



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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Hawthorne Man Convicted of First-Degree Murder of Estranged Wife in Simi Valley

VENTURA, Calif. – Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Zarbab Ali (DOB 01/04/97), of Hawthorne, was convicted by a jury of the first-degree murder of Rachel Castillo, the mother of their children. Ms. Castillo was in the process of divorcing the defendant, and the divorce was nearly complete at the time Ali murdered her. The jury also found true the special circumstance that the murder was committed by means of lying in wait and that Ali used a knife. Prior to trial, Ali pled guilty to the felony crime of sexual contact with the victim's remains after her death. He faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Senior Deputy District Attorney David Russell, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Major Crimes Homicides Unit, prosecuted the case.

"Our thoughts are with Rachel's family, who have endured unimaginable pain since the day she was taken from them," Mr. Russell said. "I am thankful for the outstanding efforts of law enforcement, whose investigation made this verdict possible. While nothing can restore what her loved ones have lost, this conviction ensures the defendant will spend the rest of his life in prison and that the community will be protected from him forever."

On November 13, 2022, detectives from the Simi Valley Police Department and the FBI located Ms. Castillo's body in a remote desert area near Littlerock. Ali was arrested later that day after leaving his parents' home in Victorville.

Ali is scheduled to be sentenced on January 12, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 24 of the Ventura County Superior Court.



Zarbab Ali moments after the verdict is read in Courtroom 24 of the Ventura County Superior Court.

Case: 2022029127

Defendant Information:

Zarbab Ali (DOB 01/04/97)

Hawthorne

Charges convicted of:

- PC 187(a) – Murder

Charges pled guilty to:

- HS 7052(a) – Unlawful mutilation, disinterment, or act of sexual contact with human remains

Special allegations found true:

- PC 12022(b)(1) – Use of deadly weapon (knife)
- PC 190.2(a)(15) – Murder by means of lying in wait