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# Hughes Hubbard & Reed

## Firm Helps Abused Wife Win Spousal, Child Support Battle

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Hughes Hubbard helped the mother of two adolescent daughters obtain sorely needed child and spousal support from her abusive husband of 16 years.

The client has been the sole caregiver for their children since she obtained an order of protection from her husband in November 2013. Because her immigration status and medical conditions preclude her from working, she did not have the means to cover living expenses for her and the children. Her husband was an employee of an international organization (IO) for 20-plus years, with a six-figure salary and a pension.

Upon referral from Her Justice in March 2014, Hughes Hubbard helped the client obtain initial orders of temporary support in December. In April 2015, Hughes Hubbard initiated a divorce action and moved to increase that support and to compel her husband to pay the utility bills. In June, the Court ordered her husband to pay \$3,500 per month in support and to pay the past-due utility bills to avoid service shutoff to the home.

Her husband refused to pay and filed a motion in July to vacate the support orders, alleging that the IO fired him due to HHughes Hubbard's requests to the IO for assistance and information. He revealed that he intended to return to Jamaica as his visa would expire on Aug. 24. The client had long feared he would apply for early retirement, cash out his pension and take all the money to Jamaica.

At the hearing on the motion on Aug. 6, 2015, the parties reached a so-ordered agreement to place any and all severance or pension funds in escrow until the action concluded. Her husband executed a written authorization to the IO directing them to make all payments to his attorney in escrow.

Enforcement of the order was unsuccessful. The IO informed Hughes Hubbard it could not make payments to a third party notwithstanding her husband's written authorization. Additionally, it had already begun processing the pension benefits and paid him his \$26,000 severance in full in July. The client's husband had lied to the Court and Hughes Hubbard that he had not received any severance payments.

Hughes Hubbard filed an order to show cause and a temporary restraining order to freeze her husband's bank accounts. On Aug. 12, the Court granted the extraordinary relief, preventing him from dissipating or absconding to Jamaica with the funds.

At the next hearing on Aug. 14, her husband appeared. After difficult negotiations, the parties entered into a so-ordered agreement placing in escrow the remaining \$22,000 in severance funds that her husband had not already spent and transferring \$12,000 from escrow to the client for support arrears and living expenses. Lastly, Hughes Hubbard secured the IO's agreement to freeze the pension until the divorce proceeding's resolution.

Mei Li Zhen, previously supervised by Alex Patchen and currently by Jason Zakai, handled the case, with key assistance from Ashley Hodges. Now that the client has some funds for her and her children, Hughes Hubbard hopes to help her get a divorce, an equitable share of the marital estate and custody of her children.

## **Related People**



**Ashley R. Hodges**