



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

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**TWO NEW YORK MEN CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT HUMAN
TRAFFICKING AND OTHER CRIMES FOR ROLES IN NEW JERSEY CHICKEN
SLAUGHTERHOUSE BUSINESS**

NEWARK, N.J. – Two New York men were arrested today for allegedly forcing employees to work for them at a Halal chicken slaughterhouse in Middlesex County, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Mohammad Abdul Wahid, 54, of Queens, New York, and Mohammed Iqbal Kabir, 42, of Bronx, New York, are charged by complaint with one count each of conspiracy to commit forced labor (human trafficking); conspiracy to harbor undocumented persons for financial gain; and violating the Fair Labor Standards Act. The defendants appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Joseph A. Dickson in Newark federal court and both were released on \$75,000 unsecured bond each, with home confinement and electronic monitoring.

“The Department of Justice is committed to working with our law enforcement partners to seek justice on behalf of vulnerable victims of human trafficking,” Vanita Gupta, head of the Civil Rights Division, said. “The Civil Rights Division commends the District of New Jersey, as one of our six Phase II Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams (ACTeam), for its leadership on the front lines of shared efforts to hold human traffickers accountable.”

“This is precisely the kind of case the ACTeams were designed to investigate and prosecute,” U.S. Attorney Fishman said. “The criminal complaint against these defendants describes conduct that is as inhumane as it is illegal. By bringing to bear the resources of multiple law enforcement agencies with expertise on human trafficking, we can work more effectively to combat these kinds of crimes.”

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

From July 2011 through January 2016, Wahid owned and operated a Halal chicken slaughterhouse business in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. The business operated pursuant to Halal practices, which meant that the live poultry was slaughtered by Muslim individuals. The poultry would then be cleaned and prepared for sale by other employees. During the time that the facility was operational, Wahid and Kabir allegedly employed undocumented persons. The employees were paid approximately \$290 a week in cash and would typically work 70 to 100 hours a week, working six or seven days a week. The employees were not paid more if they worked more hours, nor were they given overtime pay. The employees lived in a boarding house in front of the business, for which Wahid allegedly deducted \$40 a week from the employees’ pay checks. The boarding house did not have heat or hot water and was infested with insects.

The defendants also employed two Muslim individuals to slaughter the chickens and forced them to continue working at the slaughterhouse. When these two victims complained about the hours they were working and the conditions of the facility (no gloves, masks or proper soap), the defendants allegedly threatened to call the police. The victims were afraid of being arrested and deported and they continued to work until health inspectors closed the business.

The human trafficking charge with which the defendants are charged carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The harboring undocumented persons for financial gain carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. The violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act carry a maximum of six months in jail and a fine of \$10,000.

This case was developed through the efforts of the New Jersey Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team (ACTeam). The District of New Jersey is one of six federal districts designated through a competitive, nationwide selection process as a Phase II ACTeam, through the interagency ACTeam Initiative of the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security and Labor. ACTeams focus on developing high-impact human trafficking investigations and prosecutions involving forced labor, international sex trafficking and sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion through interagency collaboration among federal prosecutors and federal investigative agencies. This case was developed through the collaborative interagency efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security, FBI, IRS, and Department of Agriculture, with the assistance of the Civil Rights Division's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Meredith Williams of the U.S. Attorney's Office Narcotics/OCDETF Unit in Newark. AUSA Williams also serves as the U.S. Attorney's Human Trafficking coordinator for the District of New Jersey.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited the Department of Homeland Security, New Jersey Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Terence S. Opiola; the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, New York Region, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael Mikulka; the FBI, New Jersey Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Timothy Gallagher; the Department of Labor, Wage and Hour, New Jersey division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Charlene Rachor; the U.S. Department of Labor - Wage and Hour Division, Northern New Jersey, under the direction of Director John Warner; IRS-Criminal Investigation, New Jersey Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan D. Larsen; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William Squires Jr., with the investigation leading to today's charges.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Defense counsel:

Wahid: Mohammed Gangat Esq., New York

Kabir: Carol Gillen Esq., Assistant Federal Public Defender, Newark