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THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Press Releases

JURY CONVICTS VISALIA MAN OF 1999 COLD-CASE MURDER OF SALINAS FATHER

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Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine M. Pacioni announced today that a jury convicted Jimmy Torres Rodriguez, age 51 of Visalia, of first-degree murder for the 1999 cold-case murder of Elias Diaz. The jury also found true a special allegation that Rodriguez personally and intentionally discharged a firearm resulting in death.

Diaz, age 39, was a father of seven children and the owner of a Salinas car dealership at the time of his murder. On November 19, 1999, Diaz was shot and killed by a person pretending to be a customer interested in purchasing a vehicle. The shooter fled the scene and abandoned the murder weapon and the distinctive clothing he was wearing in a trash can a few blocks away. Subsequent DNA testing on the clothing items, along with corroborating witness testimony, linked Rodriguez, then 27, to the murder.

The Honorable Rafael Vazquez presided over the 11-day jury trial. Rodriguez is scheduled to be sentenced on January 25, 2024. He faces a maximum sentence of 50 years to life in prison.

The case was investigated by Salinas Police Department Sergeant Ruben Sanchez and District Attorney Investigator Kris Hunsaker, with the valuable assistance of many current and retired Salinas Police Department officers and the California Department of Justice, Bureau of Forensic Services Crime Laboratories in Watsonville and Richmond. The victim's family was supported by Victim Assistance Advocate Susana Reyes.

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