



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

United States Attorney Ronald C. Gathe, Jr.
Middle District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, August 4, 2022
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**FORMER SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR SENTENCED TO
24 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR MAIL FRAUD AND
MONEY LAUNDERING AFTER LIVING AS A FUGITIVE
IN IRAN AND TURKEY FOR MORE THAN A DECADE**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney Ronald C. Gathe, Jr. announced that U.S. District Judge John W. deGravelles sentenced Parviz Sharifrazi, age 70, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to 24 months in federal prison following his convictions for mail fraud and money laundering. The Court further sentenced Sharifrazi to serve one year of supervised release following his term of imprisonment.

Today’s sentencing resulted from a federal criminal investigation that began years ago. In 2008 and 2009, Sharifrazi was working as an associate professor at Southern University (“Southern”) and trying to raise money for an unrelated business venture in Iran. Beginning in 2008, he and a co-defendant, who was working as the Information Technologies (IT) Director at Southern’s College of Engineering, conceived a scheme to defraud Southern by submitting fraudulent equipment quotes in the names of fictitious vendors and causing Southern to approve the quotes, while concealing their involvement in the scheme.

In furtherance of the scheme, Sharifrazi’s co-defendant would create fraudulent computer equipment purchase requests, generate fraudulent quotes for the equipment in the name of shell companies that he and Sharifrazi had created, and then submit the fraudulent quotes to Southern’s purchasing department and cause them to be approved. Meanwhile, Sharifrazi caused other individuals to register for mail forwarding services at private mail facilities in Las Vegas, Nevada, Beaverton, Oregon, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Sharifrazi used these mailboxes to deceive Southern. Through their use of shell companies, out-of-state mailing addresses, and other means, Sharifrazi and his co-defendant were able to conceal the fraudulent nature of the purchase requests and the quotes and hide the fact that they were profiting from the scheme.

Between April and November 2008, Sharifrazi and his co-defendant caused Southern to issue 14 checks totaling more than \$150,000 to their shell companies and to mail the checks to the out-of-state mailboxes that they had opened. Then, as the defendants gained control of the funds, Sharifrazi would conduct additional monetary transactions and launder the proceeds of the scheme by, for instance, transferring proceeds from the scheme into another bank account that he and a family member in the name of a Denham Springs restaurant.

Sharifrazi was indicted in 2011. By this time, he had left Southern and was living in Iran. After being contacted by federal law enforcement agents, and knowing that the court had issued a warrant for his arrest, the defendant was a fugitive for more than a decade, living in Iran for many years and then moving to Turkey. In mid-2021, the defendant met with agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Turkey and agreed to return to the United States to accept responsibility for his crimes. Earlier this year, Sharifrazi pled guilty to mail fraud and money laundering and admitted his involvement in the fraudulent scheme described above.

Sharifrazi's co-defendant pled guilty in 2010 and has fully served his sentence, which included both a term of imprisonment and an order to pay restitution to Southern University.

U.S. Attorney Gathe stated, "This prosecution demonstrates that neither time nor distance shall deter the federal government and our partners from obtaining justice. I want to thank our prosecutors and the federal and state law enforcement agencies who made this result possible."

"This sentencing demonstrates the steadfast work of the FBI and our partners in bringing to justice individuals like former Southern University Professor Parviz Sharifraz, who engaged in fraudulent schemes that grossly impacted Southern University," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Douglas A. Williams, Jr. "We thank our partners from the U.S. Attorney's Office Middle District of Louisiana, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, the Louisiana Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Inspector General for their collaborative efforts to identify, investigate, and bring to justice criminals who seek to harm American universities through fraud and deceit."

"Today's sentencing exemplifies the patience and long arm of the law in its pursuit of financial fraud and money laundering violations," said James E. Dorsey, Special Agent in Charge of IRS-CI's Atlanta Field Office. "Mr. Parviz Shafrazi perpetuated an elaborate scheme driven by his insatiable greed and a blatant disregard for the tremendous damage inflicted on Southern University and its students. Be assured that IRS Criminal Investigation, together with our federal partners, will hold those who engage in similar behavior fully accountable."

Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street commented, "Justice for Mr. Sharifrazi has been delayed for well over a decade because of his deliberate choice to remain out of the country rather than face the music for his crimes. Today's sentencing at last brings closure and consequences for a carefully devised criminal scheme to defraud the institution of higher learning at which Mr. Sharifrazi was employed. It also hopefully sends the message that the wheels of justice may sometimes turn slowly, but they do indeed turn. No matter how long it may take, the Louisiana OIG will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to relentlessly pursue public corruption in all of its forms." Street added, "I want to commend United States Attorney

Ron Gathe and his staff, as well as our partners at the FBI, IRS, and Department of Education OIG for another successful outcome.”

This matter was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, the Louisiana Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Inspector General, with critical assistance from the U.S. Marshal’s Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Alan A. Stevens, who also serves as Senior Litigation Counsel for the United States Attorney’s Office.

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