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Jury Returns True Finding in Gang Enhancement Retrial
People v. Israel Chuca: Kern County Superior Court Case BF181697A

(Bakersfield) – Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant conviction today. On September 25, 2025, in a case presented by Deputy District Attorney Brad Taconi, a Kern County jury found it true that defendant Israel Chuca did commit a Killing by a Street Gang Member.

On August 2, 2019, Israel Chuca was driving eastbound on Niles Street when he observed Carlos Venegas and a second victim walking in the opposite direction. According to Chuca, the two men displayed gang signs at him. Chuca made a u-turn at the next light, pulled over to the side of the road, exited his SUV, and shot at Venegas and the second victim eight times. Venegas was killed instantly, and the second victim limped away. The Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) arrived on scene and assumed the investigation.

Chuca stated in his interview with KCSO detectives that the men “banged on him.” He further acknowledged that the victims were walking in an area known for its prevalence of East Side Bakers street gang members. Chuca had previously admitted he was a member of the Colonia Bakers. Several videos were found on his phone and social media where he represented himself as a Colonia Baker and an “East Side Killa.”

On January 27, 2022, the defendant was initially sent out to trial on the case. He was duly convicted of First-Degree Murder with the Special Circumstance of Killing by a Street Gang Member and Attempted Murder with a gang enhancement. On April 21, 2022, Chuca was sentenced to Life Without the Possibility of Parole.

After the case was presented, a change in the law regarding gang crimes and enhancements took effect. Due to the change in the law, the gang allegations were remanded to the trial court to be retried. If a “not true” finding would have been returned at the retrial, Chuca’s sentence could have been reduced to 25 years to life.

Sentencing is set for October 24, 2025, before Superior Court Judge Brian McNamara in Department 7 of the Kern County Superior Court. Israel Chuca is once again facing a sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; “Changes of the law have created obstacles for us and for families striving to achieve justice. Despite these setbacks, our office was determined to re-prosecute this case as Chuca deserves nothing less than a life sentence without the opportunity for parole.”

Israel Chuca:

