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Raphael Bame (43), of The Cabins, Lower Abbey Street, Sligo, was sentenced to three years in prison, suspended for five years and ordered to complete 240 hours of community service. Photograph: Getty

Sorcha Crowley

Mon Dec 29 2025 - 18:40 • 3 MIN READ



A man v
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er €12,000 in pandemic unemployment
legally “highlighted the holes in the
asylum system”, according to a [Circuit Court](#) judge.

Raphael Bame (43), of The Cabins, Lower Abbey Street, [Sligo](#), appeared before Circuit Court judge Keenan Johnson for sentencing on December 18th after pleading guilty last July to making 36 fraudulent PUP claims



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He was sentenced to three years in prison, suspended for five years and ordered to complete 240 hours of community service.

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Bame's actions "highlighted the holes in the system that someone who had been deported can come back within a month" after having already fraudulently claimed PUP payments for nine months, the judge said.

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"It's an issue for the authorities," he said.

"The Department of Social Welfare is the cornerstone of our civilised society. He undermined the integrity of the system and that's an issue for society at large. When people abuse the system and make claims under false names, that's a serious issue because it undermines the integrity of the system."

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Detective Garda Gregory Regan from the [Department of Social Protection](https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2025/12/29/man-claimed-12000-in-pandemic-payments-while-in-state-illegally/) told the judge that Bame, a Cameroonian national, first applied for a PPS

number using the false name of Raphael Nyonsi in December 2018. He said Bame used real Italian documents obtained in Italy but under a false name.

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He said on June 30th, 2022, Bame then applied for a second PPS number using his real name. However, this sparked a Garda investigation when facial image matching software flagged Bame as a potential match for the person also using the name Raphael Nyonsi.

Det Garda Regan took statements from the Department of Social Protection and on May 12th, 2024, he arrested Raphael Bame by arrangement. During [Garda](#) interviews they established that Bame was in the country illegally and had no 'stamp four' immigration permission or work permit. They also determined he had claimed PUP when he was not entitled to it under the false name.

Detective Garda Regan said Bame made admissions to the offences as soon as the matter was put to him but claimed that the HR department of his workplace made the application for the PUP payment on his behalf.

When the judge asked Detective Garda Regan where Bame had been working, he replied that the place where he had been working at the time of the offences was Molly Fulton's bar in Carraroe, Co Sligo, also under the false name of Raphael Nyonsi.

The court heard Bame had no previous criminal convictions.

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Bame entered the country for a second time on January 17th, 2020, and overstayed, Detective Garda Regan said. On January 7th, 2021, a deportation order was made against him.

On August 4th, 2021, he left Ireland voluntarily and he was refused re-entry on August 18th. He returned on a holiday visa on May 16th, 2022, and applied for a new PPS number and public services card under his real name, which alerted the authorities.

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A fresh deportation order was then issued against him after it was discovered that he had already claimed asylum in Italy. This order is still live.

The judge asked if it was Bame or the HR department of his workplace who had applied for the PUP, to which Mr Dockery replied that Bame had applied for it.

“So he wasn’t upfront with the gardaí about it, in order to reduce his culpability. I’m not impressed by that,” replied the judge.

In summing up, the judge said the State was at a loss of €12,550. He noted Bame left on August 4th, 2021, but attempted to come back in on August 18th, 2021, and was denied entry. “He got back in through the UK and Northern Ireland presumably,” said the judge.

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The judge noted the facial recognition software was extremely effective and “should reduce the number of false claimants”.



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