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Verdict Reached in Domestic Violence Homicide Case: People v. Rodrigo Flores Gomez

Imperial County District Attorney's Office announces that on July 25, 2025, a jury convicted Rodrigo Flores Gomez of first-degree murder with willful premeditation and deliberation.

On February 14, 2024, the victim of the murder, Sandy Fabela, obtained a Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) against her husband, Defendant Rodrigo Flores Gomez. Both the victim and the parties' 16-year-old daughter submitted declarations describing 16 years of coercive control, psychological abuse, and physical violence inflicted upon the victim and children by the defendant. In her declaration, the daughter explicitly stated she feared her father would kill her mother. The restraining order was granted, prohibiting Defendant from coming within 100 yards of the victim and the couple's three minor children; however, it was never served.

On April 12, 2024, Ms. Fabela and neighbors contacted the Brawley Police Department after the Defendant was seen walking on the roof of her residence. During the subsequent investigation, the Defendant was arrested for possession of Methamphetamine and felony resisting an officer with force or violence. The defendant was subsequently released from custody.

On April 19, 2024, Ms. Fabela informed the Defendant that she would not allow drug use around their children and that the restraining order granted her custody. The Defendant responded by threatening her, stating, "I will beat you until you can't get up."

On April 20, 2024, after a family dinner at approximately 8:00 p.m., the couple's 16-year-old daughter went to sleep in a backyard studio apartment where she had been living to escape the emotional turmoil of the main household. While the parties' infant and 7-year-old son were asleep, the Defendant brutally assaulted the victim, striking her repeatedly in the head and body before strangling her with enough force to fracture her hyoid bone. He then dragged her lifeless body to her car, placed her in the passenger seat, and abandoned the vehicle in nearby Meserve Park.

The Defendant returned home and approached his daughter under the pretense that the victim was in the hospital, and he needed help locating her phone. Once the phone was found, he deleted the home's security footage from that evening.

The daughter asked, "Did you kill my mom?" The Defendant admitted, stating he "had" to kill her and that he had moved her body. The daughter immediately called 911.

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Brawley PD Sergeant Mark Cano and Agent Ryan Araujo located the vehicle and found Ms. Fabela slumped over in the passenger seat, unresponsive. Forensic Pathologist Dr. Evan Matshes testified that the victim had sustained fatal injuries that rendered life-saving efforts futile.

Approximately 30 minutes into the investigation, the defendant confessed to killing the victim and placing her body in the car at Meserve Park. The Defendant was charged with Penal Code §187 (murder of Sandy Fabela) and Penal Code §273a(b) (child abuse against their daughter). His murder and drug cases were consolidated for trial.

While in custody awaiting trial, the Defendant attempted an escape from county jail. He told staff, "I'm working on something, it's looking good." During recreation time, he scaled a basketball hoop to reach the roof between Modules F and G, dropped down, and walked to the east gate leading to the street. His escape was thwarted when his clothing became entangled in barbed wire, allowing jail staff to apprehend him. He was subsequently charged with attempting to escape and pleaded no contest to that charge.

Sentencing for both the murder conviction and the escape attempt is scheduled for August 22, 2025, in Department 7 at the El Centro Courthouse, before the Honorable Judge Christopher Plourd.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Kia Harris of the Imperial County District Attorney's Special Victims Unit.