Corrupt United Nations advisor who worked with poverty-stricken countries jailed for taking bribes of £1.7million

September 23, 2017

By Ben Weich

The Mirror

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/corrupt-united-nations-advisor-who-11223782>

A [World Bank consultant](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/world-bank) who raked in £1.7million in bribes while advising the United Nations on poverty stricken countries has been jailed.

Wassim Tappuni, 64, rigged bidding wars between companies vying for contracts worth £43m to supply medical equipment to hospitals in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Tappuni gave corrupt firms the inside track on what the World Bank was looking for during bidding processes.

He also helped them to discredit rival offers in exchange for huge bribes, which he hid in a secret tax-free Swiss bank account.

Tappuni pulled off the scam from his luxury home in Kingston-upon-Thames, in south-west London, while he was being paid £170,000 a year by the World Bank and the [United Nations Development Programme](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/united-nations-development-programme).

He was convicted of a total of 13 fraud charges on July 25 following a trial at [Southwark Crown Court](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/crown-court).

Yesterday's sentencing hearing was briefly halted for a short time after Tappuni's wife collapsed in the public gallery, and was helped outside by the couple's sons.

Prosecutor Mukul Chawla, QC, said: "In terms of the contracts themselves, the payments that Mr Tappuni received were based on varying percentages of the overall contract price generally, in the order of two to five per cent.

"On one occasion, there was a flat fee agreement originally for €20,000, but subsequently €10,000 was paid."

Between April 2008 to June 2013, he received 65 corrupt payments totalling just under £1.7m for contracts worth £43m.

Jailing him for six years, Judge Peter Testar said Tappuni's decisions were made 'purely and simply for his own greed and enrichment'.

He said: "Everything was carefully designed to conceal what he was doing and to conceal his payments for doing it."

He added that Tappuni had shown some of the most 'self-righteous indignation in the face of utterly overwhelming evidence', suggesting his 'strong personality' may have swayed bidders to follow his lead.

The disgraced official was also disqualified from acting as the director of a company for ten years.

Peter Finnigan, QC, defending, said there was nothing to suggest that 'the wrong company won' in any of the corrupted bids.

He added that the six-year probe into Tappuni's affairs had caused 'the most incredible stress' on his client's friends and family.

The judge was told Tappuni has a heart condition, and suffered allergic reactions to various depression medications, while his 96-year-old mother suffered a stroke after learning of his convictions.

Mr Finnigan said: "He has lost his reputation, which is clearly enormously important to him, not only within the close circle of family and friends but also in the community.

"He is not a bad man, he is a man who has behaved badly."