

PRESS RELEASE

# Wiley Rein Secures Victory for Pro Bono Client in Human Trafficking Case

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## Press Contact

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*Washington, DC*—Wiley Rein secured an important victory on behalf of a pro bono client in a case involving a severe form of human trafficking. The matter includes immigration proceedings—in which visa petitions were granted this week to the client and his family—as well as a civil suit against the traffickers. Wiley Rein associate Umair Javed serves as counsel for the plaintiff. The team also includes Pro Bono Partner Theodore A. Howard and associate Madeleine Lottenbach.

The case was referred to the firm by The Human Trafficking Pro Bono Legal Center. As demonstrated in various filings, the firm's client was trafficked by a foreign diplomat and his wife from his native country to the United States in 2014 for involuntary servitude and forced labor as a domestic servant. The filings show how his traffickers carried out their scheme through psychological coercion and manipulation as well as physical intimidation and abuse—including by threatening his life and the lives of his wife and children, who still reside in his native country.

Wiley Rein assisted the client in his cooperation with law enforcement investigations of his case, which involved the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of State. The firm also secured Continued Presence status for the client, which enabled him to remain in the United States while the investigations were ongoing.

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## Practice Areas

Litigation

In addition, the firm successfully petitioned on the client's behalf for T Nonimmigrant Status under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act and obtained derivative T Nonimmigrant Classification for the client's wife and two young children. T Nonimmigrant Status, designated for victims of human trafficking who are willing to assist with the related investigations, is valid for four years—and after three years, a visa holder may be eligible to apply for permanent residence. The visa petitions demonstrated the significant and ongoing threat of retribution and harm to the client and his family, particularly if he was removed from the United States.

The petitions were granted on September 21—an important development that will reunite the client with his family safely in the United States for the first time since he was trafficked.

Wiley Rein also filed a civil complaint on behalf of the client against his traffickers under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) and federal labor laws, as well as for breach of contract and at common law. The suit, filed in March 2016 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, seeks to recover the client's promised wages, lawful minimum and overtime wages, the fair and reasonable value of his work, other compensatory damages, punitive damages, and attorneys' fees. The civil case is ongoing, but the named defendants have since left the United States. It is not uncommon for diplomats to use claims of immunity to avoid criminal investigations and sidestep civil lawsuits alleging trafficking and forced labor.