



NEWS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation
Los Angeles Field Office
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Van Nuys Man Sentenced to 30 Months in Federal Prison for Laundering Fraudulently Obtained Tax Refund Checks

LOS ANGELES – A Van Nuys man was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment for laundering over \$860,000 in funds that were the proceeds of a scheme to defraud the Internal Revenue Service.

Karen Aharonian, 37, formerly of Glendale, received the sentence late this afternoon from United States District Judge Dean D. Pregerson.

According to documents filed with the court, Aharonian pleaded guilty in July to count four of a seven-count indictment charging him with laundering the proceeds of a scheme to defraud the IRS through the submission of false and fraudulent tax returns. Specifically, Aharonian admitted to cashing 34 third-party checks on September 5, 2012 totaling \$184,330. All these checks were funded by fraudulently obtained income tax refunds that were direct deposited into bank accounts.

The 34 third-party checks cashed by Aharonian were signed, but otherwise blank when brought to the check cashing business. The check cashing business was owned by an unidentified husband and wife team who have also been charged with money laundering. The amounts the checks would be made payable for were provided to the check casher by Aharonian, in the form of post-it notes.

Aharonian admitted to laundering funds in the amount of \$860,695.76 between August 2010 and October 2012, a period of a little over two years. According to documents filed with the court, 'the amount is particularly large in light of the fact that defendant was incarcerated for over a year of that time frame.' In 2011, Aharonian was convicted of a conspiracy to commit racketeering and was

sentenced to 15 months federal custody. He was incarcerated on that charge from October 2010 to November 2011.

The investigation and prosecution of Aharonian was conducted by IRS Criminal Investigation, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the United States Secret Service.

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