

Baby Lollipops defendant released from jail

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One of two women charged in the notorious Baby Lollipops case was released from prison earlier this year after serving 15 years of a 40-year sentence.

Olivia Gonzalez-Mendoza was released from prison on Jan. 1, state records show. She was the girlfriend of the baby's mother, Ana Maria Cardona, when police found the baby dead under a hedge in Miami Beach in 1990.

The 3-year-old child showed evidence of having been tortured. Police struggled to identify the child, who was called Baby Lollipops because of the T-shirt he was wearing when he was found.

Gonzalez-Mendoza pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and aggravated child abuse charges and testified against the little boy's mother, Ana Maria Cardona.

Cardona was convicted and sentenced to the **death penalty**, but the Florida Supreme Court overturned the sentence and ordered a new trial in 2002, ruling that defense attorneys should have been informed of three statements Gonzalez-Mendoza made early on in the investigation admitting that she also beat the child, who was named Lazaro Figueroa.

Gonzalez-Mendoza, 42, was sentenced under the laws that applied in 1992, before the Legislature changed prison gain-time rules to require that convicted criminals serve 85 percent of their sentences. Her release was first reported by WTVJ-NBC 6. She could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Cardona, 46, is in Miami-Dade's Women's Detention Center awaiting a new trial.