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**QUEENS WOMAN SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR FATALLY STABBING
IMMIGRATION LAWYER**

Activist Lawyer Killed After Refusing to Continue Representing the Defendant

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Xiaoning Zhang was sentenced today to 25 years to life in prison for the stabbing death of 66-year-old immigration lawyer Jim Li, who dropped the woman as a client days before the killing. The victim was well known for his legal work and activism during the Tiananmen Square uprising in China in 1989.

District Attorney Katz said, “Jim Li was an activist in China and became a well-regarded immigration attorney here in the United States, where he represented those seeking political asylum. Li agreed to represent defendant Xiaoning Zhang pro bono in her case, until she admitted to lying on her application and he subsequently dropped her as a client. Zhang could not accept this and days after being told never to return to the law office, she came back armed with two kitchen knives. She violently and viciously stabbed Li, killing him. A jury convicted Zhang and today a judge sentenced her to the maximum penalty under law. It is our hope that with this sentencing, the family, loved ones and legal community can find some solace in knowing the defendant has been held accountable for her crimes.”

Zhang, 27, of Kissena Boulevard in Flushing, was found guilty by a jury last month of murder in the second degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree, menacing in the third degree, criminal obstruction of breathing or blood circulation and harassment in the second degree. Queens Supreme Court Justice Kenneth C. Holder, who presided at trial, sentenced Zhang to 25 years to life in prison.

According to trial testimony, on March 11, 2022, police responded to Jim Li’s Flushing law office regarding a disturbance. Zhang demanded that Li, who was handling her asylum request, also work to have a picture of her at a protest in front of the United Nations removed from the internet. Li told her he would not do that and Zhang became enraged. Zhang also told Li that she had lied on her asylum application about being raped by Beijing police in China. The attorney then told the woman he would no longer represent her in the immigration matter.

The defendant was told to leave the law office, but Zhang refused, and according to trial testimony, she reacted by putting her hands around Li’s neck and choking him. Police were called and escorted the defendant from the building and told her not to return.

Three days later, however, on March 14, 2022, the defendant went back to Li’s law office. This time Zhang was armed with a paring knife and a larger kitchen knife. She confronted Li and suddenly started stabbing the man in his chest and neck. An office worker was able to restrain Zhang until police arrived.

Li was taken to an area hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Assistant District Attorney Kenneth Zawistowski, of the District Attorney’s Homicide Bureau, prosecuted the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Samantha Tighe, of the Felony Trials Bureau III, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys John Kosinski, Homicide Bureau Chief, and Karen Ross, Cold Case Unit Chief and Homicide Bureau Deputy Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

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