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First-Degree Murder Conviction and Rejection of Insanity Defense
People v. Christopher Kaulaity: Kern County Superior Court Case BF202307A

(Bakersfield) – Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant homicide verdict. On April 17, 2026, a Kern County jury found Christopher Kaulaity guilty of the First-Degree Murder of his aunt, Maria Carmen Torrez, that occurred on December 7, 2024, on Haley Street in east Bakersfield. The jury also found Kaulaity guilty of personally using a deadly weapon during the crime. On April 23, 2026, the jury returned a separate verdict rejecting Kaulaity’s claim that he was legally insane at the time of the murder. This case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Cole Sherman.

Christopher Kaulaity and his aunt, Maria Carmen Torrez lived together in a house on Haley Street that was shared with seven other adult family members. On the morning of December 6, 2024, a family argument involving Kaulaity and his aunt occurred over issues with the single toilet in the residence clogging. Over the next 24 hours, tension built in the house and multiple family members warned Kaulaity that if problems continued, he and his adult sister would have to move out. On the morning of December 7, 2024, the victim was on her way to the bathroom and while passing Kaulaity in the hallway, she insulted him. While the victim was in the bathroom, Kaulaity went to his bedroom where he retrieved pepper spray and a knife. Kaulaity then kicked open the bathroom door, pepper sprayed his aunt “to blind her,” and then stabbed her repeatedly in her back and neck.

After stabbing Ms. Torrez seven times, Kaulaity called 9-1-1 and explained that he had just stabbed his aunt to death. Deputies from the Kern County Sheriff’s Department responded to the scene and took Kaulaity into custody. Life saving efforts were applied to Ms. Torrez, but she succumbed to her injuries inside the home. Kaulaity was interviewed by KCSO detectives that afternoon and he explained in detail what he had done and why.

During the trial, the defense presented evidence from a local psychologist in support of their claim that Kaulaity suffered from mental health disorders causing him to hallucinate, which they argued made him unaware of what he was doing or that it was wrong. However, the jury rejected this claim based on

Kaulaity's actions and statements from the day of the murder, and based on the testimony from a second psychologist who explained that Kaulaity was aware of what he was doing and knew that it was wrong.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; "Kaulaity's murder of his aunt was a tragic act against a woman who should have been safe inside her home. The District Attorney's Office and its prosecutors are committed to seeking justice, against individuals like Kaulaity, who commit violent crimes and attempt to excuse their behavior through unwarranted claims of insanity."

Sentencing is scheduled for May 20, 2026, in Department 1 of the Kern County Superior Court before the Honorable Chad Louie. Kaulaity faces a sentence of up to 26 years to life in prison, for this heinous crime of violence.

Christopher Kaulaity:

