

7-Eleven L.I. owners guilty of harboring 18 PH aliens

Written by Administrator
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FARRUKH BAIG

The former operators of several 7-Eleven franchises on Long Island, N.Y. and Virginia have pled guilty to wire fraud and concealing and harboring numerous undocumented Filipino and Pakistani workers for over 13 years while stealing their wages, the **Filipino Reporter** has learned.

Five defendants admitted to knowingly hiring some 50 undocumented workers — at least 18 of them Filipinos — supplying them with stolen identities while siphoning off their earnings and

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forcing them to live in unregulated, squalid boarding homes scattered across Suffolk County, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The scheme skimmed a total of \$2.6 million that was owed to the workers, court papers state.

"Using the 7-Eleven brand, the defendants dispensed wire fraud and identity theft, along with Big Gulps and candy bars," said U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch in a statement.

"In our backyards, the defendants not only systematically employed illegal aliens but concealed their employment by using the names of children and even the dead."

Mastermind Farrukh Baig, 58, a wealthy Pakistani businessman who reportedly counts former Prime Minister Pervez Musharraf as a friend, faces up to 20 years in prison at his sentencing.

Baig and his wife Bushra Baig, 50, both of the affluent Head of Harbor, N.Y., controlled 14 7-Eleven stores on Long Island and Virginia and freely spent the profits on cars and other luxuries.

The wife is facing up to 10 years of imprisonment.

The workers served rich customers at locations, including Sag Harbor and Greenport while living in squalor, prosecutors said.

Farrukh Baig's brothers Zahid Baig, 53, of Chesapeake, VA; and Shannawaz Baig, 63, of Virginia Beach; and co-defendant Malik Yousaf, 52, of South Setauket also pleaded guilty on Sept. 22 before a federal magistrate judge in Central Islip, N.Y.

They face 10 years behind bars for helping "manage and control the stores," prosecutors said.

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Two additional defendants in the case, Filipino national Ramon Nanas, 50, of Great River, N.Y. and Tariq Rana of Chesapeake, Va., had pleaded guilty earlier, according to records, and are also looking at 10 years.

The Philippine Consulate General in New York earlier told the **Reporter** that Nanas is “just a longtime assistant and not a manager or owner.”

A separate case against two other owners is still in federal court.

The Pakistani and Filipino workers routinely labored a staggering 100 hours a week behind the counter and were paid just \$350 to \$500 a week in cash, prosecutors said.

“We are committed to preserving the rule of law and and protecting our communities from the abuses of corrupt businesses seeking to gain an illegal advantage,” Lynch said.

The heartless defendants covered up the scheme by stealing more than 20 identities of American citizens — including kids, the deceased and a U.S. Coast Guard cadet — and assigning them to the undocumented workers.

The victims of identity fraud spanned seven states, according to authorities.

The defendants agreed to pay \$2.6 million in restitution for back wages they stole from their employees.

They also agreed to forfeit the franchise rights to 10 7-Eleven stores in New York and four in Virginia, as well as five houses in New York worth over \$1.3 million.

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“During the scheme, the defendants generated over \$182 million in proceeds from the 7-Eleven franchise stores,” according to the Department of Homeland Security, adding that the case is the largest criminal immigration forfeiture in its history.

The prosecution was reportedly a result of President Obama’s Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force, which was created in November 2009 in order to investigate and prosecute financial crimes.

The indictment was one of more than 10,000 financial fraud cases the Justice Department has filed in the past three fiscal years; and the defendants are just five out of 15,000 who have been indicted since the creation of the task force.

The sentencing proceedings have not been scheduled yet, but according to officials they will be held before United States District Justice Sandra J. Feuerstein, at the federal courthouse in Central Islip.