

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: WOMAN WHO STOLE BABY SENT TO JAIL

A 34-year-old woman was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment (half of which was suspended for a period of five years) in the Empangeni Regional Court this week after pleading guilty to the kidnapping of a one-week-old baby in July 2011 in the Phaweni area near Jozini.

In her plea, she said that she went to the baby's mother's house after noticing small baby clothes hanging on the washing line. She asked the whereabouts of the baby's mother. The mother, who was 16 years old at the time, told her that she was the baby's mother and that her parents were in Johannesburg. She said in her parents' absence, her neighbour was her guardian.

The accused then lied to them and said she worked for a government department that assisted people who did not have ID documents and birth certificates so that they could access financial assistance from the government.

Since the young mother did not have an ID and her new baby did not have a birth certificate, the accused convinced the guardian to allow her to take them into the Jozini CBD to apply for same.

When the three got to town, the accused gave the young mother money to go buy some food.

The accused said she would stay with the baby while the mother went to the shop. Even though the young mother was reluctant, she left the baby with the accused and went into the shop. As soon as the mother was out of sight, the accused fled with the child, taking him to Johannesburg.

The matter came to light years later, when the accused and her boyfriend were separating and the child's paternity came into question.

The accused said she stole the baby because she loved children and did not have any of her own. She said she intended to permanently keep the baby boy.

The Regional Court Prosecutor, Sdu Nyawo, submitted a Victim Impact Statement facilitated by the Court Preparation Officer, Mandisa Sikakane which was compiled by the baby's mother. In the statement, the mother said she cried for days without eating or sleeping after her baby went missing. She looked for him everywhere and every time she heard that a baby boy was found somewhere, she and her family would rush to see if it wasn't her baby. She also mentioned that her family spent lots of money seeking assistance from traditional healers trying to locate the baby. They also incurred further expenses on paternity tests. The mother said she wanted nothing to do with the accused.

The Director of Public Prosecutions in KwaZulu-Natal, Advocate Elaine Zungu welcomed the conviction and sentence. "We are glad that the child was returned safely to his mother, albeit so many years later. This matter, especially the Victim Impact Statement compiled by the mother, shows the effect of such crimes on the family of those affected. The baby's mother had a harrowing experience. The efforts in ensuring the successful finalisation of this matter by both the prosecution and police is applauded," she said.

Natasha Kara

Regional Spokesperson: DPP KZN

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