

# DFEH News Brief

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## STATE ORDERS FRESNO FABRICATION BUSINESS TO PAY \$85,636 FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT VIOLATION

**Elk Grove, CA** – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) announced today that Artifer U.S.A., Inc., a Fresno wrought iron fabrication business, and corporate president Ramez Suliman have been ordered to pay \$85,636 in damages in a workplace sexual harassment case prosecuted by the DFEH before the Fair Employment and Housing Commission (Commission).

After the hearing, the Commission, in a precedential decision, found that Artifer and Suliman had subjected office manager Brooke Anderson to physical, visual and verbal sexual harassment, violating the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA).

Shortly after being hired, Suliman began making provocative and sexually explicit remarks to Anderson, despite her repeated requests that he stop. Suliman constantly and inappropriately harassed Anderson including: made insinuations about her sex life with her husband; spoke at work about several other women in a derogatory and offensive manner; used volatile language and sexist expletives in the workplace; as well as frequently appeared uninvited to Anderson's house. Suliman's actions caused Anderson to be fearful of him; and after enduring his harassment for several months, she could not return to work at Artifer.

"Sexual harassment is unlawful under California law," said DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng. "The severe and pervasive conduct here created a hostile working environment that cannot be tolerated. The Department will enforce the law to ensure that California workplaces are free of such discrimination and harassment."

The Commission found that Suliman subjected Anderson to unwelcome sexual conduct that made her work environment hostile, abusive and offensive, depriving her of a discrimination free workplace. Finding the employer liable for sexual harassment, the Commission ordered \$10,636 in back pay plus \$50,000 to compensate Anderson for her emotional suffering. The Commission also ordered Artifer and Suliman to pay a \$25,000 administrative fine to the state's General Fund; develop a formal written policy against sexual harassment and violence based on sex; post a statement of employees' rights and remedies under the FEHA; and undergo and provide training on prevention of sexual harassment.

The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in

employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit the Department's Web site at [www.dfeh.ca.gov](http://www.dfeh.ca.gov).