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Man Pleads Guilty to Giving Alcohol to Minors before Fatal Crash

Defendant advertised a job at a marijuana dispensary, then plied applicant with alcohol

San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott announced today that defendant Fraidoon Ahmad pleaded guilty to furnishing alcohol to a minor who subsequently drove while intoxicated and crashed her vehicle, killing her passenger, her best friend since sixth grade.

The case was set for jury trial this morning. Instead, Ahmad entered a plea of guilty to both counts in the complaint: furnishing alcohol to a minor causing great bodily injury and death in violation of California Business and Professions Code section 25658(c), and furnishing alcohol to a person under the age of 21 in violation of section 25658(a).

“Mabel Bahena lost her life because an adult recklessly provided her and her friend with alcohol,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“We hope this case sends a strong message about the consequences of furnishing alcohol to minors, and prevents other families from ever experiencing such a tragic loss.”**

The tragedy unfolded on February 17, 2017, when 20-year-old Yolanda Lozano and her best friend, 19-year-old UCSD freshman Mabel Bahena, met with Ahmad at the Myst Hookah Lounge in the Gaslamp Quarter. Lozano had responded to Ahmad’s ad seeking employees for a cannabis-related business, and met him at the lounge for a job interview. Ahmad furnished each of the underage women two glasses of wine and a shot of tequila. Later, at his apartment in the East Village, he served them more alcohol.

When the young women left Ahmad’s residence, Lozano drove under the influence of alcohol and plowed into a truck on I-15. Tragically, Bahena was killed in the accident.

Lozano was charged by the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office with gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated. She pleaded guilty in July 2017, and was sentenced to 365 days in custody. During the trial, Bahena’s family asked the judge for leniency for Lozano, due to her close friendship with their daughter.

Amber Groves, the bartender who served the underage women, pleaded guilty to furnishing alcohol to a minor causing grave bodily injury and death. Her sentencing hearing is set for June 3, 2019, at 8:30 a.m. in Department 201.

Timothy Michael Abbo, owner of the hookah lounge, has also been charged with furnishing alcohol to a minor causing injury and death. His jury trial is set for July 15, 2019 at 8:50 a.m. in Department 201, with an intervening readiness hearing on June 5, 2019, at 8:50 a.m. in that department.

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Ahmad faces up to one year in custody, three years of probation, and other court fees and fines. The court set a sentencing hearing on June 13, 2019, at 1:30 p.m. in Department 201 of the San Diego Superior Court at 1100 Union Street.

This case is being prosecuted by Chief Deputy City Attorney Mark Skeels of the City Attorney's Special Prosecutions Unit on behalf of the People of the State of California.

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