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Home / Daily News / DOJ to pay \$200K to immigration judge over...

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

DOJ to pay \$200K to immigration judge over recusal pressure because of her Iranian heritage

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BY MARTHA NEIL ([HTTP://WWW.ABAJOURNAL.COM/AUTHORS/5/](http://www.abajournal.com/authors/5/))

The feds have agreed to pay a \$200,000 settlement to an Iranian-American immigration judge who says she was ordered to recuse herself from cases involving Iranian nationals after she attended a White House meeting with Iranian-American community leaders.

In addition to the monetary settlement with Judge Ashley Tabaddor, who works in Los Angeles, the Department of Justice has agreed to lift the recusal order and review its policies on the subject, NPR's The Two-Way (<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/11/03/454394225/government-settles-lawsuit-filed-by-iranian-american-judge>) blog reports.

Ordinarily, immigration judges are randomly assigned to cases, and a party can request a recusal based on bias. However, Tabaddor said in the federal civil rights suit she filed last year in the Central District of California that no such bias has ever been alleged.

The DOJ argued earlier in a court filing that the court had no jurisdiction to hear the case and said Tabaddor's presence at the White House meeting raised an issue over the "appearance of bias or impartiality."

Cooley partner Ali Mojdehi represented Tabaddor. "We are pleased the DOJ came to terms on this matter," he told NPR.

The DOJ, through a spokeswoman, declined to comment.

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