

Jackie Lacey
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NEWS RELEASE

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Two Charged in Killing of Man Whose Body Was Found in Mojave Desert

A San Gabriel man was charged today with killing a 21-year-old college student whose body was found last week in a remote area of the Mojave Desert, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Assistant Head Deputy Habib Balian of the Major Crimes Division said Ethan Kedar Astaphan (dob 6/1/93) faces one count of murder in case BA491591.

Co-defendant Sonita Heng (dob 5/10/00) of Harbor City faces one count of accessory after the fact.

Arraignment is scheduled today in Department 30 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center.

Victim Juan Hernandez disappeared on September 22 and his body was found on November 15 in the desert in San Bernardino County, the prosecutor said.

Astaphan faces a possible maximum sentence of 25 years to life in state prison if convicted as charged. Heng faces three years in prison.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles 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.