U.S. Department of Justice
Executive Office for Immigration Review
Office of the Director
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2600
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Office of Legislative and Public Affairs
(703) 305-0289 Fax: (703) 605-0365
Internet: www.usdoj.gov/eoir/

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EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct

Seven Attorneys Immediately Suspended; Eleven Receive Final Orders

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has recently taken disciplinary action against 18 attorneys for violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct for immigration practitioners.

EOIR announces these disciplinary actions to inform the public about practitioners who are no longer authorized to represent clients before an immigration tribunal. In most cases, EOIR has disciplined the practitioner based on a sanction imposed by another jurisdiction or a criminal conviction.

Disciplinary proceedings begin when the Office of the General Counsel of either EOIR or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), files a Notice of Intent to Discipline with EOIR's Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). The disciplinary action can result in the suspension or expulsion of a practitioner before the immigration courts, the BIA, and DHS. Before a suspended or expelled attorney can resume the practice of law before the immigration courts, the BIA, and DHS, the BIA must reinstate that attorney.

EOIR has recently taken the following disciplinary actions:

Immediate Suspensions

The BIA ordered the immediate suspension of the following attorneys:

- **Lilian Asante:** The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio convicted Ms. Asante of knowingly and unlawfully entering into marriage for the purposes of evading a provision of the immigration laws. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Oct. 29, 2009, based on Ms. Asante's conviction in Ohio and pending final disposition of her case.

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AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 09120864. (Posted 12/08/09)

- **Mina Baghat:** The Court of Appeals of Maryland disbarred Mr. Baghat from the practice of law for numerous violations of the state's Rules of Professional Conduct, including conduct involving lack of diligence, lack of competence, and misappropriation of trust account funds. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Oct. 7, 2009, based on Mr. Baghat's disbarment in Maryland and pending final disposition of his case.

- **Satish K. Goli:** The Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, Second Judicial Department, disbarred Mr. Goli from the practice of law after accepting his resignation. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Sept. 24, 2009, based on Mr. Goli's resignation and ultimate disbarment in New York and pending final disposition of his case.

- **Kehinde Oluwaranti Jobi:** The Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, First Judicial Department, and the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York each suspended Mr. Jobi from the practice of law for failing to cooperate with the investigation into his alleged misappropriation of funds. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Nov. 4, 2009, based on Mr. Jobi's suspensions in New York and pending final disposition of his case.

- **Guillermo Napoleon Lopez:** The Supreme Court of Florida suspended Mr. Lopez from the practice of law in Florida. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Oct. 7, 2009, based on Mr. Lopez's suspension in Florida and pending final disposition of his case.

- **Uchenna Samuel Ogbu-Nwobodo:** The Supreme Court of California suspended Mr. Ogbu-Nwobodo from the practice of law for 60 days for intentionally, recklessly, or repeatedly failing to perform legal services with competence and for improper conduct involving termination of his employment. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Nov. 4, 2009, based on Mr. Ogbu-Nwobodo's 60-day suspension in California and pending final disposition of his case.

- **Shahryar S. Shahmardian:** The Supreme Court of Colorado suspended Mr. Shahmardian for 1 year and 1 day for violating the state's Rules of Professional Conduct. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Sept. 21, 2009, based on his suspension in Colorado and pending final disposition of his case.

Final Orders of Discipline

- **J. Jack Artz:** The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit disbarred Mr. Artz from the practice of law in that court for violations of the court's rules and orders.

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The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Sept. 16, 2009, based on Mr. Artz's disbarment by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and pending final disposition of his case. A final order of Oct. 27, 2009, suspends Mr. Artz from practice before immigration tribunals for 14 months, effective Sept. 16, 2009, based on his disbarment by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and his continued appearances before the Los Angeles Immigration Court after his suspension.

- **Chandra Mahinda Bogollagama:** A final order of Nov. 5, 2009, suspends Mr. Bogollagama indefinitely from practice before immigration tribunals, based on the revocation of his license to practice law in Virginia for engaging in the unauthorized practice of law.

