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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Re:

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MODESTO, CALIFORNIA – Stanislaus County District Attorney James Brazelton announced today that Rami Soguel Merza, age 21, of Modesto, was sentenced, after being convicted by jury, to seventeen (17) months in the county jail, 4 years formal supervised probation, counseling and restitution. Deputy District Attorney Jeanne Schechter prosecuted the case for the People.

The case arose out of events which occurred on August 17, 1999, at approximately 4:40 p.m. on Highway 132 near McCracken Road. The defendant was driving a new Honda Accord westbound and pulled out into the eastbound lane to pass a pack of cars. As a big rig hauling two empty flatbed trailers approached in the eastbound lane, the defendant attempted to race to the front of the line of cars he was passing and get back into his own lane. The driver of the big rig was forced to take evasive action, along with many other drivers. The defendant reached speeds of 94-108 m.p.h., lost control of his car and crashed into a vehicle directly behind the big rig. That vehicle was driven by Shuching Chu, who had just picked up her sister, Annie Calderara, from the airport and they were returning to Modesto. Mrs. Chu was killed as a result and her sister severely injured. Also injured in the crash was the defendant's cousin, Jennifer Isho.

