

Media Statement



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TO : ALL MEDIA

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RE : NPA SEIZES HOUSE OF HUMAN SMUGGLER

On 28 May 2010, the Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU) in the NPA, with the assistance of a Court appointed curator, seized a house in Mayfair, Johannesburg, owned by a member of an international human smuggling syndicate and his wife. This was after the South Gauteng High Court, on 18 May 2010, granted the AFU a preservation order in terms of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act, against the immovable property owned by Inayat Musa Patel and his wife Waheeda Patel, valued at approximately R700 000.

The preservation order authorised the seizure of the immovable property pending the outcome of an application by the National Director of Public Prosecutions for the forfeiture of the property. It is alleged that the house was used as a base for Patel's human smuggling operations and therefore an integral part of Patel's criminal activities. It is further alleged that the house was purchased with the proceeds of Patel's criminal activities.

Patel is currently facing criminal charges in the South Gauteng High Court. He is presently out on bail and trial will proceed on 26 July 2010. These charges relate to racketeering, as well as 200 counts of fraud, alternatively contravening the provisions of the Immigration Act. It is alleged that Patel was the South African head of an international human smuggling syndicate that assisted 200 Indian nationals to gain illegal entry into the

United Kingdom via South Africa. Patel obtained fraudulent South African documents for his “clients,” with the assistance of corrupt Home Affairs officials, and arranged for their passage to the United Kingdom.

The criminal trial and asset forfeiture applications are the result of effective joint investigations and co-operation between the United Kingdom authorities, the South African Police Service, the NPA’s Organized Crime Prosecution Division and AFU, which started in 2006.

This is the second time that the AFU has acted against Patel. In 2007, it seized an amount of R74 000, representing the proceeds of his illegal human smuggling activities. Human smuggling is however different from human trafficking in that in the case of smuggling, people who are smuggled are willing participants thereto unlike trafficking where the victims are forced. The syndicate’s large scale operation was one of the factors that had resulted in the United Kingdom withdrawing the visa exemption status previously enjoyed by South African citizens. The purpose of these initiatives is to ensure that those involved in illegal human smuggling are dealt with effectively. It sends out a warning to all persons engaged in such activities that they will be effectively dealt with and not benefit from their crimes.

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