

Witness Testimonies Supporting the Defense

As defenders in the Sahel Investment Fraud Case, we present the following witness testimonies that highlight critical nuances and mitigating factors. These testimonies are intended to demonstrate that certain aspects of the case might not fully align with the prosecution's narrative and could suggest either reduced culpability or extenuating circumstances for the accused.

1. Testimony from Former SVC Employee: Hadi Ben Ali (Operations Manager, 2019-2021)

Key Points:

- **Limited Role of Defendants:** Hadi testified that Nabil Haddad, the accountant, expressed concerns about the company's financial discrepancies to Omar Al-Mahdi in mid-2021. According to Hadi, Nabil was under the impression that these discrepancies were temporary and would be resolved through additional legitimate investments. This testimony suggests that Nabil may not have been fully aware of the overarching fraudulent scheme.
- **Al-Mahdi's Assurances:** Hadi recalled multiple internal meetings where Omar Al-Mahdi assured the team, including Nabil and other employees, that SVC was actively pursuing major partnerships to stabilize operations. This could indicate that Al-Mahdi misled not only investors but also his own staff.
- **Fabricated Pressure:** Hadi alleged that external pressures—such as demands from certain powerful investors—pushed the company into financial desperation, leading to increasingly questionable decisions.

2. Testimony from European Investor: Claudia Meier (German National)

Key Points:

- **Trust in Elif Kaya:** Claudia, who invested €200,000 into SVC, stated that her trust in the company was primarily due to the professionalism of Elif Kaya, whom she described as "an intelligent and transparent advisor." Claudia noted that Elif presented detailed business plans and was genuinely enthusiastic about SVC's potential.
- **Elif's Belief in the Business:** Claudia's testimony supports the defense argument that Elif may not have been fully aware of the fraudulent intentions of other members of the team and genuinely believed in the company's vision.
- **Lack of Direct Deception:** Claudia reported that, in her interactions with Elif, there were no promises of unrealistic returns. Instead, Elif emphasized the inherent risks of high-growth investments. This could weaken the prosecution's claim of deliberate misrepresentation on Elif's part.

3. Testimony from Banking Liaison: Karim Bouzid (Representative from Tunisian Bank)

Key Points:

- **Limited Control Over Offshore Transfers:** Karim testified that certain fund transfers linked to the case occurred without direct involvement from Pierre Duval, who allegedly authorized them. Instead, some transactions were automated through routine SVC banking agreements, which could indicate a lack of Pierre's direct oversight in specific laundering activities.
- **Cooperation with Investigators:** Karim also confirmed that Pierre voluntarily provided critical banking details early in the investigation, which helped authorities track down offshore accounts in Malta and Turkey. This proactive cooperation could support arguments for a reduced sentence.

4. Testimony from Former Auditor: Fatima Jarray (External Auditor for SVC, 2019-2020)

Key Points:

- **Fabricated Financials Untraceable at the Time:** Fatima admitted that the fraudulent financial statements were so sophisticated that even seasoned auditors like herself initially found no anomalies. This highlights the complexity of the scheme and may suggest that individuals like Nabil Haddad operated under duress or were unaware of the larger picture.
- **Efforts to Rectify Discrepancies:** Fatima also testified that Nabil took steps to address emerging financial irregularities before his eventual departure from SVC. This could indicate an attempt to mitigate damages rather than actively contribute to the fraud.

5. Testimony from Industry Expert: Dr. Youssef Khaled (Economic Analyst)

Key Points:

- **Systemic Flaws in Investment Oversight:** Dr. Khaled provided expert testimony on Tunisia's regulatory environment, emphasizing that lax oversight and regulatory loopholes likely emboldened fraudulent activities.
- **Economic Pressures on Business:** Dr. Khaled highlighted that Tunisia's volatile economic climate during the period in question (2019–2022) placed extreme financial pressures on investment firms. While not exculpatory, this testimony contextualizes the decisions made by the accused as part of broader economic instability rather than outright greed.

6. Testimony from Personal Acquaintance: Amina Zidi (Close Friend of Omar Al-Mahdi)

Key Points:

- **Humanizing the Accused:** Amina testified that Omar Al-Mahdi was a self-made entrepreneur who faced immense pressure to prove himself in Tunisia's competitive business world. She described Omar as ambitious but not malicious, stating that he had often spoken of his genuine desire to make Tunisia a hub for high-growth sectors.
- **Al-Mahdi's Initial Vision:** According to Amina, Omar's initial intention for SVC was legitimate, and the company's pivot toward fraudulent activities only began when large investors threatened legal action over delayed returns. This suggests that Omar's actions were reactive rather than premeditated.

7. Testimony from IT Specialist: Sami Trabelsi (SVC's IT Consultant)

Key Points:

- **Limited Evidence of Coordinated Forgery:** Sami testified that many of the digital marketing materials and financial reports produced by SVC were created under tight deadlines and with minimal oversight from senior management. This indicates that some fraudulent documents may not have been directly ordered or approved by the defendants.
- **Evidence of Systemic Negligence:** Sami's testimony suggests that poor internal controls, rather than intentional deception, may have played a role in enabling certain fraudulent activities. For example, Sami mentioned instances where junior employees generated reports using inconsistent data, unaware of the broader consequences.