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Victim's Family Faces Long Road To Collecting Damages From Hernandez

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Ursula Ward, left, mother of Aaron Hernandez murder victim Odin Lloyd, speaks about her son while her attorney, Douglas Sheff, looks on during a news conference about Ward's civil case against Hernandez, Wednesday in Boston. (Stephan Savoia/AP)

By SIMÓN RIOS



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BOSTON The mother of the Dorchester man Aaron Hernandez was convicted of murdering is pursuing a civil lawsuit against the former Patriots star.

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Hernandez had a \$40 million contract with the Patriots when he was arrested and charged with the murder of Odin Lloyd in 2013. Lawyers for Lloyd's family say \$9.2 million of that contract has already been paid to Hernandez, and that another \$6.2 million is outstanding. But the Patriots terminated Hernandez's contract after his arrest and say they don't owe him anything. Then there's Hernandez's house in North Attleborough, assessed at more than \$1 million.



But it's unclear how much money Hernandez actually has.

“That’s why it’s so important to open up the case,” attorney Douglas Sheff said at a news conference Wednesday alongside Lloyd’s mother, Ursula Ward, “so that we can get folks perhaps who manage his money or folks who know where it is to testify under oath and give us that information.”

Sheff said the family wants to call Hernandez to testify if the case goes to trial.

“And when we do, he will no longer be able to hide behind any sort of Fifth Amendment rights against self incrimination,” Sheff said, “because he is already convicted of the crime.”

Hernandez was found guilty last week of killing Lloyd, 27, who was shot six times in an industrial park near Hernandez’s home in June 2013. The first-degree murder conviction carries a mandatory sentence of life without parole.

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Lloyd's family originally filed the civil suit in December 2013, but it was suspended pending the conclusion of Hernandez's murder trial. The family plans to file papers to reopen the case soon.

Hernandez still has more criminal charges pending against him. He's also facing murder charges in the drive-by killing of two men in Boston in 2012.

Boston College law professor Robert Bloom says any damages would be paid to the first in line, but several factors could get in the way. Bloom says that the lawyers who represented Hernandez in his murder trial probably collected their payments up front.

"It looks like he had some good legal advice," Bloom said. "His criminal defense lawyers were among the best in the state, and when an athlete gets that kind of money they're usually urged to seek out good lawyering, and it looks like he probably did that."

Bloom says it's also possible that Hernandez gave money to his family members.

"If it's in some sort of instrument like an irrevocable trust, in essence he's given away the money and it's not his anymore."

Bloom says anyone who holds secure debt against Hernandez, like a mortgage, would get first dibs. If Hernandez is unable to pay what he's ordered to, Bloom says he could file for bankruptcy and a bankruptcy court would decide who gets what.