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**TAX PREPARER PLEADS GUILTY TO FILING FALSE
CLAIMS FOR TAX REFUNDS**

SHREVEPORT, La. - United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that Sonya L. Muhammad, 32, of Calhoun, La., pleaded guilty to filing false claims for federal income tax refunds. Muhammad was indicted by a federal grand jury in December 2010 on 31 counts of aiding and assisting in making false returns and 1 count of structuring. In May 2011, a superceding indictment was returned adding six more counts of filing false returns.

Muhammad owns and operates a tax return preparation business in West Monroe. At the change of plea hearing yesterday, Muhammad admitted to preparing and filing tax returns at her business knowing that the returns contained material false claims. Between 2003 and 2007, she prepared and filed at least 31 tax returns that were materially false with regard to items such as dependants and wages in a scheme to inflate the Earned Income Tax Credit that the taxpayer would receive from the IRS. In 2011, while out on bond for these offenses, Muhammad filed six more materially false tax returns. Due to this conduct, Muhammad's bond was revoked.

Muhammad pleaded guilty to two counts of aiding and assisting in making a false return. She faces a maximum penalty of three years in prison or a fine of \$250,000, or both, for each count. She will be sentenced by U. S. District Judge James on October 3, 2011.

The case was investigated by Special Agent Jamie Knight of the United States Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney C. Mignonne Griffing.

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