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Polk killer Nelson Serrano should die, Florida Supreme Court says

[Nelson Ivan Serrano was sentenced to death in 2007.](#)

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TALLAHASSEE (AP) — The Florida Supreme Court has affirmed the murder convictions and death sentence of Nelson Serrano, a dual U.S.-Ecuadorean citizen charged with killing four people at a Bartow factory in 1997.

The court on Thursday said in a 45-page opinion that none of the issues he raised on appeal merited overturning the 72-year-old's sentence. One of those issues was that the state's case was based on circumstantial evidence.

Serrano had been convicted of the shooting deaths of four people in what prosecutors described as a business deal gone bad.

The victims were Frank Dosso, 35; his sister, Diane Patisso, 28; her husband, George Patisso Jr., 26, and a business partner, George Gonsalves, 69.

Serrano raised nine issues on appeal, including that the state's circumstantial evidence wasn't enough to convict him. His defense was that he was in an Atlanta hotel room suffering from a migraine headache when the killings occurred.

The court's opinion, however, noted that fingerprint evidence placed him at the Orlando airport on Dec. 3, 1997, the day of the murders.

The court also mentioned a taped interview with police the day after the murders in which Serrano said Diane Patisso must have "walked in the middle of something" — a fact that hadn't been released to the public.

Serrano's comment suggests that she "was not the target of the crime, but rather a witness who had to be eliminated," the court said.

Moreover, Serrano had said he felt like killing Gonsalves, and Serrano had access to the kind of gun used to kill the victims, the opinion said. The three men were shot execution-style.

Dosso and the Patisso couple were related to another business partner in the conveyor-system factory where the murders took place.

Friction between the partners developed in the 1990s, resulting in a lawsuit and Serrano being locked out by the other partners.

Serrano was living in Ecuador when he was arrested in 2002. Seven years later, Ecuador's government had demanded his return, saying Florida police kidnapped him from that country in a dog kennel. Ecuador has no death penalty. He was sentenced to death for each of the murders in 2007.

All seven justices concurred in the per curiam decision, a legal term referring to an opinion of the whole court.

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