

The Arizona Republic

## Phoenix business owner gets 6 months in fraud case

by Kathleen Gormley

Jan. 13, 2010

An Anthem man who was arrested as part of an employer-sanctions investigation was sentenced to six months in jail.

Raphael Libardi, 48, a Brazilian official says is in the country illegally, had been indicted on charges of fraud, identity theft, forgery and auto theft after it was discovered that he was using the Social Security number of a man who died in December. It was the first time that a business owner had been charged after an employer-sanctions raid.

Libardi pleaded guilty in Maricopa County Superior Court in October to two felony counts of taking the identity of another. He was sentenced on Monday.

According to court documents, the Sheriff's Office received a tip in March that Libardi had fraudulent documents. Deputies raided Libardi's granite countertop business in south central Phoenix and his Anthem home on June 30.

Libardi was arrested in July after an investigation by the offices of the Sheriff and County Attorney.

The Legal Arizona Workers Act, which took effect on Jan. 1, 2008, was designed to help law enforcement target business owners who knowingly hire workers in the country illegally.

Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas noted in July that no actual employer-sanctions case could be made against Libardi for knowingly and willingly hiring illegal immigrants.