

Jehovah's slander action over husband thrown out

Tim Healy

Published 06/03/2012 | 05:00

A JUDGE has thrown out a Jehovah's Witness slander action over allegations she implied her husband was an adulterer.

Ruth Moram says she was shunned by members -- or "disfellowshipped" -- for allegedly slandering her husband by implying he was an adulterer.

But she failed in a bid to bring her own High Court action for slander. Ms Moram, of Mastergeeha, Kilcummin, Killarney, Co Kerry, sought damages against three members of the Killarney Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

She claimed she had been slandered in a letter written by one of them to her in December 2009, which accused her of slandering her husband by the adultery allegation. Her husband denied the accusation, the court heard.

Mr Justice John Hedigan yesterday ruled she had shown no cause of action in her claims against Killarney Witness elders Peter Van Benthem, Parkavonear, Aghadoe, Killarney, and Andrew Beeston, Coolmagort, Beaufort, both Kerry. He also dismissed a similar claim against Witness member Martyn Bell, of Furies, Kerry, who wrote the 2009 letter.

The judge also awarded legal costs against Ms Moram who said she would go to jail rather than pay them. She said she would also appeal the decision to the Court of Human Rights.

In his judgment, Mr Justice Hedigan said the case dated back to June 2004 when Ms Moram claimed Mr Van Benthem and Mr Beeston accused her of slander.

Later that month at a meeting of the Killarney Witnesses congregation, Mr Bell gave evidence of the alleged slander of her husband, and as a result Ms Moram was "disfellowshipped".

The court heard that she appealed that decision internally in August 2004 -- and evidence was given in the appeal that Ms Moram had told a fellow Witness that a woman, referred to only by initials, had spent weekends away with her husband.

Ms Moram claimed that as a result of this, she was accused of slander in that she implied her husband was an adulterer.

Following these hearings, she was disfellowshipped from the Killarney Congregation.

Complaint

She then wrote a letter of complaint to the Witnesses branch office in Wicklow and it included photographs of her husband on a weekend break in Galway with the other woman, the judge said.

The branch sent a letter to the appeal committee, which changed its decision and told Ms Moram they "forgave" her.

She refused to accept this, as she insisted she had not slandered anyone and the accusation had not been withdrawn, the judge said.

The court heard that in December 2009, she claimed that Mr Bell wrote a letter which stated she had slandered her husband.

The following February, she formally left the Witnesses after elders of the Killarney congregation refused to allow her to speak at a meeting, he said.

Since then, she claimed, all her Witness friends had been forbidden from speaking to her and that she had been brought into public hatred, contempt and ridicule.

She then issued proceedings in the Circuit Court seeking damages and a declaration she did not commit slander.

A Circuit Court judge found the issues raised were beyond the limits of a secular court.

The judge also said the letter was not published to anyone other than Ms Moram.

She appealed that decision to the High Court. But yesterday, Mr Justice Hedigan dismissed her 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.

Irish Independent

 Follow @Independent_ie

Promoted Articles

Recommended by 

Recommended Videos

from 



VIDEO: Dramatic CCTV footage of vehicles taking



WATCH: Surfer Mick Fanning punches shark to survive



VIDEO - Two lads sum up an Irish Summer perfectly