Case No: 12619-2024

BEFORE THE SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL
IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974 (as amended)
BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LIMITED

Applicant

and

MUHAMMAD AZFAR AHMAD

Respondent

APPLICANT'S REPLY TO THE RESPONDENT'S ANSWER

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1. Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Respondent's Answer refer to the likely submission by the Respondent, at some point in the future, of transcripts from the video recordings that he has obtained. The Applicant makes the following points:

    a. Standard Direction 3 (as amended at the Non-Compliance Hearing on 1 August 2024 **[F10-F14]** and then again by the Clerk on 3 September 2024 **[F15]** required the Respondent to serve all documents upon which he intended to rely at the Substantive Hearing by 10 September 2024. It follows that if Applicant now wishes to serve material (other than a witness statement) outside of that timeframe, he will need to make an application to the Tribunal; and

    b. In the event of any such application being granted, the Applicant may in turn seek a consequential direction permitting it to serve an updated Reply or further evidence addressing any new points raised by the transcripts obtained by the Respondent.

2. Paragraph 3 of the Respondent's Answer complains of a misuse by the Applicant of the term "client" in its Rule 12 Statement ("R12 Statement"). Paragraphs 8 – 13 of the R12 Statement describe the background circumstances of the Daily Mail investigation, and make clear that undercover reporters attended the Respondent's offices, effectively posing as prospective clients. The term "client" is thereafter used to refer to the status of these reporters (see paragraph 21.2 of the R12 Statement as an example of such

use); there was of course never any prospect of these undercover reporters in fact instructing the Respondent to act for them in any immigration case.

3. In paragraph 5 of the Respondent's Answer he asserts that the term "*Khalistan"* was first introduced by the reporters. This is not borne out by either the Language Line transcripts or the Atlas Transcripts. The Language Line transcript attribute the following comment to the Respondent:

> *"For example, I was tied in Khalistan back in Punjab. You were attached to them and liked their certain political party"* **[X29 – X30]**

The corresponding passage in the Atlas Transcripts reads as follows:

> *"He can say that I was attached to the Khalsa in Punjab"* **[X115]**

There was no prior reference to *"Khalistan"* or the *"Khalsa"* by the reporters before it was introduced by the Respondent.

4. It is therefore not accepted that the term "*Khalistan"* was introduced by the reporters, as asserted by the Respondent in paragraph of his Answer.

Capsticks Solicitors LLP

For and on behalf of the Applicant

12 September 2024