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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Sex Trafficking Ring Shut Down



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution is charging two defendants with multiple counts of human trafficking. An investigation by Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office revealed a human smuggling and trafficking operation running in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties by Amet Maqueira De La Cal and Rosalia Leonard Garcia. Maqueira De La Cal smuggled in eight women into the United States, forcing the victims into sex trafficking to repay a huge debt under threat of violence.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "These horrific acts of sex trafficking are among the most depraved crimes we have seen in a long time and highlight how criminals are taking advantage of Biden's open border to advance their illicit trade. I applaud the swift, courageous actions of Sheriff Chronister's deputies and ensure my Statewide Prosecutors will hold the traffickers accountable in court for what they did to these eight women."

According to the investigation, Maqueira De La Cal smuggled each of the eight victims into the country. The investigation uncovered that Maqueira De La Cal, through threats of violence, then forced the women into sex trafficking and working in adult entertainment clubs to pay off the debts incurred through the transport into the U.S. The traffickers told the victims they owed $60,000 each, withheld the women's IDs and other documents, and forced the victims to live in close quarters under the traffickers' control. One of the victims made a call to a human trafficking helpline, which notified authorities of the operation.

Maqueira De La Cal and Leonard Garcia are both charged with 47 counts each—including human trafficking charges. The women rescued through this operation are receiving counseling and other resources.

Attorney General Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the case.

Anyone who knows what to look for can help stop human trafficking. To learn the signs and how to report suspicious activity, visit YouCanStopHT.com.