- **Jose Expedito Mantal Garcia:** The Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, Third Judicial Department, suspended Mr. Garcia from the practice of law for 1 year for a conviction in Virginia for conspiracy to commit immigration fraud. The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Sept. 16, 2009, based on Mr. Garcia's suspension in New York and pending final disposition of his case. A final order of Oct. 27, 2009, suspends Mr. Garcia indefinitely from practice before immigration tribunals, effective Sept. 16, 2009, based on his 1-year suspension in New York.

- **Roberta A. Golden:** A final order of Oct. 1, 2009, suspends Ms. Golden from practice before immigration tribunals for 1 year, effective Jan. 14, 2009, based on her indefinite suspension in Massachusetts for violating the commonwealth's rules of professional conduct.

- **Howard Teng-Hao Mei:** A final order of Oct. 14, 2009, expels Mr. Mei from practice before immigration tribunals, effective Sept. 9, 2009, based on his consent to disbarment in Maryland.

- **Lisa Metellus:** A final order of Sept. 29, 2009, suspends Ms. Metellus from practice before immigration tribunals for 5 years, effective Feb. 19, 2009, based on her disbarment in Florida.

- **Navron Ponds:** A final order of Oct. 8, 2009, suspends Mr. Ponds from practice before immigration tribunals for 5 years, effective Sept. 15, 2009, based on his disbarment in the District of Columbia.

- **Fernando J. Ramos:** A final order of Sept. 28, 2009, suspends Mr. Ramos from practice before immigration tribunals for 3 years, effective Aug. 19, 2009, based on his 3-year suspension in Tennessee.

- **Stephen A. Rodriguez:** The Review Department of the California State Bar suspended Mr. Rodriguez indefinitely from the practice of law for failing to comply with the terms of his probation in a previous disciplinary case.

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The BIA granted the government's petition for immediate suspension on Sept. 29, 2009, based on Mr. Rodriguez's indefinite suspension in California and pending final disposition of his case. A final order of Oct. 22, 2009, suspends Mr. Rodriguez indefinitely from practice before immigration tribunals, effective Sept. 29, 2009, based on his indefinite suspension in California.

- **Jagdip Singh Sekhon:** A final order of Sept. 24, 2009, expels Mr. Sekhon from practice before immigration tribunals, effective July 27, 2009, based on his conviction in California.

- **Barton Carl Winter:** A final order of Oct. 7, 2009, suspends Mr. Winter from practice before immigration tribunals for 120 days, effective Aug. 6, 2009, based on his indefinite suspension in Minnesota.

Background

The Rules of Professional Conduct appear in Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (8 C.F.R. §§ 1003 and 1292). They include provisions specifying grounds for disciplinary action, requirements for receiving and investigating complaints, and procedures for conducting hearings. The rules also authorize the BIA to suspend immediately a practitioner who has been subject to disbarment, suspension, or resignation with an admission of misconduct as imposed by a federal or state court, or who has been convicted of a serious crime, pending a summary proceeding and final sanction. The Rules of Professional Conduct are available at http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/vll/fedreg/2000_2001/fr27jn00R.pdf and http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/vll/fedreg/2008_2009/fr18dec08c.pdf.

A "List of Disciplined Practitioners" is available at http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/profcond/chart.htm. In an effort to provide more detailed information about individual attorney discipline cases, every immediate suspension or final order issued can be accessed through this list by clicking on the highlighted data link.

Additional information about the Attorney Discipline Program can be found at http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00/profcond.htm and http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/09/AttorneyDisciplineFactSheet.pdf.

— EOIR —

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is an agency within the Department of Justice. Under delegated authority from the Attorney General, immigration judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals interpret and adjudicate immigration cases according to United States immigration laws. EOIR's immigration judges conduct administrative court proceedings in immigration courts located throughout the nation. They determine whether foreign-born individuals—who are charged by the Department of Homeland Security with violating immigration law—should be ordered removed from the United States or should be granted relief from removal and be permitted to remain in this country. The Board of Immigration Appeals primarily reviews appeals of decisions by immigration judges. EOIR's Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to ensuring fairness in all of the cases it adjudicates.