



## COUNTY OF FRESNO

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2023

## **Driver Sentenced for Murder Following High-Speed DUI Crash into Couple on Vacation**

Today, January 20, 2023, Daniel Melgarejo (31, of Coalinga) was sentenced to five years plus fifteen years to life in state prison for the killing of Rochelle Weston (60, of Vallejo) in a crash on July 31, 2020. The sentence comes following Melgarejo's conviction of criminal charges including murder, driving under the influence causing injury, and hit and run from a collision causing death. He also admitted to an enhancement for personally inflicting great bodily injury upon Rochelle Weston's surviving spouse, Olander Weston (66, of Vallejo).

On July 31, 2020, Melgarejo was driving his vehicle eastbound on Highway 198. The Westons were also driving eastbound on their way to enjoy a vacation and spend time together at a resort. Melgarejo overtook and rear-ended the Westons going at least 115 miles per hour. He hit the Westons' vehicle with sufficient force to eject both Rochelle and Olander. Several uninvolved citizens stopped to attempt to render aid to the Westons, but Rochelle succumbed to her injuries from the crash, while Olander was rushed to an area hospital with severe injuries.

While citizens were attempting to render emergency aid to the Westons, Melgarejo approached with a cigarette in his mouth and asked them for a light. At no point did he attempt to render aid to his victims. Thereafter he fled from the collision scene.

Following investigation by the California Highway Patrol with cooperation from the Huron Police Department and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Division of Adult Parole Operations, Melgarejo was identified as a suspect. He was located passed out in the foyer of a family member's apartment and taken into custody. After the investigation was complete, it was determined that he had a blood alcohol concentration of .24%, or three times the legal limit for operating a vehicle in California.

Melgarejo was previously convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol in 2018 in Monterey. As a part of that conviction, he was advised that were he to drive under the influence and as a result someone was killed, he could be prosecuted for murder. Melgarejo was still on probation for his 2018 conviction at the time he crashed into the Westons.

The case was successfully prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Steven Ueltzen with the Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driver Vertical Prosecution Unit with assistance from Senior Investigator Jacob Rios of the District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigations. Funding for that unit has been provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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