



**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

ANDREA S. KOHLER
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
SDDA Joseph Marcano
(661) 868-2389

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**Guilty Verdicts Handed Down In Animal Cruelty and Arson Case Where Defendant Stabbed and
Lit A Live Dog On Fire:
People v. Orlando Vela, Kern County Superior Court Case #BF180969A**

(Bakersfield) -- Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant verdict on a significant arson and animal cruelty case today. On Thursday, June 30, 2022, a Kern County jury found defendant, Orlando Vela, guilty of several felony charges including arson, animal cruelty, brandishing a deadly weapon at police officers, possession of a dirk or dagger, and using force or violence to resist arrest. Evidence in the trial was presented by Deputy District Attorney Leanne Wilder.

On May 6, 2020, at 7 o'clock in the morning, Orlando Vela was contacted by Bakersfield Police officers near the intersection of Union Avenue and California Avenue in Bakersfield. Vela was pushing a shopping cart with a dog inside that he had stabbed and lit on fire, and which was still engulfed in flames. When Bakersfield Police Department officers attempted to make contact with Vela, he was aggressive, combative, yelling, and refusing all commands. He then produced a 12-inch dagger and exhibited it in a menacing manner towards officers to resist arrest. Vela then wandered into the traffic lanes near multiple occupied vehicles while attempting to avoid arrest.

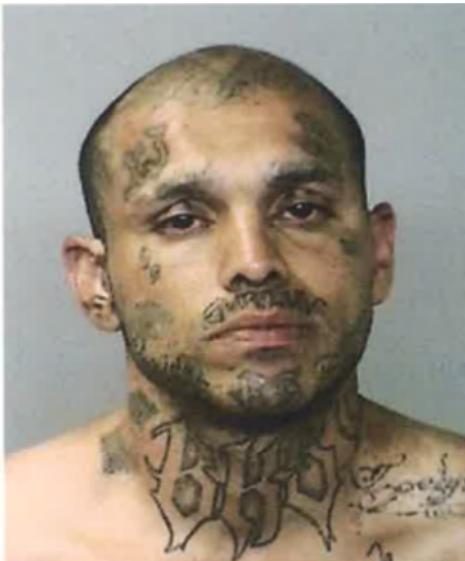
More officers and Bakersfield Fire Department personnel arrived on scene. Vela continued to be aggressive, yell, scream, and ignore commands given by officers. Two additional Bakersfield Police Department officers contacted Vela a second time in an attempt to place him under arrest. Vela ran into a nearby parking lot, turned around, faced the officers, and took a fighting stance with his fists up and began to swing his arms at officers. Once on the ground Vela continued to kick and resist arrest. At one point, Vela attempted to bite multiple officers. After several minutes, Vela was placed in handcuffs and arrested. Upon a search of his person a 12-inch dagger was found in Vela's front pants pocket.

Bakersfield Fire Department Captain and Fire Investigator, Chad Mullen, was on scene and investigated the fire of the shopping cart. It was discovered that the object on fire in the shopping cart was Vela's dog. The dog had been stabbed and then set on fire. A veterinarian confirmed the presence of smoke inhalation in the dog's lungs, which indicated that, despite being stabbed by Vela, the dog remained alive at the time that Vela set it on fire. The dog did not survive the injuries.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, stating; "Dogs will often lay down their lives for their owners, and for a man to return that loyalty by stabbing his dog to death and lighting it on fire displays a level of cruelty seldom seen, and which absolutely will not go unpunished. Vela's actions are despicable, and this conviction assures that his crimes will be met with a well-deserved prison commitment."

On July 29, 2022, the matter will go before the Honorable Charles Brehmer for sentencing. Vela has an extensive criminal history that includes prior convictions for automobile theft, firearms and drug offenses, gang activity, and a 2017 'strike' conviction for assault with a deadly weapon that will be considered by the court in the imposition of the final sentence. Vela faces a sentence up to 31 years in prison.

Orlando Vela:



Recovered Dagger:

