

## **Ex-Slaughterhouse Manager Gets 41-Month Prison Sentence**

RYAN J. FOLEY, Associated Press



In this May 2, 2013, photo provided by the Linn County, Neb., Sheriff's Office is Hosam Amara, a former Iowa slaughterhouse manager. Federal prosecutors will seek a 6 1/2-year prison term at a sentencing hearing Friday, Jan. 31, 2014 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for Amara who they say exploited immigrant workers for labor, money and sex. (AP Photo/Linn County Sheriff)(AP Photo/Linn County Sheriff, File)

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — A former manager at an Iowa slaughterhouse will spend 30 more months in prison for harboring and financially exploiting immigrant workers who were in the U.S. illegally, a federal judge ruled Friday.

U.S. District Judge Linda Reade gave former Agriprocessors Inc. manager Hosam Amara a 41-month prison term, the most recommended under advisory sentencing guidelines. But she said that Amara would get credit for 11 months he has already

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spent in custody since his arrest in Israel and extradition to the U.S., and she rejected a prosecution request for a longer sentence.

Amara is the latest figure to be sentenced to prison after a May 2008 immigration raid at the Agriprocessors Inc. plant in which 389 workers were arrested. The plant in Postville, in northeastern Iowa, had become the nation's largest kosher slaughterhouse, and the majority of its 1,000 workers had come to the U.S. illegally from Guatemala, Mexico and elsewhere.

Amara, who came to the U.S. from Israel in 1994 and became a U.S. citizen, ran the poultry side of the slaughterhouse. Reading a written statement, Amara said that he took responsibility for and pleaded guilty to harboring immigrants but said that he was simply trying to make a living to support his family.

Reade said that Amara facilitated the widespread hiring of "undocumented alien workers," took cash payments in exchange for hiring 15 such employees, and profited from a scheme in which he and his associates sold used cars to them.

"He made money off of their plight," she said.

Amara, 49, also helped workers obtain false identification documents and fled to Israel after learning that he was under federal investigation following the 2008 raid, she said. Israeli authorities arrested Amara in 2011, and he was returned to the U.S. last year after unsuccessfully challenging his extradition.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Deegan asked Reade to consider a sentence "substantially above" the 41-month guideline. He said that Amara was a key player in a scheme to harbor immigrants that was "about as pervasive as the court is going to find." Amara repeatedly took advantage of vulnerable workers who he knew could not get bank loans, buy cars on their own or complain to police about sexual mistreatment, he said.

Testifying for the prosecution, Iowa Department of Transportation investigator Christopher Leeman said that Amara worked with friends who owned a used car dealership in Cedar Rapids to sell more than 60 vehicles to Agriprocessors workers.

Amara received a commission of up to \$500 per vehicle and made loans to some buyers, Leeman said. Amara threatened one worker who cooperated during the 2005 DOT investigation, he said.

While agreeing he financially exploited workers, Reade rejected the request from federal prosecutors to issue a longer sentence for Amara's role in sexually exploiting female workers.

In support of the request, former Agriprocessors employee Chad Root testified Friday that he witnessed Amara receiving oral sex from a worker in an office at the plant and that Amara made crude comments to him about which female workers "put out."

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After getting a female subordinate pregnant, Amara beat up her husband at the plant when the husband confronted Amara, Root testified.

Root, who is serving time for drug and firearms charges, said that he was seeking a reduction in his sentence by testifying. Amara's attorney, Clemens Erdahl, said that Amara impregnated the worker but argued that the rest of Root's testimony was not believable.

Reade said prosecutors did not present enough evidence to prove that Amara sexually exploited workers. She said that even if she believed Root's testimony, it showed improper workplace behavior but "not the kind of thing I would increase a sentence for."

The sentence was less than a 78-month term that prosecutors had proposed in a December filing.

Meanwhile, Erdahl asked Reade to shorten the sentence by giving him credit for 21 months he spent on home confinement during extradition proceedings. She rejected that request.

"He's a naturalized U.S. citizen," she said. "Anytime he wanted to come back and face the music, he could have gotten on the plane."

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