



Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Melinda Haag
Northern District of California**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 29, 2012
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/CAN

CONTACT: JACK GILLUND
(415) 436-6599
Jack.Gillund@usdoj.gov

SEX TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO NINE YEARS IN PRISON

OAKLAND, Calif. – Helen Jean Singh (née Kearney) was sentenced yesterday to nine years in prison for conspiracy to commit sex trafficking, United States Attorney Melinda Haag announced.

Singh, 22, pleaded guilty earlier this year pursuant to a plea agreement and, during yesterday's sentencing, accepted responsibility for participating in a sex trafficking conspiracy involving the prostitution of teenage females. A federal grand jury indicted Singh and her husband, Mahendar "Mike" Singh, on the sex trafficking conspiracy charge on Dec. 1, 2011. According to the Indictment, Mahendar Singh and Helen Singh, both formerly of Sacramento, Calif., recruited teenage girls by promising money, drugs and a "family-like environment." They maintained control over their victims by providing drugs, using physical force and threats of physical force and fostering a climate of fear. The couple used the Internet to advertise their prostitution enterprise, which spanned from Sacramento County to multiple Bay Area counties.

An affidavit in support of the criminal complaint filed in the same matter indicates 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 three teenage girls, including 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.

"Few crimes strike at our community the way sex trafficking does," U.S. Attorney Haag said. "By sexually exploiting children and young adults for financial gain, sex traffickers have shown that greed has no bounds. My office will continue to lead efforts by law enforcement to fight the menace that is sex trafficking."

"The FBI will continue to work with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to relentlessly pursue and bring to justice sex traffickers who exploit and victimize juveniles," said Acting Special Agent in Charge Michael Gavin of FBI San Francisco. "We will

also work with our community partners to help those who are victimized get the assistance they need.”

“While no prison sentence can ever compensate for the physical and emotional toll experienced by trafficking victims, this lengthy prison term should serve as a sobering warning about the consequences facing those who engage in this reprehensible practice,” said Clark Settles, special agent in charge ICE Homeland Security Investigations San Francisco. “Human traffickers prey on the powerless and the vulnerable. ICE Homeland Security Investigations and its federal law enforcement partners are committed to protecting those who cannot protect themselves.”

The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Court Judge Phyllis J. Hamilton. Judge Hamilton also sentenced Helen Singh, who was and will remain in custody, to a five-year period of supervised release following her prison term and ordered her to forfeit property and make restitution of \$45,000 to one of the victims. Mahendar Singh, who pleaded guilty on Jan. 18, 2012, received the same sentence on April 18, 2012.

Andrew S. Huang is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who prosecuted the case with the assistance of legal assistant Vanessa Vargas. The prosecution is the result of a joint investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) after an initial investigation and referral by the South San Francisco Police Department. The San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office; the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit of the Criminal Section, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice; and the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice provided assistance.

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

Further Information:

Case #: CR 11-0883 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.