

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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## **ROCHESTER WOMAN CHARGED IN \$45,000,000 TAX REFUND SCHEME**

**ROCHESTER, N.Y.**-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Michelle Torres, 36, of Rochester, N.Y., was arrested and charged by Criminal Complaint with conspiracy, mail fraud, identity theft and filing false claims, in connection with a large, nationwide tax refund scheme.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard A. Resnick, who is handling the case, stated that according to the Criminal Complaint, from February 1, 2011 to October 31, 2011, Torres was involved in a scheme to obtain income tax refunds by the filing of fraudulent federal income tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service. Specifically, stolen identities and fabricated wages and tax withholdings were utilized to file the fraudulent federal income tax returns. Most of the returns were filed using the names and social security numbers of individuals residing in Puerto Rico who had no knowledge of the filings. Refund checks issued as a result of the fraudulent returns were sent to various addresses in Rochester and other locations in the country.

A total of 8,336 federal returns were filed by a company in Bronx, New York claiming refunds totaling \$45,768,391. A total of \$3,321,542.00 for 590 of the returns were sent by the IRS to various locations in the Rochester area. Torres participated in the scheme by retrieving refund checks which were sent to Rochester and forwarding the money to individuals in the New York City area who were responsible for filing the false tax returns.

"This Office is committed to pursuing those who would seek to defraud taxpayers and the American public," said United States Attorney Hochul. "We will work with our federal, state and local partners to bring anyone who engages in such behavior to justice."

The charges are the culmination of a joint investigation on the part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M.

Piehota, and the Internal Revenue Service under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Victor W. Lessoff.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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