

Daily Journal

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Top Labor & Employment Lawyers 2020

J. Mira Hashmall

Hashmall, a certified appellate law specialist, is a Miller Barondess partner who represents employers in all phases of litigation, from counseling to appeals.

Like many lawyers, in mid-June she was still working from home as the coronavirus pandemic kept firms shuttered. “I never thought I’d miss the office so much,” she said. Miller Barondess was planning a soft opening July 1, but is leaving it up to individuals to make their own decisions about coming back to its Century City offices. “Until there’s a vaccine, it’s going to be difficult,” Hashmall said.

Meanwhile, she represents the County of Los Angeles in its struggle with Sheriff Alex Villanueva over his efforts to reinstate former Deputy Sheriff Caren Carl Mandoyan, who was fired in 2016 after he was accused of domestic abuse and stalking. A fellow deputy alleged Mandoyan physically assaulted her, tried to break into her home, sent her harassing text messages and then lied about it.

“It’s a high-profile case with a lot of attention in the media,” Hashmall said. “For reasons no one fully understands, the sheriff wants to bring this guy back. The Board of Supervisors has tried to work with Sheriff Villanueva in a collaborative way, but he has pushed back and there’s a lot of concern about accountability.”

Mandoyan was a prominent volunteer on Villanueva’s campaign for sheriff. Last year

Hashmall obtained an injunction overturning Villanueva’s rehiring of Mandoyan. *County of Los Angeles v. Villanueva*, 19STCP00630 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed May 4, 2019).

In October 2019, U.S. District Judge John F. Walter of Los Angeles dismissed a civil rights suit Mandoyan filed alleging retaliation for his political associations. Hashmall defended that suit. *Mandoyan v. County of Los Angeles*, 2:19-cv-02537 (C.D. Cal., filed March 4, 2019).

“Mr. Mandoyan has brought another suit in state court, and our demurrer in that one is pending,” Hashmall said. “People are scratching their heads. It’s perplexing why the sheriff is putting so much effort into a guy who was fired for pretty serious stuff.”

In a separate matter, Hashmall is lead counsel for the County of Los Angeles in two federal class actions alleging it violated the federal Fair Labor Standards Act by failing to include certain payments in its overtime calculations. The plaintiffs conditionally certified a class that included more than 70,000 county employees. Hashmall successfully consolidated the suits, narrowed the scope of the claims, cut the class size to 7,000 and resolved the case for \$2.3 million—instead of the \$60 million to \$100 million the plaintiffs sought. *Ferguson v. County of Los Angeles*, 2:18-cv-06861 (C.D. Cal., filed Aug. 9, 2018).

“It was an exercise in effectively managing a [Fair Labor Standards Act] case. They never were able to balloon the size of the



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class as they wished. In cases like this, the result counts as a win,” Hashmall said.

— John Roemer