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Attorney Wins Record Canadian Defamation Case

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A Los Angeles attorney was instrumental in securing what is now, by a significant margin, Canada's largest-ever defamation judgment against a an individual.

Lee Brenner, chair of the entertainment and media litigation practice at **Venable LLP**'s office in Century City, represented American clients in the Ontario, Canada, case that just had $4.7 million ordered in damages to its 53 plaintiffs. Those plaintiffs, the judge found, were significantly defamed by a Canadian man who for years systematically seeded the internet with claims that they were sexual predators, pedophiles or had venereal diseases, among other attacks.

The defendant is appealing the ruling and judgment.

Brenner was first contacted by a client about the posts in 2012 and eventually joined forces with Canadian attorney **Maanit Zemel**, who had been following a similar issue for other clients since 2014.

"We worked very well together. I could not be more proud of what we accomplished," Brenner said. "It was a lot of teamwork. It was slow and arduous and there were setbacks. It was good lawyering and for a good cause. We didn't have any illusions we were going to make a fortune on this case. Once we talked to our clients, we saw the damage to them was exceedingly real in how profoundly it affected their lives."

Through their investigations, Brenner and Zemel determined that one man, **Tanvir Farid**, targeted his victims — most of whom were recruiters — after applying for jobs at the information technology companies they worked for. A judge ultimately ruled last year in favor of the plaintiffs. That judge awarded damages at the end of June, with each plaintiff due to receive between $50,000 and $110,000 based on the severity of the postings about them.

Farid's posts were detailed, specifically accusing the plaintiffs of deviant sexual or predatory acts or of being unfaithful to their spouses, while often including other family members' names. They were designed in a way to often become top search results on the internet and were frequently picked up by so-called extortion websites, which charged people to take down posts about them.