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For Immediate Release

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Probationer who Stabbed Elderly Trolley Rider Sentenced to Prison for Attack

Israel Valdivia Nearly Severed Ear of 71-year-old Man

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) said today that Israel Valdivia, 27, has been sentenced to prison for an early morning attack on a 71-year-old man that left the victim bleeding in the street with multiple stab wounds and a nearly severed ear.

Valdivia was sentenced to seven years to life in prison. He was found guilty by a jury of attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon on February 19. Both crimes carry allegations of use of a dangerous and deadly weapon and inflicting great bodily injury on a person over 70.

“This was a vicious, unprovoked attack on a vulnerable older man who was simply exiting the trolley to go to work,” DA Stephan said. “Today’s sentence brings a measure of justice to the victim and to the community at large. We will not tolerate senseless assaults in our trolley system or anywhere. This case demonstrates that violent criminals will be held accountable under the law.”

Valdivia approached the victim after he exited the trolley on his way to work at about 5 a.m. and attacked him, repeatedly stabbing him with an 11 to 13-inch knife. As the victim, 71-year-old Jose Serra, lay bleeding on the ground, Valdivia kicked him and fled the scene. He was eventually captured in Texas later the same month and extradited back to San Diego to face criminal charges.

Deputy District Attorney Mei Owen prosecuted this case.

Last year, defendant Angelina Montes Stricklen was sentenced to 13 years in prison for stabbing a sleeping 21-year-old man on the Blue Line Trolley in La Jolla. And in 2023, Ryan Rukstelis, was sentenced to 15 years-to-life in prison for fatally pushing a 68-year-old man into a moving freight train in an unprovoked attack.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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