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**INDIANA COUPLE SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR STAGING VIOLENT
PHONE CALLS TO VICTIM IN CONSPIRACY TO EXTORT AT LEAST \$54,000**

CHICAGO — An Indiana couple who engaged in a cruel hoax were sentenced to federal prison for an extortion conspiracy in which they obtained more than \$54,000 from a Chicago victim they knew by pretending that the husband was and would continue to torture his wife and her two young daughters if the victim did not pay him. **Juan Hacha** and his wife, **Ixchel Guadalupe Solano**, were sentenced to 87 and 42 months, respectively, after a hearing in U.S. District Court, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced today.

U.S. District Judge Ruben Castillo imposed the sentences yesterday in Federal Court after a hearing in which the victim testified and recorded telephone conversations of the extortion threats were admitted. The judge also ordered restitution of \$54,834 to the victim. Hacha, 32, and Solano, 30, both formerly of Hammond, have been in federal custody since they were arrested last September. Both pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy and communicating extortion threats by phone.

Between April and September, 2011, Hacha and Solano repeatedly manipulated and emotionally tortured the victim — a man Solano knew and who had previously expressed romantic interest in her not knowing that she was married to Hacha — by demanding thousands of dollars

while Hacha described the horrific violence that he was and would continue to inflict upon Solano and her two daughters, whose well-being the victim cared about. In some of the more than 25 extortion calls, Solano cried and screamed as if she was in excruciating pain, telling the victim that she had been shot in the leg, that her fingers had been broken, that she did not know where her children were, and begging the victim to help her and her daughters. At the same time, Hacha threatened to brutally kill the victim and his family if he did not receive the money he demanded.

In all, Hacha and Solano demanded approximately \$75,000 and obtained at least \$54,834 from the victim as a result of their threats. The victim testified in court yesterday that his life was ruined by his fear for the safety of himself and his family, as well as the safety of Solano and her two children.

After the victim turned to law enforcement for help and the conversations with Solano purporting to scream in pain were recorded, FBI agents and local police, who at the time were concerned that her injuries were real, found and arrested the couple at a restaurant in Munster, Ind., discovering that the purported violence was a hoax.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennie Levin.

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