



Supreme Court of the Philippines  
OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

**RECEIVED**

By: franz  
Date: 1/12/26 Time: 9:40

Document Control No. \_\_\_\_\_

Republic of the Philippines  
Supreme Court  
Manila

SECOND DIVISION

OLIVER PILORIN,

Petitioner,

G.R. No. 278327

- versus -

PEOPLE OF THE  
PHILIPPINES, Respondent.

Present:

LEONEN, S.A.J., Chairperson,\*  
LAZARO-JAVIER,\*\*  
LOPEZ,\*\*  
KHO, JR., and  
VILLANUEVA, JJ.

Promulgated:

OCT 08 2025

X-----X

DECISION

KHO, JR., J.:

Before the Court is a Petition for Review on *Certiorari*<sup>1</sup> under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court assailing the Decision<sup>2</sup> dated June 27, 2023 and the Resolution<sup>3</sup> dated December 6, 2024 of the Court of Appeals (CA) in CA-

\* Designated Acting Chief Justice per Special Order No. 3223 dated September 15, 2025.

\*\* On official business.

<sup>1</sup> *Rollo*, pp. 13-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 40-65. Penned by Associate Justice Rex Bernardo L. Pascual and concurred in by Associate Justices Myra V. Garcia-Fernandez and Tita Marilyn B. Payoyo-Villordon of the Tenth Division, Court of Appeals, Manila.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 150-156. Penned by Associate Justice Rex Bernardo L. Pascual and concurred in by Associate Justices Myra V. Garcia-Fernandez and Tita Marilyn B. Payoyo-Villordon of the Former Tenth Division, Court of Appeals, Manila.

G.R. CR HC No. 14996, which upheld the Judgment<sup>4</sup> dated March 10, 2020 and the Order<sup>5</sup> dated September 28, 2020 of [REDACTED], Regional Trial Court, [REDACTED] (RTC) in Criminal Case Nos. 46-2007FC and 80-2007FC. The RTC, *inter alia*, found petitioner Oliver Pilorin (Pilorin) guilty beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of qualified trafficking in persons as defined and penalized under Section 4(a) in relation to Sections 6(a) and 10(c) of Republic Act No. 9208, otherwise known as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003.

### The Facts

This case stemmed from two separate Informations<sup>6</sup> filed before the RTC, particularly charging (a) Pilorin and Dahlia Griffin (Griffin) with qualified trafficking in persons and (b) Pilorin, Griffin, and Edward Dumangas (Dumangas) with violation of Section 5(c) of Republic Act No. 7610, otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act. The accusatory portions of the Informations respectively read:

#### Criminal Case No. 46-2007FC (Violation of Section 5(c) of Republic Act No. 7610)

That on or about the 25<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2006, in [REDACTED], Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the above-named accused, conspiring, confederating together and mutually helping with one another, did then and there willfully, unlawfully and feloniously, for money or deriving profit therefrom, engaged and employ [AAA278327, BBB278327, CCC278327, DDD278327],<sup>7</sup> who are still minors, to work as entertainers and or employees of [REDACTED], a place or establishment serving as a cover or which engages in prostitution, to the damage and prejudice of the said [AAA278327, BBB278327, CCC278327, DDD278327].

CONTRARY TO LAW.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 66–81. Penned by Assisting Judge Ma. Cristina J. Mendoza-Pizarro of [REDACTED] Regional Trial Court, [REDACTED].

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 97–102. Penned by Acting Presiding Judge Gemma Theresa B. Hilario-Logronio of [REDACTED] Regional Trial Court, [REDACTED].

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 66–67.

<sup>7</sup> The identity of the victims or any information which could establish or compromise their identity, as well as those of their immediate family or household members shall be withheld pursuant to Republic Act No. 7610, entitled “An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination, and for Other Purposes,” approved on June 17, 1992; Republic Act No. 9262, entitled “An Act Defining Violence Against Women and Their Children, Providing for Protective Measures for Victims, Prescribing Penalties Therefore, and for Other Purposes,” approved on March 8, 2004; and Section 40 of A.M. No. 04-10-11-SC, otherwise known as the “Rule on Violence against Women and Their Children” (November 15, 2004). (*See* footnote 4 in *People v. Cadano, Jr.*, 729 Phil. 576, 578 [2014] [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division], *citing People v. Lomaque*, 710 Phil. 338, 342 [2013] [Per J. Brion, Second Division]. *See also* Amended Administrative Circular No. 83-2015, entitled “Protocols and Procedures in the Promulgation, Publication, and Posting on the Websites of Decisions, Final Resolutions, and Final Orders Using Fictitious Names/Personal Circumstances,” dated September 5, 2017.)

