

PRESS RELEASE

Owner of Boston Pizzeria Chain Arrested on Forced Labor Charges

Thursday, March 16, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

Defendant allegedly physically abused and threatened employees for approximately 14 years

BOSTON – The owner of Stash's Pizza was arrested this morning on forced labor charges for allegedly employing a victim who lacked immigration status and forcing him to work for years while threatening him with deportation and subjecting him to repeated verbal and physical abuse.

Stavros Papantoniadis, a/k/a "Steve Papantoniadis," 47, of Westwood, was charged with one count of forced labor. Following an initial appearance in federal court in Boston this afternoon, Papantoniadis was detained pending a detention hearing set for March 20, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.

"Forced labor is a form of human trafficking. It is not a wage dispute. If someone is being compelled to work through the use of force, threats of force, or coercion, that is a federal crime. We allege that Mr. Papantoniadis compelled and threatened victims to work against their will using fear, violence and the threat of deportation," said United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins. "The allegations in this case are horrific. Nobody has the right to violently kick, slap, punch or choke anyone, and certainly not an employer to an employee. This case illustrates the manipulative, violent and abusive tactics some employers utilize for their own greed and financial gain. Labor trafficking is real and happening every day in Massachusetts and beyond. We are working hard to expose this disturbing crime and to hold those that abuse and traffic people accountable. We ask anyone with information about this or other alleged trafficking violations to contact our office."

"Stavros Papantoniadis is alleged to have underpaid, threatened, and physically assaulted his employees, creating a climate of fear," said Matthew B. Millhollin, Special

Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England. "Homeland Security Investigations is committed to investigating labor trafficking and bringing to justice those who use force, fraud, or coercion to force people to work."

"An important part of the mission of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of labor trafficking involving the use of coercion or force. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate these types of allegations," said Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Northeast Region.

According to court documents, Papantoniadis is the owner and operator of Stash's Pizza, a chain of pizzerias which has locations in Dorchester and Roslindale, and previously had pizzerias in Norwood, Norwell and Randolph (d/b/a Boston Pizza Company), Weymouth (d/b/a Pacini's Italian Eatery) and Wareham, Mass. Over the course of several years, Papantoniadis allegedly targeted victims who lacked immigration status, employed them at depressed wages and demanded that they work, in most cases, six to seven days per week, at times for far more than eight hours per day and often without breaks or overtime compensation. Papantoniadis also allegedly withheld wages.

It is further alleged that Papantoniadis routinely threatened to have employees deported from the United States and used violence and threats to scare victims and ensure that they complied with his excessive workplace demands.

According to the charging documents, Victim 1 worked at Stash's Pizza from 2001 to 2015. During his time there, it is alleged that Papantoniadis repeatedly made derogatory comments about Victim 1's religion and violently attacked Victim 1 several times. On one occasion when Victim 1 missed a day of work, Papantoniadis allegedly responded by pushing him to the floor and calling him a "f*cking Muslim." Another time, it is alleged that Papantoniadis kicked Victim 1 in the genital, causing Victim 1 to suffer severe pain. When Victim 1 sought medical treatment, Papantoniadis threatened to kill Victim 1 or report him to immigration authorities if he did not return to work. On another occasions, Papantoniadis allegedly slapped and choked Victim 1 and broke Victim 1's teeth, causing Victim 1 to have teeth removed and causing him to wear dentures. According to court documents, as a result of the threats and violence, Victim 1 feared Papantoniadis and kept working for him at Stash's Pizza.

Other former Stash's Pizza employees disclosed additional information about Papantoniadis' threats and violence. It is alleged that when one victim planned to quit, Papantoniadis told him that he was not going to leave and subsequently attacked the victim, forcing him to run to safety in the parking lot. When another victim intended to

quit, Papantoniadis allegedly made a false police report, falsely stating that the victim had hit his car and left the scene of the accident after leaving Stash's Pizza's Norwood location. As a result, the victim was pulled over and cited by police.

The charge of forced labor provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to 5 years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Members of the public who believe they be a victim of this case or have any relevant information related to this case please call 888-221-6023, Option 5 or send an email with contact information to USAMA.VictimAssistance@usdoj.gov.

U.S. Attorney Rollins, HSI SAC Millhollin and DOL-OIG SAC Mellone made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Timothy E. Moran, Chief of Rollins' Organized Crime & Gang Unit, and Brian A. Fogerty of Rollins' Civil Rights & Human Trafficking Unit are prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Updated March 16, 2023

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