



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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San Diego Man Sentenced for Rape, Other Sex Crimes Against Sister

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Stephen Delacruz (DOB 01/13/87), of San Diego, was sentenced to 30 years in state prison for sex crimes committed against his younger sister. Delacruz previously pled guilty on May 14, 2024, to eight felonies including three counts of forcible rape, three counts of forcible oral copulation, and two counts of sexual penetration by a foreign object. Delacruz also admitted special allegations that the victim was under 18 years of age.

The sentencing brings an end to a complicated legal process that began in 2019 when the victim, Samantha J., walked into the Oxnard Police Department to report that she had been raped by her brother when she was eight years old.

The District Attorney's Office initially filed charges in juvenile court alleging Delacruz was 14 and 15 years old when he committed the crimes back in 2001 and 2002. Then Senior Deputy District Attorney Erik Nasarenko sought to have the case transferred from juvenile court to adult court, arguing that the crimes involved significant sophistication and planning and were especially violent and severe. Delacruz isolated Samantha in their Oxnard house and threatened to kill her if she ever disclosed the crimes, often displaying a knife prior to the sexual assaults.

The juvenile court judge agreed with the prosecutor and transferred the case. However, in 2022, the state legislature amended the criteria that California juvenile court judges had to consider when weighing whether to transfer a case to adult court. The new criteria required courts to determine "by clear and convincing evidence that the minor is not amenable to rehabilitation" through the juvenile court. This change in the law entitled Delacruz to another transfer hearing, which meant



the case had to be returned to juvenile court and Samantha would have to endure the same process yet again. In 2023, a different Ventura County Superior Court judge, applying the new standard, found Delacruz fit for transfer to adult court, stating that the “allegations were horrendous.”

With the case now set to return to adult court, Delacruz exercised his right to appeal the transfer order to the California Court of Appeal, resulting in another delay for Samantha. In November 2023, the California Court of Appeal affirmed the transfer order and returned the case to adult court for jury trial. Delacruz then pled guilty to all eight felony charges filed against him before the case went to trial.

“Samantha demonstrated great resiliency and determination as she fought for justice and accountability in this case,” District Attorney Nasarenko said. “Facing her brother during today’s sentencing to give her victim impact statement took incredible strength and courage.”



District Attorney Erik Nasarenko during the June 27, 2024, sentencing of Stephen Delacruz.

Case: 2020016896

Defendant Information:

Stephen Delacruz (DOB 01/13/87)
San Diego

Charges pled guilty to:

- 3 counts) PC 261(a)(2) – Forcible rape
- (3 counts) PC 287(c)(2)(a) – Forcible oral copulation
- (2 counts) 289(a)(1) – Sexual penetration by foreign object

Special Allegations

- PC 801.1(a) – Victim under 18 years of age