

The Jerusalem District Court sentenced a Beit Shemesh man to 14 years in prison on Sunday for multiple counts of rape and sexual abuse, concerning three underage girls.

Yosef Shunim was found guilty of sexually abusing three girls, aged 6, 10, and 12 at the time of the offences, who were daughters of couple with whom he had a friendly relationship.

In addition to the prison sentence, Shunim will also be made to pay NIS 30,000 in compensation, as well as a NIS 2,000 fine and one year of suspended sentence.

The three presiding judges said in their ruling that the offences "committed by the defendant are both sever and vile," saying Shunim "took advantage of the complete trust his good friends and the victims had in him so to harm their innocence, committing a series of sexual abuses for years."

"[Shunim] committed his abuses while playing games, driving, seduction, all for the sake of relieving his impulses," the judges continued, adding that the "severity of the crimes was in their nature, quantity and duration, and specifically in targeting young girls."

The defendant's attorney, Ariel Atari, said in response to the court's sentencing that the punishment was "severe and not in proportion to the alleged offences," saying that Shunim intended "to appeal both the conviction and the sentencing to the Supreme Court."

Shlomit Ben-Yitzhak, who represented the Jerusalem District Prosecutor's Office, said that the court, in its sentencing, "gravitated toward the public's interest in handing stricter punishments to those who commit offences against minors."

"The sentence sends a message to defendant and others like him, that anyone who sexually abuses small children and hurts the trusting families of those children is to expect a lengthy jail term," Ben-Yitzhak added.

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