

THE REAL DEAL

Eviction case against El-Gamal tossed out

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By David Jones

Landlord vows to bring case to civil court



Sharif El-Gamal and 552-556 Broadway (building source: PropertyShark)

A New York City Housing Court judge dismissed a lawsuit against Sharif El-Gamal, the head of Soho Properties and developer of the controversial Park 51 mosque, after his former landlord claimed he failed to pay back rent at a former office.

According to the Aug. 16 suit against Soho Properties, the developer owed nearly \$39,000 in back rent dating back to at the 552-556 Broadway office building. But, El-Gamal argued that he left the premises, between Prince and Spring streets, Sept. 20 to move to another location and that the landlord, Royal Crosbin,

failed to service the default notice properly by overnight mail.

El-Gamal, who has received death threats since the mosque controversy erupted, declined to provide the new address.

"I was never evicted, I simply moved to another location," El-Gamal, told *The Real Deal* in an emailed statement. "The case was wrongly filed and my attorneys rightfully had the case discontinued against me."

El-Gamal, who rocketed to fame this year as the developer of a controversial mosque located two blocks from Ground Zero, had been on an \$7,100-a-month lease for a sixth floor space at the building. The lease, originally signed in November 2005, was scheduled to expire Oct. 31, and the complaint says El-Gamal was being charged a default rate of \$18,000 per month.

Royal Crosbin officials were not immediately available for comment, but the landlord's attorney, Ed Toptani, acknowledged that the case was dismissed because the developer had already vacated the space. He added that the landlord would continue to pursue the back rent in civil court.

"They have no defense to the amount that's owed," Toptani said. "The landlord will be pursuing its remedies in civil court."

"We have prevailed in this lawsuit, demonstrating that no case should have ever been started against my client," said **Adam Leitman Bailey**, attorney for El-Gamal, in an e-mail.

"If the landlord wants to waste its money by starting another case, we look forward to once again standing up for our client's rights and defeating its claim," Bailey added. "We have no doubt we will prevail."