

BEFORE THE HEARING BOARD
OF THE
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY REGISTRATION
AND
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

SAMI ZIAD AZHARI,

Attorney-Respondent,

No. 6294661.

Comm. No. 2023PR00007

ANSWER

NOW COMES Respondent, Sami Z. Azhari, by and through his attorney, James A. Doppke, Jr., Robinson, Stewart, Montgomery & Doppke, LLC, and for his answer to the Administrator's Complaint in this matter, states as follows:

(Alleged Inappropriate Sexual Relationship with Client)

1. In August 2014, and at all times alleged in this complaint, Respondent practiced law with his law firm known as Azhari, LLC. His practice concentrated in the representation of individuals who had been accused of criminal conduct.

ANSWER: Admitted.

2. In May 2014, the State's Attorney of DuPage County charged Lisa M. Fasano with the misdemeanor criminal offense of telephone harassment. This matter was docketed by the clerk of the circuit court as *People v. Fasano*, DuPage County case number 14 CM 1406.

ANSWER: Admitted.

3. Attorney Lewis Gainor and Ms. Fasano agreed that Mr. Gainor would represent her in matters relating to the defense of the pending criminal case in DuPage County. Ms. Fasano paid Mr. Gainor a fee of \$4,000.

ANSWER: Admitted upon information and belief.

4. On or prior to August 10, 2014, Respondent and Ms. Fasano agreed that Respondent would represent her in the criminal case. On August 12, 2014, Mr. Gainor filed a motion to withdraw and for substitution of attorneys. On August 18, 2014, a substitution of attorney was filed in Ms. Fasano's criminal case providing that Respondent would substitute as her attorney in place of Mr. Gainor. At the time that Respondent substituted as Ms. Fasano's counsel, he did not have an ongoing sexual relationship with her.

ANSWER: Admitted. Further answering, Respondent states that his substitution as Ms. Fasano's attorney occurred due to Mr. Gainor's closure of his law practice and relocation out of state.

5. In October or November 2014, Respondent began having sexual relations with Ms. Fasano, while he was still representing her in case number 14 CM 1406.

ANSWER: Admitted.

6. Between August 2014 and April 27, 2015, Respondent represented Ms. Fasano in case number 14 CM 1406. On April 27, 2015, following a bench trial, the Court found Ms. Fasano guilty of the Class B Misdemeanor of telephone harassment – lewd comment and sentenced her to eighteen months of court supervision.

ANSWER: Admitted.

7. By reason of the conduct described above, Respondent has engaged in the following misconduct:

- a. engaging in a sexual relationship with his client, Lisa Fasano, after the client-lawyer relationship commenced, in violation of Rule 1.8(j) of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct (2010).

ANSWER: The allegations contained in paragraph 7 constitute legal conclusions, and therefore, no answer is required.

RESPONDENT'S DISCLOSURE PURSUANT TO COMMISSION RULE 231

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in the State of Illinois on December 18, 2007.

2. Respondent was admitted to practice law in the State of California on April 16, 2009.

3. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois on May 6, 2009.

4. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois on July 15, 2016.

5. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court, Northern District of Indiana on December 3, 2013.

6. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Central District of California on June 2, 2010.

7. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California on June 1, 2010.

8. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Southern District of California on June 2, 2010.

9. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Northern District of California on June 18, 2010.

10. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States District Court Eastern District of Michigan on July 7, 2021.

11. Respondent was admitted to practice law before the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit on March 23, 2012.

12. Respondent holds no other professional licenses other than his license to practice law.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ James A. Doppke, Jr.

BY: James A. Doppke, Jr.

Counsel for Respondent

James A. Doppke, Jr.
Robinson, Stewart, Montgomery, & Doppke LLC
33 North Dearborn Street, Suite 1420
Chicago, IL 60602
(312) 676-9878
jdoppke@rsmdlaw.com

