



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
SEVENTH CIRCUIT COURT DISTRICT
POST OFFICE BOX 22747
JACKSON, MS 39225-2747**

February 7, 2024

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT SAMANTHA GRANT 601.968.6568

(Jackson, MS) Hinds County District Attorney Jody E. Owens II announces the conviction and sentencing of Yolanda Torns on the charges of Second-Degree Murder.

On April 1, 2019, Louisiana State Police discovered the body of Celeste McDonald in a marshy area near Mound, LA. McDonald had been reported missing the day before in Mississippi. As a result of the Jackson Police Department's investigation, Ryan Christopher Hopkins¹ and Yolanda Torns were arrested and charged with McDonald's murder.

According to Torns' sworn testimony, prior to the murder, McDonald had accused Hopkins of sexual assault. On the day of the murder, Torns and Hopkins attempted to convince McDonald to withdraw her accusation. When McDonald refused, Hopkins allegedly killed her by cutting her throat. Torns then assisted Hopkins in disposing of the body in Louisiana. That same day, in a further effort to conceal their crimes, Hopkins and Torns were married so that they could not be compelled to testify against one another. Torns has since obtained a divorce from Hopkins.

Torns was sentenced to 40 years in the custody of the Mississippi Department of Corrections with 15 years suspended and 25 years to serve, followed by 5 years of post-release supervision. Torns' sentence is contingent on her continued cooperation with the State in the case against Hopkins, including her truthful testimony at trial. Last month, Hopkins was extradited to Mississippi and is in the custody of the Hinds County Sheriff's Department awaiting trial.

"The facts of this case are particularly tragic and are a reminder of the important work this office does in seeking justice for victims," DA Owens said following the hearing. "While the negotiated plea today does not relieve Ms. Torns' of her culpability in this case, it is an important step in holding everyone accountable."

The indictment in this matter is public record and attached hereto.

¹ Hopkins stands charged in SoM v. Hopkins, 20-257, and is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

JODY E. OWENS, II
HINDS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY