

# Iran Ordered to Pay \$10.5 Billion for 9/11 by US Judge

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Global Research, March 11, 2016

[RT](#) 10 March 2016

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#)

*A US judge ordered Iran to pay over \$10 billion in damages to families of victims who died on September 11, 2001 – even though there is no evidence of Tehran’s direct connection to the attack. The same judge earlier cleared Saudi Arabia from culpability.*

The default judgement [was issued](#) by US District Judge George Daniels in New York on Wednesday. Under the ruling, Tehran was ordered to pay \$7.5 billion to 9/11 victims’ families, including \$2 million to each victim’s estate for pain and suffering, and another \$6.88 million in punitive damages. Insurers who paid for property damage and claimed their businesses were interrupted were awarded an additional \$3 billion in the ruling.

The ruling is noteworthy particularly since none of the 19 hijackers on September 11 were Iranian citizens. Fifteen were citizens of Saudi Arabia, while two were from the United Arab Emirates, and one each from Egypt and Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia was legally cleared from paying billions in damages to families of 9/11 victims last year, after Judge Daniels dismissed claims that the country provided material support to the terrorists and ruled that Riyadh had sovereign immunity. Saudi attorneys argued in court that there was no evidence directly linking the country to 9/11.

In response to the latest ruling, Hossein Sheikholeslam, a senior aide to Iran’s parliamentary speaker, called the decision “absurd and ridiculous.”

“I never heard about this ruling and I’m very much surprised because the judge had no reason whatsoever to issue such a ruling... Iran never took part in any court hearings related to the events of September 11, 2001,”

he told [Sputnik](#).

“Even if such an absurd and ridiculous decision has been made, the charges simply hold no water because Iran has never been mentioned at any stage of the investigation and the trials that followed.”

While Sheikholeslam argued that Iran didn’t take part in related hearings, that lack of participation may have contributed to the decision. A default judgment is typically issued when one of the parties involved in a case does not respond to court summons or appear in court to make their case.

Judge Daniels found that Iran failed to defend itself against claims that it played a role in 9/11. Iran believes the lawsuit is unnecessary because it says it did not participate in the attack.



Image: Eduardo Munoz / Reuters

In the US, Tehran’s role in 9/11 has been debated heavily over the years. The [9/11 Commission Report](#) stated that some hijackers moved through Iran and did not have their passports stamped. It also stated that Hezbollah, which the US designates as a terrorist organization supported by Iran, provided “advice and training” to Al-Qaeda members.

In a [court document](#) filed in 2011 regarding the latest case, plaintiffs claimed Hezbollah “provided material support” to Al-Qaeda, such as facilitating travel, plus “direct support” for the 9/11 attacks. As a result, the plaintiffs argued Iran was liable.

However, the commission report itself found no evidence to suggest Iran was aware of the 9/11 plot, and suggested the possibility that if Hezbollah was tracking the movements of Al-Qaeda members, it may not have been eyeing those who became hijackers on 9/11.

While the report suggested further investigation into the issue, President George W. Bush has said, “There was no direct connection between Iran and the attacks of September 11.”

Iran, inhabited mostly by Shia Muslims, has also denied any connection to Al-Qaeda – a militant Sunni group – and cooperation between the two has been questioned due to religious differences. Al-Qaeda views the Shia as heretics, for example.

“The people who committed those terrorist attacks were neither friends nor allies of Iran,” Iran Press Editor-in-Chief Emad Abshenas told Sputnik.

“They were our sworn enemies, members of Al-Qaeda, which considers Iran as their enemy. Fifteen out of the 19 terrorists were Saudi citizens, which happens to be America’s best friend. The remaining four terrorists lived in Saudi Arabia and enjoyed Saudi support. Therefore the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks had nothing to do with Iran.”

How the case moves forward after Daniels’ ruling is unclear. According to Bloomberg, it can be very hard to obtain damages from another country, but plaintiffs might try to do so by targeting Iranian funds frozen by the US.

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