



## ELLIS COUNTY & DISTRICT ATTORNEY

M. ANN MONTGOMERY

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February 14, 2023

### **MURDER SUSPECT AND FUGITIVE JENNIFER PUENTE ARRESTED AND RETURNED TO ELLIS COUNTY**

Ellis County and District Attorney Ann Montgomery announced today that long-time fugitive Jennifer Samantha Puente was arrested and booked into the Ellis County Jail. Puente is charged with Murder and Tampering/Fabricating Physical Evidence with Intent to Impair a Human Corpse.

On March 17, 2012, a witness found the burning body of Moriah Gonzales (15) in a field in Ennis, Texas. After investigation, on March 22, 2012, the Ennis Police Department secured an arrest warrant for Puente for Gonzales' murder. An Ellis County grand jury also indicted Puente for the murder and tampering with Gonzales' body. Puente, however, fled from Ellis County, could not be located, and was never arrested. A warrant for Puente's arrest has been pending since March 22, 2012.

In 2016, believing Puente was in Mexico, Assistant Ellis County and District Attorneys and the Texas Rangers began working with United States Department of Justice officials to request arrest warrants and extradition from Mexico. In October 2022, Puente was located and arrested in Mexico by Mexican authorities and in the months following waived extradition to the United States. On February 10, 2023, a team consisting of members from the Texas Rangers, Ennis Police Department, and the Ellis County and District Attorney's Office returned Puente to Ellis County and booked her in the Ellis County Jail.

"For almost 11 years, many public officials worked tirelessly to find and arrest Puente so that my office could seek justice for Moriah Gonzales," stated Montgomery. "I want to specifically thank Texas Ranger Captain Jason Bobo, attorneys from the United States Department of Justice, Office of International Affairs, law enforcement officers from the Texas Department of Public Safety, law enforcement officers from the Ennis Police Department, and former and current Assistant Ellis County and District Attorneys and Investigators. Their combined efforts led to the extradition and arrest of this fugitive."

Murder is a first-degree felony punishable by between five and ninety-nine years or life in prison, and Tampering/Fabricating Physical Evidence with Intent to Impair a Human Corpse is a second-degree felony punishable by between two and twenty years in prison or probation.

If you have any questions, please contact Samantha Johnson at (972) 825-5035 or [ECDPIO@co.ellis.tx.us](mailto:ECDPIO@co.ellis.tx.us).