<sup>8</sup> *Rollo*, p. 66.

**Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC**  
(Qualified Trafficking in Persons)

That on or about the 25<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2006, in [REDACTED], Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the said accused, conspiring, confederating together and mutually helping with [sic] one another, did then and there willfully, unlawfully and feloniously, harbor, receive, maintain, and hire [AAA278327, BBB278327, CCC278327, DDD278327] to engage in prostitution.

CONTRARY TO LAW.<sup>9</sup>

The prosecution alleged that in the evening of July 24, 2006, then 14-year-old AAA278327, together with her friends, CCC278327 and DDD278327 (collectively, AAA278327 et al.), both of whom were also minors at the time, agreed to go to a disco bar. While they were waiting for a jeepney, Pilorin, who was then driving a taxi, stopped in front of AAA278327 et al. and offered them a ride. AAA278327 et al. initially refused but when Pilorin offered to ferry them for free, they agreed and rode the taxi. Pilorin then took AAA278327 et al. to a *lugawan* in [REDACTED], fed them, then offered them jobs as waitstaff in a certain resto-bar wherein their would-be employer would take care of their documentary requirements. After eating, Pilorin took AAA278327 et al. to [REDACTED] where they were made to wait for their would-be employer.<sup>10</sup>

The next day, July 25, 2006, Pilorin took AAA278327 et al. to a hut near [REDACTED] Bar, a resto-bar that Griffin owns, and introduced them to Griffin as his recruits. When Griffin asked them their ages, they responded that all of them were already 18 years old, as instructed by Pilorin. Griffin then led them to [REDACTED] Bar where AAA278327 and CCC278327 were each given a two-piece outfit consisting of a brassiere and a short wrap-around skirt to wear. When they asked to go home first to ask permission from their parents, Griffin and Pilorin prevented them from leaving, and instead, endorsed them to Dumangas, Griff Bar's manager, who in turn made them dance on stage and entertain the resto-bar's customers. According to AAA278327, Dumangas would get angry at them whenever they performed poorly.<sup>11</sup>

For the next few days, AAA278327, together with CCC278327, was made to wear skimpy clothing, dance on stage with other women, and sit with [REDACTED] Bar's customers, i.e., "*ka-table*". AAA278327 was also made to go out with customers who paid a "bar-fine" amounting to PHP 1,500.00 and then brought to hotels where they sexually abused her. Despite AAA278327 et al.'s eagerness to leave [REDACTED] Bar and go home, they could not do so because they

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 45-46.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 46-47.

*Handwritten mark*

did not have money for transportation. Eventually, and with the help of CCC278327's cousin, AAA278327 et al. were rescued from ██████ Bar.<sup>12</sup>

In defense, Griffin admitted to being the owner of ██████ Bar, while Dumangas clarified that he was just a disc jockey at the resto-bar. Nonetheless, they denied the accusations against them. They maintained that on July 28, 2006, AAA278327 et al. came to ██████ Bar to apply for jobs, particularly as guest relations officers (GROs). Griffin claimed that when she asked for AAA278327 et al. for their birth certificates, they told her that they did not have such copies with them, so she told them to come back with copies of their birth certificates. Griffin added that later, Dumangas told her that AAA278327 et al. came back to apply as GROs, so she told Dumangas to check their requirements. When Dumangas checked with AAA278327 et al., they still failed to bring copies of their birth certificates so Griffin disallowed them to work at the resto-bar. Finally, Griffin and Dumangas asserted that given their narration, they were surprised that AAA278327 et al. would file criminal cases against them.<sup>13</sup>

For his part, Pilorin also denied the accusations against him. He averred that on July 25, 2006, he was waiting in line at a taxi bay when two girls and one boy boarded his taxi and the group told him to bring them to ██████. During the taxi ride, the group, among other things, asked for his help to look for jobs but Pilorin told them that he did not know of any job offers, so he could not help them. Later, the group requested Pilorin to drop them off in front of ██████ Bar, to which Pilorin agreed. Similar with Griffin and Dumangas, Pilorin claimed that he was surprised when criminal charges were filed against him.<sup>14</sup>

