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### **Raji Afife Azar found guilty of running a LEGO fencing operation**

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced that on January 31, 2019, a jury found 41-year-old Raji Afife Azar guilty of running an operation to buy stolen merchandise, including multiple LEGO products.

Sentencing is scheduled for February 15, 2019 at 9:30 a.m. before Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Kenneth R. Walker.

During the two day trial, the state presented evidence that proved Azar was acting as a “fence,” somebody who buys stolen merchandise from thieves.

“This was, relatively speaking, a sophisticated fencing operation,” Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Sean Hughey, who prosecuted this case, said during opening statements.

The jury found Azar guilty of one count of laundering a monetary instrument, one count of criminal conspiracy to commit theft in the first degree, three counts of computer crime, and seven counts of attempted theft in the first degree.

During trial, the state presented evidence to show that Azar ran his online fencing operation between January and April 2018 in Multnomah County. The investigation started in early 2018 when the Fred Meyer Organized Retail Theft Unit received information about someone, later identified as Azar, who was willing to routinely buy stolen merchandise.

Fred Meyer launched an undercover investigation during which, Azar gave the undercover agents, and an undercover Portland Police Bureau detective, “outright advice” on how to be a better thief, DDA Hughey told the jury.

According to Portland Police, during the investigation, the Fred Meyer Organized Retail Theft Unit worked with the Northwest Organized Retail Crime Alliance (NWORCA) and learned that Azar had solicited multiple people to steal from various businesses throughout the area.

Evidence presented at trial showed Azar was able “to buy stolen merchandise from thieves for about 30 cents on the dollar, turn around and then leverage technology by selling it to complete strangers over eBay where they would never know that this might be stolen property,” DDA Hughey told the jury.

Azar was taken into custody on April 26, 2018 in the 10300 block of Southeast Washington Street in Portland, Oregon. Once in custody, law enforcement executed a search warrant at his residence in the 2000 block of Southeast 102nd Avenue. During the court-authorized search, investigators located a large quantity of stolen LEGO products and other stolen merchandise. Investigators estimated, at the time, the value of the stolen LEGO products and other items taken from local Fred Meyer stores to be approximately \$50,000, according to Portland Police.

The jury acquitted Azar of one count of felony computer crime.

Additional details about this case may be released after the defendant’s sentencing hearing.

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