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JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Maryland Couple Charged with Domestic Servitude of Filipina Woman**

WASHINGTON- A federal grand jury in Greenbelt, Md., indicted Alfred Edwards and Gloria Edwards, both of Upper Marlboro, Md., on charges arising from a scheme to compel the labor and domestic service of a Filipina national.

The indictment was announced by Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez of the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein and Special Agent in Charge Richard A. McFeely of the FBI.

"Human trafficking robs victims of their freedom and dignity and it will not be tolerated in our nation," said Assistant Attorney General Perez. "We will prosecute all cases of human trafficking to the fullest extent of the law."

"The U.S. Attorney's Office will continue to work with the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and federal and state agencies and nonprofit organizations, in conjunction with Maryland's Human Trafficking Task Force, to locate human trafficking victims and prosecute perpetrators," said U.S. Attorney Rosenstein.

According to the five count indictment, the couple enticed the victim to come to the United States to work as their domestic servant. According to the indictment, the defendants lured the victim, an impoverished, uneducated, mother of eight children, using false promises of a salary that would support her children in the Philippines. The defendants procured a fraudulent visa to allow the victim to enter the United States; confiscated the victim's documents after she arrived; and compelled her labor for 13 hours a day over a period of 10 years, using a scheme of threats, assaults, withholding of documents, withholding of pay and a peonage contract to coerce the victim's continued service.

The defendants are also charged with immigration violations.

The charges in the indictment are merely accusations and all defendants are presumed innocent until convicted in a court of law.

If convicted, the defendants each face a maximum sentence of up to 50 years in prison and \$250,000 in fines.

This case is being investigated by the Baltimore Division of the FBI and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Lenzner and Senior Special Counsel Susan French of the Civil Rights Division's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit.

11-743

Civil Rights Division