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# Elgin Islamic leader now accused of sexual abuse of former student

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Chicago Tribune

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Chicago-area Islamic educator, imam accused of sex abuse of minor: police.

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**T**he founder of an Islamic school in Elgin who is awaiting trial on sexual abuse charges now faces new allegations of abuse of a former student, police said.

Mohammed Abdullah Saleem, 76, a prominent imam who founded the Institute of Islamic Education in Elgin, turned himself in Wednesday morning at the Elgin police station, where he was charged with aggravated criminal sexual abuse of a minor, said Elgin police Lt. Rick Ciganek.

Saleem appeared in bond court Wednesday afternoon, where prosecutors said the new charges are based on allegations that Saleem abused the girl dozens of times between 2001 and 2003 when she was a student at the institute and Saleem was the school's president and principal.

Cook County Assistant State's Attorney David Shin said Saleem is accused of forcing the girl to sit on his lap while he was aroused and touching her in a sexual manner. Prosecutors said the alleged abuse began about a month after the girl enrolled at the boarding school when she was 14, escalated over time and ended when the girl moved out of state.

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Prosecutors said the alleged victim, now an adult, recently told a friend and then authorities about her claims of abuse after learning that Saleem was under investigation.

The imam's bond was set at \$1 million, over the objection of his attorney, Raymond Wigell, who called the amount "excessive" and said the charges are "without support." Wigell said his client is not a flight risk and would have difficulty posting the required \$100,000 to be freed pending his trial.

"He's a Muslim icon, but he's not a wealthy man by any means," Wigell said.

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Saleem did, however, post bail later Wednesday and was released from custody.

The imam, a resident of Gilberts, [was charged earlier this year](#) with aggravated criminal sexual abuse, unlawful restraint and aggravated battery stemming from allegations that he groped a 23-year-old woman who was working at the Islamic school at the time.

Two groups of people — one apparently in support of Saleem, one supporting the woman who worked for the school — have been present at Saleem's previous court hearings.

Saleem was trained in a conservative Islamic movement based in India. His attorney said Saleem is a naturalized U.S. citizen who has been married for 55 years and has two daughters, four sons and 19 grandchildren.

*George Houde is a freelance reporter. Stacey Wescott is a Tribune photojournalist.*

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