



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF KERN**

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

ANDREA S. KOHLER
Assistant District Attorney

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
Assistant District Attorney

December 30, 2019

MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
DA Cynthia Zimmer
(661) 868-1131

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Approved by JAK
Press Release #64

Re: District Attorney Announces Reduction In Kern County Homicides In Year-End Review

The District Attorney will be available for interview today to discuss the year-end review. Members of the media may contact Joseph Kinzel at (661) 868-1131 to schedule an interview with Mrs. Zimmer.

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced today that the year-end review of homicides in Kern County has revealed a decrease in homicide crimes for the first time in four years. The number of identified 2019 homicides in Kern County, 90, reverses a four-year trend of annual increases in homicides since 2015.¹ Further, of the 90 reported homicides in 2019, some may be ultimately classified as justifiable homicides, thus potentially reducing the total of criminal homicides even further (for example, the killing of a felon during the commission of a felony by a private citizen).

According to statistics from the Department of Justice, Kern County's number of homicides increased every year from 2015 through 2018. [2014: 59 homicides; 2015: 64 homicides; 2016: 88 homicides; 2017: 89 homicides; 2018: 101 homicides]². 2019 marks the first year since 2014 where the number of homicides has decreased compared to the previous year. The annual report from the Department of Justice is typically released in July following the year; thus, final 2019 data will be released in July of 2020 by the Department of Justice. Preliminary figures compiled by the District Attorney, however, indicate a 11% reduction in the number of homicides in Kern County in 2019 as compared to 2018.

Notable as well is an increase in prosecution activity concerning criminal homicide cases. In 2019, the District Attorney's Office completed 31 homicide trials and reported homicide convictions in 26 out of 31 trials conducted.³ The 26 homicide convictions after trial in 2019 represents a 100% increase over the

¹ Consistent with DOJ reporting, KCDA does not include officer-involved shootings as criminal homicides in this count unless criminal charges are filed.

² Homicide in California, 2018. California Department of Justice publication available online at: <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-07/Homicide%20in%20CA%2020190701.pdf>

³ To maintain consistency with DOJ reporting, KCDA does not include traffic-related homicide cases in this count. "Homicide

13 homicide convictions obtained after trial in 2018. The number of homicide trials completed in 2019 (31), also represents a 55% increase in number of homicide trials completed in 2018 (20). In summary, the District Attorney's office is conducting more homicide trials and securing more homicide convictions than the previous year.

2019's homicide trials included several significant cases, including a death penalty verdict against Miguel Crespo, who was imprisoned for murder and killed again while in custody. Major convictions were obtained on previously unsolved cases, including the case against Cedric Sutton and Darnell Wheat, who were convicted of murdering a McDonald's employee during a robbery in 2001, and the case against Prentice Foreman, who was convicted of a murder occurring in 1979. Kern County's Grand Jury is playing an increasing role in homicide cases, as the District Attorney increasingly turns to the Grand Jury to investigate and issue indictments in homicide cases when appropriate.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; "2019 marked the end of four years of increasing homicides in our county. The reduction in violence is encouraging, but there is still more work to be done. I will continue to dedicate our efforts to investigate and prosecute homicide crimes and get the killers off our streets and into prison, where they belong."

Photo: 2019 Homicide Prosecutors with Kern County District Attorney's Office



conviction" here includes all degrees of murder as well voluntary and involuntary manslaughter, excluding traffic-related cases.