

Title: Arambulo v. People of the Philippines, G.R. No. 242447

Facts:

1. **Background:**

- In September 2011 to January 12, 2012, in Calamba, Laguna, Fernando B. Arambulo and his minor son, Dominique Dimple Arambulo ('Dominique'), allegedly recruited three minors—AAA (13), BBB (16), and CCC (14)—to participate in planned robberies.

2. **Initial Meeting:**

- The minors were invited to the Arambulo residence where Fernando revealed the robbery plans.
- CCC expressed a desire to leave but was punched by Fernando, coercing him to join.

3. **Criminal Activities:**

- The minors corroborated that Fernando masterminded the robberies and drove the getaway tricycle.

4. **Defense Argument:**

- Fernando and Dominique contended the charges were retaliatory actions by a police lieutenant whose theft and obstruction cases against Fernando had been dismissed.

Procedural History:

1. **RTC Trial:**

- On May 26, 2015, the RTC found Fernando guilty of Qualified Trafficking in Persons under Sections 4 (k) (4) and 6 (a) and (c) of RA 9208, as amended by RA 10364.
- Fernando was sentenced to 20 years and 1 day to 22 years imprisonment and a fine of P2,000,000.

2. **Appeal to CA:**

- Fernando appealed, contesting that the acts charged occurred before the RA 10364 amendment, and thus, should not be applicable.
- On January 22, 2018, the CA affirmed the conviction but modified the sentence to life imprisonment and a fine of P2,000,000 with 6% interest per annum on the fine from finality until fully paid.

3. **Motion for Reconsideration:**

- Fernando's motion was denied by the CA on August 23, 2018.

4. **Petition to Supreme Court:**

- Fernando filed a petition for review on certiorari but was treated as an ordinary criminal appeal due to substantial justice.

Issues:

1. Whether the CA correctly upheld Fernando's conviction for Qualified Trafficking in Persons.
2. Whether the RA 10364 amendments could be applied retroactively.

Court's Decision:

1. **Mode of Appeal:**

- Fernando's petition was treated as an ordinary appeal, allowing a review on merits despite procedural error.

2. **Application of RA 9208:**

- The SC noted Section 4(a) of RA 9208, as it originally stood, already covered the actions: recruitment for forced labor or services through entitlement, violence, threat, force, or coercion.

3. **Elements of Qualified Trafficking:**

- Minor victims were recruited for illegal activities.
- Force and coercion were applied.
- The purpose was engaging in criminal activities.
- Three or more victims qualified the crime as "large scale."

4. **Resolution:**

- The SC modified the basis of conviction to the RA 9208 original version's Section 4(a) in relation to Section 6 (a) and (c).
- Fernando was sentenced to life imprisonment with a fine of P2,000,000.
- Moral damages of P500,000 and exemplary damages of P100,000 were awarded to each victim, with 6% interest per annum from finality until paid.

Doctrine:

1. **Qualified Trafficking in Persons:**

- Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons for exploitation via coercive or abusive means, if involving minors or committed in large scale, constitutes Qualified Trafficking.
- Reference Sections: RA 9208 Section 4(a), RA 9208 as amended by RA 10364 Sections 4

(k) (4), 6 (a), and 6 (c), and 10(c).

Class Notes:

1. **Elements of Human Trafficking:**

- Recruitment acts.
- Coercive means utilized.
- Purpose of exploitation (e.g., forced labor, slavery).

2. **Qualified Trafficking Circumstances:**

- Victim is a minor.
- Acts committed by a group (syndicate) or on a large scale (three or more victims).

3. **Relevant Statutory References:**

- RA 9208 (“Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003”)
- RA 10364 (“Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012”)
- Key Provisions: Sections 4, 6, 10.

Historical Background:

- **Legislative Context:**

- RA 9208 was enacted to combat human trafficking, especially among women and children.
- RA 10364 expanded and strengthened the original act, reflecting evolving awareness and international commitments against human trafficking practices.

- **Judicial Application:**

- Care was exercised in applying legal principles, especially concerning retroactivity and qualifying conditions for greater penalties in trafficking cases.