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For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#), (619) 531-3890  
[Tanya Sierra](#), (619) 531-3315  
*En Español* [Barbara Medina](#), (619) 531-3305

# Defendant in Grisly 2013 Christmas Eve Triple Murder Enters Guilty Plea

## *Carlo Mercado Sentenced to Three Life Terms Without Parole*

The [San Diego County District Attorney's Office](#) announced today that Carlo Mercado, 31, has pleaded guilty to three counts of murder with special circumstance allegations for the December 23, 2013 murders of Iлона Flint, Gianni Belvedere and Salvatore Belvedere. Mercado was immediately sentenced by Judge Frederic Link to three consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole. The plea agreement allows Mercado to avoid the death penalty.

Deputy District Attorney Brian Erickson prosecuted the case with support from District Attorney Investigator George Alldredge, Paralegal Tamra Clark and Victim Advocate Alana Harrell.

“Today’s guilty plea holds the defendant accountable and is a small measure of justice for the families of the victims, allowing them to avoid the emotional toll of a lengthy trial,” District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis said. “These senseless murders shocked San Diegans during the holidays three years ago. The team who prosecuted this defendant worked tirelessly in the pursuit of justice in order to reach an outcome that will send this murderer to prison for the rest of his life.”

Salvatore Belvedere and Iлона Flint, both 22, were shot in the head on the night before Christmas Eve in 2013 in the parking lot of the Westfield Mission Valley Mall. Gianni Belvedere, 24, was found in the trunk of a car in Riverside three weeks later.

In today’s change of plea, Mercado admitted shooting Gianni Belvedere in the head after the two got into an argument while Gianni waited in the Mission Valley parking lot for his fiancé, Iлона Flint, to get off of work. An hour and a half later, Mercado returned to the Macy’s parking lot in Gianni’s car, and was confronted by Iлона and Gianni’s brother, Salvatore. Mercado shot and killed them. Iлона died at the scene and Salvatore died a day later.

During the hearing, Deputy DA Erickson explained that Mercado fled the scene a second time in Gianni’s car with his body still in it. Mercado stuffed Gianni’s body in the trunk, applied a false license plate on the car and parked it near his home and work. Three weeks later, Mercado

retrieved Gianni's car, drove it to Riverside and abandoned it. There was no connection between Mercado and the victims. He did not know the victims and had no knowledge of or contact with them prior to killing them.

Cell phone evidence and Mercado's motorcycle linked him to the Mission Valley crime scene. Ballistic evidence linked the gun, registered to Mercado, as the weapon used to murder Gianni, Sal and Ilona. DNA evidence linked Mercado to Gianni's car and the bloody Riverside crime scene. DDA Erickson also presented evidence found in Mercado's home and car, his phone and computers.

In November 2013, Mercado was found incompetent to stand trial and sent to a state hospital. A judge later found him to be competent and he was returned to San Diego to stand trial.

The San Diego Police Department and Crime Lab, San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office, Riverside Police Department, Riverside County Sheriff's Coroner's Office, Homeland Security Border Patrol and Investigations, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Firearms Bureau of the California Department of Justice and the Cal-DNA Data Bank Program of the California Department of Justice all worked together bring this case to justice for the families of the victims and the community.

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