

**\* NEWS RELEASE \***  
**SALINAS GANG MEMBER CONVICTED  
FOR THE DRIVE-BY MURDER OF AZAHEL CRUZ**

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**December 14, 2015**  
**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that Bernardo Camacho, age 24, a resident of Salinas, was convicted of First Degree Murder of six year old Azahel Cruz. A jury further found that Mr. Camacho committed the murder with a firearm from a vehicle during a drive-by shooting for the benefit of the Norteno criminal street gang. The jury reached its verdict on Monday morning, December 14, 2015, after a two-week jury trial in front of the Honorable Pamela Butler at the Monterey County Superior Court.

At about 6:00 p.m. on March 23, 2010, Mr. Camacho was the front passenger in a car owned and driven by Edmundo Pulido. As they drove by the Pocket Park located at 1110 East Laurel Drive in Salinas, Mr. Camacho stuck his firearm out the passenger window and shot several times at rival gang members who were in the park. Although Mr. Camacho missed everybody in the park, one of the stray bullets went through a bordering fence and into a neighboring apartment. Azahel Cruz was standing in the kitchen of that apartment when the bullet went through his head, killing him instantly. The bullet continued through another wall and into the living room, where it shattered a mirror and sprayed glass on the mother and other family members of Azahel Cruz. Knowing that her son was in the kitchen, the mother of Azahel Cruz immediately ran there and found her son unconscious on the floor bleeding from both sides of his head.

The defendant and co-defendant Pulido quickly drove away from the scene and, within a few days, the defendant fled to Mexico. Due to the lack of identification and cooperation by witnesses at the scene of the shooting, the case went unsolved for several years. Nevertheless, due to the dogged investigative efforts of Salinas Police Department Detective Tom Larkin and Monterey County District Attorney Investigator Peter Austen, several witnesses were discovered who stated that the defendant admitted to them his involvement in the crime. Although the witnesses initially were reticent and reluctant to cooperate with the investigation, they eventually agreed to and did testify at the trial. Soon after the defendant's arrest in Mexico and extradition back to Monterey County in 2013, law enforcement authorities also discovered a note written by the defendant from jail that detailed his involvement in the case.

Mr. Edmundo Pulido, the driver of the vehicle that was used during the drive-by shooting, previously pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 35 years-to-life in prison. Mr. Pulido refused to testify at the trial of Mr. Camacho. Based on his conviction, Mr. Camacho will be sentenced on January 20, 2016 and faces a maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

District Attorney Flippo stated that Mr. Camacho's callused act took the life of a 6 year old child and was devastating to the victim's family. His conviction is small consolation for the loss that Azahel Cruz's family endured. DA Flippo commended Deputy District Attorney Panetta for his steadfast commitment to hold Mr. Camacho responsible for his actions.