

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 10 JUNE 2015**

**RE: COUPLE GET 15 YEARS FOR DRUG DEALING**

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The Durban Regional Court sentenced Collins Orji Uwakememe and his wife Veliswa Uwakememe to an effective 15 years imprisonment on Monday, 08 June 2015. Their sentences relate to charges of contravening the Medicines and Related Substances Act as well as Money Laundering.

The couple were arrested in July 2013 after police received information that there was a clandestine drug laboratory being operated from a gated estate in Amanzimtoti. The accused were found in possession of 51000 tablets and 50kgs of raw materials to make up the tablets as well as R206 000 in cash. The South African Police Service(SAPS) forensics laboratory confirmed that the tablets were synthetic ecstasy (commonly known as Bath Salts) that had the estimated street value of R4.3 million. The raw materials had the potential to manufacture 500 000 tablets with a street value of approximately R50 million.

Senior state advocate Mahen Naidu led the evidence of three experts from the SAPS forensics science laboratory who testified that the accused had altered the chemical composition of the raw materials so that it fell outside the contraventions of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act and into the Medicines and Related Substances Act, where the penalty provisions are lesser. Further, they testified that these tablets were more potent than Tik.

In aggravation of sentence, Advocate Naidu called Colonel AK Hoosen who stated that Bath salts is a new international trend and is problematic in both Europe and America. He further mentioned that he was contacted by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in America and the United Nations Drug Desk for updates on the investigations and prosecution of this matter. Advocate Naidu argued for a lengthy period of imprisonment saying that the eyes of the world were focused on the court. The asked the court to consider the clandestine and very organised nature of the operations as well as the volume of narcotics found in their possession.

The accused were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for contravening the Medicines and Related Substances Act and 15 years imprisonment for Money Laundering.

The National Prosecuting Authority commends the prosecution on the successful finalisation of this matter and we hope that this sentence will serve as a deterrent to people who contemplate similar offences.

Kind Regards,

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