

## Judge threatens developer Kevin Azzouz with arrest

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ORLANDO - An Orange County Judge has issued an order saying MetroWest developer **Kevin Azzouz** will be arrested if his company Veranda Partners LLC continues to disregard the court's judgment.

Azzouz's attorneys have countered that the developer didn't know about the contempt of court ruling until an Orlando Sentinel reporter contacted him this week, seeking comment.

His attorneys have filed an emergency motion to quash the contempt order and they expect to have a hearing before Orange Circuit Judge Jose R. Rodriguez as soon as Monday or Tuesday.

The order stems from a case that Azzouz and his company started back in March 2007 against MetroWest resident Larry Giles for criticizing Azzouz's handling of the development on an obscure website Giles set up.

Giles, a veteran Orange County Sheriff's deputy, called it a SLAPP suit (strategic litigation against public participation) which is intended to silence criticism by draining an opponent's financial resources.

Azzouz said at the time that he was only defending his company's good name.

Neither he nor his attorneys have responded to multiple inquiries seeking comment. But Azzouz said back in 2007, "The beauty of the American system is that the big guy and the little guy are equal in the arena of the court."

Last September the court ruled that it was a SLAPP lawsuit and awarded Giles an \$181,000 judgment.

Court records say that money was never paid and that Azzouz had failed to answer repeated orders of the court to fulfill its judgment.

In a motion filed this week, Azzouz's attorneys contend that the judgment is against the company Veranda Partners, not Azzouz.

"It is ironic that the man who wrongfully attempted to use the court system to punish a citizen, appears now to be making the argument that the court has no power to enforce its lawful decree," said Giles' attorney, Derek Brett.

Corporate documents list Azzouz as the sole owner of the company.

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