

L.A. Activists Respond to Criminal Conspiracy Charge With \$3-Million Lawsuit

Los Angeles attorneys contend the Animal Defense League-L.A. threatened city employees; activists say their civil rights were violated.

Charged with a criminal conspiracy in December, an animal-rights group in Los Angeles has responded with a \$3-million claim against the city for civil rights violations.

The Animal Defense League-L.A., alleged to have promoted and threatened violence against city workers, claims that the city is using the criminal charges to discredit members, limit their free speech and try to dismantle the organization.

The dispute stems from a campaign called Stop the Killing, in which ADL-LA members picketed in front of Los Angeles officials homes (including then-mayor James Hahn and animal services field commander David Diliberto) to end the city's euthanasia policy in its shelters. Los Angeles prosecutors contend that the group went beyond protesting by trespassing and harassing employees at odd hours.

The 14 criminal charges against ADL-LA include more than 50 acts, such as posting altered photos of city employees on the group's website, showing bullet holes and blood; leaving voice mail messages accusing Diliberto of infidelity; and sending two people dressed as mortuary workers to Diliberto's home at 3 a.m.

Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo also asserted that ADL-LA promotes violence through affiliation with underground movements such as the Animal Liberation Front. It has actively expressed support for even more radical elements of the so-called animal liberation movement, groups that are on the Justice Department's list of domestic terrorist organizations, Delgadillo said. The charges are a response to their illegal terror tactics.

Should Los Angeles win its case, the city will ask that members of the Animal Defense League pay up to \$120,000 in fees and be prohibited from protesting in front of homes and encouraging other threatening actions for up to 8 years.

In its lawsuit, ADL-LA refutes the charges of trespassing and harassment, noting that the group and its members were not specifically charged with committing any illegal acts.

McCarthyism has come to L.A. in the form of Rocky Delgadillo and his henchmen, said ADL attorney John Uribe. My clients have all been above ground, legal, albeit vocal protestors who have done what all activists do for their cause.

Following acts of vandalism attributed to ADL activists spray painting and a smoke bomb a disclaimer was attached to the group's website stating that the organization's publicity is not intended to incite violence, according to the claim.

Calling Los Angeles six city shelters death camps, ADL-LA says that more than 44,000 dogs, cats, puppies, kittens, rabbits and wildlife have been euthanized at the shelters, and advocates a no-kill policy.

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