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## **PUPPY TORTURER SENTENCED BY TARRANT COUNTY JURY** **Prosecutor: “Monsters are real, and he is sitting right there.”**

(Fort Worth) – Today, a Tarrant County jury sentenced convicted puppy torturer Deric Berquist to 5 years in prison. Berquist was charged with Animal Cruelty – Torture for multiple brutal beatings of an 11-week-old German Shepherd puppy named Nikki, which had been captured on his own home security system.

Jurors and others in the courtroom were visibly distressed viewing the videos in court, which showed Berquist savagely beating, punching, choking, and slamming Nikki’s small body to the ground. The puppy’s terrified squeals were heard until she finally lost consciousness.

*“The kind of man that can prey on small animals is a different kind of evil,”* said prosecutor David Alex. *“The level of torture shown in this video is the kind of thing people don’t want to believe really happens.”*

The usual range of punishment for this offense, 180 days to 2 years in State Jail, was enhanced due to the level of torture involved, allowing for the jury to sentence Berquist to the higher 5-year sentence.

The puppy belonged to Berquist’s then-live-in girlfriend, who turned him into police. Among the reasons Berquist gave for attacking the puppy was that she had defecated in her kennel.

During the trial’s punishment phase, witnesses, including members of Berquist’s family, recounted stories of his past animal abuse, starting with his strangling and lighting a squirrel on fire as a child. Testimony was also given that he had been habitually violent with former girlfriends. The same home security system installed by Berquist that captured his torture of the puppy also showed footage of him hitting his then-girlfriend, the puppy’s owner.

In closing arguments, Alex asked the jury to not just consider Berquist’s punishment, but the protection of our community as a whole, asking jurors: *“How long do you want your county safe from this kind of evil?”*

*“What kind of human does this?”* said Bonanno in her closing argument to the jury. *“Monsters are real, and he is sitting right there.”*

**WARNING: The video contains disturbing acts of violence. Viewer discretion is advised.**

<https://vimeo.com/332737702>