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Molester Could Get Death

By Rebecca Boone The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A federal jury Friday deemed Joseph Edward Duncan III eligible for the death penalty for the 2005 kidnapping, torture and murder of a 9-year-old Idaho boy.

The jury deliberated for two hours before issuing its unanimous ruling. When the hearing resumes next week, jurors must decide whether Duncan should be put to death.

Duncan didn't react to the verdict and opted not to have each juror individually polled to double-check the decision. The slain boy's father, Steven Groene, and other family supporters embraced after the verdict but seemed to keep their emotions in check.

Duncan, who acted as his own attorney, will have the chance next week to persuade jurors to give him life in prison without the possibility of parole instead of a death sentence.

The jury's sentencing recommendation is binding on U.S. District Judge Edward Lodge.

Duncan, 45, kidnapped Dylan Groene and his then-8-year-old sister, Shasta, in May 2005 after murdering their older brother, their mother and her fiance in the Coeur d'Alene area. The two children were taken deep into the Lolo National Forest, where they endured weeks of horrendous abuse at Duncan's hands.