



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Homeland Security

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For Immediate Release

MEDIA RELEASE

THREE WOMEN TRAFFICKED, JUSTICE SERVED: **LANDMARK SENTENCE AHEAD OF WORLD DAY AGAINST** **TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS**

Port-of-Spain: A former police officer has been sentenced to 16 years, 5 months, and 15 days in prison for his role in the human trafficking of three Colombian women, in a case described as one of the most significant milestones in Trinidad and Tobago's fight against trafficking in persons.

Valentine Eastman, who was a serving member of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) at the time of his arrest, was convicted on January 31, 2025, on charges stemming from a 2013 investigation conducted by the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU). On Monday 28 July 2025, the High Court handed down the sentence, just two days before World Day Against Trafficking in Persons is globally observed.

On a day unknown between March 03 and 25, 2013, Eastman recruited three Colombian women under false pretences, encouraging them to travel to Trinidad and Tobago for employment. The women were transported illegally from Venezuela with the assistance of Eastman, and were subsequently trafficked in bars across South and Central Trinidad, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. They were also forced to labour under exploitative conditions at Eastman's private residence.

The case was first brought before the San Fernando First Magistrates' Court and prosecuted by then State Counsel Ms. Sarah De Silva of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Eastman was committed to stand trial in the High Court on March 14, 2016. The trial commenced in November 2024, with Attorneys Ambay Ramkellawan and Kyrn Lewis prosecuting on behalf of the State.

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The CTU, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Embassies of Colombia and Chile in Trinidad and Tobago, was able to facilitate the return of two of the three victims to testify in person. Their courageous testimonies, along with those of 14 witnesses, formed the backbone of the State's case.

In delivering the sentence, Justice George Busby referenced the Trafficking in Persons Act, the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, comparative sentencing precedents and the United Kingdom Sentencing Guidelines. He cited the prevalence and seriousness of the offence, the planning and deception involved in luring the victims and the use of threats and intimidation. The women were subjected to sexual and labour exploitation and experienced psychological trauma and non-physical harm.

Justice Busby emphasized that the crimes were committed for profit and reflected a calculated abuse of power and trust.

The Counter Trafficking Unit, under the Ministry of Homeland Security, welcomed the outcome as a powerful affirmation of justice for victims, and a critical reminder that no one is above the law, not even those sworn to uphold it.

As Trinidad and Tobago joins the world in marking World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2025 under the theme "Human Trafficking is Organized Crime – End the Exploitation", this landmark sentence reinforces the country's commitment to protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators and preventing the crime in all its forms.

This conviction serves as a firm warning: those who traffic human lives will be held accountable, regardless of status or profession. As the nation stands united in observance of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2025, the CTU urges the public to remain vigilant. If you suspect a case of human trafficking, report it.

Call the Counter Trafficking Unit's 24/7 Hotline: **800-4CTU (4288)**.

Your call is confidential. Your action could save a life.

END

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