

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Notice of Sentencing
Life in Prison for Man Convicted of Sex Crimes Against a 12-Year-Old Child
State vs. Antonio Eliberto Lopez

October 28, 2025 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Chief Superior Court Judge David L. Cannon Jr. sentenced Antonio Eliberto Lopez, 50, of Canton, to life in prison following a Cherokee County jury’s conviction on the following charges: rape (1 count), trafficking of persons for sexual servitude (2 counts), and child molestation (1 count).

The jury returned its verdict on October 3, and the court imposed the sentence on October 28.

Charges stem from a Canton Police Department investigation that began in April 2024, after a 12-year-old girl disclosed sexual abuse. In a forensic interview, the child said that the abuse occurred over a five-month period. She said that the defendant was initially nice to her, visiting her when her father was working and bringing her gifts. The abuse began with inappropriate touching and escalated to rape.

During the sentencing hearing, Assistant District Attorney Leyna P. Pope, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State, described the defendant’s predatory behavior and the bravery of the child in coming forward.

“This defendant used his position of power and authority to get what he wanted at the expense of a 12-year-old child. He was brazen, bold, selfish, and violent with her, and he used fear to keep her quiet,” said ADA Pope. “We are thankful that she had the strength to tell someone, ensuring that she would no longer have to suffer at the hands of this man.”

The child prepared a victim impact statement, which ADA Pope read during the hearing. In her statement, the child described the lasting emotional and psychological trauma she continues to endure.

“The rape was not only an act of physical violence, it was an assault on my soul, my identity, and my fundamental sense of security, and I live with the constant trauma. Anxiety and fear have become my daily companions....The rape was not an isolated event in time. It was a moment that split our lives into a before and after. It has stolen peace, joy, and normalcy, not only from the present but also from the future and the future of those that love me most,” the child wrote.

The prosecution recommended a sentence of life in prison, while the defense recommended 25 years in prison followed by life on probation, which is the mandatory minimum.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Chief Judge David L. Cannon Jr. sentenced Lopez to life in prison. He was sentenced as a sex offender and ordered to have no contact with the victim or her family. He will be eligible for parole after serving 30 years but is subject to deportation upon release.

“An innocent child’s life was forever altered by the actions of this defendant. Her bravery in confronting him and recounting the trauma she endured is nothing short of extraordinary. We are deeply proud of her courage and resilience, and we stand with her as she continues to heal from the pain he caused,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway.

The case was investigated by Canton Police Department and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Leyna Pope, of the Special Victims Unit, with assistance from Assistant District Attorney Tyler Sims, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Child abusers often engage in a grooming process that enables them to commit abuse undetected. Common grooming behaviors include:

- Targeting a vulnerable child
- Gaining the trust of the child and caregiver
- Providing attention, gifts, or affection to fill a need
- Isolating the child from others
- Gradually sexualizing the relationship
- Using threats, fear, or guilt to maintain control

To report suspected child abuse, call Child Protective Services at 855-422-4453. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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