

Unregulated immigration advice earns Directors £17,000 fine

Directors from two law firms which generated £2.5 million in fees by providing unregulated immigration advice have been fined nearly £17,000 and ordered to pay over £28,000 in compensation.

Dan Romulus Dandes and Babbar Ali Jamil (Directors at DDR Legal Services LLP) and Ms Zia Bi (Director of Burlow & Spencer Ltd) were sentenced yesterday, (Tuesday 5 January 2021) at the Old Bailey where they were given the following sentences:

- Mr Dandes received a £20,000 compensation order and fined £750.
- Mr Jamil, who is currently believed to be out of the country was fined £10,000 in his absence.
- Ms Bi was given a fine of £6,000 and an £8,745 compensation order.

The trio were originally found guilty of providing unqualified immigration advice and/or services at the Old Bailey in April 2020 following a two-year investigation by the OISC which revealed fees in excess of £2.5m was generated.

Sentencing, Judge Munro said:

“The consequential loss and the impact on the complainants is far-reaching and in some cases devastating.”

Referring to the defendants the Judge stated:

“All of the defendants were of previous good character. The mitigation in all cases is a genuine lack of knowledge that the criminal behaviour was in fact criminal. Both Ms Bi and Mr Dandes now accept that they were negligent and innocent people suffered as a result.”

Among the complainants there were a number of consequences. One had to leave the UK permanently; another paid £7000 in expenses to contest a failed application; others had to travel to Shanghai or Bangkok to submit applications which were bound to be rejected; and a couple who travelled for work were unable to leave the UK for two years while their documentation was sorted out.

John Tuckett, Immigration Services Commissioner remarked:

“We are pleased with the Judge’s decision today to impose these fines on these individuals, who acted outside the law by providing immigration advice illegally and putting the lives of many vulnerable people at risk. As the Judge stated, these financial penalties will not be able to fully or properly compensate victims for the ‘severe consequences’ of the defendants’ actions, but we hope it will emphasise the importance of using a regulated immigration advisers”.

Mr Dandes began the supervision scheme for DDR Legal Services LLP, (a UK registered company) claiming qualification as an EU registered lawyer.

This meant law firms could circumvent regulation by the OISC or any other appropriate regulatory body as they were under Mr Dandes' supervision.

However, Mr Dandes did not have the necessary UK qualifications to act in a supervisory role, so he was unqualified to supervise, and any advice given by an individual or firm under this scheme was unregulated and illegal.

Burrow and Spencer Ltd, one of the law firms he allegedly supervised, were investigated after an unprecedented 95 complaints were received about the quality of its immigration advice.

Burrow and Spencer Ltd subsequently ceased trading in 2019.

Notes to the Editor

1. The OISC is an independent public body, established under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to regulate the provision of immigration advice and services in the UK.
2. The legislation regarding qualification and supervision is provided by section 84 Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
3. For media enquiries, please contact Cornelius Alexander, Corporate Communications Business Partner at the OISC on 0207 211 1617 or communications@oisc.gov.uk.