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Judges sends Attacker of Sikh Taxi Driver to Prison
Pedro Ramirez Sentenced to 13 years for assault and hate crime

(Woodland, CA) –June 6, 2011- District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that, on Friday, June 3, 2011, Yolo County Superior Court Judge Timothy Fall sentenced 42-year-old Pedro Ramirez of Natomas to thirteen years in state prison for his assault on a Sikh taxi driver on November 28, 2010. On March 7, 2011, Ramirez pled no contest to a felony assault charge and admitted that his attack on Mr. Singh was a hate crime. He also admitted that he caused great bodily injury to the victim. Johnny Morales, Jr., 33, of West Sacramento, who had a lesser role in the attack, pled no contest to a felony assault and was previously sentenced to felony probation.

This prosecution arose from the attack on Harbhajan Singh on November 28, 2010. Mr. Singh, a cab driver, drove the defendants and their wives to West Sacramento from Harlow's Bar in Sacramento. Mr. Singh was wearing a traditional Sikh turban and beard. As Mr. Singh was dropping them off, the defendants demanded a fare lower than the fourteen dollars requested by Singh. Mr. Singh was momentarily reluctant, but then turned to give Morales the additional change he demanded. At that point, Ramirez shouted racial epithets, accused Mr. Singh of being Muslim, and punched Mr. Singh in the face approximately ten times while Morales punched him from behind. The attack caused Mr. Singh to suffer multiple lacerations, a fracture of the orbital bone in his face and a spinal fracture. Ramirez also attempted to pull Mr. Singh from the car but was prevented by Mr. Singh's seatbelt. Ultimately, the wife of Ramirez stopped the beating by throwing her body between Mr. Singh and her husband. Morales and Ramirez then pulled Ramirez's wife from the car, allowing Mr. Singh to escape in his cab.

Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig credited the detectives and crime scene investigators of the West Sacramento Police Department with bringing the two men to justice. Crime scene investigators found a fingerprint in the victim's blood from the car, which the California Department of Justice identified as belonging to Ramirez. A series of interviews conducted by detectives established the roles of Ramirez and Morales in the attack.

During the sentencing hearing, a statement was read on behalf of the family by Aman Kaur, a family friend: "Today is not a happy day for us. We wish that none of this had happened. (Harbhajan) Singh wears the turban as an article of faith and this attack will not stop him from wearing it. He wants people to know that Sikhs are just like everyone else. He forgives his attackers and hopes that they find peace along with the rest of the community."

"Mr. Singh did nothing to provoke this vicious attack," commented District Attorney Reisig. "Attacking someone because of their race or religion is not only heinous, but against the ideals we hold as Americans and must not be tolerated."

Deputy District Attorney Ryan Couzens prosecuted the case. Couzens stated, "Mr. Singh suffered horrific physical and emotional injuries. The victim advocate on this case was instrumental in helping the Singh family throughout this ordeal."

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