### The RTC Ruling

In a Judgment<sup>15</sup> dated March 10, 2020, the RTC ruled as follows: First, in Criminal Case No. 46-2007FC, the RTC found Griffin and Dumangas guilty beyond reasonable doubt of violation of Section 5(c) of Republic Act No. 7610, and accordingly, sentenced each of them to suffer the penalties of imprisonment for an indeterminate period of 10 years of *prision mayor*, as minimum, to 16 years, five months, and 10 days of *reclusion temporal*, as maximum, and a fine of PHP 20,000.00; and ordered each of them to pay AAA278327 the amounts of PHP 20,000.00 as civil indemnity, PHP 20,000.00 as moral damages, and PHP 20,000.00 as exemplary damages. On the other hand, Pilorin was acquitted. Second, in Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC, the RTC found Pilorin and Griffin guilty beyond reasonable doubt

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 47–48. *See also id.* at 68–70, 73–77.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 44–45.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 72–73.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 66–81.

*Handwritten mark*

of qualified trafficking in persons, and accordingly, sentenced each of them to suffer the penalties of life imprisonment and a fine of PHP 2,000,000.00.<sup>16</sup>

In so ruling, the RTC found that Pilorin, Griffin, and Dumangas clearly acted in concert with one another, considering that: (a) Pilorin made AAA278327 et al. job offers as waitstaff, brought them to ██████ Bar despite knowing that they were minors, and introduced them to Griffin; (b) despite AAA278327 et al. being unable to prove their claim that they were already of age, Griffin made AAA278327 dress up, wear make-up, dance on the resto-bar's stage, sit with customers, then allowed such customers to bring her out of the resto-bar and into hotel rooms where she was sexually abused; and (c) Dumangas managed ██████ Bar and would get upset whenever AAA278327 refused to dance on stage. Given the foregoing circumstances, the RTC made the following conclusions: First, in Criminal Case No. 46-2007FC, Griffin and Dumangas, as the owner and the manager of ██████ Bar, respectively, violated Section 5(c) of Republic Act No. 7610 and must be held criminally liable therefor; on the other hand, since Pilorin is neither the owner nor the manager of ██████ Bar, he could not be said to have violated such legal provision. Second, in Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC, since only Griffin and Pilorin were charged with qualified trafficking in persons, then they are the only ones who could be convicted of such crime.<sup>17</sup>

Griffin and Dumangas jointly filed a Motion for Reconsideration, while Pilorin separately filed his own Motion for Reconsideration, with both Motions assailing their respective convictions. On the other hand, the prosecution moved for partial reconsideration seeking monetary awards in AAA278327's favor in Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC. In an Order<sup>18</sup> dated September 28, 2020, the RTC denied the Motions of Pilorin, Griffin, and Dumangas, while it granted the prosecution's Motion. Accordingly, the RTC ordered Pilorin and Griffin to jointly and severally pay AAA278327 the amounts of PHP 500,000.00 as moral damages and PHP 100,000.00 as exemplary damages, both with legal interest at the rate of 6% per annum from finality of the ruling until full payment.<sup>19</sup>

Aggrieved, Pilorin, Griffin, and Dumangas all appealed to the CA.

### The CA Ruling

In a Decision<sup>20</sup> dated June 27, 2023, the CA: (a) upheld the RTC ruling *in toto* insofar as Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC is concerned; and (b) affirmed the RTC ruling in Criminal Case No. 46-2007FC with modification, adjusting the indeterminate prison sentence of Griffin and Dumangas to eight years and

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 81.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 73-81.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 97-102.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 102.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 40-65.

one day of *prision mayor*, as minimum, to 17 years, four months, and one day of *reclusion temporal*, as maximum.<sup>21</sup>

Essentially upholding the RTC's findings, the CA held that it was proven beyond reasonable doubt that: (a) Griffin and Pilorin recruited and brought AAA278327, who was just a minor at the time, to ██████████ Bar under the pretext of job employment, but AAA278327 was instead forced to engage in prostitution and further subjected to sexual exploitation; and (b) Griffin and Dumangas, as the owner and the manager, respectively, of ██████████ Bar, had derived profit and advantage from AAA278327's sexual exploitation.<sup>22</sup>

Only Pilorin moved for reconsideration which the CA denied in a Resolution<sup>23</sup> dated December 6, 2024. Hence, this Petition questioning his conviction for qualified trafficking in persons in Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Issue Before the Court**

The issue before the Court is whether Pilorin is guilty beyond reasonable doubt of qualified trafficking in persons.

