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Fast Action Justified in Assassins

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LOS ANGELES — (AP) —

The state Supreme Court upholding the murder conviction of Sirhan Sirhan for killing Sen. Robert Kennedy, has urged stronger powers for police in combating political assassinations.

"Today, when assassinations of persons of prominence have repeatedly been committed in this country, it is essential that law enforcement officers be allowed to take fast action in their endeavors to combat such crimes," the court said.

Supporting this view, the justices ruled yesterday that police were justified in searching Sirhan's home and seizing his belongings without a search warrant.

Appeal

Attorneys for Sirhan, the 28 year old Palestinian-Arab immigrant, had appealed his conviction, claiming evidence used against him was gained by an illegal search.

The justices said police believed there might be a conspiracy to kill more presidential candidates. They were seeking evidence of this by searching the house said the court.

"Their beliefs were entirely reasonable," the court said. "The crime was one of enormous gravity, and the gravity of the offense is an appropriate factor to take into consideration . . ."

Shot After Win

Kennedy, then New York's Democratic senator, was fatally shot on June 5, 1968, moments after claiming victory in the California presidential primary.

The slight, dark-haired Sirhan was sentenced to die in the gas chamber. The court's reduction of sentence to life imprisonment yesterday was consistent with its decision earlier this year to abolish capital punishment in California.

The decision officially reduced Sirhan's sentence from death to life imprisonment.

The state attorney general's office said that, like other life prisoners, Sirhan will be eligible for parole consideration after serving seven years. He has been in San Quentin more than three years. A spokesman said that few life prisoners receive parole before serving a minimum of 12 years.

San Quentin Associate Warden James L. Park said Sirhan eventually will be moved out of Death Row, possibly to another prison.