



NEWS RELEASE

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PASSAIC MAN FOUND GUILTY BY A JURY OF AGGRAVATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OF A CHILD

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY:

June 28, 2024

Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes announces that Sergio Bernal, age 36, of Passaic, New Jersey, was found guilty after a jury trial before the Honorable Marilyn C. Clark, J.S.C., of one count of first degree Aggravated Sexual Assault, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2a(1), two counts of first degree Aggravated Sexual Assault, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2a(2)(c), three counts of second degree Sexual Assault, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2b, counts of second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4a(1), one count of third degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4a(1), one count of third degree Aggravated Criminal Sexual Contact, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-3a, , one count of second degree Hindering Apprehension or Prosecution, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:29-3b(3), one count of third degree Terroristic Threats, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:12-3a, two counts of third degree Witness Tampering, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5a(1), two counts of third degree Conspiracy to Commit Witness Tampering, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2a(1) and N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5a(1), two counts of second degree Bribery of a Witness, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5d, two counts of second degree Conspiracy to Commit Bribery of a Witness, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2a(1) and N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5a(1), and one count of fourth degree Tampering with Physical Evidence, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:28-6(1).

On August 5, 2020, the Passaic Police Department contacted the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office Special Victims Unit to report that a 16-year-old child had been sexually assaulted in Passaic, New Jersey. Thereafter, members of the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office Special Victims Unit interviewed the victim and several witnesses. The victim reported being sexually abused by Mr. Bernal on different occasions between October 2013 and August 2020 at multiple residences in Passaic.

Based on the investigation, Mr. Bernal was arrested for and charged with various sexual offenses against the victim. A further investigation revealed that after he had been arrested, Sergio Bernal had attempted to bribe several witnesses to recant their statements.

On June 27, 2024, a Passaic County petit jury convicted Mr. Bernal on the above referenced charges. Mr. Bernal's sentencing hearing is scheduled for October 29, 2024, at 10:00 AM. Mr. Bernal will remain in the custody of the Bergen County Jail pending sentence.

The sentencing exposure on first degree Aggravated Sexual Assault in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2a(1) is 25 years to life in New Jersey State Prison, subject to a 25-year parole disqualifier pursuant to the Jessica Lunsford Act; on first degree Aggravated Sexual Assault, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2a(2)(c), it is 10 to 20 years in New Jersey State Prison, with 85% of the term to be served before parole eligibility pursuant to the No Early Release Act; on second degree Sexual Assault, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2b, it is 5 to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison with 85% of the term to be served before parole eligibility pursuant to the No Early Release Act; on second degree Sexual Assault, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2c(1), it is 5 to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison with 85% of the term to be served before parole eligibility pursuant to the No Early Release Act; on second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4a(1), it is 5 to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison; on third degree Aggravated Criminal Sexual Contact, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-3a, it is 3 to 5 years in New Jersey State Prison; on second degree Hindering Apprehension or Prosecution, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:29-3b(3), it is 5 to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison; on third degree Terroristic Threats, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:12-3a, it is 3 to 5 years in New Jersey State Prison; on third degree Witness Tampering, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5a(1), it is 3 to 5 years in New Jersey State Prison; on third degree Conspiracy to Commit Witness Tampering, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2a(1) and N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5a(1), it is 3 to 5 years in New Jersey State Prison; on second degree Bribery of a Witness, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5d, it is 5 to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison; on second degree Conspiracy to Commit Bribery of a Witness, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2a(1) and N.J.S.A. 2C:28-5a(1), it is 5 to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison; on fourth degree Contempt, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9a, it is up to 18 months in New Jersey State Prison; and, on fourth degree Tampering with Physical Evidence, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:28-6(1), it is up to 18 months in New Jersey State Prison.

Mr. Bernal is subject to the Special Sentence of Parole Supervision for Life and Megan's Law registrant requirements.

Passaic County Senior Assistant Prosecutor Melissa Simsen and Assistant Prosecutor Rania Gabr represented the State during the jury trial before Judge Clark and Mr. Bernal was represented by Gregory Aprile, Esq.

For media inquiries concerning this case, contact Senior Assistant Prosecutor Melissa Simsen of the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office, Major Crimes Division, Special Victims Unit at msimsen@passaiccountynj.org or at (973) 837-7605.



(Photo: Sergio Bernal)