

Missouri Teen Receives 29-Year Sentence For Murder Of Beloved University Student

by Submitted by Madison County State's Attorney's Office
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Madison County State's Attorney Thomas Haine announced Wednesday afternoon, Nov. 29, 2023, that a judge has sentenced a Missouri teen to 29 years in prison for the murder of a student at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. Jacob Godoy, now 19, of Woodson Terrace, Mo., received the sentence Wednesday for the January 2021 killing of Moneer Damra, who was a nursing student and ROTC cadet.

At the sentencing hearing, Assistant State's Attorney Luke Yager asked Associate Judge Neil Schroeder to impose a sentence of 55 years in prison.

Damra, 27, was a passenger in a vehicle that came under gunfire from another vehicle at Illinois 157 and Interstate 270. Police have described the shooting as a random act of violence. There was no clear motive; the occupants of the suspect vehicle had no known connection to the occupants of the other vehicle.

Haine said, “By every account, Moneer Damra already had an incredible impact on the lives of so many people and held tremendous potential for even greater achievements. He made a selfless decision to help others and serve his country. I pray that this conviction and sentence will continue the healing process for his family and loved ones, as well as the SIUE community and the ROTC program.”

Godoy was 16 at the time of the killing. The judge said opinions issued by the U.S. Supreme Court and Illinois Supreme Court regarding “de facto life sentences” for young offenders meant the sentencing range in this case was 20 to 40 years in prison.

Victim-impact statements submitted to the court included one from an Army lieutenant who studied nursing with Damra. The lieutenant stated that Damra held a 4.0 grade-point average, and his killing “denied the United States Army of one of the best officers they would have ever had.” Damra’s goal was to become an Army nurse.

A sister of Moneer Damra gave a victim-impact statement in court, saying her brother overcame a number of obstacles, such as being homeless at one point in their youths.

She said she forgives her brother’s killer.

“In honor of the loving, joyful and brave life my brother cultivated, I hope you are afforded the opportunity to change your life and find a path of purpose,” she said.

Godoy, the shooter, had pleaded guilty to a count of first-degree murder. In addition to the prison term, Godoy was sentenced to three years of mandatory supervised release, formerly known as parole. A co-defendant, Jimmy Ortiz of Hazelwood, Mo., who was 19 at the time, also has been charged with first-degree murder in the killing of Damra. Ortiz’s case remains pending.

Haine commended Assistant State’s Attorney Yager for his work on the prosecution of the case, along with Illinois State Police, ISP Crime Lab, Glen Carbon Police, SIUE Police and other agencies that assisted in the investigation.

This charge and the statements made herein are based upon probable cause. The defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.