

Title: Stonehill et al. vs. Diokno et al.

Facts:

The case involves a set of 42 search warrants issued by various judges, referred to as respondent-judges, against Harry S. Stonehill, Robert P. Brooks, John J. Brooks, Karl Beck, and the corporations they represented. These warrants were sought by respondent-prosecutors and were intended to search the petitioners and their premises to seize items believed to be relating to offenses like violations of Central Bank Laws, Tariff and Customs Laws, Internal Revenue Code, and Revised Penal Code.

The petitioners challenged the validity of these search warrants, asserting they were void for being vague and overly broad, not complying with constitutional specificity requirements, and inappropriately used for fishing evidence in deportation cases against them. Respondent-prosecutors contended that the search warrants were valid, any defects were cured by consent, and illegally seized items were still admissible.

The Supreme Court initially issued a writ of preliminary injunction against the use of the seized items. They partially lifted it for corporate papers but maintained it for items seized from the petitioners' residences.

Issues:

1. Whether the search warrants constituted "general warrants" violating the particularity requirement of the Constitution.
2. Whether the seizures executed under these warrants infringed upon the rights of the petitioners.
3. The admissibility of evidence obtained through the execution of these search warrants.

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Concepcion, found the search warrants unconstitutional and void for lacking specificity and being overly broad. It held that a search warrant must pertain to specific offenses with evidence establishing probable cause. By being broad and not specifying offenses accurately, the warrants went against the constitutional mandate, amounting to fishing expeditions, which are unacceptable.

Regarding the admissibility of seized documents, the Court abandoned the non-exclusionary rule established in *Moncado vs. People's Court*, accepting the exclusionary principle applicable in the U.S. to enforce constitutional rights against unreasonable searches and seizures, holding that unlawfully obtained evidence is inadmissible.

Doctrine:

The Supreme Court established important doctrines:

1. A search warrant must be specific and tied to one particular offense.
2. The legality of a seizure can be contested only by the party whose rights have been impaired by said seizure.
3. Evidence obtained as a result of unconstitutional searches and seizures is inadmissible, aligning with the exclusionary rule.

Class Notes:

1. A party can only challenge a search and seizure if their legal rights were violated.
2. Particularity in search warrants: Specific offense and detailed description of the items to be seized.
3. Exclusionary Rule: Evidence gathered from unconstitutional searches or seizures is inadmissible in court.

Historical Background:

The case occurred against the backdrop of heightened political tension and economic scrutiny under President Diosdado Macapagal's administration. The case addressed the broader issue of government overreach and the sanctity of individual rights against state intrusion. The decision reasserted constitutional protections and signaled the judiciary's commitment to due process even in the face of intense pressure to curtail illegal activities and enforce national security.