



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Cebu City court sentences online trafficker to 16 years in prison

CEBU CITY – A 56-year-old woman pleaded guilty yesterday to trafficking her own daughter into online sexual exploitation in 2017.

Around 4 p.m. yesterday, Judge Ramon Daomilas Jr. of the Cebu City Regional Trial Court Branch 11 sentenced the trafficker to 15 years imprisonment after she pleaded guilty to the lower offence of Attempted Trafficking in Persons.

He sentenced her to an additional year in prison after she owned up to the crime of Attempt to Commit Child Trafficking, and another two months for Possession of Child Pornography. Judge Daomilas also ordered her to pay P1.1 million (almost A\$30,000) in combined fines and damages.

She was originally charged with Qualified Trafficking in Persons, which bears the penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of not less than P2 million (A\$53,000) and not more than P5 million (A\$130,000).

Police arrested the trafficker during an operation in Barangay Opao, Mandaue City on 27 May 2017. She was caught in the act of offering to sexually exploit her 15-year-old daughter in exchange for money from a foreign online predator. The teen victim was rescued and is now recovering at an aftercare shelter.

The operation, led by the Regional Anti-Cybercrime Office 7 of the Philippine National Police, was a result of a case referral from the Queensland Police Service, Australian Federal Police which earlier arrested a man for crimes related to online child exploitation, including possession of child sexual abuse materials.

Stephen James Sheriff, who was found to have solicited child exploitation material online, had been sending money through wire transfer services to the Filipina trafficker in exchange for sexually explicit materials showing her teenage daughter. According to prosecution evidence, the trafficker had allegedly exploited her daughter online for several years.

Mandaue City Vice Mayor Carlo Fortuna hailed yesterday's conviction and praised those who helped secure justice for the victim.

"I commend the concerted efforts of our law enforcers, the prosecutors and the International Justice Mission in ensuring the conviction of the accused for child trafficking. There can be no justice without a conviction. So, to all those who continue to exploit our children, be warned that your crime will never pay," he said.

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