



Books

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Author ordered to pay damages to wife of Bookseller of Kabul

Norwegian court rules Åsne Seierstad's book breached privacy of the Bookseller's real-life spouse

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A court in Norway has ordered [Åsne Seierstad](#), author of the Afghanistan-set bestseller [The Bookseller of Kabul](#), and her publisher, Cappelen Damm, to pay 250,000 kroner (£26,276) in damages to a woman portrayed in the book.

Oslo district court ruled that the Norwegian author and journalist, whose book was based on the three months she spent living with a bookseller and his family, had breached the privacy of Suraia Rais, wife of bookseller Shah Muhammad Rais, and included inaccurate information in her account.

"The information [in the book] about Rais's thoughts and feelings is sensitive," the Oslo district court ruled, according to a report in the Dagbladet newspaper. "They are attributed to her as true, and neither Seierstad nor Cappelen Damm can be considered to have acted in good faith to ensure they were correct and accurate."

Seierstad's lawyer said he would be strongly encouraging his client and her publisher to appeal against the fine.

The book was an international bestseller when it was published in 2003, and its success in the UK was fuelled by it being included in the [Richard and Judy TV bookclub](#). However, Mr Rais - the bookseller of the title - has always disputed its contents, which portray him as a tyrannical head of the household. He claimed that the book was distorted, revealed family secrets and put his family in danger, to the extent that his two wives both fled the country to live in exile in Canada and Norway.

In 2007, Mr Rais wrote his own account of his life, [Once Upon a Time There was a Bookseller in Kabul](#). Last year he [signed a deal with Indian distributor Motilal Books to sell his books into the UK](#).

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