



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

*Southern District of New York*

U.S. ATTORNEY PREET BHARARA

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 30, 2017

<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

James Margolin, Dawn Dearden,  
Nicholas Biase  
(212) 637-2600

## **ARIZONA MAN CONVICTED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT FOR MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIS**

*Ahmed Mohammed El Gammal Helped Samy El-Goarany Travel from New York City to Syria, where El-Goarany Joined, Trained with, and Died Fighting for ISIS*

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that AHMED MOHAMMED EL GAMMAL, a resident of Arizona, was convicted today of multiple terrorism offenses in connection with his efforts to help Samy El-Goarany join and train with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, a/k/a the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, a/k/a the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (“ISIS”), a designated foreign terrorist organization. EL GAMMAL was convicted of providing and conspiring to provide material support to ISIS, aiding and abetting the receipt of military-type training from ISIS, and conspiring to receive such training. EL GAMMAL was convicted following a three-week jury trial presided over by U.S. District Judge Edgardo Ramos.

U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: “Once again, we have shown that terrorists and terrorist enablers can be brought to justice fairly, openly, and swiftly in the crown jewel of our justice system – civilian courts. Today, a jury in federal court in Manhattan convicted Ahmed Mohammed El Gammal of material support of terrorism. To grow their brand of hate-filled violence and radicalization, terrorist organizations like ISIS need facilitators and promoters around the world. And the jury found today that Ahmed Mohammed El Gammal was one such terrorist facilitator. An Ambassador for ISIS right here in America, El Gammal actively touted and glamorized ISIS online, ultimately recruiting and helping a New York college student travel to an ISIS camp in Syria for military training. That New Yorker died waging jihad, and for El Gammal’s active role in sending him down that trail to terror, he now stands convicted of federal terrorism crimes.”

According to documents publicly filed in this case and evidence presented at trial:

Beginning in at least April 2014, EL GAMMAL was an outspoken supporter on social media of ISIS and ISIS’s Caliphate, or Islamic government, in Syria. Among other things, EL GAMMAL announced that he was with “[t]he State of Iraq and the Levant,” referring to ISIS; celebrated ISIS’s achievements in battle and announcement of the establishment of a Caliphate; proclaimed that he “support[s] jihad everywhere”; and declared that “[b]eheadings have a

magical effect.” EL GAMMAL additionally announced that “[i]f Daesh [i.e., ISIS] gets to Egypt, I will go join them, so I can torture the Egyptians, and whip them.”

As of at least August 2014, a 24-year-old New York City resident named Samy El-Goarany began to express his support for ISIS on social media as well. On August 14, 2014, El-Goarany heard that EL GAMMAL had made comments supportive of ISIS. Minutes later, El-Goarany contacted EL GAMMAL and they communicated via an encrypted communications platform. Less than an hour after this online conversation, EL GAMMAL sent El-Goarany a documentary on life in the Islamic State that outlined the type of training ISIS provides. Over the next several months, EL GAMMAL and El-Goarany continued corresponding over the Internet, although EL GAMMAL and El-Goarany deleted almost all of these exchanges.

In the midst of these communications, in October 2014, EL GAMMAL traveled to New York City, where El-Goarany was enrolled in college, and met with El-Goarany. During this October 2014 trip, EL GAMMAL provided El-Goarany with the phone number for EL GAMMAL’s contact in Turkey, Ateia Aboualala, who would be responsible for helping El-Goarany travel from Turkey across the border to ISIS in Syria. While in New York City, EL GAMMAL also contacted Aboualala in Turkey regarding El-Goarany’s plans to travel. EL GAMMAL later provided El-Goarany with social media contact information for Aboualala. Thereafter, in a coded conversation, EL GAMMAL assured Aboualala that he had vetted El-Goarany and El-Goarany could be trusted.

In late January 2015, El-Goarany left New York City for Istanbul, Turkey. Upon arriving in Turkey, El-Goarany immediately reached out to Aboualala. While El-Goarany was in Turkey, EL GAMMAL continued to communicate with El-Goarany over the Internet, providing advice on traveling toward Syria and on meeting with Aboualala. After arriving in Syria, El-Goarany received religious training and advanced military-type training from ISIS throughout 2015. On May 7, 2015, in the midst of his training with ISIS, El-Goarany reported to EL GAMMAL that “everything [was] going according to plan.” A few months later, on July 16, 2015, El-Goarany wrote to EL GAMMAL: “Life has changed a lot for me at this new job but I love it and I don’t regret taking up the offer,” and “May God reward you with goodness,” to which EL GAMMAL responded, “Great.”

In May 2015, El-Goarany’s father traveled to Turkey and met with Aboualala, in an attempt to locate his son. Upon learning of this, EL GAMMAL instructed Aboualala, “Don’t ever ever mention me. Not even my name[,]” and urged Aboualala not to meet with El-Goarany’s father. On May 5, 2015, Aboualala reported back to EL GAMMAL, assuring EL GAMMAL that, when Aboualala met up with El-Goarany’s father, “I covered up for you.”

In coded messages in mid-2015, EL GAMMAL reached out to El-Goarany to inquire about the possibility of his (EL GAMMAL’s) traveling to ISIS in Syria. On July 13, 2015, El-Goarany, again in a coded message, responded that he needed to ask his “supervisors at work first,” but commented that “it’s risky because the parking lot these days is going under a lot of renovation, especially in the north side,” alluding to military operations occurring in northern Syria at the time.

On November 23, 2015, El-Goarany’s brother received a message from a member of ISIS with an attached letter from El-Goarany. The letter read: “if you’re reading this then know that I’ve been killed in battle and am now with our Lord, inshaAllah. Remember what I told you . . .

we will win this war one day, this war between Iman (Belief) and Kufr (Disbelief) between Good and Evil. . . .”

\* \* \*

EL GAMMAL, 44, of Avondale, Arizona, was convicted of one count of providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and one count of conspiring to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; one count of receiving military-type training from a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a mandatory sentence of 10 years in prison or a fine; and one count of conspiring to receive military-type training from a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison. The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by Judge Ramos. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

Mr. Bharara praised the outstanding investigative work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (“FBI”) New York Joint Terrorism Task Force – which principally consists of agents from the FBI and detectives from the New York City Police Department. Mr. Bharara also thanked the Counterterrorism Section of the Department of Justice’s National Security Division, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Arizona, and the Phoenix Field Office of the FBI for their assistance.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office’s Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Negar Tekeei, Brendan F. Quigley, and Andrew J. DeFilippis are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Trial Attorney Ranganath Manthripragada of the Counterterrorism Section.

17-031

###