

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Life in prison without parole plus 30 additional years for Atlanta man  
convicted by jury of rape, attempted murder, and other crimes**  
**State vs. Fernando Castillo**

**November 21, 2023** – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Fernando Castillo, 40, of Atlanta, was sentenced on November 9 to life in prison without parole, plus 30 additional years, after a Cherokee County jury found him guilty of charges related to a violent physical and sexual assault of his girlfriend.

The jury convicted Castillo on August 28 of 11 charges, including rape, aggravated sodomy (2 counts), aggravated sexual battery (2 counts), criminal attempt to commit murder, aggravated assault (2 counts), aggravated battery, false imprisonment, and burglary in the first degree.

The Cherokee Sheriff's Office arrested the defendant on June 26, 2020, after responding to a 911 call reporting a rape. The victim, who had dated Castillo for about eight months, had bruising and injuries to her eye, ears, face, and neck consistent with a strangulation.

According to the victim, early on the morning of June 26, 2020, Castillo used a keycode to enter her home then forced his way into her locked bedroom. Once inside the bedroom, Castillo began berating her about an earlier incident at her workplace, in which he claimed she disrespected him. He then struck her repeatedly, banged her head on the wall, pinned her to the bed, smothered her with his hand, and strangled her by pressing his forearm down on her throat.

The victim said she was unable to breathe and felt like she was losing consciousness. She recalled Castillo saying multiple times, "Die b---, die." She thought she was going to die and realized she was bleeding from her nose and her mouth. The defendant then sexually assaulted her multiple times. When Castillo fell asleep, she left the home and called for help.

After speaking to law enforcement, the victim was evaluated by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). Her strangulation injuries included hematoma swelling on both eyes, subconjunctival hemorrhage in her left eye, bruising on her chin, abrasions and petechia on her neck, petechia all over her face, and swelling and bruising above her right ear and behind her left ear. The victim disclosed numerous symptoms during and following the strangulation, including headache, difficulty breathing, dizziness, memory loss, feeling faint, coughing, sore throat, neck pain, and difficulty swallowing.

“The facts of this case are tremendously disturbing and one of the worst cases of strangulation I have seen in my career. The defendant’s attack on this victim was pure evil. He was vicious, brutal, and unrelenting, and she was lucky to escape with her life,” said Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis, of the Gang and Organized Crime Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

During the four-day jury trial, the State presented photographs and other evidence that Castillo physically and sexually assaulted the victim. A total of 21 witnesses testified, including the victim, law enforcement, medical experts, a domestic violence expert, and a forensics expert.

The jury deliberated for two days before issuing its verdict on August 28. During the sentencing hearing on November 9, Superior Court Judge David Cannon Jr. listened to arguments from the State and the Defense before sentencing the defendant, who is a recidivist offender, to life without parole followed by 30 years to serve. He was also ordered to have no contact of any kind with the victim or her family.

“When the young woman in this case first met Castillo, she had no idea what a cruel, callous man he was. Throughout their relationship, the violent incidents kept escalating, as often happens in the cycle of violence,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “This jury verdict and sentencing ensures that a very dangerous man remains off our streets for the remainder of his natural life. We hope that this case encourages other victims of domestic violence to seek the help they need.”

This case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis, Gang and Organized Crime Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

## **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence typically follows a pattern, with tension building, followed by a major act of violence, a calm period, and then cycling back to tension building. As time passes, the violent episodes often get more serious and may lead to a lethal act. This pattern of abuse is often referred to as the “Cycle of Violence.” According to the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence. Odds for homicide increase substantially for victims who have been previously strangled.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, please contact the Cherokee Family Violence Center, CFVC.org, 770-479-1703 (24/7 crisis hotline). In case of an emergency, call 911.

*The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.*

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