



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maine*

100 Middle Street
6th Floor, East Tower
Portland, ME 04101

(207) 780-3257
TTY (207) 780-3060
Fax (207) 780-3304
www.usdoj.gov/usao/me

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Contact: David B. Joyce
Assistant U.S. Attorney
(207) 780-3257

Westbrook Woman Pleads Guilty to Making False Statements

Portland, Maine: United States Attorney Thomas E. Delahanty II announced today that **Nasteho Sharif**, of Westbrook, Maine, pled guilty before Judge D. Brock Hornby, in U.S. District Court in Portland to one count of making false statements on immigration applications and two counts of making false statements on benefit applications.

Court records revealed that in August 2003, **Sharif** entered the United States purporting to be someone else and never disclosed her true identity to immigration authorities. **Sharif** was admitted to the United States as a refugee when in fact she was an imposter.

In September 2003, **Sharif** applied for a Social Security Number claiming that she was lawfully admitted to the United States as a refugee. Soon after her arrival in the United States, **Sharif** moved to Maine and applied for federally funded benefits including housing, MaineCare, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In two benefit applications, Sharif falsely represented that she was a lawfully admitted refugee and provided her fraudulently obtained Social Security Number. As a result of these applications, **Sharif** received about \$44,000 in federally funded benefits.

In October 2009, **Sharif** submitted an application to adjust her immigration status to that of a lawful permanent resident. This application contained a false representation that **Sharif** lawfully entered the United States as a refugee and also contained the fraudulently obtained Social Security Number.

Sharif faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison for each count, a fine of up to \$250,000, and full restitution to the programs from where she illegally obtained the government benefits.

U.S. Attorney Delahanty attributed the success of the investigation to the cooperative investigative efforts of the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security – Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development and Agriculture, the U.S. Social Security Administration and Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

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