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PRESS RELEASE

Indictment in the case of the human smuggling criminal organization causing the death of 71 immigrants (in the so-called Parndorf-case)

The Prosecution Office of County Bács-Kiskun handed in an indictment to the Kecskemét Court of Justice based on aggravated homicide and human smuggling committed in the framework of an organized criminal group against 11 – Afghan, Bulgarian and Lebanese – men.

The human smuggling criminal organization was directed by a 30-year-old Afghan man (L.) who provided the money necessary for the operation and, with the help of his accomplices, organized the transportation of immigrants who had crossed the Serbian-Hungarian border illegally to Western Europe. A 31-year-old Bulgarian citizen (M.) who was the head of the human smuggling Bulgarian drivers also participated as an organizer in the activity of the organized criminal group and so did a 51-year-old dual Bulgarian-Lebanese national (K.) who obtained the vehicles and the temporary registration plates. The rest of the defendants took part in the crime as drivers and “forerunners” accompanying the facilitating vehicles.

The criminal organization operated from February 2015 until August 27, 2015, transporting immigrants to Germany or to Austria on a daily basis from June. The Prosecution Office mentions 31 transports in the indictment during which people were often carried in closed, dark and airless vans unsuitable for passenger transport, in crowded, inhuman, excruciating conditions. With these transports, the international criminal group moved more than 1200 people to Western Europe illegally and the Afghan leader earned at least €300,000 through this activity. The indictment involves also a facilitation during which nearly 100 immigrants were squeezed into the load area of a truck.

On August 26, 2015, around 5 am, close to the Serbian-Hungarian border, near Mórahalom the members of the criminal organization locked 71 migrants – 59 men, 8 women and 4 children – in a dark and unventilated refrigerator lorry whose doors could not be opened from the inside. The immigrants were transported to Austria on the highways M5, M0 and M1. The truck, which started its way from Kecskemét to pick up the migrants, was driven by a 25-year-old Bulgarian citizen (I.) and accompanied by a 38-year-old Bulgarian citizen (T.) as a forerunner. Before this occasion, both men performed several tasks for the criminal organization.

Approximately in half an hour after the departure, the migrants indicated with bangs and cries that they were running out of oxygen. The signals were heard by the driver and the forerunner also. Through their Bulgarian boss, they reported the problem to the Afghan head of the criminal organization who ordered them several times not to open the door of the load area, to ignore the people suffocating there and to reach Western Europe as soon as possible. Even though they could have helped the victims, the driver and the forerunner complied with the instructions of their boss and the Afghan leader. As a result, the 71 victims locked in the load area suffocated in horrendous conditions in 3 hours from the departure in the territory of

Hungary. After crossing the Hungarian-Austrian border, I. and T. left the refrigerator truck in the hard shoulder of highway A4, near Parndorf and returned to Hungary using the forerunner vehicle.

In order to make more money, the following morning the members of the criminal organization loaded 67 migrants to an unventilated, closed refrigerator lorry near Mórahalom. The defendants turned a blind eye to the fact that because of the inhuman conditions migrants had got into life-threatening medical conditions and transported them to the town of Gols, Austria. This time the migrants could kick the door of the load area open, thus no one had died.

Among the defendants of this top-priority case, nine smugglers are awaiting for the trial in preliminary custody while concerning two other defendants the Prosecution Office filed a motion for holding the trial in their absence. All of the defendants are accused of felony of human smuggling committed in the framework of an organized criminal group, partly in a business-like manner, with the torture of the smuggled persons. Besides this, the four defendants who participated in the “death lorry” transport (L., M., I. and T.) are charged with felony of homicide committed with particular cruelty, against more than one person, among these, persons under the age of 14.

M. and another Bulgarian smuggler who took part in the transport on the day following the “death lorry” event are charged with 67 counts of life-threatening battery. The Prosecution Office proposed life-term imprisonment for four defendants while concerning the others, fixed-term imprisonment executed in a maximum-security facility and expulsion from Hungary. The final decision on the culpability of the defendants will be made by the Kecskemét Court of Justice.

Done at Kecskemét, on May 4th, 2017.

Signed by:
Dr. László Nánási Chief Prosecutor