



City of Arts & Innovation

PRESS RELEASE

Police Department
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County of Riverside
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2017

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LOCAL ATTORNEY AND ACCOMPLICE ARRESTED FOR EXTORTION

RIVERSIDE, CA – The Riverside Police Department's Robbery-Homicide Unit conducted an investigation into reported acts of extortion by a local attorney and his accomplice girlfriend that culminated with their arrest yesterday on Thursday, April 20, 2017. Rogelio Morales, 39-years-old, and Mireya Arias, 32-years-old, both of Riverside, were booked into the Robert Presley Detention Center on multiple counts of extortion and burglary.

Between April 2016 to June 2016, Mr. Morales and Ms. Arias entered eleven hair salon and dry cleaning businesses in Riverside County and obtained minimal services from each. Within days, Mr. Morales would deliver court documents to the businesses claiming his client, Ms. Arias, was filing suit for violations of the Gender Tax Act of 1995

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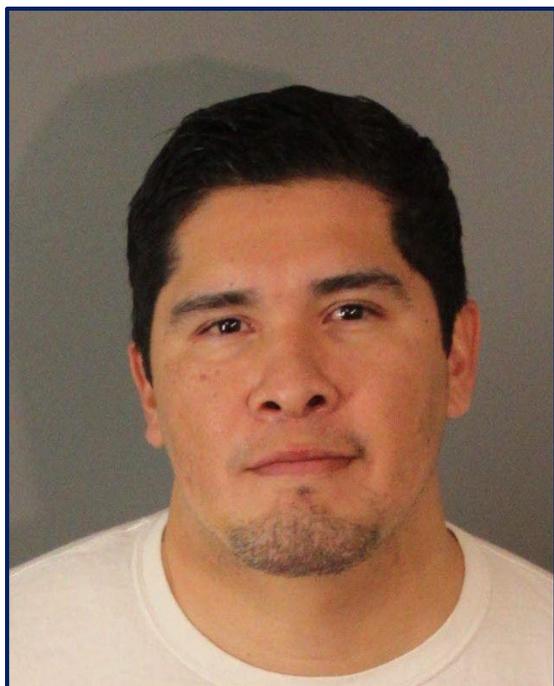
RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE | 3960 Orange Street, Riverside, CA 92501 | Phone: (951) 955-5400

and Business and Profession Codes for amounts ranging from \$20,000 to \$123,000. The victim business owners, all Hispanic and Asian, would contact Mr. Morales' law firm listed on the paperwork, or Mr. Morales would call the business offering to settle the case out of court for a smaller sum, usually around \$10,000. The lengthy investigation determined Mr. Morales and Ms. Arias would enter these businesses with the clear intent of extortion.

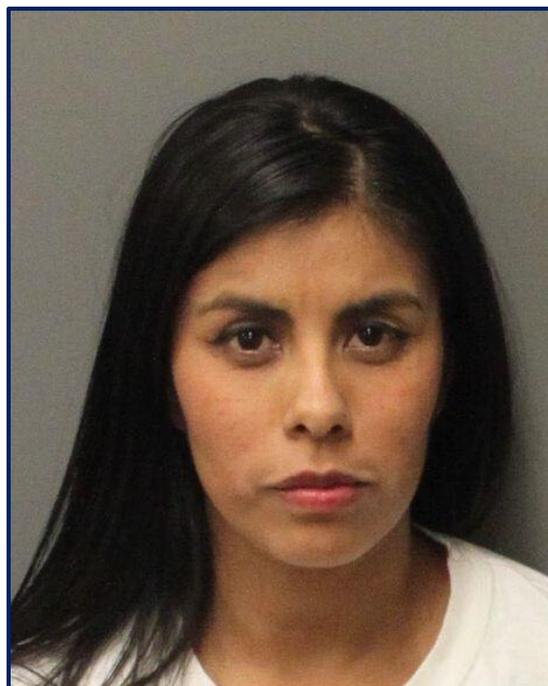
While the criminal investigation continued, the victim businesses hired attorneys. The victims and their advocates believed they were targeted because they were small immigrant owned businesses. One community activist/attorney organized a protest at Mr. Morales' law firm to bring attention to Mr. Morales' actions. Shortly thereafter, the activist began receiving threatening comments and posts to her professional social media account from social media accounts later linked to Mr. Morales and his law firm, the Law Offices of Rogelio V. Morales. This caused the activist to seek and obtain a civil harassment restraining order due to the threats of harm he made toward her. Mr. Morales continued making social media posts containing threats of harm and litigation toward the activist in violation of the restraining order. He also continued to contact the attorneys representing victim businesses with threats of litigation if the victims do not pay him \$10,000, with the most recent made in December 2016.

On March 15, 2017, detectives submitted their criminal case to the Riverside County District Attorney's Office resulting in arrest warrants being issued for Mr. Morales and Ms. Arias. The Riverside Police Department's METRO Team located and arrested both suspects as they returned home to their Riverside residence last night on Thursday, April 20, 2017. Both were booked into the Robert Presley Detention Center.

If you have information about this investigation, or if you have been similarly victimized by Mr. Morales and the Law Offices of Rogelio V. Morales, please contact Detective David Smith at (951) 353-7103 or davidsmith@riversideca.gov.



ROGELIO MORALES



MIREYA ARIAS