

Jackie Lacey
District Attorney
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NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Greg Risling, Assistant Chief
Media Relations Division
213-257-2000
GRisling@da.lacounty.gov
Twitter: @LADAOoffice

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Pair Face Death Penalty for Murder, Torture of 10-Year-Old Boy

A criminal complaint was amended today against a mother and her boyfriend accused of murdering and torturing her 10-year-old son, making the pair eligible for the death penalty, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

The complaint adds a special circumstance allegation against Kareem Ernesto Leiva (dob 12/23/85) and Heather Maxine Barron (dob 9/29/89) that says the murder of Anthony A. was intentional and involved the infliction of torture.

The defendants were charged in June with one count of murder and torture. On Wednesday, they also were additionally charged with one count of child abuse for allegedly beating Anthony's younger brother.

Both defendants appeared in court today and pleaded not guilty to the amended charges. They are scheduled to return on Nov. 27 for a preliminary hearing setting in Department A11 of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Antelope Valley Branch.

Deputy District Attorneys Jon Hatami of the Family Violence Division, Complex Child Abuse Section, and Saeed Teymouri of the Family Violence Division are prosecuting the case.

On June 20, Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies responded to a home in the 1100 block of East Avenue K in Lancaster. Anthony A. was taken to a hospital where he died the following day.

The defendants are accused of torturing the boy in the days leading up to his death, prosecutors said.

They face a possible maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole or death if convicted as charged. A decision will be made at a later date on whether to seek the death penalty.

Case MA074159 remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Homicide and Special Victims bureaus.

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.