



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 7, 2007

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ATTORNEY AND WIFE INDICTED ON CHARGES OF ASYLUM FRAUD

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today the indictment of attorney JAMES CHRISTO and his wife, REMILA CHRISTO, on charges that the defendants had conspired to commit perjury and immigration fraud and make false statements as part of a scheme in which the defendants coached clients of JAMES CHRISTO's law firm on how to present fraudulent stories of persecution in support of applications for political asylum. The Indictment was returned by a grand jury last week and the defendants are expected to be arraigned in Manhattan federal court later today. As alleged in the Indictment, as well as a criminal Complaint previously filed in this case:

Attorney JAMES CHRISTO and REMILA CHRISTO operated a law firm in Manhattan that, among other things, assisted aliens of Albanian nationality with applications for political asylum. In the course of operating that firm, JAMES CHRISTO and REMILA CHRISTO conspired to assist clients in creating fraudulent stories of persecution to submit to immigration authorities in support of claims for political asylum. Specifically, while knowing that asylum applications and asylum interviews are subject to penalties of perjury, the defendants helped clients: (i) concoct fraudulent stories that would purport to satisfy the criteria for political asylum; (ii) obtain fraudulent evidence that supported those fraudulent stories; (iii) prepare and submit asylum applications containing the fraudulent stories; and (iv) prepare for the asylum interview at which the applicant would be required to repeat the fraudulent story to an asylum officer.

JAMES CHRISTO and REMILA CHRISTO are each charged with one count of conspiracy. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment. The defendants are expected to be arraigned in Magistrate Court at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. GARCIA praised U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their work on the case.

Assistant United States Attorney MICHAEL A. LEVY is in charge of the prosecution. This case is being prosecuted by the Public Corruption Unit of the United States Attorney's Office.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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