

JUSTICE UPHELD: ARIZONA BORDER VIGILANTE ROGER BARNETT RECEIVES ANOTHER GUILTY VERDICT!

Group says the decision is a step in the right direction in stopping vigilante violence but feels much more is needed to promote greater accountability and oversight within the border region.



TUCSON, AZ - After two weeks of testimony and evidence heard in the DeConcini Federal Courthouse in Tucson, a jury of 10 men and women found that Roger Barnett—a renowned border vigilante, was guilty of assaulting and intentionally causing emotional harm on 6 men and women originally from Mexico stemming from their encounter with Barnett on March 7, 2004. After discovering a group of 16 men and women that he alleged to be on his property, Barnett threatened the unarmed group at gunpoint, kicked a young woman twice, and detained them for close to 30 minutes until Border Patrol arrived.

The trial began on February 2nd and included testimony from each of the 6 plaintiffs, and from other people who have had encounters with an enraged Barnett including, a Cochise County Sheriffs' deputy, a bow hunter who had racial insults hurled at him by Barnett, and a Douglas EMT who recalled how Barnett falsely flagged down his ambulance so that he could see if the person inside was who he had been tracking. The civil suit, which was presented by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), originally named Barbara Barnett and Donald Barnett as co-conspirators, who were dismissed of their charges by Judge Roll who felt there was a lack of evidence proving these charges. Furthermore, since only 6 of the 16 plaintiffs were present in order to testify, the other 10 plaintiffs were excluded from the suit as well.

Border Action Network, a human rights organization with membership throughout southern Arizona, closely monitored the trial every day and was satisfied with the verdict. Border Action was present at Barnett's other civil trial two years ago that also ended with a guilty verdict and a penalty of nearly \$100,000. "This verdict sends a loud and clear message that taking the law into your own hands and using excessive force and fear in the process is unacceptable," said Katie O'Connor a Border Action Network staff member that attended the trial daily.

While the group cheers today's victory, they have been calling for an end to vigilante violence for almost five years now, and also have a petition pending with the Organization of American States' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights charging the U.S. with human rights violations caused by the United States' lack of protection and legal remedies for immigrant victims of intimidation and violence by civilian vigilante groups along the US/Mexico border in southern Arizona. "Vigilantism is wrong and nobody is above the law. The state and federal government need to hold Barnett accountable, individuals should not have to file law suits," commented Angelita Nuñez, a Douglas, Arizona resident and Border Action Human Rights Promoter. "This trial, which serves up justice for now, reminds us still of the urgent need for immigration reform in order to change the reality of all of us living along the border."

"This victory gives me hope that the new administration will consider a new approach to the current failed immigration system," reflects Alfredo Doniz, a Border Action Human Rights Promoter. "In light of Arpaio's continued outrageous acts against immigrants and the vicious cycle we've seen from vigilantes at the border, not to mention our own state legislature that continually pushes anti-immigrant bills, now more than ever is the time to demand that Arizona, and the federal government stop looking the other way when violations of civil, constitutional, and human rights occur daily against all Arizona residents."