

# Jehovah's Witness 'very nearly died of stress' during slander case



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Ruth Moram tells Donal Hickey that although she cannot take an action here, she will appeal to Europe. A JEHOVAH'S Witness who lost a High Court bid to bring an action for slander has claimed she almost died because of the case.

Ruth Moram, 61, who lives about 10km outside Killarney, also said she had no money to pay the costs of the case and fully intended appealing to the European Court of Human Rights.

"I didn't get very far in the High Court and did not get a fair hearing in my view," she said.

"I'm going to take the matter further because of the seriousness of the case. I very nearly died of stress because of it. I've developed an irregular heart beat and there's nothing can be done for that."

In the High Court, Ms Moram sought damages for slander against three members of the Killarney Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

She claimed she had been slandered in Dec 2009 in a letter written by one of them to her, a letter which, she said, accused her of slandering her husband by implying he was an adulterer.

Ms Moram conducted her own case in the High Court because she could not afford legal representation, she said.

She lives alone, with pet cat Benjy for company, in an unfinished house which does not have electricity or running water and is on a breen leading into a forest.

Sitting at a table in her home, she pored over books and legal papers in preparation for her planned appeal.

"I started looking into it [appeal] in Killarney library this morning...to find out what I think I have to do. It will be slow," said Ms Moram, as she put papers into the solid fuel stove she uses to heat her home.

The Cornwall native, who has been in Ireland for about 20 years, said she was divorced from her husband and had a daughter living in England.

In the High Court, Mr Justice John Hedigan awarded costs against her but she said she could not afford to pay them.

"Even if I had the money, I would not pay because my life was put in danger [by the case]."

Though aware she could be imprisoned for non-payment of costs, Ms Moram said she was prepared to go to jail.

"If I was in jail, I might get legal aid and also would get help to improve my health which is not good."

Regarding her current relationship with Jehovah's Witnesses, she said she had "disfellowshipped" herself, or withdrew from contact with them.

"I formally left because of my health."

However, she pointed out that she still believed in the faith as practised by Jehovah's Witnesses.

The case dates to June 2004 when, Ms Moram claimed, two members of the congregation called to her home and accused her of slander and she was afterwards shunned by the congregation.

Mr Justice Hedigan dismissed the case, saying the events of 2004 were clearly statute-barred because her proceedings must be issued within three years of the event and she had only done so in 2011.

As there was no publication of the letter written by one of three people and no special damage was claimed, Ms Moram had shown no cause of action against the three and her claim was therefore dismissed, he said.