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PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISOR SUES NORWEGIAN OIL COMPANY OVER FALSE REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT ITS COMMITMENT TO RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

On August 17, 2010, Mitra N. Forouhar, filed a lawsuit against Statoil, ASA, a multi-national oil company which is partially owned by the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. Ms. Forouhar alleges that the company misled her about the nature of her position as a Human Rights advisor, which led her to move to Norway and forgo a lucrative job offer in San Francisco. The lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California: *Mitra N. Forouhar v. Statoil ASA*, No. CV 10-3623-DMR.

Ms. Forouhar, an attorney with extensive expertise in the area of corporate responsibility and respect for human rights, alleges that she was hired by Statoil mainly for “public relations” purposes, despite the company’s promises to the contrary. After working for the company for over a year, she realized that the company’s commitment to human rights was lacking. For example, despite the fact that she was supposed to be responsible for human rights policies in Statoil’s overseas operations, she was only allowed to make two trips to Statoil’s foreign facilities. By contrast, external relations consumed a significant part of her time.

Prior to her employment, Ms. Forouhar was informed that Helge Lund, the company’s Chief Executive Officer, had met with UN Special Representative John Ruggie, and subsequently had mandated that a commitment respecting human rights be integrated into Statoil’s business practices. Statoil, which has publicly touted its commitment to human rights, is a member of the Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights (“BLIHR”) and the United Nations Global Compact, and provides financial support to Amnesty Norway. In addition, Ms. Forouhar was told, and the company has publicly claimed, that Statoil was committed to implementing the Human Rights Risk Assessment (“HRRR”), a method for conducting human rights due diligence that has been proposed and endorsed by John Ruggie. The HRRR was designed to diminish and prevent human rights risks in connection with the company’s activities and operations. However, in her lawsuit, Ms. Forouhar alleges that “despite having been promised that the company was committed to the HRRR, Ms. Forouhar encountered tremendous resistance to her efforts to implement the HRRR.”

“Corporate commitment to respecting human rights requires more than just words” stated attorney Paul Hoffman. In her lawsuit, Ms. Forouhar contends that when she attempted to implement meaningful human rights practices, she was mistreated by her immediate boss and rebuffed by the company’s senior leadership.

Ms. Forouhar is being represented by attorneys Paul Hoffman and Michael D. Seplow of Schonbrun DeSimone Seplow Harris & Hoffman in Venice, CA.

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