

‘Poverty not an excuse to engage in porn trade’

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CORDOVA Mayor Adelino Sitoy yesterday urged his constituents not to use poverty as a reason to engage in cyberpornography.

“Saying that they are into cyberpornography because of poverty is crazy. There are several poor people out there yet they acquire money in an honest and proper way,” he told reporters.

Last Wednesday afternoon, operatives of the Regional Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force barged into a residence in barangay Ibabaw, Cordova where children were allegedly exposed by their parents to pedophiles online for a fee.

Maricel Ayad and her live-in partner Dionesio Inoc were arrested while their five children aged 11, 10, 7, 6, and 3 were turned over to the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Charges of violating Republic Act 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 are expected to be filed against the couple today before the Mandaue City Prosecutors’ Office which has custody over crimes in Cordova.

“Those involved in cyberpornography are really just after easy money. They know they will get large amounts of money through illegal and immoral means,” Sitoy said.

Sitoy added there were at least four raids on homes suspected as havens for cyberpornography in Cordova.

Small territory

Despite the government’s best efforts, Sitoy said the home-based cyber-porn enterprise continue to exist in Cordova.

“These people should know that what they are doing would just lead them to prison. It will end in a family’s break-up. The children will be entrusted to the Department of Social Welfare and Development while parents stay behind bars,” he said.

Sitoy clarified that cyberpornography isn’t confined to Cordova alone but also in other localities in Cebu.

“A US agent told me that cyberpornography is existing all over. But why do raids always happen in Cordova? He said it’s easy to apprehend people in Cordova since it’s a small territory,” Sitoy said.

He said investigative agents in the US were the first to detect the transaction between those involved in cyberpornography in Cordova.

“American citizens are reportedly the persons who connect with the people in Cordova. But US agents are now monitoring transactions,” Sitoy said.

He said he’s formulating an ordinance to detect cyberpornography operations through money transfer shops.

“I already called money transfer operators and they showed me the forms in receiving money. We will agree on making some revisions in their money transfer forms for us to identify the sources of money,” Sitoy said.

More arrests

Since the victims are minors, the case falls under qualified trafficking, a non-bailable offense.

In an interview, Ayad admitted that she used to perform lewd acts in front of the web camera for foreign clients before.

But she said she never exposed her children to cyberpornography. She said she only talked with foreigners, hoping some will pity her and give her money.

Edna Regudo of the DSWD’s Crisis Intervention Unit (CIU) said there will be an “assessment of the children’s relatives” to see if they can provide shelter and protection. With Correspondents Peter L. Romanillos and Michelle L. Padayhag

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