



HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORKING GROUP

Dr Andreas Schloenhardt (Coordinator)

The University of Queensland
TC Beirne School of Law

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CASE REPORT

Current as on: October 16, 2009

Case Name	<i>Kwang Suk Ra et al</i>
Reported in	n/a
Date(s)	Arrested: March 7, 2008
Location	New South Wales
Charges	s 270.6(2) <i>Criminal Code</i> (Cth): conducting a business that involves sexual servitude; s 271.8 <i>Criminal Code</i> (Cth): debt bondage; s 400.3 <i>Criminal Code</i> (Cth): recklessly dealing in proceeds of crime; s 245AC <i>Migration Act 1958</i> (Cth): allowing a non-citizen to work in breach of visa conditions
Appeal	n/a
Co-accused	Jin Woo Lee pleaded guilty in July 2008, charges unknown Jin Hee Do Na Kyung Kim Gin Taek Choi

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Case Summary

On March 6, 2008 the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in cooperation with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) searched a number of premises in Sydney (Operation Ekkala), leading to the discovery of ten South Korean victims of trafficking and to the arrest of five persons. Most of the victims were employed at 'Cinderella', a legal brothel at 509 Crown St in Surry Hills.¹

The head of the group arrested was 47 year-old brothel owner Ms Kwang Suk Ra. It was later revealed that before moving to Australia, Ms Ra had served time in prison in the United States for sex trafficking offences and a false tax return, and then relocated to Canada where she operated a massage parlour under a false name.²

Newspaper reports allege that the trafficked women under Ms Ra's control were forced to work up to 20 hours a day in pursuance to an artificially inflated contract debt of approximately AUD 10,000–40,000. All of the victims were South Korean nationals who had entered Australia on legitimate work visas.³ The women claimed to have been either subject to or have witnessed physical abuse. Some reports stated that Ms Ra also issued the women with a series of fines 'if they failed to make their clients happy', and police presented records of telephone conversations in which Ms Ra threatened to 'get' her former workers and considered hiring 'some professional criminals to fix them'. Estimates suggest that the business that employed and exploited these women made between two and three million dollars per year.⁴

The accused were charged with a range of offences, including conducting a business, namely a brothel, that involves sexual servitude;⁵ debt bondage;⁶ recklessly dealing in proceeds of crime;⁷ and allowing non-citizens to work in breach of visa conditions.⁸ On December 2, 2008, the DPP (Cth) dropped the case against Kwang Suk Ra and three of her co-accused Jin Hee Do, 36, Na Kyung Kim, 43, and Gin Taek Choi, 33, because of insufficient evidence.⁹ Further details are not unavailable.

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¹ Kara Lawrence, 'Brothel slave case against Kwang Suk Ra collapses', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 3 Dec 2008.

² Kara Lawrence, 'Brothel slave case against Kwang Suk Ra collapses', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 3 Dec 2008.

³ AFP, *Annual Report 2007-08* (2008) 34; Simon Kirby, 'NSW: Brothel Madam Lied to Sex Slaves About Debts: Court', *The West Australian* (Perth), 7 Mar 2008.

⁴ DIAC, *2008 Annual Report* (2008) 112; Paula Kruger, *Groups Urge Action to Stop Sex Trafficking* (2008) ABC Radio, *The World Today*, available at www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2008/s2183209.htm (accessed 16 Oct 2009); Kara Lawrence, 'Brothel slave case against Kwang Suk Ra collapses', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 3 Dec 2008.

⁵ Section 270.6(2) *Criminal Code* (Cth).

⁶ Section 271.8 *Criminal Code* (Cth).

⁷ Section 400.3 *Criminal Code* (Cth).

⁸ Section 245AC *Migration Act 1958* (Cth).

⁹ Natalie O'Brien, 'Trafficked, then waiting by the roadside', *The Weekend Australian*, 6 Dec 2008, 27; Kara Lawrence, 'Brothel slave case against Kwang Suk Ra collapses', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 3 Dec 2008.