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DA Gains Maximum Punishment for Ex-fugitive in 2008 Murder

Houston Tx – Suspected street gang member Ignacio Ruiz, who was recaptured after fleeing prior to his scheduled trial last month, received the maximum punishment of life in prison and \$10,000 fine on his conviction for murder, Harris County District Attorney Patricia Lykos announced Friday.

A jury returned the punishment Thursday against Ruiz, 21. He killed Rigoberto Careaga, 22, in a shooting that also wounded a female bystander on June 27, 2008.

“This killer fled, but in Harris County all of law enforcement work together to seek out and hunt down violent predators and bring them to justice,” District Attorney Lykos said. “I thank the jury for their service.”

Lykos commended the work and professionalism of the prosecutors, Assistant District Attorneys Laura Killinger and Paul Fortenberry. “The jury gave this first-offender a life term because of the random, brutal nature of the crime, combined with his utter lack of emotion and remorse,” Killinger said.

Jurors, she said, returned the verdict after also learning of an alleged assault by Ruiz when he was out on bond, and the fact that he had fled. “All of that simply proved to the jury that the defendant is not someone who should ever be allowed back into the community,” Killinger said.

The defendant was charged with felony bond-jumping for failing to appear for trial in the 228th State District Court on Jan. 26. Two days later, an intensive manhunt located him hiding in a female friend’s closet in the 5000 block of Chennault.

Investigators said Ruiz tried to flee again after being handcuffed. They captured him one block away when his trousers slipped down and sent him tumbling to the ground.

Evidence at trial traced the murder back to his repeated romantic overtures to a young female stranger at a gas station. He and companions followed her in their car to her friend’s house in the 4700 block of Park Drive, and refused Careaga’s requests for them to leave.

A witness said the defendant twice shouted to others, “Give me a green light,” before firing five shots at the unarmed victim. The car sped away and Ruiz fled to Mexico. He returned later and was arrested when charges were filed.

Prosecutors praised the dedication and tenacity of Houston Police Homicide Sergeants Jon Brooks and Millard Waters for their extraordinary work in developing the case and in tracking and capturing the fugitive. (end)

