

Jailed Street Preacher Leads Inmates to Christ Before Vindication

The Tempe City Court in Arizona this week dismissed a case against evangelist Doru Neamtu. Neamtu was targeted and harassed for street witnessing.

Liberty Counsel, who defended Neamtu, reports that Tempe police have been harassing the evangelist for many years. Among other discrimination, Neamtu is forbidden from using an amplifier on the street, while the bars and night clubs are blaring amplified noise.

Here's the backstory: Last September, Neamtu was peacefully passing out Christian tracts in front of the post office when a Tempe police officer accused him of "aggressive solicitation." His constitutional rights were further violated when the police officer arrested him on a bogus Failure to Provide Identification charge.

Doru Neamtu grew up in communist Romania, where he saw his dad jailed and beaten for preaching the gospel. His dad still bears the physical scars today.

"It is interesting to note that Liberty Counsel's Senior Litigation Counsel, Harry Mihet, who represented Doru Neamtu in court yesterday, was also born and raised in communist Romania where he lived until 1989, when dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown and executed," says Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. "Both Neamtu and Mihet had Romanian fathers who were jailed by secret police for sharing the gospel. Yesterday, they stood together against religious persecution in America," Staver said. "The courtroom was packed with Romanians, who were persecuted in Romania and had come to America to find freedom."

After being arrested last September, Neamtu shared Jesus with three fellow inmates, who each accepted Christ. When he was released from jail at 11:00 p.m., the Romanian evangelist still had one hour left until his customary midnight finish time, so he walked over to the exact spot where he had been arrested and finished his message.

Liberty Counsel came to Neamtu's aid, engaged the prosecutor in vigorous discovery, filed constitutional defenses, and came ready with ten witnesses for trial. This "shock and awe" approach persuaded the city prosecutor to dismiss the charges.

Based upon countless opinions from the courts, prohibiting a person from witnessing and distributing literature from a public sidewalk is clearly a violation of that person's constitutional rights. The Supreme Court ruled in *Madsen v. Women's Health Center, Inc.* that peacefully speaking to another person cannot be considered criminal, harassment, or intimidation, even where the conversation is uninvited and not consensual. Mr Neamtu is dedicated to sharing the gospel of Jesus. There is nothing more important, and Liberty Counsel was proud to stand beside him in court.