



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: July 22, 2022
Re: Roberto Carlos Beltran and Edgar Araujo Mendez
Jury Trial Conviction in Jail Slashing case

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Roberto Carlos Beltran and Edgar Araujo Mendez, two members of the Norteno criminal street gang, have been convicted after a jury trial of violently assaulting another inmate while they were incarcerated at the Stanislaus County jail. Deputy District Attorney Patrick Hogan prosecuted the case on behalf of the People.

On January 10, 2022, Beltran and Mendez, ages 34 and 25, who were incarcerated in the Stanislaus County jail ambushed a 26-year-old victim as he walked down a set of stairs during a routine cleaning of their housing unit. Evidence and trial testimony from witnesses, including a Modesto Police Department Gang Unit investigator, described the attack as having taken place in full view of multiple other inmates and was believed to have been motivated by internal gang politics. The attack was stopped when Sheriff's department deputies intervened.

During the attack, a sharp jail-made weapon, commonly called a "shank," was used to slice the victim's face causing significant injury. Such a slashing attack on a gang member's face is often used to humiliate or punish that member for not conforming to gang commands or rules. The victim was subsequently removed from the housing unit for his own safety.

The two inmates were charged with committing mayhem along with enhancements for personally using a deadly weapon and having prior violent or serious felony convictions.

On July 5, 2022, after a two-week jury trial before Stanislaus County Superior Court Judge Dawna Reeves, a jury returned guilty verdicts against both defendants for attempted mayhem, assault with a deadly weapon and participating in a criminal street gang. The jury also found true an enhancement on each count for committing the crimes for the benefit of a criminal street gang.

Violent incidents by members of criminal street gangs that take place while in custody harm not only the victims of those crimes, but endanger other non-involved inmates and jail staff.

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Previous laws used to prosecute gang members have been changed significantly by the State Legislature. Which has made it more difficult for prosecutors to convict gang members who commit criminal acts. Many District Attorney's offices around the state have struggled with these prosecutions, especially after a new law took effect in January of 2022.

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