



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 2, 2010**

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**FORMER BRONX PARALEGAL SENTENCED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL
COURT TO 78 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR OPERATING
IMMIGRATION FRAUD MILL**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that DALIA PRELDAKAJ, a paralegal in the Law Office of Salvador Collazo, was sentenced today in Manhattan federal court to 78 months in prison for conspiring to operate an immigration fraud mill with COLLAZO out of COLLAZO's Bronx law practice. PRELDAKAJ was found guilty following a 14-day trial before U.S. District Court Judge SHIRA A. SCHEINDLIN earlier this year.

According to the evidence presented at trial and at the sentencing hearing:

From about 2000 to 2008, COLLAZO and PRELDAKAJ ran an immigration law practice out of COLLAZO's law office located in the Bronx, New York. COLLAZO and PRELDAKAJ prepared hundreds of fraudulent applications for amnesty and other related immigration benefits on behalf of their immigration clients and then submitted those applications to the U.S. Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS"). In connection with the scheme, COLLAZO also falsely signed an amnesty application, under penalty of perjury, stating that he had personal knowledge of all of the information contained in the application, or that the information had been provided to him directly by the applicant, when in fact this was not true.

The evidence further showed that PRELDAKAJ charged clients thousands of dollars for what she told them were fees charged by USCIS, which in fact were far in excess of the actual filing and processing fees associated with the applications that she prepared for the clients. In order to conceal her proceeds from the fraud, PRELDAKAJ deposited the money into nominee bank accounts that did not belong to her, but which she controlled.

Finally, in August 2009, while on bail following her arrest, PRELDAKAJ committed witness tampering by attempting to persuade a former immigration client to file a false claim against her in Bronx Civil Court that mischaracterized the money the client had paid to PRELDAKAJ for immigration-related work as a personal loan.

* * *

COLLAZO was found guilty of one count each of conspiracy to commit immigration application fraud, immigration application fraud, and false statements. COLLAZO was acquitted of one count of charging excessive fees in connection with immigration applications. PRELDAKAJ was found guilty of one count each of conspiracy to commit immigration application fraud, immigration application fraud, charging excessive fees in connection with immigration applications, money laundering, engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction, and witness tampering.

COLLAZO, 62, who is scheduled to be sentenced on October 14, 2010, faces a maximum possible penalty of 10 years in prison for the charge of committing immigration application fraud, and a maximum possible penalty of 5 years in prison for each of the conspiracy and false statements charges. COLLAZO also faces a maximum fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross pecuniary loss or gain derived from the offense for each count of conviction other than for money laundering.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "Dalia Preldakaj preyed upon the hopes and dreams of immigrants who trusted her with their applications for status in this country. To line her own pockets, she took their hard-earned money in exchange for what turned out to be empty promises of assistance. Today's sentence sends a clear message that this Office, along with our partners at the Department of Homeland Security, will work tirelessly to prosecute anyone who tries to fleece those seeking to navigate the immigration process legitimately."

Mr. BHARARA thanked the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Homeland Security Investigations and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for their outstanding work in the investigation.

This case is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys CHRISTIAN R. EVERDELL and LEE RENZIN are in charge of the prosecution.