

**\* NEWS RELEASE \***  
**SOLEDAD MAN SENTENCED TO MAXIMUM  
TERM IN PRISON FOR  
BURNING FAMILY DOG “KATO” ALIVE**

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that Soledad resident Devonte Sirwet, age 22, was sentenced to six years and eight months in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation after pleading no contest to arson, first degree residential burglary, and felony animal abuse. This was the maximum sentence allowed under the law for these charges. Both the arson and burglary charges are strike convictions under California's Three Strikes law.

In December 2017, Sirwet's escalating anger issues and substance abuse problems caused his mother to kick him out of their family home. Sirwet was furious. He sought revenge on March 27, 2018, by breaking into the house and stealing the family dog, Kato. Kato, a 5-year-old black pit bull, was a protective dog who loved his family and had a particularly close bond with Sirwet. There were no signs of forced entry or a struggle; it is clear Kato trusted Sirwet and willingly left the house with him.

Sirwet took Kato to a nearby canal, where he savagely beat and kicked Kato. Kato tried to escape but Sirwet chased him down and poured two bottles of lighter fluid on Kato's face and body. Sirwet then lit a match and calmly walked away, leaving Kato to burn alive. A witness called 911 when he heard Kato scream; that civilian was so traumatized by what he had seen his family thought he was having a heart attack.

For over an hour, Kato fought to stay alive. When officers arrived, Kato was in agony. He was panting, crying and growling. Most of his flesh and fur were gone. His eyelids and ears had essentially evaporated because Sirwet poured lighter fluid directly onto his face. His collar was melted into his neck. Hardened, peeling flesh and fur were falling off of his body. Kato was transported to the closest veterinarian, who immediately ended Kato's suffering.

The District Attorney's Office would like to thank Soledad Humane Officer Cecilio Lozano, who provided gentle care and mercy to Kato in the final moments of his life.

This was perhaps the worst case of animal abuse in the history of Monterey County.

Kato's abuser was brought to justice thanks to the witness who called 911. If you are concerned that an animal is being neglected or abused, please call 911 or the SPCA for Monterey County. You can also submit an anonymous report at [www.spcamc.org](http://www.spcamc.org).



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