

PRESS RELEASE

Foreign National Extradited to Face Charges of Immigration Fraud, Human Smuggling, and Money Laundering Conspiracy

Friday, August 4, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Virginia

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – An Israeli national made his initial appearance in federal court today for charges stemming from smuggling, harboring and employing illegal workers.

According to court documents, Shai Cohen, 39, allegedly organized, led, and worked with others to recruit and facilitate the illegal entry of Israeli citizens into the United States under false pretenses. Cohen and his co-conspirators allegedly assisted noncitizens in fraudulently obtaining B-1/B-2 tourist/visitor visas by misrepresenting the true purpose of their travel to the United States, which was illegal employment. Cohen and his co-conspirators are alleged to have then assisted the noncitizens with travel to the United States. Upon arrival, the noncitizens were employed at various kiosks owned and operated by Cohen in malls in Virginia and Maryland. The noncitizens who engaged in illegal employment were allegedly primarily compensated for their work by under-the-table cash payments or the transfer of money to stored value payment cards, rather than a legitimate payroll system. Cohen also allegedly provided housing and transportation for the noncitizens to and from work in the United States.

Cohen was arrested in Israel pursuant to a U.S. request for his extradition. In August 2023, he was extradited to the Eastern District of Virginia.

Cohen is charged with conspiracy to defraud and commit offenses against the United States, bringing aliens to the United States for financial gain, encouraging and inducing aliens to unlawfully come to enter and reside in the United States for financial gain, harboring illegal aliens, and money laundering conspiracy. If convicted, Cohen faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically

less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Jessica D. Aber, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Kenneth A. Polite, Jr., Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Troy W. Springer, Acting Special Agent in Charge, National Capital Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and Special Agent in Charge Derek W. Gordon of the Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations, Washington Field Office, made the announcement.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Raizza K. Ty and Trial Attorney Clayton O'Connor of the Justice Department's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section are prosecuting the case.

The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs worked with the government of Israel to secure the arrest and extradition of Cohen.

A copy of this press release is located on the website of the [U.S. Attorney's Office](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the [District Court](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 1:16-cr-114.

An indictment is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Contact

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