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Winter's Rapist Denied Parole

Israel Ceja was convicted of 20 counts of Forcible Rape and other charges in 2000

(Woodland, CA) – November 2, 2026 – In January of 2026, convicted rapist Israel Ceja was recommended for elder parole by a two-commissioner panel of the Board of Parole Hearings. The Yolo County District Attorney's Office submitted a request to the Governor's Office urging them to schedule a rehearing by all Board of Parole commissioners. On April 21, 2026, the En Banc Board reversed the grant of elderly parole, and a new parole hearing was set for October 15, 2026.

On October 15, 2026, the new two-commissioner panel denied Ceja parole for a period of three years.

In 1993, Ceja married the victim's mother and began participating in bathing the victim who was then 11 years old. He began molesting her and she was in fear that she would be removed from her mother's care if she reported sexual abuse again. The defendant knew a former boyfriend of her mother had sexually abused the victim, leading her to be removed from the home. The defendant's abuse progressed and continued until the victim fainted in public in 1999. She was taken to the hospital where it was discovered she was pregnant. The DNA of the fetus confirmed the defendant was the genetic father. During the investigation of his crimes, it was learned that he had tried to make her jump from the rooftop of their house, and also a truck ramp, to try to induce a miscarriage. Additionally, in July of 1999, after coming home intoxicated from a party he had pointed a gun at the victim, accused her of looking at other men, then pulled the trigger. Fortunately, the gun did not fire, and the victim was able to escape.

On September 29, 2000, a Yolo County jury convicted Ceja of multiple counts of forcible rape, assault with a firearm, child endangerment and lewd acts. On November 1, 2000, the Honorable Timothy Fall sentenced Ceja to 139 years in state prison.

Despite the lengthy sentence, by a judge who heard all the evidence, the Elderly Parole Program in California allows inmates who are 50 years old or older, and have served at least 20 years in prison, to apply for early parole. Ceja is now 64 years old and has served 26 ½ years in custody at the time of this hearing. He had previously stopped his first Elder Parole hearing in 2022 to enable him to do further programing and work on himself.

Recent changes to these laws, including the passage of AB2727, had no impact on an individual such as Mr. Ceja. Those convicted of Rape (PC261), Continuous Sexual Abuse of a Minor under the Age of 14 (PC288.5), Lewd Act with a Minor under 14 (PC288) and numerous other forcible sex crimes still qualify for elder parole consideration at age 50 after serving 20 years (see PC 3055(a).

The victim attended Mr. Ceja's hearing and exercised her right to address the commissioners. She stressed her fear of Mr. Ceja and, in painful and emotional detail, described the impacts of being molested and raped repeatedly for years has had on her life. These included issues with relationships and several continuing mental health diagnoses. She specifically stated giving Mr. Ceja a parole hearing was a second chance that she would never receive. Through tears, she emphasized it was not right, it was not ok, and it was not fair.

Commissioner Rosalind Sargent-Burns and Deputy Commissioner Teresa Meighan agreed that Mr. Ceja continued to pose an unreasonable risk to society if released. Both commissioners cited Mr. Ceja's diagnosis of pedophilia, his lack of insight, and limited understanding of the impact on the victim, demonstrated that Mr. Ceja posed a moderate risk of future violence. The psychological assessment relied on by the commissioners also found Mr. Ceja's parole plans and appreciation of his diagnosis were incomplete. Mr. Ceja admitted to still experiencing sexual arousal from children as recently as early October 2026. The commissioners found Mr. Ceja, based on all the evidence, still does not fully understand the pedophilia diagnosis and how it contributed to the horrific crimes he committed.

District Attorney Melinda Aiello praised the sensitivity, professionalism, and thoroughness of the two commissioners. "I commend the victim for her courage in testifying at the recent parole hearing. Her willingness to revisit a painful experience and make her voice heard is truly admirable. We remain committed to standing with victims and advocating for their safety and well-being." said Aiello. "Changes like AB2727 are a start but remain incomplete. Dangerous pedophiles, like Mr. Ceja, who are sentenced to decades in prison should be excluded from elder parole."

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