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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: November 4, 2022
Re: Rene Rodriguez Franco
Attempted murder and aggravated mayhem jury
convictions

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Rene Rodriguez Franco, age 48, of Modesto has been convicted of attempted murder with premeditation and deliberation, aggravated mayhem, assault with a deadly weapon, infliction of emotional distress upon a child and two counts of false imprisonment. Deputy District Attorney Sara Sousa prosecuted the case for the People.

On July 12, 2019 at approximately 10:30p.m., officers of the Modesto Police Department were dispatched to an alley behind Melrose Ave. in Modesto for a reported stabbing. Once there, officers found a 44-year-old female victim covered in blood from multiple stab wounds. Her 5-year-old son was with her and had two cuts to both sides of his face extending out and upwards from his lips.

The victim told investigators she had been in a dating relationship with Franco and earlier that evening they had gone to a local grocery store together. After returning home, there was a verbal argument between them.

Once inside the home, the female victim asked Franco for a glass of orange juice. When Franco handed it to her, he stabbed her eleven times in the neck, chest, forearms and face with a knife. The 5-year-old began to scream and cry as he watched Franco stabbing his mother from only four feet away.

Franco then turned to the child and used the same knife to carve both sides of the boy's face. In court, witnesses described the cuts as resembling a "Joker cut" similar to the one on the face of the comic book character. After the attacks, Franco stood in front of the door and prevented both victims from leaving to seek medical aid. The mother begged Franco to let them go as she could not breathe and was feeling faint due to extreme blood loss.

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At jury trial, the mother gave a first-hand account of the horrifying events. A law enforcement witness testified that while speaking to the child victim at the hospital, he was able to see the child's molars and clear into the back of the child's throat through the cuts in his cheeks. A medical expert testified the slicing to the child victim's face was approximately 10 centimeters in length and penetrated through several layers of facial tissue and muscle. That same medical expert testified Franco stabbed the female in vulnerable areas and she could have bled to death.

Investigators who interviewed Franco said he admitted to stabbing the female victim in the neck, chest and stomach and to slicing the child in the neck with the same knife.

On October 13, 2022 after only one day of deliberations, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury returned guilty verdicts to all charges and found true all enhancements, allegations and aggravating factors.

Initially, Franco had entered a plea of "Not Guilty by reason of Insanity," however, he withdrew that plea after the verdicts.

Franco has a long criminal conviction history, which includes a 1995 assault with a deadly weapon conviction and a 2012 robbery conviction, both of which were charged as "strikes" under California's "Three Strikes" law.

Franco waived his right to a jury trial on the strike convictions. After a court trial, Judge Linda McFadden found that he had suffered the previous convictions which may now be used to enhance his sentence.

The attempted murder and aggravated mayhem convictions are Franco's third and fourth strikes. He is currently facing a minimum sentence of 50 years to life on those two counts alone, without taking into consideration any enhancements, priors or other crimes for which he was convicted.

Sentencing is currently scheduled for December 5, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. in Department 3 before Judge McFadden.

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