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**Houston man sentenced to life in prison for four-year-old's murder**

HOUSTON- A Houston man was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole Monday for murdering a four-year-old girl during a robbery, Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg announced.

Philip Battles, 20, was in the middle of a crime spree in November 2016 when Ava Castillo was shot and killed.

Ava, her mother and two siblings, ages 6 and 10, had just arrived home when Battles and two other men attacked.

The group, which climbed from a stolen sedan, tried to rob the mother of her purse as she unloaded groceries from the back of her car.

The mother was shot seven times but survived. Ava was shot in the head and died at the hospital. Her older sister was shot in the stomach and also survived.

“The last memory I have of my daughter was her gasping for air, fighting for her life,” Ava’s mother Diana Gomez said in court. “I’ll never get the chance to watch her grow up and realize her dreams and aspirations.”

Two Harris County Sheriff’s Office deputies, the first officers on the scene, broke down in tears on the witness stand as they described trying to save Ava’s life.

Following a five-day trial, the jury returned a guilty verdict Monday after less than 20 minutes of deliberation. Life without the possibility of parole is an automatic sentence for capital murder.

“What we know about Philip Battles is that no one is off limits, not even children,” Assistant District Attorney Shannon Drehner said.

“Ava was a young girl who loved her family, loved school and was full of life, in stark contrast to the world of Battles and his crew” Drehner said, “These two worlds that never should have collided.”

Battles’ codefendant Marco Miller still faces trial. Ferrell Dardar, also charged in the case, pleaded guilty to murder and was sentenced to 60 years in prison.

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