

## Extension Of Time Sought For Retrial Of Holy Land Foundation, Reports Hungry For Justice

*Court appointed defense team alleges non-payment of services preventing preparation for trial*

For Immediate Release

DALLAS/EWORLDWIRE/July 23, 2008 --- Members of Hungry for Justice, a coalition of national and regional civil rights and interfaith organizations, spoke out in support of four defendants in the Holy Land Foundation (HLF) trial seeking payment for outstanding court-appointed services.

According to John Wolf of the Crawford Peace House, "The first trial was uncalled for in the first place. I don't think prosecuting Americans for feeding hungry children is something that makes me a proud American. However, the fact that the first trial ended in a mistrial, with most defendants being very close to acquittal, showed the government really did not have a case."

The HLF defense lawyers filed a joint motion on July 15 seeking an extension of time on the retrial due to lack of funding for the court-appointed defense team. According to the motion, the team has not been paid for services or expenses rendered since October, 2007. Furthermore, the defense attorneys have been seeking approval for a budget on the retrial scheduled to begin on September 8, 2008. To date, no funds have been approved for the defense of the HLF defendants.

"The prosecutors have already spent millions of taxpayer money to retry the defendants. The defense lawyers, on the other hand, have been waiting diligently for the Fifth Circuit to approve its budgets. The trial less than two months away, and the lawyers have no money to gather witnesses and information. This is unfair and simply un-American," said Ayman Kasir, Hungry for Justice member.

"In the HLF case, we are witnessing a manipulation of the system by those whose hands are on the levers of power. From allowing barred evidence to enter jury room deliberations to holding back funding for defendants' court-appointed lawyers, the government's representatives are undermining laws they have sworn to uphold. What is supposed to be a level playing field by law is now stacked heavily against the defendants' right to a fair trial. It is a troubling pattern of behavior," said Hadi Jawad of the Dallas Peace Center, a coalition member.

Khalil Meek, Hungry for Justice spokesperson, said, "We are concerned about due process in this country. The lack of funding denies defendants the right to present any meaningful defense in this case. Apparently, the system is unable to guarantee defendants constitutional rights. The court has a responsibility to provide fair representation for indigent defendants."

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Hungry for Justice was formed in April, 2007, as an ad hoc committee to ensure the right of American citizens to fair and impartial trials. It adheres to non-violent principles and affirms the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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