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Woman gets year for false rape claim

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A woman who made a false rape allegation to gardaí seven years ago has been jailed for 12 months by Judge Desmond Hogan at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court.

Melanie Gibbons (26) went to England after failing to appear at Dublin District Court in relation to the offence in May 1998.

An extradition warrant was issued for her arrest last February, and she was taken into custody by gardaí at Holyhead on June 18th after spending two weeks in Holloway Prison.

Gibbons, from Hardwicke Street, Dublin, pleaded guilty to making the false statement at Kevin Street Garda station on December 16th, 1996. She has no previous convictions.

Det Garda Garvan Ware told Ms Caroline Biggs, prosecuting, that Gibbons made the complaint after meeting a man.

She claimed he raped her in his flat in Dublin.

Gardaí launched an investigation in which the man was interviewed.

After further inquiries were made, the allegations were proved to be false and Gibbons was arrested. Det Garda Ware said there was no apparent reason for her to make up the claim, but said she was suffering from depression and her mental state was not right.

She later admitted she did not have sex with the man and he never forced himself upon her. Judge Hogan, who banned any information on the man being published, said he did not intend to hold Gibbons in custody any longer.

He suspended the last six months of the sentence, taking into account that she had been in custody since the start of June.

He said: "The court should mark the seriousness of the offence.

"However, it did happen some time ago and I'm not aware of any serious effects that the allegation has had on the victim."

Det Garda Ware said that when Gibbons was interviewed about the allegation, she said she had something on her mind and was going to kill herself. He said that in England she had a relationship with another man and they had two children.

Mr Pdraig Dwyer, for Gibbons, said his client did not have a particularly happy childhood because she was bullied at school and had spent a lot of time in and out of clinics with various psychiatric issues.

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