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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Jury Returns Guilty Verdicts For First Degree Murder and Associated Charges in
Ridgecrest Domestic Violence Case**

People v. Jose Romero: Kern County Superior Court Case BF169466A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a jury verdict in a homicide case. On January 26, 2023, a Kern County jury found Jose Romero, age 67, guilty of the attempted murder of his then-wife, Estela Romero, and the first-degree murder of Elsa Rodas, Romero's neighbor. Deputy District Attorney Hunter Starr presented the evidence in the jury trial that resulted in the convictions.

On the night of August 20, 2017, Ridgecrest resident Jose Romero had been arguing with his wife when he went out and had several beers. When Romero returned home, he argued with his wife more. During the argument, Romero retrieved a pistol, loaded it, and attempted to shoot Estela. When the gun repeatedly failed to fire, Romero beat his wife with the gun, causing injuries to her head. Estela and her eleven-year-old grandson fled the residence. Romero followed. He left the now-empty handgun in his gun safe and retrieved an AK-47 rifle. Romero loaded the rifle and went to his neighbor's house looking for his wife.

Romero's neighbor, Elsa Rodas, opened her door when Romero knocked. Romero shot Ms. Rodas with the AK-47 and then entered her home looking for Estela. Romero entered a bedroom toward the rear of the residence and fired a shot into the closet, believing his wife to be hiding there. Romero then fled back to his residence. Meanwhile, Estela and her grandson had made it safely to a different neighbor's home. That neighbor called police and sheltered the victims until Kern County Sheriff's Deputies and Ridgecrest Police Officers arrived. When law enforcement officers arrived, Romero stood on his front porch and told police to kill him several times before turning and running toward his rifle. Officers chased Romero, tackled him, and took him into custody.

Evidence in the jury trial started on January 9, 2023, and the trial ended on January 26, 2023 with guilty verdicts for first degree murder and attempted murder as well as true findings on two gun-use allegations and one allegation of personal infliction of great bodily injury during a domestic violence incident.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, stating, “The impacts of domestic violence are seldom contained behind closed doors. Domestic violence and the harms that come from it spill into our streets and into the homes of others. The prosecution of domestic violence related crimes remains a priority for the District Attorney’s Office.”

Sentencing is scheduled for February 27, 2023 before the Honorable Judith Dulcich in Department 2 of the Kern County Superior Court, where Romero faces a sentence of up to 75 years to life in prison.

Jose Romero:

