



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF KERN

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KENNETH M. RUSSELL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
DDA Cole Sherman
(661) 868-2350

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Kern Valley State Prisoner Found Guilty of the Murder of Cellmate
People v. Robert Hernandez: Kern County Superior Court Case BF196739A

(Bakersfield) – Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant jury trial verdict. On July 17, 2026, a Kern County jury found Robert Hernandez guilty as charged of the Second Degree Murder of his cellmate, Jose Aviles, that occurred on September 9, 2021, at Kern Valley State Prison (KVSP). The Court also found true that Hernandez had a prior “strike” conviction for an attempted murder he committed in 2018 in Los Angeles County. This case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Cole Sherman.

On the afternoon of September 8, 2021, Hernandez and Aviles were escorted and locked into their shared cell at KVSP. This was the last time Aviles was seen alive. On the morning of September 9, 2021, officers responded to the shared cell where they located Aviles’ deceased body concealed in his bed underneath a sheet with a towel covering his head from view. Hernandez was removed from the cell. When asked what had happened, Hernandez merely stated that Aviles was “unresponsive.” Aviles had significant injuries to his face and neck and was pronounced deceased at the prison. His injuries included shoe prints on his face and neck that matched the bottom of the shoes Hernandez had been wearing.

An autopsy determined that the victim died from blunt force trauma and strangulation. At trial, Hernandez testified and claimed that Aviles had attacked him and stated that he acted in self-defense. The jury rejected this claim based on the evidence which proved that Hernandez had attempted to conceal Aviles’ body following his crime in addition to evidence that proved that Hernandez had no injuries to his body consistent with his story.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; “Hernandez has demonstrated a clear and ongoing pattern of violence that has persisted even during incarceration. Despite his attempt to justify his actions as self-defense, the jury rightfully rejected that claim after carefully considering the evidence. This conviction will ensure that he faces the full consequences of his heinous crime.”

Sentencing is scheduled for August 14, 2026, before the Honorable Kenneth C. Twisselman in Department 9 of the Kern County Superior Court. Hernandez faces an additional 35 years to life sentence.

Robert Hernandez:

