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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 14, 2013

(HARTFORD) State Victim Advocate Michelle Cruz, Esq., will hold a press conference Friday February 15, 2013 at 11 a.m. to release the Office of the Victim Advocate's investigative report relating to the domestic violence murder of Shengyul Rasim on January 17, 2010. The press conference will be held at the Office of the Victim Advocate 505 Hudson Street, 5th floor, Hartford, CT 06106.

The following report is the result of an intensive investigation including reviewing court documents, police reports, transcripts and interviews of various agencies and individuals by the OVA. The OVA has found, through its investigation, a significant gap in services to victims of domestic violence particularly during the arraignment phase of a criminal prosecution and errors with the Family Violence Education Program. The most significant miss-steps indentified within this report were: the State's Attorney's failure to triage the initial arrest of Selami Ozdemir; the State's Attorney's failure to object to the offender's placement in the Family Violence Education Program; the State's Attorney's failure to keep in contact with the victim; and the State's Attorney's failure to screen the victim and her children for Witness Protection.

In order to enhance the safety of victims of domestic violence and hold an offender accountable there must be a prompt arrest; an appropriate in Court triage of domestic violence cases at arraignment; and an appropriate prosecution of a domestic violence offender. In this case the State's Attorney's Office of Milford, CT had the opportunity and tools to respond to Selami Ozdemir's continued violence and refusal to honor the Order of Protection, but failed to do so. The West Haven Police Department, having no available mechanism to hold Selami Ozdemir on the night of the murder, had less than ten minutes to respond and seek protection for Shengyul Rasim and her children. The Milford State's Attorney's Office had four months to secure safety measures, to monitor Selami Ozdemir; respond to his non-compliance with the Court's Order of Protection, to assess Shengyul Rasim's safety, and to consider certification within the Witness Protection Program for Shengyul Rasim and her children.

"The OVA has continually advocated for improvements to enhance the safety of domestic violence victims while holding domestic violence offenders accountable. This report demonstrates the need to address the issues present within the practices of our criminal courts," stated Cruz.

For those who plan on attending this press conference please be advised that identification is required by security to enter the building.

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