



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Canadian Couple Sentenced to Federal Prison in ‘Secret Shopper’ Mass Marketing Scam that Bilked Victims Across United States**

*LOS ANGELES* – A Toronto couple who were extradited earlier this year to the United States have been sentenced for their roles in a mass marketing scheme that targeted hundreds of victims across the United States with counterfeit checks that accompanied bogus claims they had been selected to become “secret shoppers” at MoneyGram counters inside Walmart stores.

Idris Nuradin 35, was sentenced yesterday afternoon to 27 months in federal prison by United States District Judge Philip S. Gutierrez. In addition to the prison term, Judge Gutierrez ordered Nuradin to pay \$110,109 in restitution to 33 victims.

Nuradin’s wife, 34-year-old Habone Gayad, 34, yesterday received a “time served” sentence, which is approximately eight months in custody.

The couple and others mailed out hundreds of letters from Toronto to people across the United States that falsely stated they had been selected to act as secret shoppers at Walmart and MoneyGram, according to court documents. The letters included bogus checks that the victims were instructed to deposit to their own bank accounts. The victims were told to immediately wire most of the proceeds of the checks at MoneyGram counters located inside Walmart stores. The balance of the checks would serve as the payment for the secret shoppers.

However, the solicitations and the checks sent out by Nuradin and his wife were bogus. Since the checks were counterfeit – including checks supposedly issued by Warner Brothers and AEG Live – banks held victims responsible for funds that victims withdrew and wired to the scammers in Canada. In his plea agreement, Nuradin, who pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud, admitted that he targeted more than 500 victims and intended to cause losses of approximately \$1.9 million. The actual losses suffered by identified victims totaled \$110,109.

“This case demonstrates that criminals cannot hide in foreign countries and take advantage of Americans without repercussions,” said United States Attorney Eileen M.

Decker. "This cruel scheme had a devastating financial impact on many victims who never intended to participate in a crime."

"The defendants in this case were among an endless amount of criminals operating worldwide who target Americans with fraud schemes disguised as money-making opportunities," said Deirdre Fike, the Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office. "The FBI collaborates with domestic and international law enforcement partners to investigate criminals who exploit the vulnerabilities – and empty the bank accounts – of U.S. victims with convincing schemes."

Robert Wemyss, Inspector in Charge, U.S. Postal Inspection Service - Los Angeles Division, stated: "The U.S. Postal Inspection Service will continue to work with our partners in law enforcement to ensure that the U.S. Postal Service isn't used as a conduit to defrauding the American consumer. The protection of our citizens is at the cornerstone of our mission."

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Postal Inspection Service, Toronto Police Service in Canada and the Federal Trade Commission.

Nuradin and Gayad were indicted in 2010 and were extradited by Canada in April at the request of the United States Department of Justice.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Monica E. Tait of the Major Frauds Section.

The FBI has compiled a list of some of the most common scams, as well as tips to help prevent you from being victimized, which is available here:

<https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-fraud-schemes>