

New Jersey imam says he was tortured

by UPI

NEWARK, N.J. -- A New Jersey imam on trial for deportation says he has no ties to the Palestinian militant group Hamas and contends he was tortured by Israel in 1993. The four-day trial of Mohammed Qatanani wrapped up Monday in Newark, N.J., with testimony before an immigration judge. Qatanani, the imam of the Islamic Center of Passaic County, testified he endured 30 days of physical and mental torture at the hands of Israeli interrogators who believed he had ties to Hamas, the Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger reported. However, Qatanani said he never belonged to the group and was never charged with anything by the Israelis despite the alleged torture, a key to his argument that he should be allowed to stay in the United States. Prosecutors from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, however, dispute that contention. They said an Israeli military court convicted the imam of assisting Hamas and Qatanani lied about having no arrest record when he applied for permanent residence in 1999, the newspaper said. The case has been recessed until closing arguments are made next month. A decision is expected by September.

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