

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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Dec. 19, 2016

Man Sentenced to LWOP for Planning Wife's Murder in 1992

A 43-year-old man was sentenced today to life in state prison without the possibility of parole for hiring another to stage a robbery and then kill his wife, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

On Nov. 21, Morrad Modle Ghonim was convicted by a jury of first-degree murder in case VA138935. Jurors also found true special circumstance allegations of lying in wait and murder for financial gain, as well as a gun allegation.

Deputy District Attorney Robert Villa, who prosecuted the case, said on July 23, 1992, Vicki Ghonim, 17, was in a car with her infant son and husband, defendant Morrad Ghonim, at Creek Park in La Mirada.

While at the park, an unknown person walked up to their vehicle. The person attempted to rob them, and then fatally shot her, the prosecutor said.

The case remained unsolved for more than 15 years. In 2009, authorities received a DNA hit that linked Leon Martinez, 42, to the killing. He was arrested on Oct. 20, 2010.

Evidence presented during trial revealed that Morrad Ghonim paid Martinez \$500 to stage a robbery and carry out the murder, the prosecutor said.

On March 12, 2015, a jury convicted Martinez of first-degree murder and found true special circumstance allegations of lying in wait and murder for financial gain. A special allegation that Martinez personally used a handgun also was found to be true.

Martinez is scheduled to be sentenced in case VA116931 on Feb. 23, at the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Norwalk Branch.

More than a month after Martinez's conviction, prosecutors charged Morrad Ghonim in connection with his wife's death.

At the time of the filing, Morrad Ghonim was living in the Caribbean island of Antigua. In May 2015, he was apprehended by law enforcement and returned to the U.S.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's 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.