### **The Court's Ruling**

Prefatorily, the Court notes that Pilorin elevated the matter before the Court through a Rule 45 Petition for Review on *Certiorari*. As a general rule, appeals of criminal cases shall be brought to the Court by filing a petition for review on *certiorari* under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court; however, and as an exception, an appeal on the CA's decision shall be made by a mere notice of appeal in cases wherein the CA imposed the penalty of "*reclusion perpetua*, life imprisonment or a lesser penalty."<sup>25</sup> In this case, Pilorin clearly availed of a wrong mode of appeal by filing a petition for review on *certiorari* despite having been sentenced by the lower courts to suffer, among others, the penalty of life imprisonment. Be that as it may, and since the instant case involves Pilorin's liberty, the Court deems it proper to treat the Petition as an ordinary appeal to resolve the substantive issue at hand with finality.

This preliminary matter having been settled, the Court rules that Pilorin's criminal liability for qualified trafficking in persons must be sustained, as will be explained hereunder.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 64.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 49–60.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 150–156.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 13–38.

<sup>25</sup> RULES OF COURT, Rule 122, sec. 3(e), in relation to Rule 124, sec. 13(c).

*[Handwritten signature]*

At the outset, it is well to point out that as per the Information in Criminal Case No. 80-2007FC, the crime was committed in 2006. As such, the applicable law is Republic Act No. 9208 in its original form, i.e., before amendments were introduced by Republic Act No. 10364 and Republic Act No. 11862. On this score, relevant provisions of Republic Act No. 9208, particularly Sections 3(a), 3(b), 4(a), 6(a), and 10(b), respectively read:

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

(a) *Trafficking in Persons* - refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer or harboring, or receipt of persons with or without the victim's consent or knowledge, within or across national borders by means of threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person, or, the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation which includes at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, servitude or the removal or sale of organs.

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall also be considered as "trafficking in persons" even if it does not involve any of the means set forth in the preceding paragraph.

(b) *Child* - refers to a person below eighteen (18) years of age or one who is over eighteen (18) but is unable to fully take care of or protect himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition.

....

Section 4. *Acts of Trafficking in Persons.* – It shall be unlawful for any person, natural or juridical, to commit any of the following acts:

(a) To recruit, transport, transfer; harbor, provide, or receive a person by any means, including those done under the pretext of domestic or overseas employment or training or apprenticeship, for the purpose of prostitution, pornography, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, involuntary servitude or debt bondage;

....

Section 6. *Qualified Trafficking in Persons.* – The following are considered as qualified trafficking:

(a) When the trafficked person is a child;

....

Section 10. *Penalties and Sanctions.* – The following penalties and sanctions are hereby established for the offenses enumerated in this Act:

(c) Any person found guilty of qualified trafficking under Section 6 shall suffer the penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of not less than Two

million pesos (P2,000,000.00) but not more than Five million pesos (P5,000,000.00)[.]

In *People v. Peek*,<sup>26</sup> the Court *En Banc* elucidated on qualified trafficking in persons, including its elements, as follows:

In order to prosecute violations of Section 4 of RA 9208 ... the prosecution must establish: (1) the **act** of recruitment, obtaining, hiring, providing, offering, transportation, transfer, maintaining, harboring, or receipt of persons with or without the victim's consent or knowledge, within or across national borders; (2) the **means** used include by means of threat, or use of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person, or, the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person; and (3) the **purpose** of trafficking includes the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, servitude or the removal or sale of organs.

Subsequently, under Section 3 (a), paragraph 2 of RA 9208 ... when the trafficked victim is a child, it is considered as trafficking in persons even if it does not involve any of the **means** stated above. In relation thereto, a child is defined under Section 3 (b) of the same Act as a person below 18 years of age or one who is over 18 but unable to fully take care of or protect himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition. Thus, in such cases, it is enough that the following was established by the prosecution: (a) the trafficked victim was a **child**; (b) the **act** of recruitment, obtaining, hiring, providing, offering, transportation, transfer, maintaining, harboring, or receipt of persons with or without the victim's consent or knowledge, within or across national borders; and (c) the **purpose** of trafficking includes the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, servitude or the removal or sale of organs.

Moreover, under Section 6 (a) of RA 9208, as amended, the crime of trafficking in persons is **qualified** when the trafficked victim is a **child**.<sup>27</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

In this case, the Court agrees with the findings of the lower courts that all the elements of qualified trafficking in persons have been proven beyond reasonable doubt.

