

****Title:**** *People of the Philippines vs. Jerrie Arraz y Rodriguez*

****Facts:****

Jerrie Arraz y Rodriguez was accused of trafficking in persons, rape, and violation of the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 against “AAA252353” across six separate Informations from March to June 2014 in Quezon City. The victim, from a economically challenged family in Surigao Del Sur, was brought to Manila under the pretense of employment but was instead exploited for sexual acts, including live broadcasts of these acts over the internet. The ordeal included multiple instances of sexual assault and exploitation, orchestrated by Arraz for monetary gain from foreign clients.

****Procedural Posture:****

The cases were consolidated, and Arraz pled not guilty. Following a trial at the Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Quezon City, he was found guilty beyond reasonable doubt of all charges. The Court of Appeals (CA) later affirmed this conviction with modifications pertaining to the amount of civil indemnity and damages. Arraz then appealed to the Philippine Supreme Court, contending the credibility of “AAA252353” and the legality of his arrest among other issues.

****Issues:****

1. Whether the testimony of “AAA252353” was credible and sufficient to support the conviction of Arraz for trafficking in persons, rape, and violation of the Cybercrime Prevention Act.
2. Whether the arrest of Arraz was lawful and valid, particularly arguing against the claim of entrapment.
3. Appropriateness of the awarded damages and penalties in light of the affirmed crimes.

****Court’s Decision:****

The Supreme Court dismissed the appeal, affirming the CA’s decision with modifications. The court found “AAA252353’s” testimony credible, detailed, and substantiated by evidence. It held that Arraz’s arrest was the result of a valid entrapment operation, not instigation, given his predisposition toward the criminal conduct for which he was arrested. Penalties and damages were adjusted in accordance with prevailing jurisprudence.

****Doctrine:****

The case reaffirmed principles regarding the credibility of witnesses in sexual assault cases, emphasizing that immediate reporting or resistance is not a prerequisite for credibility. It

also clarified legal distinctions between entrapment and instigation in law enforcement operations. Furthermore, it underscored the severe legal and moral reprehensibility of trafficking in persons, sexual assault, and cybersex crimes, reflecting on the statutory penalties and damages warranted for such violations.

****Class Notes:****

1. **Credibility of Witnesses:** The timely reporting of a crime or physical resistance by a victim is not indispensable for the victim's testimony to be deemed credible.
2. **Entrapment vs. Instigation:** Entrapment legally captures criminal activity in progress without inducing the crime's commission, which differs from instigation.
3. **Qualifying Circumstances in Rape and Trafficking:** Presence of aggravating circumstances such as the exploitation's duration or the victim's vulnerability can elevate the crime's severity.
4. **Cybercrime Prevention Act (RA 10175):** Engaging in, controlling, or operating any lascivious exhibition of sexual activity with the aid of a computer system is punishable, emphasizing the law's stance against cybersex and related offenses.
5. **Damage Awards:** The Supreme Court validates and specifies the standards for awarding civil indemnity, moral damages, and exemplary damages in cases of sexual assault and exploitation.

****Historical Background:****

This case sheds light on the grim realities of human trafficking and cybersex crimes in the Philippines. It highlights the evolving legal landscape in addressing cyber-enabled sexual exploitation, marking a significant judicial stance against such infractions within both local and international contexts. The decision reflects a commitment to uphold human dignity, justice, and the rule of law in the digital age.