



Department of Justice

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Northern District of California

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HUSBAND-WIFE TEAM CHARGED WITH SEX TRAFFICKING OF TEENAGERS

Husband arraigned today; Wife to Appear December 8

OAKLAND, Calif. – A federal grand jury in the Northern District of California indicted Mahendar “Mike” Singh and Helen Jean Singh (née Kearney), formerly of Sacramento, Calif., of conspiring to violate the federal sex trafficking law, United States Attorney Melinda Haag announced. Filed on Dec. 1, 2011, the indictment alleges that the couple conspired to traffic teenage females to provide sex acts to customers in exchange for money and other things of value.

Mahendar Singh was arraigned today and pleaded not guilty before United States Magistrate Judge Laurel Beeler in Oakland. Helen Jean Singh is scheduled to be arraigned on December 8. According to the indictment, Mahendar Singh, 40, and Helen Jean Singh, 22, recruited teenage females by promising money, drugs, and a “family-like environment,” maintained control over them by providing drugs, using physical force and threats of physical force, and fostering a climate of fear, and used the Internet to advertise their prostitution enterprise, which spanned from Sacramento County to multiple Bay Area counties.

An affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint filed in the same matter indicated that the couple was arrested on Aug. 20, 2011, after the South San Francisco Police Department responded to a motel near San Francisco Airport and found Mahendar Singh with a 19-year old

and two 16-year olds. The affidavit alleges that the defendants used an Internet website to advertise their victims and employed cell phones and text-messaging to make arrangements with customers.

Mahendar Singh is presently being held in federal custody and is scheduled to next appear on Jan. 11, 2012, before United States District Judge Phyllis J. Hamilton in Oakland. Helen Jean Singh was previously released on bond. Her next hearing will be set at her arraignment, which is scheduled to take place on December 8.

The maximum statutory penalty for conspiring to commit sex trafficking, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1594(c), is lifetime imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000, forfeiture, and restitution. However, any sentence following conviction would be imposed by the court after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal statute governing the imposition of a sentence, 18 U.S.C. § 3553.

Andrew S. Huang is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who is prosecuting the case with the assistance of legal assistant Jeanne Carstensen. The prosecution is the result of a joint investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the assistance of the South San Francisco Police Department and the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office.

Anyone who suspects instances of human trafficking are encouraged to call HSI, FBI, or the Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-3737-888. Anonymous calls are welcome.

Please note, an indictment contains only allegations against an individual and, as with all defendants, Mahendar Singh and Helen Jean Singh must be presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Further Information:

Case #: CR 11-00883 PJH

A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at www.usdoj.gov/usao/can.

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at www.cand.uscourts.gov.

All press inquiries to the U.S. Attorney's Office should be directed to Jack Gillund at (415) 436-6599 or by e-mail at Jack.Gillund@usdoj.gov.