective Earl Westfall, the Columbus Police Department, Prosecutors Jack Wong, Debra Gorrell, and the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office for their unwavering efforts to secure justice for Imam."

Imam Mohammed's son Abdulkhabir Hassan said, "Through this horrific tragedy, Ali Latif's constant support has been crucial in helping me overcome challenges. We are extremely appreciative of Ali's unwavering efforts to ensure justice and our safety, and we consider ourselves fortunate to have such a powerful friend on our side."

Imam Mohammed's daughter Shukri Hassan said, "During these tragic years, Ali was a very humble and supportive person. He explained how the system works and was very passionate about his job. I really appreciate having him during our difficult time. Without Ali, I don't think we would have come this far. We appreciate his effort and time to make sure we get justice and all the help that we needed. My family and I are really fortunate to have him on our side, and I am sure many other clients will be glad to have him."

Imam Mohamed's legacy of service and compassion continues to inspire his family and community, who remain committed to upholding his work and keeping his memory alive.