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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

Attorneys And Associate Of Immigration Law Firm Plead Guilty To Participating In Asylum Fraud Scheme

Defendants Prepared Fraudulent Asylum Applications and Affidavits, Coached Clients to Lie Under Oath During Immigration Proceedings

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ILONA DZHANGAROVA, ARTHUR ARCADIAN, and IGOR REZNIK have each pled guilty to conspiracy to commit immigration fraud. DZHANGAROVA and ARCADIAN pled guilty today, and REZNIK pled guilty on August 24, 2022, each before U.S. District Court Judge Mary Kay Vyskocil.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "The defendants — a husband and wife team of licensed immigration attorneys and a writer who worked with them — invented offensive lies to cheat our country's asylum process, which is meant to protect vulnerable people who legitimately fear persecution because of their race, religion, political beliefs, or sexual orientation. When attorneys cynically exploit those fears for financial gain by pedaling false claims and coaching clients to lie under oath, they abuse the trust placed in them and make a mockery of the asylum system. With their guilty pleas, the defendants are being held accountable for their serious crimes."

According to the Indictment against DZHANGAROVA, ARCADIAN, and REZNIK, other documents filed in this case, and statements made in open court:

Between November 2018 and December 2021, ILONA DZHANGAROVA, an immigration attorney, ran the Dzhamgarova Firm, an immigration services firm based in Brooklyn, New York. The Dzhamgarova Firm worked with clients — primarily aliens from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States — seeking visas, asylum, citizenship, and other forms of legal status in the United States. Among other things, the Dzhamgarova Firm advised certain of its clients regarding the manner in which they were most likely to obtain asylum in this country, fully understanding that those clients did not legitimately qualify for asylum. The firm also prepared and submitted to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") clients' fraudulent Form I-589 asylum applications, asylum affidavits — statements of an asylum applicant's personal history and claimed basis for asylum, often including allegations of past persecution — and related supporting documentation. Members and associates of the firm also coached certain clients to lie under oath during interviews conducted by USCIS Asylum Officers and provided legal representation to their clients during various immigration proceedings.

Among other things, DZHAMGAROVA advised clients to seek asylum by falsely claiming that they were members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community who suffered persecution in their native countries, when DZHAMGAROVA fully understood that these clients were not members of that community and suffered no such persecution. Additionally, DZHAMGAROVA and her husband, ARTHUR ARCADIAN, also an attorney, prepared and submitted clients' fraudulent asylum applications and affidavits to USCIS, under penalty of perjury, fully understanding that these documents at times contained material falsehoods. DZHAMGAROVA, ARCADIAN, and REZNIK also coached certain clients to lie in asylum interviews conducted by USCIS asylum officers and represented these clients as they lied under oath during immigration proceedings.

The Dzhamgarova Firm also employed writers, including IGOR REZNIK, who knowingly concocted and drafted clients' fraudulent asylum affidavits so that they could be submitted as part of clients' asylum applications. These affidavits, which were designed to support clients' persecution claims, conveyed narrations of clients' personal histories that were filled with falsehoods, including events and incidents of alleged persecution that were completely made up by REZNIK.

* * *

DZHAMGAROVA, 46, ARCADIAN, 44, both of Brooklyn, New York, and REZNIK, 41, of New York, New York, each pled guilty to one count of conspiring to commit immigration fraud and each face a maximum of five years in prison.

The maximum potential sentence in this case is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendants will be determined by a judge. DZHAMGAROVA and ARCADIAN are scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Mary Kay Vyskocil on May 31, 2023. REZNIK is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Vyskocil on May 5, 2023.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's New York Eurasian Organized Crime Task Force, USCIS's New York Asylum Office and Fraud Detection and National Security Unit, and Homeland Security Investigations. Mr. Williams further thanked United States Customs and Border Protection for its assistance.

This case is being prosecuted by the Office's Money Laundering and Transnational Criminal Enterprises Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys David R. Felton and Jonathan E. Rebold are in charge of the prosecution.

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