

For Immediate Release
May 24, 2011

**LAS CRUCES HOTEL OWNERS CHARGED WITH
FEDERAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSES**

LAS CRUCES – United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales announced that Las Cruces residents **Elina Sihombing**, 47, and her husband **David Girle**, 54, were arrested on May 23, 2011, and made their initial appearances this morning in United States District Court in Las Cruces on a criminal complaint alleging that they committed human trafficking offenses. Sihombing and Girle are scheduled for a detention hearing at 3:00 p.m. this afternoon in federal court in Las Cruces.

The criminal complaint filed in the case alleges that Sihombing and Girle obtained the labor and services of two Indonesian women by force, threats of force and physical restraint, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1589. They also are charged with recruiting, harboring and transporting individuals for the purpose of forced labor in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1590, and removing or confiscating the victims' immigration documents in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1592. The maximum penalty for each of the two forced labor offenses is up to twenty years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The maximum penalty for the offense relating to the withholding of immigration documents is up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

According to the criminal complaint, in 2004, Sihombing and Girle allegedly brought the first of their two victims from Indonesia to Phoenix, Arizona, where they were then living, as a nanny for their toddler and with the understanding that she would have the opportunity to obtain an education and prepare for a career. Instead, the victim allegedly was forced to work as a nanny and household help and with remodeling of the couple's residence from 8:00 a.m. to midnight every day, but was never paid for her work and was never given an opportunity to attend college as she had been promised. The complaint alleges that, in 2005, Sihombing and

Girlle brought another woman to Phoenix from Indonesia who performed the same type of work for the couple without any remuneration.

The complaint alleges that on July 27, 2007, Sihombing and Girlle relocated to Las Cruces where they purchased America's Best Value Inn hotel on Picacho in Las Cruces, New Mexico and lived on the hotel grounds. Sihombing and Girlle allegedly told the two victims that, after the hotel was remodeled and sold, they would be paid for their labor. Thereafter, Sihombing and Girlle allegedly required their victims to work from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. every day with no days off. The victims were not allowed to leave the hotel and were only allowed access to their families in Indonesia if the contact was monitored by the couple. In 2009, the victims allegedly asked Girlle about their immigration documents, and he told them he had them for safekeeping. Girlle also advised them that their visas had expired. Sihombing allegedly withheld food from the victims as punishment and also threatened to call immigration authorities if the two did not do as Sihombing demanded. The complaint alleges that this type of treatment continued until January 4, 2010, when the two victims left the hotel.

These charges are the result of an investigation initiated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Las Cruces and the New Mexico Attorney General's Office. The investigation received assistance from Homeland Security Investigations and the Las Cruces Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jessica Cárdenas Jarvis in conjunction with the New Mexico Attorney General's Office.

A criminal complaint is only an accusation. All criminal defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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