

# USCIS On Immigration Consultants Sentenced for Filing Bogus Asylum Applications

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LOS ANGELES – The efforts of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) helped lead to the successful sentencing of a San Gabriel immigration consulting business and one of his employees for participating in a long-running scheme to prepare and file fraudulent asylum applications that made phony claims of religious persecution on behalf of hundreds of Chinese nationals. Haoren Ma, 50, of San Gabriel, the owner of New Arrival Immigration Service, was sentenced April 28 to 4½ years in federal prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy, immigration document fraud and aggravated identity theft. Ma’s employee, Minghan \*\*\*\*, 49, of San Gabriel, was sentenced on Monday, May 5 to one year and one day in prison for conspiracy to commit immigration document fraud.

USCIS learned about activity in January 2009 when U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers intercepted a package containing a stuffed animal that contained five fraudulent Chinese passports. The package was being shipped to an address used as a mail drop by New Arrival Immigration Service. This package tipped the USCIS Los Angeles Asylum Office and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) to further investigate filings by the New Arrival Immigration Service. Officers from the L.A. Asylum Office worked with HSI agents to bring the case to prosecution.

Many of the asylum applications prepared by the defendants contained nearly identical accounts of purported persecution, including descriptions of underground church meetings that led to arrests and torture by Chinese authorities. As part of the scheme, Ma and \*\*\*\* provided their clients with detailed written materials and audio tapes on Christianity to help them prepare for their asylum interviews.

“We are very pleased with this outcome,” said David Radel, Acting L.A. Asylum Office Director with USCIS. “It is an excellent example of federal agencies working together to combat fraud and maintain the integrity of our immigration system. USCIS is committed to identifying those who may have illegally obtained asylum through this fraudulent scheme and providing this information to our investigative colleagues.”

Haoren Ma operated an immigration business, but was neither an attorney nor an accredited representative. USCIS encourages people who need help filing an application for immigration benefits to seek assistance from the right place and from people who are authorized to help. For ideas on how to find legal services and avoid scams, go to [www.uscis.gov/legaladvice](http://www.uscis.gov/legaladvice). Thanks to USCIS efforts, HSI investigators linked the defendants to more than 800 asylum applications filed since 2000, making it one of the largest asylum fraud cases uncovered in the Los Angeles area in recent years.