

THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

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Tuesday, September 16, 2008

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ATTORNEY SEARCH

Rita Mahdessian - #141901

Current Status: Active

This member is active and may practice law in California.

See below for more details.

Profile Information

Bar Number	141901		
Address	535 N Brand Blvd #270 Glendale, CA, 91203	Phone Number	(818) 242-7400
		Fax Number	(818) 242-0114
		e-mail	vartkes@lex.net
District	District 7	Undergraduate School	See Registration Card;
County	Los Angeles	Law School	See Registration Card;
Sections	None		

Status History

Effective Date	Status Change
<i>Present</i>	Active
2/12/2006	Active
11/12/2005	Not Eligible To Practice Law
9/14/1999	Active
10/1/1994	Not Eligible To Practice Law
11/20/1989	Admitted to The State Bar of California

[Explanation of member status](#)

Actions Affecting Eligibility to Practice Law

Effective Date	Description	Case Number	Resulting Status
Disciplinary and Related Actions			
11/12/2005	Discipline w/actual suspension	02-O-14394	Not Eligible To Practice Law
9/12/1996	Discipline w/actual suspension	94-C-13451	Not Eligible To Practice Law
10/1/1994	Interim suspension after conviction	94-C-13451	Not Eligible To Practice Law

Administrative Actions

This member has no public record of administrative actions.

Copies of official attorney discipline records are [available upon request](#).

[Explanation of common actions](#)

State Bar Court Cases

NOTE: The State Bar Court began posting public discipline [documents](#) online in 2005. The format and pagination of documents posted on this site may vary from the originals in the case file as a result of their translation from the original format into Word and PDF. Copies of additional related documents in a case are [available upon request](#). Only [Opinions](#) designated for publication in the State Bar Court Reporter may be cited or relied on as precedent in State Bar Court proceedings.

Effective Date	Case Number	Description
11/12/2005	02-O-14394	Stipulation [PDF]

California Bar Journal Discipline Summaries

Summaries from the California Bar Journal are based on discipline orders but are not the official records. Not all discipline actions have associated CBJ summaries. Copies of official attorney discipline records are [available upon request](#).

November 12, 2005

RITA MAHDESSIAN [#141901], 46, of Glendale was suspended for two years, stayed, placed on two years of probation with an actual three-month suspension and was ordered to take the MPRE and comply with rule 955. The order took effect Nov. 12, 2005.

Mahdessian stipulated to six counts of misconduct in two cases. According to the stipulation, she employed Rosa Urbina, a paralegal who, in 1997, set up and operated a business called Last Resource Attorney Services in Palmdale. In 2001, Mahdessian applied for and received a business license to provide legal services from an office next door to Last Resource. Her main office was in Glendale.

A client who wished to sue Los Angeles County met with Urbina and gave her a \$2,000 check payable to Mahdessian. Urbina wrote her name above Mahdessian's as payee and the check was deposited in Urbina's account.

After the client threatened to report Mahdessian to the State Bar, he went to her office and signed a complaint and a verification to the complaint. The verified complaint listed him "in pro per." Several months later, he was told by Urbina to substitute Mahdessian into the case, which he did. At a hearing on the matter the same day, Mahdessian asked for additional time, saying she had just been hired.

She later told the client she would seek a default against one of the defendants, but she never did.

Mahdessian stipulated that she aided in the unauthorized practice of law by abdicating control of her office to her staff, failed to perform legal services competently, keep her client informed of developments in his case and "employed . . . means inconsistent with the truth" by telling the

court she had just been hired.

In an immigration case, she did not return her clients' phone calls for several months and when they fired her, she said their documents, including their passports, were lost. The clients obtained a small claims judgment of \$390 against her.

She stipulated that she failed to secure client property or keep clients informed of developments in their case.

Mahdessian was disciplined in 1996 for committing an act of moral turpitude after she pleaded guilty in 1994 in federal court to one count of possessing a fraudulent identification document, a misdemeanor.

In mitigation, she cooperated with the bar's investigation.

September 12, 1996

RITA MAHDESSIAN [#141901], 35, of Glendale was suspended for three years, stayed, and placed on probation for three years, with an actual suspension of two years and until she has shown proof of her fitness to practice law, effective Sept. 12, 1996. She was ordered to pass the MPRE within the first two years of her actual suspension.

Mahdessian was found culpable of an act of moral turpitude, filing fraudulent amnesty applications and possession of a counterfeit employment authorization card.

In March 1994, Mahdessian pled guilty in federal court to one count of possessing a fraudulent identification document, a misdemeanor. She received three years probation and was fined \$10,000.

In September 1990, special agents from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began an investigation into certain individuals suspected of traveling to El Paso, Texas, to file fraudulent citizenship amnesty applications.

Before the investigation began in earnest, Mahdessian voluntarily appeared at the U.S. Attorney's office in El Paso, offered her assistance and admitted she had worked with several individuals who charged aliens to file phony amnesty applications. Mahdessian's role was to interview the applicants and inform them of the requirements.

At some point during the scheme, Mahdessian's cohorts determined that the immigration legalization office in El Paso was an easier office to obtain approval of the applications, so the claims were filed there.

Mahdessian cooperated with the investigation with the understanding that she could be charged with a crime or crimes. Her assistance led to several arrests in the amnesty application ring.

In aggravation, Mahdessian's misconduct significantly harmed clients, the public and the administration of justice.

In mitigation, she suffered from extreme emotional difficulties and has been diagnosed with a dependent personality disorder and depression. She displayed candor, cooperated with the bar's investigation and presented eight letters from attorneys, former employers, charitable groups, religious organizations and professional colleagues, all attesting to her good moral character and good standing in the community.

She also was cooperative with the INS investigation and flew from Los Angeles to El Paso on several occasions for extensive interviews. Three of her associates were later charged and convicted.

Through her cooperation, the government saved extensive investigatory costs and approximately 150 fraudulent amnesty applications were uncovered, enabling INS officials to "undo" the damage."

Without the assistance of Ms. Mahdessian," said Deputy U.S. Attorney Thomas C. Roepke, "the investigation could not have been successfully completed."

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*Cited in Kaparetyan v. Mukasey,
No. 05-75865 archived on September 16, 2008*