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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Sentenced to LWOP for Capital Murder, Arson, Stalking

A 34-year-old man was sentenced today to life in state prison without the possibility of parole for the 2015 killing of his estranged wife's friend, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

On March 29, a jury found Ernesto Ornelas guilty of five counts in case TA138348: one count each of first-degree murder, arson and stalking and two counts of disobeying a court order.

Jurors also found true a special circumstance allegation of lying in wait. Moreover, jurors found true a special allegation that the defendant personally and intentionally discharged a firearm which caused great bodily injury and death.

Deputy District Attorney Shannon Cooley, who prosecuted the case, said Ornelas had a long history of domestic violence involving his wife, from whom he was separated and living apart.

A domestic violence protective order was issued in May 2015. However, Ornelas violated the order several times, the prosecutor said. Additionally, Ornelas threatened to kill several men as a result of his jealousy over his wife, the prosecutor added.

On Sept. 19, 2015, Ornelas impersonated his wife on her social media account and had a conversation with victim Miguel Evora, 28, a friend of his wife's from church, the prosecutor said.

Several hours later, the defendant lured Evora to his residence in the 3500 block of East Imperial Highway in Lynwood. When Evora arrived, Ornelas fatally shot the victim three times, the prosecutor added. The defendant then dismembered Evora's body and concealed the remains in the trunk of the victim's vehicle. Evora's car and body was later recovered in San Bernardino, the prosecutor said.

A day after the killing, an arson was committed at Ornelas' residence to cover up the crime scene. Still, Evora's blood was located in the defendant's home on a pair of burnt shorts and sheets, according to evidence presented at trial.

On Oct. 7, 2015, Ornelas was apprehended and later charged in connection with the planned killing.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the San Bernardino 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.