

Iran's properties in Canada sold, proceeds handed to terror victims



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An Iranian Officer of Revolutionary Guards, with Israel flag drawn on his boots, is seen during graduation ceremony, held for the military cadets in a military academy, in Tehran, Iran, June 30, 2018. *Tasnim News Agency/via REUTERS/File Photo*

Tens of millions worth of seized Iranian government properties have been sold off in Canada and the proceeds handed to victims of terrorist groups sponsored by the regime, Global News has learned.

According to a [document](#) filed in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice last month, the victims got a share of the money earned through the sale of Iran's buildings in Ottawa and Toronto.

The properties went for more than \$28-million, documents show. The recipients were victims of Hamas and Hezbollah — terrorist groups bankrolled, armed and trained by Iran.

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Normally that would be an unremarkable statement but the creditors in the case were terrorism victims and the assets were Canadian properties seized from the Iranian regime.

The Ottawa property, which had been the Iranian Cultural Centre, was particularly valuable. Marketed as a “transit-oriented development opportunity on the apron of the University of Ottawa,” it sold to a Montreal developer for \$26.5-million.

The Toronto property, which was owned by a company headed by an embassy official and served as the Centre for Iranian Studies, went for \$1.85-million.

A lawyer representing one of the victims also confirmed the sales had occurred.

The Canadian Coalition Against Terror, which lobbied to change the law so victims could seek redress from states that sponsor terrorism, said it was pleased Tehran had been held to account.

“The Iranian regime unwaveringly and unabashedly provides tens of billions of dollars for terrorist organizations that have destroyed innocent lives across the globe, including those of Canadians,” said Danny Eisen, the [C-CAT](#) spokesperson.

The redistribution of Iran's assets marks the likely end of a process that started seven years ago when the former Conservative government designated the Islamic Republic a state sponsor of terrorism.

Under the [Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act](#), enacted in 2012, victims can use the courts to claim the Canadian assets of designated state sponsors of terrorism. Iran and Syria are currently designated.

Foreign governments typically can't be sued, but the legislation lifted state immunity for those countries. Only non-diplomatic assets can be claimed by victims, meaning embassies and consulates are off-limits.

Several American families that had won large court judgments against Iran over terrorist attacks subsequently filed claims in the Ontario and Nova Scotia courts, seeking a share of Iran's assets.

They included the family of Marla Bennett, a U.S. citizen killed in a 2002 Hamas bombing, and Edward Tracy and Joseph Cicippio, who were held hostage by Hezbollah from 1986 to 1991.

The court sided with the victims and awarded them Iran's assets. The judge said the properties were "beneficially owned by Iran" and added there was evidence the Ottawa property was linked to the [Iranian Revolutionary Guards](#).

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Iran initially ignored the case but then hired a law firm to appeal the Ontario court ruling, which the regime called "politically motivated."

The sale and distribution of Iran's assets began after the [Supreme Court rejected Iran's appeal](#) last year. Now that the sale of the properties is complete, the assets have been distributed to the victims.

In addition to the proceeds of the sale of the properties, the victims were awarded a share of some \$2.6-million seized from Iran's bank accounts. Documents also list a Toyota Camry and Mazda MPV.

Canada severed [diplomatic relations with Iran](#) in 2012, citing the regime's support for Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, as well as its nuclear program, threats against Israel and backing of terrorist groups.

During the 2015 election campaign, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to restore ties with Iran but that did not happen. The United States has recently abandoned the Iranian nuclear deal and tightened sanctions against Tehran.

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