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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Sentenced for Killing Girlfriend in Whittier

A 57-year-old man was sentenced today to 50 years to life in state prison for shooting his girlfriend to death in their Whittier home, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Deputy District Attorney Mariela Torres said Rafael Ayala Castillo was found guilty on Nov. 13 of first-degree murder in case VA145805.

The jury also found true a special allegation that the defendant personally and intentionally discharged a firearm, which caused great bodily injury and death to the victim.

Castillo and his girlfriend, Sandra Rodriguez Polanco, 54, had been in a relationship for nearly 10 years and shared an apartment together in the 11700 block of Floral Drive in Whittier.

According to court testimony, on Sept. 12, 2017, a family member of Polanco's went to her home and found the victim with a fatal gunshot wound to the head.

Authorities were called and police began searching for Castillo, the prosecutor said. The defendant was located that afternoon in Reseda and taken into custody.

The couple had been having relationship problems prior to the murder, according to witness testimony.

The domestic violence case was investigated by the Whittier Police Department.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.