



Newark pastor pleads guilty to forcing teens to videotape him, lover

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LINDEN — A well-respected pastor of a Newark church admitted yesterday to endangering two teenage girls by making them videotape his sexual trysts with a congregant.

Moises Cotto, 55, of East Orange pleaded guilty to two counts of endangering the welfare of a minor in connection with the liaisons that authorities said lasted two years.

In exchange for the guilty plea, the state will recommend a 14-year prison term, will require Cotto to register as a sex offender under Megan's Law and be placed on parole supervision for life, said Assistant Union County Prosecutor David Hummel.

Cotto, pastor of Yahweh Templo El Candelero, was arrested in May along with his mistress, Brenda Pabon, 37, a congregant at the church who has also been charged in the case. He was initially charged with kidnapping, aggravated assault, attempted aggravated sexual assault and endangering the welfare of a minor.

"This is a man who violated all the values and beliefs that he swore to live by for a life of lies and deceit," said Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow.

Authorities at the time said Cotto and Pabon began an extramarital affair in 2008 and at met least twice a week at the Benedict Motel in Linden. The meetings lasted until May, when one of the victims told a parent about the videotaping.

Charges are still pending against Pabon, who is accused of kidnapping and endangering the welfare of a minor.

While at the motel, Hummel said, Pabon and Cotto allegedly forced the girls to videotape their sexual acts.

Cotto has been held at the Union County jail in Elizabeth in lieu of \$1.3 million bail since his arrest. He is scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 8. Pabon is being held in lieu of \$750,000 bail.

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Union County
Prosecutor's
office

Rev. Moises Cotto, 55,
pastor of the Congregation
of Yahweh Templo El
Candelero on Chester
Avenue in Newark.

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