

Defendant surprises court in Dubai with scribblings on T-shirt

Visitor accused of stealing Dh990,000 waves cloth bearing handwritten defence in English

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Dubai: A visitor accused of stealing Dh990,000 surprised a court on Tuesday when he waved a cloth on which he had written his defence in English and drawn UAE and Ethiopian flags.

The 25-year-old Ethiopian suspect had walked into the dock of the Dubai Court of First Instance wearing a white T-shirt, which carried handwritten words in red and green.

Prosecutors had accused the defendant, D.E., of robbing an Iraqi investor of a bag containing Dh990,000 and an \$800 (Dh2,942) mobile phone.

When Presiding Judge Al Saeed Mohammad Barghout asked him whether he speaks English or Arabic, D.E. replied: "No..., little English." Then he surprised all by pointing to his T-shirt and asking the court translator to read out the words.

At first everybody in courtroom four, including the judge, thought the suspect was joking. After taking the judge's permission, the translator approached the suspect and read out what was written on the front of his T-shirt.

"It reads that he is not guilty. He is suffering in his detention," the translator said, addressing Judge Barghout.

Then the three judges on the panel along with the audience laughed. Judge Barghout asked the translator with a smile to check whether there was anything written on the back of the defendant's T-shirt.

To the astonishment of the audience including the jury, D.E. turned around and asked the translator to read.

Suffering emotionally

The handwritten message read: "I am not guilty. I am suffering emotionally and physically inside prison. I have been detained since April 15 and have been suffering since ..."

As the judge was about to adjourn the hearing until an Ethiopian translator is made available, the suspect pulled out a big white cloth and started waving it.

"Take it sir... Court, please take. This is for you!" said the defendant in faltering English.

The cloth had the UAE and Ethiopian flags drawn on it. The UAE flag was drawn as placed on a stand that looked like planet Earth. When asked by the judge what was written on the cloth, the translator said it contained the defence of the suspect.

"The court reconvenes on January 2 until a translator is made available," said Judge Barghout.

According to the bill of charges, D.E. and two other suspects [who remain at large] attacked the Iraqi investor and stole his money and phone after assaulting him.

The 40-year-old Iraqi testified that three men followed him into the elevator of a building when he went to a money exchange in Muraqqabat.

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