

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Brothel Owner Sentenced to Over 7 Years in Prison After Pleading Guilty To Trafficking Women

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ST. THOMAS — Brothel owner Ramona Rivera Luna has been sentenced to 87 months behind bars.

Rivera Luna, 65, of the Dominican Republic, was sentenced on Monday by Chief USVI District Court Judge Robert A. Molloy after pleading guilty to “one count of transporting an individual in foreign commerce for the purpose of prostitution and three counts of bringing illegal aliens to the United States for financial gain.”

Luna was the proprietor of the Embers Guesthouse, an illegal brothel in St. Thomas which Luna staffed with women from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela who she

admitted to tricking into coming to the USVI. She says she promised them jobs as bartenders, but when they arrived, they found themselves owing Luna for the costs of their travel and no bartender work available.

Instead, Luna forced them into sex work, taking a commission from the women's earnings, and extracting rent payments as well.

Following Luna's stint in prison, she will serve a further five years on supervised release. She was ordered to pay \$1,095,712.00 in restitution and a mandatory \$24,400 special assessment fee.

Judge Molloy said that his sentencing decision took into consideration the mental anguish to which Luna had subjected her victims.

A number of law enforcement departments investigated the case including Homeland Security investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Meredith Edwards.