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11 claim they were duped

ELEVEN Filipinos have filed a writ in the Supreme Court seeking almost \$400,000 in damages from their Hongkong employers.

They claim they were tricked into working for a family clothing business in Hung Hom, and were ill-treated and underpaid.

Two of the five defendants were jailed in January after pleading guilty to conspiring to bring the 11 into Hongkong in breach of the Immigration Ordinance.

The Filipinos - Leopoldo Sanchez, Corazon Acosta,

Margarita Gavina, Melendrina Natividad, Warlita Natividad, Nida Acosta, Erlinda Angeles, Belinda Bardillion, Aludia Uy, Gina Collamar and Daylinda Elorde - yesterday filed a writ for damages in the Supreme Court.

Their statement of claim alleges they were employed in the Philippines between 1986 and 1989 to be domestic helpers in Hongkong.

Their employers, Stephen Lee Yui-kwan and Marthy Li Chak-kwan, arranged their visas, passports and air

tickets, promising them decent jobs and wages.

The reality, they claim, was starkly different.

On arrival their passports were taken away and they were given menial jobs in two clothing factories.

They were made to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, were given no holidays and only allowed out twice a week on supervised shopping trips.

They claim they were given no accommodation and had to sleep on the factory floors.

Their employment was terminated last November when their passports were seized by the Immigration Department.

They are still unable to return to the Philippines.

The 11 claim they were not paid the wages promised them and have lodged claims for compensation ranging from \$10,825 to \$53,496. The writ involves claims totalling \$398,966.

Lee and Li were jailed for four and three months respectively in January after pleading guilty to a conspiracy charge at Western Magistracy.