

Allentown Man Cleared Of Kidnap, Rape 'Victim' Admits Prostitution

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Kidnapping and rape charges against an Allentown man were dropped yesterday because the alleged victim said she did not want to testify and gave different accounts of what happened.

Abdul Hamid Ali Alchahal, 31, of 504 N. 2nd St. pleaded no contest to indecent assault before Lehigh County Judge David E. Mellenberg, who ordered Alchahal to pay a \$300 fine or perform 100 hours of community service.

The 20-year-old woman, who has been convicted of loitering, told police and Assistant District Attorney John Waldron that she was a prostitute, Waldron said.

She and Allentown Detective Russell D. Kerchner, the police prosecutor, did not object to the negotiated plea, according to Waldron.

Alchahal initially was charged with two counts of kidnapping, rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, two counts of felonious restraint, recklessly endangering another person, crimes committed with firearms and carrying firearms without a license.

He spent about two months in the county prison after the alleged incident last Aug. 13.

In early October he was released after Judge James N. Diefenderfer set bail at \$25,000 approved surety.

The district attorney's office and Patrick J. Reilly, Alchahal's counsel, agreed as part of the plea that the sentence would be to time served.

Mellenberg said he had "no quarrel" with the negotiated plea but wanted to hear "for the record" from Waldron that the woman did not object to it.

"We are going from horrendous charges all the way down to a misdemeanor of the second degree," Mellenberg said. "I don't want this young lady suddenly two days from now saying, 'Look at this case. Look what they have done with it.'"

Waldron said the woman missed eight or nine appointments to discuss the case and told him, "Do whatever you want. I'm not going to testify."

"There's two different stories all the way through," Waldron said.

The woman attended a preliminary hearing before District Justice Wilbur Gilbert but was "nearly impossible" to reach after that, Waldron said.

Assistant District Attorney Howard Stevens said there was no medical evidence of rape.

The woman first said she was walking on Turner Street in Allentown when Alchahal pulled up in a station wagon and forced her into the car, Waldron said. She claimed he used a gun to get her into his car and drove to a field in South Whitehall Township where the alleged rape occurred.

She later called police from a convenience store.

Waldron said police had evidence that she flagged down the car. They searched Alchahal's house and car but did not find a gun.

In one of her statements, she told Waldron that Alchahal offered to pay her \$15, the attorney said.

"She was waffling back and forth about what happened," he told Mellenberg. "We have reason to believe there was a problem with money. She wanted \$50. He was willing to pay \$15."

Reilly said Alchahal has no criminal record in his homeland, Lebanon, or in the United States.

He told the judge that Alchahal, who has five children, would be able to get his job back at a fabrics company when the case is settled.

Reilly said he was prepared to take the case to trial but felt a trial would have been "risky" because of the climate of hostility bred by the hostage crisis.

He told Mellenberg that a sentence of one year or more would jeopardize Alchahal's chances for citizenship and could mean deportation.

In Lebanon, the convictions on the charges he faced in Lehigh County would mean the death penalty, Reilly said when Alchahal was asked if he understood the no contest plea.

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