

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Notice of Sentencing

Man Convicted of Raping a Child is Sentenced to 50 Years in Prison, Followed by Life on Probation
State vs. Juan Nazario Lopez

May 13, 2024 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Chief Superior Court Judge Ellen McElyea sentenced Juan Nazario Lopez, 53, on May 8 to 50 years in prison, followed by life on probation. He must also register as a sex offender pursuant to Georgia law, abide by sex offender special conditions of probation, and have no contact of any kind with the victim.

A Cherokee County jury previously found Lopez guilty of rape, incest, aggravated child molestation, child molestation, and enticing a child for indecent purposes. The guilty verdict was announced on April 26 after a four-day trial in Judge McElyea's courtroom.

Cherokee Sheriff's Office began investigating these allegations on April 16, 2023, after a woman reported that her niece was being molested by a family member. Multiple family members were interviewed, and the child and her younger sibling participated in forensic interviews.

"The day the victim in this case had the courage to disclose these crimes to her aunt, she took the first steps in taking back her life and stopping the abuse from continuing," said Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, of the Special Victims Unit. "This victim felt safe enough with her aunt to disclose the abuse she had been suffering for years, even though exposing the truth had a tremendous impact on her family and home life. Children need people in their lives where they can go and feel safe; that is paramount in a child's disclosure journey."

During the plea hearing, the State introduced text messages by the victim that proved how the defendant's abuse significantly impacted her mental health, which aggravated this defendant's criminal actions.

"This young victim suffered immeasurable harm at the hands of a family member. Her courage in disclosing this abuse helped her to rise above this trauma," said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. "Children suffer mental health consequences when they keep dark secrets out of fear of shame or disbelief. We are thankful that this little girl could rely on her aunt to help her when she needed her the most and that a Cherokee County teacher also played a role in supporting her through this trauma."

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, of the Special Victims Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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