First, AAA278327's birth certificate explicitly indicates that she was born on February 7, 1992. As such, it is undisputed that on the dates pertinent to this case, i.e., July 2006, she was a 14-year-old minor.<sup>28</sup> Second, Pilorin and Griffin, in concert with one another, recruited and brought AAA278327 to ██████████ Bar on the pretext of a legitimate job employment. Third, the real

<sup>26</sup> G.R. No. 256452, February 25, 2025 [Per J. Kho, Jr., *En Banc*].

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*, citations omitted.

<sup>28</sup> *See rollo*, pp. 67-68

AKO

purpose of bringing AAA278327 to ██████████ Bar is to make her engage in prostitution and sexual exploitation. AAA278327's testimony in this regard is telling:

Q: Where were you finally brought by accused [Pilorin]?

A: One of the bars in ██████████.

Q: Can you recall the name of the place or the establishment?

A: ██████████ Bar.

Q: And what was your reaction when you know that you were brought to the ██████████ Bar?

A: I was surprised.

Q: Why were you surprised?

A: When we entered the place, we saw naked women.

....

Q: You said the Pilorin told you that you will meet your employer, whom did you meet when you reached ██████████ Bar?

A: Dahlia Griffin.

....

Q: What happened after you meet [sic] with [Griffin]?

A: [Pilorin] introduced us to her. We stayed in the hut.

Q: Were you introduced by [Pilorin] to [Griffin]?

A: He introduced us to her and told us that she is the owner of the club.

Q: You said "we", can you tell us who were the other persons who were introduced to [Griffin]?

A: [CCC278327] and [Aniceto].

Q: So there were three of you?

A: Yes ma'am.

Q: What kind of work you are supposed to do at ██████████ Bar?

A: According to [Pilorin] as a waitress.

....

Q: You testified that you were introduced to Dahlia and she would be your employer, what, if any, did Dahlia say to you with respect to your work?

A: She asked us how old are we.

Q: And what was your reply?

A: We answered that we are already 18 [years old] because that was the instruction of [Pilorin].

Q: What was the response of [Griffin] when you said [that you were] 18 [years old]?

A: She was asking the date of our birth.

*Aras*

Q: What was your reply?

A: It was [CCC278327] who asked and she was not able to answer that is why she laughed and [Griffin] told that she will take care of the papers.

Q: What else did [Griffin] tell you?

A: No more ma'am, she just asked us to dress up.

Q: What kind of wear you should do?

A: 2-piece ma'am.

Q: Where did this 2-pieces [sic] come from?

A: She asked someone working in the bar to get [them].

Q: When you said "*pinakuha niya po*", who made that instruction?

A: [Griffin].

Q: Do you have with you the particular bra or 2-pieces [sic] that you were asked to wear?

A: Yes ma'am.

....

Q: When this article of clothings [sic] were brought, you testified that you were asked to wear [them], will you know who wear [sic] the other articles?

A: The other bra is [sic] worn by [CCC278327] while the other bra I wore the following day.

Q: So you were asked to wear these articles of clothing, the string bra and wrapped around, what were your reaction[s], when you were asked to wear that clothing?

A: I was surprised, ma'am.

Q: Why were you surprised?

A: Because I did not expect to wear that bra but we were asked to wear that.

....

Q: What was your response after you were asked to stay and see what you were expected to do?

A: We told them that we will go home and we will ask permission.

Q: What was their response?

A: They did not agree and told us to just wear the clothing.

Q: What happened after that they did not agree for you to go home?

A: We were forced to wear those garments.

Q: After you wore the garments, what happened?

A: She asked somebody to put make up on us.

Q: What happened after you were [sic] the make-up?

A: We were asked to go to the bar.

ABC

Q: What did you do in the bar?

A: We were asked to dance.

Q: What part of the bar were you asked to dance?

A: [On] the stage.

Q: And you said that you were asked to dance at the stage, who dance[d] with you?

A: [CCC278327].

....

Q: How long did you dance in the stage?

A: 3 songs.

Q: And what happened after the 3 songs were over?

A: [Griffin] asked me to sit in the table of one Filipino customer.

Q: What did you do when you were asked to sit in the table of a Filipino customer?

A: I was just ask[ed] to drink.

Q: What kind of drink were you asked to drink?

