



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2026

CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

GEORGIA MAN INDICTED FOR MURDER-FOR-HIRE PLOT AGAINST CORONA RESIDENT

*Defendant Agreed to Murder Stranger for Promised \$20,000 Payment from Third Party in Ecuador;
Faces Up to Life in Prison, If Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Luis Belis was indicted for first-degree murder and other offenses for fatally shooting 37-year-old Jairo Vinces-Cobena in March on a Corona street. Belis allegedly contracted with a third-party contact in Ecuador to kill the victim, whom he did not know, for a promised \$20,000 payment.

District Attorney Katz said: “As alleged, the defendant entered into a contract to kill Jairo Vinces-Cobena and stalked the victim on several trips he made to New York City. In March 2026, Luis Belis tracked the victim down to a street in Corona, Queens, murdered him in cold blood and quickly fled to Georgia. I thank our law enforcement partners in Gwinnett County and the NYPD for apprehending and returning this murder suspect to New York so that he can face justice in our courts.

Belis, 25, of Lawrenceville, Georgia, was arraigned yesterday on an indictment charging him with murder in the first degree, murder in the second degree and two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree. Queens Supreme Court Justice Gia Morris remanded the defendant and ordered him to return to court on September 18. If convicted, Belis faces life in prison without the possibility of parole.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges and investigation, in January 2026, Belis was recruited by a relative into a murder-for-hire scheme targeting a Corona man whom he had never met, 36-year-old Jairo Vinces-Cobena. After Belis’ relative brokered a long-distance introduction, Belis allegedly contracted to kill the victim with a man he believed was in Ecuador for a payment of \$20,000.

Belis purchased a pre-paid cellphone for the purpose of directly communicating with his contractor using the messaging platform WhatsApp to conceal his identity and correspondence. Belis traveled from Georgia to New York several times during the months of January to March 2026 to target the victim but backed out of shooting him.

On March 12, 2026, Belis allegedly traveled to New York from Georgia in a gray Ford Explorer. Over the course of the day, Belis acquired a firearm.

On the following day, March 13, at approximately 7:15 p.m., Belis parked the same gray Explorer in the vicinity of 51st Avenue between 96th and 97th Streets in Corona. Belis exited the car wearing black clothing and a purple mask concealing his face, mounted a stand-up scooter and rode toward the vicinity of 98th Street and 55th Avenue. The defendant circled around the block for approximately 30 minutes then encountered the victim. Belis produced a firearm and allegedly fired multiple shots at the 37-year-old man, hitting him in the head and body.

When police arrived at the location, they discovered the victim lying unresponsive on the sidewalk and bleeding from a wound to his head. Five 9 mm shell casings were recovered from the scene, and police observed two vehicles with apparent ballistic damage.

The victim was taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead from his gunshot injuries.

Belis allegedly returned to the gray Explorer on 51st Avenue, put the scooter inside of the car then drove away. Police issued an alert for the car and apprehended the defendant on March 17 in Gwinnett County, Georgia. At the time of his arrest, police officers recovered a 9 mm firearm inside the vehicle, a stand-up electric scooter and a cellphone.

He was extradited to New York yesterday.

After the shooting, Belis allegedly made multiple attempts to contact the man in Ecuador to collect payment of his \$20,000 fee, without success.

Assistant District Attorney Ryan Nicolosi of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Antonio Vittiglio under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney John Kosinski, Bureau Chief, and Karen Ross and Jonathan Selkove, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

