

# Ex diplomat from Philippines accused of trafficking nanny

## Canada-wide warrant issued for Bueneflor Cruz and her husband, who have left country

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A former diplomat from the Philippines and her husband are facing criminal charges for allegedly trafficking their 26-year-old nanny for labour at their Ottawa home.

Insp. Paul Johnston said a woman was "controlled" by the couple for more than four years after entering the country legally to work as a nanny. Her identification was allegedly seized by the couple.

"She was working every day, under conditions that wouldn't be appropriate for anyone here in Canada," Johnston told CBC News.

"Her movements were controlled, her activities were controlled and who she was in contact with was controlled. And her hours of operation were well beyond what would be considered respectable."

## 3rd-party complaint triggered investigation

The police investigation began in December 2013 after a third-party complaint about alleged illegal labour. A 26-year-old woman was rescued and remains in Canada in a safe location, police said.

This is the first time human trafficking charges related to labour have been laid in Ottawa, police said.

A Canada-wide warrant has been issued for Bueneflor Cruz, 44, and Robert Cruz, 45.

Police alleged the couple exploited the woman for "financial and material benefit" from July 2009 to December 2013 at their home.

At the time, the couple had diplomatic immunity.

## Couple surrendered ID cards, returned to Philippines

On April 30, police requested a waiver of immunity from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD) to proceed with criminal charges.

Police said Bueneflor Cruz had been on a posting with the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, and her husband Robert had joined her in Ottawa.

But on Monday, DFATD informed police the couple had surrendered their identity cards and returned to the

Philippines.

The husband and wife have been charged with trafficking a person by exercising control, trafficking a person for financial/material benefit and withholding or destroying identification documents for the purpose of facilitating an offence.

Robert Cruz was also charged with uttering threats to cause bodily harm and mischief under \$5,000.