A: Juice with tequila.

....

Q: At that time you were there dancing and entertaining customers, do you recall if you were ask[ed] to seat [sic] in a table and entertain customers?

A: Yes with an American.

Q: What happened to this American?

A: He also took me out in bar fine.

Q: Did you know how much is the bar fine?

A: [PHP] 1,500.00.

Q: What is the bar fine for?

A: *Para sasama sa labas.*

Q: How much of the bar fine would go to you?

A: Half, ma'am.

Q: So the American [paid] you [PHP] 1,500.00 to take you out?

A: Yes in Blue Rock.

Q: You and the American only?

A: Yes ma'am.

Q: What happened in Blue Rock?

A: I was again brought inside the room.

Q: What happened inside the room?

A: *Ginalaw [niya] po ako.*<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Rollo, pp. 52-55.

As the CA aptly observed, AAA278327's positive and candid testimony established that Pilorin and Griffin, in conspiracy with one another, took advantage of her vulnerability and minority. Particularly, they lured her into a purported legitimate job as a waitstaff, but once she was already in ██████ Bar, she was forced to dance on stage wearing skimpy clothing; entertain the resto-bar's guests; and worse, engage in prostitution and sexual exploitation. Clearly, all the elements of qualified trafficking in persons have been proven beyond reasonable doubt.

In a final, desperate plea to escape criminal liability, Pilorin points out that as explicitly stated in the Judgment dated March 10, 2020 of the RTC, the judge who rendered the ruling was not the same judge who presided in taking AAA278327's testimony.<sup>30</sup> Pilorin then posits that given this fact, the judge that rendered the ruling was unable to determine whether AAA278327's testimony is worthy of belief and credible on material points.<sup>31</sup> However, the Court is unable to subscribe to his view. As case law instructs, "the validity of a judgment is not rendered erroneous solely because the judge who heard the case was not the same judge who rendered the decision. In fact, it is not necessary for the validity of a judgment that the judge who penned the decision should actually hear the case in its entirety, for [they] can merely rely on the transcribed stenographic notes taken during the trial as the basis for [their] decision,"<sup>32</sup> as in this case.

In sum, the Court sustains Pilorin's conviction for the crime of qualified trafficking in persons. As regards his criminal penalties and civil liabilities *ex delicto*, suffice it to say that the lower courts correctly sentenced him to suffer the penalties of life imprisonment and a fine of PHP 2,000,000.00, and ordered him to pay AAA278327 the amounts of PHP 500,000.00 as moral damages and PHP 100,000.00 as exemplary damages, all with legal interest at the rate of 6% per annum from finality of this Decision until full payment, as the foregoing are in accord with prevailing jurisprudence on the matter.<sup>33</sup>

**ACCORDINGLY**, the Petition is **DISMISSED**. The Decision dated June 27, 2023 and the Resolution dated December 6, 2024 of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. CR HC No. 14996 are **AFFIRMED in toto**. Oliver Pilorin is found **GUILTY** beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of qualified trafficking in persons as defined and penalized under Section 4(a) in relation to Sections 6(a) and 10(c) of Republic Act No. 9208, otherwise known as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003. He is sentenced to suffer the penalties of life imprisonment and a fine of PHP 2,000,000.00. He is likewise ordered to pay the victim, AAA278327, the amounts of PHP 500,000.00 as

---

<sup>30</sup> *Id.* at 77.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 19–22.

<sup>32</sup> *Kummer v. People*, 717 Phil. 670, 68 (2013) [Per J. Brion, Second Division], citing *People v. Cadley*, 469 Phil. 515, 524 (2004) [Per J. Carpio Morales, Third Division].

<sup>33</sup> *People v. Peek*, G.R. No. 256452, February 25, 2025 [Per J. Kho, Jr., *En Banc*].

moral damages and PHP 100,000.00 as exemplary damages, all with legal interest at the rate of 6% per annum from finality of this Decision until full payment.

**SO ORDERED.**



**ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.**  
Associate Justice

**WE CONCUR:**



**MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN**  
Acting Chief Justice  
Division Chairperson

On official business  
**AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER**  
Associate Justice

On official business  
**JHOSEP Y. LOPEZ**  
Associate Justice



**RAUL B. VILLANUEVA**  
Associate Justice

**CERTIFICATION**

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 13 of the Constitution, I certify that the conclusions in the above Decision had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



**MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN**  
Acting Chief Justice