

Bail for George Zimmerman, charged in Trayvon Martin shooting, set at \$150,000

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Bail for George Zimmerman, accused of second-degree murder in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, was set at \$150,000 on Friday. In a highly unusual move, Zimmerman also took the stand and addressed the slain teenager's parents, who were in the courtroom.

Judge Kenneth R. Lester, who presided over the nearly two-hour proceedings, set several conditions for Zimmerman's release. He cannot be in possession of any firearms, drink alcohol or use non-prescription drugs. He will also be required to wear a GPS monitoring device, report regularly to authorities and must surrender his passport. Zimmerman was not immediately released as certain details are still to be worked out in addition to securing the bail money.

Zimmerman, 28, was charged April 13 in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin. Zimmerman's arrest followed weeks of protests led by the young man's parents, Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin, demanding that the shooter be brought to justice. His formal arraignment is tentatively set for May 29. The second-degree murder charges carry a mandatory sentence of 25 years in prison and a maximum life term.

Martin was shot and killed by Zimmerman as he walked unarmed through a gated community in Sanford, Florida on the night of February 26. Zimmerman claimed that he shot Martin in self-defense, and police on the scene accepted his version of events. Police cited Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law, which allows individuals to use deadly force in public places without an obligation to retreat. Bringing second-degree murder charges, prosecutors contend that Zimmerman profiled and pursued Martin before shooting and killing him.

In a statement from the witness stand on Friday, which Zimmerman said was for "the mother and

father," he stated, "I am sorry for the loss of your son. I did not know how old he was. I thought he was a little bit younger than I am. And I thought he was armed." He did not directly accept responsibility for his murder.

Tracy Martin wept throughout the bond hearing, visibly shaking, and was comforted by the slain boy's mother. Speaking to *USA Today* after the hearing, attorney Benjamin Crump, representing Trayvon Martin's family, said the family viewed Zimmerman's apology as "insincere and self-serving."

Speaking for the parents following the hearing, Crump said, "They are devastated, completely devastated, that after nine days from the killer of their son being arrested, they learned today that he will be released."

He added, "This family, they were so torn, so hurt, that they couldn't even bring themselves to come here and stand, after they learned what they learned here in court. It has been a tough day."

Speaking to the press outside the court, Zimmerman's attorney Mark O'Mara rejected a reporter's suggestion that the defense was "pandering" to the parents. He said his client wanted to apologize after hearing Martin's parents say on TV that he hadn't done so. "He wanted to respond," O'Mara said. "It should have been done in a private setting but that wasn't afforded him."

Although it is unusual for people charged with murder to get bond, it is not unheard of in some situations. Zimmerman's defense argued that he has ties to the local community and family members testified on his behalf via telephone on Friday. Zimmerman turned himself in voluntarily after charges were filed against him, an indication, his attorney argued, that he is not a flight risk.

Prosecutors had requested Zimmerman be denied

bond or, if granted, that bail be set at \$1 million. At Friday's hearing, the prosecution repeatedly brought up two incidents from Zimmerman's past. The first was an arrest for assaulting an undercover police officer during an under-age drinking crackdown. The second involved an injunction filed by a former girlfriend, who claimed Zimmerman had hit her.

Judge Lester decided that neither of these incidents was a reason to deny bail. He called the arrest by the undercover officer "run of the mill" and termed the injunction "somewhat mild."

Early on in Friday's court proceedings, defense attorney O'Mara challenged wording in the prosecution's affidavit bringing second-degree murder charges against his client. In particular, he took objection to the phrase "Zimmerman confronted Martin." Dale Gilbreath, one of the state investigators involved in preparing the state's brief, said different wording could have been used.

Assistant State Attorney Bernie de la Rionda commented on this exchange, "I'm sorry, I didn't know we were going to be trying the case today." When de la Rionda went on to question Gilbreath about the night Trayvon Martin was killed, Gilbreath pointed out that a 911 operator has advised Zimmerman not to pursue Martin.

Asked by the prosecuting attorney whether there was any evidence suggesting that Zimmerman's original statement to the police about the shooting was not true, Gilbreath replied, "Yes."



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