



NEWS RELEASE  
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## POEA raps agency for recruitment of minors

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) has ordered the immediate filing of administrative and criminal charges against a licensed recruitment agency which is reportedly involved in recruiting teenage girls as domestic helpers for Syria.

POEA Administrator Jennifer Jardin-Manalili directed the immediate investigation of Greengate Manpower Services Co. based on the overseas employment certificates (OECs) or exit permits of the two minors who were offloaded at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). POEA also immediately placed the agency under preventive suspension, thus prohibiting them from further recruiting workers for overseas employment. Under the provisions of Republic Act 8042, as amended by the newly passed law on overseas employment, Republic Act No. 10022, and the POEA Rules and Regulations, deployment of minors carries with it the cancellation of the license of the recruitment agency.

The two minors were not allowed to pass through the immigration gates after Bureau of Immigration (BI) personnel suspected that the girls' real identities were altered based on the documents they presented and the obvious discrepancies in their ages as compared to their physical appearance. Initial investigation revealed that the girls attempted to pass themselves off as 23 years old, the age reflected in their passports purportedly to qualify them as household service workers who, under the Household Service Worker Reform Package of the POEA, are required to be at least 23 years of age. Bone-aging examination, however, revealed they are only 14 and 17 years old, respectively.

The girls were presented to the POEA administrator by BI officials, representatives of the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., a non-government organization working for the protection of victims of trafficking in persons, and POEA officers who all form part of the task force against illegal recruitment at the NAIA airports. The girls admitted they were both minors, aged 14 and 17, and brought to Manila by their recruiters from Lamitan, Basilan.

In the light of this development, the POEA again cautioned the public especially in the far-flung areas to guard against the recruitment activities of some agencies and illegal recruiters preying on young girls with the promise of employment overseas. Parents are especially advised not to be swayed by the enticing offers of work abroad for their minor children. The POEA is also calling upon the assistance of the local government units to intensify their campaign against illegal recruitment and trafficking in persons. ###