



*United States Attorney
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**TOGOLESE MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR FORCED LABOR OF
YOUNG WEST AFRICAN WOMEN IN HAIR BRAIDING SALONS
IN NEWARK AND EAST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY**

Defendant Also Ordered to Pay Victims Over \$3.9 Million in Missed Wages

NEWARK, N.J. – A man from Togo was sentenced today for his participation in an operation in which dozens of women and girls were forced to work at hair braiding salons in Newark and East Orange, New Jersey without pay for the financial benefit of the defendants, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Dereck Hounakey, 33, was sentenced to 55 months in prison for conspiring with others, including his mother and her ex-husband, to commit forced labor, traffic with respect to forced labor, and hold visas and identification.

The defendant previously pleaded guilty to the charges before United States District Judge Jose L. Linares, who also imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

At his plea hearing, Hounakey admitted that from October 2002 through September 2007, he engaged in a conspiracy to obtain the forced labor of a number of women and girls whom his mother, Akouavi Kpade Afolabi, had brought over from Togo with fraudulent visas. Once the victims entered the United States, Hounakey and his co-defendants required them to work at hair braiding salons for up to 14 hours per day, six or seven days a week. The victims were also required to turn over all of their earnings, including their tips, to the defendants. The defendants did not allow the young women to keep their passports or identification, to speak with their families outside of the defendants' presence, or to make any outside friends. Hounakey stated that his mother recruited individuals to pose as the relatives of the girls and women and that another defendant, Geoffry Kouevi, helped them study facts about their fake husbands and fathers in order to fraudulently obtain visas. Hounakey also admitted to hitting a girl for making a telephone call without permission, and to having sex with several of the victims, one of whom was a minor, during the course of the conspiracy.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Linares sentenced Hounakey to three years of supervised release and ordered him to pay restitution to each of the victims, in the total amount of \$3,949,140.80. The restitution amount includes the wages the victims should have been paid during their servitude, calculated under the Fair Labor Standards Act, which provides for payment of minimum wage and overtime, as well as compensatory damages for the delay in

receiving their wages.

Lassissi Afolabi, who previously pleaded guilty to related charges, is scheduled to be sentenced on July 12, 2010. Kouevi and Akouavi Kpade Afolabi, who were convicted after separate jury trials, are scheduled to be sentenced on July 20, 2010, and September 1, 2010, respectively.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Linares will, as he did today, consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which recommend sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendants' criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all of that time.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Newark, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter T. Edge, as well as agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. Department of State for the investigation leading to today's sentence.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Shana W. Chen and Nancy Hoppock of the United States Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Dwight H. Simon Day, Esq., Newark, New Jersey