- Human trafficking

QC closes 2 hotels; girl, 14, rescued

‘It’s heartbreaking that children, who should be in school, become victims of exploitation by abusive individuals.’

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The Quezon City Government has shut down two lodging establishments found complicit in the trafficking and exploitation of minors, as part of its intensified campaign to protect children from abuse.

On 20 June, the Business Permits and Licensing Department (BPLD) issued a temporary closure order against Blazingwood Apartelle in Barangay San Agustin for violating Section 75(c) of the Quezon City Revenue Code. The provision authorizes the mayor to close any business deemed a public nuisance or used by disorderly or criminal individuals.

The closure came after a joint entrapment and rescue operation last May, led by the Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center–Luzon Field Unit (PNP WCPC-LFU), in coordination with the Caloocan City Social Welfare Department and QCPD. Six minors were rescued from the apartelle, and two suspects were arrested for violating the AntiTrafficking in Persons Act and the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act.

“It’s heartbreaking that children, who should be in school, become nd victims of exploitation by abusive individuals,” Mayor Joy Belmonte said. “We will not stop until those responsible are held accountable. If we have to inspect every establishment in the city, we will.”

Earlier this week, the BPLD also closed down MC Hotel (Maxmuller, Inc.) for violating the Quezon City Liquor Ordinance. The hotel was found allowing minors to consume alcohol within its premises.

Last 18 June, a rescue operation conducted by the city’s Social Services Development Department (SSDD), QCPD, and the PNP WCPCLFU led to the rescue of 20 minors from the hotel. Social workers confirmed that some of the children were involved in sex work and had been staying at the hotel for over two weeks. Others admitted they frequently visited the establishment to drink and swim.

The rescued minors are now under the care of the Quezon City Processing Center and Bahay Kanlungan, while efforts continue to contact their families and barangays.

All-out campaign against exploitation Mayor Belmonte has ordered the BPLD, SSDD and QCPD to intensify inspections of inns, motels and similar establishments that could be used as fronts for human trafficking.

The city is also working with barangay officials, police commanders and faith-based organizations — including the Dioceses of Cubao and Novaliches — to strengthen antitrafficking efforts across Quezon City.

Under City Ordinance SP-3413, S-2024 or the Quezon City Tourism Child Protection Policy, all tourismrelated businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and shops, are required to report any suspected case of child abuse, exploitation, or online sexual exploitation of children (OSAEC)

within 24 hours. Establishments are likewise required to report adults accompanied by unrelated minors.

They must require adults to present valid proof of identity and proof of relationship for any minors in their company. Entry must be denied to unregistered minors who are not relatives of the guest.

“As a child-friendly city, it is our duty to protect our children. We cannot turn a blind eye to suspicious activities,” Belmonte said. “If you know something, report it immediately to the city government.”

Residents may report suspected cases of child exploitation through Helpline 122 or the official Facebook page of the Quezon City Government.

14-year-old girl rescued

A 14-year-old girl was rescued from human trafficking inside a hotel in Binondo, Manila on Friday night, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) reported Saturday.

The operation was launched after the victim and her mother filed a report days earlier, revealing that the girl had previously been sexually exploited in exchange for money.

Barely a week later, the same individuals allegedly attempted to exploit the minor again by arranging a new booking through online messages. Acting swif tly, the NCRPO mounted a coordinated rescue and entrapment operation, which led to the arrest of the suspects.

Criminal charges for violation of Republic Act No. 9208, as amended by RA 10364 or the Expanded AntiTrafficking in Persons Act of 2012, will be filed against those arrested.

The rescued minor is now under the care of local social welfare authorities for protection and assistance.